

Independent Impact Report

ACI
UGANDA

Alternative
Care
Initiatives





Executive Note

Twenty years ago our founder, Mick Pease, decided to follow the advice of Baroness Caroline Cox and promote the concept of foster care around the world. Responding to questions such as: “how will you know it's successful?”, Mick would answer “If people invite me back”.

Twenty years on Strengthening Families And Children (SFAC) gets invited all over the world to support organisations of all sizes. Alongside advocacy and awareness raising, SFAC supports organisations to develop and implement family care programs through training and mentorship, and technical support.

This impact report helps fill in the gaps of measuring success. It will help SFAC and its family of donors and supporters know our success, identify our weaknesses and review our role for the future.

We are delighted Mark Riley and his team took on this work. Mark knows SFAC from his work in Uganda when SFAC provided training and advice to Retrak, Child's i Foundation (CiF), Alternative Care Initiatives (ACI) Uganda, Home Free (formerly Thrive Uganda), Ekisa Ministries and CALM Africa. Our training with those organisations concentrated on moving away from children's homes to providing foster care, adoption and kinship care services. Mark also joined us on a project in Indonesia.

For some this may question the report's independence. For us however, it meant Mark Riley understood the SFAC methodology and would be more confident to challenge what was not working as well as identify success.

Mark was given full autonomy to ask whatever questions he wanted to whoever he chose.

We thank him and his team for the report and will work hard to build on the successes and strengthen areas that have been identified to further our work in the next twenty years.

Dan Hope
CEO

Philip Cotterill, OBE
Chair of Trustees

A photograph of a man with a shaved head and a goatee, wearing a blue and white striped t-shirt and dark trousers. He is standing in front of a light-colored stone wall. The image is partially obscured by a large yellow graphic element on the right side, which contains text. The yellow element has a torn-edge effect at the top and bottom. There are also blue and green geometric shapes in the top right and bottom left corners of the page.

Foreword

It is a great honour and privilege for me to write the foreword for the impact report on the work of Strengthening Families And Children (SFAC).

Myself and a colleague started CALM Africa in 2005 in order to support vulnerable children in the communities of Rakai and Wakiso Districts in Uganda. A key part of the work was to ensure that children who needed temporary care and protection could be cared for in their own community and rather than be placed into a residential care (orphanage).

We started our work in Rakai, a district that was badly affected by the HIV and AIDS scourge, leaving many children without parental care. The growing number of children orphaned due to HIV and AIDS prompted CALM Africa to develop a foster care system, by identifying and training families in the communities to become foster parents. The outcomes between children placed in family care compared to those placed in residential care were markedly different.

Through collaboration with SFAC, we were able to expand and improve our foster care program; including ensuring that children were appropriately placed and monitored. SFAC support included funding, training and mentorship, and advisory.

Drawing on our initial work with SFAC in Rakai and Wakiso, we have been able to share our experiences, practices and case studies with a wider network of care providers; enabling them to develop more robust foster care practices. With SFAC support, we have been able to make an important contribution to Uganda's care system reform journey.

When Mark asked me to write the foreword for this impact study, I thought about what makes SFAC special. The first thing that came to mind was relationships. Through forming long term relationships, based on a mutual interest in ensuring children are safe, protected and thrive in families, SFAC has been able to work across different organisations across 49 countries. The difference in children's lives is immeasurable.

SFAC has continued to support various reforms and innovations in Uganda and I am sure they will be committed to Uganda for years to come.

We are proud to be a part of the global SFAC family.

Joseph Luganda, Head of Programs – CALM Africa (Uganda)

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STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND CHILDREN (SFAC)

A mission that never wavers...

SFAC is a registered UK charity (Reg No. 1186903), founded in 2002, with the simple mission: to promote best practice in the protection of children including the promotion of family care alternatives to residential care; by supporting and inspiring anyone who wanted to start, improve or expand their own work and projects that kept or placed children into families. The SFAC vision is to ensure all children are safe and have a sense of belonging:

Safe +Belong=Thrive.

SFAC has worked with a wide range of organisations from small community organisations looking to support children and families in their local area to large international charities, national governments and judicial authorities.

SFAC provides a diverse range of support including in-person and online training and mentorship for practitioners, advocacy and awareness raising, reviewing, advising and helping develop practices and national policy and law reforms.

SFAC's covers many areas including training organisations on best practices in foster care, developing child protection and court systems for national governments, and providing therapeutic courses to practitioners to enable them to support children effectively

Approach

- Training workshops
- Advice and consultation to organisation to review current practice or identify areas future development
- Online Resources and Guides
- Advocacy and awareness raising in what children need from those providing care and protection

SFAC also offers an online Protective Behaviors Course in collaboration with 'Feeling Safe Foundation', which is accredited by the Open College Network, West Midlands.

The SFAC team include full-time, part-time staff and a number of occasional contractors and volunteers who contribute to SFAC's work (providing legal, social work and therapy services). A small team of active trustees supports the work of SFAC. The administrative base of SFAC is at the Bridge Community Church, Leeds.

