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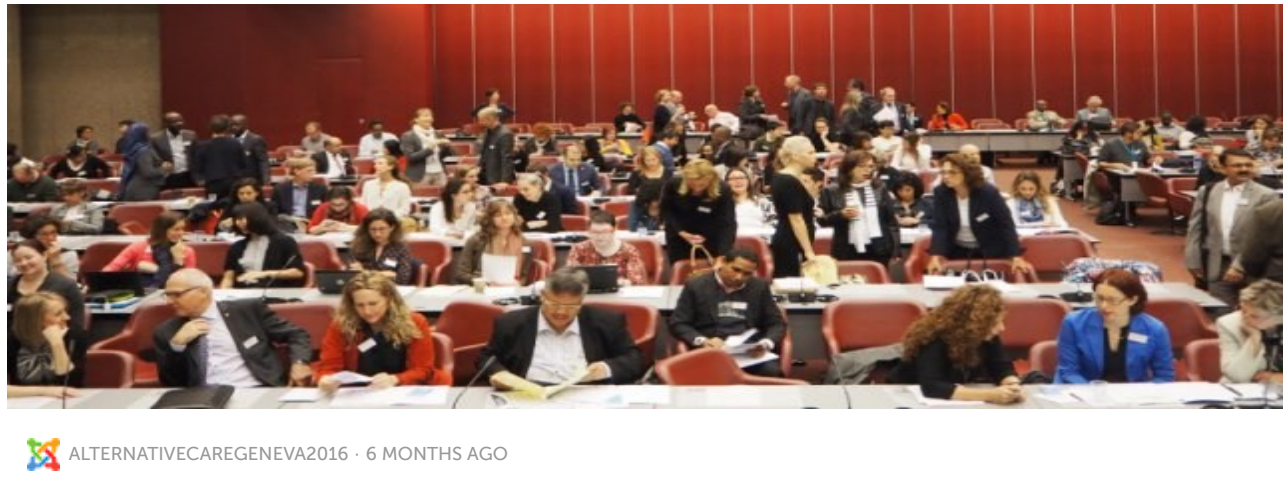
# International Alternative Care Conference - Building the Momentum, 3-5 Oct, 2016

Care to Practice - C2P - and Better Care Network bring you Africa highlights from the conference. If you would like to join C2P, email

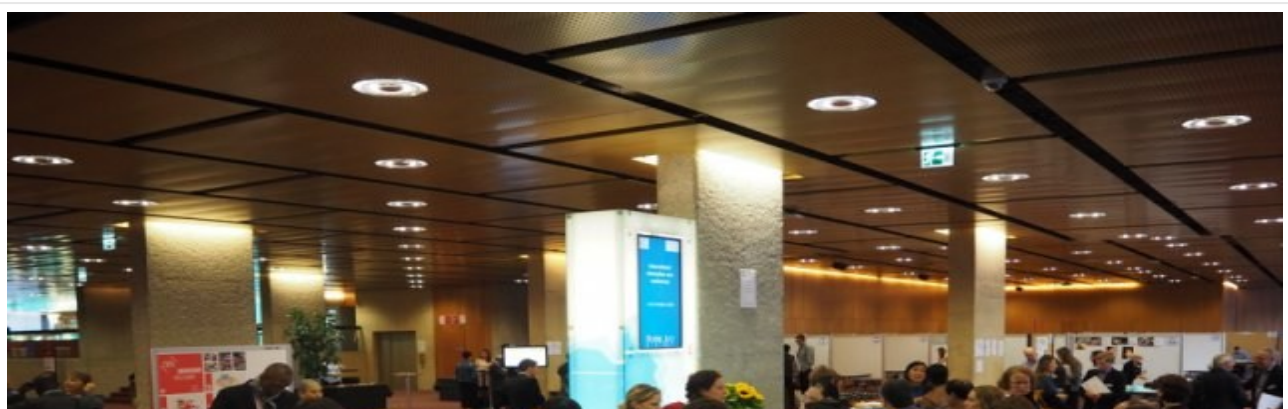
[lucy.hillier@bettercarenetwork.org](mailto:lucy.hillier@bettercarenetwork.org)

