

**HOPE
AND
HOMES
FOR
CHILDREN**



POLICY DIALOGUE BRIEFING

NO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT GLOBAL CHILD CARE REFORM

**Time to commit to a future without child
institutionalisation**

Scan here to register to the Policy Dialogue



Monday 16th September



**10-11am New-York/3-4pm London/4-5pm
Geneva/5-6pm Addis Ababa/9-10pm
Bangkok**



Zoom



Foreword

There is no sustainable development in a world where children grow up in institutions. The harm of institutionalisation on children is well-documented and all across the world, there is overwhelming evidence that the estimated 5.4 million children confined to institutions are at high risk of daily violence, abuse and neglect.

The institutionalisation of children is symptomatic of child protection and care systems that do not work. The profoundly unsustainable nature of institution-based care systems is two-fold: Where families and communities face poverty, inequality, lack of access to essential services such as support to care for children with disabilities and access to quality education, families often have no other choice but to place their children in institutions. At the same time, those children who have lived in institutions are forced to grow up without the care, love, resources vital for their well-being. Children very often carry the negative consequences of institutionalisation for the rest of their life, including physical and mental health struggles and social exclusion. Institutionalisation is undoubtedly both a consequence and a perpetrator of inequality and discrimination.

At a time when world leaders are evaluating the progress on the sustainable development goals and agenda at the UN Summit of the Future, we have an opportunity of a lifetime to ensure no child is left in an institution. Hope and Homes for Children, an international NGO working to stop children from being confined to institutions, is pleased to welcome you to our first Policy Dialogue convened to uncover the links between sustainable development and the fight to eradicate child institutionalisation.

Drawing on our 30 years of expertise in deinstitutionalisation, working with governments, funders, civil society organisations, families and children to create the conditions for long-term reform, Hope and Homes for Children is joining forces with an expert panel for this Policy Dialogue. We look forward to the fruitful discussions during this Policy Dialogue and share this policy brief, outlining some of the key concepts that will be discussed during the conversation. Hope and Homes for Children is looking forward to welcoming you to our Policy Dialogue and continuing to work together to ensure no child grows up in an institution.

Hope and Homes for Children

Agenda

Time (Central European Time)	Session Title	Panellists
16.00-16.10	Opening: Building a future where no child grows up deprived of family care	Stephen Ucembe <i>Regional Advocacy Manager, Africa - Hope and Homes for Children</i>
16.10-16.15	Life after institutionalisation: Mwiza's story	Mwiza* <i>Rwanda (recorded video)</i>
16.15-16.45	Panel discussion: No sustainable development without eradicating child institutionalisation	Anju Pun <i>Country Director – Forget Me Not, Nepal</i> Adel Anna Sasvari <i>Policy Officer Rights of the Child, DG INTPA, European Commission, European Union</i> Christopher Muwanguzi <i>Chief Executive Officer - Child's I Foundation, Uganda</i> Prof. Marinus H. van IJendoorn <i>Honorary professor UCL, University College London, United Kingdom</i>
16.45-16.55	Questions and answers	
16.55-17.00	The way forward: The next steps and closing remarks	Stephen Ucembe <i>Regional Advocacy Manager, Africa - Hope and Homes for Children</i>



Photo 1: **Juju* from Kenya.** Jean Bizimana / Hope and Homes for Children

The harm of institutions

NB: You can find more detailed information on the harm of institutions of children on the 2022 Hope and Homes for Children publication 'Families. Not Institutions' (see section 'Further reading' below).

The estimated 5.4 million children living in institutions across the world¹ form one of the most vulnerable and marginalised groups in society, exposed to a system that harms their development and systematically violates their rights. Crucially, the majority of children in institutions are not 'orphans'; approximately 80% have at least one living parent.²

Institutions compromise children's development, threaten their survival, exacerbate inequalities, and increase challenges throughout life. Over 100 years of research from across the world demonstrates the significant harm caused to children in institutions who are deprived of stable, continuous and loving parental care and who may consequently suffer life-long harm.³ Violence, abuse and neglect in institutions is pervasive⁴⁵. Children in orphanages are particularly at risk of violence compared to children in other settings, including verbal abuse, beatings and physical torture, sexual abuse including rape, and psychological harm including isolation, harassment and humiliating discipline. This sometimes includes solitary confinement, physical restraints and forced medication⁶. The impacts of institutionalisation can continue beyond childhood and lead to multiple disadvantages during adulthood⁷. Life-long impacts of institutionalisation include severe

¹ Chris Desmond, and others, 'Prevalence and Number of Children Living in Institutional Care: Global, Regional, and Country Estimates', *The Lancet, Child & Adolescent Health*, 4.5 (2020)

² Corinna Csáky, 'Keeping Children out of Harmful Institutions: Why We Should be Investing in Family-based Care' London: Save the Children, 2009.

