

Care Reform in Uganda: Achievements and Challenges

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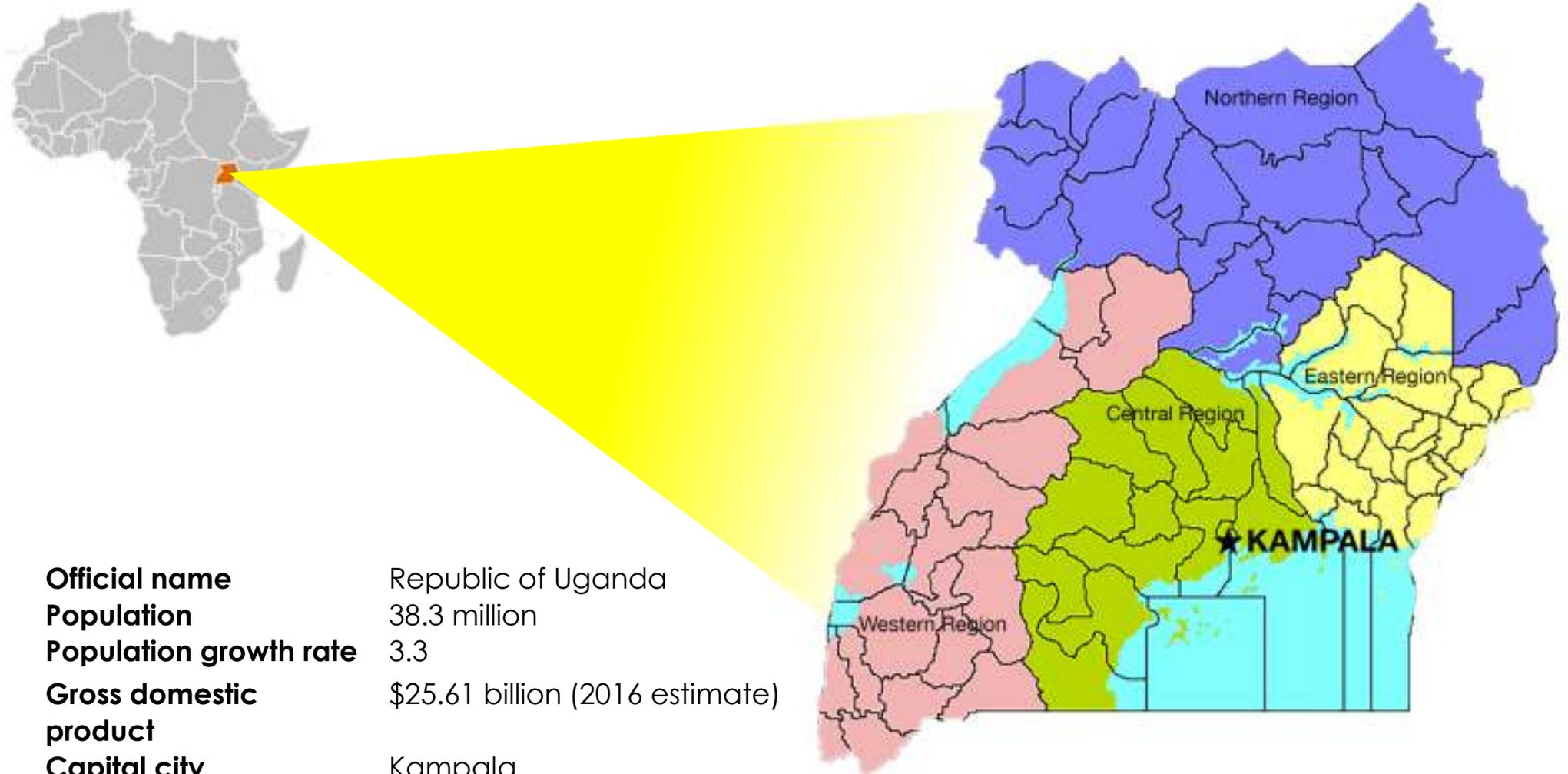
Principal Probation and Welfare Officer

