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## Eastern and Southern Africa regional learning platform on care reform

Monthly update - November 2022

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### Introduction

Welcome to the monthly update from the regional learning platform on care reform in Eastern and Southern Africa. The platform is an opportunity for policy makers and practitioners in Government, UNICEF and NGOs to exchange learning on care. The platform was established by UNICEF and Changing the Way We Care (CTWWC) and is supported by the consultancy firm Child Frontiers. Explore our past webinars and resources [here](#) and [here](#).

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### Announcements on the platform

- **Webinar - Supporting the reintegration of children with disabilities in Rwanda:** With UNICEF support, the government of Rwanda are in the final phases of their care reform programme. Having returned the majority of children from residential care back to families and communities, they are now working on the reintegration of children with disabilities. In this webinar we will hear from policy makers and practitioners on how this has been done and key lessons learnt. **Date:** 7th of December. **Time:** 11-12.30 Nairobi time. Zoom link can be found [here](#). Meeting ID: 844 5715 2882 Passcode: 225626
- **Webinar recording - Supporting kinship care in Eastern and Southern Africa:** Kinship care (care by extended family or friends of the family) is the most common form of alternative care in the region, yet also the least well supported. This webinar explains why it is vital to invest in kinship care and provide examples of promising practice. A recording of the webinar can be found [here](#).
- **Tell us what you have gained from the platform and how it can be improved.** Please fill out this [short form](#) to let us know what you learnt from the platform, how this has impacted on your work and how we can improve in the future. This will only take 5 minutes and will help us make the platform more relevant to your needs.
- **Helpdesk.** As part of the platform, we have set up a Helpdesk for UNICEF country office staff and government counterparts. For guidance on any aspect of care reform, please contact Emily Delap of Child Frontiers



## Addressing the neglect of kinship care

By Emily Delap

Kinship care is the care of children by the extended family or friends of the family. It is by far the most common form of alternative care in Eastern and Southern Africa. Indeed, in some countries in the region, it is almost as common as parental care with up to 40 percent of children in kinship care. Despite the widespread use of kinship care, it has received relatively little attention from those working on care reform, who often instead focus on the more formalized aspects of the care system relating to residential and foster care.

The neglect of kinship care is unfortunate. Kinship care is the preferred option for many children who can't live with their parents as they want to be placed with someone they know. It has been used for centuries in the region in response to parental death or migration or to give children a home closer to their schools. Unlike foster care, it is widely culturally acceptable. Kinship carers, particularly grandmothers, were the superheroes of the HIV pandemic. They cared for countless children who lost their parents, despite dealing with their own bereavement, living in chronic poverty, and receiving no or minimal help.

The neglect of kinship care may be attributed to a reluctance to get involved in what is usually an informal private arrangement between family members. There may also be a perception that kinship carers' love for the children in their care means that they will look after them without the need for assistance. Usually, kinship care is responded to within broader social protection or family-strengthening programmes. Whilst these interventions often include kinship carers within target groups, they do not usually recognise the unique challenges that distinguish kinship from parental care.

Evidence shows that a failure to properly support kinship care is leaving both children and carers vulnerable. Kinship carers are often elderly with health problems or disabilities. Already living in poverty, they struggle to feed an often unplanned addition to the household. They and the children in their care commonly find it hard to transition to their new relationship. Kinship carers can struggle to reach across the inter-generational divide, to adjust to having to discipline children from a more indulgent role as a grandparent, and to navigate any ongoing relationship with the child's parents. If carers have their own children, children in kinship care can be discriminated against and expected to do more chores or be given less food.

Some progress is being made in the region, with pockets of good practice in countries such as Kenya, where kinship care is extensively referenced in policies and guidance on care, or South Africa, which is introducing a new grant for kinship carers. The involvement of community volunteers to monitor and assist kinship carers and the use of caregiver support groups have been shown to be of value. However, much more need to be done for care reform to be successful across Eastern and Southern Africa.

*(Information included in this article is taken from this [webinar](#) and [report](#))*

## Other news and resources

- **Case studies on COVID-19 and care:** Case studies from [Kenya](#) and [Uganda](#) show how COVID-19 has and is affecting family-child reunification and alternative care placement, and offers recommendations for family- and community-based care of vulnerable children in the context of COVID-19 and future emergencies. The case studies were produced by Changing the Way We Care, and complement the [report](#) and [video](#) developed as part of this platform on lessons learnt from COVID-19 on care reform.
- **Global care leavers festival:** The 10-day Care Leavers Festival runs from November 20th to 30th and is part of the 2nd International Care Leavers Convention. It will feature the direct voices of Care Leavers and celebrate diversity by bringing together snippets and conversations globally on a common platform. For more information please see [here](#).
- **New webinar series on kinship care.** The network Family for Every Child are running a six month learning series of webinars and resources around kinship care. The first webinar takes place on the 30th of November and looks at the definitions of kinship care, the different types of kinship care, and whether there is a need for a legal definition. It includes panelists from Zimbabwe, Brazil and India. This is part of a wider community of practice on kinship which can be joined [here](#). Details of the webinar can be found [here](#).

**Want to share resources or advertise a webinar or event on care reform in Eastern and Southern Africa?** Please contact Bertha Lutome of Child Frontiers: [blutome@childfrontiers.com](mailto:blutome@childfrontiers.com)

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