



CONCEPT NOTE

1ST AFRICAN CONFERENCE ON IMPLEMENTING FAMILY CARE

INTRODUCTION

There are an estimated 151 million children worldwide who have lost either one or both parents, with at least 13 million of these children having lost both parents¹. African children continue to bear the brunt of the situation due to the HIV and AIDS epidemic, poverty and livelihood insecurities and it is predicted that the situation will get worse.

Statements contained in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, endorsed in conventions and instruments of the Organization of African Unity, the OAU Heads of State and Government's Declaration on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child as well as the United Nations, in particular the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child enforce that ***“Every child shall be entitled to the enjoyment of parental care and protection and shall, whenever possible, have the right to reside with his or her parents”***.¹ ***A child who is parentless, or who is temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or who in his or her best interest cannot be brought up or allowed to remain in that environment shall be provided with alternative family care, which could include, among others, foster placement, or placement in suitable institutions for the care of children and shall take all necessary measures to trace and re-unite children with parents”***.²

Despite the focus on the best care option for orphaned and vulnerable children being a family unit, many children are still deprived of this right as well-meaning international and local organizations have over the past decades provided care for orphaned and vulnerable children in institutions. Regrettably this has been done with little understanding and foresight of the negative long term effects of institutional care on children. Studies and research has proven that children in institutional care rarely leaves the system unscathed, present with bonding and attachment disorders, inadequate social and emotional development³ and are alienated from their peers and communities when they leave care.

THE DRIVE TOWARDS FAMILY CARE FOR AFRICAN CHILDREN

Since the late 1990's, several countries around the world have responded by developing National Plans for children or mainstreaming OVC issues into existing strategies. Some of the key developments and outcomes with regard to recommendations and guidelines for Family Care have resulted from conferences, work groups and task teams.

¹ UNICEF 2013

² The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Nov 1999

³ The risk of Harm to young children in institutional care. Kevin Browne University of Nottingham UK 2009; Early Childhood Development

vulnerable children in Africa whilst addressing the challenges and requirements for ensuring the safe families and communities as well as addressing the need for Standards and Guidelines for Institutional Care. Amongst others, the conference Declarations and Recommendations called for an enhancement of the legislative and policy environment and a paradigm shift from focusing on the incapacities of families and communities to enhancing their skills and resilience as well as investment and sustainable funding for enhanced child protection systems.

In November 2009, after years of inter-governmental consultation and negotiations, a resolution welcoming the Guidelines on Alternative Care of Children was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. The Guidelines provide an important framework for governments, organisations and other stakeholders to prevent unnecessary institutionalisation of children and providing appropriate alternative care systems. A call was made to African countries to collectively support the adoption of the Guidelines for Alternative Care of Children at the UN General Assembly and to provide legal and policy frameworks and scaling up of child sensitive social protection programmes as well as the adoption of relevant Hague Conventions in countries, which have not done so, was recommended.

Throughout 2011 four working groups of The Way Forward project convened to collaborate on whether the full continuum of care was available to children without parental care in Africa. In addition, these groups were asked to reflect on ways to develop the broad range of partnerships (government, private and faith- and community-based organizations) necessary to support delivery of a full continuum of care in Africa. The Working Groups communicated regularly to continue progress toward their findings and reports and reconvened in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in May, 2011.

At the Dakar Conference in May 2012, sub-Saharan Francophone Countries aimed at mobilising and inspiring actors and donors to become part of a region-wide initiative on children without appropriate care. The Conference declaration, similar to the Declarations of the 1st International Conference in Africa on Family based care for children but highlighted the importance of adherence to national and cultural realities within African nations.

Leading child protection partners such as UNICEF, Save the Children and others, have focused on a range of collaborations and conferences focusing on the policy and legislative environment to effect change, lobby, communicate and build capacity to influence decision makers at various levels. The Implementation of the UN Guidelines on Alternative Care for Children has also been launched internationally, yet there appears to be little motivation for institutions to provide family care alternatives for children. Some organizations have however made great strides in a change of heart and direction focusing on the recruitment and screening of alternative families, strengthening their parenting and socio-economic resilience, entering into community dialogues and forming multi-sectoral partnerships to support family- based care and deinstitutionalizing children.