London

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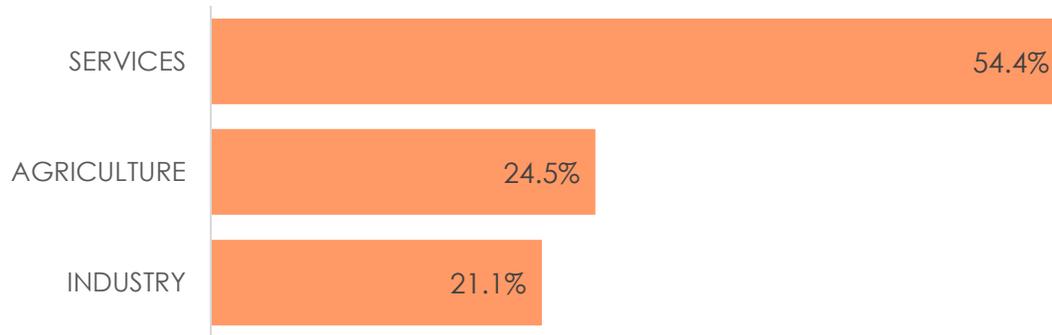
Map of Uganda



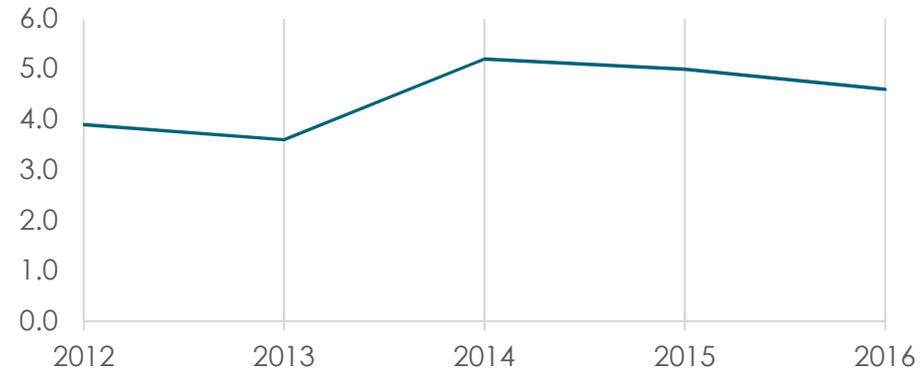
Official name	Republic of Uganda
Population	38.3 million
Population growth rate	3.3
Gross domestic product	\$25.61 billion (2016 estimate)
Capital city	Kampala
Neighboring countries	Kenya, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania

Main Demographic, Economic, and Social Indicators

GDP – Composition by Sector



Annual GDP Growth (%)



Population	38.3 million people; 57% are children (<18 years); about half (48%) <15 years
Population in multidimensional poverty (%)	70.3
Employment to population ratio (% , ages 15 and older)	81.9
Inflation rate (%)	6.40 in June of 2017
Human Development Index (HDI)	Index: 0.493; Rank: 163 out of 188 countries
Mean years of schooling	5.7
Life expectancy at birth	59.2 years
Maternal mortality ratio (deaths per 100,000 live births)	343
Under-five mortality (Per 1,000 live births)	64
Infant mortality rates (per 1,000 live births)	43
Neonatal Mortality (per 1, 000 live births)	27

Presentation Outline

1. Cultural and historical influences on care
2. Key actors in care reform
3. Main features of care reform
4. Key achievements of care reform
5. Major outcomes for children resulting from the care reform
6. Factors that have facilitated or made care reform possible
7. Key challenges and opportunities

Cultural and Historical Influences on Care

- Traditionally, orphaned and separated children were supported by their extended families through informal foster care.
- Weakening of traditional kinship care bonds
 - Urbanization and migration
 - Poverty and socioeconomic pressure
 - HIV and AIDS
 - Insecurity, conflict, and disasters
 - The Structural Adjustment Programs
- Faith communities and childcare service provision
 - “Christian duty towards orphans”; Madrassas
- The growth of “orphanages” and the “social orphan”
- Deinstitutionalisation and promoting quality family & community-based care

Key Actors in Care Reform

- Government ministries, departments, and agencies
- United Nations (UN) agencies
- Development partners
- Civil society organisations, including faith-based organisations
- Academic/research institutions and professional bodies
- Residential care facilities (RCF)
- Families, communities, and individuals



