The Development of Russia's Child Protection and Welfare System

Ann A. Rudnicki

Abstract: For the past 20 years, Russia has worked to develop child protection and welfare systems in an effort to reduce the high number of homeless youth that has amassed since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Some notable progress has been made, though it is clearly insufficient to meet this need. Any progress, however, must be measured against the enormity of the task faced and the still-evolving science of child protection systems internationally.

Keywords: child protection, foster care, orphans, street youth

The number of homeless youth increased exponentially in Russia during the 1990s, constituting the third great wave of homelessness in the 20th century.[1] Each wave was a symptom of major cataclysms within the country. Beginning with the first wave that arose during World War I and the Russian Revolution, the state created a set of child protection institutions that remained largely in place at the time of the fall of the Soviet Union. When massive economic and social disruption occurred during the transition from Communism, Russia attempted to improve its child protection system and reduce the numbers of youth on the streets while simultaneously addressing the broader crises in the country. This process continues to evolve, but progress has been slow.

Ann Rudnicki has extensive experience developing and managing multi-faceted programs for street youth and other high risk youth and families. She has served as a consultant to programs developing services for youth, and is currently the Executive Director of the Kitsap Adult Center for Education in Bremerton, Washington. Copyright © 2012 World Affairs Institute

The problems faced by homeless and other vulnerable youth in Russia, and the failures of Russia's social service and child welfare system to adequately address their needs, have been well publicized both inside and outside the country. Many legitimate critiques can be made about Russia's response to these problems. At the same time, there is often inadequate recognition of the enormity of developing an effective child protection system. Further, those with insufficient knowledge of child and family services in other countries can at times over-emphasize Russia's failures and under-credit its successes in this area, while at the same time over-crediting the successes and under-crediting the failures of other countries that have been working to resolve these same problems for longer periods of time. This article focuses attention on these issues.

This article is the product of ethnographic, literature-based, and documentary research conducted between 2001 and 2010. Program visits, discussions, observations, and interviews with child protection professionals and the general public were conducted in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Omsk, Perm, and Tomsk. Conversations and visits were all conducted under the protocol of confidentiality and thus will be referenced without attribution.

The Problem: The Prevalence of Homeless, Abused, and Neglected Youth in Russia

Soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, reports began to appear regarding huge numbers of homeless youth on the streets of Russian cities and villages. By 1995, shelters were being established for an estimated 300,000 homeless children. The children to be served were described as a combination of "victims of domestic abuse or [those who] have been 'forgotten' by drunken parents," as well as orphans and other children found on the streets."[2] Estimates of the numbers of homeless youth have ranged from one million[3] to five million.[4]

The figures above represent a range of 0.7 percent to 3.5 percent of the Russian population;[5] comparison figures from the US range from 0.2 percent to 0.9 percent.[6] Because of the difficulty of locating homeless populations, any estimates of prevalence must be considered unreliable. Definitional issues—specifically what constitutes a "truly" homeless child—compound the problem. Given the unreliability of this data, one cannot with any certainty compare the prevalence of homeless youth from one country to the next.

In conversation, Russians usually cite the economic situation during the transition period as the primary cause for youth homelessness. Research indicates that the reality is more complex. In 2002, for example, the Center for Sociological Research of the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation conducted interviews with approximately 2,000 homeless youth, aged 7 to 17, accessed through human service facilities or directly on the street.[7] Their average age was 12.5 years, with 20 percent between 7 and 10.[8] In this survey, 42 percent were homeless for the first time.[9] Their time spent on the street ranged from one week to more than six months,[10] with 18 weeks as the average. The three primary reasons given for homelessness were, in decreasing order of times mentioned, were: 1) "drunken parents"; 2) "lack of one or both parents"; and 3) "physical abuse."[11] In general, the families from which these youth came were extremely dysfunctional, with high levels of substance abuse, parental crime, or incarceration. Sixty-three percent of youths reported abuse at home, and 18 percent stated that one or both of their parents had had their parental rights terminated.[12]

The fact that the majority of youth on Russian streets appear to have been abused and/or neglected makes it clear that the problem of homeless youth is a symptom of a lack of adequate child protection and family reconciliation services. The 2008 census indicated that 700,000 children are orphans,[13] two-thirds of whom are "social orphans"[14]—children who have one or two living parents but whose homes are unsafe or unhealthy because of abuse or neglect. A 2009 publication stated that 2.5 percent of Russia's youth were lacking parental care—an expression generally comparable to the term "social orphan" for youth except for children with no living parents, but specifically describing children who are under the supervision of the state child protective services. This prevalence was in comparison to 0.5 percent of youth in Great Britain, 0.69 percent in the US, and 0.89 percent in Germany.[15] When considering the data from Russia regarding homeless youth and children in combination with that of children lacking parental care, it is clear that improving the response to abuse, neglect, and other family dysfunction would help reduce the numbers of youth on the street.

Some improvement in the number of street youth has been noted in Saint Petersburg, which has a higher level of services than most other parts of the country.[16] Experts state that the number of street youth in that city have declined considerably over the past 10–15 years to a current level between 3,000 and 10,000 youth. According to the organization Health Right, which provides a continuum of services for street youth, three reasons have contributed to the decrease: 1) the improving economic situation, which improved the social welfare of families and thus their ability to effectively raise their children; 2) the effectiveness of the system for the social protection and social-rehabilitation of children; and 3) the declining number of school-aged children as a result of the falling birth rate.[17] Given the wide variation that exists among jurisdictions throughout the country, one can not assume that such improvement is representative of the country as a whole, but it does suggest that some efforts to improve the child protection system are beginning to bear fruit.