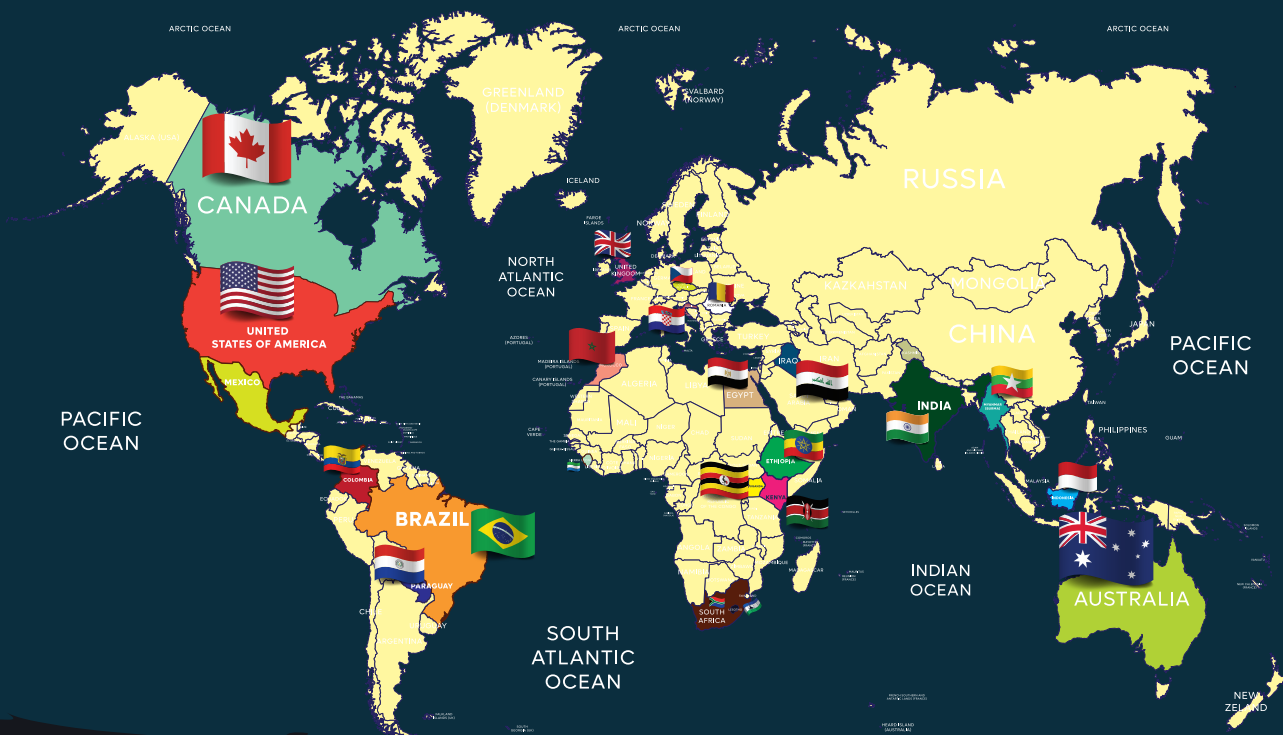
From humble beginnings, SFAC has been able to provide organisations, individuals and specific projects with sustained support, recognising that sustained and consistent support is most effective. This has meant that SFAC has been working with the same organisations and individuals for many years and are able to see the benefits of these long term relationships.

The purpose of this impact report is both to celebrate 20 years of SFAC and look to the future of SFAC. For a more detailed read on the history of SFAC please purchase the 2018 book 'Children Belong in Families' (ISBN: 1532644345), by Philip Williams and Mick Pease. 'Children Belong in Families' is the insightful and uplifting story of SFAC that spans three decades and five continents.

¹Practitioners refers to anyone working with or making decisions on behalf of children who are vulnerable; their families and carers. This might include carers, social workers, caseworkers, judges, lawyers, psychologists, youth workers or government officials and more..



Geographic Coverage





STUDY APPROACH

To highlight the impact of SFAC's work a review of relevant literature was conducted, including trip and activity reports. In addition, an online survey was completed by SFAC partner organisations from 14 out of the 49 countries/regions SFAC have worked in including: Latin America and Caribbean (Brazil, Columbia and Paraguay), Sub-saharan Africa (Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone), South and Southeast Asia (India, Indonesia and Mynamma), Middle East (Kurdish Region of Iraq), and North America (Mexico, and USA).

While this impact report does not include all of the work and countries that SFAC has worked in, it does offer a timely reflection on what SFAC has achieved, the work SFAC continues to do and also what the future of SFAC looks like.

Limitations

Given the way SFAC started work in many countries, there were no 'baselines' created that can be used to compare progress and rigorously assess the impact of SFAC. In many cases, SFAC was invited to several countries by organisations to provide specific support; with little time to collect any baseline data to inform measurement of progress and outcomes of care systems reforms.

Additionally SFAC does not manage or implement projects directly. Rather, the organisation works with local partners to create change and improve practice. Many of these partners are grassroots organisations without comprehensive monitoring and evaluation systems in place. Therefore it was impossible to determine the full impact of SFAC work with qualitative measures.



IMPACT

Overall, participants in this impact study highlighted the impact of SFAC's work across three interrelated domains:

- Promoting foster care as an alternative to residential care
- Transitioning of residential care services and reunification of children in family care
- Strengthening case management systems and shaping policy

Collectively from the review it is clear SFAC's work in many countries has contributed to the deinstitutionalization of the care systems; culminating into reduced reliance on residential care and more children placed in family care.

Impact in numbers

Based on responses from 18 partners across 14 several countries, Table 1 highlights the number of children who have been directly or indirectly impacted positively through SFAC support. Overall, an estimated 2465 children had directly benefited from the work of SFAC and over 11500 children had indirectly benefited. This is based on just 30% of the work SFAC have undertaken. If this is extrapolated to cover 100% of the work, then conservatively it can be estimated that over 8000 children have directly benefited, and over 38000 children indirectly benefited, from SFAC's work.

The numbers do not include national impact of change involving governments and courts or the ripple effect of other orgs who SFAC has not directly worked with. This means the numbers of children impacted will be considerably higher into the millions and counting.