Main Features of Care Reform

Laws, policies, guidelines, and regulation

Laws	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995• Children Act Cap 59• Children (Amendment) Act, 2016• Local Government Act, 1997
Regulations, guidelines, & practice standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Alternative Care Framework, 2012 and Action Plan (2016/17–2020/21)• National Parenting Guidelines, 2016• Standard Operating Procedure for Family Reintegration, 2015• The Children (Approved Homes) Rule, 2013
Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Social Protection Policy, 2015• Uganda Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (2013)• Special Needs and Inclusive Education Policy (2011)• The National Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Policy, 2004• Universal Primary Education Policy (1997)• Universal Secondary Education Policy (2007)

Main Features of Care Reform

- Coordination and collaboration
 - Alternative Care Implementation Unit within the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD)
 - National Child Protection Working Group (CPWG)
 - Alternative Care Task Force
 - The District OVC Coordination Committee and Sub-Country OVC Committees
- Inspection and monitoring
 - Inspection and monitoring of children homes to ensure compliance with the Children (Approved Homes) Rule, 2013
- Gatekeeping mechanisms
 - National Alternative Care Panel
 - Courts of law and placement decision making

Main Features of Care Reform

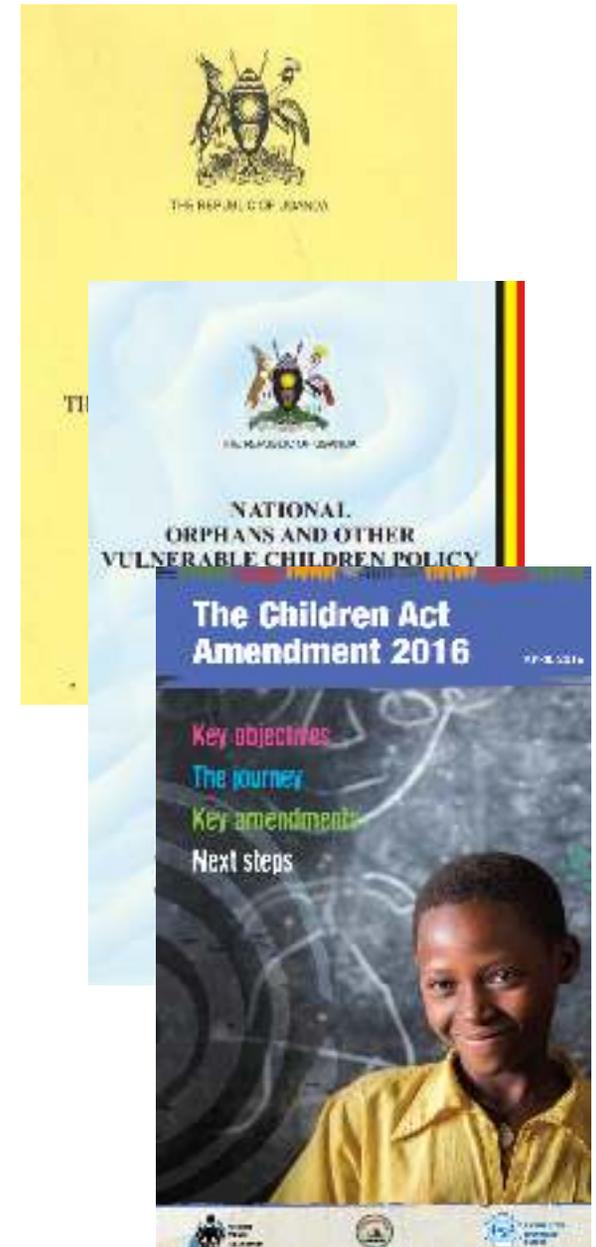
- Social service workforce strengthening
 - Alternative Care Training Curriculum developed by Makerere University
 - Pre- and in-service training for social workers in child protection and care
 - Use of para-social workers to augment case management
- Service Provision
 - “OVC programming” in accordance with the National Strategic Programme Plan of Interventions for OVC (2010/11–2015/16)
 - Social protection programs, e.g., Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE)
 - Deinstitutionalisation projects and alternative care programs
 - National child helpline services

Main Features of Care Reform

- Information systems
 - OVC Management Information System
 - Data from the Children's Home Assessment Toolkit reported to Alternative Care Implementation Unit (AICU)
 - Proposal to develop Children Homes Management Information System
- Research/assessments
 - Research on childcare and protection, and alternative care
 - Operational research projects aimed at building an evidence base around what works to keep children in healthy and protective families. Example: Keeping Children in Healthy and Protective Families (KCHPF) Project