Responses to Homeless, Abused, and Neglected Youth in the Soviet Union and Russia

Several components of the current child protection system have their roots in the Soviet period. Most notable among these is the orphanage system. The orphanages were set up during the early part of the 20th century when a large number of children were orphaned as a result of the combined effects of World War I, the Russian Revolution, and the Red–White wars that followed.[18] This system necessarily focused on finding alternative housing and caretakers for these children, the majority of which were "true" orphans—those whose parents were no longer living. As such, family reconciliation or preservation services were moot. Interventions were done to help the social orphans that did exist, especially between 1927 and 1929, but fell victim to an increased focus on industrial development and collectivization.[19]

Alan Ball's book on the early history of the orphanage system is extremely comprehensive and informative. While he identifies the areas where the Soviet Union failed to successfully meet the needs of homeless youth, he also concludes that during the 1920s "numerous Soviet officials, educators, and journalists deserve credit for publicizing the problem and struggling to overcome it. The concern they displayed for children's welfare rings true."[20]

Unfortunately, that level of effort early in the century did not continue, falling victim to repression and economic difficulties. Much of the system set up in the 1920s, however, did remain intact until the fall of the Soviet Union.

When hundreds of thousands of homeless young people began to appear on the streets after Communism's decline, the need to address this problem was expressed not only by society in general but by the highest level of government—including, for example, Boris Yeltsin in 1997,[21] Vladimir Putin in 2002,[22] and Dmitry Medvedev in his 2010 State of the Nation address.[23] This concern by the three presidents has been paralleled by the interest of the national media, which broadcasts routinely about neglected, abused, or abandoned children.[24]

In response, Russia sought to develop services that would reduce the number of youth on the streets in a way that would comply with best practices and international agreements, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (discussed below). Since 1990, several hundred laws have been passed regarding the rights and treatment of children, including abused and neglected children and juvenile delinquents. For example, one 1999 law that passed in the Russian Federal Assembly, along with its subsequent amendments, outlines the legal response of governmental agencies to neglected children, juvenile delinquents and their families.[25] The Family Law has been amended several times during the post-Soviet period to reflect new priorities and understandings.[26] It is these various laws that create the legal framework for Russia's child protection system.

The Creation of a Child Protection System: Components and Challenges

If one looks at the elements that make up an effective child protection system, it is easy to see why building such a system can be a daunting task. Several elements are common in developed countries as part of the formal systems intended to protect children from familial abuse and neglect. First of all, there must be some method of identifying children at risk. Child abuse and neglect tends to occur behind closed doors, so some method must be established to bring children at risk to the attention of the "system." Some centralized office in each locality—usually as part of the government—must then evaluate and respond to those reports. Clearly defined criteria for evaluating risk are necessary in order to determine whether the potential for harm to the youth justifies involvement by outsiders, most notably the state, and whether services to the family can allow the child to safely remain at home. Short- and long-term housing options must be available for children who have been removed from their families. These options could include temporary shelters, an assessment or rehabilitation facility, a foster home, placement with a relative, or some type of institution.

Every one of these steps is problematic, even in child protection systems that are more developed than are Russia's. In an ideal world, the system as a whole develops holistically and organically. In the real world, where policies and philosophies conflict and where resources are rarely adequate to meet the demands, the system can develop piecemeal in ways that are counterproductive. In addition, child protection involves many subjective evaluations not only about abuse or neglect, but about the ability of a parent to change. Training can improve those evaluations, but there is no substitute for experience. And experience can be a very harsh teacher in the area of child protection, with mistakes potentially resulting in the continued abuse or even the death of a child, or the unnecessary separation of families.

An added challenge is that so-called "evidence-based practices" supported by research do not necessarily have the same success system-wide that they have in more limited studies. Further, it is difficult to conduct effective research on the child welfare system as

a whole because of the number of variables, making it more difficult to determine unintentional or remote impacts of any specific intervention.

Several examples illustrate these difficulties. Family preservation services that prevent a child from being placed in a foster home or institution are considered to be best practices, but if they are implemented before there is an effective risk assessment procedure, they can result in children being left in families which continue to abuse or neglect them. On the other hand, improving the identification of potential child abuse victims before establishing adequate family reconciliation services or foster homes can result in more children being placed in institutions.

The following sections will discuss these areas in more depth, and consider Russia's progress regarding them.

Child Abuse and Neglect: Prevalence, Definitions, and Reporting

The number of children in Russia who have come to the attention of the child protection system either as orphans or as children "lacking parental care," was reported as 703,000 in 2009—2.7 percent of the total child population, a 3.3 percent decline from 2006.[27] This exceeded the 0.7 percent decline in total children aged 0–14 during that same period;[28] the number of new cases declined by 17 percent.[29] The prevalence of these children varies widely within the country, from 1.54 percent of the total youth population of the Northern Caucasus region to 4.09 percent in the Far East.[30] It is difficult to know the meaning of these numbers, however, unless they are measured against the same standard. The decreased prevalence from 2006–2009 could indicate a true decline, but could also indicate a change in reporting standards.

