Well-Being of the World’s Children

Summary of Proceedings

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Trafalgar Square
London, England
CIFAR brings together outstanding researchers to work in global networks that address some of the most important questions our world faces today. Our research is focused on improving human health, transforming technology, building strong societies and sustaining the Earth. Established in 1982, CIFAR is comprised of nearly 400 fellows, scholars and advisers from more than 130 institutions in 17 countries.

The CIFAR Forum on the Well-Being of the World’s Children was an intensive two-day discussion that brought together preeminent researchers, practitioners, and public officials from universities, NGOs, international organizations, and from the public and private sectors to explore a broad set of topics related to child well-being. The Forum stimulated dynamic dialogue between multidisciplinary, multi-sectoral participants.

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CIFAR is supported by the governments of Canada, British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and Quebec, and by Canadian and international partners, as well as by individuals, foundations and corporations.

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Executive Summary

Building on our legacy of research into early child development and the social determinants of health, CIFAR held the Forum on the Well-Being of the World’s Children (the Forum) November 17-19 2016 at Canada House in London. Representing diverse perspectives and subject matter expertise, more than 100 participants from academia and the public and private sectors exchanged ideas through plenary lectures and breakout groups. CIFAR believes that interdisciplinary approaches to intractable global challenges can accelerate progress. In holding the Forum, CIFAR’s goal was to identify research questions that could ultimately mitigate intergenerational cycles of disadvantage and inequity that prevent children around the globe from growing up to realize their full potential. To that end, CIFAR organized the Forum to:

1) Generate substantive insights on the important questions and priority challenges that can be addressed through an interdisciplinary global research network, and

2) Build a coalition of partners who are well-positioned to help CIFAR define how best to sustain future support of research related to child well-being.

The Forum was structured around three overarching themes:

1) Dynamic experiences of childhood adversity
2) Complex determinants of child development
3) Protecting and promoting child well-being through policies and systems

For each theme, prominent speakers were invited to set the stage for interactive group discussions. Participants identified gaps in current research and potential interdisciplinary approaches to address these gaps. A summary of those discussions is provided in this report. The following are some of the predominant insights that emerged:

• **Priority research challenges require a holistic conception of child well-being.** The Forum identified diverse and important challenges that require interdisciplinary research attention. To better understand and ultimately address these complex challenges in global child well-being, it was agreed that there is a need to look, in an interdisciplinary way, at the interactions and connections among the biological, environmental and psycho/socio/economic variables of development and how they interact over time, and to examine the enablers of well-being, not just the deficits and risks.

• **A clear global consensus on child well-being would promote partnerships for research and action.** There is an opportunity to articulate a global consensus on what is a reasonable ‘level’ of child well-being that cuts across contexts. This could become an organizing mechanism for more contextual research and would help to determine if there are grand-challenge questions that are globally relevant. It could also clearly communicate levels of adversity to decision-makers and help hold them accountable through, for example, development of an index and/or report card with common metrics.
• **To respond to today's global challenges, new research approaches and methodologies are needed.** There is a significant evidence gap with regard to long-term effects; researchers may understand what works to alleviate hardship but know less about the long-term impact of those interventions. Given the complex and intergenerational variables that impact child well-being, the research community should prioritize the creation of effective longitudinal studies to understand processes and dynamics across time. Further, it is necessary to improve, scale-up and accelerate the delivery of intervention strategies by learning how to measure and address the adversity facing children at a larger, societal scale while still understanding and reacting to contextual differences. This includes determining how different intervention strategies interact with one another and how some interventions impact - and may actually exacerbate - other risks and factors; how to transform isolated interventions targeted at individuals into integrated, bundled approaches; and how to iterate approaches before all research results are in.

• **Collaboration, coordination and information sharing are required to address the challenges related to global child well-being.** Understanding and addressing the multi-faceted and interconnected factors associated with child well-being hinges on finding better ways of working together and on the sharing of information. Currently, collaboration between researchers is, for the most part, serendipitous and unplanned, particularly across disciplinary boundaries. Researchers also need to learn how to engage with policy makers and other stakeholders from the outset to inform the development of research agendas and ensure they are invested in using the outcomes. The Forum was an important, intentional opportunity to build connections and foster more collaboration both within and outside of the research community.