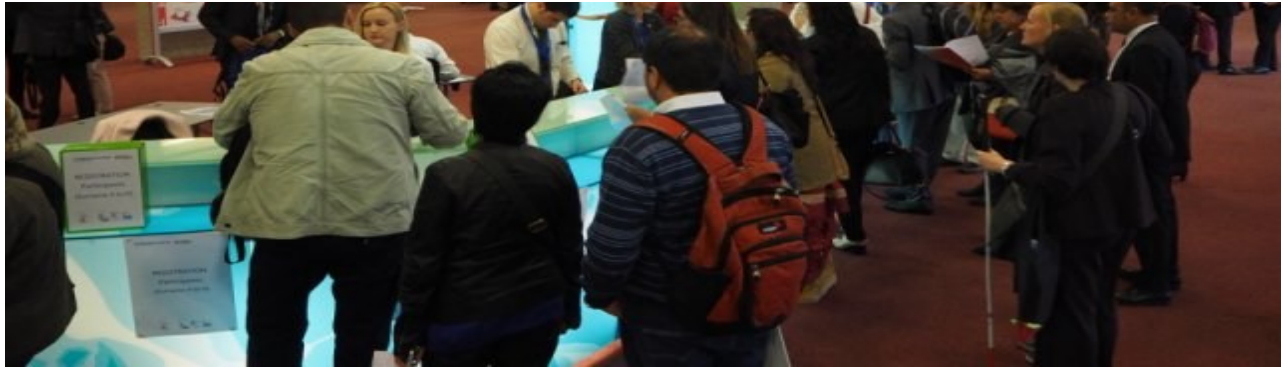
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About 400 people - government, academia, international organisations, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, national child-focused organisations, private foundations, care leavers and practitioners - attended the conference in Geneva. This included some fair representation from the Africa region.

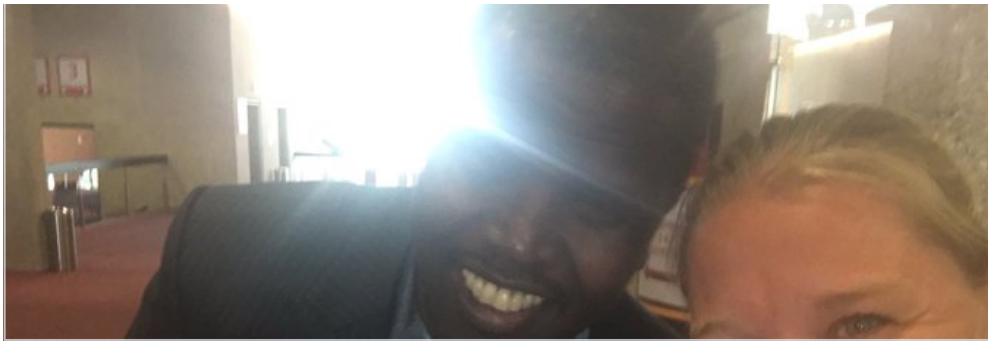




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#Aternativecare2016 is generating discussion on moving forward with #ChildrensReintegration in Africa. @ClareF62 @g\_oyat @PhilipSGoldman

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## Focus of the conference: Moving forward and implementing the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children



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The Guidelines have played a critical role in improving child care systems in a number of countries - J. Zermatten

#AlternativeCare2016

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The role of the [Alternative Care Guidelines](#) was reaffirmed in defining and guiding care reform processes across the globe. Whilst they are not legally binding, it was emphasised that:

The Guidelines are *"a very strong tool for the work of the Committee of the Rights of the Child."*(Benyam Dawit Mezmur, Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child).

