

THE INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR CHILD HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT (ICHAD)

Over one-third of the global population is under the age of 19 and 90 percent of these youth live in developing countries. Nearly half of the youth in developing countries live on less than two dollars a day. Poverty significantly exacerbates threats to well-being. Yet, social interventions continue to focus largely on single risk factors, failing to address structural threats, such as poverty. Most interventions also continue to target individuals in spite of evidence that structural/contextual factors, including family and community level resources, are often important determinants of youth outcomes.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the interactive effects of youth poverty and disease are particularly severe. Decades of economic crisis, the AIDS pandemic, and civil conflict have left millions of African youth orphaned or otherwise vulnerable while simultaneously weakening extended family support systems.

Because of poverty and other related barriers, including orphanhood, a number of children and adolescents miss out on education, and are more likely to engage in risk-taking behavior, such as unprotected sex and substance abuse. If unaddressed, the mutually reinforcing crises of youth poverty and disease threaten youth developmental outcomes, portending devastating consequences for children and families over the next generation.

Against that backdrop, ICHAD's mission is to contribute to the reduction of poverty and improvement of public health outcomes for children, adolescents and families in low-resource communities, particularly those in Sub-Saharan Africa and other developing nations.

The Center advances its mission through:

- **Innovative applied intervention research:** ICHAD houses a broad range of innovative applied social and economic empowerment intervention research studies with practice, programming and policy implications. Through its research, ICHAD seeks to develop evidence-informed, scalable, and sustainable solutions to address poverty and improve youth outcomes.
- **Capacity building opportunities for new generation of scholars:** ICHAD develops and implements enhanced research training programs and mentorship opportunities for Master's, Doctoral and Postdoctoral students as well junior faculty at Washington University in St. Louis and in developing countries. The training focuses on conceptualization, design, implementation and evaluation of applied intervention research concerning economic empowerment through asset-development, social protection and public health. The training also provides mentorship in scientific grant writing, manuscript preparation, and dissemination of key findings intended to inform practice, programming and policy.
- **Raising public awareness and support for economic empowerment interventions:** ICHAD seeks to increase public awareness for economic empowerment programs that: a) address context-specific and mutually-reinforcing challenges/stressors faced by developing country youth (e.g., "youth bulge") and their families; and b) generate new public-private partnerships to advance widespread adoption, implementation and scale-up of evidence-based economic empowerment interventions.
- **Informing public policy and programming:** ICHAD seeks to use the findings from its applied research to inform child and adolescent-focused policy and programming. ICHAD engages district- and national-level policymakers and establishes academic-government partnerships to disseminate its study findings and move forward the policy agenda on child and adolescent well-being.

ICHAD builds upon a 15+ year solid foundation of basic and applied innovative field research and conducted by ICHAD Research Team across Sub-Saharan Africa. To the best of our knowledge, ICHAD constitutes one of the first university-based interdisciplinary center focusing both on child and adolescent health and economic empowerment in Sub-Saharan Africa.