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**Subject:** Care reform monthly update

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**From:** Emily

**To:** Better Care Network Contact

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

Monthly update - September 2023

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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, case studies, videos and policy papers [here](#) and [here](#). To sign up to these monthly updates, please complete this short [form](#).

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## Announcements on the platform

- **Webinar recording:** A recording of our last webinar on case management as part of care reform can be found [here](#).
  - **Webinar:** Our next webinar will explore key strategies for preventing family separation, drawing on examples from across the region.  
Date: 12<sup>th</sup> of October Time: 1pm Nairobi time Zoom login details: To join the meeting click [here](#) Meeting ID: 812 5547 4958 Passcode: 442091
  - **Video:** We have a new video on demonstrations counties for care reform in Kenya. This illustrates the importance of a system strengthening approach to care reform and can be found [here](#).
  - **Case study:** We have a new case study on the role of kinship care in supporting children in a refugee camp in Kenya, which can be found [here](#).
  - **HelpDesk:** Do you have a dilemma about care reform? Would you like to know about how others have succeeded in their care reform efforts? Whether you are just starting out on your care reform journey or a long way down this road, we can help. As part of the learning platform, we offer a HelpDesk for all UNICEF and government staff in Eastern and Southern Africa. Please contact Emily: [edelap@childfrontiers.com](mailto:edelap@childfrontiers.com) or Mona: [maika@unicef.org](mailto:maika@unicef.org)
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## Demonstrating a system strengthening approach to care reform in Kisumu County, Kenya

In 2014, the Government of Kenya developed comprehensive [guidelines on the alternative family care of children](#). This guidance outlines a continuum of care whereby maximum efforts are made to keep children within their own families, and where this is not possible, place them in family-based alternative care. In 2018, the Government of Kenya decided to pilot the implementation of key components of this guidance at the county level. Starting with three counties, it worked with UNICEF, Changing the Way We Care (CTWWC) and local civil society organisations (CSOs) to demonstrate that care reform is possible, and generate lessons that could be used to shape national policies and strategies. Kisumu County in western Kenya was the first demonstration county. Efforts to strengthen the care system in Kisumu included the following.

- **Collecting evidence:** At the start of the programme, a situation analysis was carried out on children in residential care, and on children with disabilities in residential care. A focus on evidence-based reform has continued throughout the care reform process in Kisumu through monitoring and sharing of learning.
- **Changing attitudes.** Efforts were made to inform stakeholders of the harm caused by residential care, and to challenge stigma and discrimination around

disability.

- **Policies, legislation and guidance.** The care reform process in Kisumu County has helped to generate and shape national policies and guidance on children's care. This has included Kenya's National Care Reform Strategy and case management guidance for children's reintegration.
- **Strengthening the social service workforce.** The capacity of professional, para-professional and volunteer social service workers has been built so that they can support care reforms. Particular emphasis has been placed on building the capacity of government social workers for sustainability.
- **Improving gatekeeping and decision-making.** Training was carried out with a range of actors involved in decisions on children's care to ensure that they understood the importance of and actively promoted family-based care.
- **Service delivery.** Several services were developed in Kisumu County to prevent family separation, support family-based alternative care and promote reintegration. These included transforming residential care facilities to focus on support to children and families in the community, family-strengthening activities such as household economic strengthening and parenting programmes, case management support to children reintegrating from residential care, and supports to kinship care and kafalaah. Children with disabilities have been incorporated into all service provision.
- **Partnership and coordination.** Efforts have been made to coordinate inputs from government, CSOs, UNICEF and residential care providers. The central role of government in sustainable care reform has been recognised, as has the importance of involving residential care providers in reforms.
- **Financing care reform.** Experiences in Kisumu County suggest that it is vital to estimate the costs of care reform, considering all the components of system strengthening outlined above. Efforts can then be made to campaign for greater resources to be allocated to care reform to fill any gaps in financing.

Experiences in Kenya suggest that a demonstration county model is highly valuable. It allows experimentation and the generation of evidence around what works in care reform. This enables learning generated in one part of the country to inform policies, guidance, and programmes in the country as a whole.

*"There's a lot that we've learned from Kisumu County, which is now informing us... we realised that when we started with Kisumu County, there's a lot that we did not take into account. And that has helped us a lot as we go to the next demonstration counties: we improve or we correct whatever we have not done well."* (Carren Ogoti, Directorate of Children's Services, Government of Kenya)

More details on care reform in Kisumu county can be found in [this short video](#).

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## Other news and resources

- Changing the Way We Care have developed [a paper](#) outlining how the case management package for supporting the reintegration of children was developed and rolled out.

**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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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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