Judging by recommendations from professionals in the field, there is a need for clarification and more specific definitions regarding children and families who require the intervention of society in general and the child protection system in particular. For example, at a 2009 Child Protection conference, one government representative spoke of the lack of unified criteria for determining abuse.[31] The specificity—or lack thereof—in the definition of abuse can affect implementation. The Russian family code refers to, for example, physical or psychological violence, chronic alcoholism, and the commission of unthinkable crimes against the life or health of the child.[32] Without further elucidation in statute, regulation, or policy, such a broad definition makes consistent assessment of child maltreatment difficult. By contrast, the definition of abuse used in the US state of Washington is considerably more detailed, with an eight-point definition of physical abuse alone.[33] Such definitions can also be subject to the cultural context. For example, corporal punishment is discouraged in the US but is not usually considered child abuse unless it is excessive. However, Russia is one of the countries in the world in which physical punishment is still considered acceptable, despite efforts by educators since the late Soviet years to emphasize less harsh and more diverse approaches to child-rearing.[34]

Having clear definitions regarding child abuse and neglect and disseminating training among professionals working with children regarding the signs of potential abuse is of limited value, however, unless there is a clear system established where people can report abuse and which has the responsibility to investigate such charges. Unfortunately such a system is currently lacking in Russia, which limits the ability of the state to intervene when children are at risk. Further, the identification of children in need of protection cannot rest simply with child protection organizations, but requires the involvement of people in other

occupations who routinely encounter youth. The 1996 Family Code included requirements for mandated reporting by professionals and citizens who become aware of potential harm to children, but this is not yet common practice, partly due to a lack of awareness of the statute.[35]

Finally, any normative or legal change must contend with the size and diversity of the country as well as the variations in local jurisdictions, which impacts many policies and procedures. But,

> … given large regional and subregional differences in administrative capacity & financial resources, differences in access to family & child welfare programs have emerged…[T]here are no mechanisms to ensure that national welfare policy is correctly interpreted and implemented at the subnational level.[36]

In this context, the above-cited regional variation in rates of children lacking parental supervision is not surprising.

Forms of Care: Institutions, Family Reconciliation, Foster Care

Institutions

One of the most serious criticisms of the Russian child welfare system is its well-documented over-utilization of orphanages or "institutions."[37] Current international research indicates that institutional care by its very nature limits the development of children. Very young children placed in institutions with minimal staffing may spend much of their time in their cribs without the necessary physical and intellectual stimulation that is critical for child development:[38] "A rule of thumb is that for every three months that a young child resides in an institution, they lose one month of development."[39] However, one author—himself a graduate of a US orphanage—conducted a survey of orphan graduates in the US, concluding that

> As a group, the orphanage alumni, categorized by age, outpaced their counterparts in the U.S. general population on almost all social and economic measures, not least of which were education, income, and positive assessments of their life experiences, both during their upbringing and afterwards.[40]

More recent research has argued that orphanages can be a viable option for orphaned and abandoned children—and, at times, an even better option than placing children in a family-based setting with strangers.[41] In addition, a research project in one "baby home" [42] in Saint Petersburg demonstrated that it is possible to improve the quality of care by increasing staff training and implementing structural changes. Such improvement notably translates into a significant difference in the overall development of the children.[43] Nevertheless, the research found that even mild lags in development and caretaking can create substantial behavioral problems that lead to later problems, such as difficulty with adoptions.

Youth graduating from Russian orphanages experience high rates of crime (40 percent of graduates), drug addiction (40 percent) and/or suicide (10 percent).[44] The government does provide a series of social and financial supports to orphan graduates, such as an apartment, financial compensation, and linkages to social service centers.[45] Those working with the youth, however, believe that these supports are not adequate enough to offset the deprivation and dependency that occur as a result of living in an orphanage.[46]

Family Reconciliation

Because of this, various groups—including USAID, international or foreign non-profits, and Russian governmental and nongovernmental organizations—have worked to increase the level of family-based care. These include family preservation services and the placement of children in foster homes instead of institutions. While early support for and interventions within families at risk has increased, progress throughout the country has been inconsistent and support in the law inadequate.[47] Such "family preservation services" (FPS) allow the child to remain safely within the family rather than being placed in some form of out-of-home care. Interventions can be as diverse as educating parents about the developmental needs of children or assisting a parent in obtaining treatment for a drug or alcohol problems.

The current Marriage and Family codes reflect the primacy of the family in raising a child. Unlike the 1969 Marriage and Family Code, which stated that "[p]arents have duties to rear their children … to prepare them for socially useful work, and to rear them as decent members of the socialist society,[48] the Family Law of 1996 established the right of the family to raise a child with minimal interference by the state except in cases of abuse or neglect. The state is now less likely to remove a child from the home because of some perceived lack of support for national principles. Such a legal change supports but does not necessarily require family preservation services.

Several components are essential in order for family preservation services to be effective. First of all, the governmental and nongovernmental professionals must believe that high-risk families have the ability to change with an intervention. Yet in Russia, these families are often looked at askance by society in general and by some of the very professionals charged with helping them. The word for high-risk families is *neblagopolychnye*, (usually translated as "unfortunate") and denotes families with multiple problems such as substance abuse, criminal behavior, or violence. At the present time, clear definitions regarding high risk families are lacking, making it difficult to establish which families require the attention of child protection professionals.[49] In common parlance *neblagopolychnye* is often spoken in a tone indicating disapproval or even outright contempt. Such an attitude among professionals can contribute to the high percentage—nearly 70 percent—of parents losing their parental rights after referral to the child protection system.[50]

On the other hand, communities with a strong commitment to family preservation have achieved success in reducing negative perceptions and in shifting the priority of their child welfare system toward early identification of family problems and family preservation. These regions include Moscow, Perm, Krasnodary, Novosibirsk, Kalyzh, Irkytsk, and Tomsk. Tomsk Oblast has been considered a leader in these efforts,[51] with USAID funding remaining a strong supporter.

