



ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT (SUMMARY)

REPORTING PERIOD: JULY 2024 – JUNE 2025

COUNTY: KISII COUNTY

Overview

During FY25, Victory Child Empowerment (VCE) implemented a diverse portfolio of Care Reform (CR) activities in Kisii County, working across multiple levels of society to strengthen child protection and promote family-based care. At the family level, household visits provided individualized support to parents and caregivers, enabling them to address vulnerabilities and improve their capacity to care for children within safe and nurturing environments. Within communities, VCE facilitated barazas, awareness sessions, and trainings that mobilized local leaders, gatekeepers, and families to embrace the principles of care reform and to take collective responsibility for child wellbeing. At the sub-county and institutional levels, the organization convened stakeholder forums and multi-agency meetings that fostered dialogue, strengthened coordination, and promoted alignment with national policies and the Care Reform Strategy (2022–2032).

Media engagements further amplified these efforts by raising public awareness, sharing lived experiences, and creating space for open conversations on the transition from institutional to family and community-based care. Despite the economic challenges that continued to affect households and local institutions, VCE and its partners made significant strides in shifting mindsets, equipping duty bearers with skills, and laying the foundation for stronger systems of support. These interventions contributed to tangible progress in advancing child protection and safeguarding the right of every child to grow up in a family environment.

Key Achievements

1. Strengthening Subnational Structures

- **Facilitated 5 Area Advisory Council (AAC) meetings in Marani, Kisii Central, Kisii South, Kitutu Central, and Gucha.**

VCE facilitated five Area Advisory Council (AAC) meetings across Marani, Kisii Central, Kisii South, Kitutu Central, and Gucha sub-counties. These forums brought together representatives from government departments, civil society organizations, faith leaders, and community-based groups to strengthen coordination and oversight of child protection efforts. The meetings provided a platform for reviewing the status of care reform in each sub-county, identifying gaps in service delivery, and aligning interventions with the National Care Reform Strategy (2022–2032).

Through these engagements, stakeholders renewed their commitment to supporting vulnerable families, enhancing case management processes, and ensuring that children transitioning from institutional care are monitored and adequately supported within family and community settings. The AAC meetings also fostered cross-learning among sub-counties, enabling local actors to share promising practices and address emerging challenges collectively.

- **Supported 3 Alternative Care Committee (ACC) meetings in Gucha, Kitutu Central and Marani.**

VCE supported three Alternative Care Committee (ACC) meetings in Gucha, Kitutu Central, and Marani sub-counties. These forums brought together children's officers, social workers, probation officers, local administrators, and representatives from civil society to review and strengthen the implementation of alternative care approaches. The meetings provided space for case conferencing, where complex cases of children in need of care and protection were discussed, and practical solutions were developed to ensure safe and appropriate family- and community-based placements.

By facilitating dialogue among duty bearers, the ACC meetings enhanced coordination of referral pathways, promoted adherence to the Children Act 2022, and reinforced the principle that institutionalization should only be used as a last resort. Importantly, the sessions helped sub-county teams identify follow-up actions, such as family tracing, reintegration, and targeted support to caregivers, thereby contributing to improved outcomes for children at risk of separation or already in alternative care.

- **Engaged Gusii elders across 3 sub-counties to promote traditional family support systems.**

VCE engaged Gusii elders across 3 sub-counties to promote and revitalize traditional family support systems as part of advancing care reform. Recognizing the respected role elders play in shaping cultural norms and mediating community issues, the dialogues highlighted indigenous practices that historically safeguarded vulnerable children through clan-based care, communal responsibility, and extended family networks. These engagements created opportunities for elders to reflect on the erosion of such systems and to commit to restoring them as sustainable alternatives to institutionalization.

By anchoring care reform within familiar cultural frameworks, VCE strengthened community ownership of child protection, encouraged intergenerational solidarity, and reinforced the message that every child belongs in a family. The participation of elders also helped bridge gaps between formal child protection structures and community-based approaches, ensuring that modern policies resonate with local traditions and values.

