Procedure for Cases of Abandoned Babies at Angkor Hospital for Children: A Qualitative Evaluation
Jasmine Mojica Whitney

Abstract
Numerous studies have been conducted in multiple continents over the past several decades evidencing the negative impacts of children growing up in residential care facilities, particularly for children under the age of three years. Still, over 75% of children living in residential facilities in Cambodia have at least one living parent. Parents often choose to or are coerced into bringing their children to live in orphanages, as they believe that their children will be offered a better life there. Recognizing the need for promotion of family- and community-based care, in 2011 the social work unit at the Angkor Hospital for Children (AHC) in Siem Reap, Cambodia created a procedure for cases of abandoned babies in which the infants are ultimately reintegrated with their biological families. This study is a qualitative evaluation of AHC’s procedure. Six families - biological parents and extended relatives in which babies had been reintegrated - were interviewed, as were two foster caregivers and three staff members at AHC and partnering organization Kaliyan Mith (KM.) The purpose was to discover the families’ and children’s current conditions, as well as each subject’s perception of the procedure. The results of the evaluation show that reintegration of abandoned babies is both possible and successful, and the families are thankful for the hospital’s involvement. Still, the procedure needs to be strengthened in order to ensure the safety and well-being of the children in the long-term. Recommendations for improvements to the procedure were made; it is important that AHC and KM collaborate to develop and document clear protocols for providing services to the reintegrated families as well as consistent follow-up. Implications for other NGOs adopting infant reintegration procedures are also explored.