

CARE FREE FROM VIOLENCE FOR AFRICAN CHILDREN

1 in 2

Children in Africa experience **violence** in the home, at school or in the community each year.

Children exposed to violence at home are at risk of being **placed into alternative care** or ending up on **the streets**.

Evidence now shows that removing a child from an abusive home and placing them into alternative care **does not always mean an end to violence** against children.

Children in residential care often face **increased risk** of different forms of violence.

A growing evidence base shows that neglect is an especially prevalent and dangerous form of violence against children that has **long term and negative repercussions** on their wellbeing and development.

Children with disabilities are particularly at risk from violence in all care settings.

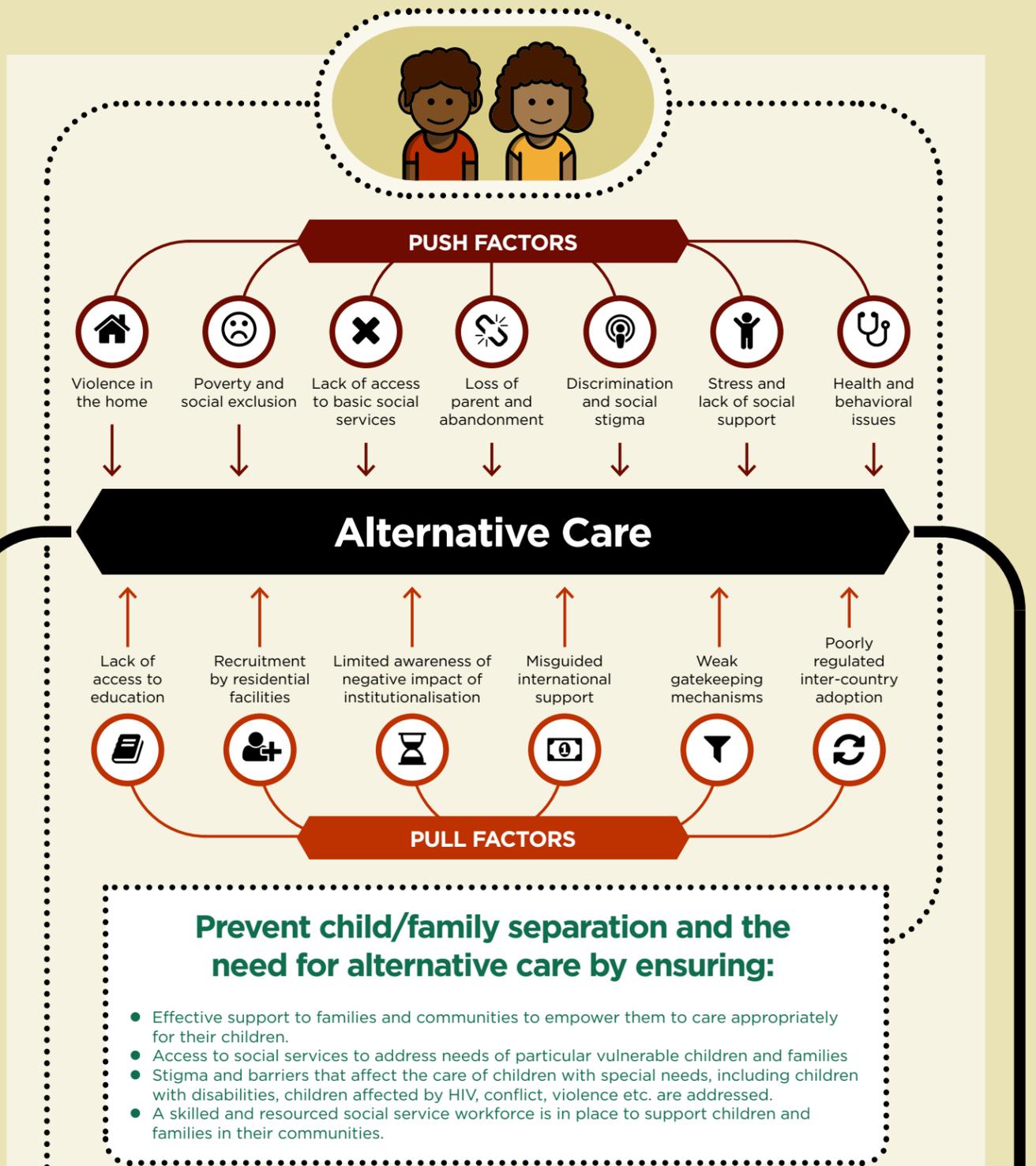
REGULATING ALTERNATIVE CARE

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children set out the responsibilities of States to ensure children are placed in alternative care **only when necessary**, and that the care is **appropriate** and protective.

States must establish a regulatory system for alternative care that ensures:

- Child/Family separation is a **last resort**
- Placement decisions by competent authorities are based on **child's best interests**.
- Minimum **standards of care**.
- Recording of data **for each child** in care.
- Confidential **complaints** reporting mechanisms.
- Children have **a say in all decisions** affecting their care.
- Oversight by an **independent mandated body**.
- Clear **prohibition** of all forms of violence and ill-treatment in alternative care.

The current alternative care system is failing **to protect children from violence**. Making life better for girls and boys requires **strengthening families, regulating alternative care, and empowering the social service workforce**.



Numerous studies, including first-hand reports from careleavers, across Africa and around the globe have shown a high risk of violence against children in residential care and suggest that violence in these contexts is widely underreported, particularly as most of these institutions are unregistered and unregulated.

Residential Care



Kinship Care



Kinship care plays a significant role in ensuring children remain in family care. In 40 out of 54 countries in Africa, 15% of children under 15 live apart from parents, the vast majority (95%) in their extended families. Children in kinship care can also be at risk of violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. This risk can be elevated when family resources are stretched thin.

Informal foster care has always played an important role in Africa and increasingly formal foster care systems are being established to provide family-based care on a short-term, long-term or emergency basis. Evidence from countries where foster care is well established shows that children in foster care can be at risk of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse by their caregivers as well as potential stigma and discrimination.

Foster Care



Ensure that safe and nurturing alternative care is available to children through:

- Effective gatekeeping mechanisms to ensure the care provided is suitable for the needs of that particular child.
- A range of family-based alternative care options are established, supported and monitored
- Ensuring use of residential care is limited to cases where it is strictly needed and can provide individualized and small-group care.
- An effective regulatory system to oversee the appropriateness and quality of alternative care is put in place.
- A ban on young children, especially children under 3, being placed in residential care.