Promoting foster care as an alternative to residential care

SFAC has supported several organisations across several countries to develop and implement foster care programs through training and mentorship for practitioners. For example, in Paraguay, SFAC works closely with the team at Little Neighbour to help them develop a sustainable foster care programme. As a result at least 50 children were placed in foster care. Similarly, in Uganda, SFAC supported CALM Africa to establish the first community based foster care program, directly benefiting over 30 children.

When SFAC came to CALM Africa in 2011, it was the turning point in our understanding for the best place for a child to grow. There were lots of families and children struggling. We were trying to help but we did not want to build an orphanage. We wanted to do something different but we didn't know what. Thanks to SFAC's training and support, CALM Africa now champions the promotion of Community Based Foster Care in Uganda and we are consulted by different organisations to share our model (Key Informant, Uganda).

Similarly, SFAC has also supported the establishment and strengthening of foster care projects in Brazil (Abba and Revive), Morocco (Fape), Cambodia (Children in Families), Colombia (Formando Vidas) and Kurdish Region of Iraq (Step-Iraq).

SFAC has supported Abba, and now Revive, in Brazil to create the first foster care programmes in their area where Mick is often referred to as the 'father figure of foster care in Brazil' (Key Informant, Brazil)

SFAC was instrumental in introducing the idea of foster care to the Kurdish Regional Government. SFAC encouraged and supported 'STEP-UK', a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) in Kurdistan, to carry out advocacy and training practitioners on foster care. The organisation has been able to support the Kurdish Government to run a foster care unit with 18 children being safely cared for with 16 foster families (Key Informant, Kurdish Region of Iraq)

SFAC impacted foster care professionals and foster families with validated experiences and methodologies, which have strengthened the foster care benefits to more than 1000 participants. Mick taught us the importance of family care of children that could not be with their family of origin. We in turn opened 6 family based long term care homes for children. We also taught the principles Mick had taught us in many other seminars across Colombia and several other Latin American countries (Key Informant, Columbia)

Further, SFAC has over the years also provided practical training to foster carers, foster care agencies and other stakeholders providing foster care services. For example, SFAC supported Retrak, a UK-based organization working with street children in Africa, to formalise and strengthen procedures for its first foster care programme in Uganda, and helped the organisation launch other foster care initiatives in Ethiopia. SFAC was also one of the guest trainers during the first Foster Care training conference in sub-saharan Africa (August 2010), which brought together 22 social workers from 7 countries in the region: Uganda, Ethiopia, Ghana, Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania and Burkina Faso. From the list of projects listed in the appendix, the involvement of SFAC in developing and advancing foster care is significant. Similarly, SFAC has supported many organisations to develop kinship care - an area likely to grow as more organisations move to close/reduce residential care facilities or work in family care alternatives.



Transitioning of residential care services and reintegration of children in families

SFAC work has contributed to the transition of residential care services, culminating into the reunification of children with their biological families or placement in alternative families in several countries. For example, in Paraguay, SFAC supported the initiation of cross-government review to reform the care system. As a result, 260 children have been 'deinstitutionalized' i.e. supported to return to safe and nurturing families. Similarly in Myanmar and Sierra Leone, participants observed that SFAC had them rethink their model of care for children, by sharing valuable resources, raising awareness and training about the limitations of orphanages and importance of family care, and sharing innovative ways to take action.

A key element of SFAC's training and awareness raising process is to engage various actors, including orphanages / children home owners and managers; via interactions around a 'fictional' case study. Using small group discussions and coaching participants walk away with an understanding of what it takes to see vulnerable children living in secure families and next steps for their role in moving children to families

SFAC helped our organization transition from supporting residential care to supporting family care. This impacted our work in 9 countries and over 1500 children directly. Because of SFAC's help, the first family-reunification program in Myanmar was started for non-governmental homes. Over 100 children have been placed with families, dozen of orphanages have been defunded, and hundreds of families have been informed about the harms of sending their children to institutions (Key informant, Myanmar)

I truly feel that our work with SFAC is only just beginning. One of the SFAC partner organisations reintegrated 50 children in Sierra Leone in 2021. SFAC provided them with ongoing active remote support (through calls and email) for case management and social work processes to help them. Another example is their critical training function especially through the JourneyHome platform (but also at a 1MillionHome Conference in Brazil). The JourneyHome Course was released in the fourth quarter of 2021 but has already been reaching people in many different countries, helping improve child protection and family reunification processes and strategies.

Participants in the study also highlighted how through a combination of advocacy and awareness raising, SFAC has been able to inform and support practitioners (including orphanage managers) across several countries to realise the importance of family care to healthy development and/or work toward reintegration of children in residential care with their families.


SFAC has played a key role in raising awareness about the value of family based care with residential children's care managers in Indonesia. The managers had an emotional session with SFAC which helped in addressing the resistance, especially from residential care staff, to family care. We are Currently working to produce policies to reunify children in homes safely back to families (Key Informant, Indonesia).

Recently, SFAC was appointed as a technical advisor to 1MillionHome (1MH), a non-profit organization whose mission is to help a million children get home and eradicate the practices that lead to family separation. The 1MH community of practice is made up of family focused organizations as well as residential facilities that are transitioning to family care. As a technical advisor, SFAC supports a range of organisations to manage transition from residential care to family care by sharing best practices, approaches and case studies. Supporting NGOs, governments and courts in this area is a growing focus for SFAC and critical in SFAC achieving its mission, as recently evidenced at a conference (April 2022) in Costa Rica alongside Casa Viva.

