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DEVELOPMENT OF A MONITORING TOOLKIT AND REVIEW OF GOOD PRACTICES FOR THE SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION OF CHILD RETURNEES

Executive Summary

Samuel Hall for the EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub

Research Study
**Development of a Monitoring Toolkit and Review of Good Practices
for the Sustainable Reintegration of Child Returnees**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AVRR	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration
BID	Best Interests Determination
CSDSF	Child-Sensitive Durable Solutions Framework
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KII	Key Informant Interview
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PARA	Post-Arrival Reintegration Assistance
PCA	Principal Component Analysis
RSS	Reintegration Sustainability Survey

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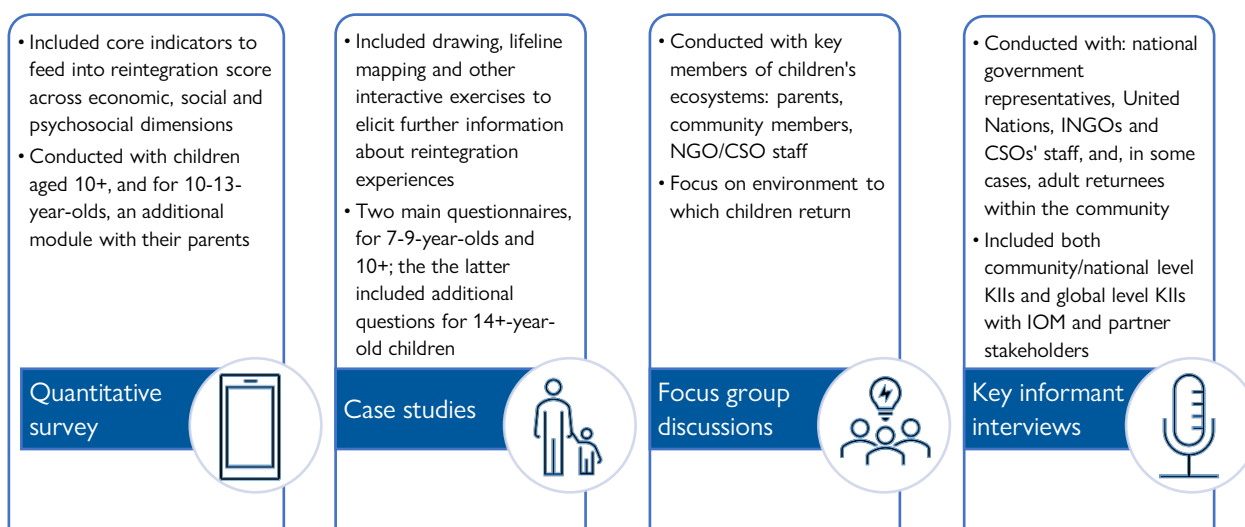for the Sustainable Reintegration of Child Returnees**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

This study was commissioned in the framework of the EU–IOM Knowledge Management Hub under the "Pilot Action on Voluntary Return and Sustainable, Community-Based Reintegration" project, funded by the European Union and implemented by IOM. The two recognized that while understanding of and evidence around the sustainable reintegration of adults has been growing, the same is not true for children – despite the fact that children are returning, alone or with families, to the very same reintegration contexts. Building on a monitoring approach for adult returnees developed in a 2017 Samuel Hall – IOM research project, this study addresses the information gap around children's reintegration experiences. It has three key objectives, to:

1. Set standards, with a review of existing practice on supporting and monitoring child reintegration;
2. Operationalize standards by developing, testing and finalizing a child-focused monitoring toolkit;
3. Implement standards, with a new orientation for reintegration policies and programmes for children.

The full report reviews the current state of child reintegration programming and frameworks underpinning it. It presents the Child Reintegration Monitoring Toolkit developed through this study and findings from its piloting.

In a first phase, the research team explored frameworks and information on children's rights, evidence on existing monitoring approaches, and findings from secondary data analysis and literature on the topic. A draft Toolkit was developed, tested and refined during a second research phase. It was piloted in Ethiopia, Georgia, Honduras, Iraq, and Nigeria, with **176 child returnees interviewed** (through 30 case studies and 146 quantitative surveys), along with 86 community members and stakeholders through FGDs and KIIs.

