



Association of Care Leavers Uganda (ACLU)

Statement of Support for the Transition of Residential Care Service

Association of Care Leavers Uganda (ACLU) is a community-driven Care Leaver led network united by a shared purpose: to claim our agency and support others who have navigated the institution care systems in Uganda. Our platform isn't just about having our voices heard – it's about using them to drive change. We aim to fiercely advocate (with our allies) for the well-being of care-experienced individuals at every stage of life, from childhood to adulthood. We aim for the Association of Care Leavers Uganda (ACLU) to become the representative voice and organisation for care experienced people in Uganda. Our goal is to ensure that our members are well taken care of, integrated into their communities, and actively and meaningfully contribute to improving the child protection and care system.

The situation of residential care in Uganda

The analysis of recent data on children in residential care reveals that 7,896 children are currently residing in 163 approved children's homes in Uganda. However, the exact number of children in residential care remains unknown due to many children's homes being unregistered, and the children living in them not being officially counted. It's noteworthy that more than two-thirds of the children living in residential care in Uganda have a living parent and could potentially live with their families if provided with the right support services. Reasons for placing children in residential care include material poverty, lack of access to basic social services, household violence or neglect, child abandonment, parental death or illness, and other factors affecting family functioning such as marriage breakdown or parental drug and alcohol abuse.

The importance of families and harms of residential care.

We, at the ACLU, stand united in the belief that every child deserves and should grow up in a family. Our lived experiences have shown us first-hand the profound and lasting harms of institutional care on a child's emotional, psychological, and social well-being. This isn't just a matter of moral obligation; it's a fact supported by evidence. We continue to argue prioritising families over residential care. Our aim is to create an agency for experienced people by tackling big problems, offering help, connecting people, and working with others to make things better.

Call to action - Organisations and individual donors

Organisations and individual donors, we urge you to reconsider support for residential institutions, We, who've known the walls of institutions, stand before you. We've seen first-hand the scars they leave. That's why we're calling on you to join us in a revolution. Let's move away from these places and build a future where families are strong, communities support each other, and every child has a chance to grow up loved in a family. Imagine it: less money wasted on buildings, more invested in keeping families together or finding them loving homes. This isn't just about us, it's about every child who deserves a safe and happy place to call their own.

A call to action - Governments donor countries

Governments of donor countries must take a proactive role in steering private funding away from institutions and toward family-based care. We urge you to monitor the flow of funds from your citizens, residents, and entities that support residential care institutions overseas, as well as voluntourism activities to prevent the exploitation of vulnerable children. These actions are vital in combating child trafficking. Finances should be redirected towards organisations that strengthen families, support the reintegration of children to family-based care and provide support to Care Leaver Networks.

For more information, or to read testimonies of our members, see the links below.

- ACLU Member Testimony: [Rachael's Story](#)
- ACLU Member Testimony: [Lawrence's Story](#)
- ACLU- [The Care Leaver Experience Report](#)
- News Article: [Children need a family environment, not childcare homes](#)
- [Transform Alliance Africa](#)
- [Family For Every Child](#)
- [Better Care Network](#)
- [UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Platform](#)