Strengthening case management systems and shaping policy

Several informants also highlighted the work of SFAC in strengthening case management systems or procedures to ensure appropriate care for children. SFAC approach to strengthening case management includes joint case reviews for some of the more difficult cases presented by partners. The approach allows partners to present some of the challenging cases, outlining the situation of a child or other family situation, and SFAC provides mentorship and advice on each of the cases. The aim of the mentorship is for local partners to tap into SFAC's extensive practice experience.

In addition, through ongoing mentoring, SFAC guides organisations through the process of developing their own solutions based on core concepts and principles – solutions that are appropriate for their context, culture and resources. For example, in a key informant from Casa Viva Costa Rica observed:



SFAC approach is not to impose a case management system or model to an organisation but to work with them to build on current practice, understand resources, context (law and skills) and develop approaches that work for them. In fact, organisations or countries have different systems; which SFAC supports them to develop and then provide ongoing support.

SFAC provided us with 'case management' guidance in the development of the Casa Viva Model which Casa Viva continues to operate and continuously improve. This case management approach has been developed, piloted and operationalised to support Casa Viva case workers to provide children with a spectrum of care alternatives, starting with family reunification, then national adoption and long term foster care.

Furthermore, SFAC has been able to influence NGO and national policies related to family care in several countries including Iraq-Kurdistan, Costa Rica, Morocco, Brazil and Paraguay. Notably, SFAC worked alongside The Salvation Army and various NGOs to create effective assessment, care planning and alternative care systems. For example, the use of the 'continuum of services' is widespread across government and courts in Paraguay. Similarly, policy changes are also evident in governments and court systems following SFAC in Morocco, Paraguay, Brazil and Iraq-Kurdistan. There is also widespread use of the Essential Information and Care Plan system by organisations supported by SFAC.

It will take many years before the full impact and influence of such support and policies are known, but the significance of such work should not be underestimated and SFAC has played a key role in inspiring and supporting care reform.

¹Directly impacted by the work of the partners and SFAC includes children who have been direct beneficiaries of the partner organisations - children whom the partner has been the lead case worker for. Indirect beneficiaries is the estimated number of children who have benefitted from the work of partners and SFAC through networks, influence, advocacy and training of other non-direct partners, or children who have benefited from policy and law changes as a result of the work of SFAC.

¹<https://casaviva.org/>

Table 1: SFAC reach and support, 2002-2022

Country (s) in which SFAC partners work	Year which partner organization started working with SFAC	Support from SFAC	Beneficiaries	
			Direct	Indirect
Paraguay	2012	Training and mentorship, awareness raising; advice to organisations to review current practice or identify areas for future development, advice on transitioning residential care services, support towards setting up a foster care programme and programme for young people leaving care.	200	2,000
Brazil	1999	Training, advocacy and awareness raising , and advisory to practitioners on foster care development	130	1,300
Colombia	2003	Training and mentorship on foster care	65	200
Kenya, Sierra Leone, USA	2019	Training and ongoing mentorship, and advocacy, quality of assessments of reunification program and development of alternative programmes		80
Uganda	2000	Awareness raising and training on foster care		Over 1000
Uganda	2015	Practical training to foster carers, foster care agencies and other stakeholders providing foster care services.	20	200
Uganda	2012	Establishment of Community Based Foster care program	30	205
The Kurdish Region of Iraq	2007/8	Awareness raising, and training in foster care	20	
Myanmar, Mexico	2010	Training and awareness raising importance of family care, advice on transitioning residential care services	1500	2000
Indonesia, Kenya, India	2017	Training and ongoing technical support Awareness raising, and training in foster care, Training on importance of family care,	500	Over 5000

TESTIMONIALS

Working in Paraguay, we are inspired by professionals globally, such as SFAC team alongside other key organizations that have come to provide us training, helping us to be equipped and equip others with key pieces of the puzzle, driving change bottom-up and top-down, so that every child can be in a safe and loving family (Key informant, Paraguay).

Meeting Mick was a pivotal moment. I had been agonising over how to transfer experience and knowledge of UK based Foster care, in a culturally appropriate way that was truly 'owned' at a local level. Mick is an inspirational force and tenacious in his effort to transform lives and policies. Congratulations on reaching this milestone and all the best for the next 20! (Key Informant, Uganda)

SFAC has proven to be one of our most strategic and valuable partnerships. They have brought a level of expertise to our organization and community of practice that we truly needed and has positively benefited not only 1MILLIONHOME directly, but also reached other organizations that we're affiliated with. We are truly honored to partner and look forward to continuing partnering in the future! (Key Informant, Sierra Leone)

CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1: 'Viva SFAC' Paraguay

SFAC has been inspiring and impacting the move to support children in safe and loving families in Paraguay since 2012. SFAC supported the advancement of foster care, family care in general, and through best practice social work and legal proceedings.

Since Mick's (Pease) first visit to Paraguay, SFAC supported the FIRST faith-based foster care project 'Families Que Dan Vida' by Red Viva Paraguay (Viva Network in Paraguay). The project was done in conjunction with the National Secretariat of Paraguay's Adoption Center. SFAC supported the training for the 'Families Que Dan Vida' professional team, and guest speakers for the first event to recruit families within the church sector.

Subsequent visits from Mick and Dan (Hope) took place in 2013 and 2017, supporting the growth of the vision of family care and training across the board with all sectors in Paraguay including local and national government, private organizations providing alternative care, social work professionals, and Judiciary. SFAC also organised and hosted two Paraguayan delegations for a learning experience visit to Leeds UK (2013 and 2018) where they met members of the UK Judiciary, social work teams and legal professions to learn and share experiences on ensuring children are legally supported effectively.