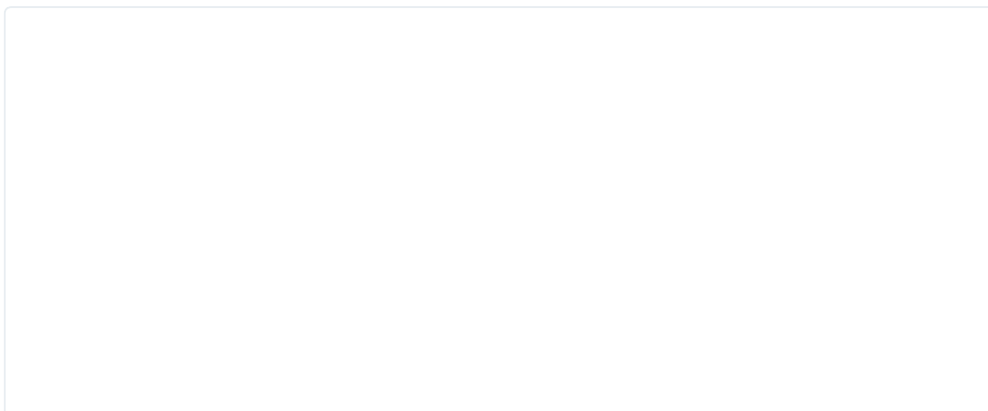


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Also, "*the Guideline's force lies in its global recognition, acceptance and use*" (Nigel Cantwell, International Consultant)

## Evidence of progress in some African countries

It was positively noted that some countries on the continent, such as **Kenya** and **Liberia**, have already developed national alternative care guidelines, or guidelines regulating quality of care in all settings. This demonstrates the region's encouraging progress and commitment in driving the care reform process forward at a policy level.





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Peter Muthui: thank you for spotlighting these! [@altcareGva](#)  
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Kenya Soc. of Careleavers participated in developing Kenya alt care guidelines; calls for + active platforms on care  
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**Anna Nordenmark**

@kafs4

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Helping children live in families requires implementation of necessity principle in [#AlternativeCare2016](#)

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## Key take away messages for the Africa region

1) Meaningfully include and draw on the experiences of children, youth and care leavers in alternative care during design, implementation and monitoring of alternative care programming. Intentional inclusion of children, youth and care leavers in the process is not a “should” but a “must.”

**Jamie Vernaelde**

@jmvernaelde

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Must stop giving lip service to child participation w/in [#childrensrights](#): we don't work for children but with children [#ALternativeCare2016](#)

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**Mr Ayenigba**

@ibroayo

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Child Protection starts by recognizing the voice of children in deciding about their future [#AlternativeCare2016](#)

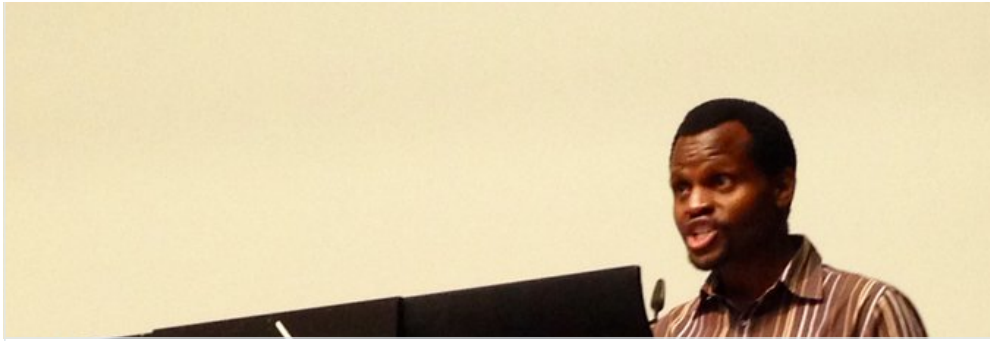
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We must create and support ways to engage these young people to effectively identify their needs, help define what “appropriate” and “necessary” placement in alternative care is or should be, and generate improved understanding of what successful reintegration into family-based care can look like.





