




## 'Feeling and being a part of something better'

Children and young people talk about reintegration



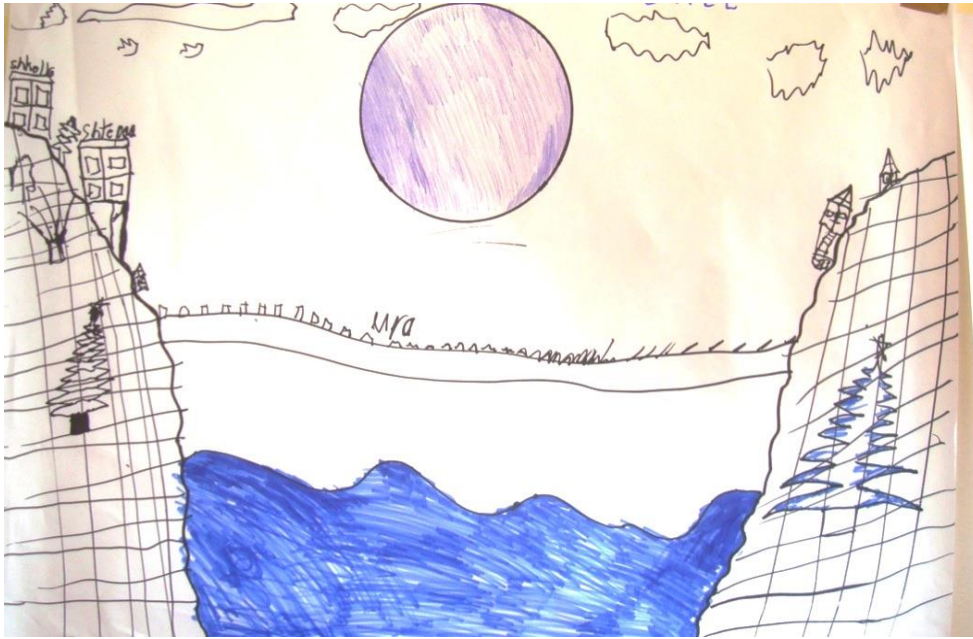
 In June 2013 consultations with 89 reintegrated children and young people were organised in seven countries. The consultations were part of a larger project to develop a monitoring and evaluation guide for organisations working with reintegrated children – so that they could improve their work with reintegrated children and young people.

## Children and young people were asked two questions:

1. What do children and young people feel are the most important changes that have happened to them since they joined the reintegration programme?
2. What 'indicators' or 'signs' show us that a child has 'successfully reintegrated' and which indicators are most important for children and young people?

To answer this question children and young people told us their stories of change. Many children and young people made 'river of life' drawings to help them explain how their life had changed.

To answer this question children and young people produced 10 'indicators' of a successfully reintegrated child and then they chose which indicators they thought were the most important (this process is called ranking).



## Glossary

A 'reintegrated' child	A child who has been reunified with family members or is living in a permanent family-based care setting and who is happy, healthy, safe and has the same opportunities as other children in their community.
We	When the word 'we' is used in this report it means the group of people who are developing a toolkit for organisations working with reintegrated children round the world (see the back page of this report).
Consultations	Groups of children and young people were asked their opinions about reintegration. Consultations were similar to a workshop so had different group activities including drawing to help children explain their opinions.
Facilitator	Someone who made sure all the children in the consultation were comfortable and were happy to give their opinions.
Note Taker	Someone who listened carefully to children in the consultation and wrote down everything children were saying.
Counselling services	Counselling is when children talk about their problems to someone else. Counsellors are the people the children talk to – they are specially trained to help children figure out their problems.
Income-generation schemes	Where children or their parents are given income (money) to buy things that will give them an income. For example children may be given money to buy a cow so that they can sell the milk from the cow to give them a regular income.
Vocational training/skills	Training or skills that will help you get a job. For example, training in hairdressing or in farming.
Foster family (carer)	A family that isn't a child's own family but who want to look after the child as if he or she were their son or daughter. The 'carer' is the person who is responsible for caring for the child – like a parent.
Monitoring and evaluation	Monitoring is when you check that something is working the way you thought it was working. Evaluation is very similar – it is when you are checking that something is working well, you are looking at its value.

89 children and young people took part in consultations in 7 countries. A third were boys aged between 10-18 years old. Girls and young women were generally older, most aged between 19-25 years old. All children and young people who took part had different experiences that meant they were separated from their families but they have all been given support to be reintegrated.