SFAC connected the Red Viva Paraguay to World Without Orphans (WWO) which inspired the inception of a national movement called 'Paraguay Protects Families' in 2016. This initiative is led by a group of children's homes and faith-based organizations with a shared vision for every child to grow in a safe and loving family.

The first-ever training in protection and care decision-making for Judges TOGETHER with Public Defenders (lawyers representing children and families in protection proceedings) and Prosecutors (mandated to be part of proceedings to ensure due process is adhered to) took place in 2018, with a team of legal experts from SFAC.

SFAC's last visit in 2019, to support the strategic work summit with the key stakeholders of our national system of protection of children's rights, to review our nationwide system and design a cross-government plan to improve child protection proceedings.

SFAC has been providing remote professional support to a new foster care program 'Dulce Semillita' ('Little Neighbors') started in 2020 to help drive change by example, one case at a time.

TESTIMONIALS

Mick, Dan and Walter (from SFAC) came to Uganda and just 'listened' to what was going on with regards to alternative care and care reform in the country. Slowly, as they started to get to know more about what was going on in Uganda, they humbly made some very astute suggestions and provided some advice. This was in contrast to a lot of expensive consultants who arrive in Uganda and leave as quickly as they arrive. There was recognition by SFAC that moving away from an 'orphanage' system takes many years and needs a lot of people working together. To this day, much of their advice and guidance is being followed as Uganda is still on a long journey to eradicate orphanages. (Key Informant, Uganda)

Without the advice and guidance from SFAC I don't know where we will be today. They have been able to quietly and consistently support our work and help us navigate some very tricky situations. Progress is slow, but we are in a marathon, not a sprint. (Key Informant, Latin America).

The 'Protective Behaviour' approach and training provided by Caitlin at SFAC, has significantly impacted and increased the safety of children we work with. We are now focused on creating a culture of safety in communities for both children and adults, not just responding to issues. (Key Informant, Philippines).

From SFAC we have benefitted from a clear practical and personalized focus, bringing it down to reality, with dynamic training, top-notch practical tools and personal testimonies (Key Informant, Paraguay)



Case Study 2: 'Heaven's Family' Myanmar

in 2011 Mick and Brenda travelled with 'Heaven's Family' to Myanmar to conduct foster care awareness seminars with the orphanages that 'Heaven's Family' supported at the time. The purpose of the trip was to raise awareness of the problems with 'residential care' and outline the processes, challenges and benefits of replacing 'residential care' with foster care. This was a huge challenge as foster care was not widely undertaken or even spoken about at the time.

One day the team rode a jeep deep into the 'Chin' mountains to visit a remote village, a place similar to where children from orphanages were originating from. Mick and Brenda endured a several hour long trip in a cramped jeep over very difficult roads to reach the village. At one point a makeshift bridge had to be constructed out of logs so the jeep could cross a ravine to be able to continue. The journey was so difficult that a couple people decided to not continue and went back to the hotel, but Mick and Brenda continued. When the team reached the top of the mountain, they were warmly greeted by the entire village and were told that they were the first foreigners who had visited since the British left Burma in 1948!

After spending some time chatting to the local people, discussing foster care and visiting a water project, the team made the long journey back down the mountain. This was to be one of the first communities which embraced foster care and in part, this was due to the visit by Mick and Brenda.

*"Despite the extremely uncomfortable travel arrangements, Mick and Brenda never complained. It was a testament to their commitment and willingness to go and do whatever it took to raise awareness of the importance of keeping and supporting children in families".
Heaven's Family, Myanmar*

Since the initial trip to Myanmar SFAC have continued to provide support, encouragement and advice on strengthening families, foster care and moving away from orphanages. The project has evolved significantly with the 'Heaven's Family' project, led by Philip Barker at Orphan's Tear, starting to close the orphanages they run. SFAC, through Dan, Mick and Walter, supported the organisation to develop case management tools for reunification of children to their families. Through continued training and engagement this training and approach is also being rolled-out to other Myanmar organisations. This led to 'Kinected Myanmar' being created which is supporting organisations moving away from orphanages to family care.



Case Study 3: Philippines - Building community not buildings

When Rebecca (Becca) Desrochers visited an orphanage in the Philippines in 2014 she had no idea of the journey she was about to embark on and how it would be influenced by a small, but impactful, charity in the UK.

It didn't take Becca long to realise that even though the children in the orphanage had been sexually exploited and needed help, that keeping them in an orphanage was not the answer as orphanages are inherently bad for children and expose children to development and exploitation risks.

Becca did however know that she wanted to do something to help children, especially those who were at risk of being exploited and exposed to online sexual exploitation, which was rife in the area she lived in. Becca connected with International Justice Mission (IJM) and started supporting children who had been exploited access support services. Becca saw the need for a crisis centre where children could stay after being rescued from sexual exploitation. It was at this point in 2016 when Becca and her colleague connected with Dan and Caitlin from SFAC. SFAC provided Becca with advice, guidance and training. This highlighted to Becca that even a 'crisis' centre could become an 'orphanage' and led to the long-term institutionalisation of children unless staff were significantly trained and you had a high staff to child ratio which would be expensive. SFAC advised Becca to invest in communities, not buildings as it would be cheaper and more reflective of their skill base.

