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

Final Report

Samuel Hall for the EU-IOM
Knowledge Management Hub



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TABLE OF CONTENT

Acknowledgements	iii
List of boxes, figures and tables	v
List of acronyms	vii
1 INTRODUCTION	3
1.1 Background and objectives	3
1.2 Methodology	4
1.3 Report structure	9
PART I: STATE OF PLAY – CHILD REINTEGRATION PROGRAMMING	11
2 UNDERSTANDING CHILD REINTEGRATION	11
2.1 Trends and challenges of child reintegration programming, monitoring and outcomes	11
2.2 In their own voices: child returnees' reintegration experiences	23
2.2.1 Opportunities identified to strengthen child return monitoring	24
2.2.2 Constraints to address	31
3 EXISTING GOOD PRACTICES IN CHILD REINTEGRATION	38
3.1 Preparedness for returns	39
3.1.1 Operationalization of the best interests procedures	39
3.1.2 Improving information sharing from a child's perspective	39
3.1.3 Leveraging children's ecosystem to foster reintegration	40
3.2 Multidimensional interventions	41
3.2.1 Lifting families out of economic poverty to enable them to tackle children's needs	41
3.2.2 Providing child-sensitive economic support	42
3.2.3 Enhancing children's ability to cope through psychosocial support and long-term case management	42
3.2.4 Promoting and facilitating return to school	44
3.3 Multilevelled interventions	44
3.3.1 Individual level (1): supporting vulnerable children to obtain civil documentation	44
3.3.2 Individual level (2): capitalizing on older children as vectors of psychosocial support activities	45
3.3.3 Community level: fostering social cohesion and children's acceptance	45
3.3.4 Structural level: coordinating with institutions and local structures for referrals and partnerships	46
3.4 Success factors and challenges of reintegration initiatives	48

PART II: PRESENTING THE CHILD REINTEGRATION MONITORING TOOLKIT.....	52
4 A NEW APPROACH TO MONITORING	52
4.1 Rationale and approach	52
4.1.1 Defining a child reintegration monitoring toolkit	53
4.1.2 Designing the child reintegration monitoring toolkit	54
4.2 Scoring the index	57
4.2.1 Translating indicator responses to scores	57
4.2.2 Exploring reintegration based on index results	57
4.3 Strengthening the toolkit: lessons learned from piloting	60
4.3.1 Assessing the initial approach	60
4.3.2 Strengthening the tools	64
4.3.3 Additional guidance for utilization	66
5 LOOKING AHEAD: ROLLING OUT THE TOOLKIT ACROSS RETURN CONTEXTS	69
5.1 Way forward	69
5.2 Recommendations for use	70
5.3 Recommendations for future research	73
ANNEX 1 Indicator mapping	75
ANNEX 2 Principal component analysis methodology	79
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	81

LIST OF BOXES, FIGURES AND TABLES

Box 1. Joint sense-making workshops at the country level	7
Box 2. COVID-19 collateral impact on child migrants and returnees	17
Box 3. Learning from existing IOM and Samuel Hall data	20
Box 4. Gender and reintegration	22
Box 5. Returns to fragile environments and States	26
Box 6. Case study Psychosocial support 17-year-old girl in Honduras	35
Box 7. Ethiopia Supporting children economically and socially – Positive Action for Development	41
Box 8. Casa Alianza Honduras Frontera Programme Tackling children’s individual needs and creating safe spaces	43
Box 9. Principal Component Analysis	57
Figure 1. Research process	5
Figure 2. Fieldwork locations	6
Figure 3. Tools tested	7
Figure 4. Range of actions for child reintegration	14
Figure 5. Participation in social events within the community	26
Figure 6. Children's ecosystems in their own words	27
Figure 7. Do you feel comfortable and safe outside your house?	35
Figure 8. Good practices for sustainable reintegration	38
Figure 9. Key concepts for a child monitoring reintegration toolkit	53
Figure 10. Approach taken to toolkit design	55
Figure 11. Average reintegration scores by age	58
Figure 12. Average reintegration score living with a guardian	58
Figure 13. Average scores, time since return	59
Figure 14. Question: can you draw here a picture of the most important parts of your life here? What are the best parts of living here?	61
Figure 15. Common signs of distress in children, as per Save the Children's psychological first aid training	64
Figure 16. Recommendation themes	70
Table 1. Quantitative interviews	4
Table 2. Case studies	4
Table 3. Research locations	7
Table 4. Percentage of individuals scoring above 0.66 (1 = full reintegration) for each RSS score, by age groups	20
Table 5. Recurring themes reported by child returnees and aged-out minors upon return, by country of study	23
Table 6. Key Ethiopian institutions and entities working on child reintegration	47

Table 7. Success factors for sustainable child reintegration and associated good practices	48
Table 8. Tested toolkit indicators	56
Table 9. Average reintegration score by country and dimension	58
Table 10. Average reintegration score by sex and dimension	58
Table 11. Reintegration score indicators showing least variance in results	65

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AVRR	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration
BIA	Best Interests Assessment
BID	Best Interests Determination
CAH	Casa Alianza Honduras
CCC	Community Care Coalition
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 19
CRC	Child Right Committee
CSDSF	Child-Sensitive Durable Solutions Framework
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DINAF	Directorate for Children, Youth and Family
ECRE	European Council on Refugees and Exile
ELENA	European Legal Network on Asylum
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FUJCFSA	Federal Urban Job Creation and Food Security Agency
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GCM	Global Compact for Migration
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ID	Identification Document
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ILO	International Labour Organization
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
KII	Key Informant Interview
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEASURE	Mediterranean Sustainable Reintegration
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
MiMOSA	Migrant Management Operational System Application
MOLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

MOWCYA	Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAD	Positive Action for Development
PARA	Post-Arrival Reintegration Assistance
PCA	Principal Component Analysis
PSS	Psychosocial Support
RSS	Reintegration Sustainability Survey
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UASC	Unaccompanied and Separated Children
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VHR	Voluntary Humanitarian Return

KEY CONCEPTS

Return	Refers broadly to “the act or process of going back or being taken back to the point of departure. This could be within the territorial boundaries of a country, as in the case of returning internally displaced persons (IDPs) and demobilised combatants; or between a country of destination or transit and a country of origin, as in the case of migrant workers, refugees or asylum seekers. Note: A number of subcategories of return describe the various ways in which return is implemented, e.g. voluntary, forced, assisted, and spontaneous return; as well as subcategories which describe who is participating in the return, e.g. repatriation (for migrants caught in a crisis).” ¹
Child returnee	A child is a person who is below the age of 18, unless the applicable law sets a lower age. The UNCRC equates “child” with “minor”. ² A child returnee is thus a returnee under the age of 18. This can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children returning with their families through AVRR; • Unaccompanied and separated children returning through AVRR; • Children returning alone or with families not through AVRR (including other voluntary returns, deportations, returns to legal guardians);³ • Returns of aged-out failed asylum seekers/temporary protection holders turned 18, including both voluntary and not.
Sustainable reintegration	“Reintegration can be considered sustainable when returnees have reached levels of economic self-sufficiency, social stability within their communities, and psychosocial well-being that allow them to cope with (re)migration drivers. Having achieved sustainable reintegration, returnees are able to make further migration decisions a matter of choice, rather than necessity.” ⁴
Child or age sensitive approach	A child sensitive approach: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses “the patterns of children’s poverty and vulnerability” and recognizes “the long-term developmental benefits of investing in children”;⁵ • Is “informed by an understanding of the multiple and often intersecting vulnerabilities and risks that children and their care-givers face”;⁶ • Recognizes that children’s “experience of such vulnerabilities changes throughout childhood”.⁷

¹ IOM, “Glossary on Migration,” 2019.

² United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 44/25 adopted on 20 November 1989.

³ Forced return cannot be considered in the best interest of a child.

⁴ IOM, *Towards an Integrated Approach to Reintegration in the Context of Return* (2017), page 3.

⁵ Rachel Yates, Upjeet Kaur Chandan, and Patricia Lim Ah Ken, “Child-Sensitive Social Protection. A New Approach to Programming for Children Affected by HIV and AIDS,” *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies* 5(3): 208–16 (2010).

⁶ Nicola Jones and Rebecca Holmes, “Tackling Child Vulnerabilities through Social Protection: Lessons from West and Central Africa,” ODI Background Notes (2010).

⁷ *Ibid.*

Monitoring	“A continuing function that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives”. ⁸
Child sensitive indicators	“Cross-reference individual child and family needs with accessibility to the means and resources to mitigate environmental [and/] or community vulnerabilities”. ⁹ Child sensitive indicators should take into account that vulnerabilities differ depending on children’s life-stage, and “structural considerations that may encourage or hinder access of returnee children and families to support and which may be available to other vulnerable children in the country of community of origin”. ¹⁰

⁸ OECD, Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management (2010), page 27.

⁹ IOM, Reintegration Handbook: Practical guidance on the design, implementation and monitoring of reintegration assistance (2019), page 244.

¹⁰ Ibid.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Globally, data on child returnees and their reintegration remain scant. According to Eurostat, 5,180 children returned, either voluntarily or forcibly, from the European Union to a third country following an order to leave in 2019.¹¹ The same year, 47,117 children returned to El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras from the United States of America and Mexico.¹² At the IOM level, 17 per cent of the 64,958 returnees supported through AVR R programmes in 2019 were children, compared to 22 per cent in 2018.¹³ In addition, IOM publishes the share of UASC in the overall group of migrants in vulnerable situation and assisted with AVR R (1,038 children in 2019). An additional 3,355 children were assisted under VHR, including 1,395 UASC.¹⁴

Children's returns continued during the COVID-19 pandemic; as of October 2020, 4,800 children were assisted by IOM in voluntary returns to Ethiopia alone.¹⁵ Further children are returning without the support of IOM, assisted by other organizations, on their own and in some cases, forcibly. Despite these numbers, there is to date a real gap in both evidence and understanding around the reintegration of children, and targeted actions and means of monitoring them. This prevents actors from accomplishing what has been committed to in the *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration's* Objective 21: "Cooperate in facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration", and more specifically, "promote gender-responsive and child-sensitive return and reintegration programmes".¹⁶ The scarcity of public and private data on voluntary and forced returns, coupled with the fact that existing data rarely includes age disaggregation, is a challenge for understanding and responding to the needs of child returnees throughout their migration cycle.¹⁷

In recent years, new reintegration frameworks have provided operational guidance on sustainable reintegration, setting standards for programming. IOM and Samuel Hall partnered in 2017 to develop a specific methodology for monitoring sustainable reintegration outcomes, resulting in a reintegration score incorporating indicators around economic, social and psychosocial well-being (the RSS).¹⁸ This survey has since been rolled out across a range of countries worldwide, providing IOM, its donors, and local partners, with unique, longitudinal data on post-return outcomes that can inform programming and policy. This framework, however, was only designed to track outcomes for adult returnees. This is why, in 2020, IOM embarked on further exploration of returns among specific demographic groups – including women and

A sustainable solution including return, local integration and resettlement is informed by the guiding principles of the Convention of the Rights of the Child including the best interests of the child, the principle of non-discrimination, the right to survival and development and the right of the child to be heard in line with their age and maturity.

IOM Reintegration Handbook, Module 6, jointly developed with UNICEF

¹¹ Eurostat, Database, accessed on 16 October 2020.

¹² IOM, Iniciativa de gestión de información de movilidad humana en el Triángulo Norte, Triángulo Norte Dash.

¹³ IOM, 2019 Return and Reintegration Key Highlights, (2020).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ IOM, Press release, COVID-19 unaccompanied child migrants reunited with their families in Ethiopia, by IOM (16 October 2020).

¹⁶ United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 73/195 adopted on 19 December 2018, page 7. Hereinafter "Global Compact for Migration" (GCM).

¹⁷ See [Chapter 2.2](#).

¹⁸ Samuel Hall and IOM, Setting Standards for an Integrated Approach to Reintegration, commissioned by IOM and funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (2017).

children – and ways to tailor assistance to their specific needs. This work is in coordination with and supported by the European Union, which identified it as a priority.

Recognizing and understanding the differentiated experiences and motivations of children, within households as much as on their own, is crucial to achieving child-sensitive safe and dignified return, and sustainable reintegration. The limiting existing information confirms that a child’s experience will not necessarily correspond to that of the adults around them (when there are adults) nor even to that of other children within the household. To ensure the best interests of the child, actors require further, long-term evidence to verify that they are fulfilling their commitments to children. IOM thus commissioned Samuel Hall through the EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub’s Research Fund to lead this study with three key objectives:

1. Review and set standards on supporting and monitoring child reintegration;
2. Operationalize standards by developing, testing and finalizing a child-focused monitoring toolkit;

Implement standards, with evidence and tools to inform reintegration policies and programmes for children.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted in five countries, with 22 local researchers, across six months in 2020–2021. In total, 176 child returnees and aged-out minors¹⁹ were interviewed as part of this research, through case studies (30) and quantitative surveys (146). This included both forced and voluntary child returnees, including some who had received support from IOM and other organizations and others who had not. In addition, eight FGDs were conducted with parents, NGO members and other members of child returnees’ ecosystems. Lastly, 44 KIIs were conducted across the target countries for the research and at a global/institutional level.