## + How were consultations organised?

The same guidelines were used to run each consultation. All consultation facilitators and note-takers had been trained on how to use these guidelines. All the consultations took place in June and July 2013.



## + Who took part?

# Who took part?

89 children and young people from 7 countries

**BOYS IN ETHIOPIA:** 7 boys aged 13-17 took part in a consultation run by Retrak and are now living with family.

Pendekezo Letu and are now living with families or foster families.

**BOYS IN UGANDA:** 11 boys aged 14-18 took part in a consultation run by Retrak and are now living with foster families.

**BOYS IN GHANA:** 10 boys took part aged 12-14 took part in a consultation run by Challenging Heights and are now living with family members.

**YOUNG WOMEN IN UGANDA:** 10 young women aged 19-22 took part in a consultation run by Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL) and are now living independently with friends or family.

**YOUNG WOMEN IN SERBIA:** 9 young women aged 15-20 took part in a consultation run by Atina and are now living with family members.

**GIRLS IN TANZANIA:** 10 girls aged 11-14 took part in a consultation run by Shalom Centre and are now living with family members.

**YOUNG WOMEN IN ALBANIA:** 10 young women aged 19 to 25 took part in a consultation run by Different & Equal and are now living independently.

**GIRLS IN KENYA:** 15 girls aged 10-14 took part in a consultation run by

**BOYS IN ALBANIA:** 7 boys aged 10-14 took part in a consultation run by Tjeter Vizion and are now living with family members.



# What did children tell us?

Children told us their stories of change. They also developed their own indicators of a successfully reintegrated child.



## Girls in Kenya

### Stories of change

Girls in Kenya talked about being confused and scared when they first came to the half-way house but they made friends, they felt loved by the house mother and they felt sad when they left. Many girls said that learning life skills

**The important thing I learnt is to protect myself from bad people; also we were taught how to be good and to respect people, before I used to abuse people, even big people.**

was important to them and helped them have better relationships with other people.

**Tabis, aged 14**

Some girls said they liked their homes better when they returned because they were repaired and clean. They also said that they liked the changes they saw in their own behaviour (such as not fighting or not becoming angry) or in their parents' behaviour (such as not drinking).



## Indicators that show a child is doing well

### The most important signs that show a child is doing well:

1	Self discipline	6	Happiness
2	Avoiding peer pressure	7	Self awareness
3	Self esteem	8	Self control
4	Abstinence	9	No bullying
5	Don't want to see other children out of school.	10	Good hygiene

Girls in Kenya agreed with the explanation of 'successful reintegration' as:

➔ **A child who has been reunified with family members or is living in a permanent family-based care setting and who is happy, healthy, safe and has the same opportunities as other children in their community.**

**How did they explain the idea of successful reintegration?**



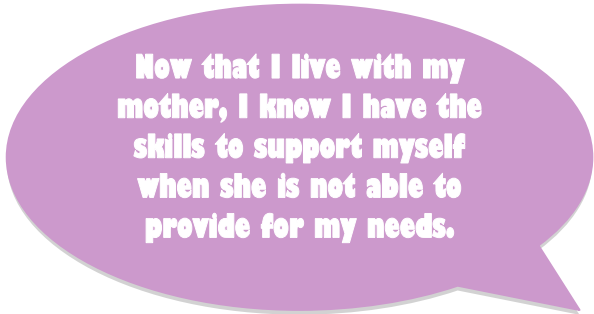


# Girls in Tanzania

## Stories of change

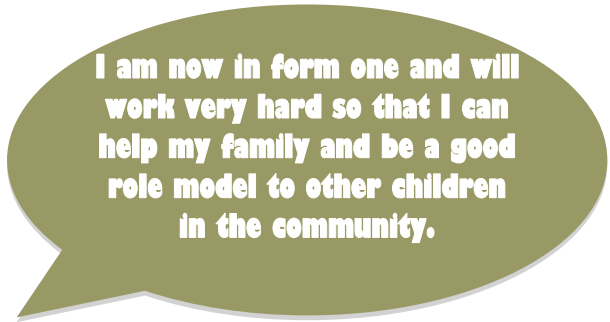
Girls in Tanzania talked about how the Shalom Centre gave them food and somewhere to live as well as the opportunity to go to school.

