

**30th anniversary of the CRC + 10th anniversary of the UN Guidelines on the Alternative Care of Children
+ 5th anniversary of Optional Protocol on the CRC on a communications procedure**

**Room XXII, 15h30 – 17h45 (Part I: UN Guidelines, Part II: OPIC)
18 November 2019, Palais des Nations**

Working with children with disabilities to set up foster carers - Burkina Faso ISS – Marie Jenny

Burkina Faso in West Africa, has a strong culture of informal Foster care which encouraged the government to implement a few years ago a formal foster care program which at present count 200 foster families. However, only 6 children with disabilities in the whole country are placed in Foster Care. Guided by the Suitability Principle of the UN Guidelines, ISS yearns for promoting family-based care for CWD.

Developing and planning foster care for those children is a huge responsibility for any services providers as the absolute priority is to provide a safe and stable environment for the child and prevent placement breakdown.

To this end we are piloting with local government and Civil society organizations a program to include CWD in the current foster care system however with very specific provision. A dedicated multidisciplinary team will be in charge of the assessment process, as well as adapted preparation of the child and specific training for the foster families.

Furthermore, building a range of targeted support services for children and foster families is really critical as it is still under-developed in Burkina Faso: inclusive education, access to community-based rehabilitation, in-home care, discussion group, respite care are a few examples of measures that need to be developed to ensure foster care meets the needs of children with disabilities. These services need to be available also for birth families when reintegration can be foreseen or vulnerable families in their community to prevent unnecessary separation.

We need to keep in mind that foster care is still NOT going to be the sole answer for every one of those children. It's not going to be appropriate for every child and should be decided on a case by case basis. This leads to an ethical question as to the profile of children that could benefit this measure. We decided with all stakeholders in Burkina Faso to limit placement into foster families during the pilot phase, to children with mild to moderate disabilities. Of course, our aim is not to discriminate any child but to ensure safe and sustainable placement. Caring for a child with severe disability requires a well-established and solid set of services which we thrive to achieve to be able to include in a later stage more children with high needs if this is deemed consistent with their best interests.

Question: What could be done to ensure children with severe disabilities have access to foster care in low- or middle-income countries?