STRATEGY
2023 – 2030
EVERY CHILD HAS A RIGHT TO A FAMILY

There is a global movement informed by 80 years of research to put an end to this practice and give families the support they need to stay together. In this document we outline the critical role that Child’s i Foundation will play as part of this movement so that we can end the suffering of children growing up in institutional care.

THIS IS THE CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUE OF OUR TIME

WILL YOU JOIN US TO FIGHT FOR EVERY CHILD’S RIGHT TO A FAMILY?

FAMILY
WE ALL UNDERSTAND WHAT IT IS TO BE PART OF ONE

It talks to what it is to be human, to be connected to people, to be loved.
Family gives us roots, language and identity.
The love we experience from a parent as a child is the foundation upon which we can build a happy, fulfilled life. It is family that holds our story, and the stories of the generations that came before us.
Families may look different across countries and cultures. Aunties, uncles, grandparents and siblings may all have a part to play but the essential need for a child to have a family is the same across the world. It is why the fundamental right of every child to belong to a family is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

YET MILLIONS OF CHILDREN AROUND THE WORLD LIVE WITHOUT A FAMILY

Their births are not registered, their deaths are not mourned, their numbers are not counted. These children have no freedom. Their lives are governed by strict routines and run by paid staff who are sometimes cruel. Most of them experience violence, abuse and neglect. Trafficking and exploitation is commonplace.
Their voices are not heard. They have no one to hear them.

THESE CHILDREN LIVE IN ORPHANAGES

Most of them have a parent who, facing multiple challenges, almost always living in poverty and often lured by the false promise of a better life for their children, feel they have no alternative but to give them up to an orphanage.

THIS SHOULD NOT HAPPEN

EVERY CHILD HAS A RIGHT TO A FAMILY

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WILL YOU JOIN US TO FIGHT FOR EVERY CHILD’S RIGHT TO A FAMILY?
WHY ARE CHILDREN PLACED IN ORPHANAGES?

The first known orphanages (also known as children’s homes) were established centuries ago. Born from a desire to protect children and offer them a place of safety where they may otherwise be at risk little was understood of the harm they cause. But as the evidence has grown of the suffering, the development delays, the neglect, abuse and exploitation experienced by children in orphanages, they were phased-out of most developed countries in the latter half of the 20th century.

However, orphanages are still widespread in many developing countries and the devastating impact reaches far beyond the children they hold. Typically orphanages will attract investment away from families damaging the community mechanisms that once existed to support them.

80% of children in orphanages have a living parent, who given the right support, could care for their child.

SCHEMATIC OF EXISTING FRACUTRED SYSTEMS

Families face many challenges:
- Stigma
- Housing insecurity
- No access to education
- Poverty
- Food insecurity
- No access to health services

...and have few options:
- Single parent family
- Child headed family
- Grandparent headed family
- Abandoned child

Children...
- Separated from:
  - Family
  - Community
  - Roots
  - Culture
  - Language
  - Love

- Will experience:
  - Trauma
  - Loss
  - Exploitation
  - Neglect
  - Developmental delays

- Likely to experience:
  - Trafficking
  - Violence
Around the world today we are seeing how this damaging practice can be ended. Communities are mobilising to give families the support they need so they don’t have to give up their children. The extended networks of aunties, uncles, grandparents and friends are coming together to protect and care for children. And alternative families (adoptive, foster or kinship) are stepping forward to offer love to those children who cannot be with their birth families.

Orphanages are starting to understand and are helping reunite their children with families. They have seen first-hand the positive impact they can have by repurposing as new facilities that can serve their entire community and help prevent family separation.

Donors are starting to redirect money from orphanages to families and, most importantly, Governments are recognising the need for children to grow up in families and are enshrining this right in law.

**EFFECTIVE SYSTEMS WORK TOGETHER TO SUPPORT FAMILIES**

Change is always hard. This work - called **CARE REFORM** - is complex and takes time. But it is change that endures and that will secure the future for children for generations to come.
By the end of the century, based on present trends, almost half the world’s children will live in Africa. This continent has the highest level of poverty of any and the risk factors for family separation are immense.

**If the global movement for care reform is to be successful, change must be achieved in Africa.**

Child’s i Foundation has been working on the ground in Uganda for over a decade now developing a body of practice-based evidence which will be the foundations for this change. We are very proud of what we have achieved so far which goes way beyond what might have been expected for an organisation of our size.

We have:

**Pioneered the transformation of an entire district in Uganda**

Working closely with all the stakeholders - families, community leaders, orphanages, local government officers, police, hospitals, and donors - we have shown that orphanages are not necessary, that families can be supported to stay together and that safe and loving alternative families can be found for children that cannot remain with their birth families.