Nearly all girls said learning life skills helped their self-confidence as well as finding out about learning of their talents such as singing, gardening or jewellery-making. Two girls said that a project where their parents or carers had been given money to set up a small business was helpful. Other girls said that talking to a counsellor before they were reintegrated was helpful. Many girls said they worked hard at school because people at the centre had told them working hard was important. Also, many girls said it took them time to adapt to their new life back with their family but they really wanted to be part of their family and community.



**Now that I live with my mother, I know I have the skills to support myself when she is not able to provide for my needs.**

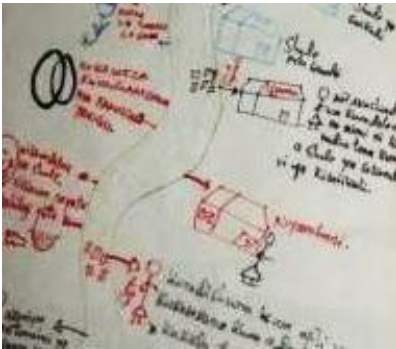
**J Sister, aged 13**



**I am now in form one and will work very hard so that I can help my family and be a good role model to other children in the community.**

**LR, aged 13**

## Indicators that show a child is doing well



1	Community understanding of reintegration	6	Responsibility of community
2	Acceptance	7	No discrimination
3	Economic empowerment	8	Respecting others
4	Community is aware of children's rights	9	Good morals
5	Love and respect	10	Independence

**How did they explain the idea of successful reintegration?**

- ➔ To be re-unified with the family, relatives or community
- ➔ Being close with the family again
- ➔ The process of re-unifying a child with their families from the centres, child-headed households or from the streets that expose them to so much danger.

# + Boys in Uganda

## Stories of change

Boys in Uganda talked about how they changed their behaviour. They became more disciplined, learned to read and write, respected others, and stopped stealing and fighting. This helped

boys to get along with each other better.

Boys also said that counselling services helped prepare them for living with a foster family. Boys talked about their foster family as ‘teachers’ who helped them to continue making the changes in behaviour they had started in the half-way house.

Learning to read and write or learning vocational skills in farming, welding or carpentry were important to the boys.

**I used to fight a lot but stopped and started respecting others after having counselling.**

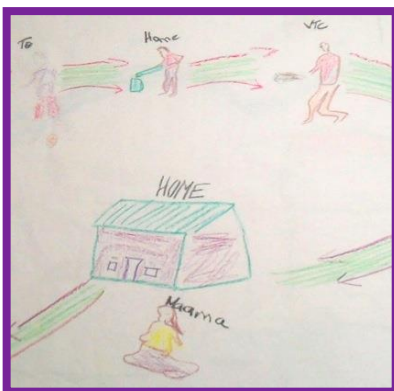
**Moriis, aged 16**

**In my foster family, I continued to learn good behaviour like relating well with and respecting other people. My carer was very co-operative and understanding.**

**John, aged 18**

**Work is important so that you can fend for yourself and not be dependent.**

**Isma, aged 17**



**How did they explain the idea of successful reintegration?**

## Indicators that show a child is doing well

1	God fearing	6	Access to medical care
2	Good relationship with family and community	7	Goes to school
3	Feeds well	8	Is hardworking
4	Has good shelter	9	Is free from abuse
5	Access to water	10	Can play games

➔ **Boys in Uganda explained that they saw reintegration as a journey of making them better in their behaviour. One boy mentioned that it helped him change from his bad behavior of stealing and helped him settle well at home.**



# Young women in Uganda

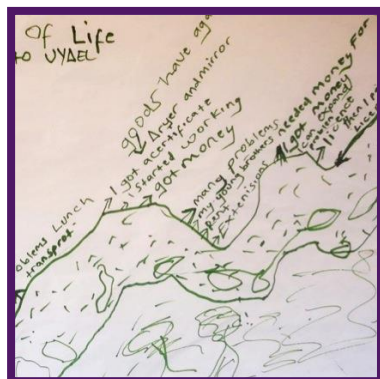
## Stories of change

Young women in Uganda talked a lot about earning money. All the young women had attended training on how to be a hairdresser and were being helped (by UYDEL) to start their own businesses. Young women

also said that working gave them self-confidence and many talked about the support their friends gave them - friends they made at the centre.

Also, young women talked a lot about needing to pay towards their family's costs.

They said that mothers, aunts and sisters helped look after and care for them - although two young women talked about the death of this key person in their lives.