The approach was (a) participatory, (b) collaborative, and (c) experimental. Building on a thorough desk review, the tools developed under this research study were tested in the field, with feedback received from participants and users. These tools were adapted to children’s developmental levels considering different age groups (see [Chapter 4](#) for details on age breakdown). Country-level workshops with IOM staff presented some of the initial findings from testing the Toolkit. They also shared reflections on using the Toolkit in their particular context, identifying additional challenges faced by users – including on training and other support needs. The result of this collaborative process is

TABLE 1. QUANTITATIVE INTERVIEWS

	AVRR/IOM supported	Non-AVRR
Ethiopia	20	10
Georgia	20	10
Honduras	21	13
Iraq	18	1
Nigeria	20	13

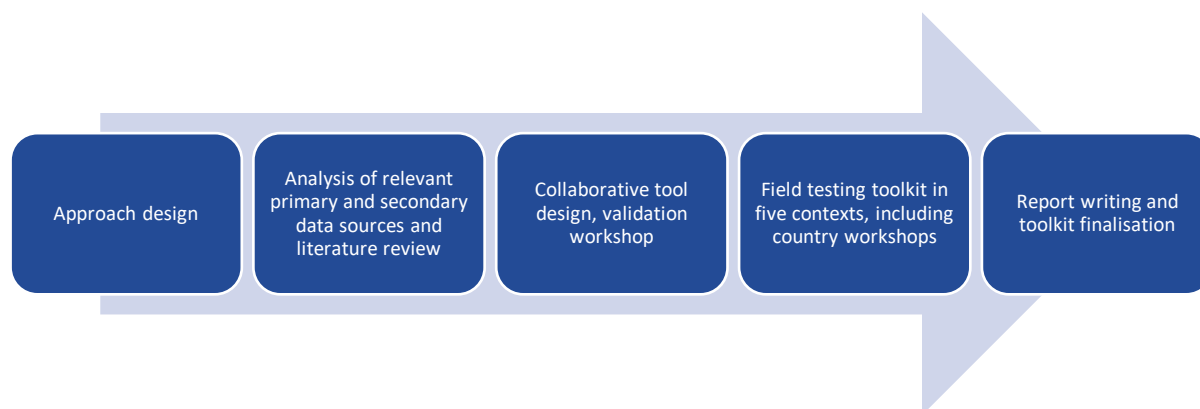
TABLE 2. CASE STUDIES

	7-9 years old	10-18 years old
Ethiopia	2	4
Georgia	0	6
Honduras	2	4
Iraq	1	5
Nigeria	2	4

¹⁹ “Ageing-out” refers to when “unaccompanied children reach the age of majority pending the outcome of the asylum or family reunification procedure”. See ECRE and ELENA, ECRE/ELENA Legal Note on Ageing Out and Family Reunification (2018), page 2. In short, children turn 18 and are officially no longer considered as children.

presented in this report for the development of a Child Reintegration Monitoring Toolkit. Figure 1 details key elements of this approach.

Figure 1. Research process



Literature review and secondary data analysis

The literature review covered existing frameworks and evidence on the topics of reintegration and child reintegration. Researchers reviewed sources from academia, policy, and practice, prioritizing those published in the past ten years. A total of 78 sources are referenced and numerous others were reviewed over the course of the research, prioritized for relevance and year of publication. The research team further assessed existing IOM datasets (primarily drawing from the RSS, stored in IOM case management system, MiMOSA, and two country-level databases) as well as Samuel Hall databases to extract child-specific post-return information. It also served to evidence the relevance and measurability of potential indicators. In addition, data was extracted from Samuel Hall's past studies on return and reintegration with a child component or focus.

The data determined what elements of child return and reintegration indicator frameworks already exist, and which elements of existing surveys should be part of the indicator framework and of this Child Reintegration Monitoring Toolkit.²⁰

Development of the draft Toolkit

Learnings from children's rights and durable solutions frameworks, existing reintegration monitoring approaches (in particular IOM's RSS and Save the Children's CSDSF),²¹ and findings from existing IOM and Samuel Hall data ensured the development of the draft Toolkit is rights-based and evidence-based. The ambition was to take a child-sensitive approach to monitoring child returns. This Toolkit was shared with focal points in country offices and reviewed by Technical Review Panel members in December 2020, prior to field testing. During the Panel workshop, stakeholders debated key questions and agreed on the way forward on sensitive points.

Field testing in five countries

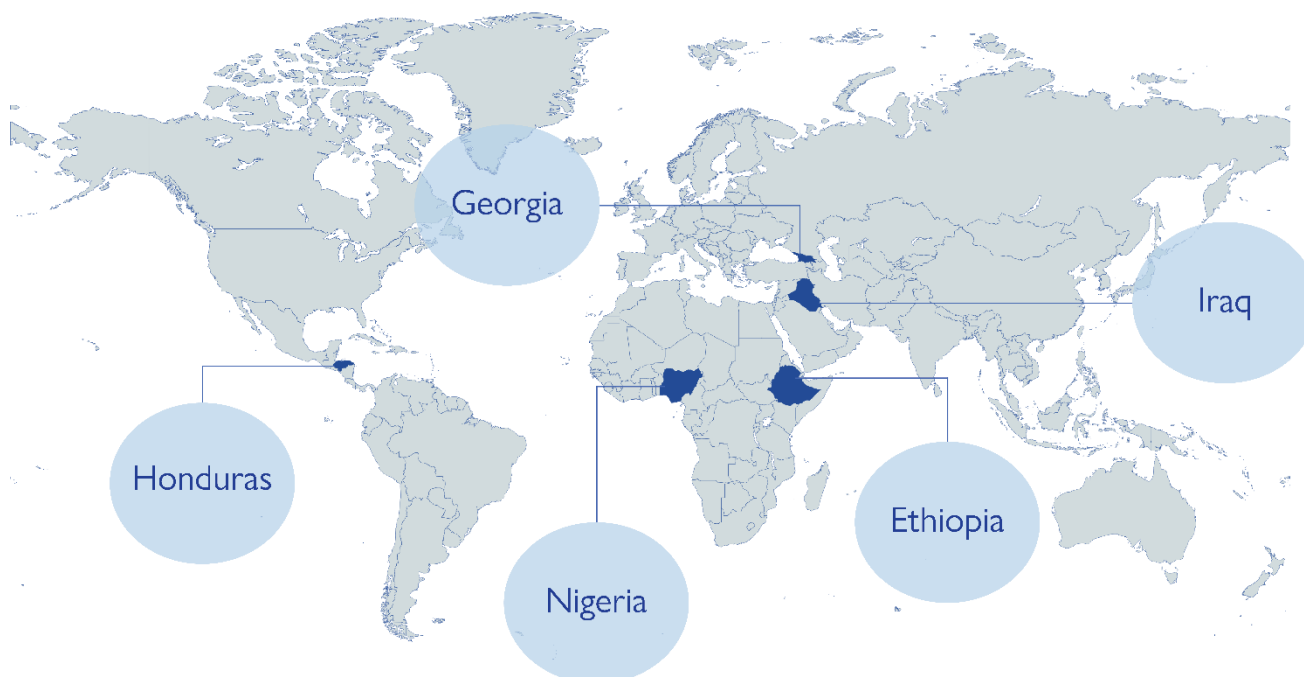
Five countries were selected by the Panel for piloting the reintegration monitoring tools for child returnees: **Ethiopia, Georgia, Honduras, Iraq, and Nigeria**. These countries were selected based on the current

²⁰ Hereinafter the "Toolkit".

²¹ See Save the Children, Durable Solutions for Children Toolkit (2019).

caseload of child returnees supported by IOM through both return and reintegration assistance under AVRR programmes or PARA programmes.²² Data was collected in each of these five countries of origin, which provide a breadth of very different reintegration contexts where to test the Toolkit.

Figure 2. Fieldwork locations



Source: Mapchart.net

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration or Samuel Hall.

In each country, the research team selected fieldwork locations in collaboration with the country teams. These were chosen based on interviews and the desk review to allow the pilot to capture a range of experiences. Additional interviews were subsequently conducted remotely (see below *Research limitations and adaptations*) allowing for the inclusion of additional locations. Table 3 details the locations of respondents interviewed.

²² Reintegration assistance is equally relevant to those migrants who are assisted to return through programmes, considered as voluntary returns by other stakeholders or are forcibly returned by governments and may find themselves in a vulnerable situation due to extended periods of time spent abroad, lack of preparedness before return and stigmatization linked to deportation. These migrants, and the communities to which they return, need post-arrival support through comprehensive reintegration assistance. For this reason, under very specific conditions, IOM, in cooperation with the governments of both origin and host countries, has also been providing PARA to migrants returned by other actors, voluntarily or involuntarily, after they were formally admitted to their countries, that is, after the process of return concluded. IOM strongly believes that voluntary returns should be the preferred option and should be promoted over forced returns, as it gives migrants a choice and allows them to prepare for their return, thus positively impacting their reintegration process.

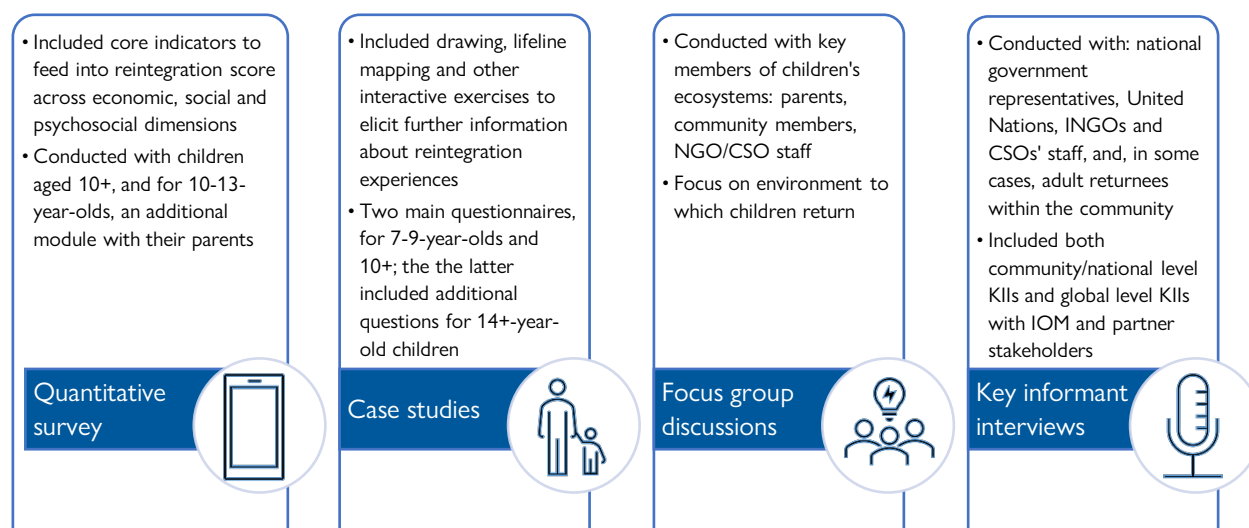
TABLE 3. RESEARCH LOCATIONS

Country	Locations
Ethiopia	Amhara, Dire Dawa city administration, Oromia and Addis Ababa
Georgia	Kakheti, Imereti, Kvemo Kartli, Tbilisi, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti
Honduras	San Pedro Sula, Tegucigalpa
Iraq	Basra, Baghdad, Ramadi, Duhok, Wasit, Babylon, Sulaymaniyah
Nigeria	Lagos, Delta, Edo, Benin, Ogun, Oyo and Rivers States

Four types of tools were tested in each context (Figure 3). To best identify challenges and to ensure the initial scoring considers the diverse experiences that child returnees can have, the research team targeted a broad range of participants. Specific goals were set for the quantitative tool and case studies around gender, age, and type of return. The quantitative survey with children (for 10–13-year-olds, a brief parent/guardian module was also included) was

designed to provide needed data to feed into a reintegration index, across the three dimensions of reintegration and with additional sociodemographic factors considered. The case study allows for the interrogation of the specific experiences of child returnees of various types, in particular the interplay between different vulnerabilities in their return experiences. Both the quantitative surveys and the case studies provided a specific opportunity for children to feedback on anything that had not been covered by the draft tools, to identify gaps. In line with the understanding of reintegration as dependent on the broader ecosystem surrounding returnees, the FGDs were centred on key ecosystem members, including parents, community members, and as NGO/CSO staff.

Figure 3. Tools tested



BOX 1. JOINT SENSE-MAKING WORKSHOPS AT THE COUNTRY LEVEL

To strengthen the Toolkit, the Samuel Hall team conducted a workshop with IOM team members in each pilot country after data collection. These enabled sharing and discussion findings from the fieldwork to better understand contextual challenges, limitations, and any missing needs from the Toolkit. They were also used to gather information from IOM teams on necessary conditions for and recommendations around operationalization of the Toolkit.

Research limitations and adaptations

The research team faced interview limitations primarily around research participant identification and access. Given the limited scope of this pilot, data collection was not intended to be statistically representative, but rather to provide an opportunity to test the tools with a breadth of respondents, and allow for the initial development of a scoring approach and an opportunity to include child returnees' voices in the research process.