• Included core indicators to feed into reintegration score across economic, social and psychosocial dimensions • Conducted with children aged 10+, and for 10-13-year-olds, an additional module with their parents	• Included drawing, lifeline mapping and other interactive exercises to elicit further information about reintegration experiences • Two main questionnaires, for 7-9-year-olds and 10+; the the latter included additional questions for 14+-year-old children	• Conducted with key members of children's ecosystems: parents, community members, NGO/CSO staff • Focus on environment to which children return	• Conducted with: national government representatives, United Nations, INGOs and CSOs' staff, and, in some cases, adult returnees within the community • Included both community/national level KIIs and global level KIIs with IOM and partner stakeholders
Quantitative survey	**Case studies**	**Focus group discussions**	**Key informant interviews**

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PART 1: STATE OF PLAY – CHILD REINTEGRATION PROGRAMMING

The analysis explores existing data, presents findings from the research on children's reintegration experiences and highlights existing good practices. It details the challenging situation faced by actors wishing to support children to reintegrate sustainably: limited information around children's specific reintegration experiences to develop and justify potential approaches, and few programmes specifically targeting children's sustainable reintegration from which to learn, in an increasingly difficult global context. Actors face the challenge of providing adapted support to a population whose experiences are less well understood, often based on anecdotal data or assumptions that household-level support will suffice.

Seven key findings emerge on the state of child reintegration programming and ways forward:

1. NUMEROUS LEGAL AND PROGRAMMING DOCUMENTS SHOULD GUIDE CHILDREN'S REINTEGRATION

A range of international, national, technical, and organizational frameworks, recommendations, guidance, and policy instruments have been established to promote the protection, safe and dignified return, and sustainable reintegration of child returnees. However, they often remain de-linked. Two existing monitoring frameworks for reintegration (IOM's Reintegration Sustainability Survey and Save the Children's Child Sensitive Durable Solutions Framework) were brought together to inform the development of the Child Reintegration Monitoring Toolkit.

2. MOST REINTEGRATION AND DURABLE SOLUTIONS POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES ARE CHILD-BLIND

Return, reintegration and durable solutions policies and programmes tend to be child-blind, meaning that they do not account for children's rights and needs in their design. In the context of child returns, this means that they do not consider the specific experiences of children, nor their drivers of migration and reintegration. Yet, children inherently bear three distinct sets of vulnerabilities calling for child-sensitive programming: physical/biological, dependency and institutionalized disadvantages.

3. DATA TRENDS EVIDENCE CHILD-SPECIFIC NEEDS ACROSS DIMENSIONS OF SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION

Economically, while much attention is paid to the child's household's economic status, children themselves may be concerned by child work or child labour upon return. Socially, child returnees face particular gaps in access to public and basic services such as education and the possession of identification documents. In many cases, the migration journey can mark the end of child returnees' school education. Psychosocially, many children will have more limited social networks than their parents, confirming a more restricted social capital. Of note, children of varying ages must be considered distinctly across all three dimensions, facing differentiated challenges.

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4. CHILDREN HIGHLIGHT A RANGE OF REINTEGRATION CHALLENGES, UNDERLINING OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN MONITORING

The difficulties faced by child returnees vary by context, original reason for migration and more. Perceptions of security and belonging differ dramatically by country, with the lack of knowledge of the local language being a contributing factor. However, some common trends emerge. Children's perceptions and opinions are often disregarded in decision-making around return. Most of the interviewed children described economic challenges at the household level impacting their well-being, in particular those who had not received reintegration support. Education is a key gap as only 62 per cent of child returnees interviewed attend school (with significant variation by country) and some face challenges in having education received abroad recognized. Across the board, children expressed a variety of negative emotions. Exploring children's self-assessed priorities will be key to designing and implementing successful programming in line with the rights accorded to them.

5. EXISTING GOOD PRACTICES ON CHILD REINTEGRATION ARE LIMITED

Across the five countries, key informants were often unable to identify child-sensitive reintegration programming, and even less so to single out good practices, at the country level. That said, some local initiatives offer good practices to learn from, as do child-focused or child-sensitive activities with a broader remit.