**How did they explain the idea of successful reintegration?**

**I had very many friends who I had studied with. We decided to work together, whenever one person got work to do, she could invite us to work together and share the profits.**

**Chocolate, aged 19**

**I need to raise more money to see that I support at least one of my young siblings in school.**

**Anointed Kwish, aged 19**

## Indicators that show a child is doing well

1	God fearing	6	Being able to associate with other people in the community
2	Confidence	7	Respected by people in the community
3	Vocation skills	8	Being exemplary
4	Hard working	9	Getting my own money from my sweat
5	Meeting and knowing the right people	10	Being able to counsel

All the young women had their own ideas of successful reintegration. For example, here is Mango's explanation:

**➔ Respected by people in the society, making my own money, can speak for other youth in my community, having very good and trusted friends, having customers that need my services.**



# Boys in Ethiopia

## Stories of change

Boys in Ethiopia all said they kept themselves clean, they had good food and they started catch-up classes for their schooling at the Retrak Centre. Two boys talked about the

reaction of their families when they returned home. See what Guli had to say....

**Guli, aged 14**

Six boys said that an income-generating project (where they were given money to buy sheep, cows or a bicycle to rent out) helped them pay for their schooling or paid for family costs.

Many boys were proud of their success in school and a number of boys, like Konso, were able to improve their relationships with their family.

**When my parents came back home in the evening, my mother was very excited to see me. But my father was not happy.**

**I sent community elders to ask why my father hated me. He told the elders he hated me because I used to fight with other boys. Now he has forgiven me and we are at peace.**

**Konso, aged 17**



**How did they explain the idea of successful reintegration?**

## Indicators that show a child is doing well

1	Basic needs fulfilled	6	Support family but not exploited
2	Supporting and caring family	7	Get along with the community
3	Education	8	Children's rights
4	Income (money)	9	Not neglected and abandoned
5	Respecting family	10	Bright hope

**Boys in Ethiopia gave a number of explanations that were quite similar; here is an example:**

**➔ Reinstatement a child to former family situation and enable a child to have good conduct and to go along with the community.**





# Boys in Ghana

## Stories of change

Boys in Ghana talked mostly about going to school. Many boys said they had learned to read and write, or to speak English and were now happy to be in school. Boys also said they were given

good food, medical care and money for school. They also said that they saw changes in their behavior or attitude when they were back home.

Two boys talked about knowing their rights and one boy said that he now had more friends which he believed would make it easier for him to get support.

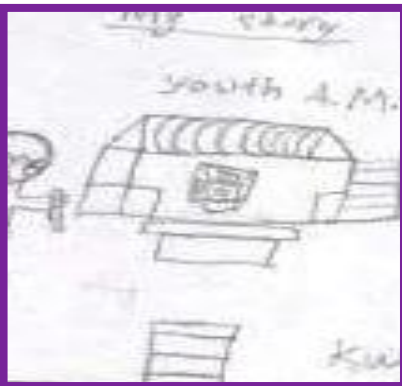
**Before I could not write but upon enrolling in school I was able to read and write.**

**Happy Boy, aged 14**

**I now know how to behave in the house...I am now obedient.**

**One Lovely, aged 12**

## Indicators that show a child is doing well



**How did they explain the idea of successful reintegration?**

1	School or skills training	6	Enjoy our basic rights and play
2	Punctual and doing well in school	7	Improved behaviour
3	Parents are able to provide basic support	8	Know our basic children's rights
4	Access to medical care	9	Believe in ourselves and our abilities
5	Children will not go back to previous situations	10	Being respectful and also respected

➔ **The act or process of coming out of a hard situation and not going back in the same hard situation because your parents are taking good care of you so that you remain in school.**



## Boys in Albania

### Stories of change

Boys talked about the support they had from the centre (staff teaching them how to behave, learning to read and write) or the activities they took part in at the centre (art, drama, cooking

etc).

Three boys mentioned medical care they had been given by Tjeter Vizion – one 13-year-old boy called Green said he was sent to Switzerland for an operation. Green’s drawing (see below) shows his old house, his school and his new house with a bridge in between.



**How did they explain the idea of successful reintegration?**

**...the centre replaced the absence of my parents. I had people near me (social workers and other children) who loved me. We stayed together and learned together.**

**Violet, aged 14**

**The bridge is the centre that helped me a lot and the social workers there.**

**Green, aged 13**

## Indicators that show a child is doing well

1	Family	6	Safety
2	School	7	Shelter
3	Food	8	Rights
4	Love	9	Friends
5	Health	10	Skills

→ **‘Being happy’ was the most popular phrase to explain successful reintegration.**



# Young women in Albania

## Stories of change

Many young women said that counselling helped them to stop being nervous or aggressive, to express their feelings, understand and accept what had happened to them and gave them a sense of peace in their lives.