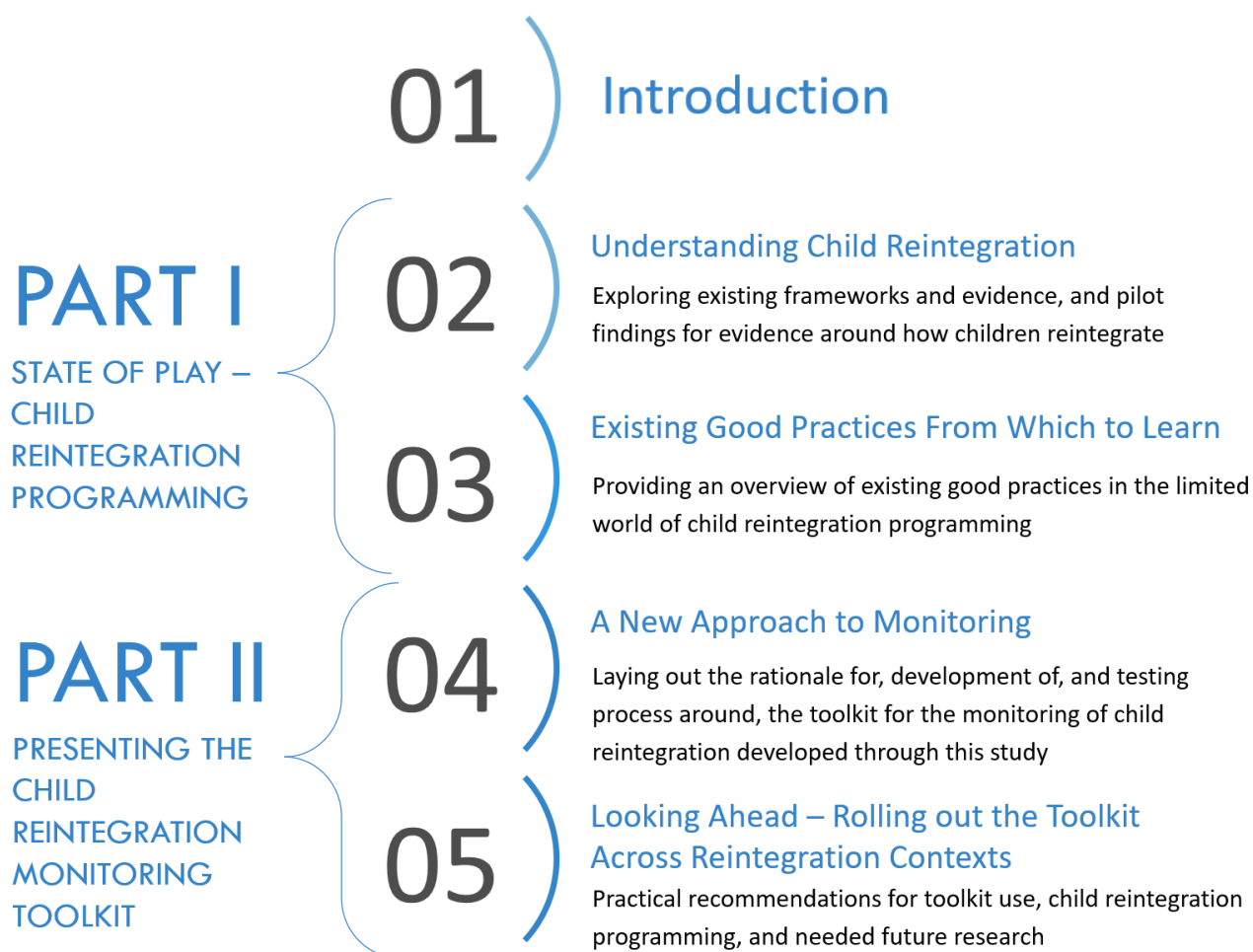
- Identification of child returnees. The research considered two primary groups of child returnees: IOM-supported (via AVRR except in Honduras, where the caseload is primarily supported through PARA programmes) and those who had not benefited from IOM reintegration support. To identify the former, IOM teams reached out to the households of eligible children in the country, requesting their consent to participate in the pilot prior to the research team reaching out to them. This proved more complicated than anticipated for several reasons. Contact information was not always correct/up-to-date and country teams had fewer contacts available than suggested by AVRR figures. A lack of up-to-date information is in part explained by households' relocation, a lack of local contacts who could help reach returnees in some areas, changed phone numbers, or households not having phones. In some cases, children's ages were not confirmed.²³ Finally, in Honduras, the hurricane displaced possible respondents, complicating their identification.
- Willingness to participate in the research. Some eligible returnees did not wish to participate in the research and expressed concerns around COVID-19 and in-person interviews, despite agreed mitigating approaches (personal protective equipment, selection of well aerated locations for interview, etc.). Others expressed concerns around security and economic situations such as the opportunity cost around having to be at home and not working.
- COVID-19-related access limitations. Health-related safeguarding approaches limited access, in particular in Iraq and Georgia, and current government restrictions around COVID-19 meant that the teams could not travel to the households of all research participants.

To address these challenges, the research team developed mitigation measures with IOM. It was initially planned that local contacts would be sought from IOM and other organizations working with child returnees. The research teams broadened outreach to include non-reintegration actors; conducted extensive snowball sampling based on personal networks and past research contacts; and shared contacts with IOM of AVRR-supported respondents who might be eligible for the research, allowing IOM to reach out to them to secure consent. The research team adopted remote data collection methods in several contexts (including Iraq and Georgia) to address limitations in access due to COVID-19. This adaptation also allowed the research to include a more diverse group of participants.

²³ In Iraq in particular, despite over 4,000 assisted returns in 2019, IOM's team was not able to gain consent from sufficient returnees to meet planned targets. This mirrors broader research challenges in Iraq, where a worsening economic condition, suspicion around any sort of research and monitoring, and the lack of organizations working with child returnees made the identification of potential respondents and the obtainment of their consent very difficult.

1.3 REPORT STRUCTURE

The present report is made up of two parts – the research and the attendant Toolkit for reintegration practitioners and other stakeholders. The toolkit enables practitioners to monitor to what extent child returnees reintegrate in a sustainable manner in the communities to which they return, and to identify the main factors that contribute to the sustainability of their reintegration.





PART I: STATE OF PLAY – CHILD REINTEGRATION PROGRAMMING

2 UNDERSTANDING CHILD REINTEGRATION

2.1 TRENDS AND CHALLENGES OF CHILD REINTEGRATION PROGRAMMING, MONITORING AND OUTCOMES

This section summarizes essential findings related to child reintegration, including factors affecting reintegration outcomes; programming, legal and policy frameworks underpinning reintegration mechanisms; and existing reintegration and monitoring approaches. A comparative review of available findings helped refine the design of the Child Reintegration Monitoring Toolkit.

Legal and programming frameworks designed to protect children through return and reintegration

A number of legislative frameworks and policy instruments have been established to promote protection, safe and dignified return as well as sustainable reintegration of child returnees, including UASC. These include but are not limited to the following:

- The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*²⁴ lays out children’s rights and issues general comments to frame the interpretation of the convention’s provisions and principles, notably with regards to vulnerabilities faced by UASC.²⁵ The convention further considers that, unless in the child’s best interest, a child is usually best placed when under the care of their parents. Save the Children drew on the convention’s list of child rights to design its CSDSF.
- The *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* and its Protocol²⁶ is the first multilateral treaty defining the characteristics of a refugee and setting out refugees’ rights as well as States’ legal obligation to protect them, under the principle of non-refoulement.
- The *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families*²⁷ sets standards for migrant workers and members of their families, focusing on eliminating the exploitation of workers throughout the migration process, and includes specific rights granted to children.
- The *Hague Convention on Parental Responsibility and Protection of Children* and its Practical Handbook²⁸ set a structure for international cooperation in the field of child protection, building bridges between national legal systems as well as detailing how to operationalize the convention.
- The *Guidelines on Determining the Best Interests of the Child – Best Interest Determination (BID)*.^{29 30} UNHCR defines BID as a “formal process with strict procedural safeguards designed to determine

²⁴ See footnote 2.

²⁵ See also General Comment #6 in UNICEF, General Comments of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2006).

²⁶ United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 429 (V) adopted on 28 July 1951 convention, and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees entered into force on 4 October 1967.

²⁷ United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 45/158 adopted on 18 December 1990.

²⁸ Hague Conference on Private International Law, officially Convention of 19 October 1996 on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Co-operation in respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children, concluded on 19 October 1996, and Practical Handbook on the Operation of the 1996 Hague Child Protection Convention, 2014.

²⁹ UNHCR, “Guidelines on International Protection No. 8: Child Asylum Claims under Articles 1(A)2 and 1(F) of the 1951 Convention and/or 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees,” 2009.

³⁰ UNHCR, Guidelines on Assessing and Determining the Best Interests of the Child: 2018 Provisional release (2018).

the child's best interests for particularly important decisions"³¹ affecting the child. When a BID is deemed irrelevant or inadequate, UNHCR recommends opting for a BIA prior to making any decision related to a child. The BID follows strict procedural safeguards of a formal determination; the BIA requires that the professionals who are involved have the required skills and knowledge to conduct this assessment. IOM further established guidance, jointly with UNICEF, on BID procedures in its *Handbook on Protection and Assistance for Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse*.³²

- The *Global Compact for Migration* is the first internationally negotiated agreement to mitigate drivers of migration, risks and vulnerabilities faced by migrants throughout their migration journey, and to promote the contribution of migrants to societies. It recommends child-sensitive approaches and upholds the best interests of the child at all times.
- The *United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children*³³ seek to improve the implementation of the 1951 UNCRC and other guiding texts and agreements, notably regarding the protection and well-being of children deprived of parental care, or at risk of being so.
- The *United Nations Resolution on the Right of the Child focusing on Children without Parental Care*³⁴ calls on governments to enforce the rights of children who have lost or are at risk of losing parental care, including the prevention of separation, the provision of quality alternative care and the identification of east care solutions.
- The *Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action*³⁵ guide emergency responses for the protection of children, including refugees. The document includes 28 Sphere companion standards, organized under the following four categories: standards to ensure a quality child protection response; standards on child protection risks; standards to develop adequate child protection strategies; standards to work across sectors.
- The *InterAgency Guidelines for Case Management and Child Protection*³⁶ complement the 2012 Minimum Standards to provide a shared understanding and clear guidance on how to case management, focusing on child-centred procedures and language.
- The IASC *Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons*³⁷ recognizes children as distinct right holders and recommends processes and procedures related to child migrants.
- The European Commission's *Communication to the European Parliament and the Council on the Protection of Children in Migration*³⁸ provides a series of coordinated actions to address children's protection gaps and needs upon arrival in Europe, ranging from their identification and reception to the implementation of procedural safeguards and the establishment of durable solutions, with a focus on the best interests of the child.
- The IOM and UNICEF *Guidance for Protection, Care, and Assistance of Vulnerable Child Migrations*³⁹ underlines the need for assistance targeting children to adopt a **child-centred approach**, paving the way for the adoption of the best interests principle and the design of the BID for child returnees.

³¹ UNHCR, Field Handbook for the Implementation of UNHCR BID Guidelines (2011), page 8.

³² IOM, *Handbook on Protection and Assistance for Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse* (2019). The joint IOM–UNICEF guidance is in Part 6.

³³ United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 64/142 adopted on 24 February 2010.

³⁴ United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 74/133 adopted on 18 December 2019.

³⁵ The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, *Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action* (2012). A new edition was published in 2019.

³⁶ Global Protection Cluster, European Commission and USAID, *Inter Agency Guidelines for Case Management and Child Protection* (2014).

³⁷ Inter-Agency Standing Committee, *IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons* (2010).

³⁸ European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council - The Protection of children in migration* (2019).

³⁹ IOM, *Handbook on Protection and Assistance* (see footnote 32).

- *The Guidance to Respect Children's Rights in Return Policies and Practices*⁴⁰ sets out measures necessary to ensure the respect of every child's right throughout the return process, focusing on the European Union return legislation and policy, to guide stakeholders designing and implementing return procedures.
- *The Reintegration Handbook – Practical Guidance on the Design, Implementation and Monitoring of Reintegration Assistance* and in particular its Module 6 – A Child Rights Approach to the Sustainable Reintegration of Migrant Children and Families⁴¹ provide key principles for the implementation of an approach focused on child rights, to foster sustainable reintegration for both children and their families. The Reintegration Handbook also identifies good practices around case management at the micro and macro levels, before providing guidance surrounding monitoring and evaluation practices for child reintegration support.
- The *EU Strategy on Voluntary Return and Reintegration* aims to develop a more uniform and coordinated approach among Member States to boost the effectiveness and sustainability of the common European Union system for voluntary returns.⁴²

Complementing these legal and programming guiding documents, IOM and Save the Children have each developed a monitoring framework for reintegration, the RSS⁴³ ⁴⁴ and the CSDSF respectively.

- The RSS comprises 15 field-tested indicators built on 30 measurements and a scoring system relating to the economic, social and psychosocial dimensions of reintegration. The RSS was designed, and the scoring adapted, based on adult returnees' experiences. As such, the RSS does not account for the differentiated experiences of children, nor is it designed for use with them.
- The CSDSF focuses on children, providing guidance around a rights-based approach to durable solutions through standardized indicators based on the IASC Durable Solutions framework, and child rights and protection standards as laid out in the UNCRC. The nine themes, 33 indicators and 95 analysis indicators are included under four key categories: material, physical, legal, and mental health, and psychosocial safety. The CSDSF is the first framework measuring reintegration outcomes through a child-sensitive approach and can entirely rely on secondary data. Should primary data collection be envisaged under the CSDSF, it can include KIIs, household surveys, knowledge, attitude, and practice surveys, anonymized case management data collection and FGDs discussing the voices of children. It is primarily designed for the understanding of a durable solutions environment – and whether it is appropriate for durable solutions for children – rather than for the assessment of the individual experience of a single child.

Both frameworks present indicators to measure and assess reintegration against international standards on child rights. They provide an approach and selection of indicators that constitute a solid basis to design a monitoring toolkit meant to track reintegration over time. However, despite the existence of reintegration and monitoring frameworks, as well as several related studies, the literature review, workshops and KIIs with

⁴⁰ IOM et al., *Guidance to Respect Children's Rights in Return Policies and Practices - Focus on the EU legal framework* (2019).

⁴¹ IOM, *Reintegration Handbook* (see footnote 9).

⁴² European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council - The EU Strategy on Voluntary Returns and Reintegration* (2021).

⁴³ See IOM, *Towards an Integrated Approach to Return and Reintegration* (see footnote 4), and Nassim Majidi and Nazanine Nozarian, *Measuring Sustainable Reintegration*, *Migration Policy Practice* IX(1): 30–39 (January–March 2019).

