

**Launch of 'Moving Forward: Implementing the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children'  
11 April 2013  
UNICEF House, New York City**

**Opening**

It's an honour & pleasure to be here, and an absolute privilege to have co-lead the project with Nigel Cantwell, whom many of you will know to be the prime actor in the crafting of the Guidelines (if you know Nigel you'll know what a pleasure it is to work with him, his vast knowledge as well as his great sense of humour!). To have worked with Nigel, our fantastic CELCIS team at the University of Strathclyde, and a passionate, wise and well-led Steering Group has been a rich, creative, and ultimately a fruitful experience.

From my perspective, the purpose of the launch is to mark 2 things: this event is both a *celebration* and I hope a *further call-to-action*; these two areas are what I'll speak about briefly today.

**Celebration**

The Handbook, *Moving Forward* is yet another milestone along a journey about making change happen to realise the rights—ultimately to improve the circumstances—of a group of children who are a highly vulnerable when rights aren't being met. Today is a celebration of yet a further step to closing the gap between international policy and local realities for children and families. In some ways it's a sober celebration, given the seriousness of the issue—of the lifelong, personal and societal impacts when we get it wrong for these children—but a celebration nonetheless because it is yet another step in the right direction.

As were earlier milestones: the *acceptance of the Guidelines* by the UN General Assembly was highly celebrated as they have ushered in a new rights-based international framework for this group of children—globally. This is indeed a global problem; no country has got this sorted.

And the potential impact of the Guidelines is made all the more significant by the wide ranging cooperation and leadership across a wide range of players, notably Brazil alongside other governments ambitious for children as well as UNICEF, civil society, individual specialists and young people with experience of alternative care, from all parts of the world. We drew on a similarly rich tapestry of advisors to inform the Moving Forward project. This cooperative pedigree provides an essential springboard for the next steps: moving ahead with implementation.

**Purposes of the Handbook**

We've written the Handbook for a number of purposes, and taken into account the different perspectives, interests and learning styles of a whole range of target audiences, with an aim for maximum accessibility, usefulness and ultimately, impact. Whether you're looking for context and background, you like checklists and high-level policy guidance, you relate best to stories and narrative, or you've got a specific 'issue' you're wanting more insight and info on, there will be something here for you. Specifically, *Moving Forward* addresses five key aspects:

Firstly it addresses **the thinking behind** the inclusion or wording of the provisions in the Guidelines; whereas other international documents have "les travaux préparatoires" to draw from, for better understanding of the nuances, the thinking and the intention behind any one provision, the Handbook offers this insight into the Guidelines.

Secondly, the Handbook looks specifically at the implications of the Guidelines' provisions from a policy perspective and identifies **a wide range of policy areas** that must be addressed to ensure optimal implementation of the Guidelines. Given the complexity of alternative care—being concise here was a massive task!

Thirdly, the Handbook sets out **examples of practice** identified throughout the world that illustrate an element of the Guidelines. As well as taking an in-depth look at the meaning behind the provisions in the Guidelines and their policy implications, the Handbook provides examples of “promising practices”, that is, initiatives in line with the Guidelines that are already under way, whether through governments or civil society.

The response from around the world for particular examples of practice was enthusiastic; we received many potential examples that fit the criteria for 'promising practice', but could realistically only include about 70. In the final selection of examples we aimed to achieve the best possible regional representation, and ensured that any country appeared only once. We made sure the range of actors were reflected, too: the examples identify practices and programmes led by government, by international organisations as well as local NGOs. Importantly, the final result is a series of vignettes that give a flavour to inspire all those concerned to consider what can be achieved in a wide range of socio-cultural and economic contexts, and to look more closely at these examples to determine what could be adapted and applied to local contexts.

Fourthly, in addition, **15 topics** were selected based on the view that they would benefit from more in-depth explanation. Through these 15 topics, the Handbook ‘streamlines’, if you will, some of the provisions for further clarity and impact. We've tried to highlight the main thrusts of the Guidelines, which can get lost in the overall text. The references to participation of children, for example, feature in a number of provisions in the Guidelines; we've brought these all together in one place in the Handbook so they can be examined more closely.

Finally—**the final chapter of the Handbook** points us to the *second purpose of the launch* today: from celebration of this new milestone, to inspiring ACTION. The final chapter has a special purpose: to demonstrate that implementing the Guidelines is something that can be done by specialists in isolation but requires inputs and commitment from a broad spectrum of society, working together.

“Closing the gap” – the title of the final chapter – between policy and practice you'll be well aware, means harnessing the efforts of governments, NGOs, researchers, care and social work professionals, community leaders and even the business sector. We're starting from a strong platform here, as, broad involvement has been a key feature of the entire project to date. Hopefully that same spirit will also underpin this next phase – of moving forward with implementation.

On behalf of the Handbook team, we very much hope you will find the handbook helpful in moving your part of the world forward...on the road to improving respect for the human rights of children who are, or may be, in need of alternative care.

Jennifer Davidson,  
Director of CELCIS