**Int'l Social Service**

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Peter Kamau helps youth "voice up & be the agents of change for Kenya" for [#AlternativeCare2016](#)

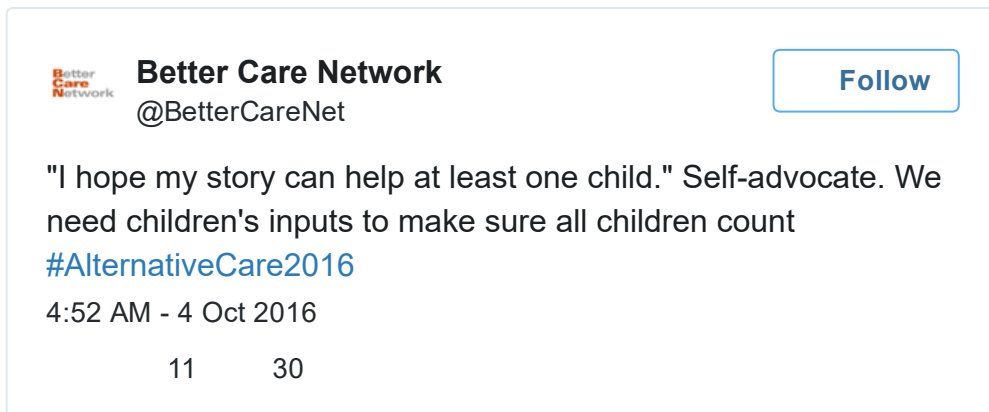
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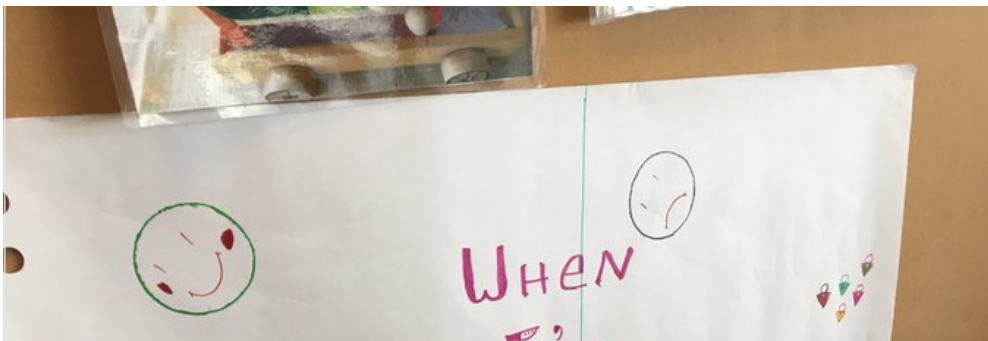
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Placing the child at the centre of family strengthening, care reform, and broader child protection system strengthening efforts means *"understanding who the child was, who the child is, and who the child will be."* (Rolf Widmer, President, ISS Switzerland).





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A visual of children's experiences in residential care. @lumos  
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"The decision by the child has to guide us...children ask to be placed in families." Dr. Uwera, NCC, Rwanda  
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"Family-group conferencing" was presented as one cost-effective and pragmatic method where children's and youth's voices can be part of the process of decision making and in creating a shared vision and approach. Family-group conferencing reflects and builds upon cultural practices that have been used in many African contexts for centuries

(Claudine Uwera, Executive Secretary of the National Commission for Children, Rwanda) and is a way to proactively engage family and community members in the decision making process.



