

CHILDREN ARE A GIFT.

EACH ONE IS UNIQUE AND UNREPEATABLE,  
AND AT THE SAME TIME UNMISTAKABLY  
LINKED TO HIS OR HER ROOTS.

—POPE FRANCIS



**CATHOLIC  
CARE FOR  
CHILDREN**

A FAMILY FOR EVERY CHILD

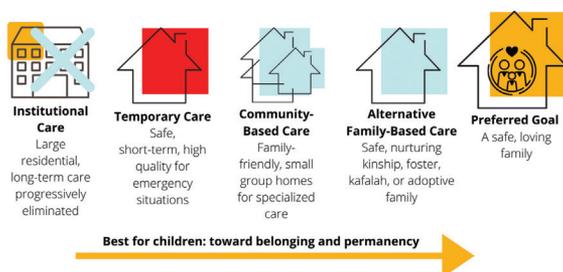


## CATHOLIC CARE FOR CHILDREN

# Principles, Beginnings, & Impact



## Continuum of Care for Children



### WHAT IS BEST FOR A CHILD?

- Children need safe, nurturing families—where they know they belong and are loved.
- When a family is in distress, take steps to strengthen the family to prevent separation of a child from the family.
  - When separation has occurred, reunite a child with the family or find a safe, nurturing family-like alternative.
- Institutional care should be a last resort.

## Every child deserves a family

**Catholic Care for Children (CCC)** is a visionary initiative, led by Catholic sisters, to see children growing up in safe, nurturing families. Guided by the biblical mandate to care for the most vulnerable and animated by the principles of Catholic Social Teaching—especially the dignity of each person—CCC teams are reducing the need for institutional care by encouraging and facilitating family- and community-based care for children.

CCC began in Uganda in 2016 after the government enacted legislation favoring family- and community-based care. The goal was to remedy the alarming increase in the number of children being cared for in institutions due to poverty, disability, and lack of social support. Catholic sisters and brothers ably read the signs of the times. With support from GHR Foundation, the Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU) launched **Catholic Care for Children in Uganda** to help the Catholic community pivot from institutional care toward family- and community-based care for children and persons with disabilities. The transition was no easy feat.

The new care model required dozens of sisters and other staff to become degreed in social work; 44 care institutions to begin record keeping and case management for residents; hundreds of stakeholders to be persuaded of the importance of family care; and thousands of families traced, reconnected with their children, and supported throughout the process. The efforts paid off. By 2020 the census of children's and babies' homes in Uganda declined by 75 percent, from 1,207 to 331, and four children's homes had fully transitioned to community-based programming. Catholic sisters, drawing on their charism (spirit) of care, had emerged as leaders in childcare reform.

For Catholic sisters, the charism of care remains constant; the means of expressing it evolves. As one Ugandan sister notes, CCC is a "way of expressing our charism—what moves us to do what we do, the way we do it, the attitude we use to do it, the energy we put in. We built on that strength to ensure that this expression of charism is now combined with skills and professionalism."

## Success inspires replication

Already active in national care reform, Catholic sisters in Zambia took inspiration from CCC in Uganda and, in 2017, launched **Catholic Care for Children in Zambia** through the Zambia Association of Sisterhoods. Then, in 2019, the Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya picked up the baton and established **Catholic Care for Children in Kenya**. As in Uganda, CCC teams in Zambia and Kenya are engaged with church leaders, government representatives, and civil authorities to ensure broad-based participation and support.



## Positive impact of CCC initiatives

- Growing consensus that family is the best place for a child.
- Skills and resources secured to transition to new care models.
- More children living with their families, connecting with their culture, and learning important life skills.
- More families and communities learning about child safeguarding and protection.
- Improved care for children remaining in residential settings.
- Religious institutes working together to express anew their charism of care.
- Expanded leadership among women and men religious.

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## Case Study

## Welcome home, Eric

Eric's mother died in childbirth. Unable to care for another child, Eric's father brought the newborn to a babies' home in Uganda. As was typical at that time, the care home kept no records of the family or ongoing communication. By the time Eric was a teenager, leaders in his children's home began following the protocols of CCC, including family tracing. Eventually the staff facilitated Eric's reconnection with his family. Eric's brothers and sisters were happy to welcome their younger sibling home. Eric is now living with his older brother and getting to know his extended family.

Eric says, "Life is much tougher at my home than it was at the children's home. However, here I now have the chance to know my family and people who love me."

