DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION OF ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN UGANDA (DOVCU)

Background

Over the last decade, child care institutions multiplied in Uganda. At the time this project was being designed, 57,000 children were living in child-care institutions, and an additional 10,000 children were living on the streets. Living outside of family care can have serious implications for children’s development. Therefore, the Deinstitutionalization of Orphans and Vulnerable Children project aims to reduce unnecessary separation of children from their families and to place children currently living outside of family care in nurturing families. ChildFund is the leading implementer of the project, alongside three consortium partners: TPO Uganda, Retrak and Child’s I Foundation.

This project will pilot an integrated package of interventions. One such intervention aims to create opportunities for existing care institutions to re-conceptualize their role and acquire relevant knowledge and skills to support the aims and implementation of the Alternative Care Framework in order to ensure family-based care for all children. In addition, the project will use Retrak’s tested standard operating procedures to reintegrate girls who live on the streets. DOVCU also aims to strengthen the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) and the targeted districts’ capacities to monitor institutions and effectively implement the new Alternative Care Framework. Additional strategic interventions will strengthen informal child protection mechanisms and mobilize communities to monitor children’s well-being. Last, the project will strengthen household economies and parenting skills to further prevent unnecessary separation and to support reintegration. ChildFund and its partners will work in the 12 districts that concentrate 50% of the institutions in Uganda, and that are located across four regions: East, West, North and Central.

Objectives and Interventions

REDUCTION OF UNNECESSARY SEPARATION OF CHILDREN FROM THEIR FAMILIES

DOVCU recognizes that multiple risks can simultaneously influence family members and relationships at the household level, contributing to child separation. Some of these risks include economic hardship and a lack of strong parenting knowledge as well as violence and conflict within the family and community. The project will work with and support households that are at risk of child separation to reduce unnecessary separation of children from their families. Specific measures and interventions will focus on promoting nurturing care and parenting practices, household economic strengthening, child protection, psychosocial support, and interventions for addressing substance abuse and supporting recovery.
PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN WHO ARE OUTSIDE OF FAMILY CARE INTO NURTURING FAMILIES

DOVCU will develop and implement a case management process and system to reunite children who have been living outside of family care with their families or to place them into alternative family-based care. Specific interventions will help strengthen district-level Probation Social Work Officers, District Officers and Community Development Officers to support case management, conduct family tracing, assess and monitor households at risk of separation and support the reintegration process. The DOVCU team and implementing partners will provide technical assistance to child-care institutions to establish family tracing and support reintegration as well as alternative family care when family tracing is unsuccessful. The main intent is to support the reintegration of children from the street, remand homes, rehabilitation centers, and child-care institutions with biological family or their placement into alternative family care. For children who have expressed interest in reconnecting with their families or living in family care, the project will establish care plans to support individualized interventions to prevent separation and reintegrate the children with families or family-based care. Last, the project will strengthen collaboration among government officers, community-based organizations, faith-based networks and other community structures that play an integral role and will continue to support children who are at risk of separation, or those who have been reintegrated with family or placed in alternative family care.

ChildFund is a child-focused international development organization that works with children living in extreme poverty, reaching 19.7 million children and family members in 29 countries. With primary funding from sponsors and from government, corporate and individual donors, we work long-term in communities to help them transform themselves into places where children have what they need to live at their potential throughout their lives: access to health care, nutrition, learning opportunities, safety and caregivers equipped to ensure all these elements are in place. Our approach is grounded in the idea that if any of these pieces is missing, especially early in a child’s life, his or her development is at risk.

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