This realisation and advice helped Becca start 'Redeeming Zoe', which works on the front line, in communities where there is a widespread online child sexual exploitation and child trafficking. Through SFAC, Redeeming Zoe undertook the 'Protective Behaviour' course which has led Redeeming Zoe to implement a child-centred approach that prioritises keeping children safe in their communities. Since then Redeeming Zoe, with a small local staff, have been able to support over 100 children who were exposed to online sexual abuse and exploitation in the community. Redeeming Zoe has been able to work with schools and use the 'My body belongs to me' books to help children keep themselves safe. This work has been recognised by the government and Redeeming Zoe are in discussions to embed 'My body belongs to me' materials into the national curriculum.

Redeeming Zoe has been able to make a far bigger and more sustainable impact to protect and support children than if they had stuck with their original plan and built a crisis centre. As Becca says "SFAC helped us to see that we could make a bigger impact if we built communities, not buildings".



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The study highlights several areas related to programming, funding and impact measurement that should be considered going forward. These are key to strengthening the SFAC's work, monitoring impact and creating a lasting and sustainable legacy.

Expand training and mentorship on family care

Participants highlighted the need for SFAC to continue to provide innovative training and mentorship to practitioners on foster care, case management and transitioning residential care services. This would require SFAC to:

- engage with local practitioners in more countries who will work under SFAC support and guidance,
- develop more online resources and tools to expand our reach and provide support to more organisations,
- establish and support foster care networks for promoting learning and experience sharing.

Coaching and online trainer-of-trainer training in coordination with other global experts, especially for foster care, case management, and legal reform/best practice. Every so often, international in-person training to support local specialists.

More training and sharing of expertise, giving weight to advocacy for Foster care where it is misunderstood or undeveloped and continue or increase the movement to deinstitutionalise children who could be supported by wider family or others in their communities, given support and the tools to do it.

Support foster care networks with additional training and capacity building.

Continuing to focus on moving on the thinking from residential care to family based care.

Technical support on trauma-related behavior management

Participants underlined the need for additional training for practitioners and foster carers that is trauma-informed and focused on the practical aspects of behaviour management for children in foster care. In particular, they would like SFAC to provide more support and guidance on how foster carers can effectively deal with or respond to children's trauma-related behaviour,

“

SFAC should focus on support to foster families on behaviour of children and adolescents who went through traumatic situations (Key informant, Brazil).

Provide ongoing technical advice on 'how to' deal with children in care more positively (Key Informant, Indonesia)

”

Policy advocacy

SFAC should also do more to influence care reform policies in countries through training, evidence-based advocacy, and policy dialogue. For example, participants in Uganda emphasised the need for SFAC to work with 'national policy makers' to inform different policy reviews and implementation of the policies that are already in place. Similarly, in Colombia the study participants highlighted the need to 'work to actively change government policies and norms that prioritise residential care rather than family care for children without parental care'. SFAC will need to consider this along with the 'invitation only' policy or how they can support NGOs they are working with who can, in turn, assist in national policy reform.

Scale up technical support and advisory services on transitioning residential care services

SFAC efforts should also be directed to supporting efforts aimed at transitioning residential care services, through developing contextually-relevant guidance, sharing of best practices, and creating opportunities for cross-country learning. With the vast experience of SFAC in so many different contexts and regions, the sharing, training and mentoring for supporting the transitioning away from residential care can provide partners with real-life input and experience that can help their own transformations.

Strengthen SFAC networks and collaborations

One of the major successes of SFAC has been the ability to bring different stakeholders together and develop a common language, understanding and approaches for a particular country or region, in particular those countries at the start of a 'care reform' process. These collaborations and networks have in turn been able to make a more positive and sustainable difference. SFAC should continue to seek opportunities to bring together stakeholders and work with networks.

It would be, for example, extremely beneficial to create a global network of SFAC partners so that there can be increased learning and sharing among SFAC partner organisations. This could be a low-cost network, utilising online tools, to allow partners to engage with each other, share case studies and experiences, share tools and approaches and also identify opportunities to learn from each other. All countries have different strengths and weaknesses and are all at a different part of the care reform journey, creating a network of SFAC partners can help 'fast track' progress through sharing and learning and also support continued momentum for reform and change. This will also allow SFAC to continually engage with partners and identify emerging issues and provide additional training and mentoring.

Tracking progress and impact of SFAC work

Data from many countries and from many SFAC partners doesn't exist or is unreliable. For new SFAC countries and partners, SFAC should consider undertaking a country and partner profile which sets out some key areas where the country / partner are at in terms of the care reform journey (if it exists). This should include identifying, using existing data and reports, the country / partner situation against some key indicators in line with SFAC's strategic objectives, for example: prevalence of foster care / number of children in foster care etc. This should be a simple process using a simple tool to help track progress against the indicators as SFAC starts supporting the country / partner. Additionally, SFAC should develop an annual monitoring tool in the form of a questionnaire that is completed by all partners, existing and previous, so that SFAC can track progress that the partner (and countries in which they are operating) are making. This will not only be an effective way of better tracking the impact of SFAC but also in identifying emerging issues and support needs.

from SFAC's support, the subsidy has been a significant factor in them being able to access high quality support, training and mentoring at no, or a reduced, cost.

SFAC has consistently demonstrated that working with small NGO's, whether in Paraguay, Brazil, Uganda or Cambodia, can create the space for change at a national level. For this to happen however, funding is needed to ensure SFAC can continue to subsidise costs to these organisations, especially if SFAC is to provide more services in line with the identified needs highlighted in this impact report.

Limited funding would mean that SFAC could not support some of the most innovative and impactful community organisations. SFAC needs to consider and develop longer term funding opportunities to ensure that support, especially for grassroot small organisations, can continue. This will need SFAC to consider increasing their funding streams and consolidating the SFAC approaches, tools and focus in order to be able to apply for and secure increased funding.