In order to further accelerate such endeavors, child protection professionals recommend better planning, training, and development of services throughout the country so that children in all regions can be adequately protected.[52] Such training is essential in order for communities and professionals to evaluate which families might benefit from family preservation services. Further, there must also be training regarding a "toolkit" of interventions that can resolve the problems in the family. Unfortunately, such interventions can be dependent on other services in the community; for example, it may not be possible to protect a child who is abused by an alcoholic or drug-addicted parent until that parent successfully undergoes treatment for alcohol abuse. Yet "[o]nly about a third of Russia's

regions have any treatment facilities at all. And the results from treatment facilities, when they do exist, are disappointing."[53]

Despite all of these challenges, USAID reports that the family preservation efforts it funded in Russia have had a 50–100 percent success rate.[54] If that is the case, then it may be useful to analyze exactly what was accomplished since, as one 2008 literature review on family preservation services stated,

> the lack of research on family factors that influence the outcomes of family preservation services makes it difficult to know whether they are effective for the full range of family problems faced by child protection services...Overall, there is almost no research on what works for whom in FPS.[55]

Family preservation is a value that should be supported whenever possible, and Russia's increased—albeit still limited—use of it is a welcome development. Nevertheless, the state of the art in FPS is still underdeveloped and, when combined with an underdeveloped child protection system, can present risks leading to decreased rather than improved child protection.

Foster Care

In addition to expanding FPS, governmental and nongovernmental organizations in Russia have been recruiting foster homes to reduce the vast numbers of youth still housed in orphanages. Some limited success has been reported. According to USAID, the number of children placed in foster care increased by 778.1 percent from 2000 to 2007, but the percentage of children in foster care in 2007 was still only 5.28 percent of the total number of children in state care, compared to 21.3 percent who were in institutions. The remaining 73 percent, however, were largely in family settings, including adoption or in non-reimbursed custody—such as staying with extended family members.[56]

In Russia, foster care as a model has faced various challenges in implementation. A 2005 national survey indicated the primacy of financial issues, including both income and the size of housing, along with bureaucratic impediments and a lack of available small children.[57] Recommendations from professionals include better preparation of foster families and a change in the law to make mandatory the training of foster families.[58] Such training can increase the retention of foster homes and improve childcare by preparing families for the difficulties they might face.

Youth in the care of the child protection system, or those who are on the streets, also face stigmatization, which can be a barrier to foster home recruitment. Multiple sources of information indicate that these youth are stigmatized within the general society—something observed even during the 1920s when the street youth composed a different population than the current group does.[59] A 2005 study by the Center for the Sociology of Education at the Russian Academy of Education reinforced stereotypes that orphaned children are more likely to have physical health issues, mental health issues, and behavioral problems.[60] Government child protection professionals in one city related to me how street children, by their very nature, have a type of permanent mental disability. Such a view can, of course, impact the entire system of care since it implies that abused and neglected children have a limited ability to change.

It is possible that the negative view of these children may simply be one example of how Russian culture views people outside of the immediate family. For example, one factor in

the difficulty of recruiting foster or adoptive homes is a reluctance by families to take in

children who are *ne cvoy*—that is, not their own.[61] This reluctance reflects cultural issues that transcend the family unit. Using Geert Hofstede's dimensions of national culture, Raghu Nath and Kunal Sadhu[62] rated Russia as a country characterized by high uncertainty-avoidance, that is, "intolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity."[63] Accepting a foster child into one's home is a situation rife with uncertainty and ambiguity.

In addition, the experience of the United States shows that the widespread use of foster care does not necessarily guarantee good outcomes. For example, the percentage of US youth who have been homeless at some point since they graduated from—or "aged out" of—foster care has been cited as 12–30 percent,[64] with the percentage rising to 49 percent of a sample in one study.[65] Other problems experienced by former foster children include high levels of unemployment (22–55 percent) and incarceration (18–26 percent).[66]

The movement to increase the number of children in foster homes rather than institutions is a welcome evolution in Russia. The efforts of many governmental and nongovernmental individuals throughout the country to improve the quality of family-based services must be recognized, despite the uneven progress. Given that the outcomes of foster care graduates in the US are similarly dismal to those of institutional graduates in Russia, it is clear that the mere use of foster care as an option does not guarantee success. As with FPS, both the strengths and limitations of such interventions must be recognized so that any negative unintended consequences do not outweigh the potential advantages.

International and Western Influences on the Russian Child Protection System

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia's interchange with the West has increased dramatically and affected the development of Russia's social service continuum. This interchange includes both participation in international bodies and the acceptance of foreign funds by governmental and nongovernmental entities. Further, foreign individuals and organizations have started or supported programs to help children and families in Russia. This section will discuss these efforts.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is cited as a foundation for many of Russia's laws addressing abused, neglected, and street youth. The CRC was adopted by the United Nations in 1989; all member nations are signatories except for the US and Somalia. Under the CRC, countries are obligated to show movement toward improved rights for children in the specified categories, and the Convention provides a mechanism to encourage compliance with its standards. The CRC lacks, however, a specific enforcement mechanism beyond the pressure of world opinion; it recognizes, though, that countries may lack the financial resources to meet their obligations, and places the burden on other countries to offer resource assistance to help the struggling country achieve its outcomes.[67]

The CRC does not dictate any specific method for achieving the rights outlined in the Convention. In reality, standards are based upon models and "best practices" that have usually been established in the developed countries of the west. A country is evaluated through a review process during which it must submit data and reports regarding its performance in the targeted areas. Third-party entities such as domestic or international NGOs may also submit commentary regarding performance. The experts in the field of child protection

who make up the Monitoring Committee meet with the country representatives to review the data and then issue a report on their overall findings.

In 1993, the Russian Federation presented its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.[68] Russia was criticized for deficits in eight separate areas, but has shown some progress since then. For example, the most recent CRC monitoring in 2005 applauded the development of laws and policies that better protect the rights of children,[69] while expressing concern that implementation of the law was lacking and that insufficient progress had been made in a number of areas. Concerns most relevant to this discussion are 1) the continued high numbers of children in institutional care such as orphanages; 2) the inadequate quality of care and at times outright abuse of children in institutional care; and 3) the continued numbers of children on the streets and the lack of sufficient planning and programming to address their needs.