For their part his family members have enjoyed teaching Eric new skills in self-reliance and sharing information about his culture, language, and family history. "Eric shall get the chance to know his family, to know where he belongs," says one of his sisters. "He will also get a chance to know and understand the society that he is living in. When he first came back home after staying at the children's home, he didn't know how to do many things by himself. He didn't know how to wash his clothes, didn't know that he needed to go to the borehole to fetch water, how to prepare food, or how to clean the compound. After being at home for some time, he is learning a lot of things."

## CATHOLIC CARE FOR CHILDREN

# Looking Ahead

THE CHILD, FOR THE FULL AND HARMONIOUS DEVELOPMENT OF HIS OR HER PERSONALITY, SHOULD GROW UP IN A FAMILY ENVIRONMENT, IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF HAPPINESS, LOVE, AND UNDERSTANDING.

—U.N. CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

By meeting or exceeding standards for care and responsibly and successfully transitioning to new models, CCC teams have clearly demonstrated what family- and community-based care looks like and the positive impact it has on society, families, and children. The spread of these successful reforms is imperative for the well-being of children and families. Global awareness and support is vital.

Many of the CCC institutions are already envisioning what they will be doing in the future as they transition from long-term residential care. Ideas include setting up day care, healthcare, and emergency centers and developing community-based programs focused on economic empowerment and family health. Each reconfiguration means new action, development, and communication plans.

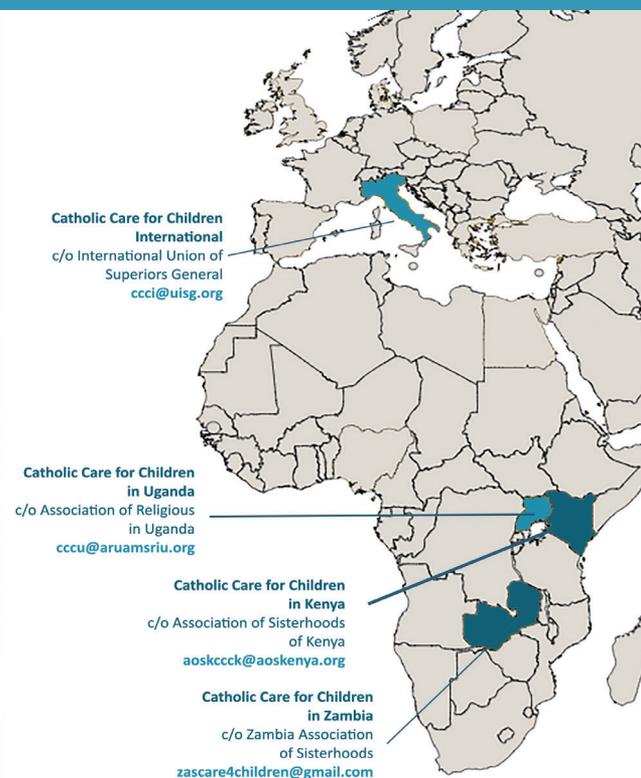
## An expanding movement

The CCC movement is poised to expand under the auspices of **Catholic Care for Children International (CCCI)**. Founded by the International Union of Superiors General in 2020, CCCI is at the helm of this sister-led, charism-driven movement to help religious institutes provide children and their families with the best possible care. This movement is grounded in faith, informed by the social sciences, and aligned with the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child—which all point to the importance of a family for every child.

With the support of CCCI, CCC teams are at the center of a growing global network of religious sisters who are setting aside institutional approaches to caring for children and other vulnerable persons in favor of family- and community-based care.

CCCI invites religious institutes, particularly those with a charism of care, to consider participating in this inspired care reform movement dedicated to ensuring that children grow up in safe, loving family environments. In addition, Catholic Care for Children teams welcome the assistance of individuals, organizations, and agencies in advancing their bold initiative on behalf of the world's children.

To learn more about, support, or participate in Catholic Care for Children, please contact **Sister Niluka Perera, RGS**, coordinator for Catholic Care for Children International; [ccci@uisg.org](mailto:ccci@uisg.org).



## Current CCC projects

### ASSOCIATION OF RELIGIOUS IN UGANDA

99 religious institutes  
6,000 women and men religious

**CCCU: 44 childcare institutions and programs**

### ASSOCIATION OF SISTERHOODS OF KENYA

164 religious institutes  
6,000 women religious

**CCCK: 140 childcare institutions and programs**

### ZAMBIA ASSOCIATION OF SISTERHOODS

46 institutes  
1,472 women religious

**CCCZ: 41 childcare institutions and programs**

### INTERNATIONAL UNION OF SUPERIORS GENERAL

2,000 institutes  
600,000 women religious