This report summarizes the discussion from the Forum in the following four sections: Priority research questions and global challenges; Research frameworks and methodologies; Agenda setting; and Opportunities for partnership.

For CIFAR, the Forum provided an opportunity to bring together leaders from academia, civil society, and government to discuss questions of profound importance to the world. Building on the coalition of partners, researchers, and other stakeholders from the Forum and elsewhere, CIFAR will:

• Hold an open call for research workshops under the theme of global child-well-being in March 2017.
• Hold a Global Call for Ideas in late 2017 and include a targeted call related to the well-being of the world’s children.
• Support CIFAR’s current research programs that provide an opportunity for interdisciplinary inquiry into complex questions related to well-being.

For more information about the Forum and to learn about next steps, please visit: [https://www.cifar.ca/events/forum-child-well-being/](https://www.cifar.ca/events/forum-child-well-being/)
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The CIFAR Forum on the Well-being of the World’s Children was held at Canada House in London from November 17-19, 2016. A central aim of the Forum was to identify gaps in the research agenda related to child well-being that may point toward new interdisciplinary approaches complementary to CIFAR’s goal of supporting long-term research networks centred on questions of global importance.

Forum participants were drawn from a cross-section of academia, government, business, and civil society, representing many different facets of research and practice on child well-being. Experts on children’s rights, cognitive development, demographics, developmental psychology, economic policy, child health, neurodevelopment, and public policy, amongst others, participated.

Following three plenary panel presentations, participants were encouraged to think beyond their own immediate areas of expertise. A series of breakout groups were designed to identify points of convergence and synergy, as well as new opportunities at the intersection of theory and practice. The most prominent themes discussed at the Forum are highlighted in the sections that follow. Under each theme, there are also representative questions identified by Forum participants as promising areas that an interdisciplinary research agenda on child well-being might consider.
Priority Research Questions & Global Challenges

Inspired by the presenters and the panel discussions, participants articulated important and urgent challenges in global child well-being to help inform an interdisciplinary research agenda. A summary of those discussions and the questions that arose under overarching thematic areas is provided below.

DEFINING ‘GLOBAL’ CHILD WELL-BEING

Forum participants discussed the challenge of articulating a comprehensive definition for child well-being that responds to diverse, geographically disparate contexts. Several participants commented that a lack of clarity on child well-being across diverse settings and cultures is a significant barrier to moving research forward. In particular, participants noted that:

• There is a need to clarify universal principles and requirements for achieving well-being and ensuring children thrive. Within this context, participants asked:
  » How can working towards a shared understanding of well-being support the identification of specific outcomes that can be measured globally?
  » How would a universal definition of child well-being promote a better understanding of both adversity and resilience, including defining a hierarchy of adversities faced by children around the world?
  » Given the challenge of connecting a global definition of child well-being to local contexts, how do we better connect relevant meso-level processes, micro-level interventions, and broader macro conditions?

LIFE-COURSE APPROACH TO CHILD DEVELOPMENT

A life-course approach to studying child development could provide a more holistic and complete picture for researchers. By conceptualizing child development across the life course, researchers may be better able to make connections between biological, environmental, psychological, social, and economic factors that impact child well-being. Participants noted that:

• Research and interventions aimed at understanding and improving early child development must be closely linked to efforts to promote positive development during adolescence.
How can research better understand variables related to children in the 5-15 age group?

How do variables within this period of time impact developmental trajectories between infancy, adolescence, and beyond?

There is growing interest in understanding how development during youth and adolescence affects a person’s capabilities and life chances.

How do the developmental needs of children change as they get older? How can research better understand brain plasticity during adolescence?

How can social-emotional skills be better promoted during adolescence?

What is the impact of urbanization on behaviour during adolescence?

What is the developmental impact on children when their parents are adolescents? How can adolescents be better prepared for pregnancy and parenthood?

