

Campaign partners:



www.anppcanug.org



National Council for Children
www.mglsd.go.ug



www.mglsd.go.ug



Children at Risk Action Network



https://www.childfund.org/uganda



Save the Children

uganda.savethechildren.net/



http://bantwana.org/



we make families, not orphans

http://www.childsfoundation.org/



Every child has rights.

www.calmafrica-ug.org/



www.solehope.org



www.viva.org



www.fidauuganda.org/



http://www.abidefamilycenter.org/



www.efuganda.org/



No child forced to live on the street

www.retrak.org/



Together to end AIDS

www.sfac.org.uk/



THRIVE

www.thriveuganda.org/



www.arcuganda.org



www.wvi.org/uganda



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL ADMINISTRATION



Africa Renewal.org



www.alternative-care-initiative.org



www.amazima.org



'Strengthen African Families' The 'SAFE' Campaign



For more information:

www.alternative-care-uganda.org

info@alternative-care-uganda.org



www.facebook.com/groups/198577020276970

For further information on children without adequate family care, see www.bettercarenetwork.org

A Call for Change

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As an alliance of individuals, government and organisations working in Uganda, we appreciate the overwhelming care and concern for our children by the international community, including governments, churches, organisations and individuals. We seek to ensure that our children are in safe, happy and healthy families and that should be a priority for all of us.

“In Africa, we believe that families are the foundation of our communities and that everything should be done to keep children within their own families and communities.”

Mr. James Kaboggoza, Assistant Commissioner for Children Affairs Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development

We are increasingly concerned by the way our children are often described and their best interests not upheld. A number of organisations fail to recognise and work within the legal frameworks of the countries in which they operate. Though intentions may be good, such organisations often end up working against national policies and programmes designed to strengthen child welfare provisions.

The inappropriate and inaccurate use of the term ‘orphan’ has increased stereotypes and stigma for our children and created negative perceptions and individualised short term responses. This needs to change.

Current Situation

- In Uganda many children are vulnerable mainly due to poverty. 38 percent of the population live in absolute poverty with children constituting 62 per cent of the poorⁱ - but the situation of Uganda children is more complex than is often portrayed, for example:
- Over half of Ugandans Millennium Development Goals are on targetⁱⁱ
- More than 90 per cent of orphaned children are cared for by their own familyⁱⁱⁱ
- 85% of children in child care institutions / orphanages have at least one living parent^{iv}
- Social-work and case management based programmes have resettled up to 70% of children outside of parental care with their family while the remaining 30% placed into domestic alternative care placements^v
- Kinship care and informal foster care is already embedded in Ugandan culture and tradition
- Domestic adoption already happens and is increasing in numbers

“When you label a child an ‘orphan’ you respond to the ‘label’ and not the individual needs of a child”

Dan Hope, Social Worker, Substitute Families for Abandoned Children (SFAC). www.sfs



Key concerns

A well-meaning desire to “rescue” Ugandan children has led to concern and responses that often only touch the surface and do not change root causes or issues for the many children rather than the few.

- **Child Care Institutions / Orphanages** have proven to have adverse affects on child development, high levels of abuse, disruption to family and community connections and negative **long term** outcomes in terms of social exclusion – homelessness, crime, poverty and mental health^{vi}. Additionally they are proven to be an ineffective use of resources and stifling the development of alternative care and prevention activities. Uganda’s children do not need any more Orphanages but strong families, communities and effective child protection systems. There are many push and pull factors which result in children living in child care institutions. These include family poverty, availability of ‘free’ services such as education in institutions, and incentivised ‘recruitment’ of children by institutions themselves. Whilst the death of one or parents can be a factor leading to institutionalisation, it is rarely the only factor. Often, children are not formally abandoned but are temporarily placed in institutions by families in difficulty, or they are encouraged or forced to place them there due to lack of alternative services, discrimination or the poor knowledge and understanding of professionals involved. ‘Orphan hood’ is not the significant factor that is often publicised^{vii}
- **International adoption** can remove focus and resources away from good work that is being done to strengthen families, resettle children or find in-country solutions. International Adoption is a very expensive intervention for individual children that distorts and corrupts local initiatives to place Ugandan children in Ugandan families. It also increasingly leads to high levels of corruption, manipulation and coercion in a weak and unregulated system
- The over emphasis and often **misrepresentation of ‘orphans’** distracts attention, resources and programmes away from other vulnerabilities and what is really necessary to improve the wellbeing and livelihoods of Ugandan families and communities including vulnerable children

Way Forward



We believe we should be working together to strengthen local child welfare systems in order to keep children with their families and in their local communities. As an alliance we call on organisations, churches and individuals to:

- Work with the Ugandan government and child protection experts to strengthen existing child protection systems and work within the existing policy and legal frameworks
- Support the growing number of organisations working to keep families together, resettle children back with their relatives, place children into family-based care and close child care institutions
- Encourage and support the implementation of child rights centred legislation and programmes
- Respect the individual needs and rights of ALL children and not use stigmatising and negative labels such as ‘orphan’
- Re-evaluate well-meaning activities that may unintentionally destabilise children and create more demand for institutionalised care (i.e. ‘Short Term Mission’ trips to ‘orphanages’)
- Follow an informed approach to healthy child care and child development

“We must never forget the importance of family and community in the life of a child.”

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

(Endnotes)

- i Uganda Child Poverty Report
- ii MDG Goals, Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development September 2013

- iii UNICEF-MICS; Measure DHS
- iv Ugandan Baseline Study on the State of Institutional Care in Uganda 2012
- v Residential care for abandoned children and their integration into family

based setting in Uganda: Lessons for policy and programming, 2013, EDDY J. WALAKIRA, ERIC A. OCHEN, AND PAUL BUKULUKI, Makerere University, SUE ALLAN, Child’s i Foundation, Kampala, Uganda

- vi Keeping Children out of Harmful Institutions and why we should be investing in family-based care, Save The Children 2009
- vii SUNRISE OVC Alternative Care Workshop Report 2013