It will be interesting to see the data and commentary that emerge as part of the upcoming review process, in light of the fact that statistics indicate slow progress in the same areas of concern. Nevertheless, the fact that Russia—unlike the US—has invited such international scrutiny of its child protective system must be recognized, and one can hope that it has provided some added impetus for change.

Foreign Funding and Advice: The Challenge of Program Replication

Funding by foreign governmental and nongovernmental entities has supported the development of Russian services for children and families. The US has been a major player. In fiscal year 2008, approximately $25.3 million, or 41 percent, of the total USAID funding budgeted to Russia was allocated to "invest in people", which included funding related to child protection.[70] One category of this funding is titled "Aid to Russian Orphans" (ARO), whose purpose is to "improve child welfare services and policies in Russia by introducing and supporting innovative programs to reduce child abandonment introduce early intervention and case management for families at-risk, promote community and family-based care for orphans."[71]

The International Research and Exchange Board (IREX) is the US agency responsible for implementing these efforts, and distributes the money through the Russian NGO the National Foundation for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NFPCC). The mission of the NFPCC is to improve outcomes for at-risk children and youth, including but not limited to improving family based care and the overall child welfare system. In 2008–2009, 60 percent of the NFPCC's budget was foreign funding and 56 percent of the total budget was from USAID.[72]

The USAID funding is consistent with the CRC, which states that affluent countries should help those with more limited resources meet targets specified in the Convention. At the same time, this funding also has the potential to influence Russian child welfare practices by means of values, practices and program models already institutionalized in the US. USAID's evaluation report makes it clear that dissemination of certain practice values and approaches is a high priority for USAID,[73] although they also emphasize that they offer options rather than dictate specific approaches.[74] It is not surprising, therefore, that US child welfare programs serve as a model for USAID-supported programs.

Since funding by USAID puts the US in the role of expert *vis–à-vis* Russia, it is reasonable to consider the overall success of US programs. Many US programs are thought to be model programs in their field, and the US child welfare system is certainly more highly

developed than Russia's. At the same time, the system as a whole has its limitations. There continues to be large number of homeless youth, with a mid-range approximation of 1.6 million cited each year,[75] despite the fact that both governmental and nongovernmental entities have been working to address this issue since the passage of the US Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act in 1975.

Furthermore, attempting to replicate program models in situations where conditions can not be precisely duplicated may in fact sabotage success. In those cases, it may actually be better to implement a seemingly second-best model than to work with the model that has been shown to be superior in another setting.[76] In this specific case, it is useful to consider contrasts in culture between the US and Russia. One source describes the US as having no real child and family policy, but says that its implicit policies derive from, for example, the privacy of the family and the individualism within the culture;[77] a prominent factor in Russia is the concept of the "collective":

> The collective is still very present in Russian society at large: The affinity for the group can still be seen today in everyday life, in group dating, and physical contact with strangers….In restaurants Russians will not hesitate to join a table with strangers rather than dine alone. Men kiss men and show affection, women hold hands while strolling. Recreation is often arranged in groups, often with colleagues they work with. They prefer organized sports with set teams. Russians feel free to tell you if you or your child is not dressed warm enough. In general, in a collective society, everybody's business is also everyone else's.[78]

Staff at several different youth programs mentioned the collective as an important part of their program model. The Russian collective appears to transcend the concept of "socialization," which is often part of the model in US youth programs. For example, I had the opportunity to share transport with a school field trip for Russian teens, and marveled at the way in which the young people seemed relaxed and comfortable with all the others in the group as well as the teacher. Similarly, in a non-residential program for street youth, the teens interacted with each other in a way more akin to a family than program attendees, despite their different ages and backgrounds. This was a marked difference from similar programs in the US, in which bonding may be good within sub-groups but is more limited for the larger group as a whole. On the other hand, the earlier discussion regarding children "not your own" suggests that this collective mentality is not universal.

Care must thus be taken to make sure that program replications adequately reflect the local situation and culture—something more likely to happen as a result of distributing foreign money through Russian organizations. It is conventional wisdom that money has influence, and the pressure of foreign funding may result in program models not fully compatible with or reflective of national culture and conditions. Research has shown, though, that the influence of foreign funding may be more complex. In one study, for example, the success of foreign-funded democratization initiatives in Russia was dependent upon the extent to which the surrounding communities already shared the norms of the funding entity.[79] Those findings do not obviate the possibility of more subtle shaping of policies and procedures, which may not be fully in the best interest of the target population.

Secular and Missionary Programs Started and Supported by Foreigners

Not only have foreign entities provided critical seed funding for services and technical assistance for new models of care, but foreign and especially Western individuals and nonprofits have increased programming for children and families in Russia. Some of

these programs have been secular, such as Love's Bridge[80] in Perm, started by Americans in conjunction with a local charity; or Health Right International,[81] a global organization which utilizes all local staff in its Russian programs.

More common are missionary programs, whose faith-based perspective contributes another dimension to integration into the community, especially since they represent faiths beyond just the predominant Russian Orthodox Church. The missionaries are largely from Protestant denominations, often from evangelical communities that identify themselves as "Christian" rather than from more traditional Protestant denominations. An example of the extent to which mission activities in Russia are considered important for the Christian communities is the CoMission for Children at Risk, an umbrella organization that assists a wide range of Christian groups in helping children in the post-Soviet states. Over 200 different groups affiliated with CoMission are active in Russia, and their reach extends into many communities that otherwise might lack resources.[82] Their involvement might be limited to regular mission visits to Russian in order, to bring supplies to orphanages or to operate summer camps for children. At the other end of the spectrum, the Harbor in Saint Petersburg[83]—another CoMission member—offers both residential and non-residential services to assist orphans with skill-development.

