



Child Care reform in Rwanda

Programme

Tubarerere Mu Muryango (TMM):
Let's raise children in families.

Overall Goals

Implement the national strategy on child care reform whereby children are returned from residential institutions to family and community-based care

Ensure that Rwandan children have access to, and are supported by, a strengthened child protection system

Strategic Objectives

1. Enhance the capacity of the NCC to lead a national child care reform and coordinate a functioning child protection system
2. Strengthen the capacity to deliver and coordinate child care services at decentralized levels.
3. Strengthen the family unit for reintegration, resilience and prevention
4. Ensure long term sustainability and strengthening the child protection system
5. Strengthen data and strategic knowledge management, monitoring and evaluation
6. Communication, advocacy, community-mobilization

Direct Implementing Partners

National Commission for Children
UNICEF
Hope and Homes for Children
Global Communities
Tulane University

Background

During the 7th Children Summit on 4 January 2012, the Government of Rwanda made a strong commitment to transform orphanages and other children's institutions and to reintegrate children into family based care. The then newly established National Commission for Children (NCC) was tasked to oversee the successful reintegration of children, the creation of a national alternative care framework and the transition towards a robust child protection system.

In March 2012, the Cabinet of Ministers endorsed a landmark Strategy for National Child Care Reform that details how Rwandan children living in institutions should regain their right to live in a loving, safe and supportive family environment. This strategy is aligned with the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda and the Integrated Child Rights Policy, as well as with international conventions and guidelines.

The strategy promotes the achievement of the following strategic goals:

- (1) Transform Rwanda's current child care and protection system into a family-based, family strengthening system whose resources (both human and financial) are primarily targeted at supporting vulnerable families to remain together.
- (2) Promote positive Rwandan social values that encourage all Rwandans and their communities to take responsibility for vulnerable children.

Some key elements that informed the strategy were, first, a national survey on institutional care conducted by MIGEPROF in partnership with Hope and Homes for Children revealed that 3,323 children and young adults were living in registered institutions commonly known as orphanages, and second a successful pilot closure of an institution in Kicukiro District.

Achievements

Enhanced Capacity of NCC to lead the Childcare reform and child protection system

Enhanced capacity at decentralized levels

Strengthened family for reintegration and Prevention

Strengthened Child protection System for Sustainability

Data and strategic knowledge management

Public awareness and community mobilization

- Revision of **legislative and policy framework** for alternative care
- **A national coordination mechanism** regulated by a Partnership Compact
- **Program Management Team**
- **48 trained social workers and psychologists** operational
- **1,696 children and young adults placed** into family and alternative family-based care from July 2012 to December 2014
- Family strengthening through **socio-economic and psychosocial support**
- Establishment of **community-based services to ensure prevention and sustainable reintegration**: Inshuti z'Umuryango-Friends of Family
- **Reduction in the number of new entries** into institutions: **-81% from 2011 to 2014**
- **Integration** of social workers and psychologist **into civil service structure**
- Establishment of **District child and social service unit**
- **A referral mechanism** from Village, Cell, Sector, District to National level
- Increased allocation for **family-based care within Government budget**
- **Assessment of existing Child Protection Case Management** to inform a Child Protection Information Management System
- Survey on the **well-being of children reintegrated** into family-based care in 2012
- **Communication Strategy** for child care reform program
- National **community-mobilization**
- Gradual transformation of **attitudes and behaviors towards family-based care**

Challenges

- Existence of unregistered institutions
- Resistance of some institution managers and their donors.
- Difficulties in tracing private donors financing institutions and in ensuring re-investment of resources to support children and families in the community.
- Funding gap and challenges in ensuring sufficient resources for the implementation of the care reform.

Lessons Learned

- Government ownership and commitment on the reform process through a single implementation framework
- Partnership and coordination mechanism between Government, United Nations, and Civil Society agencies.
- Importance of evidence-based programming and advocacy
- Need for further conceptualization and operationalization of child care reform for children with disabilities
- Stronger investment in public awareness to increase knowledge of the community about the benefits of family-based care over institutionalized care

WAY FORWARD

- Establishing a national community-based child protection system through Inshuti z'Umuryango for prevention and timely response
- National capacity-building of professional and para-professional workforce
- Ensure national coverage of the Tubarerere Mu Muryango programme
- Intensify national and international public awareness and community mobilization.
- Continuous resource mobilization for the Tubarerere Mu Muryango programme
- Conduct a national assessment on institutions for children with disabilities
- Developing and implementing a national model of family-based care for children with disabilities (phase II of the Strategy for National Child Care Reform).