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Recommendations to World Bank Safeguard Policies

Safeguards must protect the rights of institutionalised children

Lumos is an international NGO working to end the institutionalisation of children. We work to transform education, health and social care systems for children and their families and help children move from institutions to family-based care.

Approximately **eight million children** in the world live in large-scale residential institutions. More than **90% of these children are not orphans** and have living parents known to the authorities.

Sixty years of research demonstrates that institutionalisation seriously harms the health, development and future life chances of children¹. Many countries have developed alternatives to institutionalisation that result in much better outcomes for children.

Poverty and institutionalisation

There is a strong link between poverty and institutionalisation. A lack of sufficient financial support for families with children **increases the risk of institutionalisation**. This is more pronounced for children with disabilities or those from Roma ethnic origin. Studies consistently demonstrate that young people raised in institutions have much poorer outcomes than their peers raised in families. They are at a much greater risk of **unemployment and homelessness**, sexual exploitation and trafficking and even suicide.

Human rights and institutionalisation

Living in an institution is a breach of the fundamental human rights of these children. The **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)** states that “for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality” the child should “grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding”.

The **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)** requires States to ensure that people with disabilities have access to community services “necessary to support living and inclusion in the community; and to prevent isolation or segregation from the community” (Art. 19).

¹ European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care (2012), Common European Guidelines on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care, Brussels, pp 47

Alternative to institutionalisation

The alternative to institutionalisation is to provide **quality family and community based services**. This includes the development of inclusive and accessible universal services, so that children with disabilities can receive health and education services whilst remaining in their families and communities. Further targeted **health, education and social services** are also required for children with specific needs. This allows children to grow up in a caring family environment where their individual needs are taken into account and met. Evidence shows that **babies can recover completely** from the damage caused by institutionalisation as long as they are placed in families **before the age of six months**.

World Bank Safeguard Policies

The current World Bank safeguard policies for investment lending contain no explicit protections for the rights of children and prevention of further institutionlisation.

Since the Bank's "environmental and social ("safeguard") policies are designed to avoid, mitigate, or minimize adverse environmental and social impacts of projects supported by the Bank"² it is crucial that policies address the deinstitutionalisation of children and contribute to improving their lives. Lumos would welcome the inclusion of the following actions:

- In countries with a high reliance on institutional care, supporting governments to develop national action plans for reforming health, education and social services for children and families, with a specific focus on transition from institutional to community based care.
- In countries with a lack of community and family based services for children, supporting the development of services that do not include reliance on institutions or "orphanage" care.
- Supporting countries to amend legislation and regulation to ensure full compliance with UNCRC, UNCRPD and international best practices and standards.
- Supporting cost benefit analyses and other research which strengthens the case for reform.
- Work with ministries of finance to assist them in redirecting resources from expensive but poor quality institutional care to more efficient, higher quality family and community based services.
- Development of services which support the families and provision of foster care
- Funding the specialised personnel to manage the process of transforming and developing community based services
- Training policy makers, managers, architects, planners and builders on person-centred planning for community based services (so that those who are responsible for

² The World Bank website:
<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/PROJECTS/EXTPOLICIES/EXTOPMANUAL/0,,contentMDK:20403230~menuPK:64701637~pagePK:64709096~piPK:64709108~theSitePK:502184,00.html>



designing and planning new buildings know how to base their designs around the needs and wishes of the service users).

- Adaptation of schools to accommodate inclusive education practices (for example this might include adding disabled access and designing specific spaces for one to one teaching or specialised activities for autistic children)
- Adaptation of hospitals and community health clinics to ensure access to the most vulnerable children and their families (for example, adding disabled access, facilities for parents to room in with children, ensuring all maternity hospitals have rooming in and do not separate children from their mothers at birth; child-friendly spaces in hospitals/clinics; spaces for training and counselling parents of vulnerable children etc)

It is important to note that the construction of new institutional settings and reconstruction or renovation of the existing institutions represents a breach of the UNCRC and UNCRPD.

The Bank must ensure that the support it provides to its borrowers is used in a way that further enhances children's fundamental rights and welfare. Deinstitutionalisation is a key tool for achieving this.

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