



VAC and Alternative care in refugee settings

Overview of the situation

- An estimated 70 per cent of the refugees are children. As of 15 May 2017, of the total South Sudanese refugee population 1 million are children.
- Of the 1 million children, a total of 75,000 South Sudanese refugee children have been registered as unaccompanied or separated
- 6,831 Burundi UASC refugee children – total Burundi refugee population is 360,000 out of which 56% are children
- High mobility of the population
- In camps refugees / urban refugees
- Separation trends:
 - Separation before the fleeing
 - Children became separated during the population movement
 - Intentional separation to access services such as education
 - As a negative coping mechanism e.g. child labour

Alternative care forms for refugee children in the emergency

- Emergency shelters until foster care families are identified
- Family based care arrangements:
 - spontaneous care arrangements (Ethiopia, Uganda)
 - foster family (Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania)
 - kinship care arrangements
 - customary care arrangements
 - Supported child head household
- Community/Group care
 - Integrated shelter – (Ethiopia(Shire); Uganda)
 - Independent living arrangements
- Institutional care of UASC children is not used as an alternative in the region and not promoted by UNHCR

The process of placement in Family Care Arrangement

- Identification of the child in need of alternative car:
 - Upon arrival in the reception center: registration of UASC and referral to child protection partners (BIA)
 - Once in camp or urban area: through self referral, community, partners - best interest assessment conducted to assess protection risks, tracing needs, etc
- Child counselled on his/her placement
- Identification of foster care givers through community, spontaneous care.
- Social worker assess the foster parents and the care arrangement (interview, home visits) and provide counseling to the foster parents on their role and responsibility
- In some cases placement orders are required
- Support to the foster family
- Monitoring of the care arrangement

Challenges in providing care for refugee children

- Children have experienced traumatic events in their country of origin and during the fleeing
- Overwhelming number of UASC are in need of temporary care arrangements until their family is successfully traced and children can be reunified with them (if in their best interest)
- Identification of foster family in a timely manner
- Refugee families already in a vulnerable situation
- Particular context such as Shire where majority of population is single young males– lack of foster families
- Logistical issue (locating the children in the refugee camps for follow up purposes)
- Limited resources to expedite tracing and reunification of UASC
- National alternative care policies not inclusive of refugee children

What do we know about children in alternative care ?

- Often children under foster care are discriminated in the foster family example: being given the domestic tasks, no access to school
- Some children leave in to reunify with their family without partners/CPC being informed, and disappear.
- When cash grant is provided to foster family it can create tensions
- No evidence of the violence committed in AC but anecdotal data exists (no evidence of increased exposure to abuse in AC than with biological family)
- Shire example – children in family based care arrangements are found to be less inclined to move onward than those remaining in independent living or community based care—20% of children in AC either delay movement or stay with family.

How to strengthen alternative care in emergency setting?

- Organizing better support for foster families: given the context and their vulnerability, families might not be ready/equipped to receive children having experienced traumatic events
- Involve the refugee community in the identification of foster families
- Need more robust monitoring mechanisms and more capacity to follow up on cases but also to identify and prevent cases of abuse and violence
- Reinforce collaboration between CPC and case workers, networks of foster parents
- Establishment of pre-selected foster care families

Way forward!?

- Link with the national child protection system! Increase engagement with the national child protection system to include the particular needs of refugee children in its alternative care policies and regulations
- Identification of foster care family during registration ?
- Formalizing foster care ? depending on the context , not always appropriate in emergency context
- Emergency foster care system ?
- Use of material assistance and livelihood support to support foster families!
- Use of cash support for foster family?