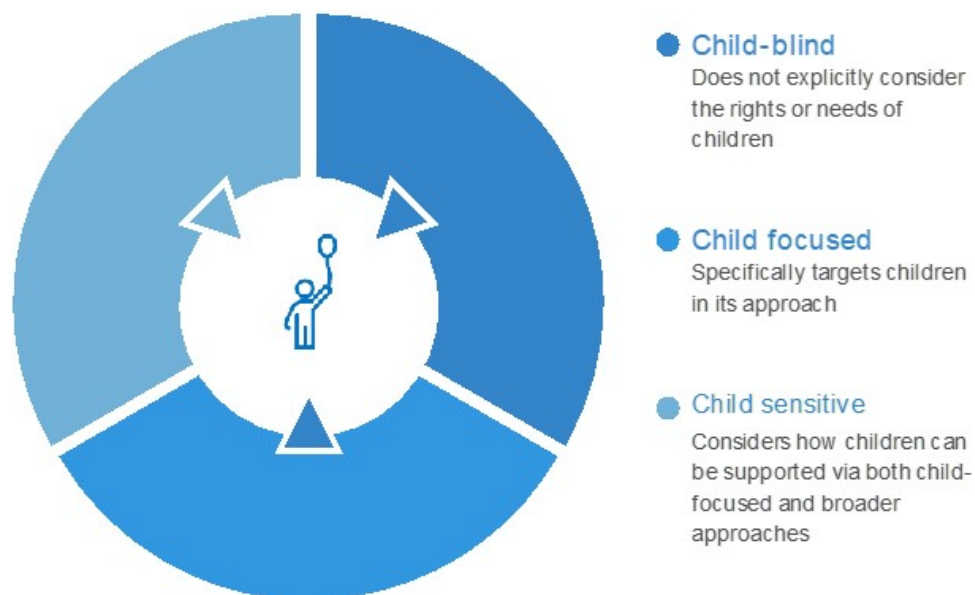
⁴⁴ The IOM monitoring framework, developed and rolled-out by the EU–IOM Knowledge Management Hub, also include other reintegration-related tools at the individual level (reintegration programme and reintegration satisfaction monitoring tools), at the community level (a series on community-based reintegration monitoring tools adapted to each type of respondent), and at the structural level (capacity-building monitoring tools).

reintegration stakeholders highlighted that certain dimensions are often overlooked when child-specific priorities are not included in discussions.

Integrating children in reintegration programming

Reintegration programmes fall under a spectrum of three approaches: child-blind, child-focused and child-sensitive (Figure 4). Overall, return, reintegration and durable solutions policies and programmes tend to be child-blind, namely they do not account for children’s rights and needs in their design.⁴⁵ On the other hand, child-focused programmes specifically target children, while child-sensitive interventions capture child-focused activities as well as broader approaches.⁴⁶ For instance, according to Save the Children, for social protection to be child-sensitive, it does not always need to target children as the main beneficiary, but it must seek to maximize benefits for them and do no harm.⁴⁷ Child-sensitive programmes should address patterns of poverty and vulnerability to understand their depth as well as how they intersect and pose risks to children and their caregivers throughout various life stages.⁴⁸ In the context of child returnees, these programmes should for instance assess and account for drivers affecting children that triggered the migration journey and may be present upon return. The transition from childhood to adulthood specifically represents a crucial point for child-sensitive programming. In a collective paper released in 2019, high-level NGOs and institutions working with children emphasized that “protection needs do not end on a child’s 18th birthday,”⁴⁹ and that the legal definition of adulthood may hinder a child’s development and identity formation, sometimes rendering them more vulnerable than they were while under 18 years old.

Figure 4. Range of actions for child reintegration



⁴⁵ Danish Refugee Council et al., Joint NGO Recommendations on Durable Solutions for the Global Compact on Refugees’ Programme of Action (2017).

⁴⁶ Keetie Roelen, Social Protection Human Rights, “Challenging Assumptions: From child-focused to child-sensitive social protection” (30 July 2015).

⁴⁷ Yates, Chandan and Lim Ah Ken, Child-Sensitive Social Protection (see footnote 5).

⁴⁸ Roelen, “Rights-Based Child-Sensitive Social Protection” (see footnote 46).

⁴⁹ IOM et al., “Guidance to Respect Children’s Rights in Return Policies and Practices,” page 27 (see footnote 40).

Children inherently bear three distinct sets of vulnerabilities, justifying the reintegration of a child focus in policy and programming.⁵⁰ These vulnerabilities are:

1. Physical/biological: children, regardless of their age, are more susceptible to the negative impacts of malnutrition or disease, such as underdevelopment, by virtue of their immature immune systems.
2. Dependency: children are, by necessity, dependent on adults for their well-being. Misuse, neglect and abuse stemming from an asymmetrical dependency relationship compound vulnerabilities.
3. Institutionalized disadvantage: in certain societies, children tend to be devalued based on perceptions associated with their age.

Stakeholders further recommend anticipating reintegration support before a child returns to the country of origin, to plan and address structural and resource gaps as well as provide adequate counselling.⁵¹ Reintegration stakeholders tend to say that sustainable reintegration cannot be achieved if there is no pre-departure planning and sufficient awareness raising.⁵² A child-sensitive case management, along with pre-departure preparations, are key for the preparation of adequate reintegration planning, including for decisions related to family reunification for UASC. To date, reception and care arrangements, notably for UASC, and reintegration modalities are assessed and refined ahead of the return, only when the latter is assisted and voluntary.⁵³

Defining sustainable reintegration

In 2017, IOM adopted an integrated definition of sustainable reintegration, focusing on three dimensions:⁵⁴ (a) **economic** self-sufficiency, (b) **social** stability in returnees' communities, as well as (c) **psychosocial** well-being and the ability to cope. The 2017 definition marks a key milestone in the field of reintegration programming and policy, as it envisages the reintegration process as multidimensional and multilevel approach centred on the individual, the community, and the structural level. Considering the three dimensions as they apply to child returnees is critical to the design of a monitoring toolkit that focuses both on children's rights and lived experiences, and on reintegration objectives.

(a) **Economic self-sufficiency in the context of child reintegration** covers aspects of reintegration supporting individuals or households' re-entry into economic life and facilitates their attempt at securing sustained livelihoods. Economic self-sufficiency can be attained when child returnees' households are able to address children's needs without resorting to negative coping strategies, such as lower quality and/or quantities of food,⁵⁵ but also child work or child labour. A study by Samuel Hall, War Child and UNICEF⁵⁶ carried out in Afghanistan revealed that child returnees tend to be involved in child work or child labour,⁵⁷ with over 60 per cent of surveyed child returnees reported being involved in child work or labour. An IOM evaluation⁵⁸ conducted in 2019 in Afghanistan further indicated that child returnees are often found to be involved in various forms of child labour, often associated with daily wages and including petty trade,

⁵⁰ Keetie Roelen and Rachel Sabates-Wheeler, "A Child-Sensitive Approach to Social Protection: Serving Practical and Strategic Needs," *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice* 20(3): 291–306 (2012).

⁵¹ EU–IOM Knowledge Management Hub, [Seminar on the Return and Reintegration of Children and their Families](#) (2–4 March 2021).

⁵² Based on KILs conducted in the context of this research.

⁵³ IOM and UNICEF, "A Child Right's Approach to the Sustainable Reintegration of Migrant Children and Families," in IOM, *Reintegration Handbook* (see footnote 9).

⁵⁴ Samuel Hall and IOM, *Setting Standards for an Integrated Approach* (see footnote 18).

⁵⁵ Samuel Hall and Save the Children, *From Europe to Afghanistan: Experiences of Child Returnees* (2018).

⁵⁶ Samuel Hall, "Research Study on Return and Reintegration Needs of Deported Unaccompanied and Separated Minors in Western Afghanistan".

⁵⁷ International Labour Organization, Definition of child labour. Child work is different than child labour in the sense that the latter implies that the work undertaken is harmful to children, physically or mentally, and prevents children from attending school, occasionally or consistently.

⁵⁸ Samuel Hall, "Evaluating IOM's Return and Reintegration Activities for Returnees and Other Displaced Populations: Afghanistan," (2019).

woodwork, plastic, metal, scrap collection from garbage dumps and working in brick kilns. A Terre des Hommes 2014 study confirmed that “the ability of parents to carve out an existence in the country of origin is key to their survival and their reintegration in the society,”⁵⁹ and that lack of access to labour markets can lead to further exclusion.

(b) Social stability in the context of child reintegration comprises access to public and basic services including health, education, housing, justice, and social protection. With regards to children, social stability entails markers and indicators related to school enrolment and certification, as well as the possession of IDs.⁶⁰ Child returnees are more at risk of not enrolling in school upon return or to drop out because, among other reasons, schools are ill-equipped to absorb children who are no longer comfortable with the local language or struggle with mental health issues upon return. Similarly, child returnees who were enrolled in school in the host country may struggle to find a school accepting their certificate acquired abroad; for older children and aged-out minors, restarting school from the time they left their country of origin may not be a possibility.⁶¹ In such cases, the migration journey can mark the end of school education. The lack of personal IDs can also be a barrier to social reintegration. In Afghanistan, some child returnees lack a *Tazkera*, the national personal identification document (ID); not having this document prevents school enrolment and, for older children or aged-out minors, their ability to secure work.⁶² Similarly, many Syrian families abroad are not able to add children born abroad to their family booklet, which can prevent children from accessing school upon return.⁶³

(c) Psychosocial well-being and ability to cope relate to child returnees’ and their families’ reinsertion into support networks, namely ecosystems, involving friends, relatives, neighbours and civil society structures and entities. This dimension covers child returnees’ re-engagement with their country of origin’s and/or community of return’s values, ways of living, language(s), moral principles and traditions, which foster the enjoyment of cultural rights. In practice, this aspect relates to child returnees’ feelings as well as society and communities’ perceptions around them. Upon return, children are likely to face discrimination and bullying in connection with their experience abroad and related to factors such as the language barrier, when they struggle to speak in their mother tongue, or others’ perception that they have failed their migration journey. The Terre des Hommes study also found that “the second most important factor influencing reintegration was the knowledge of the local language,”⁶⁴ while the Inter-Agency Group on Children’s Reintegration underlines cases where “these children have often been away for many years, and may have forgotten local languages and traditions.”⁶⁵ A study across Afghanistan, Somalia and the Syrian Arab Republic highlights the importance of social activities as fostering a sense of belonging among child returnees and aged-out minors.⁶⁶ Other studies across various settings and countries emphasize mental health markers as drivers of vulnerability affecting reintegration. Caretakers report children showing signs of fear, anxiety, struggle to focus, exhaustion, sadness, aggressiveness and, in some cases, suicidal thoughts, particularly for aged-out minors or children who have endorsed the role of head of household.⁶⁷ Such

⁵⁹ Terre des Hommes, Half Way Home. Monitoring the Reintegration of Children Returned from EU Countries to South-East European Countries (2014), page 38.

⁶⁰ Objective 4 of the GCM: Ensure that all migrants have proof of legal entity and adequate documentation (see footnote 7).

⁶¹ Samuel Hall et al., Unprepared for (Re)Integration: Lessons Learned from Afghanistan, Somalia and Syria on Refugee Returns to Urban Areas (2019).

⁶² Samuel Hall and Save the Children, From Europe to Afghanistan (see footnote 55).

⁶³ Norwegian Refugee Council, “Briefing Note - Syrian Refugees’ Right to Legal Identity: Implications for Return” (3 January 2017).

⁶⁴ Terre des Hommes, Half Way Home (see footnote 59).

⁶⁵ Inter-Agency Group on Children’s Reintegration, Guidelines on Children’s Reintegration (2016).

⁶⁶ Samuel Hall et al. Unprepared for (Re)Integration (see footnote 61).

⁶⁷ Costanza Vera Larrucea, Henrik Malm Lindberg and André Asplund, Those who were sent back. Return and reintegration of rejected asylum seekers to Afghanistan and Iraq (2021).

symptoms typically translate into exacerbated tensions at home between siblings and/or between children and their caretakers.

BOX 2. COVID-19 COLLATERAL IMPACT ON CHILD MIGRANTS AND RETURNEES

Samuel Hall 2020 brief on child returns to Afghanistan highlighted the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on reintegration processes and progress. The study found that child returnees tend to be burdened with yet another layer of vulnerability, as they fear to expose their families and communities to the disease, which may further fuel stigmatization. The concomitant economic crisis and inflation of basic commodities often left returnees unable to cater to the needs of children. With schools shutting down for extended periods of time, child returnees are at further risk of turning to, or being forced into, child labour. Meanwhile, organizations have little leeway to implement and oversee programming, as well as to ensure that child protection standards are met. On that note, Save the Children stated that UASC are at risk of being denied case management protocols or BID assessments ahead of return.

In May 2020, IOM reported a worrying use of forced returns by host countries, to allegedly mitigate the spread of COVID-19. UNICEF also warned that returns of UASC from the United States to Mexico and northern Central America, including Honduras, put these children at risks of violence and discrimination, as they are perceived to be carriers of the disease. To further explore the impact of the pandemic, Human Rights Watch carried out interviews with voluntary returnees who went back to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela when they found themselves without financial resources. Findings from these interviews suggest that these returnees are extremely vulnerable once back in their home country, and even more so when they have children. Upon arrival, returnees are sent to filthy quarantine centres lacking basic supplies and services, including infant formula, soap, medical care, water, and electricity, and where children face heightened protection risks.

More recently, in November 2020, UNICEF released a study comparing the impact of previous health crises on children and highlighting the negative effects of the current pandemic on children already experiencing vulnerabilities. While the study does not specifically look at child returnees, it does provide insight into how the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown may further jeopardize child returnees' reintegration.

