Subject: Data on children's living and care arrangements
Posted by Better Care Network on Sat, 12 Apr 2014 00:21:34 GMT
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DHS data has enormous potential to inform policies and interventions targeting children at risk of separation from their families as well as children living outside of family care, however, currently this potential is not being realized. A key barrier is that in most cases the data that would be useful, such as data on children's living arrangements, survival status of parent, and relationship to the head of the household, is not extracted and presented systematically in national reports.

The fact that this data is available and, in most cases already collected under the DHS core questionnaire but not extracted or analyzed systematically, points to an immediate need that can be relatively easily addressed without major investment of resources or time. What is lacking at this stage is clear guidance for data collection agencies and data users, including national authorities, programmatic agencies, policy and research bodies as well donors, about the importance of this data and how it can be systematically extracted and used.

In December 2012, the United States Government adopted the Action Plan on Children in Adversity which made preventing unnecessary family-child separation and the promotion of appropriate family care one of 3 principal objectives of its international assistance (Objective 2). The plan also puts emphasis on broader surveillance and lists specific actions that will be taken to help harness global efforts and build capacity to achieve sustainable surveillance systems at the national level, with a particular focus "on capacity development of other governments and local organizations in the priority countries to identify and report on these three issues by promoting methodologies that produce nationally representative results comparable across countries and time." (Objective 5)

Ensuring better and more systematic mining and use of DHS data relevant to children's care and living arrangements has become crucial, not only for HIV AID prevalent countries, but for all countries seeking to strengthen their responses and systems for children facing a range of care and protection risks.

Better Care Network is also in full support of calls for the inclusion of disability questions to the DHS. Disability is a major risk factor for child-family separation and the placement of children in institutional care, whether it is disability affecting the child's caregiver or the child. Reliable disability data is critical to understanding better the links between children's care situations and living arrangements and child well-being outcomes. Without such data, policy makers, researchers, programmers, service providers and donors cannot develop or deliver effective policies and programmes to strengthen family care, prevent unnecessary child-family separation and institutionalization.