6. ADDITIONAL COORDINATION BETWEEN STAKEHOLDERS IS NEEDED

In several instances, key informants pointed to a lack of institutional support towards reintegration initiatives while emphasizing the need for decentralized ones, involving authorities such as municipalities, to foster the implementation of effective reintegration programming. Both Ethiopia and Nigeria offer examples from which to draw, having stepped up coordination efforts with various stakeholders and entities at the macro, meso and microlevel to improve reintegration support. Nigeria is equipped with an institutional framework for returnees' reintegration, consisting of the National Migration Policy and the National Labour Migration Policy. In Ethiopia, authorities are actively engaging on child reintegration issues in partnership with IOM. Honduras shows encouraging signs, with the Ministry of Governance and Justice, for example, devising a community-based approach to locally coordinate the provision of assistance.

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Preparedness for returns

Ensuring best interests determination procedures are properly carried out;

Improving information sharing from the child's perspective;

Leveraging children's future ecosystems to foster reintegration.

Multi-dimensional interventions

Lifting families out of economic poverty to enable them to tackle children's needs;

Providing child-sensitive economic support;

Enhancing children's ability to cope through psycho-social support and long-term case management;

Promoting and facilitating return to school.

Multi-levelled interventions

Individual level: (1) Supporting vulnerable children to obtain civil documentation; (2) **Capitalizing** on older children as vectors of psychosocial support activities;

Community level: Fostering social cohesion and children's acceptance;

Structural level: Coordinating with institutions and local structures for referrals and partnerships.

7. KEY SUCCESS FACTORS CONSIDER MULTIPLE LEVELS OF INTERVENTION

Action is required at the individual, household and community level. For example, to better prepare returns in order to support reintegration, children must receive further information ahead of return, while the BID can be used to identify future members of children's return ecosystem who can foster reintegration. Older children can play an active role as vectors of psychosocial support, for example, while community-level interventions can foster broader social cohesion and acceptance.

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PART 2: PRESENTING THE CHILD REINTEGRATION MONITORING TOOLKIT

Existing monitoring mechanisms consider the number of children supported through programming (including via their household) and the types of support received. Such output monitoring, however, does not allow stakeholders to understand children's reintegration experiences, nor does it identify the priority needs of child returnees. Furthermore, by focusing on children who are receiving support, drawing conclusions based on such information runs the risk of obscuring the situations of the worst-off children. Yet, practitioners recognize the differentiated needs of children who return, and echoed the need for better means of supporting them.

The Study thus proposes a Child Reintegration Monitoring Toolkit to address these gaps – designed for use by reintegration actors, including governmental, United Nations, and INGO actors, to support them in better understanding child returnee reintegration.

1.   DEFINING THE PURPOSE OF THE CHILD REINTEGRATION MONITORING TOOLKIT

This Toolkit is designed to conduct child returnee monitoring (and will be used in many cases for beneficiary monitoring) rather than programme monitoring. The remit of this tool calls for a focus on understanding the situation of child returnees, and, longitudinally, how their reintegration status evolves over time (noting that, as past research has shown, this will not necessarily be linear). It is not designed to reference specific existing programmes nor to establish causal linkages between *specific* programmes and degree of reintegration.

2.   A TOOLKIT CENTRED ON REINTEGRATION FRAMEWORKS AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The Toolkit was designed based on a multistep process. Key factors impacting reintegration and indicators of reintegration were identified and refined based on several dimensions (children's rights and reintegration principles; existing frameworks; existing evidence; piloting results). The Toolkit includes both a quantitative tool to specifically monitor indicators across the three dimensions of IOM's 2017 definition of sustainable reintegration (economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities, and psychosocial well-being) as well as qualitative tools to nuance these findings and provide further information around the full ecosystem involved in children's reintegration.