Young women said that changes in their behavior meant they had better relationships with others and a sense of independence. Finding a safe place to live was important, as was taking part in vocational training which then led to finding a job. Many young women had a job they enjoyed or they had set up their own business. A lot of young women said mediation services with their families were important in helping them to have better relationships with their family and old friends.

**Feeling relieved and emotionally stable helped me to understand and accept what has happened in the past.**

**Ina, aged 21**

**I think twice before I act and I have become a reflective person. I can take decisions for myself.**

**Kleja, aged 19**

**Now I talk to my father after a long period of misunderstandings between us.**

**Sara, aged 25**



**How did they explain the idea of successful reintegration?**

## Indicators that show a child is doing well

1	Safe house	6	Good relationship with familiar people and friends
2	Feel safe	7	Regular income
3	Has regular job	8	Re-enters school or professional course
4	Emotionally stable, communication skills, polite	9	Has professional skills
5	Problem solving and decision-making skills	10	Can adapt to new places

**→ Having a safe house to live, living independently or with a family, having a job and feeling happy and safe.**



# Young women in Serbia

## Stories of change

Many young women said that staff at the centre helped them to talk more openly and helped them to...

...be stronger, more stable, without fear, to be able to move freely.

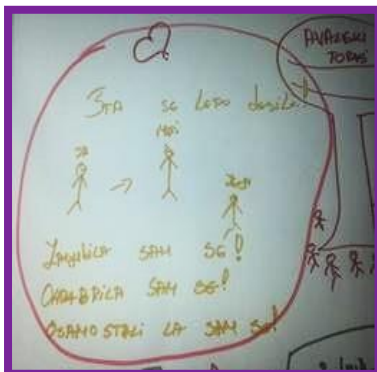
Atina, aged 20

Some young women talked about the

importance of being 'healthy', in particular, strong mental health. Many young women talked about taking part in vocational training (to be manicurists or hairdressers) or going back to school. They were happy to find a job and somewhere to live. Most of the young women said that their boyfriend or husband was very important to them.

My boyfriend knows about my situation and the problems I had. He supports me to manage to leave it all behind, not to think about it.

Magdalena, aged 15



## How did they explain the idea of successful reintegration?

## Indicators that show a child is doing well

1	Health	Love	6	A child is supposed to be a child
2	Home and roof over head		7	School
3	Family		8	Self belief
4	Documents and rights		9	Happy and smiling
5	Normal, violence-free life		10	

Note: In Serbia the young women chose 'health' and 'love' as the two most important signs that show a child is doing well.

→ A child who is healthy, loved, satisfied and laughing, living in a non-violent family and attending school.

## Our analysis

We examined and analysed everything children and young people told us and could see many similarities and connections. These are the conclusions we came to.



## Exploring the stories of change

In most countries children stayed at an 'emergency shelter' of some sort for days or weeks and then moved on to a **residential home** for a period of months to years (depending on how long each child needed to stay there).

At the residential home children were **prepared for reintegration** with their family or into the community. As children and young people had different names for these residential centres, in this report we are calling them 'centres'. For many children and young people, the support given by the centre was very important in their stories of change.

Children and young people explained that the biggest change for them was when they **moved**

**from the safe and supportive care of a residential centre to live back with their families or communities** – where they faced many difficulties.

The stories of change showed us that children and young people coped very well with these difficulties. The stories showed that the support they were given during their time in a centre was helpful when they were living back with their families or living in the community. After their basic needs were met (shelter, food, medical care), children and young people often talked about the importance of emotional support they received from staff (through counselling) and friends made at the centre.





## Exploring the stories of change

Looking at all the stories of change, we can see some similarities between them.