The variables that impact child development are intergenerational. There is a need for more longitudinal studies that follow cohorts over generations to more fully understand and demonstrate the developmental, longitudinal, and ecological variables that influence child well-being.

How can researchers better study the root of determinants of child well-being that are intergenerational and can only be understood over time?

How do definitions of “childhood” and a child’s role in society change between and within generations?

For indigenous children, how do intergenerational variables within families and communities interact with colonial structures to impact their well-being?

PREVENTION, PROTECTION & RESILIENCE

A research agenda on resilience and prevention for children could be further expanded to include questions about how and why many children continue to thrive in the face of risks, vulnerabilities, and adversity. Given this, there is potential for more research on resilience to close knowledge gaps about how to cope with adversity as well as the potential for more research on “positive deviance.” In particular, participants noted that:
• It is important to focus beyond health promotion to include protective factors to safeguard against adverse experiences. The research community needs to focus on outcome measures related to thriving, not just being “good enough”.
  » How can parental and societal understandings of prevention of the negative impacts on child well-being be increased?
  » How are understandings of the positive behaviours that improve child well-being promoted in society?
  » What are the social and biological factors that allow some children to thrive?
• There is a need to better understand how resilience and protection might look different in different strata of children (e.g. middle-class children, high-risk children, etc.).
  » What confers protection from adversity in these different groups? Why do some kids thrive while others do not?
  » Can genetic polymorphism confer risk or protection?
  » Should resilience and protection be thought of mostly in the psychosocial domain?
  » Does resilience live inside and (or) outside the child?
  » How can the capacity for self-soothing be developed?
  » At what points do children need high-intensity care?
• More research is needed to explore the role of broader social structures in promoting or inhibiting prevention, protection or resilience in children.
  » How does culture impact child development? How do invisible structures and informal institutions (e.g. non-traditional childcare) impart protection, or not?
  » What are the epigenetic and socio-economic factors across contexts involved in protection or resilience and which are context specific?

IDENTITY
The intersection between identity creation and child development offers potential opportunities to expand understandings of well-being. In particular, participants noted that:

• The impact of gender and gender roles on a child’s developmental trajectory is an area of research that presents opportunities for continued study, including:
  » How do we better understand the relationship between gender roles, gender identity, and the impact of early sex education?
  » What is the role of men, fathers, and discrimination against boys in a child’s early years? How do these factors impact on the dynamics of gender in society?
  » How do dynamics of gender interact with different contexts and with other adverse circumstances (e.g. economic, race/ethnicity)?
  » How early in life does sexual dimorphism begin?
  » What are the patterns or contradictions in cultural sensitivities to gender differences?
• Other facets of identity were brought forward as important considerations for further research, including identities that may lead to experiences of exclusion and discrimination.
  » How do racial and ethnic identities promote or inhibit child well-being and in what contexts are these protective or adverse factors for development?
  » What is the role of the parent and/or the family in transmitting values and iden-
tity to their children? How do these values and identity change as a child ages?

» What is the impact of acceptance or discrimination on child well-being and development?

» How do community or tribal structures promote or inhibit child well-being?

» What is the role of culture, including language and attachment patterns, on child well-being?

» What is the impact of social values or social cohesion on attachment, nurturing, and belonging?

» How do wealth and status (absolute and relative) relate to identity development and child well-being?

DISABILITY

Disability in childhood is an understudied aspect of child well-being globally. In particular, participants noted that:

• Researchers can make progress towards better understanding the impact of early childhood development (ECD) interventions for children with special needs. Generally speaking, disability issues are not well integrated into ECD interventions and children with mild- or mid-range disabilities often do not get the services that they need.

• More research is needed to understand individual differences of children with special needs. This includes increasingly specialized implementation and interventions that take into account differences within this group.

  » How can research better understand the impact of the family/household on the well-being of children with disabilities?

  » How are children with disabilities included in a classroom?

  » What is the experience of social inclusion for children with disabilities and what are the impacts of peer interactions and/or bullying on their overall well-being?