Evidenced barriers and enablers to sustainable reintegration

“Various elements influence a person’s ability to re-integrate into their society and they are not dissimilar from the drivers that resulted in the decision to migrate in the first place. If these are not addressed, they will continue to result in migration as a coping mechanism to actual or perceived inadequate standard of living, insecurity and opportunities.”⁶⁸

With this statement, IOM emphasizes that drivers of migration may still be present upon return and challenge both the feasibility of return and the sustainability of reintegration. UNICEF guidance recommends adopting a comprehensive analysis of children’s migration experiences to better tailor needs and responses.⁶⁹ Key informants in Honduras and Ethiopia noted that, when children migrate due to insecurity, reintegration is unlikely to become sustainable. Similarly, experiences throughout the migration journey, tied to migration modalities, such as being a victim of trafficking, may impact a child’s reintegration through additional layers of vulnerability.⁷⁰ Lastly, return modalities and type of support available upon return shape reintegration. These aspects, which are not mutually exclusive, are further detailed and categorized under three modalities in a ECRE and Save the Children comparative study, and summarized below:⁷¹

- **Migration modalities:** regular, irregular (including smuggled), and children born to migrant parents in host countries. Those traveling alone, who have been or whose parents have been trafficked or exploited, are more vulnerable,⁷² while UASC, whose return may not be in their best interest and/nor desired by their legal guardian, may feel pushed to migrate again.^{73 74}
- **Return modalities:** AVRR or VHR, provided by IOM, or other assisted returns overseen by international and local NGOs or institutions. Forced returns and deportations are not in the child’s best interest and may further hinder reintegration.⁷⁵
- **Reintegration modalities:** regardless of their enrolment in voluntary return schemes, children can receive assistance upon return through international agencies, governmental institutions, CSOs, and NGOs, for example from IOM and GIZ. Such assistance can include in-kind support, access to services such as health care, or job training. While many organizations have mechanisms in place for the consideration of children’s specific needs, there are instances in which, depending on the context and situation, children returning with families are at risk of receiving support envisaging the family as a cohesive unit, which disregards their specific needs. In certain cases, children do not receive any support upon return, due to absence of entities providing such support, lack of awareness regarding the existence of assistance mechanisms or administrative challenges to secure this support. Aged-out minors, whose asylum request was denied or who lost their temporary protection, are often treated as adults despite their needs being closer to those of children.

⁶⁸ IOM, Enhancing Migrant Well-Being upon Return through an Integrated Approach to Reintegration, Global Compact Thematic Paper (2017), page 3.

⁶⁹ UNICEF, Access to Civil, Economic and Social Rights for Children in the Context of Irregular Migration, UNICEF Written Submission, 2012 Day Of General Discussion, Committee On The Rights Of The Child 2012.

⁷⁰ Samuel Hall and Save the Children, From Europe to Afghanistan (see footnote 55).

⁷¹ ECRE and Save the Children, Comparative Study on Practices in the Field of Return of Minors (2011).

⁷² IOM and UNICEF, Harrowing Journeys: Children and Youth on the Move Across the Mediterranean (2017).

⁷³ Research conducted by Samuel Hall for Save the Children in Afghanistan found several instances of children who reported that authorities abroad had not contacted their families prior to their return. Samuel Hall and Save the Children, From Europe to Afghanistan (see footnote 55).

⁷⁴ Such returns would, of course, go against IOM practices.

⁷⁵ Forced returns are however not in the best interest of the child.

To be sustainable, reintegration should encompass various factors across these three aspects. The Terre des Hommes study⁷⁶ highlights that, if a child knows the language spoken in the home country, attends school, where they can receive meals and health check-ups, has access to social and medical services but also to recreational activities, reintegration will be easier. Similarly, if a child's parents or caretakers have the resources to provide adequate care to their children and are aware of child rights and services accessible to them, this is conducive of sustainable reintegration for both the family and the child.⁷⁷ On the other hand, children who are stateless, including those who were born into migration, who face complicated family relationships, in the case of UASC whose families may not be able nor willing to welcome them back, or who have limited access to child protection services,⁷⁸ are likely to face challenges on the road to reintegration.

Children may not want to return to their country of origin because they feel that the host country provided better opportunities, enjoyed a positive schooling experience, established friendships and/or spent a significant amount of time in the host country.⁷⁹ The latter can also dictate the perception of child returnees' communities in the country of origin and, subsequently, how they welcome these children. The longer a child has been abroad, the less likely they have a social network to rely upon in their country of origin and/or community of return. This can create barriers to material and psychological support that are crucial to a child's development.⁸⁰ Child returnees are often subjected to discrimination, stigmatization, and bullying – particularly at school⁸¹ – in the country of origin, hindering their sense of well-being and belonging, and ultimately their reintegration.⁸² Majidi further found that Afghan returnees' experiences emphasize social networks' potential inability to support the reintegration process, thereby questioning the concept of a "community of return" that returnees would be able to settle back in.⁸³ Allsopp and Chase also elaborated on this aspect, connecting it to the perception of belonging: for instance child returnees may not feel that they belong to their country of origin, especially those who have lived most or all of their life abroad.⁸⁴

Finally, existing monitoring schemes often lack a long-term focus, beyond post-return monitoring, that is primarily project-centred and does not continue after the project has ended. This is often due to limited funding and in response to current donor interests and priorities, as well as to challenges in keeping track of returnees, who may move within a country of return, change phone numbers or migrate again. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) highlights the need for a **longitudinal approach**, pairing post-return with long-term monitoring of a child returnee's reintegration outcomes. Such monitoring would look at the effectiveness of the assistance received, when relevant, and at factors beyond the realm and aims of assistance.

⁷⁶ Terre des Hommes, Half Way Home (see footnote 59).

⁷⁷ Henrik Gomilkó et al., "Minors in Assisted Voluntary Return (and Reintegration) Situations in the Case of Austria" (2015).

⁷⁸ European Union and Agency for Fundamental Rights, Returning Unaccompanied Children in an Irregular Situation from the European Union: Fundamental Rights Considerations (2019).

⁷⁹ Terre des Hommes, Half Way Home (see footnote 59).

⁸⁰ IOM, Reintegration. Effective Approaches (2015).

⁸¹ Terre des Hommes, Half Way Home (see footnote 59).

⁸² Gomilkó et al., Minors in Assisted Voluntary Return (see footnote 77).

⁸³ Nassim Majidi, Assuming Reintegration, Experiencing Dislocation – Returns from Europe to Afghanistan, *International Migration* 59(2): 186–201 (April 2021).

⁸⁴ Jennifer Allsopp and Chase, "Best Interests, Durable Solutions and Belonging," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45(2): 293–311 (January 2019).

BOX 3. LEARNING FROM EXISTING IOM AND SAMUEL HALL DATA

A review of existing data, including IOM's RSS and databases from its case management system, MiMOSA, as well as past studies, explored specific enablers or barriers to reintegration. This review aimed at identifying where the Child Reintegration Monitoring Toolkit could complement existing indicators.

For example, comparing reintegration outcomes across three age groups in the RSS dataset revealed limited differences between age groups. The age groups included 219 children aged 14–17 (3%), 548 aged-out minors (7%) – namely who were minors upon return and 7,381 adults (91%). The RSS is not designed specifically for use with children, which is why the differences between such different age categories was not adequately captured, reinforcing the need for a toolkit that could provide further depth into the experiences of children and aged-out minors.

TABLE 4. PERCENTAGE OF INDIVIDUALS SCORING ABOVE 0.66 (1 = FULL REINTEGRATION) FOR EACH RSS SCORE, BY AGE GROUPS

	Adults	Aged-out minors	Children (14–17 years-old)
RSS composite score	50%	56%	52%
RSS economic reintegration score	29%	35%	24%
RSS social reintegration score	37%	44%	42%
RSS psychosocial reintegration score	80%	82%	86%

N.B.: The 0.66 threshold was selected as this is aligned with the threshold used for case management purposes by IOM as opposed to the 0.5 threshold used for final monitoring assessments for sustainable reintegration; given that the data is used to consider children's reintegration, this more conservative approach was deemed most appropriate.

This RSS data analysis identified several indicators showing differences between children and adults:

- **Economic dimension.** *The household's financial status* and its impact in terms of nutrition, expenses directed towards children and negative coping mechanisms such as child labour. The analysis of IOM's RSS data highlighted that children within the 14–17 age category appear to be the least well-off in terms of economic well-being. According to the RSS' scoring system, only 24 per cent of children are found in the top tier (dimensional score of 0.66 and above), compared to 29 per cent of adults and 35 per cent of aged-out minors, with the latter reporting lower levels of debts and better access to employment. The RSS further found that 40 per cent of child returnees were currently working, including possible cases of child labour.⁸⁵ These figures suggest both that children are often in poor families and that there are limited opportunities for even older children to effectively contribute to household finances.
- **Social dimension.** *Access to essential needs and services*, including documentation, water, education, health, and housing. Both children and aged-out minors are slightly less likely to be able to access basic needs and services such as documentation, education, water, health, and adequate housing despite scoring higher than adults for social reintegration. In terms of documentation, for instance, children and aged-out minors have a significantly lower rate of IDs possession compared to adults.

⁸⁵ See footnote 57 for further details on the distinction between child labour and child work as per the ILO.

A lack of IDs can hinder access to both basic and reintegration services, such as employment, justice, and social services. Aged-out minors further appear particularly vulnerable with regards to access to education, with 14 per cent of them reporting poor to very poor access to education.

- **Psychosocial dimension. Psychosocial vulnerabilities.** According to the RSS, children have more limited social networks than their parents, being less likely to participate in social events (42% saying very often or often), confirming a more restricted social capital on their part, which may reflect cases where they are not reintegrating but de facto integrating for the first time. Beyond RSS findings, the literature review suggests that all age groups are vulnerable to psychosocial issues ranging from mental health struggles and isolation to family conflict, discrimination, difficulties concentrating and feeling unsupported. In certain instances, for example in terms of sense of belonging, children seem to be better off than adults, but a higher rate of children in the RSS reported wishing to receive specialized psychosocial support upon arrival (33% versus 26% of adults). These issues are however difficult to assess without a qualitative counterpart to the survey to further delve into; children may report feeling that they belong in their country of origin or community of return, but perhaps this is in opposition to bullying and discrimination they suffered in the host country. Similarly, adults may feel shame around acknowledging that they need psychosocial support, leading to underreporting on that matter.

Assessing reintegration through the lens of intersectionality

The literature identifies multifaceted factors as enablers or barriers to reintegration and considers the entire migration cycle⁸⁶ (pre-departure, journey, and return) when assessing reintegration outcomes. Children face various vulnerabilities, often correlated to their age, sex, disability, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, and related social constructs.⁸⁷ These vulnerabilities tend to overlap and interact with each other, which is defined as intersectionality.⁸⁸

***MIGRANTS IN VULNERABLE SITUATIONS:** "Vulnerable migrants are migrants who are unable to effectively enjoy their human rights, are at increased risk of violations and abuse and who, accordingly, are entitled to call on a duty bearer's heightened duty of care."⁸⁹*

With this in mind, and throughout the design of the monitoring toolkit and interpretation of pilot findings, the approach taken acknowledges that various combinations of factors determine children's vulnerabilities. Using this lens, Samuel Hall sought to avoid the identification of specific groups of children as vulnerable and to acknowledge various levels of vulnerability within groups of children sharing similar characteristics, for instance related to age or sex.

***INTERSECTIONALITY:** "Conceptual framework for understanding the ways in which aspects of human identity (e.g., gender, race, socioeconomic status) simultaneously interact and intersect to*

⁸⁶ IOM, Handbook on Protection and Assistance (see footnote 32).

⁸⁷ Terre des Hommes, Half Way Home (see footnote 59).

⁸⁸ Kimberle Crenshaw initiated the concept of intersectionality as a means of understanding "the ways in which human identity (e.g. gender, race, socioeconomic status) simultaneously interact and intersect to shape lived experience and life chances through interlocking systems of bias and inequality that exist at the macro-structural level (i.e. sexism, racism, classism)." See: Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" (1989), page 31.

⁸⁹ IOM, Handbook on Protection and Assistance (see footnote 32).

shape lived experience and life chances through interlocking systems of bias and inequality that exist at the macro social-structural level (i.e., sexism, racism, classism)."⁹⁰

Ravnbøl, and Nadan and Korbin studied child vulnerability against the intersectionality framework to examine discrimination against children.⁹¹ Ravnbøl's work, in particular, highlighted that age, combined with sex or gender, ethnicity, disability, and national and economic statuses are key determinants of *intersectional discrimination*.⁹² This type of discrimination is often embedded in laws and policies (*structural intersectionality*), but also in political and public participation forums (*political and representational intersectionality*). Acknowledging that intersectional discrimination operates in various spheres allows for a better understanding of children's vulnerabilities: how and under which circumstances they arise, as well as how they are influenced by socioeconomic and cultural characteristics. While often superficially explored, these aspects are critical in assessing and understanding reintegration outcomes, notably when it comes to issues disproportionately affecting child returnees based on their age or sex, such as child or early marriage, child work or labour and withdrawal from schools.

BOX 4. GENDER AND REINTEGRATION

The case studies and FGDs highlight gendered risks, in particular around sexual abuse or trafficking during migration. While boys are not excluded from this phenomenon, this was spontaneously raised in multiple qualitative interviews with regards to specific experiences being recounted. This can impact not just girls who are mistreated, but also children born of such experiences. For example, in Nigeria, one teacher participating in an FGD detailed:

"She said she went to Saudi Arabia for a job as a maid, she spent almost seven years there. But in staying there, she had a baby from maybe one of the bosses. After some time, like four or five years after she had the baby, one thing leads to another and she was brought back to Nigeria. She stayed with one of her aunts within the area where I was staying, so I met her, talked to her. [...] All she has to do here is slave work again, working for somebody who is selling food. So, I now look at the baby that is close to five years old. You can't allow the baby to be staying with you alone because if she puts the baby down, the baby will not stay. The baby wants to stay with her mum. So, I asked her: this child is grown enough, let me take this child to school. [...] So, one day I now took the girl to her school, the girl did not leave me. I said go and play with others. Maybe she didn't understand my language: she will just be looking, stay with me and be looking at me alone. Go and play with them, I said, but, she did not go."