In the district of Tororo in the East of Uganda all the children that were living in orphanages have now been placed in families, the orphanages have been transformed into hubs that provide a range of services and the whole community has mobilised in support of this approach. The work in Tororo has provided a road map which we have used to scale into a new district, Mpigi, in Central Uganda.

**Created the conditions to eliminate institutional care in Kampala**

In Kampala, the complexity and scale of the current situation is such that it will take longer to completely transform. However, we are starting to see important progress: in the division of Makindye, the community has mobilised and is offering support to families when it is needed and there is now a growing number of trained and approved alternative families that can offer care and love for children if they cannot remain with their birth parents.

We have also demonstrated that young adults can be transitioned from institutional care to independent living. We have supported them to start successful businesses, given them new life skills and they are now mentoring other young people in their communities.
Built capacity to enable the safe closure of orphanages across Uganda

In the districts of Tororo, Mpiji, Makindye and Wakiso we have built the capacity and capability of all stakeholders so that they are now taking the lead with this work. We have trained social workers and community leaders to understand how best to support families and we have worked with local government officers, with the police and with hospitals to ensure that abandoned children are never referred to orphanages.

In the district of Masaka, we have even built the capacity and capability of a local charity, Home Free, so that they are now able to lead the complex work of transitioning orphanages.

Influenced key audiences to prioritise family-based care (and reduce reliance on orphanages)

Child’s i has worked hard to influence all audiences over the years: from families and communities to orphanages and donors using a variety of tactics and media. But for care to be reformed across the country Political Will is critical and it is here that there have been a number of landmark developments. In particular:

- Child’s i helped to draft the Government’s National Framework for Alternative Care, which sets the agenda for care reform in Uganda and puts families at its core.
- We played a key role in advising on the Government’s National Action Plan for Alternative Care for Children in Uganda 2020–2025 which seeks to operationalise the framework.
- As part of this we supported the government to establish the National Alternative Care panel which was piloted as part of our work in Tororo. There is now a plan to roll out District Alternative Care Panels to all districts in Uganda based on this model.

Helped establish and expand the Transform Alliance Africa (TAA)

Child’s i has led a growing collective of 18 like-minded specialist national NGOs working across 10 countries in Africa called the TAA. Building evidence, sharing learning and amplifying their collective voices, these organisations are working with governments, communities and donors to replace orphanages with sustainable child protection systems that see support for families at the core.
Today, having demonstrated how children can and should always grow up in families (not orphanages), we are ready to scale our impact.

**VISION:**
one day every child will thrive in a safe and loving family

**MISSION:**
to bring African practice-based evidence to the movement for global care reform

**GOAL:**
by 2030 Uganda is fully committed to children growing up in families not orphanages

**VALUES:**
Our values are embedded in every part of our organisation; they are an intrinsic part of this strategy:

- In everything we do we **prioritise children**. We only do what’s in their best interest, we stand up for them and challenge practices that are harmful to them.

- We believe and invest in the power that comes when we **collaborate** and are driven by the collective wisdom that emerges when communities lead.

- **We are evidence-led.** We capture data on all aspects of our work and use this information to refine and improve outcomes for children. It is the evidence that has led to this strategy.

- **We innovate** by reimagining solutions and alternatives to ensure that children always grow up in families.
STRATEGIC AIMS:

1. CONSOLIDATE AND CHAMPION GOOD PRACTICE

...so that people in Uganda and beyond can see how care reform in Africa could look

2. SCALE UP THROUGH PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

...so that people in Uganda and beyond can see that care reform in Africa is possible

3. MOBILISE A MASS MOVEMENT FOR CARE REFORM THROUGH AUTHENTIC AND AFRICAN VOICES

...so that people in Uganda and beyond understand that care reform in Africa is imperative
CONSOLIDATE AND CHAMPION GOOD PRACTICE

a. Consolidate good practice in Uganda and share with others
We will consolidate our work in the areas in which we operate and establish them as learning hubs with roadmaps and documentation that help others deliver good practice. This documentation will continually be refined as we learn and the body of evidence that is created will be used to build consensus for reform.

b. Share learning across the continent through the TAA
Through the TAA we will share our knowledge of good practice in Uganda and learn from what is happening elsewhere in Africa. The TAA will come together to build the body of evidence for care reform to reflect good practice across the continent.