DISRUPTION

There are many disruptive factors in children’s lives, globally, including the global refugee crisis, the rising risk of displacement due to climate change, and the dynamics of urbanization and economic migration, amongst others. Some issues raised at the Forum include:

• Urbanization: Increasing urbanization, changes in living conditions and increasing population density alter roles within families and communities. Specific questions posed by Forum participants include:

  » What is the impact of urbanization throughout the child’s life course? For example, how is adolescent development impacted by changing living conditions such as limited recreational space?

  » What is the impact of changing living conditions on child well-being, particularly for those living in urban slums?

  » What are the protective elements and negative effects of urbanization for children and youth?

  » How does culture interact with urbanization and what does this mean for children’s developmental trajectories?

  » How do forces of urbanization impact indigenous children who leave their communities? Inversely, what is the impact for those who stay?
• **Migration:** The impact of migration on children at various stages of development is understudied. Immigration and migration are complex and varied phenomena (e.g. economic or climate migrants, political refugees, internally displaced persons) and the consequences for children are not well understood. Considerations for further research include:
  » Children who have been displaced are often “invisible” or are hard to access. How can studies be designed to better represent these populations?
  » What are the lifelong effects of being an unregistered child within a state?
  » What are the intergenerational impacts of trauma experienced by families who have fled conflict?
  » What are the consequences of climate change and displacement for children and their families?
  » What are the consequences for children left behind when parents migrate in search of employment?

• **Violence:** Violence and trauma have significant impacts on child well-being. Given the challenge of studying populations experiencing violence, abuse, and trauma, research is required to better understand outcomes for children in these settings. For example:
  » What are the mechanisms of intergenerational transmission of trauma?
  » How can the research community work to develop a better understanding (socially and biologically) of how trauma is transmitted between generations (e.g. holocaust survivors) so that interventions can be more effective?
  » What are the developmental and well-being variables and mechanisms within societies that shape how war and conflict impact children? What are the protective elements in society that promote positive outcomes for children after they have experienced violence?
  » How can research better understand abuse, bullying, and cyberbullying directed at or between children and family members?
TECHNOLOGY & CONNECTIVITY

The rapid development and diffusion of technology can be beneficial and also detrimental to child well-being and as such, may present new areas of research. In particular, participants noted:

» What is technology’s causal role in child development? For example, what are children not doing when they watch TV and what is the impact of this on their developmental trajectories?

» What are the positive and negative effects of the types of increased connectivity created by social media, in mental and physical health, brain development, behaviour, etc.?

» How do new technologies impact a child who presents with adversity as opposed to a child who does not?

» What is the role of technology in the development of social relationships and attachment?

» In what ways could technology help better connect children and adolescents when human contact is lacking or not possible?

» What are the impacts (positive and negative) of peer attachments made through technology?

» How might access to technology lead to forms of adversity?

» What are the consequences of being denied access to internet and communication technologies?

» How could technology be used to help advance healthy brain development across diverse settings?

EDUCATION

Participants discussed education as a complex determinant of child well-being. Participants recognized that schooling can both promote and hinder positive learning and well-being outcomes for children throughout their life course. In particular, participants noted:

• Schooling in many contexts does not meet the needs for skills development that could have a positive impact on employability.

  » How can curricula better equip students with skills to match workforce demands? How can there be greater interaction with a broader range of actors (such as employers) in the development of curricula in different contexts?

  » How can children learn skills for the digital age?

• Similarly, life skills that could be taught in schools (e.g. fundamentals of good parenting, basic financial management, health and sexual education) are often not taught. It may frequently be the case that life skills training comes too late in life for it to be most useful. Research is needed to clarify what are the essential skills and the most impactful time at which to introduce them.

  » How can teachers feel better prepared to teach life and social skills in the classroom? Can this be addressed as part of teacher training curricula?

• Further questions for consideration include:

  » How can the formal education system be better used by researchers to take advantage of opportunities to observe children, disseminate information, and teach protective life skills?