2. Case Management & Family Support

- **Conducted 112 follow-up visits to reintegrating families and 34 visits to families at risk.**

VCE conducted 112 follow-up visits to families that had received children back from institutional care, as well as 34 visits to households identified as being at risk of separation. The follow-ups focused on assessing the stability of reintegration, monitoring the wellbeing of children, and ensuring that caregivers were adequately supported to provide safe, nurturing, and protective

environments. Through these visits, caseworkers provided counseling, parenting guidance, and linkage to essential services such as education, health, and livelihoods support.

For at-risk families, the visits served as an early intervention mechanism, helping to identify stress factors such as poverty, conflict, or neglect before they escalated into separation. This sustained presence in the households not only built trust between families and child protection actors but also strengthened accountability in care reform by ensuring that no child was left without monitoring or support. Ultimately, these follow-ups contributed to improved family resilience, reduced vulnerability to re-institutionalization, and greater confidence in community-based care solutions.

- **Supported case planning for 36 reintegrating families and 34 at-risk families.**

VCE supported the development and implementation of case plans for 36 reintegrating families and 34 families identified as being at risk of separation. Each case plan was tailored to the unique needs of the child and household, outlining steps to strengthen caregiving capacity, improve access to services, and address underlying vulnerabilities such as poverty, conflict, or parental illness. For reintegrating families, the plans guided the transition process, ensuring that children leaving institutional care were gradually and safely settled back into family environments with appropriate psychosocial, educational, and livelihood support. For at-risk families, the process served as a preventative measure, helping to stabilize households before separation occurred by connecting them to social protection programs, community support systems, and targeted counseling. By coordinating with children's officers, community volunteers, and service providers, VCE ensured that the plans were practical, holistic, and regularly monitored. This structured approach not only strengthened accountability in child protection but also gave families a clear pathway towards resilience and self-reliance.

- **Facilitated on-job training for CCI staff and a case management reflection workshop.**

VCE facilitated on-the-job training sessions for staff working in Charitable Children's Institutions (CCIs) alongside a case management reflection workshop. The trainings equipped caregivers and child protection officers with practical skills on alternative care practices, child rights, psychosocial support, and effective case management, ensuring that daily interactions with children were grounded in the principles of care reform. By offering learning within their work environment, staff were able to directly link theory to practice, identify gaps in their approaches, and adopt more family-centered methods of care.

The reflection workshop provided a safe space for caseworkers, children's officers, and partner organizations to review ongoing cases, share lessons, and analyze both successes and challenges in reintegration and family strengthening. This peer-learning process not only enhanced consistency in decision-making but also reinforced the importance of multi-sectoral collaboration in addressing complex child protection issues. As a result, institutional staff and frontline workers left with renewed confidence, practical tools, and a shared commitment to advancing the transition from institutional to family- and community-based care.

- **Provided shopping, family support, and school fee for vulnerable children.**

VCE provided direct support to vulnerable children and their caregivers through shopping packages, family support initiatives, and the payment of school fees. The shopping packages, which included essential food and household items, helped ease the immediate economic burden on struggling families, ensuring that children's basic needs were met within their homes. In addition, targeted family support interventions—ranging from psychosocial counseling to linkages with social protection programs—strengthened caregivers' capacity to provide a safe and nurturing environment.

By covering school fees for children from extremely vulnerable households, VCE safeguarded their right to education, prevented school dropouts, and reduced the risk of family-child separation that often arises from financial hardship. These interventions not only addressed urgent material needs but also served as a stabilizing force, allowing families to focus on long-term resilience and children to thrive within a supportive family setting.