³ van IJzendoorn, M.H., Bakermans-Kranenburg, M.J. et al (2020) Institutionalisation and deinstitutionalisation of children: a systematic and integrative review of evidence regarding effects on development. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 7;

⁴ Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, 'World Report on Violence against Children', United Nations Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children, 9/27, 16/53/57/58/59 (2006)

⁵ Manfred Nowak, 'United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty', United Nations, 2019, I

⁶ Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, 'World Report on Violence against Children', United Nations Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children, 9/27, 16/53/57/58/59 (2006)

⁷ van IJzendoorn, M.H., Bakermans-Kranenburg, M.J. et al (2020) Institutionalisation and deinstitutionalisation of children: a systematic and integrative review of evidence regarding effects on development. *The Lancet Psychiatry*,

developmental delays, disability, irreversible psychological damage⁸ and poor health. Furthermore, the placement of children in institutions can represent a form of trafficking and modern slavery⁹. Evidence from different countries demonstrates how institutions can act as central participants in a web of modern slavery and trafficking of children¹⁰.

The solution: global child care reform

There is an alternative – supporting families to prevent separation, moving children from institutions into family- and community-based care, and closing institutions so that vulnerable children are not placed in an environment that exposes them to further harm. The comprehensive process of transforming a country's care system is referred to as care reform.

“Care reform cannot be separated from the wider sustainable development agenda”

The care reform process starts with understanding why children are separated, or at risk of separation, from their families. This insight is used to build a system of support that recognises and builds the capabilities of families and communities so that children have the protection and care they deserve, fulfil their potential and realise their rights. By looking at the population of children in institutions and at risk of separation, the care reform process identifies the critical inter-linkages between the institutionalisation of children and other key human rights and development areas.

Taking a holistic multi-sector approach to care reform has the potential to catalyse and strengthen change across the broader system of support for children, families and their communities – providing the foundations to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals. The care reform process is essential and is inherently connected to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Care reform cannot be separated from the wider sustainable development agenda.

Tackling care reform is key to achieving the SDGs, and there is a myriad of benefits that an inclusive, sustainable care reform process can bring to many of the most marginalised. The structural factors outlined include:

- **Disability:** Children with disabilities are disproportionately placed in institutions, due to a range of factors, such as discrimination, social exclusion and a lack of available support. Children with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to abuse and neglect once placed in an institution.

⁸ G. Mulheir et al (2012) 'Deinstitutionalisation – A Human Rights Priority for Children with Disabilities' Equal Rights Trust Review, 9 (2012)

⁹ Joseph M. Cheer, Leigh Matthews, Kathryn E. Van Doore and Karen Flanagan (eds.), Modern Day Slavery and Orphanage Tourism, C Fenton-Glynn, 2021

¹⁰ Ibid.

- **Poverty:** Poverty is the most common underlying risk factor that leads to children being separated from their families and institutionalised. Institutionalisation then harms educational and career prospects, contributing to a cycle of poverty.
- **Education:** Many children are placed in institutions because they cannot access quality, affordable and inclusive education in their community. Despite the promise of education, institutionalisation consistently leads to poor educational outcomes.
- **Health:** Lack of access to quality healthcare can result in children being placed in institutions to meet their basic needs, while institutionalisation itself can cause lifelong health problems.
- **Gender:** Discriminatory attitudes and laws towards women and girls, especially single mothers, can lead to family separation, while girls are particularly vulnerable to abuse within institutions.
- **Race, ethnicity and indigenous communities:** Structural racism, discrimination and inequalities within child protection systems lead to the overrepresentation of children from certain ethnic groups, races and indigenous communities in institutions. This discrimination continues once children are placed in an institution, with significant evidence of physical abuse and ill-treatment. The impact of this can be intergenerational.