- It was very important for children and young people to **understand what had happened to them**. This helped them to improve their relationships with other people (particularly their family).
- Mediation services - where children and the adults who will care for them **talked about what life would be like and discussed any problems** - were very useful. They helped everyone involved know what to expect before the child was reintegrated. Mediation also helped adults to give children the emotional support they needed.
- **Friends made at the centre** gave children and young people emotional support and practical help (such as a place to stay or a loan of money) when they were reintegrated – and things got difficult.
- Trying to find a job was a big difficulty for many children aged over 16 and made them quite stressed about money. Many children had to pay for their own schooling or for their living costs. Many girls had to help their family with their living costs too. So **income-generating schemes** and **vocational training** helped them to reduce this pressure.
- Younger children talked more often about the importance of **learning to read and write** or success in their schooling.
- The most common change in behaviour that children and young people talked about was self-discipline. They **connected self-discipline to their sense of purpose** and their plans for the future.
- Children and young people's goals were mostly about **doing well in school or getting a job**.
- Children and young people said that **building their self-confidence** helped them to be reintegrated and that they built their confidence through:
  - ➔ life-skills training
  - ➔ making friends (at the centre) with others who understood what they had gone through
  - ➔ learning about rights and responsibilities
- Children and young people believed that **working hard** and being committed to school or vocational training helped them to **see a positive future for themselves**.

# Examining the indicators of successful reintegration



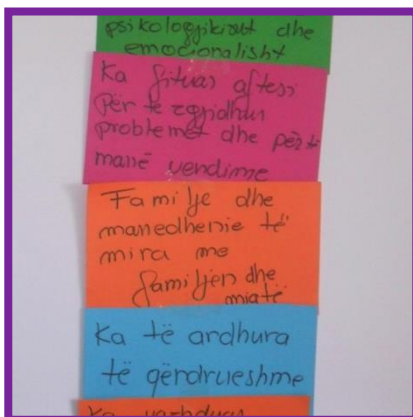
## How children and young people explained reintegration

Children and young people explained the idea of 'successful reintegration' slightly differently to the way adults explained it. Children and young people focused more on:

- the importance of self-confidence
- the quality of relationships and emotional support given by family or community members
- their 'good conduct'
- the importance of regularly paid work or money.

For example, Anointed Kwish, a 19-year-old young woman from Uganda explains 'successful reintegration' as...

...being confident to speak to different people in different areas, strong and chasing my dream, responsible and respected in society, having a job and being competent in what I do. Having very many friends who we share with all that we need.



Children and young people in each of the 9 consultations produced 10 indicators of 'a successfully reintegrated child' and then ranked them (decided which were most important). As many of the indicators were quite similar we have put them into groups. For example, the group on 'emotional support' includes all the indicators about

children feeling safe, feeling loved and feeling cared for by others.

Children and young people produced 90 indicators in total. We analysed how children and young people ranked the groups of indicators (by looking at which indicators they thought were most important).



## Which are the most important indicators of successful reintegration?

When we looked closely at the ranking of these indicators it was clear that the top five indicators were quite similar and many of the indicators were connected to each other.

Two groups shared the top ranking position: the group of indicators on 'basic needs met' and the group of indicators on 'emotional support'.



### **BASIC NEEDS MET:** children have a safe place to live, they have enough food and drink and have good medical care.

The group of indicators on 'basic needs met' is quite different from all the other groups as it looks at children in crisis. For example, many children had been rescued from the streets so had 'basic' needs such as shelter, food or medical care, or children needed somewhere safe to stay:

*'...if you don't have a safe place where to put your head you will end up in the street...'* (girls in Albania).

Although it is very important to help all children in crisis, we wanted to look more closely at how children are reintegrated back with their families and so we did not focus in detail on the group 'basic needs met' in our analysis. Instead we focused on the rest of the groups.



### **EMOTIONAL SUPPORT:** children feel safe and are loved and cared for by others.

Many children and young people thought that when a child has emotional support they are very likely to be successfully reintegrated. Girls in Tanzania explain what emotional support meant to them:

*'...when a child is shown love and is valued within the family and community.'*

Most children and young people expected their family to give them emotional support. So, many children and young people talked about the importance of feeling 'loved' by family and friends.

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2

**BELIEVING IN YOURSELF:** children have self-confidence, self-control and faith.

Many children and young people chose indicators that were related to how they thought about themselves – self-confidence or self-belief. For example, boys in Ghana explain self-confidence as:

*‘...children believe in themselves and their abilities.’*

Many children also said that self-discipline and self-control were important and that life-skills training helped them to make decisions or to build their self-confidence. In Uganda, girls and boys both said that their faith in God was connected to their self-confidence:

*‘With God you can achieve anything and you will have good behaviour which helps you relate well with others.’*

3

**CHANGING YOUR BEHAVIOUR:** children respect others, they are hard-working, have good hygiene.

Children and young people explained ‘changing my behaviour’ as being hard-working, respecting family, taking care of their health and being able to solve problems and make decisions – as children in Albania explained:

*‘Someone who resolves their own problems and finds a way to get a better life.’*

In addition, young women in Uganda said they became hard-working because they wanted their businesses to be successful. Changes in children and young people’s behaviour were often connected to children learning life-skills (such as how to look after themselves, how to keep clean and have good hygiene).

