

**BREAKING
THE CYCLE**
PROTECTION, RESILIENCE & RECOVERY
for street connected children

2021 
CONFERENCE

Care Reform in Eastern Africa: Global Perspectives, Emerging Lessons, Challenges and Critical Issues in providing care for Children Living Without Parental Care in the Region

Railway Children Africa (RCA) Experience in Providing Alternative Care for Street Connected Children

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children RAILWAY
Fighting for street children

Railway Children Africa - Family Reintegration Work

We believe in a world where no child has to live on the streets.

We know that children need a safe and loving family to thrive, and access support services.

Street connected children have complex needs and the work to support their return home and their reintegration in families and communities is complex, takes time and it requires specialist support.



Railway Children Africa - Family Reintegration Work

2018-2021

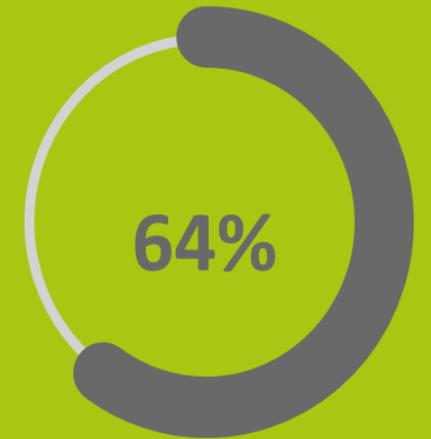
1,765 children have been reintegrated with their parents or extended families.



Children thriving at home and are in education after 1 year.



Families reported improved relationship.



Families received economic support.

RCA Experience in Alternative Family Based Care

In 2019, with support from UBS, RCA began implementing an alternative care project that aimed to;

- 1) Support our overall reintegration work
- 2) Support our preventative work using ACT, Raising Safe Kids.
- 3) Bolster our efforts to train a cohort of 'fit persons'
- 4) Support orphanages to transform away from residential care and into community hubs, transitioning children into family-based care in the process of doing so.
- 5) Build an alliance of agencies across Tanzania committed to care reform and collectively advocate for change with government.

This presentation focuses on our successes, challenges and lessons in the 3rd 4th and 5th areas. The first two areas are explored more in detail in other session organized in this conference.

RCA Experience in Alternative Family Based Care

Establishing a Cohort of Fit Persons

For street connected children to return home, safely, there is a need for them to have a safe space to live and thrive whilst issues that led to their departure are resolved, or alternative family options are sought in the extended family.

RCA in collaboration with UNICEF supported the government to develop Fit Persons Training Manual to include specific support for street connected children.

Supported the government to train 205 Social Welfare Officers from **22 LGAs** in the fit persons intervention and worked with Social Welfare Officers from **13 LGAs** to identify and train **312 individuals as fit persons**.



RCA Experience in Alternative Family Based Care

Establishing a Cohort of Fit Persons

Placed to Fit
Persons

493

Reintegrated

393
(79%)

Still at Fit
Persons

40
(8%)

Drop-Outs

55
(11%)