  » How can learning and schooling outcomes be enhanced across different, often unstable, contexts? What is the relationship between learning outcomes and conflict/insecurity?
**CHILD HEALTH**

Discussion at the Forum addressed the varied and complex determinants of a child’s health and how this is related to overall well-being, from pre-conception to adolescence and beyond. Health at the Forum was conceptualized broadly, including physical health, mental health, brain development, and nutrition.

- **Physical Health:** Participants at the Forum discussed the complex variables that contribute positively or negatively to the overall physical health of children throughout their early years and into adolescence. In particular, birth asphyxia and early neonatal insults require more research to understand the sources of variability in outcomes among these groups. Also, non-communicable diseases in children require greater attention in low- to middle-income countries.
  - What needs to be done to better understand co-morbidities present for the world’s most vulnerable children?
  - How and why are children born preterm at high risk of developing other conditions throughout their lives?

- **Mental Health:** A global rise in mental illness among children and young people should be a priority for research given the close connection between mental health and overall well-being. Questions posed throughout the Forum include:
  - How can research better understand the interaction between maternal mental health and child well-being?
  - How can research evaluate the proliferation of untested mobile applications for mental health? What works, what doesn’t, in what context?
  - How can research make gains in understanding mental health needs of vulnerable groups in complex settings such as refugee camps?
  - How can mental health and social/emotional learning be promoted in schools?

- **Brain Development & Neuroscience:** Forum participants discussed how brain development is greatly understudied in low- to middle-income countries. Given established knowledge on the interconnections between brain development, cultural contexts, and external conditions (such as stimulation, nutrition), participants noted that there is a need for research into whether it is possible to extrapolate what constitutes “normal” brain development across multiple contexts.
  - How are cultural differences and experiential differences woven into the brain and how does this impact brains differently in different contexts?
  - What can be done to influence brain development at scale? How can brain science and related interventions be integrated into other approaches to promoting child well-being, such as with vertical programs like immunization?

- **Nutrition:** Participants at the Forum discussed research opportunities related to the impact of absolute and relative access to food and nutrition on child health and overall well-being. In particular:
  - What can be learned about the correlation between microbes and nutrition for children across different contexts? What does this look like in a ‘developed’ country context and how does this differ across geographies and income levels globally?
  - How do changes in agricultural production across the globe impact child health and development?
  - How can appropriate nutrition be delivered to children? How can service providers better identify what nutrition is needed?
HEALTH SYSTEMS

Forum participants discussed the role of health systems in promoting positive outcomes for a child’s health and overall well-being. It was noted that increasing access to health services does not necessarily promote the best outcomes for the most vulnerable children. In particular:

• Research can further explore which policies and programs make the biggest difference (positive or negative) for children within the health system.
  » What are the entry points of care for children within the health system and how can these best be leveraged for multi-sectoral interventions to promote positive well-being outcomes?

• More research is needed to know how community health centres and health workers can better serve rapidly changing communities and how overall health systems can be more responsive to rapid urbanization.
  » How can low- to middle-income countries create health systems that are resilient to crisis (e.g. pandemics, economic crisis, and migration)?

POLITICAL ECONOMY

Throughout the Forum, discussions recognized that the implementation of child well-being programs and policies is fundamentally political. The political economy of childhood presents several priority topics for investigation by researchers, including:

• Given that cost effectiveness is a key driver in prioritization, better tools and more rigorous assessment of the cost effectiveness of inaction, research, interventions, and policy are needed.
  » How can research focus on the economics of interventions, while also finding a new way of assessing “value” in terms of well-being (e.g. by prioritizing the future potential of children)?
Research should seek to better understand and calculate the cost and benefit of past interventions, the projected financial impact of interventions (including unlocking children’s potential), and the cost and benefits of inaction.

> What are the political incentives for financing and allocating funds to different priority areas related to children? What variables and mechanisms shape incentives across and/or between countries? For example, what are the implications of the increasing societal focus and funding to support aging populations, and how might this negatively impact the focus on and resources for children?

There is a need for the research community to focus not only on public policies but on the policies and practices set by the private sector in relation to children.