Pursuing care reform as part of the sustainable development agenda:

Our recommendations to world leaders

In the lead up to the UN Summit of the Future, and as governments prepare to commit to take action to lead to a more sustainable world for future generations, Hope and Homes for Children addresses the following recommendations to world leaders to ensure **child care reform becomes a key objective in the sustainable development agenda:**



Condemn child institutionalisation and other forms of deprivation of family: At the global level, we call for the unequivocal denunciation of deprivation of family in all its forms, in particular, but not restricted to, child institutionalisation. Child institutionalisation is recognised by global human rights frameworks and children's rights experts as harmful to children, their health, safety, well-being and development. Institutions violate children's rights, with violence, neglect, and abuse as pervasive features. Children in institutions are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and are commodified as assets to raise funds from tourists across the world. Child

institutionalisation is an aberrant practice that must be eradicated and has no place in democratic, sustainable and equal societies. By committing to ending child institutionalisation, for all children, world leaders can take a stand to end a global injustice, and improve the conditions for childhood globally, benefiting, ultimately, wider protection and care reform.



Pursue an inclusive approach to social protection to prevent family separation and build community resilience: In many cases, family separation could be prevented if authorities take the necessary measures to support children and their families and adequately address the drivers of separation. Social protection is therefore a fundamental factor in reducing unnecessary separation of families in crisis, and strategies for social protection should be aligned with those for child protection and care.



Set data collection mechanisms, evidence-based goals, and monitoring and evaluation systems at global, regional and national levels: Child care reform advocates have long warned that little progress can be achieved without robust data collection and strong progress monitoring indicators on children deprived of family care, including theirs and their families and communities' circumstances, the root causes of separation, their outcomes, and the impact of policies implemented on the latter.



Ensure the meaningful consultation of, and accountability to children, young and older people with care experience, their families, communities and the organisations representing them: Building a future where all children grow up in safe and loving families requires listening today to those children, young and older people who have known the harm of institutions and/or family separation, as well as their families, communities and the representative organisations that work on their behalf. To meaningfully engage them, world leaders must ensure that they reach them and provide them with an accessible platform to share their stories and guide the design of policies that concern them. In addition, world leaders must in turn make themselves accountable to these audiences, and be ready to report on progress made over time.



Commit to national child protection and care reform through sustained financing, including global financing mechanisms: Eliminating institutions and family separation starts with the pursuit of the reform of national child protection and care systems. While the task at hand requires resolute global and national political will, Hope and Homes for Children is positive that it is attainable, and that solutions can be found in successful local and national examples of child protection and care reform. These examples must be studied and amplified, and in turn scaled up globally, adapted according to each national and local context where they are applied.

These recommendations will form a framework for our Policy Dialogues Series, as each Dialogue will look to explore more in detail evidence, on the ground experiences and promising practices to achieve one specific of these recommendations.

Further reading

- [2019 Resolution on the Rights of the Child \(A/RES/74/133\)](#)
- [G. Mulheir et al \(2012\) 'Deinstitutionalisation – A Human Rights Priority for Children with Disabilities' Equal Rights Trust Review, 9 \(2012\)](#)
- [Hope and Homes for Children \(2022\) Families. Not institutions](#)
- [Lumos \(2021\) Cycles of Exploitation: The links between children's institutional care and human trafficking](#)
- [Manfred Nowak, 'United Nations Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty', United Nations, 2019,](#)
- [UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty \(2019\)](#)
- [van IJzendoorn, M.H., Bakermans-Kranenburg, M.J. et al \(2020\) Institutionalisation and deinstitutionalisation of children: a systematic and integrative review of evidence regarding effects on development. The Lancet Psychiatry, 7](#)

Hope and Homes for Children aims to be a catalyst to end the institutionalisation of children globally. We work together with civil society organisations and funders, governments and in partnership with children, their families and communities to develop institution-free care systems. We achieve this by strengthening child protection mechanisms, building the capacity of local professionals, developing services to support all families and providing family-based alternatives for children who cannot remain with their own parents. We also work with governments and civil society to influence policy and legislation to protect and promote children's rights.

Hope and Homes for Children is:

Registered as a Charity in England and Wales. No 1089490;

Registered on the Transparency Register of the European Union, Identification number: 035163533684-92;

An organization in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council since 2019

An NGO in participatory status with the Council of Europe as of 2021.

Head office:

Hope and Homes for Children
The Guild, King Street
Salisbury
SP2 0RS
United Kingdom

Email: info@hopeandhomes.org

Phone: +44 (0) 1722 790111