

More than our stories

Strategies for how to meaningfully engage care leavers in care reform



Kenya Society of Careleavers
KESCA

Changing
THE WAY WE
care



LUMOS

Maestral

Better
Care
Network



Introduction of presenters

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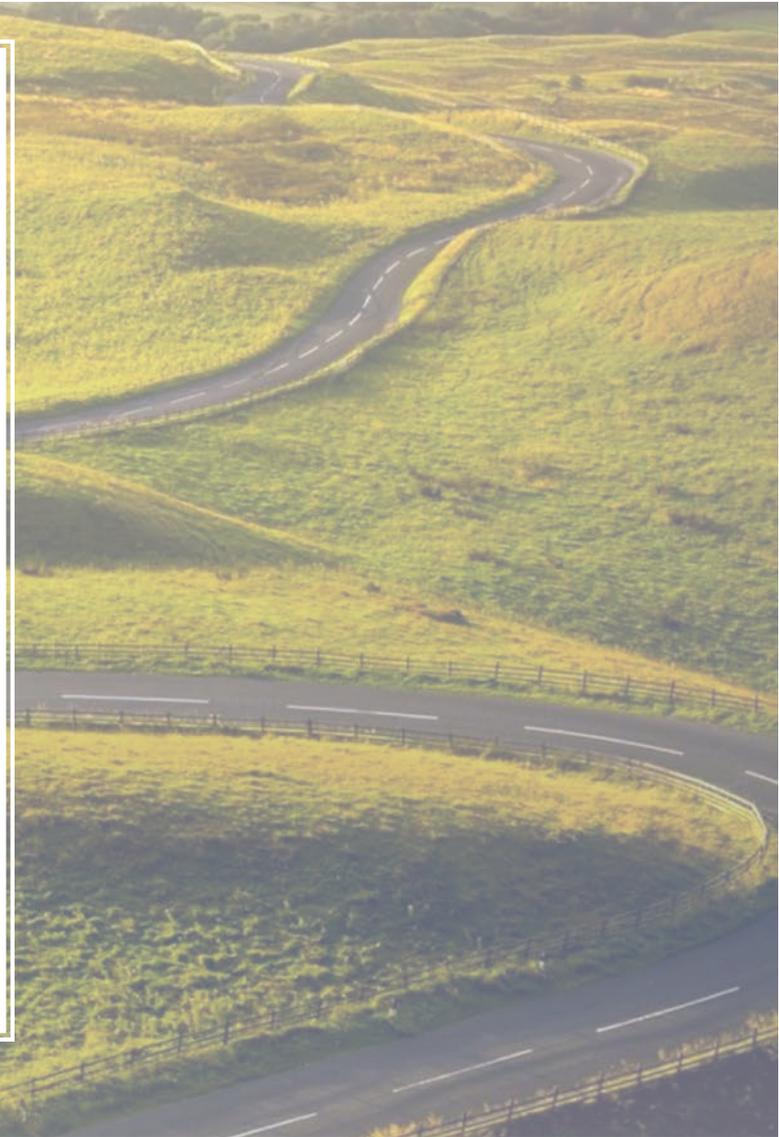


Rapid online poll

The journey

- Care reform efforts growing over the past decade.
- Increased recognition and participation of care leavers. *But is it enough?*
- Care leavers organizing and advocating
 - to be heard;
 - to share life experiences to inform policies, programs and practice;
 - to support one another whilst advocating for issues they are passionate about; and
 - to challenge the sector.

“No more tokenism but real engagement”





Why the Guidance was developed

- To promote the active involvement of care leavers in care reform;
- To empower and build self confidence; and
- To create room for their voices to advocate for positive change.

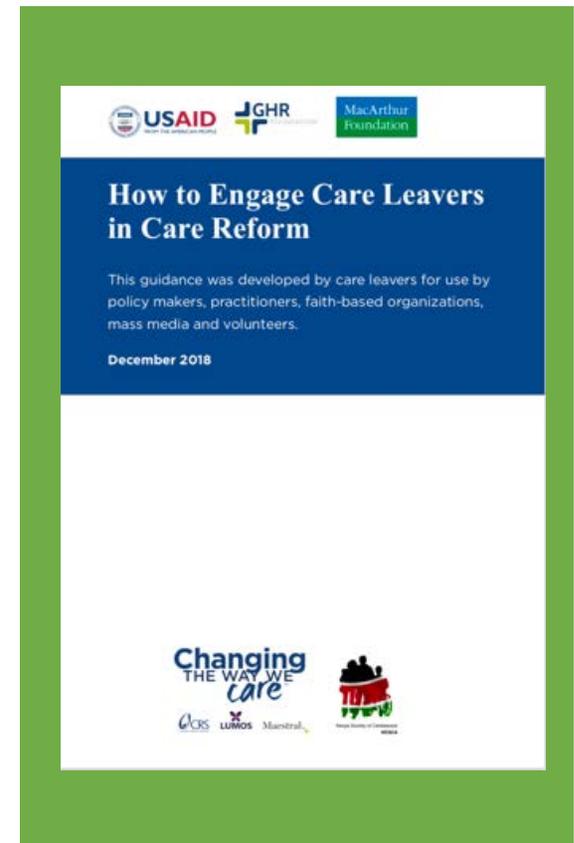


How the Guidance was developed

- Involved 25 Kenyan care leavers in a two-day workshop led by care leavers.
- Compiled key messages that care leavers want shared; based on previous experiences.
- Provides concrete suggestions for how to involve care leavers in **all aspects of care reform** from design, implementation, M&E and advocacy.
- Mutual desire to share experience. Not to seek sympathy but to demand action.

