

Prevention of family separation and provision of alternative care services

Focus on the Guidelines for Alternative Care of Children

Oak Foundation Partners Meeting

Dar-es-Salaam, 30th May 2014

Basics Issues

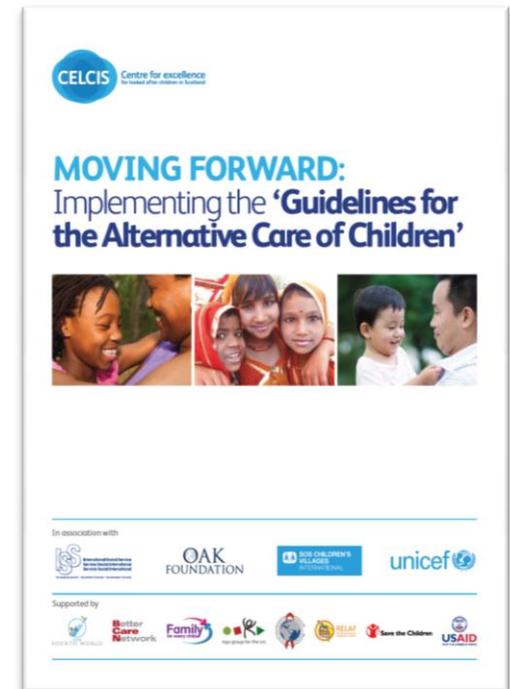
- Millions of children lack adequate family care due to poverty, AIDS, armed conflict, disasters, family dysfunction, and other factors.
- They are largely out of sight and out of mind.
- Governments face many challenges in meeting their responsibility to support families
- In many countries, there is a proliferation of inappropriate and unregulated care
- There is an over-reliance on residential care facilities that are in many instances outdated and harmful for children

Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children

- The Guidelines, welcomed by the UN General Assembly on 20 November 2009, provides further guidance to UNCRC and the ACRWC
- The Guidelines sets out to:
 - support efforts to preserve or re-establish the family unit
 - when needed, identify and provide alternative child care that promotes the child's development
 - encourage governments to assume their responsibilities towards the rights of children without parental care
 - encourage all concerned with child care to fully take into account the Guidelines in their policies and activities.

Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children

- Moving Forward: Implementing the « Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children »
- Launched in March 2013 and in April 2013 at the ACERWC 21st session, Addis Ababa
- Provides additional guidance to policy makers and practitioners
- Opportunity for experts and hundreds of governmental and non-governmental professionals to present “promising practices” across regions



Two Core Principles

- Principle of necessity: is care genuinely needed?
- Principle of suitability: is the care appropriate for the child?

Key elements to take into account to ensure that alternative care is used only when necessary and is appropriate for the child concerned.

Source: Moving Forward: Implementing the 'Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children'

Principles to be applied

Reduce the perceived need for formal alternative care

- Implement poverty alleviation programmes
- Address societal factors that can provoke family breakdown (e.g. discrimination, stigmatisation, marginalisation...)
- Improve family support and strengthening services
- Provide day-care and respite care opportunities
- Promote informal/customary coping strategies
- Consult with the child, parents and wider family to identify options
- Tackle avoidable relinquishment in a pro-active manner
- Stop unwarranted decisions to remove a child from parental care

Discourage recourse to alternative care

- Ensure a robust gate-keeping system with decision-making authority
- Make available a range of effective advisory and practical resources to which parents in difficulty can be referred
- Prohibit the 'recruitment' of children for placement in care
- Eliminate systems for funding care settings that encourage unnecessary placements and/or retention of children in alternative care
- Regularly review whether or not each placement is still appropriate and needed

Ensure formal alternative care settings meet minimum standards

- Commit to compliance with human rights obligations
- Provide full access to basic services, especially health-care and education
- Ensure adequate human resources (assessment, qualifications and motivation of carers)
- Promote and facilitate appropriate contact with parents/other family members
- Protect children from violence and exploitation
- Set in place mandatory registration and authorisation of all care providers, based on strict criteria to be fulfilled
- Prohibit care providers with primary goals of a political, religious or economic nature
- Establish an independent inspection mechanism carrying out regular and unannounced visits

Ensure that the care setting meets the needs of the child

- Foresee a full range of care options
- Assign gatekeeping tasks to qualified professionals who systematically assess which care setting is likely to cater best to a child's characteristics and situation
- Make certain that residential care is used only when it will provide the most constructive response
- Require the care provider's cooperation in finding an appropriate long-term solution for each child

What do the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children say about preventing separation?