3. Care Reform Advocacy & Community Sensitization

In FY25, VCE invested in strengthening capacity, advocacy, and community engagement to advance care reform in Kisii County. Thirty children's officers and pastors were trained on child protection and family-based care, equipping them to serve as frontline champions. Four workshops reaching 200 participants created platforms for dialogue and alignment with the National Care Reform Strategy, while sensitization forums in Ogembo, Sengera, and Nyabisia deepened community awareness. To broaden its reach, VCE partnered with local organizations and Radio Vuna to promote positive messaging on family-based care. The organization also supported community events such as the Day of the African Child and Youth Week, providing opportunities for children and youth to voice their experiences and aspirations. Together, these interventions strengthened local capacity, amplified advocacy, and fostered community ownership of the care reform agenda.

4. Capacity Building & Trainings

VCE continued to strengthen skills and systems for child protection by training journalists on child-sensitive reporting, ensuring that media coverage upholds children's dignity and rights. In partnership with stakeholders, the organization also oriented Department of Social Development (DSD) officers, Child Protection Volunteers (CPVs), and CCI staff on the Families Together guides, with a strong focus on disability inclusion. To support children directly, life skills training was provided to 23 reintegrating children alongside follow-up training of trainers, equipping them with confidence and resilience for successful reintegration. Additionally, refresher workshops were organized for Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) groups, helping boost household economic stability and reducing the risk of child-family separation.

5. Disability Inclusion

VCE advanced disability inclusion within care reform by holding a two-day training focused on integrating disability perspectives into child protection and family-based care. The training equipped stakeholders with knowledge and practical tools to ensure that children with disabilities are fully considered in case management and reintegration processes. To sustain this momentum,

VCE facilitated the establishment of service mapping and technical working groups dedicated to disability inclusion. These structures now provide a platform for coordination, referral, and joint problem-solving, ensuring that children with disabilities and their families can access appropriate services and support within their communities.

6. CCI Transitioning

VCE supported the development and implementation of transition plans for Centre for Grace, Matuta Ventures, White Oak, and House of Grace Charitable Children's Institutions (CCIs), guiding them towards compliance with the National Care Reform Strategy. This process involved close collaboration with CCI staff, local authorities, and community stakeholders to ensure that children were gradually and safely prepared for family- and community-based placements. Notably, the Centre for Grace successfully phased out as its children were reintegrated into families, marking a significant milestone in the shift away from institutional care. These efforts not only safeguarded the wellbeing of the children but also demonstrated practical pathways for transforming CCIs into community-focused service providers that strengthen families rather than replace them.

MONITORING & EVALUATION (MEAL)

VCE strengthened its evidence base and accountability systems by updating beneficiary databases and refining case management tools to better track children's progress and family outcomes. To complement this, focus group discussions were conducted with reintegrated children, caregivers, and community members to capture their perspectives on the impacts of reunification, providing valuable insights for improving support services. In addition, VCE facilitated Data Quality Assessments (DQA) to enhance the accuracy and reliability of reporting, ensuring that program achievements and challenges are consistently documented and shared with stakeholders. These measures not only improved program monitoring but also reinforced data-driven decision-making in advancing care reform.

OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

Opportunities:

- Supportive Gusii elders promoting traditional caregiving.
- Willing CCIs ready to transition.
- Positive collaboration with stakeholders and community structures.

Challenges:

- Some children relapse back into CCIs due to poverty, food insecurity, or abuse.
- High prevalence of child protection concerns (defilement, trafficking, substance abuse).
- More children and families are being rendered vulnerable due to HIV & AIDs
- There is high stigma for children and caregivers infected with HIV & AIDs

Lessons Learned

- Community barazas remain a strong platform for sensitization and feedback.
- Virtual engagement is effective in extending outreach.
- Most children in Kisii CCIs have potential kinship or biological caregivers.

Next Quarter Priorities (FY25 Q1)

- Hold quarterly AAC and review meetings with DCS.
- Expand *Families Together* sessions.
- Engage more community leaders, faith-based groups, and media in care reform.
- Strengthen household economic empowerment initiatives.
- Support on awareness creation on HIV/AIDs management, treatment and prevention



County Care Reform Strategy development with Children Officers and partners



DCS National Government Team Visit to VCE Offices



Trauma Informed Care Workshop with Children, Government Officers and Partners