

JOINT STRATEGY TO PROMOTE ALTERNATIVE CARE ISSUES AT THE UNITED NATIONS

Context

Millions of children live in informal or formal care settings, or are otherwise separated from their parents. Many more are at risk of separation, due to issues such as, difficulties within the family, HIV, armed conflict, natural disasters and poverty.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and specifically the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children seek to provide safeguards for this vulnerable group of children. However, the full implementation of children's rights embedded in these international standards remains inadequate.

To address these gaps, the working groups on alternative care issues in Geneva¹ and New York², comprising of a consortium of dedicated NGOs, UN agencies and professionals have been working closely to promote a better protection of these children in the international arena, particularly at the United Nations.

Consolidating synergies

Whilst both working groups have individual plan of actions, including activities mostly relevant to only Geneva or New York due to location³, there are some cross-cutting initiatives that both groups are actively involved in. By uniting efforts and developing a joint strategic plan for two years incorporating these common initiatives, we hope that there will be a greater impact globally especially within the two primary hubs of the United Nations, in Geneva and New York.

Core objectives	Concrete activities
Promote the guidelines via the implementation and monitoring handbook (IM handbook)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">⊕ Facilitate the development of IM handbook – provision of practices/policies; identify experts for consultation; comments on drafts etc⊕ Organise launch event of handbook early 2013 (HRC and GA in March)⊕ Finalise the definitions on formal care in a useable format for handbook
Identify/build “champions” within country missions to raise profile of alternative care issues within the UN framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none">⊕ Organise briefing sessions on alternative care issues for upcoming UN events⊕ Support the establishment of a ministerial forum (similar to that used for promoting awareness of the Paris Principles) to facilitate an annual Ministerial Level Meeting at UNGA starting in 2013 or 2014⊕ Engage champions to promote the guidelines and their implementation through bilateral and multilateral meetings with an aim for alternative care to be the theme for the 2014 Omnibus Resolution (GRULAC drafting)
Day of General Discussion 2014 (DGD) – strengthening and supporting families and caregivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">⊕ Finalise the concept note and expected outcomes of DGD⊕ Lobby UN CRC members, NGOs, UN agencies and others for support⊕ Organise potential speakers, publicity and encourage submissions of documents

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¹ See <http://www.childrightsnet.org/NGOGroup/childrightsissues/WithoutParentalCare/>.

² See <http://www.ngocomunicef.org/> (coming soon) The NY WG is part of the NGO Committee on UNICEF.

³ For example specific activities related to the Geneva WG include treaty body mainstreaming and the Human Rights Council and for the New York WG, activities related to UNICEF Executive Board and the UN General Assembly