KESCA is using/ plans to use the Guidance to inform their work in Kenya:

- to collect and analyze the situation of children and youth in care;
- to prepare children before exiting care;
- to design guidance on how to support children and youth after exit;
- to support key actors engaged in care in how to treat, talk about, and engage with care leavers; and
- to advocate for informed and intentional role in care reform.



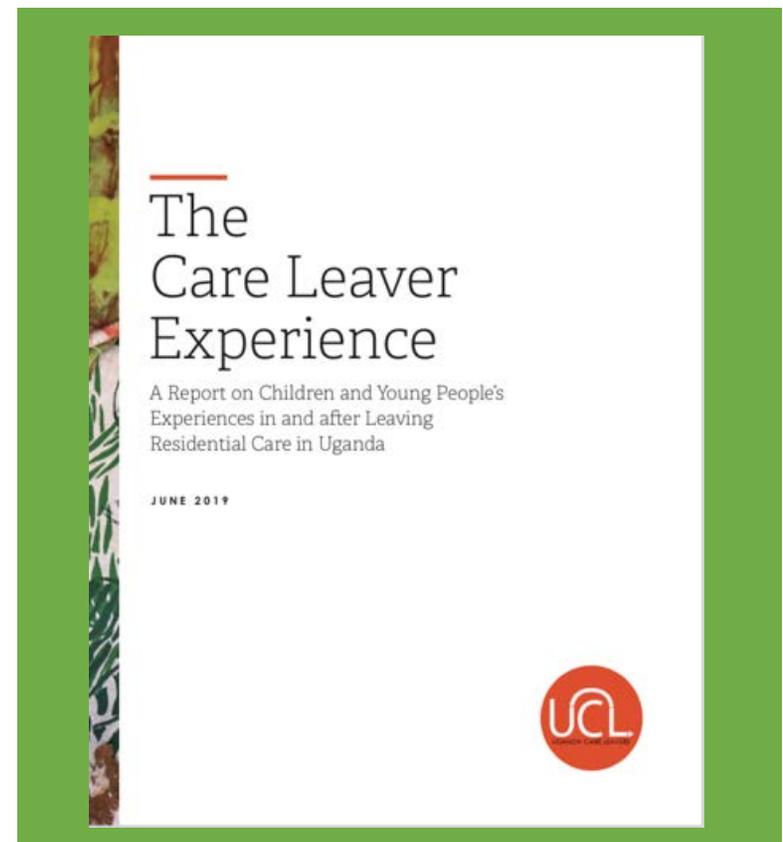


The Care Leaver Experience

- Between 2016-17, used a mixed-methods approach to collect information from care leavers on their lived experiences.
- Care leavers were identified through informal care leaver networks, government officials and local organizations.
- Conducted participatory workshops for care leavers in seven districts of Uganda.
- Provides important information about outcomes for care leavers, highlighting commonalities of their experiences before care, within residential care and after care.

Main points

- Demonstrates with true examples why we **must change** the way we care for children.
- Illustrates why the care leaver experience must influence policy.
- Shows the importance of preventing family separation and of expanding family-based alternatives for children and care leavers.
- Outlines why more focus, resources and services must exist for transition and aftercare.



UCL is using the document:



- to highlight challenges that children and young people face; even in “quality residential care;”
- as a “go-to” resource when engaging with different stakeholders such as government, NGOs, peers and donors;
- to advocate for inclusion of care leavers by government when developing policies and programs;
- to mobilize support for children and young adults transitioning from care into families, communities and independent living;
- to advocate for prevention and alternative family-based care; and
- to encourage (insist) donors redirect their funds towards family-based alternatives and transitional support.

Rapid online poll

Policy makers, government and practitioners SHOULD

- Avail opportunities for participation.
 - Involve care leavers in bottom-up planning processes.
 - Involve care leavers in development of tools.
 - Engage care leavers in design and implementation of monitoring frameworks.
 - Ask care leavers what “success” of care reform would look like and use that information to develop relevant outcome indicators.
- Allow care leavers to sit on district and sub-county child protection committees.
 - Engage care leavers on alternative care panels.
 - Provide opportunities for care leavers to engage with policy makers.
 - Train care leavers to be trainers of other care leavers.
 - Use care leavers in the design and implementation of advocacy efforts.