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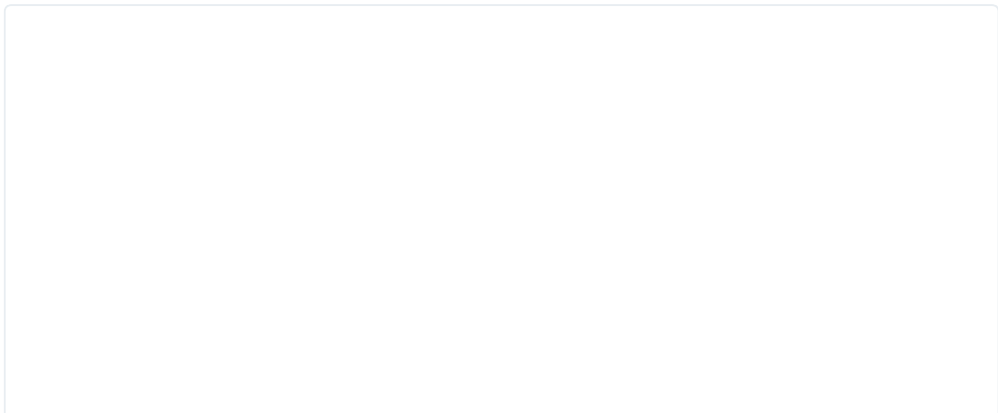
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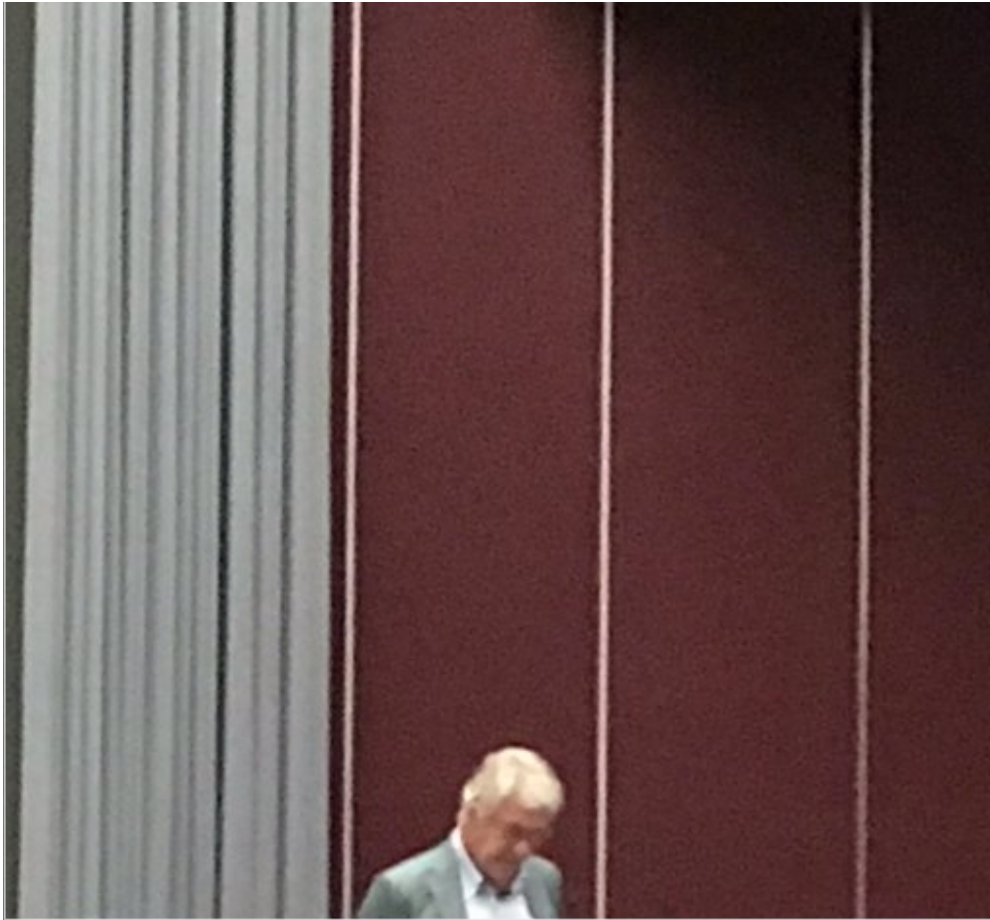
Family group conferencing is an example of how communities  
can be involved in gatekeeping. | Habimfura

can be involved in gatekeeping. Γ.Παυλιδου  
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Family-group conferencing was characterised as a “*bridge between the professional world and the family world*” (Rob van Pagée, Founder, Eigen-krach Centrale, on “Family Group Conferencing”)





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Rob van Pagee of Eugene-kracht Centrale: focus should be family, not just child and parent [@altcareGva](#)  
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**International Alternative Care Conference**  
Geneva, 3 to 5 October 2016

Building on the **Momentum**


## Leaving care – the voices of young people

*'When we leave care why should they stop caring?'*

*'I've learnt to live out of care – with a back-up team'*




*'My main worry – not being able to settle'*

*'Care, its given me great opportunities...now I know what direction I an going in'*

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When we leave are, why should they stop caring? Mike Stein presentation. [@altcareGva](#) [#AlternativeCare2016](#)

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2) The social service workforce, from community up to national level, is a critical component of any care reform effort.

