Permanency is Not Enough
  - Permanency can be found in Institutions, Foster Care, Dysfunctional Families that commit abuse and neglect: these are not good for children even if permanent
  - Kids need Parenting to flourish: yes Permanent Parenting, and from early on

How further the goal of providing Permanent Parenting for children worldwide? What strategies to get from here – millions of Unparented, millions in Institutions – to there? International Adoption should be part of the solution: only a part yes, but could be a significant part: 40,000 at peak but could easily multiply by 10 or 100
  - Dramatic difference for those 40,000 to 4 million lives
  - Cost free to Governments; doesn’t divert resources but actually adds to resources for kids not adopted

How Strategize to Make IA work for kids – work to provide maximum number of homes?
  - Recognize IA in trouble: drop from 2004 to date by half
Maintain Hope for the future of IA: No reason to give up and assume IA dying out. If IA is right for children need fight for it. And MEPA as example of how can turn policy dramatically around. And example of how fighting for what thought was right even if many thought our position extreme prevailed in the end.

Work together – those who believe in IA -- as a community. We are a fragile, small, weak group – can’t afford to be divided.

Fight together for core principles – don’t compromise on what should be recognized as Kids basic human rights to grow up with Parents.

Resist the temptation to give in to those who argue that children necessarily belong to their birth parents or to their countries of origin regardless of whether those parents or countries can care for them --
  o It’s easy to give in, because children incarcerated in institutions are not able to speak up for themselves to say that they would actually prefer to grow up with loving parents –
  o We have to stand strong and speak out for these silent children
  o We have to reject false romanticism about how always best for kids to stay in country where can enjoy birth heritage. We know better.

The Families for Orphans Legislation: Draft bill in Congress, some of us have urged revisions, see Packet here; why do we feel important and urge Adoption Community to come together on this revised proposed bill:
  o Agree with Sponsors – FFO Coalition – that much in the original bill could make a difference, esp having a new office in DOS dedicated to promoting families for orphans
But feel that for this bill to help not hurt, key to clarify that IA shld NOT be seen as last last resort:
clarify that priority goals should be:
- Family Preservation & Reunification yes but only to degree serve BIC
- Legal Guardianship and Kinship Foster Care – the Bill’s new “Permanency” options – only to degree that in individual cases actually serve BIC
- Adoption as general priority (not Legal Guard or Kinship FCare) when Fam Pres/Reun not appropriate
- IA as well as Domestic Adoption – yes preference for Domestic because Hague Convention says so but ONLY if pursued through Concurrent Planning strategy

My hope we can go forward together as united Adoption Community, recognizing the strength of the Sponsors’ inspiration in proposing this bill, but strengthening it so it serves Kids’ interests in getting not just Permanency but Parents.

In conclusion, 3 stories from the past week to bolster our courage and strengthen our skepticism about claims that in-country options are always best for children.
- One is an online news article by someone who runs a children’s home in Nepal who questions the priority given to family preservation by those opposing IA: he states that 90% of the kids in the home he runs are there because new step parents have thrown them out or abused them; he states these kids would be at risk if reunited for maltreatment at home for sale into slavery. And yet, some would say that family preservation and reunification
should always be the first priority without regard to whether they serve BIC.

- One is a story sent me by a professor at school of social work, Katherine Tyson, who with her husband adopted twin Mayan boys from Guatemala. The birth mother was so anxious to give her twins a better life that she filmed a video so that there could be no doubt about her consent. The twins were born healthy but because of delays due to the impending moratorium on international adoption the twins were almost a year old by the time the adoption could go through, and by then one of the boys was lying in a coma at the hospital with meningitis destroying his brain cells. They were told this child would never be able to function at all assuming he even lived — never swallow or eat on own, never talk or walk. The child is now back with them in the U.S., able at age 3 because of the intense care they have given him to walk and even run with leg braces, to communicate even if not yet talk, and to laugh and play with his twin. Had he had appropriate medical care, including basic vaccinations, he would never have contracted meningitis. Had his adoption not been delayed — had he been placed at 6 months rather than 12 months — he would not have contracted meningitis. Had he stayed in Guatemala once he had meningitis he almost certainly would have died or been so destroyed as to have no meaningful life. And yet, some say that priority should be given to all in-country options for children, and that we should hold children for months and years while looking to see if we can’t find some in-country home in preference to out-of-country adoption.

- Finally there is an online NYT story about informal foster care in Haiti. This is known as “Restavek” and those who know what it actually looks like say that it is often simply child slavery and not anything we would think of as parenting care. The story quotes a Haitian mother anxious
to place her children for international adoption saying she would never let them end up in a Haitian family as restaveks — “They force the child to work like an animal, they don’t really take care of them.” An estimated 173,000 children live as Restaveks in Haiti. And yet, some say that priority should be given to in-country foster care and other so-called family like options over out-of-country adoption.

For children whose birth parents cannot provide loving, nurturing parenting, social science, developmental psychology, and common sense tell us that they will as a general matter do better by far with the permanent loving parents that adoption, whether domestic or international, provides, than with any other form of alternative care however “permanent” it might be. If we care about children we need to fight for their rights to true parenting.