THE MAIN OBJECTIVES OF THE CONFERENCE

Grass roots level NGO's, CBO's and FBO's are the implementers of policy and legislative guidelines. Churches and religious institutions also play a significant role in the provision of care for OVC and the main objective of the conference is to mobilize organizations and faith-based institutions in Africa to implement family care for children and prevent further proliferation of institutions. A number of African stakeholders have developed "promising practice models," while others are still lagging behind due to a lack of knowledge, information and clear implementation steps for family care. In some cases, care providers have strong beliefs about one model against the other and there is need to openly debate and learn from each other. It is also a necessity to re-examine the effect of institutional care on children and to discuss a range of alternative family care options such as foster care, domestic adoption and independent living groups. The transition of Children's homes, institutions and "orphanages" to temporary safe care facilities for children, whilst family based care options for the child and reunification is being investigated, should be debated.

Psycho-social support for children in institutional care as well as children and families will be highlighted as a critical component of care models.

THE MAIN THEMES OF THE DIALOGUES:

1. Alternative Care: What is the best care option for children?

What does the term “Deinstitutionalization” mean?

What is the role of Institutions?

Voices from the past – First-hand experienced from adults that grew up in the various care models

Bonding and attachment

The second insult – care leavers

2. How do we implement family care?

From Temporary care to Family Care

Foster Care

Adoption

Place of Safety families

Community care models

Other models – street children, children with disabilities, independent living

3. How do we ensure that children are protected in Family care?

Financial, psycho-social and technology support

Child Protective Behaviour

Formal and informal Child Protection systems

With interactive Dialogues, led by communication specialists, we will be guided on how we communicate with each other and how we communicate with communities regarding Family care.

WHAT MAKES THIS CONFERENCE DIFFERENT?

The conference moves away from the traditional “lecture and listener” format with Topic Facilitators opening discussions on the various topics which are followed by robust group discussions, feedback, “Wall Café’ sessions and specialist panel discussions. This allows for everyone’s voice to be heard!

OUTCOMES OF THE CONFERENCE

The conference aims to achieve the following:

- Stakeholders have knowledge and understanding of the role of institutions and the Implementation of family care
- A Network of implementing organizations is formed to lobby an advocate for family care and continue to share knowledge and experience through dissemination of information on the Network website
- Conference statements and declarations are documented and handed to the AU and the African Council of Churches

CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

Conference participants will be drawn from African countries, stakeholders involved in implementing family care, faith-based institutions, academic and research institutions, donor organizations and social service professionals. The participation of Government departments and International NGO's are welcomed. We anticipate approximately 350 participants and the conference will be conducted in English.

CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS

After various meetings and broad collaboration with regional and international partners it was agreed that due to logistical reasons the organizing committee should consist of South African partners and that for purposes of this conference the "family based care implementers" should split from the organizations focussed on the policy and legislative matters in order to maintain the focus on the conference objectives. Contact with regional partners will be maintained via South African partner offices.

The following organizations serve on the organizing committee (in alphabetical order):

Organizations	Representative Person
AIDS Foundation	Andrew Miti (Fundraising)
BrainBoosters	Eddie Phillips (Fundraising)
Department of Social Development	Mrs. M. Mbere
Give a Child a Family	Monica Woodhouse (Conference Chair) Steven Wetton (Marketing and Logistics) Elize Coetzee (Fundraising)
Parenting Africa Network	Trevor Davies (Marketing an Logistics)
RIATT and REPPSI	Angelita Silva (HIV and AIDS)
SA Cares for Life	Sylvi Bodemer (Secretariat) Tanya Knollys (Logistics)
Together Africa Without Orphans TAWO	Billiance & Catherine Chondwe

Secretariat and Media	
Conference Chair:	Monica Woodhouse
	monica@gcf.org.za
Conference Secretariat :	Sylvi Bodemer
	sylvi@scares.co.za
Conference Planners	www.conferencecall.co.za
Donor support:	
Wereldkinderen (Netherlands)	
Läkarmissionen (Sweden)	
ICS (Nairobi)	

Input into the planning and inclusion of other organizations is done via partner organizations throughout Eastern and Southern Africa.

CONFERENCE LOGISTICS AND AGENDA

The three day conference will take place from the **10 to the 12th June 2015** in **Johannesburg, South Africa** at the Emperors Palace near the O.R. Tambo International Airport with regular shuttle services between the conference center and the airport as well as ample parking for day visitors and various accommodation options.

COMMUNICATION

Further information and communication is published on the conference website.

www.caresystems.co.za

CONFERENCE FUNDING AND BUDGET

The budget is based on a conference fee of R2,500 per delegate or three days (excluding flights and accommodation)

Early Bird Fee Available