Key Achievements of Care Reform: Prevention of Unnecessary Family Separation

- Existence of legal and policy frameworks that promote children's right to adequate care in their families. For example:
 - The Constitution and the Children Act, 2004, underscore children's right to stay with their parents or guardians unless this is not in their best interests.
 - The National Alternative Care Framework (ACF) emphasizes the need for family support and preventing the separation of children from their parents or relatives.
 - The Children (Amendment) Act, 2016, places a duty on the MGLSD to develop a “national strategy” for the provision of prevention and early intervention programmes to families, parents, caregivers, and children (S. 42B).



Prevention of Unnecessary Family Separation

- Service provision
 - Provision of services to support families as part of OVC programming
 - Family violence prevention programs
 - Linking social protection schemes with alternative care strategies—such as integrating the cash transfer programme with the current reintegration efforts
- Public awareness and advocacy
 - The Strengthen African Families campaign
 - Development of Information Education and Communication/Behavior Change Communication materials to promote family preservation and community-based care
- Workforce development
 - Pre- and in-service training for social workers in child protection and care
 - Building capacity of community-based structures (e.g., para-social workers) to prevent family separation and promote family reintegration

Prevention of Unnecessary Family Separation

What's under way?

1. Development of a family policy that will provide a national framework for supporting families in their caregiving role
2. Supporting families at risk of separation, through different programs
 - a. Parenting skills training
 - b. Household economic strengthening, etc.
3. Building the capacity of social workers or other relevant workforces to support family strengthening and family-based care and protection
4. Working with community-based structures prevent child-family separation. For example, Training additional para-social workers (PSWs) to ensure ongoing community sensitization around issues related to the care of children
5. Advocacy and social behaviour change communication (SBCC) campaigns to promote quality family & community-based care

Key Achievements of Care Reform: Residential Care

- Existence of laws, policies, and regulations on residential care service provision, for example:
 1. Children (Approved Homes) Rule, 2013
 - a. Outlines the basic minimum standards and procedures for approval of children's homes in Uganda
 - b. Guidance on admission of children into approved homes, frequency of inspection, and reporting requirements
 2. The Children Act (Cap 59) and Children (Amendment) Act, 2016
 - a. Outlines procedures for approval of homes and placement and removal of children in approved homes
 - b. Requires children's homes and probation and social welfare officers to maintain contact with the parents or relatives of a child in the home and maintain contact between the child and the parents or relatives of the child
 - c. Regular inspection of the home
 3. National Alternative Care Framework (ACF):
 - a. "Institutional care should only be used as a last resort."

Residential Care

- An estimated **1,610** children have been reunited with their families since 2014 under the two separate projects: Strong Beginnings and Deinstitutionalization of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (DOVCU).
- Inspection and monitoring
 - Up to 564 RCFs have been assessed using the Children's Homes Assessment Toolkit since 2013.
 - Closure of RCFs that do not meet the minimum standards; for example, under the DOVCU project up to 21 homes were closed.
- Workforce Development
 - Building capacity of residential care facility staff to ensure compliance with Approved Homes Rules (2013) in selected district

Residential Care

What's under way?

1. Conducting regular Inspection of all Children's Homes in the country and making appropriate recommendations for approval, improvement, or closure
2. Development and piloting of RCF closure guidelines
3. Closure of institutions that do not meet the minimum standards
4. Planning to map all children's homes in Uganda and the situation of children in care (UNICEF)
5. Improving/strengthening the capacity of the districts to supervise and regulate operation of children's homes

Residential Care

Under way:

6. Identifying opportunities for transforming children homes into centers that provide family- and community-based services
7. Proposal to develop a management information system for children's homes

Key Achievements of Care Reform: Foster Care

- Regulation
 - Placement of a child with foster parents by a probation and social welfare officer (PSWO) is regulated by the Foster Care Placement Rules contained in the Children Act, 2014 (Schedule 2, s. 43).
 - The Children (Amendment) Act, 2016, recognizes fostering as an essential precursor to adoption—both national and intercountry adoption.
- Gatekeeping mechanisms
 - Alternative Care Panels established 2012
 - Up to 104 foster care replacements have been approved by the Alternative Care Panel since 2013
- Service provision
 - Small-scale emergency and long-term fostering programs developed and implemented by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)
 - Piloting of an emergency foster family care approach

Foster Care

What's under way?