The Guidelines emphasise that States should:

- * prevent the separation of children from their parents and families where whenever possible.
- * have national policies in place to support families and prevent children being placed unnecessarily in alternative care.

National policies should among others:

- * Provide a national framework for supporting families in their caregiving role.
- * Provide services to support families: health, social welfare, shelter, education, parenting skills.
- * Provide targeted services for families in specific circumstances such as disabilities, young parents, child-headed households.
- * Strengthen work with families: anti-discriminatory policies, family involvement to develop services, public awareness, training for professionals.

What do the guidelines say about a range of care options?

National policy should among others:

- Guarantee **quality care standards** in all forms of care
- Promote the **development of family-based care options**
- Require that placements are made on **case-by-case** basis in order to meet their needs
- Ensure that placements options take into account the **cultural and religious needs of children**
- Ensure the needs of all children are met including children with disabilities
- Require that decisions on children's care are made by an authorized **gatekeeping** agency

Promotion of the Guidelines in Africa

- Family Based Care Conference, Nairobi 2009
- Francophone Conference on Family Strengthening and Alternative Care, Dakar, 2012
- AU Family Systems meeting, 2012
- ICA Conference, Dakar & Addis Ababa 2012
- Launch of Moving Forward at ACERWC 21st session, Addis Ababa 2013
- Regional Conference on domestic adoption, Nairobi, 2013
- One day session on the Guidelines in the November 2013 session of ACERWC
- Alternative Care Briefing of ACERWC, 12 April 2014, Ethiopia

Next Steps in regard to the Guidelines in Africa

- Development underway of a “*Tracking Tool to monitor progress in the Implementation of the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children*”
- Alternative Care Country Briefs requested by the ACERWC for countries due to report to the Committee
- Proposal of day of General Discussion on Family Strengthening & Alternative Care 2014 in the next session of ACERWC (Nov 2014)
- BCN Regional consultation
- Discussion underway of having the conference on Care Systems in Eastern and Southern Africa in 2015
- Discussion underway with SRSG VAC of conducting Regional expert consultations on violence against children in all care settings

Key action to transform systems of care and protection

- Mobilize political will – *recognize this is a national development issue as well as what children need*
- Establish a legal and policy framework including standards of care
- Provide support to vulnerable families
- Develop family-based alternative care
- Establish effective gatekeeping mechanisms
- Regulate and monitor standards of care for all residential care centers including enumeration of facilities and the children in them

Key action to transform systems of care (Cnt...)

- Strengthen and redirect social work services
- Redirect governmental and private resources to support family care (family reintegration, quality alternative care, and preventing unnecessary separation)
- Develop inclusive education
- Change public attitudes regarding care
- Give priority to moving the youngest children into family care

A multi-year plan is essential with synergies among the key actions.

The Better Care Network

Better Care Network

- ✓ Interagency network facilitating active information exchange & collaboration on the issue of children without adequate family care
- ✓ Advocate for technically sound policy and programmatic action on global, regional and national levels

2013: BCN Inter-Agency Regional Initiative on Care

- ✓ Identify the key strategic national and regional priorities for action that can accelerate child care reform within the region
- ✓ Strengthen capacity and collaborative mechanisms to advance care reform through information exchange, technical and peer support, research and advocacy on the importance of family-based care as identified in the inception phase

Asante Sana

Visit BCN website and sign up to our newsletter:

<http://bettercarenetwork.org/BCN/Newsletter.asp>

Contact BCN Regional Initiative:

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Questions for round table discussions

1. With your country and programs experience, what is being implemented to prevent the unnecessary separation of children and how are parents being supported in their caregiving role?
1. With your country and programs experience, how can informal care be supported and potential risks for children be addressed?

Question1:

What is being implemented to prevent the unnecessary separation of children and how are parents being supported in their caregiving role?

Q1: Potential prevention activities and support

- Respite care for families in difficulty and/or those with disabilities
- Raise awareness of and access to government subsidies
- Inclusive education programmes for adolescent mothers
- Provision of affordable day care for single parents
- Income generating activities
- Other potential answers

Question 2:

How can informal care be supported and potential risks for children be addressed?

Q2: Informal care risks

- Support informal carers (e.g.: subsidies, respite care etc.)
 - Important that carers are not “controlled” as additional burden to difficult task
- Support to child headed households (e.g.: access to education, link to community leaders, etc.)
- Community level mechanisms to identify potential situations of neglect or abuse such as child exploitation (e.g.: domestic aids and sexual exploitation etc.)
- Other potential answers