



ASPIRES Family Care

Evidence and Guidance for Economic Strengthening to Help Families Stay Together

The Accelerating Strategies for Practical Innovation & Research in Economic Strengthening (ASPIRES) project, supported by PEPFAR and USAID and managed by FHI 360, supports gender-sensitive programming, research and learning to improve the economic security of highly vulnerable individuals, families and children. ASPIRES provides technical assistance to US Government agencies and their implementing partners to advance and scale up high-quality interventions in the areas of consumption support, money management, and income promotion. It also designs and implements rigorous research to evaluate programs and inform a new understanding of best practices in economic strengthening (ES) for vulnerable populations.

With funding from USAID's Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF), ASPIRES' Family Care project is tackling the topics of how ES interventions can help separated children—such as children in residential care facilities, children living on the street, or children migrating for work—return to and remain in their families. We are also exploring how ES can help highly vulnerable families stay together. Keeping families together reduces children's risk of neglect, abuse and exploitation and increases the likelihood that they will experience positive physical, social, and mental health outcomes.

Globally, poverty is a common factor contributing to the separation of children from their families. While our knowledge about how ES interventions can affect different dimensions of children's well-being is growing, there is little research on how ES interventions work with particular families in specific contexts to prevent or respond to child-family separation. ASPIRES Family Care is developing evidence to help guide future programming through two field-based projects in Uganda. It will draw on this evidence as well as learning from other



Photo Credit Rachael Akiteng, AVSI Foundation in Uganda 2017

projects addressing family preservation and reintegration to develop programming guidance that will help projects match specific families with ES interventions that improve their economic circumstances and support family stability.

Income Affects Capacity to Care for Children

Children need family care. Those who separate from their families miss critically important developmental opportunities and are vulnerable to harm and health problems. They miss making the social connections that they will need long-term and can face challenges in developing a sense of identity and self-esteem. Poverty is often a driving factor behind children's family separation, and strengthening families' economic circumstances and capacities can help caregivers provide for children's needs, reduce stress in the home and help preserve families.

Visit ASPIRES on Microlinks

Household Economic Strengthening in Support of Prevention of Family-Child Separation and Children's Reintegration in Family Care

Review of Vulnerability Assessment Methods for Reintegration and Prevention of Separation

Household Economic Strengthening Interventions in Programs to Reintegrate Children in Family Care and Prevent Family-Child Separation: A Brief Report on Responses to an Online Survey.

<https://www.microlinks.org/category/kdid-project/field-support/aspires>

ESFAM's Packages of Support

Most vulnerable: Household financial literacy training + cash transfer + transition to VSLA + group-based business skills training + economic and social coaching at home

Highly vulnerable: Household financial training + matched saving accounts at banks + business skills training at home + economic and social coaching at home

Very vulnerable: Village-based saving and lending association + group-based financial literacy and business skills training + economic and social coaching at home

FARE's Menu of Services

Most Vulnerable

- Enterprise selection, planning and management training + cash transfer

All Families

- Plans + home visits

All families (location permitting) can select

- Village-based saving and lending association
- Apprenticeship for adolescents
- Small scale production skills
- Life skills training and discussions for adolescents
- Parenting skills training
- Community dialogues on topics of interest + outreach

ASPIRES' two projects in Uganda identified economically and socially vulnerable families at risk of separation as well as others whose children are returning to family care from institutions or the street. They offer a range of services to increase family stability and reduce the likelihood of future separation or re-separation. Both projects are based on the theory that a combination of case management, social support and household economic and livelihood strengthening will stabilize highly vulnerable households, facilitating the return of separated children to family care and preventing future separation. In addition to supporting families, the projects offer a space for learning about how to provide these services, how families experience them and how well they work.

Economic Strengthening to Keep and Reintegrate Children in Families (ESFAM)

ChildFund International implements ESFAM in Uganda's Gulu, Kamuli and Luwero Districts. ESFAM aims to prevent family-child separation in 611 at-risk families and to assist in the reintegration in family care of 89 school-aged children from 12 child care institutions. ESFAM assesses families' economic vulnerability and assigns them to suitable packages of support based on their degree of economic vulnerability. All families should receive regular home visits, service referrals, family improvement plan support, counseling, financial literacy training and economic and social coaching by community workers supported by a social worker, as well as an ES intervention targeted at the family's level of economic capacity. Some children are involved in children's savings groups.

Family Resilience (FARE)

The FARE project is led by AVSI Foundation and implemented in Kampala Capital City and Wakiso District. It aims to prevent family-child separation in 350 at-risk families in four target parishes and to reunify and assist reintegration into family care of 268 children identified through four centers for street children and a government detention facility for children. All families should receive regular home visits, service referral, household development plan support and counseling as needed by trained social workers. A group of the most economically vulnerable families received a regular cash transfer over a six-month period, preceded by training in microenterprise selection, planning and management. Families can choose to participate in other activities based on the priorities in their household plans.

Research and Developing Guidance

Operational research on ESFAM and FARE includes:

- A longitudinal quantitative assessment examining change in household vulnerability over time and whether the projects were successful at fostering children's reintegration into families and preventing family-child separation
- A longitudinal mixed-methods assessment in 80 households to help explain intervention effects
- An analysis of selected data examining why some project beneficiaries reduce their risk of family-child separation and others do not
- A cost-effectiveness analysis.

ASPIRES will draw on its own research, as well as the emerging literature and program experience of a larger and more geographically distributed body of similar projects, to assist it in developing more globally-relevant guidance.

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