1. Development of Guidelines on Establishment of Alternative Care Panels in Uganda
2. Developing standard operating procedures (SOPs) for foster care & adoption placement

Key Achievements of Care Reform: Supervised Independent Living

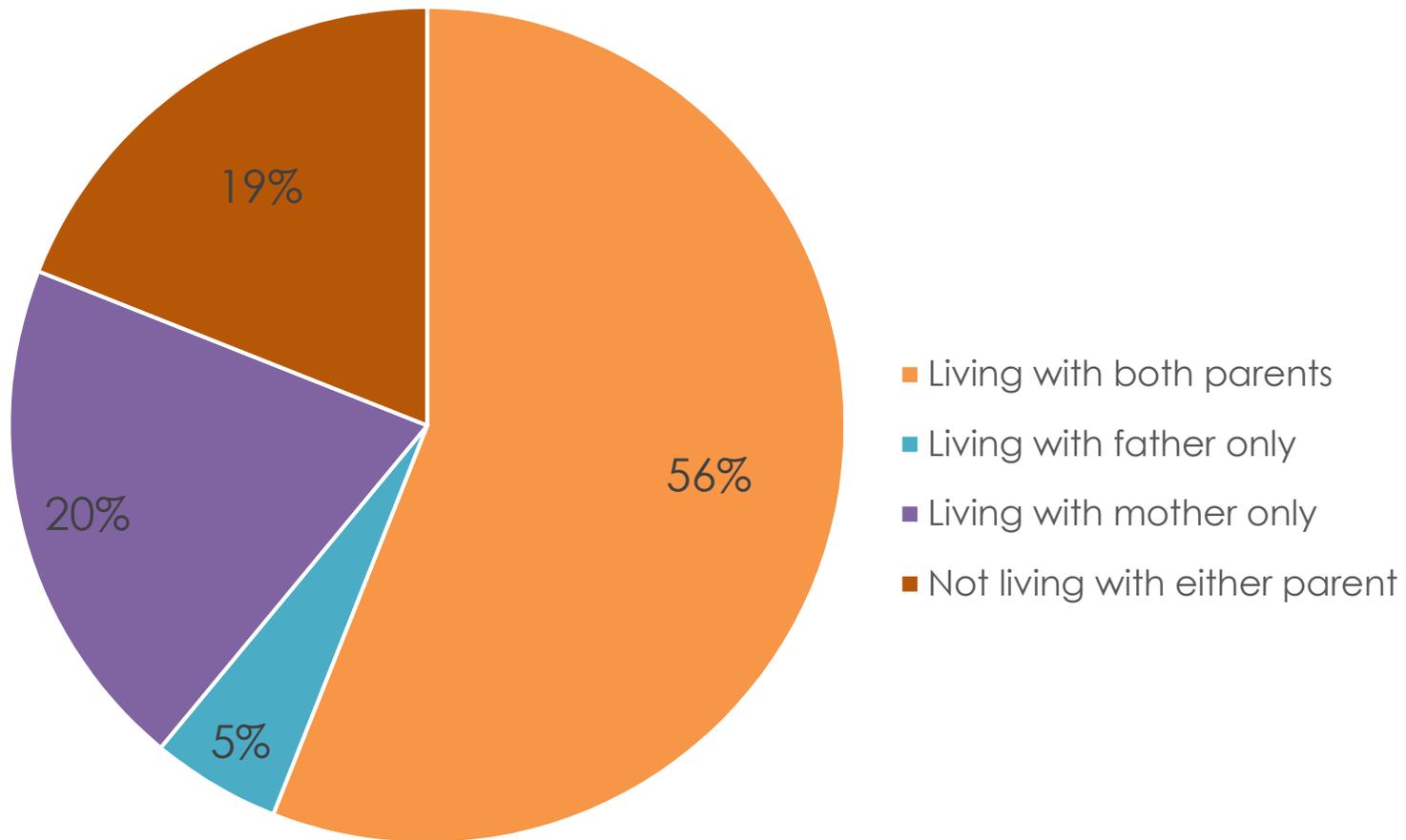
- Legal and policy framework
 - a. Independent living is not mentioned in the Uganda Alternative Care Framework.
 - b. The Children's Act is more helpful, stating that *“where a child is unable to return to his or her parents or to go to foster parents or has no parent, nor a foster parent, he or she shall be encouraged and assisted by the approved home and the probation and social welfare officer to become independent and self-reliant.”* The Act, however, does not elaborate further on this option of alternative care.
- No structured supervised independent living programs