3.   TRANSLATING RESULTS TO SCORES

Twenty-two indicators (six economic, nine social, and seven psychosocial) were used to calculate dimensional and overall reintegration scores. While the majority of indicators were designed for binary responses, for some of these, in particular those around child labour, more complex rules were employed to assess whether a response was contributing to reintegration or the opposite. Principal Component Analysis has been used to reduce data to a smaller number of dimensions designed to explain as much of the variation/dispersion in the data as possible. The scoring results in reintegration scores for each dimension (between 0-1), which can be combined in an overall reintegration score.

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4.   PILOTING THE TOOLKIT UNDERLINED THE IMPORTANCE OF AN AGE-DISAGGREGATED APPROACH

The tested approach distinguished between children aged 7–9, 10–13 and 14+, with only the latter two groups answering the quantitative survey, and a simplified case study format for the former. Just as children on turning 18 do not immediately turn into adults with a complete set of needs, the pilot underlined the degree to which their maturity, and ability to participate in research, do not necessarily correspond to their age. The younger age groups (7–9 and 10–13) varied greatly in their development and maturity. This poses methodological implications around which tools are best suited to each child and how to identify whether a child is – or is not – comfortable participating in the research. Toolkit users will require careful training to ensure they can adapt accordingly.

5.   THE TOOLKIT MAY TOUCH ON DIFFICULT EXPERIENCES, THEREFORE REFERRALS ARE KEY

Some children interviewed directly detailed or alluded to psychologically distressing experiences. In other cases, parents felt the need to explain sources of stress experienced by children. Such experiences are frequently identified in the descriptions of children's migration journeys. This carries two major implications for the Toolkit: its design specifically includes more creative elements for children to express themselves comfortably and suggests active communications techniques, while its recommendations for use highlight needed psychosocial training, as well as referral mapping processes.

6.   THE TOOLKIT IS NECESSARY TO ALLOW FOR SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION

Without information around contexts of return and specific experiences of children on return, organizations and states cannot hold to the approach outlined in IOM Reintegration Handbook, taking into account the guiding principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child approach. Past research and the responses of children in this study underline the degree to which children's voices are not being appropriately heard. Their involvement in return decisions is inconsistent and therefore challenging sustainable reintegration from the beginning. When they have been heard, the focus has been on unaccompanied and separated children, generally and rightfully identified as facing greater risks. The thousands of children returning with their families also have a right to be listened to.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes on **three key messages and eleven recommendations for the use of this Toolkit**, aimed at improving sustainable reintegration outcomes for children. These recommendations set standards, and provide a roadmap to operationalize them as well as a strategic orientation to ensure participation and adaptation to specific contexts.

MONITORING APPROACHES

PREPARING effective, appropriate and efficient child reintegration monitoring

MONITORING STAKEHOLDERS

Building monitoring PARTICIPATION across the ecosystem

MONITORING STANDARDS

Ensuring safe and adaptive monitoring PRACTICES

#1. PREPARE EFFECTIVE, APPROPRIATE AND EFFICIENT CHILD REINTEGRATION MONITORING

1. Conduct detailed training around the purpose of the Toolkit and its utilization;
2. Prepare a referral mechanism to be used with research participants;
3. Mainstream the Toolkit at the country organizational level;
4. Ensure data protection and safeguarding within organizations;
5. Identify appropriate monitoring interview locations.

#2. BUILD MONITORING PARTICIPATION ACROSS THE ECOSYSTEM

6. Integrate a child feedback loop on experiences;
7. Co-design future programming;
8. Work through existing coordination networks and local ecosystems.

#3. ENSURE SAFE AND ADAPTIVE MONITORING PRACTICES

9. Mainstream the Toolkit within existing approaches;
10. Conduct regular context and access assessments;
11. Ensure a conflict-sensitive approach in all monitoring.

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These recommendations are intended to be considered together, with progress required across all three components. As the Toolkit is disseminated and used across contexts, it should be regularly revised to ensure that it takes the broader base of new findings into account. The study also calls for further research to be able to develop approaches to monitoring and programming, for example on the intersection of vulnerabilities, the provision of services and referrals, in particular around education and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), and the experiences of very young children.

The Final Report is available here.

The full Child Reintegration Monitoring Toolkit is available here.

Credits:

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Page 9. Celebration of International Day of the African Child in Burkina Faso. © IOM 2019/Alexander BEE.

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EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub

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