

Engaging Directors of Charitable Children's Institutions

VIDEO SUMMARY

As a part of national care reform efforts, the Kenyan Government enacted new laws and policies aimed at reducing the country's overreliance on institutional care for children. Whilst enacting new laws and policies of this nature is a critical component of care reforms, there can be huge challenges with implementation and compliance, particularly if there is an inadequate process of policy socialization and stakeholder engagement. This is heightened in countries where a significant proportion of institutions are privately run and funded and where the enforcement of regulation has been historically weak.

In this video, Peter Kamau from Child in Family Focus discusses his organisation's approach to engaging with the directors of privately-run charitable children's institutions (CCI's) to secure their buy-in for transition and the

reintegration of children into families, in line with government policy. Peter shares insights from their learning regarding CCI directors' reactions to new policies, which engagement approaches have resulted in an openness to transition, and which have resulted in resistance and a failure to achieve buy-in.


Anthony and Carolina Waiharo, the directors of Wanalea Children's Home in Nairobi Kenya, also share important firsthand insights into their initial reactions to the new laws and changes to the policy position of government. They openly discuss their underlying concerns and the concerns of other directors, and what type of support enabled them to embrace change and begin to work towards the reintegration of children in their care.


DISCUSSION TOPIC


In this video Peter, Anthony and Carolina draw attention to issues surrounding the process of enacting new laws and policies and the impact this can have on stakeholders' reactions and, therefore, on implementation and compliance. It highlights an important consideration: that legislative and policy reform is a much broader process than the enactment of law. It requires an effective means of engaging with stakeholders, socializing new laws and policies, and the development of a framework to support implementation.

The video furthermore highlights the important role civil society organisations can play to support other organisations better understand new laws and adopt new practices. Without such an approach and framework, new laws and policies can be met with confusion and resistance and can fail to achieve a significant and positive impact on practice and be poorly or inadequately implemented. In some cases, there can be adverse and unintended consequence for children and their families.

In your context:

-  What is the status of legislative and policy reforms? Are there new laws being proposed or policies that are yet to achieve widespread acceptance and implementation?

-  What are some of the actual or potential barriers or points of resistance? What are some of the underlying concerns or needs of the stakeholders who are or are most likely to resist or struggle to adopt change?

-  What would be required to effectively support these stakeholders to adapt their practice or services and adhere to new laws or policy? What would be required to put such a support framework in place?



DISCUSSION TOPIC

Peter talks a lot about striking the right balance when supporting directors and staff of institutions to engage with a transition or change process. He points to the importance of developing positive and respectful relationships which empower rather than demean or demonise directors. He speaks of the need to support directors and staff to engage with the technical information and tools to build capacity without overwhelming them and creating unnecessary barriers. Anthony and Caroline reflect on the impact it had on them when CFF was able to strike this balance, in particular how it gave them confidence to engage with the change process and navigate the risks.

Despite this being a successful approach, Peter acknowledges that there are situations in which this methodology has not worked, and he identifies some of the reasons why. In particular, he identifies the challenges associated with institutions with overseas donors who effectively act as the key decision makers. In these cases, Peter notes that engaging only with the directors is unlikely to result in a decision to transition.

In your context:

- ① What are the main challenges with encouraging and supporting institutions to transition in your country or the context of your work?

- ② In your experience or from your knowledge what has and hasn't worked in terms of encouraging and supporting institutions to agree to transition and reintegration of children in their care? What do you attribute these successes and failures to?

- ③ Are there different scenarios with institutions in your context (i.e. the overseas funded scenario that Peter spoke about) that require different approaches? If so, what are they and how does the approach need to differ?

- ④ Discuss any aspects or learning from this video that could be tested, adapted or incorporated into your practice to increase your effectiveness or reach in terms of supporting institutions to transition or engage in reintegration. What, if any, further resources (material or human resources) might this require?