



KIGALI DECLARATION ON CHILD CARE REFORM

Acknowledge. Align. Accelerate.

Global Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on Childcare Reform Kigali, Rwanda | 17–19 December 2025

Preamble

We, members of Global Expert Group on Childcare Reforms, MAs, PSAs, IO, IORs, care experienced young people, convened in Kigali, Rwanda, from 17–19 December 2025, united by a shared commitment to children’s rights and wellbeing.

We reaffirm that **every child has the right to grow up in a safe and nurturing family environment**, and that **no child or family should be left behind**.

Guided by the theme **Acknowledge. Align. Accelerate.**, and informed by evidence, lived experience, and global and regional policy standards upholding the human rights of children and their families, we adopt this Kigali Declaration as a collective commitment to transform childcare and protection systems for present and future generations.

I. Acknowledge: The Moment We Are In

Acknowledging reality is what helps us learn and develop to stay relevant in the communities and governance structures we operate in. We acknowledge that millions of children worldwide continue to be separated from their families unnecessarily, not because of lack of love or commitment of the caregivers, but because of poverty and systemic shocks, which national and local authorities address through late interventions, underinvestment in prevention of the drivers of separation, and fragmented services (including social, economic, and psychosocial support).

We recognize that institutional care, particularly when used as a long-term response, is inherently harmful for children, carrying negative life-long negative child development outcomes and injustice that can be passed down to the next generation, as consistently demonstrated by global evidence.

We further acknowledge that safeguarding failures, governance gaps, and accountability weaknesses have led to child abuse and neglect within some of SOS Children’s Villages direct care services, eroding the rights of the children we were meant to protect as well as public trust. These realities demand honesty, accountability, and decisive reform.

We also acknowledge that the care reform debate has moved from national to global, from policy to practice, from ideologies and principles to what works to accelerate implementation.

Last, but not least, children’s care reform is:

- A **child rights obligation**
- A **safeguarding imperative**
- A **moral responsibility**
- A **systems transformation agenda**

II. Align: A Shared Direction for Children

We believe that

every child belongs in a family, and every family deserves the support necessary to care for its children.

We commit to:



- Aligning funding, partnerships, advocacy and programming with global and national evidence, laws and policies that foster rights-compliant, context-specific and holistic integrated children's care and protection systems.
- **Strengthening governance and leadership** that provide clear vision, accountability, and local ownership of childcare reforms.
- **Embedding safeguarding and child protection** as non-negotiable foundations of all child-related systems and services.
- **Prioritizing family strengthening, prevention, and gatekeeping** to reduce unnecessary separation and ensure alternative care is used only when necessary and appropriate. Promote humanitarian-development-peace nexus in our work.
- **Advancing care transformation and de-institutionalisation**, expanding quality family- and community-based alternatives, including kinship care, foster care, kafala, and supported independent living arrangements.
- **Ensuring planned transitions and aftercare**, guided by the no-harm principle, with continuity of care and support for children and young people leaving care.
- **Investing in a professional, supported, and ethical workforce** as a core safeguarding and quality requirement.
- **Working with, not parallel to, national child protection systems**, strengthening government partnerships and system coherence.
- **Using evidence, data, and learning** to inform policy, improve practice, and ensure accountability.
- **Mobilizing sustainable and innovative financing**, aligned with prevention, family-based care, and long-term system strengthening.
- **Aligning strategic communication and organizational identity** with contemporary care reform principles, outcomes, and public expectations.

Alignment requires coherence across policies, strategies, functions, structures, processes, operations and borders with children's best interests at the centre.

III. **Accelerate: From Commitment to Impact**

We recognize that the Global Charter on Children's Care Reform, launched at the UN General Assembly in September 2025, is catalysing global momentum among governments, donors and civil society partners to accelerate change. And we want to be part of that change that children cannot wait.

We therefore commit to accelerating reform by:

1. **Championing national and regional care reform agendas**, in partnership with governments, Continental bodies such as the African Union, European Union, ASIAN, regional economic communities, relevant sector operators, UN Agencies and global institutions.
2. **Transforming care models responsibly**, ensuring transitions from institutional care are safe, participatory, well-planned, and supported by aftercare. Integrate trauma-informed relational care across care options.
3. **Scaling prevention and family strengthening rapidly**, particularly in contexts affected by poverty, crisis, conflict, displacement, and climate change. Promote humanitarian-development-peace nexus.



4. **Embedding safeguarding culture, leadership accountability, and independent oversight** across all child-related systems.
5. **Ensuring meaningful participation of children, young people, families, and communities** in decision-making, monitoring, and learning.

Acceleration is measured not by declarations made, but by improved outcomes in children's lives.

Our Collective Commitment

We affirm that childcare reform is not merely a technical or organizational exercise. It is a moral, social, and child rights imperative

Through this Kigali Declaration, we commit to moving forward together **acknowledging gaps honestly, aligning to sector standards boldly, and accelerating care reforms with courage** to ensure that every child grows up with care, protection, identity, and belonging.

**Adopted in Kigali, Rwanda
19 December 2025**