An Institutionalized Generation: Residential Care, Poverty and Education in Cambodia

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Background
An Invisible Population

- The homeless, in institutions, migrant laborers
- Household surveys may overlook up to a quarter of the poorest wealth quintile (Carr-Hill, 2013).
U.S. Government Commitment

U.S. Government Action Plan on Children in Adversity

✓ Put Family Care First

✓ Increase the percentage of children living within appropriate, permanent, and protective family care.

✓ The percentage of families providing adequate nutrition, education opportunities, care, and protection for their children is increased.
Cambodian Leadership + U.S. Support

National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning

Columbia University (USA)

MLT Consulting

MoSVY  UNICEF  Ministry of Interior  Ministry of Labor  CNCC  GAC

Funded by USAID via JSI
Methods
Methods

- 24 sentinel sites in 11 provinces selected through two-stage PPS

- Key informant interviews to identify all RCIs in selected sites

- Triangulation of data from multiple sources:
  - Institution director
  - Record review
  - Night count

- Individual interviews with 13-17 year olds
Inclusion Criteria

A residential care institution was defined as:
- Any facility where children live, and there is at least one full-time staff member (paid or volunteer) whose primary purpose is to provide long-term care for children.

A child living in a residential care institution was defined as:
- Anyone under the age of 18 years who was sleeping in the institution for at least four nights per week during the data collection period.
Results
National estimation*

-An estimated 48,755 children are living in residential care institutions in Cambodia. This is in comparison to the previous government estimate of 11,453 children.

-This means that nearly 1 out of every 100 children in Cambodia is currently living in residential care.

*The rate of children in residential care in the selected communes was calculated using a Poisson model and applied to all districts in Cambodia with at least one reported residential care institution.
Child characteristics from records

\( n=3,476 \) children <18 years of age

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<td>3.61%</td>
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<td>14.45%</td>
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<td>9 to &lt;13 years</td>
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<td>13 to &lt;18 years</td>
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Child characteristics from interviews

$n=1,737$ children 13-17 year olds

- Most children have at least one living parent (≈80%)
- Poverty and education are the main reasons children said they were placed in residential care (≈75%)
- High levels of school attendance (>95%)
- High levels of literacy (85-95%)
- Very low levels of paid child labor, though ≈30% involved in institutional fundraising
- Moderate levels of illness and very low levels of injury (in the past 30 days ≈15% sick and <3% injured)
- High levels of *self-reported* safety and trust (≈90% feel very safe and trust adults a lot, 10% some safety and trust)
Summary and Implications
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- The magnitude of children living in RCIs in Cambodia is striking and substantially higher than previous statistics.
- 70% of institutions were not inspected by MoSVY in 2014.
- The demand for institutions is driven by lack of opportunities for children and families living in poverty and gaps in education and the existing child welfare system.
- One year ago, we didn’t know any of this.
Acknowledgements

- H.E. Hang Lina
- Oum Sophannara
- Bruce Grant
- Chhaya Plong
- Lucia Soleti
- Sopheap Hoeung
- Samnang Nguon
- Rathyrea Prak
- Neil Boothby
- Jamie Gow
- Rick Rinehart
- Christian Larsson
- Saeed Rahman
- David Whitford
- Gary Yu
Questions?
Extra slides….

that I moved to the back of the presentation.
RCI Estimation: Strengths

- First known independent national estimate of children in RCIs, not based on administrative databases, in any low- or middle-income country
- Strict inclusion and exclusion criteria
- Key informants consulted at multiple levels
- Triangulation and physical verification of numbers of children
- Transparent and replicable methods
RCI Estimation: Limitations

- Poisson model assumes the rates detected within the sampled communes can be applied nationally to all districts with at least one reported residential care institution in the government commune database.

- Gaps in reported residential care institutions in the commune database may lead to underestimation.