⁹⁰ Crenshaw, Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex (see footnote 88).

⁹¹ Camilla Ida Ravnbøl, "Intersectional Discrimination Against Romani Children and Anti-Discrimination Measures to Address Child Trafficking" (UNICEF, 2009). See also Yochay Nadan and Jill E. Korbin, "Cultural Context, Intersectionality, and Child Vulnerability," *Childhood Vulnerability Journal* (2019).

⁹² Ibid.

2.2 IN THEIR OWN VOICES: CHILD RETURNEES' REINTEGRATION EXPERIENCES

Findings for this section are drawn from 176 interviews with child returnees (30 case studies and 146 quantitative surveys) and aged-out minors between the ages of 7 and 21 years old, including 68 per cent of AVRR beneficiaries or belonging to households enrolled in an AVRR scheme.

This section highlights drivers of migration specific to each country, which are often still present upon return and create continued challenges for reintegration. The situation within each country, from one area to another, poses different challenges. This is the case for instance in Tegucigalpa or San Pedro Sula (Honduras) and Dire Dawa (Ethiopia), which host a significant proportion of street children.⁹³ In the case of Honduras, these cities are also particularly prone to gang violence and child murders. This section addresses child returnees' experiences across countries, highlighting suggestions for inclusion in the Toolkit and programming priorities depending on country- and child-specific factors.

The findings in Table 5 are not representative of the situation in each country but depict emerging trends from multiple data sources. Considering each country's singularity is key to showcasing the diversity of experiences, to contextualize and interpret findings and emphasize the need for localized and individualized reintegration approaches.

TABLE 5. RECURRING THEMES REPORTED BY CHILD RETURNEES AND AGED-OUT MINORS UPON RETURN, BY COUNTRY OF STUDY

COUNTRY	THEMES	DETAILS
Ethiopia	Economic poverty Addiction Homelessness Child labour UASC	Child returnees in Dire Dawa have often transited through Djibouti, where they faced homelessness and addictions to khat glue, and fuel. Others were living in Saudi Arabia or Yemen, sometimes with their parents who had secured work there, or they had themselves found work there, often as domestic workers.
Georgia	Health issues Migration	Families often appear to migrate to seek health care that is not available, or available at a prohibited cost. Once in the host country, they apply for asylum. It can take up to several years for their application to be processed and very likely denied, and they often had additional children in the host country, who are at risk of facing a language barrier and psychological distress from being returned to an environment they do not know.
Honduras	Economic poverty Gang violence Migration Transit countries	Children's migration experience is often short; they are caught in a third country (transit country), such as Guatemala or Mexico, or shortly after arrival in the United States. They typically spend some time in a migrant centre before being sent back to Honduras. UASC arrested or found by organizations in Guatemala, Mexico and the United States are accompanied at the border, where they are at risk of ending up in the streets if family tracing and reunification are not undertaken.
Iraq	Threats from tribes,	Upon return, children often struggle with psychosocial issues. They often spent

⁹³ See for example IOM, "A Study on Child Migrants from Ethiopia," December 2020, which details the situation of many migrant children before and after migration abroad, including Dire Dawa.

	militias, or terrorist groups Migration	several years in the host country, where they went to school. Very few of them were UASC.
Nigeria	Economic poverty Child labour UASC Transit countries	Children migrated with their families or alone and were identified in transit countries such as Libya, Algeria, the Niger or Burkina Faso, before returning, often voluntarily. Several of them had their education interrupted during the migration journey.

2.2.1 OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED TO STRENGTHEN CHILD RETURN MONITORING

Empowering children to provide their perceptions at times their voice may not be heard

Speaking with children is essential to provide perceptions other than those of adults. Giving children a voice is critical. In many cases the children who took part felt that they did not have any control over the return decision, and struggle to reintegrate in a country of origin that they may not know. Children’s perceptions are often disregarded by both legal guardians and governments, despite past studies showing that the inclusion or exclusion of children into the decision-making process leading to a return plays a significant role in their reintegration. Less than half of surveyed children reported that they had felt involved in the decision to return, despite 62 per cent of them agreeing with it, but these results tremendously vary between countries, albeit not significantly between AVRR and non-AVRR respondents. Anecdotally, children in Ethiopia (53%), Georgia (63%) and Nigeria (67%) stated that they had been involved in the decision to return, while only 21 per cent and 26 per cent of child returnees in Honduras and Iraq said so.

“They spoke in Spanish with my mother, but the decision to return to Honduras was imposed [on us], we did not have the opportunity to choose. As an immigrant, I didn’t feel respected. They did not let us talk to a judge to explain why we had to leave Honduras. My mother did not understand she was signing a deportation order, now we cannot even apply for a tourist visa for 10 years. [...] I did not agree to return to Honduras because we had nothing in the country. My mother had sold the house. We had to move to a town to live in a house my uncle owns. I was afraid that people would laugh at us.”

Honduras, female child returnee, 16 years old upon return.

Host countries: Mexico and the United States (two trips)

When asked whether they had agreed to the return decision (regardless of involvement in the decision), with the exception of Iraq, the majority of children across the targeted countries said that they had agreed to return – although qualitative findings highlight more complicated stories and perceptions. Findings are more significantly tied in the case of Honduras and Ethiopia, where just over half of respondents (56% and 53% respectively) reported agreeing with the decision to return. In Iraq, a child called the field researcher after a survey carried out remotely, to tell him that she felt she should say that it was also her decision to come back, because her father was in the room when the survey took place, but that she had not wanted to return to Iraq. A child returnee in Honduras elaborated on why she felt that she had not been consulted throughout the decision-making process. She recalled that neither she nor her mother willingly returned to their country of origin – her mother was asked to sign by Mexican authorities a paper that was not introduced to her as a deportation order. This suggests that, in some cases, when returns are deemed to be the result of returnees’ willingness to go back, the latter may actually perceive the process in a very different way.

When asked if there was anything further that they wished to tell us, children who responded to this open-ended question often spoke about their needs for support and reflected on their migration experiences.

I feel unhappy anytime I remembered the way they threatened my mum using gun in Libya.

(Quantitative survey, female returnee in Nigeria)

I am living in destitute condition. I have nothing to eat, I need job, I have no even cleaning materials.

(Quantitative survey, female returnee in Ethiopia)

Here in Iraq, there is no comfortable life, and I can't go to my school regularly because I am afraid when I go out because before awhile they got a threaten letter.

(Quantitative survey, male returnee, Iraq)

"There was better transportation system in Greece." The interviewer added, "The respondent was on the last year of secondary school and had difficulties to go to tutors, because there is no proper transportation service in Kutaisi (Georgia)"

(Quantitative survey, female returnee, Georgia)

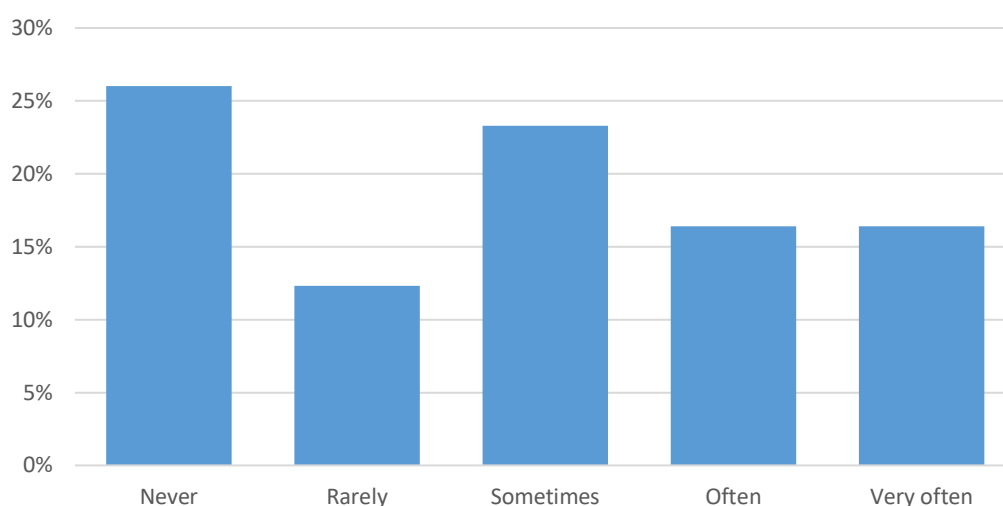
"During the process of migrating I suffered a lot, my feet hurt, and I suffered from headaches"

(Quantitative survey, male returnee, Honduras)

Recognizing child returnees' limited social ecosystems, capitalize on their immediate family networks

Across countries, child returnees' ecosystem, namely the key people in children's environment, comprises the nuclear family cell and rarely goes beyond the individuals composing it or people within this immediate network, who are geographically close and with whom children regularly interact. This ecosystem is critical to ensuring children's reintegration, providing them with an emotional and financial safety net contingent to their stability and well-being. UASC may lack access to this network upon return, either because they no longer have any family who can take them in, or reunification is not deemed in their best interest. In such cases, alternative care for reintegration is essential.

Figure 5. Participation in social events within the community
(n=138, with 8 additional respondents noting that they have returned since COVID-19 began)



Almost all child returnees interviewed (98.6%) live with a parent or guardian. Yet, child returnees' ecosystem appears to be minimal, focused at the household level, with variations across countries. Some children or aged-out minors identified friends, neighbours, NGO personnel involved in return and reintegration programmes, or teachers, while the vast majority cited their parents, siblings and, in a few cases, relatives they live with, as the people closest to them and providing them with support. Several child returnees in Ethiopia and Nigeria highlighted the role of teachers, religious figures and social workers, but frequently categorized these stakeholders as "secondary," in other words not within their closest network. This is reflected in the limited social interactions some children have, in particular in Georgia, Iraq and Nigeria. This poses an additional concern in the case of children who are not happy in their current environment (14 respondents out of 146).

BOX 2. RETURNS TO FRAGILE ENVIRONMENTS AND STATES

Children returning to fragile contexts and states will generally face additional challenges to reintegration. Such environments pose expected challenges – more difficult economic situations, higher likelihood of violence, additional factors conducive to remigration – as well as knock-on effects from these. For example, researchers have underlined that "communities in fragile countries or countries in conflict, including in

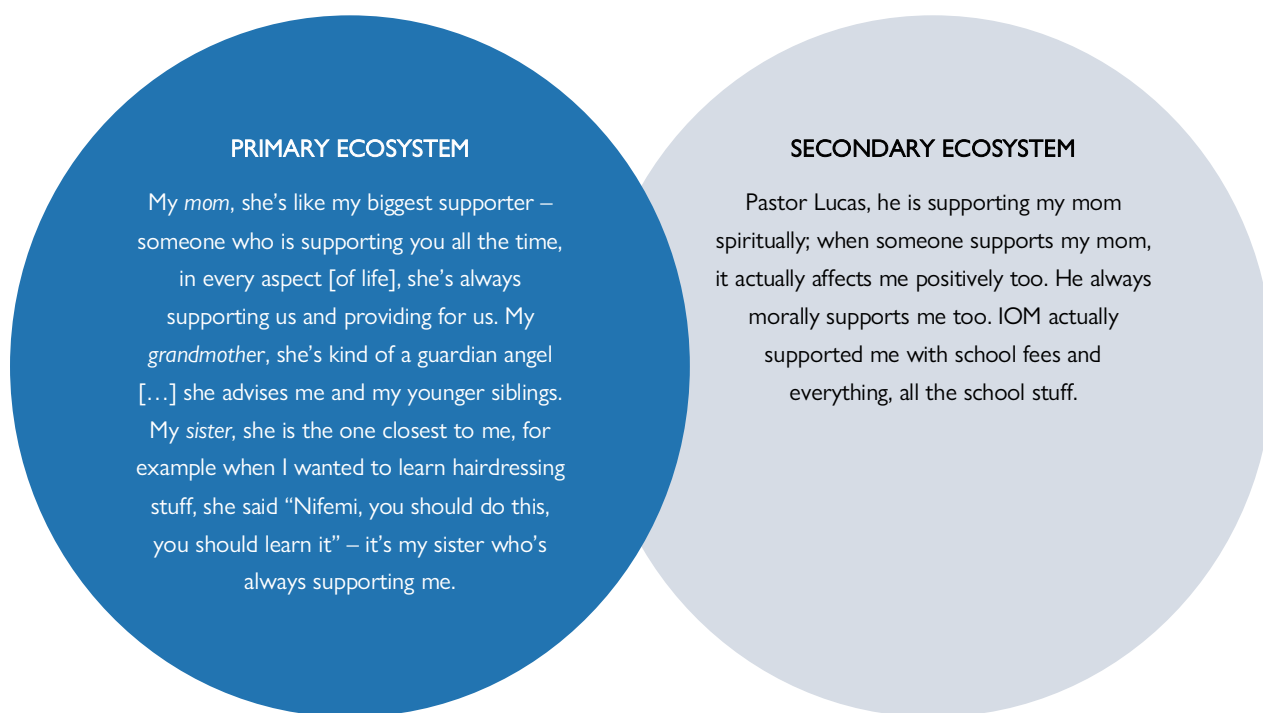
Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia, face challenges with absorbing returnees in large numbers, let alone offering services for all their citizens.”⁹⁴

Considering the broad needs of returning children to sustainably reintegrate, this poses a real challenge to organizations wishing to support them; providing support specifically to child returnees may generate further tension within communities and can contribute to further stigma against them. In Iraq, close to 40 per cent of children interviewed already felt they were treated differently due to their returnee status and 74 per cent do not feel safe outside their home. Stakeholders must therefore embed conflict sensitivity within their support and referrals approaches, to ensure that child returnees are not perceived, erroneously, as being better off or favoured than host community children with equally significant support needs.