Final reflections

I would like to thank all of the people who contributed to this impact report - from Dan and Mick at SFAC, who provided me with a great deal of information spanning 20 years, to all of the informants who completed the online survey, and those who participated in virtual and face to face interviews.

A special thanks to Ismeal Ddumba-Nyanzi, who helped me pull lots of information together into something coherent, and to Joseph Luganda for generously writing the foreword

One of the things I have realised in pulling this report together is that Mick (Pease) didn't sit down on day one and develop a long term strategy, implementation plan or undertake complex 'baseline' studies, for what he was going to with SFAC, but instead opened himself up and allowed himself to be led by his conviction and faith to whoever asked for help. While this certainly makes life a little more difficult in analysing the full impact of SFAC, it also highlights that passion, combined with skills and experience, can make a significant impact in the lives of children.

From the engagement with partners during this impact report, it is clear that SFAC brings much value internationally to this sector, both in terms of inspiring change and also providing ongoing support on practices. The strength of SFAC is to be able to share their experiences and approaches across multiple stakeholders in different contexts. To see change fully implemented and for states to embed a child's best interest into their legal and policy frameworks, means taking a long-term view and developing long term relationships with the organisations they work with. Additionally, recognising the changing contexts that countries experience, the global COVID-19 pandemic and climate crisis are two examples, remaining flexible and being able to bespoke support to partners is critical in ensuring that responses are appropriate and child-centred. If SFAC strengthens and builds on these important elements and incorporates the recommendations made in this report into their longer term strategy, then SFAC will continue to inspire and support change internationally in a more impactful and demonstrable way.

SFAC has completed its work on an average income of £60,70,000 a year and a team of just 2 full time equivalents. I think that is a remarkable achievement. If more funding comes to SFAC the impact it will have on securing more children in families, improving safe and appropriate practice and enabling children to thrive could be immense. The challenge is maintaining the capacity and the quality.'

20 years more!

Everyone I spoke to during this process all highlighted how lovely it is working with SFAC and how they have valued their support, input and encouragement. Even when the conversations between SFAC and some of the partners have been difficult, SFAC never strayed from being kind and encouraging. It is the kindness and humility of SFAC without compromising their beliefs that perhaps sets them apart from other organisations in the sector. The impact SFAC has had has been significant, even if difficult to quantify, and as more organisations and countries embrace family care the need for SFAC remains as significant as ever. The challenge for SFAC remains being itself and being the humble, kind challenger! As we celebrate 20 years of SFAC it is imperative that SFAC continues to provide support, encouragement and expertise, with the same humility and kindness.

Mark Riley

Alternative Care Initiatives, Uganda

APPENDIX: SFAC PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Partner Organisations/Agency	Country	Area(s) of support
1MillionHome	Kenya, Zambia, Sierra Leone, USA, Uganda.	Reunification, foster care, domestic adoption, advocacy and case management
Abba Brazil	Brazi	Foster care, advocacy and legal systems for children's care
ACCI	Cambodia, Myanmar, Uganda, Lesotho, India, Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka	Transitioning residential care, reunification, alternative care, kinship care, foster care, child protection and case management
ACE	Zambia	Alternative care
Act 4 Africa (Uganda)	Uganda	Case management, child protection and therapeutic work
Alternative Care Initiatives (ACI)	Uganda	Foster care and child protection
Bethany Children's Services	Ghana	Alternative care and legal systems for children's protection and care
Better Care Network	Global	Alternative care and advocacy
CALM AFRICA	Uganda	Foster care, kinship care, community care, therapeutic work and child protection
Casa Viva	Costa Rica	Foster care and reunification and advocacy
Chab Dai (Cambodia)	Cambodia	Foster care kinship care
Child Reintegration Centre	Sierra Leone	Alternative care and child protection and therapeutic work
Child's i Foundation (CiF)	Uganda	Alternative care, foster care and case management
Children in Families	Cambodia	Foster care (including children with disabilities)
Children of Tien Shein	Kyrgyzstan	Foster care and advocacy

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Partner Organisations/Agency	Country	Area(s) of support
City of Brasov, Romania	Romania	Child protection and foster care
Abba Brazil	Brazi	Foster care, advocacy and legal systems for children's care
Costa Rica government and courts	Costa Rica	Alternative care and court system
DGH Belize	Belize	Alternative care and child protection and therapeutic work
Dutch Tanzania Project	Tanzania	Alternative care
Dongamuzi	Zimbabwe	Advocacy
Ekisa Ministries	Uganda	Foster care for children with disabilities
Elam	Tajikistan	Foster care
England Government	England	Foster care, kinship care, legal systems for care of children and child protection
Faith to Action	Global	Alternative care and advocacy
FAMadagascar	Madagascar	Foster care
Fape, Morocco	Morocco	Foster care, child protection, alternative care therapeutic work and the court system
Formando Vidas	Colombia	Foster care
Free to Be	India	Alternative care, foster care, therapeutic work
Ghana Government & Judiciary	Ghana	Alternative care and court system
Global Child Advocates	Thailand.	Reunification and community programmes and foster care
Heaven's Family	Myanmar	Reunification
Help Kids International	Sri Lanka	Foster care, child protection and reunification