The social service workforce must be trained, strengthened, supported and promoted.

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Lucy Buck: "Social workers are the CHANGE"  
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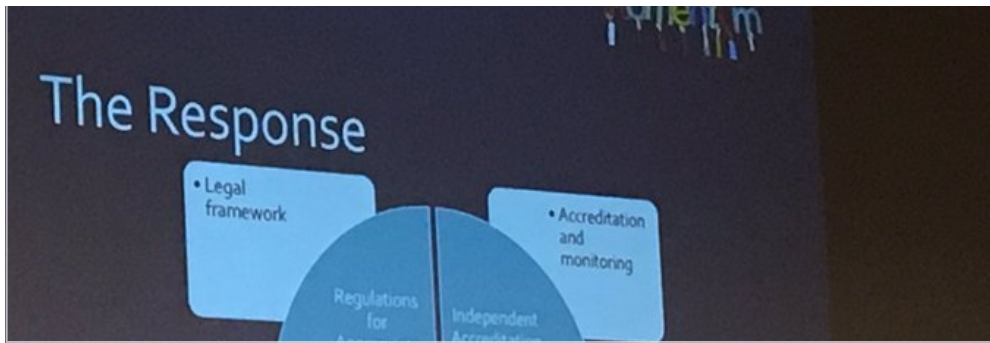
Investing in social service workforce is an important precondition for deinstitutionalization - D. Pop [#AlternativeCare2016](#)

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The social service workforce is a key component of ensuring a holistic response to alternative care. It is also responsible for identifying children at risk of family separation, referring vulnerable children to preventive (i.e. family strengthening) or alternative care services when needed, and accompanying separated children and families through the reintegration process.



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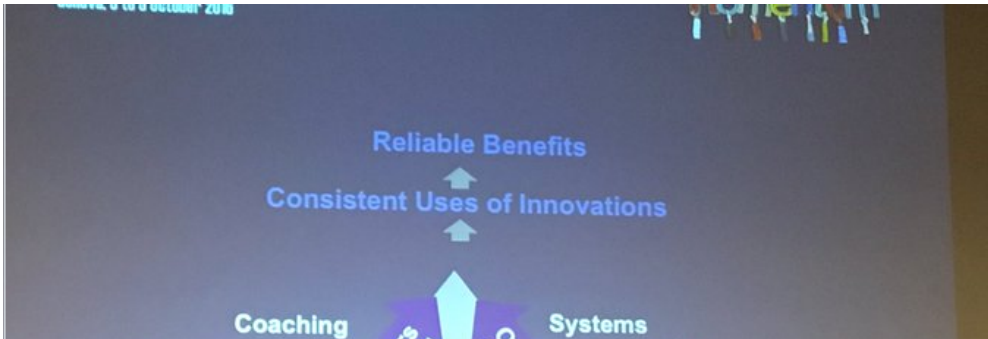
The linkages to ensure a coordinated response to alt care

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Training of SWs should be accompanied by selection and coaching to reinforce quality of SWs #AlternativeCare2016 @JenniferCELCIS

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Experiences on strengthening the social service workforce were shared from Liberia.



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Geoffrey Oyat: Liberia is strengthening the social welfare workforce [@altcareGva](#) [#AlternativeCare2016](#)

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The positive impact of capable and caring social workers on children was also highlighted, and this included some examples given by the children who attended the conference.



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"I want to be a SW thanks to SWs giving me a voice when I was in care, and for them listening to me to in leave care"

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"Child participation should be a fundamental component of SWW capacity building." Young care leaver and budding SW  
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The conference also noted that the social service workforce has a crucial role to play in generating awareness in communities on the importance of family-based care.



