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Eastern and Southern Africa regional learning platform on care reform

Monthly update - March 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 and resources [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

Announcements on the platform

- **Webinar - Climate change and care reform.** This webinar examines the impacts of climate change on children's care, and explains how care reform strategies and programmes need to adapt to address these new realities. The webinar will begin with an explanation of what climate change is and how it is and will affect communities in Eastern and Southern Africa. We will then present evidence on the impacts of climate change on violence in families and family separation, and provide suggestions for climate change responsive care reform. Climate change is increasingly leading to more extreme weather events. At the end of the webinar, we will look at one such event, cyclone Idai, and show how this affected families in Mozambique. **Date: 22nd of March. Time: 11-12.30 Nairobi time.** Join the call with this [Zoom link](#) (Meeting ID: 820 4496 7062 Passcode: 090561). Portuguese and French interpretation will be provided
- **Video on kinship care:** Our new 10 minute video explains what kinship care is, and how it can be supported, using learning from Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe. The video can be found [here](#). We also have videos on the [reintegration of children with disabilities in Rwanda](#), and [lessons learnt from the COVID-19 pandemic on care reform](#).
- **Case studies on aspects of care reform:** Over the last year we have been developing case studies on child, young person, and caregiver experiences of kinship care, reintegration, supervised independent living,

- **New paper on Kafalah:** Kafalah is an alternative family care option for children outside of parental care practised by Muslims around the world. In this short [paper](#), we explain what Kafalah is, how it is being used in Eastern and Southern Africa, and how Kafalah can be better supported.
- **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 (edelap@childfrontiers.com) or Mona Aika from the UNICEF regional office (maika@unicef.org).



Are you applying a system strengthening approach to care reform?

UNICEF has long promoted a child protection system strengthening approach. This means that rather than addressing child protection concerns one by one, efforts are made to strengthen the entire child protection system. The system includes evidence, policies and guidance, services, budget allocations, a workforce, supportive social norms, and child and community engagement.

In Eastern and Southern Africa, as elsewhere in the world, UNICEF is working hard with government and NGOs to apply the system-strengthening approach to care reform. This involves strengthening the parts of the child protection system that relate most directly to children's care (referred to as the care system), recognising the linkages between care and other aspects of child protection, and using care reform as a catalyst for wider improvements in the child protection system. In Rwanda for example, the deinstitutionalization process has been used to develop both the professional and volunteer child protection workforce.

System strengthening can be overwhelming; with so many different aspects of the system needing to be stronger, it can be hard to know where to begin. It is important to remember that no one agency can achieve change alone and that everyone has something to contribute. A starting point for strengthening the system is talking to others and using evidence to figure out where change is most needed and how each agency can best contribute.

In some countries, much of the hard work determining how to improve the care system has already been done. For example, Kenya already has a 10-year care reform strategy that looks at the changes needed across the elements of the care system. Like Kenya's strategy, such policies should be based on evidence, including the experiences of children and carers. There is also a need for a degree of flexibility in strategy implementation as the external context changes or as new evidence emerges around what is and is not working. Conflict, climate change, and COVID have already or will derail many carefully made plans. The increasing instability related to these forces highlights the need to for care reforms in humanitarian contexts and the importance of aligning these reforms with national systems.

Strengthening the care systems requires a high degree of collaboration with those outside of the care and protection sectors. Poverty and lack of access to education

reform is complex with many moving parts and coordination is vital.

Although there is a tendency for care reform to be viewed narrowly in terms of reducing the number of children in institutional care, improving the care system has much wider goals. Such reforms should lead to improvements in the care of all children, including the many millions of children in the Eastern and Southern Africa region being cared for by relatives, who may be vulnerable to inadequate care.

How well children are cared for in Eastern and Southern Africa is primarily determined by families and communities. The limited reach of social workers means they must focus on improving the care of the most at-risk groups. Working with extended families and wider communities, including religious leaders and faith-based groups, is vital for more widespread change.

Want to know more? The following resources have been developed by the learning platform:

- [An introduction to care reform – pamphlet and video](#)
- [Caring systems – maximising synergies between care reform and child protection system strengthening in Eastern and Southern Africa](#)
- [Creating synergies between social protection and care in Eastern and Southern Africa](#)

Other news and resource

- **Resources on family strengthening.** [Thandanani Children's Foundation](#) in South Africa have a [video](#) outlining their family strengthening programme. [Tushindie](#) in Kenya have a set of [case studies](#) that explain their approach to family strengthening and the impact that this is having on child and carer wellbeing.
- **Transforming children's care - global collaborative platform.** This platform has multiple learning groups on different aspects of care reform. Coming up in the next month is a meeting to explore how to address stigma and discrimination to prevent the separation of children with disabilities on the 16th of March, and a webinar on the 30th of March examining the impacts of foster and institutional care in Brazil. Find out more [here](#).
- **Webinar series on kinship care.** Family for Every Child will be having the third webinar in their series of webinars on kinship care on the 29th of March. This webinar examines the importance of kinship care during emergencies and crisis periods and ways to support kinship care at these times. The webinar will draw on learning from a project to support kinship care during crises in Lebanon. It will examine the support needs of Ukrainian refugees in kinship care in the UK. Cross-border placements into kinship care will also be explored, using examples from the UK to show how these placements can be effectively supported. More details can be found [here](#). Family for Every Child also have a community of practice which shares learning on kinship care across the world and includes recording of past webinars. This can be joined [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

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