The relationship between these foreign organizations and domestic ones has varied, depending not only on the organizations involved, the specific communities in which they operate, and the prevailing level of openness with or suspicion of the West. If the foreign agencies must at times tread lightly so as not to jeopardize their ability to operate within the country, they also seem largely to have viable relationships with domestic governmental and nongovernmental agencies that have helped expand, influence, and improve services in Russia.

It would be an interesting area of research to conduct a social network analysis regarding the social service networks in various communities in Russia to better evaluate the patterns of cooperation among agencies with varied levels of domestic versus foreign support and/or governance. Such research would help measure the overall impact of foreign influences on the Russian child welfare system as a whole.

Even without such research, it appears that the foreign funding and the provision of services by foreign groups has played a role in helping to advance child protection, providing in-country technical assistance and exposure to program models that may otherwise have happened more slowly. Such support is unlikely to have borne fruit, however, unless there was a previously interest and commitment within Russia.

Conclusion

One does not have to look far to find evidence of Russia's inadequately developed child protection system. The number of children recognized by the system is high, family reconciliation service are limited, too many children remain in institutions, and outcomes are poor. Definitions of child abuse and neglect, as well as parameters and responsibilities for intervening with families and/or children, are all inadequate. Wide variations exist from one locality to the next.

Yet one can also find evidence of change. The legal framework, while still evolving, has been dramatically reworked in accordance with international standards, particularly the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. By becoming a signatory of this latter group, Russia has opened itself up to international scrutiny of its child protection

system. The number of children in foster homes rather than institutions is increasing, albeit slowly. Family reconciliation services may be few, but efforts in several localities are strong. There is a committed core of governmental and nongovernmental professionals throughout the country who are working to improve the system, and who are exchanging ideas and technical assistance.

Further, these efforts must be viewed in the context of the enormity of the task they are pursuing—the development of an effective child protection system in a vast country that is still undergoing the political and economic impacts of transition. Their lack of success should be examined in relationship to the lack of success in other countries whose child protection systems still face substantial challenges despite many more years of effort under less-daunting circumstances.

It is difficult to be patient when discussing child protection, since delays in improving the system can result in wasted or lost lives. Yet it is easy to overlook the risks in moving quickly in one area without simultaneously developing prerequisite infrastructure or services in another area. Similarly, one can easily ignore the risks involved in initiating program models and systems before the personnel implementing them have acquired sufficient experience to operate them effectively. The challenges becomes even more complex when recognizing that, despite the many wonderful child protection models that have had success under specific circumstances or in specific locations in the world, state-of-the-art child protection systems as a whole are works in progress, and resources rarely are adequate enough for the need.

Thus, Russia’s child protection system faces challenges both universal and specific. Russia must continue to develop its legal framework to permit and facilitate effective interventions that keep children safe and families healthy. It must address the legal and practical barriers that contribute to regional discrepancies in implementation of child protection systems. It must work to change attitudes that can inhibit child protection and make the recruitment of foster homes difficult. It must continue to expand the expertise and experience of child protection professionals throughout the country. It must find and allocate adequate resources to conduct all of these tasks.

As Russia develops expertise in these areas, it can provide another perspective on addressing the challenges that many countries throughout the world face in developing effective child protection systems. It will be able to contribute experience and research in culturally specific variations of models that are viewed internationally as best practices, and will hopefully contribute to the development of new models that can influence practice in other countries.

NOTES

1. Alan Ball, *And Now My Soul is Hardened: Abandoned Children in Soviet Russia 1918-1930* (Berkeley, CA: University. California Press, 1994); and Sally W. Stoecker, "Homelessness and Criminal Exploitation of Russian Minors" *Demokratizatsiya* 9, no. 2 (2001): 319-336.

2. *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* XLVII, 24.

3. ITAR/TASS News Agency, January 15, 2002, 1008015t8977.

4. Tatiana N. Balachova et. al. "Street Children in Russia: Steps to Prevention," *International Journal of Social Welfare* 18 (2009), 27–44, doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2397.2008.00573.x.

5. *The Economist, Pocket World in Figures* (London: Profile Books, 2011), 204.

6. Paul Toro et al., "Homeless Youth in the United States: Recent Research Findings and Intervention Approaches" (2008), in D. Dennis, G. Locke, & J. Khadduri, eds., *Toward Understanding Homelessness: The 2007 National Symposium on Homelessness Research,* 1–33 (Washington DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2007), available at http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/homelessness/symposium07/; and *The Economist, Pocket World in Figures,* 236.

7. Aleksandr Leonardovich Aref'ev, "The Homeless and Neglected Children of Russia." *Russian Social Science Review* 46, no. 5 (2005): 79–101.

8. Aref'ev, 83.

9. Aref'ev, 83.

10. Aref'ev, 84.

11. Aref'ev, 92.

12. Aref'ev, 93.

13. RIAN News Service, January 10, 2011, available at http://en.rian.ru/russia/20060529/48774014.html 05/29/2006.

14. "Foster parents in Russia may undergo special training," *Prokerala News Service,* January 8, 2011, available at http://www.prokerala.com/news/articles/a193483.html (accessed December 27, 2011).

15. Natsionalni Fond Zashiti Dyety ot Zhestokovo Obrasheniya, "Rocciickaya Cictema Zashiti Detsba: Problemi i Perspectivi" (Moscow: Vcerocciickaya naychno praktichestaya Konferentsiya, 2009): 12.

