

FOREWORD 3

"If we paid no more attention to plants than we do to our children, we would be living in a world of weeds." – Luther Burbank

This masterful and scholarly book documents, with cold, hard numbers, direct personal observations, and engaging case studies of persons both famous and obscure, that the international pandemic of child maltreatment is a cancer growing on our humanity. Dr. Helander calls on his lifetime experiences and insights to present to every concerned citizen of the world this comprehensive analysis of a problem that besets all nations, political entities, religious bodies, cultural groups and social organizations.

Dr. Helander reminds us that a long history of these crimes against children exists. Ancient myths, stories and religious texts mention the abuse of children. Infanticide has been practiced since the beginning of recorded time and is responsible for more child deaths than any other single cause. In ancient Greece, weak children were put to death. In 900 BC, the work called *Practica Peurorum* by the Persian physician Rhazes suggested that in some cases of in-jury to a child that "the child may have been struck intentionally." Soranus, a Greek gynecologist in the 2nd century AD: wrote about "how to recognize a newborn that is worth rearing", clearly advocating for infanticide in cases "born early, who lack a vigorous cry, and who are not perfect." The Bible refers to infanticide in the story of Abraham being ordered Yahweh to sacrifice his son Isaac as a show of faith, only to be deterred at the last moment by the "An-gel of God." The New Testament begins with the "Slaughter of the Innocents" from which Je-sus was saved. In 1212, 50,000 children were sent by priests from France and Germany to recover the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem in the "Children's Crusade." Few survived. In the Middle Ages in Scandanavia there existed an option called "Wasser Weihe", which gave a fat-her the right to decide whether or not to kill or not kill a newborn baby. In 1624 in the U. K. there was an "Act to prevent the Destroying and Murthering of Bastard Children." In 1843, infanticide still existed in Germany where first born sons might be interred in walls of castles to ward off evil spirits. Similar attitudes have been reported in Eskimo, Polynesian, Egyptian, African, Native American, Australian aborigine, Child, Indian cultures.

In the 21st century we consider ourselves more humane, more informed and more benevolent towards our children than these examples from the distant past. But the prodigious synthesis of information that informs this book calls into question the level of compassion that exists for the children of the world. Dr. Helander documents the evidence for physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children in the first three chapters, then displays the hard facts of maltreatment of children in residential institutions and documents that one fourth of children in the world are deprived of parenting. In Part II, he discusses the pervasive toxic influence of neglect and follows this with an erudite discussion of the long term consequences of maltreatment. Finally, he discusses the potential for prevention.

Of particular concern to Dr. Helander is the failure of local communities, nations and international bodies to protect children from all manner of harm. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of The Child (CRC) articulated several principles in 1989. Quoting from the United Nations Department of Public Information publication of 1991: "Encompassing the whole range of human rights – civil, political, economic, social and cultural – the Convention recognizes that the enjoyment of one right cannot be separated from the enjoyment of others. It demonstrates that the freedom a child needs to develop his or her intellectual, moral and spiritual capacities calls for, among other things, a healthy and safe environment, access to medical care, and minimum standards of food, clothing and shelter." Listing all of the highlights of the Convention is beyond the scope of this Foreword, but some of the important provisions are that:

1. Institutions should conform to the standards of care and protection of children;
2. A child has a right to life;
3. A child should be protected from physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, and sexual abuse.
4. Protective measures include social programs, prevention programs and identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up;
5. Provisions should be made for disabled children, adequate education, and a forbidding of torture.

The CRC was ratified by all countries except Somalia, where there is no official government, and the United States. Although ratified in other countries, many of them disregard the provisions, citing lack of resources, and there are no sanctions for non-compliance. The Convention against Torture (CAT) was *not* ratified by 51 states and 78 states opted out of the core responsibilities related to the CAT.

There is widespread failure of surveillance for all forms of maltreatment, and 140 countries – with a total population of 5 billion people and 90 percent of the world's children – do not allow the United Nation's Human Rights Council to receive information or to take any action relating to children's rights, thus effectively crippling the effort to protect children. Detailed in several tables in Chapter Six is a compilation, nation by nation, of the universality of child maltreatment, with supporting references.

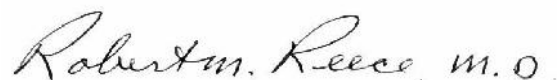
In later sections of the book, the author summarizes the research on the long term consequences of child maltreatment, particularly the Adverse Childhood Experiences epidemiological studies in the United States. In Part Four, Dr. Helander combs the literature on possible etiologies for abusive behaviors, including health-related causes during pregnancy and early childhood, possible genetic and epigenetic factors, environmental influences, and presents a chart on the possible pathways to abuse.

Dr. Helander then describes phenomenon "collective violence." He presents this in a "human ecology frame", essentially a four-layered approach to understanding. The first layer

is the family and immediate environment; the next, the community; the last two layers are the nation and the international community. After reviewing the World Bank's research on the quality of governance in regions of the world, showing a low rating in most of the world's regions, he concludes that "human interpersonal and collective violence is massive."

This detailed documentation of physical, sexual and emotional violence against children begs the question as to why this epidemic has been so neglected by national and international governing bodies and by religious organizations whose moral suasion should be directed toward protection of vulnerable populations. Several explanations may obtain. Denial has always played a role in hiding an evil reality; there are countless examples of this. Manipulation of information and the concealment of evidence of maltreatment contribute to the general ignorance about the problem. The quest for and the grasping of power and money become driving forces for many, crowding out sympathy for the plight of children. The disinhibiting influence of alcohol and drugs is central in a substantial percentage of cases, and the enormous economic engine of the drug trade is a formidable enemy in ameliorating this factor. The competing concerns of economic recessions, wars, tribal disputes, floods, earth-quakes, and other natural disasters, as well as medical epidemics such as HIV, malaria, tuberculosis and diarrheal diseases all contribute to "compassion fatigue" whereby our ability to respond to one more serious problem is attenuated or completely lost.

This is why this book is of such importance. The marshalling of the facts about this pandemic has been accomplished by Dr. Helander and no longer is the information out of sight. This treatise should become a roadmap for responsible people and governments to address this long-neglected problem so that we do not continue to see this plethora of "lost lives."



Robert M. Reece, MD
Clinical Professor of Pediatrics
Tufts University School of Medicine
Boston Massachusetts
Executive Editor, *The Quarterly Update*