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Helping Children Worldwide	Sierra Leone	Alternative care, case management and child protection
Helping Haitian Angels	Haiti	Foster care and reunification
Home Free (formerly Thrive Uganda)	Uganda	Foster care and therapeutic work
Hope Foundation	Liberia	Foster Care
JOCUM (YWAM)	Brazil	Foster care
Kinnected Myanmar	Myanmar	Reunification, kinship care and advocacy
Kurdish Government and Courts	Kurdish Region of Iraq	Child protection and alternative care project, foster care legislation.
Little Neighbours	Paraguay	Foster care, kinship care, child protection, case management and therapeutic work
Life Foundation	Egypt	Alternative care
Life Vision	Romania	Alternative care, community work, therapeutic work and case management
Morocco Children's Trust	Morocco	Foster care, child protection, alternative care and court system
Morocco government and court	Morocco	Legal systems, advocacy, and alternative care
Nadomall Sunka	Croatia	Foster care
Oasis India	India	Foster care
Offspring India	India	Therapeutic work, case management and child protection
Orphan's Tear	Myanmar	Reunification, advocacy and case management
PCDW	Nepal	Foster care

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Pamoja Leo	Tanzania	Therapeutic
Helping Haitian Angels	Haiti	Foster care and reunification
Paraguay Government and Courts	Paraguay	Child protection, alternative care and court systems
Red Viva /PPF	Paraguay	Child protection and alternative care
Redeeming Zoe	Philippines	Alternative care and therapeutic care
Retrak (Part of Hope for Justice)	Uganda and Ethiopia	Foster care for children from the streets
Revive Brazil	Brazi	Foster care and case management
RICF Romania	Romania	Foster care and case management work
Sepheo	Lesotho	Alternative care, foster care, kinship care. Case management and therapeutic care.
Social Legal Centre	Tajikistan	Foster care
Selamata Project	Ethiopia	Therapeutic work
Spaulding	USA	Alternative care
Sri Lanka Government and Courts	Sri Lanka	Foster care, legal systems, , child protection and alternative care
Step Iraq and Step UK	UK	Child protection, legal systems, foster care, advocacy, and alternative care
Tearfund	Tajikistan	Foster care
The Salvation Army, Australia	Australia	Case management and alternative care
The Salvation Army, IHQ	United Kingdom	Children's homes, reunification, case management, child protection and advocacy
The Salvation Army, India East	India, East	Children's homes

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Partner Organisations/Agency	Country	Area(s) of support
The Salvation Army, India North	India, North	Children's homes
The Salvation Army, Indonesia	Indonesia	Case management, alternative care, child protection, transitioning of a children's home and advocacy
The Salvation Army, Kenya East	Kenya	Advocacy, case management and foster care
The Salvation Army, Mexico	Mexico	Alternative care/children's homes
The Salvation Army, South Africa	South Africa	Case management, children's homes and advocacy
The Salvation Army, Philippines	Philippines	Case management, foster care and alternative care
The Salvation Army Overseas Department, SAWSO, USA	USA	Alternative care and case management
Their Futures Today	Sri Lanka	Foster care and child protection
Toybox	Guatemala	Foster care
Trust for Africa	Lesotho	Alternative care
Turkish government and courts	Turkey	Alternative care and foster care
UNICEF - Turkey/Iraq	Turkey, Iraq	Alternative care, advocacy and foster care
Village Community Development Fund (VCDF)	Uganda	Kinship care and child protection
Viva International	Uganda	Foster care
Weza Solutions	Kenya	Alternative Care, Case management
Word of Life Yerevan	Armenia	Foster care
World Without Orphans	Europe and Egypt	Alternative care

* There are four countries where SFAC's early records do not record the organisation name (countries are Burkina Faso, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Pakistan).

** Other organisations from various countries have also been in attendance at conference talks SFAC has given for organisations in the list above, but there are no records of the names of the organisations or countries.



SFAC

CHACO

Por qué es la familia mejor parte de mí?

Definitions

Alternative care = informing organisations about different types of alternative care and foundational knowledge on each subject and how this fits within a 'continuum of services'.

Advocacy = informing organisations, donors and staff about why children's homes/residential care is not the best or only option for alternative care of children.

Children's Homes = working with organisations to transition their children's homes to offer short term / emergency care, other non-residential services such as alternative care and/or family support and improve reintegration and child protection practices.

Foster care = children living with a family in the community in the families own home (owned or rented by family). The family is not biologically related to the child. Training and support provided to the organisation on detailed specifics of how to recruit, assess, monitor, review carers, policies and procedures for foster care including safeguarding children; care planning and case management processes specific for foster care.

Kinship care = children living with a biological relative (blood relative). Training and support provided to organisations on detailed specifics in assessing if carers are safe, supporting carers when a child is placed.

Reunification = a child returning to a parent/carer who previously looked after the child. Training and support provided on assessment processes including basics to kinship care/child protection and unique considerations for reunification cases, how reunification sits in 'continuum of services', case management systems required, support and training needed for parents/carers and child.

Case Management = providing specific training on care planning, best interest decision-making for children's placement and care, child protection assessments and planning, understanding 'continuum of services', understanding 'impact of care options', judicial/gov/ngo role, policies and procedures.

Child Protection = training on child protection assessments and decisions, case management systems for child protection work and understanding of where this sits within 'continuum of services'

Legal Systems = training provided on 'continuum of services' and 'impact of care', role of judiciary in protection and care of children, examples of good practice and learning from UK model and from experiences around the world, role of children's guardian, role of lawyers, role of judge, how judgements and decisions are made about significant harm and best interests of children.

Therapeutic work = training and mentoring provided to staff involved in the care of children including protective behaviours course.

Community work = training to provide child protection or alternative care prevention programmes - focus for SFAC is on case management, relationship to 'continuum of services', and therapeutic training.

NOTE: SFAC delivers the above at different levels reflective of an organisation and countries literacy levels, skill and knowledge levels, legal context, cultural context and resources.