Listening to children detailing their ecosystems (Figure 6) underlines the limited nature of the primary ecosystem, centred on immediate family, close relatives, and friends, especially in more dangerous contexts. While teachers, social workers and other community members were occasionally mentioned, they were very rarely mentioned as being part of it. This calls for a recognition that efforts in child reintegration may need to focus on this limited ecosystem, and the need for a more targeted child focus in community-level reintegration efforts for the latter to be supportive of them.

Figure 6. Children's ecosystems in their own words

NIGERIA | O., girl, 16 years old, returned from Libya



⁹⁴ Anna Knoll, Pauline Veron, and Niklas Mayer, “A Sustainable Development Approach to Return and Reintegration: Dilemmas, Choices and Possibilities,” Making Policies Work - Discussion Paper No. 291 (ECDPM, 2021), p. 6–7.

ETHIOPIA | A., boy, 16 years old, returned from Djibouti (UASC)

PRIMARY ECOSYSTEM

The most important people in my life are my [grandparents]. I don't know my mother, so I see my grandmother as my biological mother. I don't remember how old I was, but [my family] told me that [my mother] left when I was 2 years old; my grandma replaced [her] and tries to make me as happy as she can. My grandfather [...] helped me grow up. I see him as a father because my father married another woman and gave me to his parents. They do what I need [...], I love them so much for that.

SECONDARY ECOSYSTEM

From the community, I usually interact with *friends and neighbours*. [My friends and I] we grew up together. We usually get together here around our home and play. They also look out for me and asked about me when I got sick.

I also have a good relationship with our neighbour, because sometimes they economically support us, by providing us with money, vegetables, or food

HONDURAS | A., 17 years old, girl, returned from Mexico and the U.S. (two migration attempts)

PRIMARY ECOSYSTEM

My mom and my two brothers.

They keep me company. We have problems like everyone else but they keep me company and we have learned to be together.

Being originally from Tegucigalpa, *I do not have friends in Danlí* where we currently live. I'd rather stay inside the house with my family.

SECONDARY ECOSYSTEM

I hang out with *my aunt, my cousin, my boyfriend and my friends.*

I like visiting Tegucigalpa, like today, because I get to see my friends here.

I have a friend in the village but I don't trust her very much. In this country you never know who you can trust. I don't want to get involved in anything dangerous.

GEORGIA | G., boy, 17 years old, returned from Germany

PRIMARY ECOSYSTEM

My mother helps me in every way, she supports me, there is nothing that I cannot talk about with my mother, and I feel that she supports me and is always by my side, even though we are far away from each other. My *father* also supports me, he is by my side. We communicate well with each other and he helps me with my studies, or if I need something. The rest are my *closest friends*, with whom I spend most of my time. We have shared interests, in studying or life in general. We understand each other.

SECONDARY ECOSYSTEM

There are no such people [who are around me or with who I communicate daily], mainly the ones I have already written. There are a lot of people besides them, but I just can't think of particular people for now.

IRAQ | A., boy, 18 years old, returned from Sweden (UASC)

PRIMARY ECOSYSTEM

The most important persons are my dad, who died, and my brother who died [as well] – he loved me so much and never allowed me to be sad, he did everything I wanted.

SECONDARY ECOSYSTEM

The third most important person is my cousin, he understands my suffering, and my sister, who takes care of me, asks about me all the time - she is the person who I can tell about what makes me sad or is annoying me without any fear.

Operationalizing children's voices to influence programming

The adoption of the best interests principle and design of its BID for child returnees have paved the way for a more child-centred approach to assistance.⁹⁵ Several frameworks, listed under [Section 2.1](#), further recognize children as distinct rights holders and recommend the adoption of processes and procedures related to child migrants. Findings from surveys and case studies with child returnees confirm that approaches specifically targeting children are key as children's needs do not systematically align with household needs. Exploring children's self-assessed priorities or untying their stories to evaluate areas of need will be key to designing and implementing successful programming.

A 14-year-old boy in Honduras, currently living in Tegucigalpa with his mother and sister, was uprooted twice throughout the migration journey and upon return. His mother had sold the family house to pay the coyotes⁹⁶ and they were unable to go back to their area of origin. This child suffered psychological distress during the migration journey – in Mexico, he spent six months living with the coyote while his mother worked to gather more money to pay for the coyote to take them into the United States – as well as when he was held at the detention centre in the United States. In addition, his mother, who is the head of household, has been unable to find work upon returning to Honduras. In this case, reintegration assistance should, at first glance, incorporate a psychosocial component but also focus on providing economic support to the head of household, to enhance her ability to cater to the needs of her children.

"I was taken away from my mother so that I could get medical help. I think I got the flu; I was very sick and had a bad fever. I don't like to talk about that."

Honduras, male child returnee, 14 years old upon return.

Host countries: Mexico and the United States.

Another example of a Nigerian 16-year-old boy who received economic support through an AVRR scheme suggests, from the way he recollected his story, that he likely needs psychosocial assistance as well. He remained quiet and looked visibly worried on a few occasions during the interview and seems to have a limited support network, for instance he repeated several times that no one in the community is helping his family. These findings resonate with the intersectionality lens, which envisages multifaceted factors as enablers or barriers to reintegration and considers the entire migration cycle to understand reintegration outcomes. This study does not significantly highlight variables, such as sex and age, as key determinants of post-return vulnerabilities, with trends on these varying by context, although certain country-level trends have emerged. In Honduras for instance, where child returnees have often spent time in detention centres in the transit or destination country, sometimes separated from their loved ones, psychosocial needs may vary than for Iraqi or Georgian child returnees who spent several years living in a European country and for whom distressing experiences may look different.

⁹⁵ IOM, Handbook on Protection and Assistance (see footnote 32).

⁹⁶ Coyote is the colloquial term for human smugglers in Latin America.

2.2.2 CONSTRAINTS TO ADDRESS

The strong impact of households' economic struggles on children's well-being

The vast majority of child returnees (86%) reported that their household's income is not enough to cover the needs of its members. Honduras, Iraq, and Nigeria scored particularly negatively, with close to all children in each of these contexts identifying their household's resources as insufficient. Those who seem particularly vulnerable to economic challenges were not enrolled in an AVRR scheme.⁹⁷ Close to three quarters of parents and legal guardians reported that their household is indebted and pointed that returning to their country of origin had negatively impacted access to food. This is the case in Nigeria and Iraq, where two thirds of respondents have had less, or worse quality food since their return.

"My favourite thing right now is my grocery store and living with my grandma. I feel great about having work and being able to make my own money. And I also feel happy about being able to go to school and to go to the health centre when I get sick."

Ethiopia, male child returnee, 14 years old upon return.

Host country: Djibouti.

Out of surveyed children, only a few are engaging in child work or child labour. In certain cases, for instance for aged-out minors or older children, engaging in income-generating activities is essential to their sense of well-being and economic peace of mind. An adolescent in Ethiopia, who returned from Djibouti a few years ago, emphasized support received from PAD as critical to his well-being. PAD supported him with opening a grocery store, at which he works when he is not at school. Even when not leading to child labour, familial economic difficulties can cause other problems: one young Nigerian boy explained at the end of the quantitative survey: "My parents couldn't afford to pay my school fees since my return to Nigeria and I am not happy because I am not attending school."

Fragile social stability outcomes, further compounded by COVID-19

When asked whether they were able to engage in social activities within the community, such as attending events, visiting friends, or playing sports, surveyed children shared varying accounts. Ethiopian children reported high rates of occasional or regular participation in social gatherings and activities (90%) while Georgian and Iraqi children appeared to be isolated – 60 per cent and 90 per cent of children in Georgia and Iraq never or rarely engage in social activities. This could be due to stricter restrictions in Iraq, parents or caregivers being reluctant to let children mingle, or the fact that such spaces may be less available in Iraq, regardless of the pandemic. Children in other countries may have been unable to distinguish between the pre-COVID-19 era and now, and a majority of Iraqi children returned to Iraq in 2020. In Iraq as well, less than half of surveyed children reported having friends within the community of return, while nearly all other children across countries reported that they did.

Most children interviewed reported having access to documentation, with the vast majority (85%) owning at least one form of ID—passport, birth certificate or national ID card. Return modalities, sex and age do not account for variations into the possession of IDs. In terms of services, a total of 60 per cent of children interviewed have access to formal health-care services if they need (with the lowest numbers in Honduras), although the quality and costs were both noted as inhibiting access. As for education, only 62 per cent of child returnees interviewed are currently going to school, with responses varying across contexts. While 90

⁹⁷ This can also indicatively point to AVRR programmes working as planned, with those who have benefited from it less vulnerable as a result of AVRR.

per cent of respondent children go to school in Georgia (remotely, at the current time), only 42 per cent do so in Nigeria. For those who do not go to school, their household's lack of financial resources and/or refusal to pursue their education account for the main explanatory factors.

While abroad, only 43 per cent of child returnees interviewed reported that they went to school, which likely plays a role into their reintegration outcomes – reflecting actions needed before return, to ensure educational access after return. In Ethiopia for instance, only 23 per cent of children interviewed went to school while abroad, but migration is often tied to economic reasons – several of the children who took part in case studies worked, or their parents worked, in Djibouti or in the Gulf Peninsula (Yemen, Saudi Arabia), which constrained access to education. Similarly, only one third of Honduran children interviewed went to school while abroad, but case studies suggest that some children spent their limited time abroad in detention centres. Overall, sex does not appear to be a differentiator of school enrolment, but age plays a role; younger children (10–13, 56%) are more likely than older ones (14–18, 29%) to be enrolled in school while abroad and upon return (71% of 10–13 years old vs. 51% of the older group).

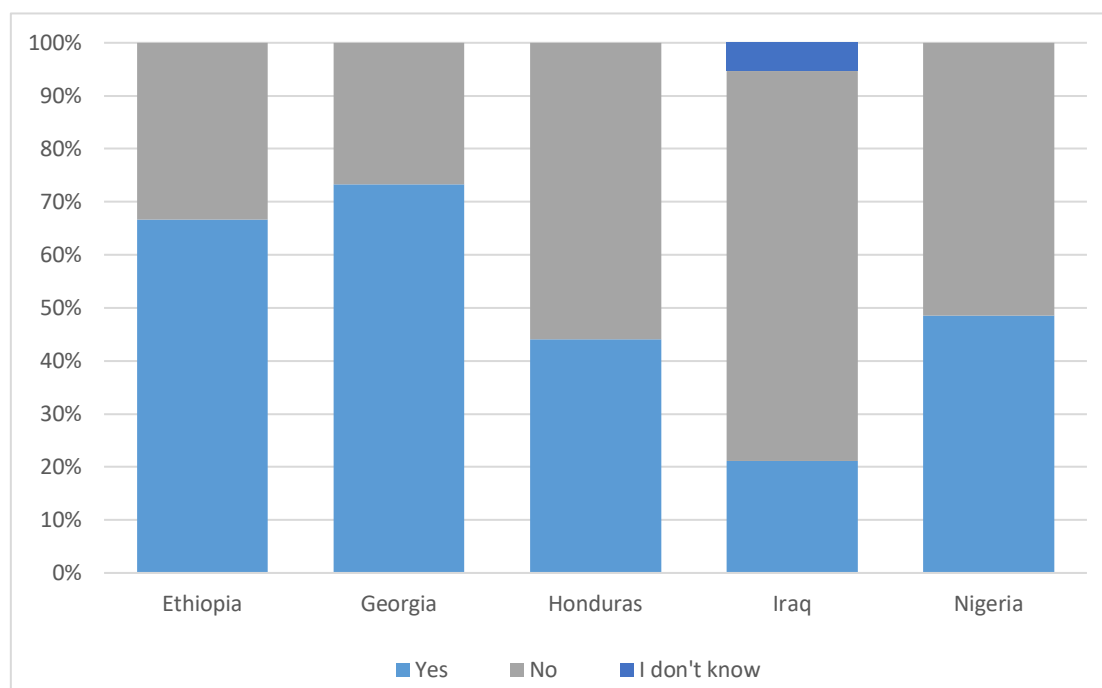
For children who were able to enrol in school while abroad, only half of those had their studies recognized once back in their country of origin. In Iraq, none of them were able to restart school from the grade they had reached while abroad. A key informant in Iraq mentioned that the government sought to open a school dedicated to child returnees, but further investigation revealed that the project was never launched. Education resumption is critical in generating a sense of well-being among child returnees. COVID-19 has posed further challenges in countries where school has been suspended and children were unable to continue going to school, or to return to school upon return. A few child returnees emphasized the role played by school as vectors of socialization that create positive life events, such as when they enrolled in school contests or went to the library. Several child returnees currently enrolled in school further mentioned their friends from school when asked to draw their ecosystem.

Divergent perceptions of belonging

When asked whether they feel comfortable and safe outside their house, child returnee responses differed by country (Figure 7). The majority of respondents in Iraq (74%), Honduras (57%) and Nigeria (52%) reported not, while this feeling was less prevalent in Ethiopia (30%) and Georgia (26%). Nigeria (27%) and Ethiopia (13%) had the largest proportions of child returnees among respondents unhappy with their current living arrangements. These findings could be tied to initial reasons for migration still being present upon return, for instance insecurity and gang violence in Honduras or threats posed by paramilitary groups in Iraq. Most child returnees interviewed (89%) however said they were happy with the people they live with, but this might be tied to parents or legal guardians being present or nearby throughout the survey or case study. The majority of child returnees who participated in the study live with a parent or legal guardian, including those who migrated unaccompanied. When the survey was administered remotely,⁹⁸ field researchers could not identify whether parent/guardian presence disrupted the answer to this question.