> How are governments and other decision makers persuaded to buy in to interventions to promote child well-being? In particular, what is the consequence of state retrenchment and an unregulated corporate sector?

Research is needed that focuses on the power and influence of international organizations in shaping national-level politics vis-à-vis children that highlights power structures at the population, community, and individual levels.
In the discussion of important research questions, participants also highlighted the need for the research community to develop new research approaches and frameworks in order to adequately tackle these global challenges. A summary of these considerations is provided below.

**METHODOLOGY**

Throughout the Forum, participants explored various methodological and measurement challenges that need to be addressed in order to move research into the well-being of the world’s children forward. Participants noted that:

- There is a need for more meta-analysis and systemic review. The synthesis of existing knowledge can help to answer the question “where is the evidence currently.”
- There is a need to incorporate well-being indicators into commonly used measurement, costing, and efficacy tools. The indicators must be culturally appropriate and accurate.
- Research needs to address ethical issues around research with children, including how ethics boards can become obstacles even to non-invasive approaches.
- The research community can better gather evidence on long-term effects. Researchers have a good understanding of what works to alleviate hardship but know very little about the long-term impact of those interventions.
  - How can research methods effectively demonstrate the connections between biological, environmental and psycho/socio/economic factors?
  - How can longitudinal studies be designed to support a more holistic view of well-being across multiple generations and the life course?
  - What can be done to promote better understanding of the heterogeneity issues of human developmental trajectories (e.g. critical periods for intervention, resilience, and positive deviance)?
- There are significant methodological gaps in how intersectionality research is undertaken.
  - What are some possible empirical ways of developing and conceptualizing questions and collecting data to better integrate micro and macro level variables?
  - How can research measure and address adversity of children at a larger, societal scale while still understanding and reacting to contextual differences?
  - What methods can be developed for gathering evidence that allows for rele-
vant comparison between the generic and contextual levels? How can research
designs integrate/nest the local into global and global into local?

• Additional measurement and methodological considerations include:
  » How can research explore the impacts of concurrent interventions more effec-
tively (e.g. parenting support and income support)?
  » How can research designs better address change and uncertainty? For exam-
ple, the effects on children of climate change, increasingly powerful technology,
growing up without hope of employment, etc.
  » What innovative methods can be adopted from other disciplines traditionally
found outside the child well-being domain?
  » How can research studies and publications better account for “process” within
their findings and discussion?

COLLABORATION & DATA SHARING
Forum participants reflected on the opportunities and challenges of promoting collab-
orations between researchers globally that are engaged in the area of child well-being.
Included in this is the role of data sharing, so that information is better coordinated and
synergistic. Participants noted that:

• It is crucial to provide adequate attention and funding to inter- or transdisciplinary
research efforts, recognizing the complex challenges of integrating different scien-
tific cultures. For example, there is a need to increase opportunities for neuroscience
research in developing countries, including integrating neuroscience into broader
research programs.
• It might be useful to explore including the private sector in research partnerships,
particularly given the incentive the sector has to deliver outcomes quickly.
• Collaborative cohesion in research, particularly “pragmatic research”, is needed. Cur-
rently, collaboration among researchers is most often serendipitous and unplanned.
Researchers have disincentives to collaborate (e.g. lack of awareness of other ex-
pertise, tight deadlines, and strict parameters on use of funds). There is a need for
multi-centre studies that pool resources over a long period of time.
• Across all fields of inquiry, there is a need to learn more from existing data and to
gather data in a way that lends itself to sharing. This should include integrating and
drawing more from existing data sets (e.g. the UK Economic and Social Research
Council and the Ping Project) and better utilization of existing data/big data oppor-
tunities (e.g. children enrolled in various programs). Data sharing is invaluable, as
data pooling allows for the emergence of new hypotheses.
• Data sharing is not restricted to scientific research but is also related to incentives,
priorities, and approaches to working with policy makers and funders.
• There should be a sensitive and complementary engagement with big data, not as a
substitute for population-based data, but as a new model for data sharing and anal-
ysis. Also, there is a need for better data about prevalence and interventions. Use of
technology and big data may require including geographers and other specialists on
research teams.
• There also needs to be a better understanding of who should do the research, where,
how, and under what circumstances. This could allow for capacity building within
countries.
Participants discussed the opportunities and challenges for establishing a global research agenda related to the well-being of the world’s children with the potential to contribute toward evidence-informed policy making as well as more efficacious programs implemented by NGOs and others. The following provides an overview of some of the topics that emerged related to supporting international action; improving implementation science; and promoting knowledge mobilization.

**SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL ACTION**

- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a 15 year framework, offering an opportunity for longer term research projects (e.g. an agenda targeted to identifying the barriers to achieving the SDGs and the research required to make the SDGs more attainable).
  - For example, research could focus on SDG 4.1: “...by 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes”.
- Articulating a common theory of change could allow for the prioritization of research questions that could be holistic and solutions driven.
  - A common international agenda could be developed around two themes: (1) measurement (to help with the development of cross national data sets); and (2) cost effectiveness of models.
  - However, there is a danger that a common/global theory of change could lead to the implementation of one particular knowledge base that is blind to cultural and contextual sensitivities.
  - This requires efforts, through research, towards developing a shared understanding of child well-being that would support the identification of specific outcomes that can be measured globally.
- A research agenda should be inclusive of local communities, NGOs, children, policy makers, and others.
- The need to incorporate children’s voices, their priorities for research, and their own perception of well-being is critical to designing efficient and effective policies and programs. For example, in conflict zones researchers tend to focus on issues such as PTSD, but children are focused on things like school and sanitation.
IMPROVING IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE

Participants at the Forum discussed how research can help to move implementation science from a focus on efficacy to effectiveness, at the right scale, across the full range of heterogeneous contexts. Broadly, participants discussed:

• There is a need to systematically profile communities so that similar interventions can be matched with similar communities. This includes the creation demonstration projects that illustrate an effective integrated approach.

• There is a critical need to learn more about scaling up successful interventions while recognizing that interventions will impact each other, and that the broader they are, the more complicating factors exist.
  » How can different intervention strategies interact? How is it possible to bundle interventions together? Do some interventions exacerbate other risks/factors? How can research better understand how to utilize existing platforms and existing delivery systems?
  » What is the consequence of task-shifting (including the burden on lay workers) for how services are delivered efficiently and effectively?
  » What are the features of and barriers to effective intervention (e.g. within the enabling environment) and why do certain interventions work better?

KNOWLEDGE TRANSLATION & COMMUNICATION

Participants at the Forum noted that there is a general need within the research community to better share the information already available and to re-think how to move from evidence to action. In particular, participants noted that:

• Researchers need to better equip themselves to make research findings friendly to different stakeholders (policy makers, funders, others). This could mean, for example, fewer references to P-values and more references to red-yellow-green indicators for action.

• The potential role of knowledge brokers needs to be better understood, including how evidence generated through science translates into action by people, policy makers, companies, and organizations.

• There is a need to foster greater communication between researchers and policy makers through visualizations. For example, there could be potential to work with computer scientists to develop algorithms and other tools that can more effectively communicate research findings.

• In addition, there is a need for the research community to listen to policy makers. For example, researchers should engage with policy makers from the outset to inform the development of research agendas and thereby to have policy makers be invested in using the outcomes. Provide them with avenues to engage with researchers and ask what questions they need answered.

• Participants noted that scientists should better understand how large-scale social change happens. For example, how the research behind smoking and seatbelt use in the United States was mobilized to change policy.

• Collaboration across stakeholder groups was highlighted as a possible means of effective knowledge translation. For example, climate negotiators and researchers convened a year before a major negotiation to understand the negotiators’ questions. This resulted in some translation of existing knowledge and some new research, but all of it was immediately utilized.