4

**EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING:** children are educated at school or take part in vocational training.

In Ghana, boys felt that doing well in school was very important to successful reintegration. In many countries children and young people felt that being able to read and write was a key sign of successful integration. In Ethiopia, boys saw their education as important to their long-term welfare:

*‘An educated child supports himself and his family. Education gives hope and the ability to think in long terms.’*

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Two groups shared the fifth ranking position: the area on 'children's rights' and the area on 'income and work'.

5

## **MONEY AND WORK:** children have regular paid work or a regular income

**Income and work:** Many children and young people said they needed a regular income (money) for successful reintegration. This was because they needed to pay the costs of their schooling and to support their families. Boys in Ethiopia explained how income generation (getting money) helped reintegrated children to feel less stressed:

*'...income generation helps a child not to create too much pressure in his family for his needs.'*

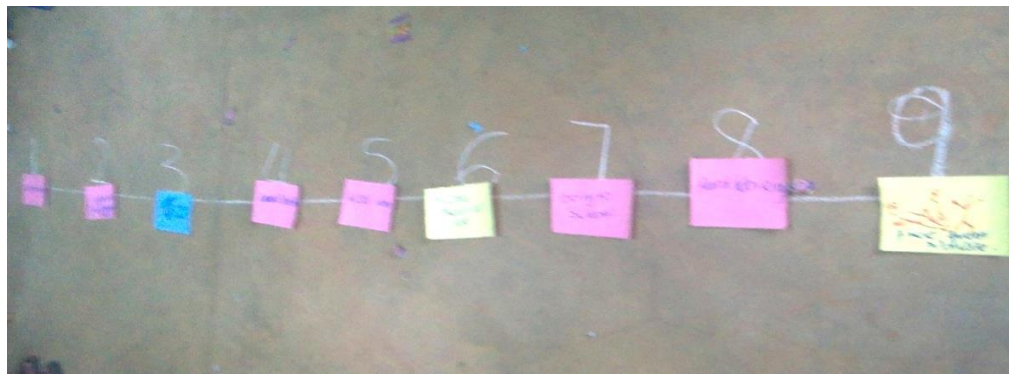
Vocational training (such as hairdressing or car maintenance) helped children to find jobs or get some kind of income. Having a job or an income helped children to feel proud of themselves. It also gave children a sense that they were trusted by their family or community. Indicators on 'money and work' were connected to indicators on 'believing in yourself' and 'emotional support'.

5

## **CHILDREN'S RIGHTS:** children and people in local communities know about children's rights.

**Children's rights:** children and young people thought it was important that children knew their rights but also that people in their communities knew about children's rights. For example, girls in Tanzania explained one of their indicators as ...

*'When the parents and the community are aware and have the knowledge of the importance of reintegrating a child. So that the community is also responsible for a child who is reintegrated.'*





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# What will happen next?



The information we have received from reintegrated children and young people in this report will be used to **improve the support that reintegrated children get** from those trying to help them.

All the organisations that ran the consultations have said that they have learned many things from talking to children and young people and they want to **change some of the things they do to support reintegrated children and young people**. For example, one organisation has said it will start a mentoring service for children – where children talk often to an adult who gives them advice on many of their problems. Many organisations said they will **listen more carefully to children** so that they can understand reintegration from the child's point of view.

The information in this report will also be used to **develop a toolkit for other organisations working with reintegrated children and young people** around the world – so that they can monitor and evaluate their work with children and young people.

A **BIG THANK YOU** to all the children and young people who took part in these consultations and to the facilitation teams. This report was written by Helen Veitch and commissioned and published by the Centre for Rural Childhood, Perth College, University of the Highlands and Islands, Scotland, UK and Home: The Child Recovery and Reintegration Network. The work was kindly funded by the Oak Foundation.

**Note:** all names given for children and young people in this report are not their real names – children and young people chose a 'pretend' name that has been used instead of their real name. Also, children and young people agreed for photographs of their work to be used in this report.

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