RCA Experience in Alternative Family Based Care

Establishing a Cohort of Fit Persons – Lessons Learnt

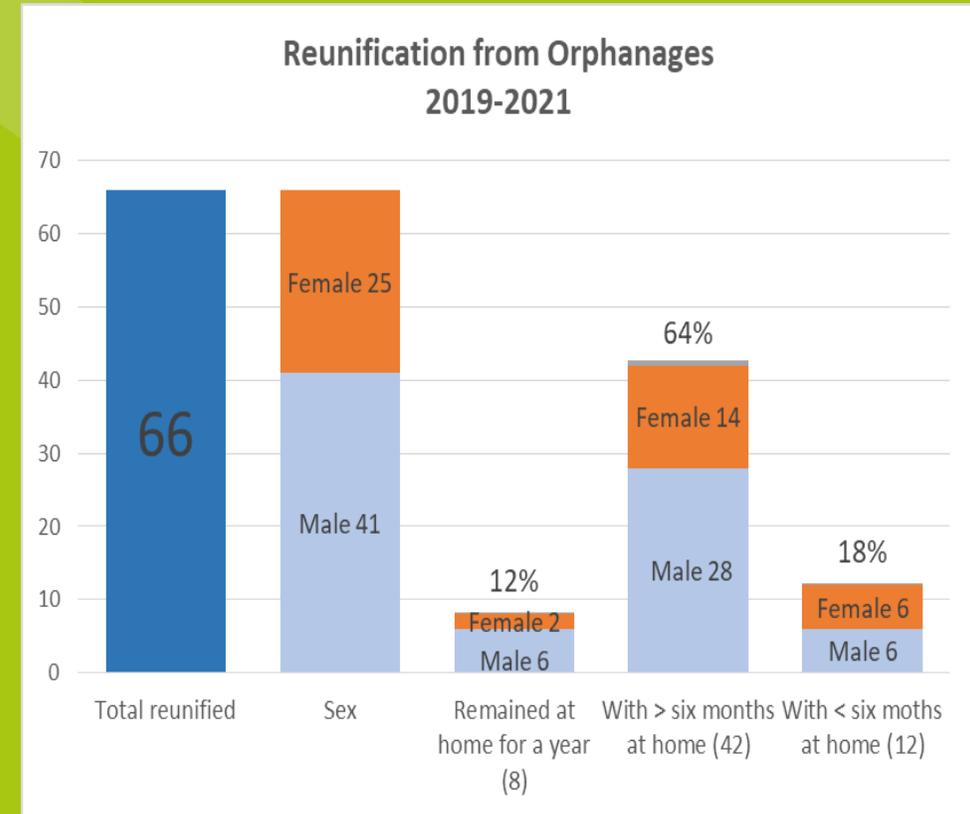
1. Fit persons for street connected children need good selection processes to ensure they are ready to welcome and care for street connected children.
2. Fit persons need additional training to ensure they have the skills and competencies to support street connected children.
3. It is important to consider that some placements will break down due to challenging situation.
4. The social welfare department needs more resourcing and training to support fit persons and street connected children.
5. The options for street connected children need to be considered and a range of options need to be available (to respond to their needs and circumstances).

We are further assessing the key protective and risk factors associated with a successful placement for street connected children with fit persons.

RCA Experience in Alternative Family Based Care

Supporting Orphanages to Transform – Lessons Learnt

1. Resistance to change should not be underestimated – it took us **a year** to bring on board one children's home to work with us.
2. **1** out of the **4** children's homes we engaged with, has started the transition of children into families and communities.
3. A majority of children in the 4 partner children's homes have at least one parent and extended families. Their families struggle to care for their children.
4. The success of the transition and reintegration work made our partners very proud and more engaged in the process.
5. The success of the transition was a reflection of strengthened skills and capabilities of the staff in the homes.
6. **2** children were adopted.



RCA Experience in Alternative Family Based Care

Supporting Orphanages to Transform – Challenges

1. Lack of first hand experience in de-institutionalization
2. Inadequate resources for Social Welfare Departments
3. Most of the long term care homes in Tanzania are started and run by individuals and are not registered. They have no governance structures and systems in place.
4. Care reform is not part of child protection system strengthening in Tanzania
5. Reintegration of children with disability and mental health issues has been a challenge.
6. Alternative care options (fit persons, adoption and formal fostering) are not well known and used
7. There is also difference between what the law stipulates and practice in fostering children. The practice is fostering is for adoption.



RCA Experience in Alternative Family Based Care

Supporting Orphanages to Transform - Final Reflections

1. De-institutionalization takes time so it is important to design a program that factor in enough time.
2. Readiness will always be different for each orphanage; engagement strategy should be designed to fit their readiness level – an alternative purpose must be found.
3. It is important that family & community based interventions are established alongside reintegration of children from long term care.



RCA Experience in Alternative Family Based Care *Supporting Orphanages to Transform – Final Reflections*

1. Successful reintegration is not a guarantee that orphanages will commit to change.
2. There is no one size fits all plan when it comes to de-institutionalization.
3. The strategy of lobbying through donors and boards will not work for many in Tanzania as they do not have boards nor international donors.
4. Community awareness is a critical element of any DI programme.
5. Local government needs to be engaged in an MoU around DI and involved in all reintegration cases following proper case management processes.

RCA Experience in Alternative Family Based Care

Setting a CSO Platform

Making care reform a national agenda requires collective efforts.

RCA is trusted at national and local level and therefore well placed to coordinate a CSO platform around care reform.

The platform is for modeling how regulations and guidelines are implemented on the ground and share good practice.

Bring together larger and smaller players to collectively elevate and amplify their voice to inform government on what works, what does not work and what changes are needed.