• Further questions for consideration regarding knowledge mobilization include:
  » What do we do with evidence that changes politics, behaviours, and interventions that organizations carry out/manifest? How does it translate into new or amended interventions?
  » How much evidence is needed before one can implement and later scale up? Who is accountable for that process? Researchers? Governments? NGOs?
At the Forum, participants discussed the barriers they face in efforts to produce transformative research breakthroughs. Arguably, the most significant barrier discussed amongst the participants is the constraint imposed by funding that supports research on relatively short time horizons (e.g., 2-3 years). Participants expressed that there is little flexibility in current research funding to encourage or even allow for truly interdisciplinary thinking. An additional challenge is that many funding organizations are focused on children’s health, making it more difficult to find support for research on broader topics related to child well-being.

Given the complex questions posed throughout the Forum, participants noted that future research efforts should be encouraged to require multiple disciplinary perspectives and, correspondingly, funders should prioritize these collaborative networks. Further, in order for the research in this area to have impact, researchers need support to ensure their findings have exposure to relevant stakeholders (e.g., policy makers, civil society) outside of academia.

CIFAR held a Partners’ roundtable immediately following the Forum to build upon these conversations. This provided an opportunity for NGOs, foundations, and government funders to further discuss the more prominent themes brought up throughout the meeting. Led by Sir Mark Walport, Chief Scientific Adviser to the UK Government, the discussion reflected on how these complex research questions brought forward during the Forum connect with emerging priorities at the organizations represented at the table. It was noted that this conversation will be integral to informing post-Forum activities, including the formation of research workshops that could lead to a potential global call for proposals to launch a new research network.

Roundtable participants identified the following priority questions as being of most direct relevance to the individual mandates of their respective organizations:

» How can there be a global consensus on what is a reasonable level of child well-being? How does this account for equity and equality at different scales?

» How should the SDGs be integrated into the research agenda for child well-being to ensure mutual benefit in advancing knowledge and practice?

» Is there utility for the development of global metrics intended to promote child well-being that would encourage deeper relationships between academia, government, and civil society?
» How can methodology support the drive toward understanding local conditions while also illuminating broader context?

» How can local voices be better integrated into methodologies and studies related to child well-being?

» How can the impact of studies be maximized? How can available data be maximized? For example, the dataset of 1.4 million children through PLAN International’s database.

» How can longitudinal studies better contribute to understandings of child well-being?

» How can the cost of longitudinal studies be reduced?

» What can be done to better understand the process of moving scientific evidence towards policy application?

» How can interventions and programs achieve quality at scale?
Conclusion

The CIFAR Forum on the Well-being of the World’s Children brought together a diverse group of leaders committed to better understanding and addressing the important global challenge of child well-being. At CIFAR, we recognize that addressing the multi-faceted and interconnected factors associated with child well-being depends on finding better ways of working together across disciplines, sectors, and borders. The Forum helped to build connections, share information and perspectives, and foster collaboration and cooperation. Our hope is that the Forum and this report on its proceedings will inform and inspire researchers, policy makers, business, and civil society leaders around the world to work together.

For CIFAR, the Forum laid the foundation for building a coalition of partners to take this important work forward. CIFAR will:

- Hold an open call for research workshops under the theme of global child-well-being. These workshops are intended to explore key questions of global importance that can best be addressed through interdisciplinary, international teams. They are for short-term, time-limited interactions of 10 to 20 people. For more information, please visit: https://www.cifar.ca/assets/researchworkshops/
- Hold a Global Call for Ideas. A global call for new research programs will be held in late 2017 and will include a targeted call related to the well-being of the world’s children.
- Support CIFAR’s current research programs that provide an opportunity for interdisciplinary inquiry into complex questions in well-being. Many CIFAR Fellows are working on research questions related to child-well-being. They include Fellows and Advisors in CIFAR programs in Child & Brain Development; Institutions Organizations & Growth; Social Interactions, Identity & Well-being; and Successful Societies.
- Disseminate this report to the global community committed to research and action on child health and well-being and create opportunities to connect researchers, stakeholders, and partners in government, business, and civil society to explore opportunities to work together to address this complex global challenge.

CIFAR would like to thank all of the individuals and supporters who made the Forum possible. For more information about the Forum’s leadership, proceedings and funders, please visit: www.cifar.ca/events/forum-child-well-being/