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Eastern and Southern Africa regional learning platform on care reform

Monthly update - January 2024

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

Announcements on the platform

- **Platform evaluation and learning themes:** We have just completed an evaluation of phases 1-3 of the learning platform and are about to begin phase 4. We have a number of learning themes for phase 4 of the platform which have emerged from the evaluation including care in the context of the poly crisis, the linkages between education and care, gathering data and information needed to plan care reforms, an update on social protection and care linkages, and supervised independent living. We would love to hear your views on these themes and any further suggestions you have. Please complete this [short survey](#) (5 minutes maximum)
 - **Webinar recording - new global guidance on kinship care:** Our last webinar introduced [new global inter-agency guidance on kinship care](#). During the webinar we shared key lessons learnt on how to support kinship care, drawing particularly on examples of promising practice from Eastern and Southern Africa. A recording of the webinar can be found [here](#) and the webinar powerpoint [here](#).
 - **New video on kinship care:** Our latest video looks at kinship care in Zimbabwe and can be found on our [YouTube channel](#) in [English](#), [French](#) and [Portuguese](#). Our video on [Demonstration counties for care reform in Kenya](#) is now also available in [French](#) and [Portuguese](#).
 - **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.
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Supporting kinship care in Zimbabwe

“Kinship care is not something that is new, that is being brought from outside or external, it is something that is within our culture, it is within us.” (Shingirai Amos Paungano, Acting Deputy Director, Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare)

Kinship care involves children who cannot be cared for by parents being looked after by relatives or friends of the family. Global and regional guidance state that kinship care is the first option that should always be explored when children cannot be cared for by parents. Kinship care has been used for centuries in Zimbabwe, and is a manifestation of strong beliefs around collective responsibility for child rearing. Around a quarter of all children are estimated to be in kinship care in Zimbabwe. There are multiple benefits associated with kinship care, including allowing children to grow-up in a familiar environment with their own families. However, kinship carers are often elderly and struggle to provide for the children in their care.

“I’m 64 years old. So exhausted and tired. I cannot do much work to sustain these children. Some of the children I care for are too young to farm so I have to persevere and continue to farm for us to survive. There is a big issue whenever one of us falls sick. I always worry if we will be okay or not. Also, my health deteriorates everyday as I have a constant backache, and sometimes cough, which is disturbing for my age. I think so much and worry too much because of the number of dependants.”

The government and local civil society organisations (CSOs) are working together to maximise the benefits and minimise the risks of kinship care. This has involved changes to multiple aspects of the care and protection system. For example:

- **Developing policies and guidance on kinship care.** Zimbabwe is in the process of developing the National Alternative Care Policy which will replace the National Orphan Care Policy. This new policy will place strong emphasis on kinship care. Currently, guidance for practitioners centres on residential and foster care. Once the Alternative Care Policy has been finalised, the government will develop guidance on kinship care.
- **Ensuring more government resources are directed to kinship care.** Although the government has devoted extensive resources towards supporting vulnerable children, there is acknowledgement that more resource are required before kinship care can be fully supported.
- **Building a social service workforce able to support kinship care.** Efforts are underway to ensure that there are sufficient, trained social service workers to support kinship care families. It is recognised that it is neither possible nor advisable to offer social work support to all kinship care households, and that children vulnerable to abuse or neglect, or those with complex needs should be prioritised.
- **Working with a range of actors and sectors to support kinship care.** The government acknowledges that addressing the challenges faced by kinship care families requires inputs from those working on health, education, social protection and other sectors.
- **Using kinship care as part of de-institutionalisation processes.** The government is committed to reducing the number of children in institutional care, and sees support to kinship care as a key component of this strategy. For example, efforts are made to trace and assess potential kinship carers as part of processes reintegrating children in institutions back into families and communities.
- **Developing services and support for kinship care families, with a particular focus on self-help groups.** The government and CSOs such as the Farm Orphan Support Trust (FOST) are working to develop supports and services for kinship care families. In some cases, this involves ensuring that kinship care families can access existing health, social protection or education supports targeted at vulnerable households. In other instances, specific services are being developed for kinship care families. FOST have found that a strong emphasis on self-help and mutual support allows for more relevant, sustainable and effective services.

environment is better for me compared to where I was staying with my mother.”
(Child in Kinship care)

Other news and resources

- New global interagency guidance on kinship care have just been launched. The summary can be found [here](#) and full guidance [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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