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Social service workforce at both professional and community levels is key to strengthening families. [@save\\_children](#)  
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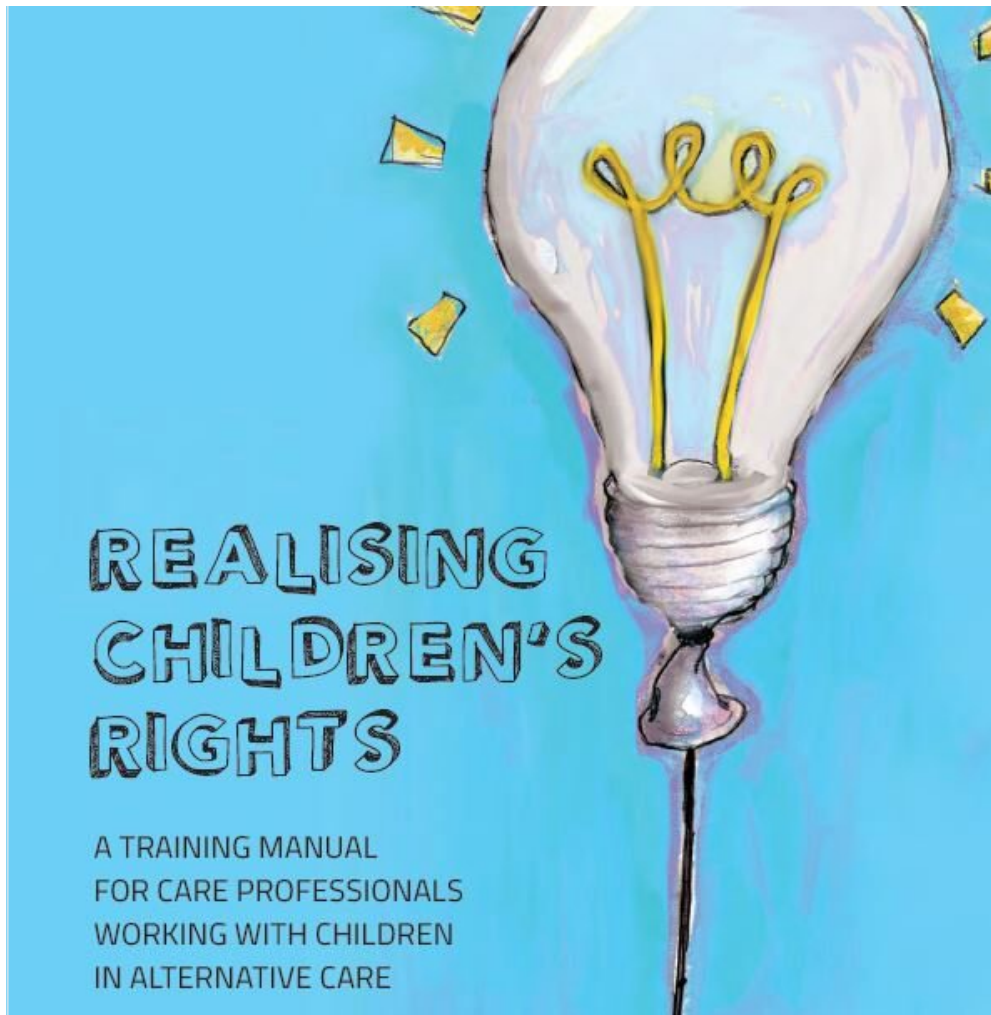
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Laura Haas: Rwanda social service workforce development relied on active learning, communication, trust  
[#AlternativeCare2016](#) [@altcareGva](#)

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Tools such as the Better Care Network's working paper on the [\*Role of the Social Service Workforce Development in Care Reform\*](#) and the International Social Service's [\*Guidelines to Promote Family Life for Children with Disabilities in Residential Care\*](#) provide evidence and practical guidance on how the social welfare workforce can be engaged in care reform processes. The SOS Children's Villages International's [\*Realising Children's Rights\*](#) training manual was also referred to as tool to strengthen the skills of those working with children in alternative care.



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Strengthening working practices of care professionals to realise [#childrights](#). Read more here: [goo.gl/5nWzeg](http://goo.gl/5nWzeg)  
[#alternativecare2016](#)

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3) The need to understand "what we know, and what we don't know", which includes more robust and rigorous data, is a priority. The ability to use strong data to inform policy and programming is also fundamental to identifying children outside of parental care, understanding the reasons for their separation from their family, and measuring their wellbeing.



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Data collection and analysis are a basic foundation to policy development and plans for care system reform!

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