16. The term "street youth" will be used synonymously with that of "homeless youth." In both cases, they refer to youth who are operating largely outside of a home structure and outside of the supervision of responsible adults.

17. O. N. Bogolyboy and P. B. Yuricka, eds., *Rykovodstva Po Okazaniyu Komplekcnoy Pomoshi Becprizornim i Beznadpornim Necovershennoletnim* (St. Petersburg: Doctors for Children, 2009): 7.

18. Stoecker, 319–336.

19. Ball, 179–80.

20. Ball, 199

21. *Current Digest* XLIX, 7.

22. *Pravda Online,* "Russia, China Foreign Ministers Sign Protocol On Draft Treaty On Good-neighbourly Relations, Friendship And Partnership," April 29, 2001, available at http://english.pravda.ru/politics/2002/12/23/41225.html (accessed December 27, 2011).

23. "Medvedev Signs 28 Orders to Fulfill His Speech Vows," *The Moscow Times*, December 8, 2010, available at http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/medvedev-signs-28-orders-to-fulfill-his-speech-vows/425860.html (accessed January 10, 2011).

24. See, for example, Argumenti I Facti, No. 15, 2007, April 11, 2007 "Child-Murders—Why Are We So Cruel Towards Our Children", 13; No. 7, 2010, "Who Needs These Children—We Do!" 8- 9; No. 17, 2007, "The Hunt for Children",13; and Argumenti I Facti – Peterburg –No. 5, 2010, "Children Need To Be Defended From Us,"15.

25. Russian Federation, "Ob Osnovakh Sistemy Profilaktiki Beznadzornosti i Pravonarusheii Nesovershennoletnykh [On the fundamentals of the system of protection for neglected children and juvenile delinquents]," adopted by Federal Assembly June 9, 1999, amended on April 22, 2005.

26. Russian Federation, "Semeinii Kodeks Rossikoy Federatsii, Ctatya 123 [Family laws of the

Russian Federation Article 123]," December 8, 1995, amended December 28, 2004.

27. Fond Poddershki Detei, *Detei v Trudnoy Zhizhnennoy Citzuatzia: Novie Podhodi k Reshenie Problem, (*Moscow, 2010): 13.

28. Russian Federation State Statistical Services, available at http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat/rosstatsite/main/population/demography/# (accessed November 11, 2011).

29. Fond Poddershki Detei, 14.

30. Fond Poddershki Detei, 15.

31. Natsionalni Fond, 22–25.

32. Russian Federation. "Semeinii kodeks Rossikoy Federatsii," 69.

33. Washington Administrative Code 388-15-009.

34. Ronald Shor, "Physical Punishment as Perceived by Parents in Russia: Implications for Professionals Involved in the Care of Children," *Early Child Development and Care* 176, no. 3-4 (May 2006): 429-431.

35. Balachova, 34

36. World Bank, *Russian Federation Child Welfare Outcomes during the 1990s: The Case of Russia* (Washington, DC: World Bank Human Development Sector Unit, 2002): 74.

37. United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, "Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 44 of the Convention, Russian Federation: Concluding Observations (CRC/C/15/Add. 274)," 38.

38. Kevin Browne, *The Risk of Harm to Young Children in Institutional Care* (London: Save the Children, 2009): 10–12.

39. John Williamson and Aaron Greenberg, "Families, Not Orphanages," Better Care Network Working Paper (September 2010): 6, available at http://www.crin.org/docs/Families%20Not%20Orphanages.pdf (accessed December 27, 2011).

40. Richard B. McKenzie, ed., *Home Away From Home: The Forgotten History of Orphanages* (New York, NY: Encounter Books, 2009): xii.

41. Kathryn Whetten et. al., "A Comparison of the Wellbeing of Orphans and Abandoned Children Ages 6–12 in Institutional and Community-Based Care Settings in 5 Less Wealthy Nations," *PLoS ONE* 4, no. 12 (2009): e8169.

42. A "baby home" is an orphanage for children aged zero to four.

43. Christine J. Groark et. al.. "Improvements in Early Care in Russian Orphanages and Their Relationship to Observed Behaviors," *Infant Mental Health Journal* 26 (2005): 96.

44. Russian NGO Big Changes, available at http://www.bigchange.ru/education_eng.htm (accessed December 27, 2011).

45 Nadezhda V. Prisiazhnaia, "Orphan Children: Adjusting to Life after the Boarding Institution," *Russian Education and Society* 50, no. 12 (December 2008): 27.

46. Prisiazhnaia, 35.

47. Natsionalni Fond 2009, 180.

48. Amy C. Butler and Ludmilla G. Kuraeva, "Russian Family Policy in Transition: Implications for Families and Professionals," *Social Service Review* (July 2001): 203.

49. Natsionalni Fond 2009, 15.

50. Fond Poddershki Detei, 18.

51. Natsionalni Fond 2009

52. Natsionalni Fond 2009, 181–182.

53. Narconon International, Russia Drug Treatment International, available at http://www.narconon.org/drug-information/russia-drug-addiction.html (accessed November 11, 2011).

54. Balachova, 34.

55. LucyTully, *Literature Review: Family Preservation Services* (Ashfield, New South Wales: Centre for Parenting and Development, 2008): 13.

56. Alexander Telyukov and Mary Paterson, *Assessment of USAID's Child Welfare Programs in Russia: Evaluation Report*, (Gaithersburg, MD: Terra P Group, Inc., 2009): 4.

57. Russian Centre for Public Opinion, cited in Victoria Schmidt, "Orphan Care in Russia," *Social Work and Society* 7, no. 2 (2009): 64.