Key Achievements of Care Reform: Kinship Care

- Kinship care is recognized and supported by the national legal and policy framework. For example, the ACF recognizes and encourages support for informal kinship care.
- Extended family remains a great resource for providing care for children deprived of parental care.
- The number of children in kinship care far surpasses those in any other alternative care option.

Kinship Care

Distribution of living arrangements among children 0–17 In Uganda, 2011



Source: UDHS 2011

Kinship Care

What's under way?

1. Strengthening child protection systems, including informal mechanisms to increase oversight of informal kinship care

Key Achievements of Care Reform: Adoption

- Children (Amendment) Act, 2016
 - Improved regulation of intercountry adoption
 - Restricted legal guardianship to citizens of Uganda
 - Encouraged domestic adoption
 - Called for the establishment of an adoption agency to handle adoption applications
- Alternative care panel and approval of adoption placements
- Ugandans Adopt campaign
 - Output: Since 2014, 60 children have been placed in adoptive families, 14 families are on the waiting list, and there are 20 ongoing assessments.

Adoption

What's under way?

1. Development of Guidelines on Establishment of Alternative Care Panels in Uganda
2. Developing SOPs for foster care & adoption placement
3. Ratification of the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (or Hague Adoption Convention)

Key Achievements of Care Reform: Family Reunification & Reintegration

- Legislation, policy, and guidelines/practice standards:
 - Children Act, Cap 59
 - Alternative Care Framework
 - Development of SOP for family reintegration
- Service provision
 - Existence of NGOs/programs supporting family reunification and reintegration
 - Using para-social workers to prevent family separation and promote family reintegration
 - Establishment of community-based services to ensure sustainable reintegration
- Workforce
 - Training of key (probation and judicial officers, police, etc.) on family reintegration and alternative care

Key Achievements of Care Reform: Family Reunification & Reintegration

- Information systems
 - OVC management information system (MIS) has an indicator on number of children reintegrated

What's under way?

1. Development of a national child policy, which prioritises strengthening families to prevent child-family separation
2. Establishing systematic linkages to existing social protection schemes

Key Achievements of Care Reform:

Factors That Have Made Care Reform Possible

- Government ownership of and commitment to the reform process
- Partnerships and coordination mechanism between government, the UN, and civil society agencies
- Gradual transformation of attitudes and behaviors towards family-based care
- Advocacy and behavior change communication campaigns focusing on changing social norms and practices

Major Outcomes for Children Resulting from Care Reform

- An estimated **1,610** children have been reunited with their families since 2014, under the two separate projects: Strong Beginnings and Deinstitutionalization of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (DOVCU) project
- Increasing number of children placed in alternative family-based care
- Programmatic efforts to transition children from the streets into families

Key Challenges

- Lack of SOPs and practice standards for foster care and adoption
- Low investment in childcare and protection services by government
- Lack of an interagency case management system
- Weak enforcement of the Children (Approved Homes) Rules, 2013
- Lack of data on children in the different alternative care options
- Dispersed information management systems
- No harmonised case management forms; no standard tools across the continuum of alternative care services

Key Challenges

- Resistance from RCFs to change model of care
- Some donors, NGOs, and community leaders are not necessarily aware of the government position relating to alternative care provision.
- Limited follow-up support for youth leaving care

Opportunities

- Engaged and dedicated government
- National Action Plan for Alternative Care (2016/2017–2020/2021)
- National Child Protection Working Group
- Development of guidelines on establishment of alternative care panels in Uganda
- Ongoing development of National Child Policy

Opportunities

- Commitment and support from development partners
- Child helpline to augment case management
- Ongoing research to build an evidence base (KCHPF, ASPIRES)
- Use of para-social workers to prevent family separation and promote family reintegration