

WORLD SOCIAL SUMMIT

Key Messages

Embedding child care reform as a core foundation for sustainable social development

By 2050, 70% of children and young people will be living in low and lower-middle-income countries. The way we care for them will define the future we inherit. We call upon the UN and its Member States to seize this pivotal moment of the Second World Summit for Social Development to embed child care reform firmly within the global sustainable development agenda. By doing so, States will not only safeguard the rights and futures of millions of children, but also contribute decisively to building more equitable, inclusive and resilient societies worldwide.

Background

There can be no social development if children are left behind, and children separated from their families, without parental care, and trapped in institutions are foremost among these. However, these children and young people remain largely invisible in the social development agenda.

The [Doha Political Declaration](#), set to be adopted by UN Member States at the Second World Summit on Social Development acknowledges *'the family as a central enabler and contributor to social development'* (paragraph 4.m).

Yet, across the globe, 5.4 million children are already trapped in 'orphanages' – despite 80% not being orphans - and, as climate disasters and conflicts escalate, millions more are at risk of the same fate. The need for care reform is urgent and growing; we must act now to prevent further harm and build a strong future founded on family. Reforming care systems away from institutions, building models of quality alternative care, and strengthening child protection systems develops the core national infrastructure for social development. The dividends of this reform extend across sectors and generations.

This Summit presents a pivotal opportunity to mainstream child care reform across global and national policy frameworks by embedding family-centred care into strategies for health, education, social protection and justice, thereby strengthening systems that prevent family separation and promote inclusive outcomes. By aligning reform with priorities on gender equality, disability inclusion and humanitarian response, the UN and its Member States can amplify cross-sectoral investments that secure better life chances for children and deliver more equitable, resilient societies.





Recommendations

Acknowledging the importance of family care for children and recognising the centrality of child care reform in fulfilling children's rights, as set out within the UNCRC and UNCRPD and other human rights instruments, all UN member states should:

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- ♥ **Integrate child care reform explicitly into national SDG implementation plans**, ensuring alignment with goals on health (SDG3), education (SDG4), reduced inequalities (SDG10), gender equality (SDG5), and peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG16).

 - ♥ **Align planning, financing and monitoring of social policies** to prioritise family support, inclusive services and the active participation of children and communities in order to leave no child behind.

 - ♥ **Promote meaningful participation and agency** of children without parental care, children and young people with care experience, families and civil society organisations throughout the care reform process, ensuring that reforms are responsive to their lived experiences and evolving needs.

 - ♥ **Contextually implement intergovernmental commitments such as the Global Charter on Care Reform for Children**, bringing together sectors such as social protection, health, education, justice and finance to develop holistic, multisectoral strategies for care reform.

 - ♥ **Develop and implement sustainable financing models** that map existing resources invested in institutional care and redirect these funds towards strengthening family support services, prevention of separation, and quality alternative family care.

 - ♥ **Address stigma and discrimination** that disproportionately affect marginalised groups of children, including those with disabilities, migrants, refugees, girls and ethnic minorities, by promoting inclusive policies and community engagement initiatives.

 - ♥ **Prioritise capacity building of the social workforce, judiciary, health professionals and educators** to apply child rights-based approaches, improve gatekeeping functions and deliver quality family-based care and protection services.
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Recognising care reform as essential pillar of sustainable development, now and in the post-2030 agenda, the United Nations and its associated bodies should:

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- ♥ **Embed care reform principles within UN legal and policy frameworks**, including through enhanced guidance from treaty bodies, special rapporteurs and UN agencies, to reinforce State obligations and promote harmonised approaches globally.

 - ♥ **Strengthen SDGs data collection on all children outside of care and in alternative care**, including: those in institutions, kinship care, foster care and other alternative arrangements, and those living on the street, in domestic servitude, or other forms of child exploitation. Use this evidence to inform policy, monitor progress and hold governments to account.

 - ♥ **Integrate child care reform a central pillar of the UN inclusion agenda**, ensuring that support to family-based care systems and the progressive elimination of institutions are explicitly integrated into policies on education, health, disability, social protection, gender equality, justice and humanitarian response.

 - ♥ **Ensure that UN emergency and humanitarian responses uphold family unity and prevent unnecessary institutionalisation** by integrating care reform principles into disaster preparedness, refugee protection and crisis interventions.

 - ♥ **Support innovation and knowledge exchange** between countries and regions to share best practices, lessons learned and effective models of care reform adapted to diverse cultural and socio-economic contexts.

 - ♥ **Commit to long-term monitoring, evaluation and learning frameworks** that track outcomes for children and families, enabling continuous improvement and adaptation of care systems.

 - ♥ **Engage donors, international financial institutions and private sector partners** to align funding priorities with care reform objectives and discourage investment in institutional care.

 - ♥ **Foster partnerships between governments, UN agencies, civil society and affected communities** to build broad coalitions advocating for sustained political will and systemic change.

 - ♥ **Uphold transparency and accountability** by establishing independent oversight mechanisms and accessible complaint procedures to protect children's rights throughout the care reform process.
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These recommendations were developed by Hope and Homes for Children, with input from other NGOs from the care reform sector globally.

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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;

Organization in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council since 2019
NGO in participatory status with the Council of Europe as of 2021.

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