58. Natsionalni Fond 2009, 24.

59. Ball, 129.
60. Prisiazhnaia, 25.
61. Clementine Fujimura,"Adult Stigmatization and Homeless Children," *Demokratizatsiya* 10, no. 1 (2002): 42.
62. Raghu Nath and Kunal K. Sadhu, "Comparative Analysis. Conclusions, and Future Directions," in *Comparative Management–A Regional View* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1988): 273.
63. G. Hofstede, G. and M. F. Peterson, "National values and organizational practices," in *Handbook of Organizational Culture and Climate*, N.M.Ashkanasy, C.P.M. Wilderom and M.F. Peterson, eds. (London: Sage, 2000): 401.
64. The Children's Aid Society, "Aging Out of Foster Care," February 28, 2005, available at http://www.childrensaidsociety.org/issues/aging-out-foster-care (accessed December 27, 2011).
65. Patrick Fowler et. al., "Aging-Out of Foster Care: Pathways To and From Homelessness and Associated Psychosocial Outcomes in Young Adulthood," *American Journal of Public Health* 99 (2009): 1453.
66. The Children's Aid Society, 2.
67. UNICEF, "Understanding the Convention on the Rights of the Child," Article 4, available at http://www.unicef.org/crc/index_understanding.html (accessed December 27, 2011).
68. United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, Report to the UN General Assembly, "O progresse, dostignutom rossiski federatseh v khode osushestvelnia tseleh vsemirnoi deklaratsii i plana destvii vsemirnoh vstrechi na visshem urovne v interesakh detey," 2001.
69. United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, "Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 44 of the Convention, Russian Federation: Concluding Observations" (CRC/C/15/Add. 274. 09/30/2005): 38.
70. USAID, "Russia's Regions Work to Expand Foster Care Programs," June 25, 2009, available at http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/press/success/russian_foster_care_programs.html (accessed December 27, 2011).
71, USAID/Russia, Assistance to Russian Orphans (ARO), March 30, 2010, available at http://russia.usaid.gov/programs/health/child_welfare/ARO1/ (accessed December 27, 2011).
72, National Foundation for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Annual Report 2006 – 2007, available at http://www.sirotstvo.ru/files/28/AnnualReport2006-2007Eng.pdf (accessed December 27, 2011).
73. Telyukov and Patterson, 12–13.
74. Telyukov and Patterson, 9.
75. Paul Toro et al., "Homeless Youth in the United States: Recent Research Findings and Intervention Approaches" (2008), in D. Dennis, G. Locke, and J. Khadduri, eds., *Toward Understanding Homelessness: The 2007 National Symposium on Homelessness Research,* 1-33, available at http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/homelessness/symposium07/ (accessed December 27, 2011).
76. Bruce Talbot Coram, "Second Best Theories and the Implications for Institutional Design," in Robert E. Goodin, *The Theory of Institutional Design* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1996) 90–91.
77. The Clearinghouse on International Developments in Child, Youth and Family Policies at Columbia University available at http://www.childpolicyintl.org/ (accessed December 27, 2011).
78. Duane Goehner, "Russian American Cultural Contrasts," available at http://www.goehner.com/russinfo.htm (accessed December 27, 2011).
79. Lisa McIntosh Sundstrom, *Funding Civil Society: Foreign Assistance and NGO Development in Russia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006): xv.
80. See http://www.lovesbridge.org.
81. See HealthRight International, https://healthright.org/where-we-work/russia.
82. The CoMission for Children at Risk, Directory of Organizations, available at http://www.comission.org/organizations/?filter=r,1#doctitle4 (accessed December 28, 2011).
83. The Harbor St. Petersburg, available at http://www.theharborspb.org (accessed December 28, 2011).

GO BEYOND THE PAGES

Global I.Q. with The Economist

Join the World Affairs Council online for Global I.Q. with The Economist, a free live interactive webinar featuring the magazine's journalists from around the world.

Listen at home or work for the opportunity to pose questions and win prizes – or download the podcast later.

Sponsored by

In association with The Economist

For more information and to access the Global I.Q. archive:

www.dfwworld.org/globaliq

Ahmed **Rashid** Kenneth **Pollack** John **Mearsheimer** Ian **Kershaw** Robert **Kaplan** John **Gray** Paul **Kennedy** Philip **Tetlock** Richard **Bulliet** Benny **Morris** Paul **Pillar** Jacob **Heilbrunn** Bruce **Riedel** Geoffrey **Wheatcroft** Anatol **Lieven** Barry **Eichengreen** Aaron **Friedberg** Abbas **Milani** Patrick **French** William **Dalrymple** Mary **Beard** Richard **Overy** Robert **Jervis** Patrick **Allitt** Christian **Caryl** Richard **Evans** Jessica **Stern** Bruce **Hoffman** Richard **Betts** Margaret **MacMillan** Thomas **de Waal** Eugene **Rogan** Mark **Mazower** Scott **Atran** Ramachandra **Guha** John **Lukacs** James **Piereson** Piers **Brendon** Minxin **Pei** Harvey **Cox** Anthony **Pagden** Scott **Sagan** Kenneth **Waltz** Michael **Scheuer** Nicholas **Carr** David **Kay** Gilles **Kepel** Liaquat **Ahamed** John **Nagl** David **Victor** Joost **Hiltermann** Gordon **Wood** Joseph **Stiglitz** Alistair **Horne** Khalil **Shikaki** David **Rieff** Richard **Clarke** Milton **Bearden** Joseph **Ellis** Ian **Buruma** Ryan **Crocker** Anthony **Grafton**

The Thinker's Guide to Foreign Policy

www.NationalInterest.org