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Eastern and Southern Africa regional learning platform on care reform

Monthly update - April 2023

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, case studies, videos and policy papers [here](#).

Announcements on the platform

- **New resources on care reform and climate change.** Our new paper and webinar recording suggest that climate change is the greatest current and future threat to children’s care in the Eastern and Southern Africa region. Responding to this threat requires urgent coordinated action related to care reform policies and interventions and climate change responses. The paper and webinar begin with a description of climate change in the Eastern and Southern Africa region, followed by an analysis of its impacts on families, children’s care and the care system. They then suggests how the risks to children’s care associated with climate change can be mitigated through changes to the care system and to climate change adaptation plans. The paper can be found [here](#) and the recording of the webinar [here](#).
- **Webinar - transformation of residential care, April 26th 11-12.30 Nairobi time.** This webinar will examine the transformation of residential care agencies from overnight care providers to strengthening family-based care. We will begin with a presentation on key global learning on how to transform residential care, followed by examples from the Eastern and Southern African region. At the end of the webinar, we'll discuss how the transformation of residential care can be scaled up. Login into zoom using this [link](#) (Meeting ID: 329 457 5186 | Passcode: 664656)
- **Helpdesk.** As part of the platform, we have set up a Helpdesk for UNICEF country office staff and government counterparts. For guidance on any

office (maika@unicef.org).



The transformation of residential care

Decades of research suggest that children need families to thrive, but millions of children live separated from parental care, often in institutions. The detrimental effects of institutional care on a child’s well-being are widely documented. Without the love, nurture, and protection of a healthy family, these children are vulnerable to a host of developmental and child protection challenges. [1] Institutional care is also more expensive than supporting family-based care.

In response to this evidence, many governments in Eastern and Southern Africa have embarked on reforms to close or transform residential care. Transformation involves supporting residential care facilities (or children’s homes) to shift from ‘institutional care’ to more supportive family and community-based care options. For example, staff from facilities may provide support to vulnerable families to help prevent separation. Children’s homes may be transformed into after-school or holiday daycare centres.

Transforming residential care involves a series of steps and considerations to ensure the safety and well-being of the children involved. Tailored strategies need to be developed for each transition process, considering their unique dynamics. Accordingly, several guidance documents and tools have been developed to assist practitioners, including the:

- [Phases of Transition Interactive Diagram](#)
- [Transitioning Residential Care Cost Estimation Tool](#).

A [recent study in Kenya](#) highlights several catalysts for the transition from residential care to a non-residential model, including the director's attitude and openness towards transition, perceived feasibility of transition, and donor support for the transition. Similarly, various country reports and documents consistently indicate that **donors of residential care services exert a significant influence over the operation of programs and on the decision to transition**. In most cases, a transition of the residential care facilities is highly dependent on two variables: whether the principal donor had been identified and successfully engaged for transition; whether the principal donor had made the decision to transition or divest of residential care.

In addition, the **transition must be backed by strong government commitment, demonstrated by both policies and programmes to implement policies**. While some residential care providers may voluntarily transition, most need to be convinced of the government’s commitment to reform the care system and enforce changes at the service level before they seriously consider or plan for transition.

[Emerging evidence](#) also suggests that civil society plays an important role in catalysing and enabling services to transition. Previous experience of successfully reintegrating some children can trigger the transition as providers can see that family-based care models are successful. Weak gatekeeping and lack of case management systems hinder transition.

integrative review of evidence regarding effects on development. The Lancet Psychiatry. doi:10.1016/s2215-0366(19)30399-2

Other news and resource

- **Transforming children's care - webinar on care leavers - 9th of May.** Drawing from the learning from participatory research in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as Australia, this webinar will introduce different approaches used to engage individuals with lived experience of alternative care in research efforts and highlight some of the key findings and lessons for meaningful and effective engagement. Further details of the webinar can be found [here](#). The webinar has been organised as part of the Transforming children's care global collaborative platform. This platform has multiple learning groups on different aspects of care reform. Find out more [here](#).
- **Webinar series on kinship care.** Family for Every Child will be having the fourth webinar in their series of webinars on kinship care on the 4th of May. This webinar examines how support needs vary by form of kinship care and characteristics of the child. For more details, join Family for Every Child's community of practice on kinship care [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

The learning platform was established by UNICEF Eastern and Southern African Regional Office (ESARO) in collaboration with Changing the Way We Care (CTWWC) and has been made possible by funding from USAID’s Displaced Children and Orphans Fund through UNICEF ESARO.



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