Policy makers, practitioners and donors SHOULD NOT



- use a care leaver's story, image or video footage without consent;
- parade and constantly ask care leavers to share their stories;
- expose care leavers to any potential conflicts /negative engagements with residential care or others; or
- use a care leaver's story or experience for your own gain.

Q & A

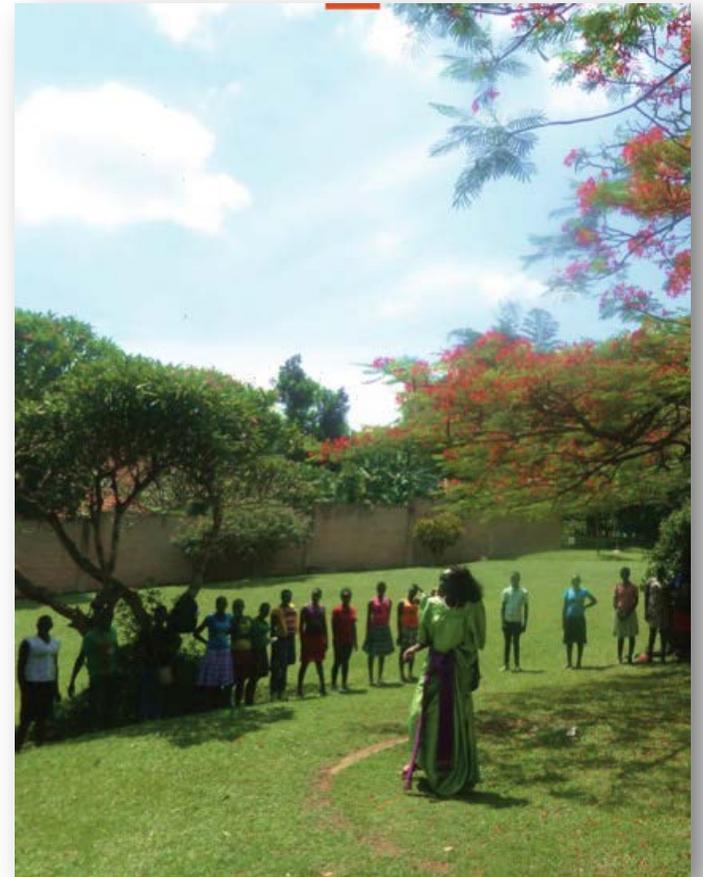


Uganda Care Leavers

What: a social welfare project designed to support children, youth and adults who have spent all or part of their childhood in residential care.

How: formed in 2016 in response to the growing number of children, youth and adults leaving child care institutions.

Activities: support, community, connection, research and advocacy.





UCL provides:

- counselling;
- a sense of belonging and a common identity;
- opportunities for collective activities (income generation / sports);
- access to support members of the network (e.g., hairdressing, produce);
- opportunities to engage with and use experience to inform in policy and programming;
- social media platforms and communication; and
- a platform to meet other care leavers in different parts of Uganda.

- KESCA is a registered society by and for young people who spent all or part of their childhood in residential care.
- Started by six friends from the same residential care facility. Later reached out to other young people with similar issues transitioning/ integrating. Current membership is at **650 members**.
- Activities include:
 - Advocacy and awareness
 - Women's Empowerment Program (Singing To The Lions)
 - Puppetry Project
 - Computer Training and services center
 - Mentorship 4 Life Program
 - 1000 Memories Project



Lessons Learned



Although we share similar experiences, that doesn't make us all the same and doesn't mean that everyone will always agree.



Leaders of care leaver organizations require expertise in different areas; could benefit from mentoring.



Need to acknowledge the different categories /groups of care leavers and the dynamics of each; e.g. HIV positive, young people living with disabilities etc. and understanding the issues/challenges around each.



Need to be clear about expectations. Important to explain what we can and cannot do in terms of resources.



Need to set clear boundaries.



Recognize that there can be issues with dependence. The network cannot and should not be everything.

Our ask of you...

Policy-makers, programs and practitioners

- Find ways to engage with care leavers in meaningful ways and on a regular basis.
- Support care leaver organizations and include them in relevant programming and advocacy.
- Provide practical experience for and/or mentor care leavers.
- Support educational opportunities for care leavers
- Hire qualified care leavers.
- Don't be afraid or intimidated by care leaver messages.
LISTEN!
- Think of care leavers as equal partners.

Donors

- Support transition and after care services.
- Connect us to education and employment opportunities.
- Support prevention!
- Provide resources for care leavers who want to establish an organization.
- Ask for our opinions.

Rapid online poll

final
thoughts

Thank you

To find the documents highlighted today, please go to:

How to Engage Careleavers in Care Reform

<https://bettercarenetwork.org/library/principles-of-good-care-practices/leaving-alternative-care-and-reintegration/how-to-engage-care-leavers-in-care-reform>

The Careleaver Experience

<https://bettercarenetwork.org/library/principles-of-good-care-practices/leaving-alternative-care-and-reintegration/the-care-leaver-experience-a-report-on-children-and-young-people%E2%80%99s-experiences-in-and-after-leaving>



THANK
YOU