SCALE UP THROUGH PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

a. Identify changemakers in Uganda and support them to deliver good practice
We will work with organisations and groups that we believe can achieve change, and give them the support they need. These changemakers may be working in strategically significant geographical areas or with communities where there is an increased risk of separation. They may be local government representatives or lawmakers, children’s homes or women’s groups. If they are allies for children and families we will do our best to support them.

b. Build strategic coalitions to scale up the collective impact of our work
Working through the TAA where appropriate we will work to build coalitions with key actors to strengthen our collective impact.

c. Encourage and support foster care and adoption as alternatives
Biological and extended families are generally the best place for children, however there are some instances where this is not possible and, in those cases, it is imperative that suitable loving families can be found to foster or adopt. Child’s will work with the government to ensure that fostering and adoption processes are standardised, that the Uganda Adoptive Parents Association is strengthened and that there is a large pool of potential Ugandan parents readily available to foster or adopt.
MOBILISE A MASS MOVEMENT FOR CARE REFORM THROUGH AUTHENTIC AND AFRICAN VOICES

a. Amplify the voices of those with lived experience

To win the hearts and minds of people across Africa, the voices of those who have experienced the care system must be heard. These are young people who have grown up in orphanages, parents with lived experience, community leaders who are now supporting families to stay together, leaders of orphanages that have transformed and local government representatives that have experienced the benefits of changing their practice in favour of families.

These people are the experts and Child’s i will work tirelessly to ensure their voices are heard.

b. Identify and work with allies that could affect change

This work is difficult. We will seek out allies wherever they are and bring people together to effect positive change. We will work with politicians who want to see care reformed and enshrined in law and with local government representatives that want to support families to prevent separation.

The Uganda Parliamentary Forum for Children and for Mental Health can play an important role in influencing policy and we will establish strategic coalitions with them both in order to achieve reform. Our agenda can also be greatly advanced by journalists and influencers and we will seek out those that are allies for our mission.

This overall approach will be mirrored across the continent through the TAA.
WHAT DO WE NEED TO DELIVER THIS STRATEGY?

We need:

People
To deliver this strategy we need to invest in our people and our volunteers. We want to harness their talent by ensuring that we have a vibrant, supportive culture of kindness, where diversity, equity and inclusion is embedded across everything we do.

Sustainable funding and financial resilience
We anticipate that this strategy can be delivered with an annual organisational income of approximately £1.5 million. A detailed operational plan with a 3 year budget and a comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and learning framework with milestones and outputs will ensure that we remain on track to achieve our aims.

We will aim to find donor partners who will work with us for 3 years or more in support of this strategy to give us the financial resilience required.

Knowledge and information management
Our know-how – the practice base, expertise and the evidence developed from our work – is our core differentiator. No other organisation has the breadth and depth of practical expertise that we have in strengthening families and transitioning orphanages. Also, we know that our evidence of impact is critical to unlocking funding, influencing policy and in holding ourselves accountable to children.
Elijah lost his mother at birth. His father was unable to care for him so at 2 weeks old he was placed in an orphanage where he spent the first 3 years of his life – with no family or home to call his own.

When Child’s i became involved we worked hard with the local Probation and Social Welfare Officer to find a better solution. We traced Elijah’s aunt, Asinasi and who was willing to give him care and we undertook a full assessment to ensure that she would be suitable.

It is now 3 years since Elijah was reintegrated with his family. A trained community volunteer still visits the family to check on their well-being. The orphanage, which has now transformed into a community hub, continues to support Elijah’s education in a nearby school which he loves. He is now fluent in the local language, meeting his developmental milestones and thriving.

“I have never birthed any children but through Elijah, I have been able to feel the joy of being a mother. Thank you for supporting us”

- Asinasi
At first, it seemed impossible to have children leave but with support from Child’s i Foundation social workers, I trusted the process and now all children are either living independently or back with their relatives.

- Sister Theresa, transitioned children’s home in Kampala

I’m grateful to Child’s i Foundation for the support. My life has changed completely! During my transition from the children’s home, I was supported to develop new life skills, like cooking, and budgeting, I was also supported with rent and capital for my business. I have a successful shop that sells phone accessories and operates a mobile money service centre.

- Tadius, Care leaver, Kampala
A WORD ABOUT...

War, the global climate emergency and the cost of living crisis

War, the global climate emergency and the cost of living crisis are rightly at the forefront of everybody’s minds at the current moment. So why is it urgent or even relevant to consider children in orphanages right now?

The answer is that at these heightened times of danger and long after they have ended, families and communities offer children the best chance of survival. Children need to be with the people that love them, that will look out for them and that will find the routes to safety. A family can flee danger, an institution cannot.

Sadly because there is so little support for families and communities in the very places where war and natural disasters are most likely to occur, the risk of children being placed in orphanages is greatly increased at these times.

**Children always have a right to a family life but particularly so when there are extreme external dangers.** We need action to stop more children being placed in orphanages now more than ever.
TAKE ACTION

and join our cause to ensure that every child can survive and thrive in a safe and loving family.

Get in touch with our CEO Christopher Muwanguzi:
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WE MAKE FAMILIES, NOT ORPHANS

childsifoundation.org

Child’s i Foundation
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