⁹⁸ 86 of 146 interviews were conducted remotely.

Figure 7. Do you feel comfortable and safe outside your house?



In Iraq and Nigeria, a larger proportion of children interviewed – 39 per cent and 47 per cent respectively – feel that they are treated differently due to their returnee status. Most child returnees who participated in case studies did not, however, report facing discrimination upon return, but discrimination cannot be excluded, since it may be difficult for children to single out or identify discrimination as a conscious behaviour from community members, related to their migratory background. A child in Nigeria indicated that she might be facing discrimination when she mentioned that her friends’ parents did not want to let them come to her house to play, while another, in Ethiopia, seemed to suggest that she is her friends’ last choice to play with, which means they only play with her when no one else is around. Another child in Nigeria reported facing mistreatment at school, due to her socioeconomic status and her household’s occasional inability to pay school fees. Community members’, including children’s, attitudes or discussions may however be wrongly interpreted. A child in Honduras said that she felt shame upon returning to her country of origin, because she thought she had failed, which could have prompted her to jump to conclusions and identify certain behaviours as being negative and discriminatory, and directly connected to her failed migration attempt.

“Since I came back, I began going to school. I started attending Pride of Faith Academy and I started from SS 1⁹⁹ instead of SS 2; they put me back in SS 1 since I hadn’t gone to school for a whole year [...]. The teachers there, because my school has a majority of rich children, they bully us because we are from poor homes, they treat us differently, they mistreat us and send us out of class when we don’t pay our school fee. Most times I cry.”

Nigeria, female child returnee, 15 years old upon return.
 Host country: Libya.

⁹⁹ Secondary School Grade 1.

"[do you think that people have treated you differently because you lived abroad?] No, I do not have such people in my close circle, nor would I have relationships with such people, who behave like this."

Georgia, female child returnee, 11 years old upon return.

Host country: Germany.

Regarding their sense of belonging in the community they currently live in, child returnees in Ethiopia, Georgia and Honduras were far more likely to say they feel that they belong. This was however less obvious in Iraq and Nigeria, where 42 per cent and 39 per cent of surveyed children said that they do not feel they belong. Survey results however suggest that return modalities do not appear to play a role in whether children are more or less likely to experience a sense of belonging. In Ethiopia and Nigeria, child returnees, particularly those who engaged in child work or child labour, depicted their migratory experience as shattering, and often welcomed the return to their country of origin. Beyond trafficking, which can lead to sexual abuse, prostitution, unwanted pregnancies and risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections, some children recalled migration experiences that made them welcome the return to their home country. This was for instance the case for Nigerian children whose parents or themselves worked as domestic workers in Libya.

"I did not feel that I belonged over there. There's a very common thing there, it is racial discrimination, like we are a black person, and they are white. The way they react when they see black [people] around them, you can't feel that you belong. They are not that friendly. They used to be harsh at times, before you see someone who smiles at you, maybe that person understands that it's the same blood flowing in us."

Nigeria, female child returnee, 14 years old upon return.

Host country: Libya.

The environment in the country of origin may diminish the sense of belonging, for instance when children have little interactions with the outside world and struggle to make friends. In Honduras, many of the older children reported that they did not really interact with other children, with one of them stating that you "cannot trust anyone here" and another saying that she wants to stay "out of trouble."

Case studies nuance this picture, underlining that the length of child returnees' migration journey, their status (UASC versus accompanied), their age upon undertaking the migration journey, their experience in the host country, may all contribute to a stronger or weaker sense of belonging when returning to their home country. In Honduras, for example, none of the children interviewed had spent significant time abroad and for many this time had been spent primarily in detention centres; on the other hand, several children returning to Iraq, Ethiopia, and Georgia had built lives abroad, going to school, speaking different languages, and their notion of home may thus have changed more significantly.

"I was worried, we did not want to return to Honduras. My parents sold everything and then they didn't have access to decent employment. At the first opportunity I wanted to move to the United States. On the second trip, I didn't know what was worse: trying again or staying in Honduras."

Honduras, female child returnee, 16 years old upon return.

Host countries: Mexico and the United States (two trips).

Language in particular plays a key role. In Iraq, for example, where Arabic and Kurdish are the main languages, some interviewed children had forgotten how to write in either language. In other cases, families resettled elsewhere than their area of origin, for example initially from a southern, Arabic-speaking province they moved to KRI upon return, where Kurdish is the primary language taught at school, making school difficult. While 'only' 8 per cent of children interviewed did not speak one of the common languages where they lived, an additional 14 per cent could neither read nor write the language and 8 per cent could only do one of the two. In the short term, this makes school – a key vector of potential belonging for children – difficult -and in the longer term this fundamentally impacts children's ability for sustainable reintegration.

Concerns around children's psycho-social well-being

Children were asked how often they experience feelings of anger, sadness, fear, stress, loneliness, low self-esteem, and difficulties concentrating. Iraqi children seem to be the ones struggling the most, with anger (69%), low self-esteem (53%), fear (42%), stress (37%), and loneliness (32%). In other countries, one or several sentiments often prevailed over others, such as anger (50%), issues with concentrating (38%) and stress (26%) in Honduras, and low self-worth (42%) in Nigeria. While very few child returnees interviewed throughout case studies actively voiced psychosocial support as critical to their reintegration, they touched upon it – directly and indirectly – on multiple occasions, and FGD participants and key informants alike emphasized it as a primary need upon return. The fact that none of the child returnees explicitly requested psychosocial support could be related to cultural taboos or to a lack of awareness of such services. A testimony from a child in Honduras further highlights how critical psychosocial services are at times of heightened vulnerability. She reported being sexually abused by a coyote once in Mexico and emphasized the work performed by DINAF centre in Honduras to help her deal with the subsequent psychological distress.

BOX 6. CASE STUDY | PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT | 17-YEAR-OLD GIRL IN HONDURAS

A. travelled as an UASC and was raped by the coyote she had paid to cross from Guatemala to Mexico. She found her way to migration authorities in Mexico and asked to be returned to Honduras.

"I stayed for four days at the migration office in Mexico, and I received the basic things, things to clean myself and food. That place was okay, it is called Siglo XXI, and I received good attention. I was asked if I wanted asylum or to return to my country. They were very clear with what they told me, and I decided to come back to Honduras. I was sad because of what had happened, and I only wanted to return home fast. I arrived in San Pedro Sula and stayed for three weeks at the DINAF centre, where the attention was excellent, while they contacted my relatives to come pick me up. They helped me overcome the abuse I went through in Mexico."

In line with guidelines around conducting research with children,¹⁰⁰ throughout this study, field researchers observed children's body language for signs of stress, distress, and fatigue, which usually go together with a challenging migration experience and difficulties upon return. These children may struggle to formulate answers to the questions that are asked of them – this was the case with a boy in Iraq, who engages in child labour and often declined to respond – but observing their behaviour is critical in emphasizing the acute needs of such children. Children's voices will be of the utmost importance. Furthermore, parents, legal guardians or community leaders may identify, and report, priority needs that do not respond to children 's assessment of

¹⁰⁰ Save the Children, Save the Children Psychological First Aid Training Manual for Child Practitioners (2013).

their top priorities. This is the case for family reunification – it may be wanted by legal guardians but may not be requested by UASC. This is particularly relevant in Honduras, where sexual abuse or domestic violence within the family circle is one of the main drivers of migration, but also in countries such as Nigeria or Ethiopia, which have a large proportion of UASC among child migrants.

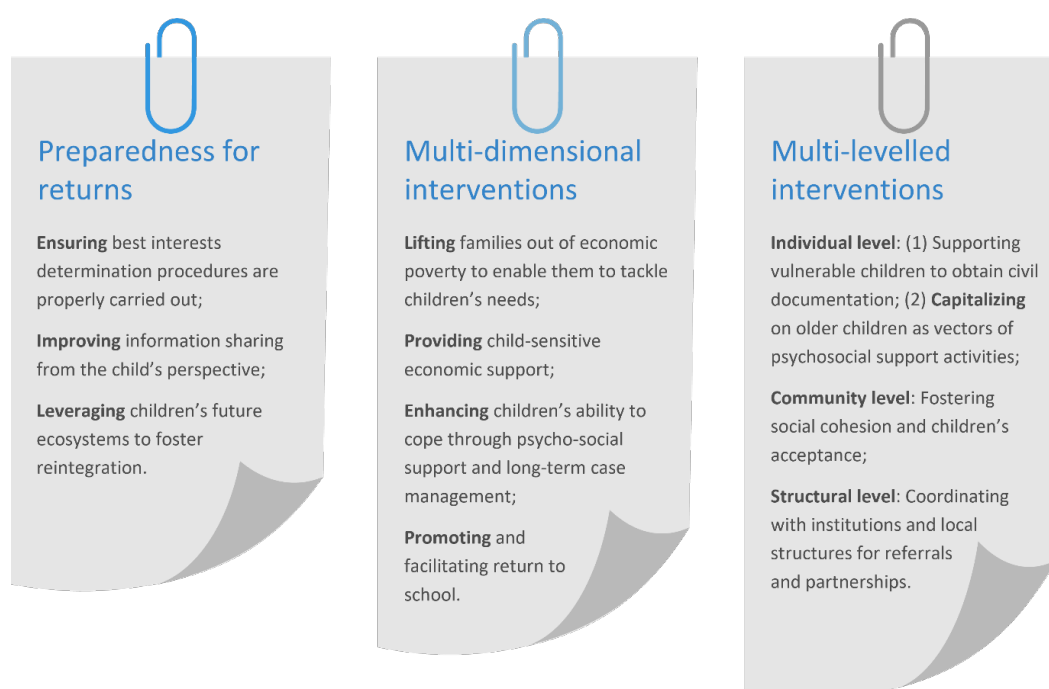


3 EXISTING GOOD PRACTICES IN CHILD REINTEGRATION

While numerous guidance documents on child reintegration have been developed in recent years, including IOM and UNICEF Guidance to Respect Children’s Rights in Return Policies and Practices, primary data collection in Ethiopia, Georgia, Honduras, Iraq, and Nigeria suggests that there is still a long way to go with a lack of strong practices on child reintegration. This may be due to a vacuum of responsibility; returnees are transiting between a host country that they are not citizens of, and a country of origin that is often unable to provide them with a safe and protective environment. In addition, policies and programmes are often child-blind and child returnees are not properly listened to and heard. Examples of good reintegration practices also include programmes that seek to integrate children’s ecosystem, be flexible and tailored, and understand children’s needs prior to their return and adapt responses accordingly.

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. This did vary by country. Several sources were able to identify localized or international reintegration activities with child and youth returnees from which to learn. Similarly, and with the exception of Iraq and Georgia, key informants described several child-focused or child-sensitive initiatives that have shown encouraging reintegration results and provided recommendations for future programming to yield sustainable reintegration outcomes. In recognition of the fact that child reintegration programming is rare, but that child-focused interventions exist, for instance, under the realm of child soldier reintegration, support after emergencies, or other forms of assistance, this section takes a broad view of potential programmes from which to learn. It presents the key dimensions of relevance to sustainable reintegration, and the best practices within each dimension, from the five countries of study and beyond. This chapter delves into the three dimensions and three levels integral to sustainable reintegration. It then concludes with a synthetic overview of good practices’ success factors and constraints.

Figure 8. Good practices for sustainable reintegration



3.1 PREPAREDNESS FOR RETURNS

- Return preparedness is a key component of reintegration, often overlooked by stakeholders dealing with child returnees despite existing guidance on the matter.

Prior to enrolling child returnees into reintegration programming, stakeholders recommend assessing and mitigating factors and **risks** that may constrain sustainable reintegration. As emphasized by an Ethiopian stakeholder during the EU–IOM Knowledge Management Hub’s Seminar on the Return and Reintegration of Children and their Families,¹⁰¹ for example, a key enabler of sustainable reintegration is return preparedness, especially tackled while migrants are still present in the host country. Children must be provided with up-to-date information around the context to which they will return; support in reintegrating crucial networks (e.g. documentation allowing them to attend school on return); and, crucially, programming to support reintegration must be adapted to localized risks and challenges contributing to remigration from the start of the return. For example, when a child is returning to a context like Ethiopia, where structural poverty plays a strong role in many migration journeys, actors could work to develop with the child a plan to address financial challenges on return, linking them with organizations providing such assistance in Ethiopia.

3.1.1 OPERATIONALISATION OF THE BEST INTERESTS PROCEDURES

Research has found that BIA and BID procedures are not systematically carried out for both UASC and accompanied children returning from Europe by the State actors mandated to do so.^{102 103} This can result in the best interest procedure, which should be carried out by the host country, being left out of decision-making processes related to return and reintegration, leaving the children concerned unprepared for both. When they are carried out, BIA and BID are often not exploited to their full extent, with children inconsistently consulted. UNHRC underlines the need for “safe and ethical collection, storage, sharing and analysis of information relating to the Best Interests Procedure”;¹⁰⁴ information sharing and involving a range of stakeholders in the process can contribute to stronger BIA/BID procedures, but requires appropriate tools for safe case management and data protection approaches agreed between all involved. BIA and BID processes should be applied in coordination with the management of the case of the child concerned as a whole, rather than in a silo; this will help ensure that findings more naturally feed into both decision making and return preparation, when appropriate. States could also design verification checklists for UASC to make sure proper procedures have been followed in identifying the child’s family or an appropriate guardian. A remote phone call is insufficient.

3.1.2 IMPROVING INFORMATION SHARING FROM A CHILD’S PERSPECTIVE

Children need information about the context to which they are returning¹⁰⁵ to ensure that they are aware of the challenges they may face upon return. For voluntary return decisions to be qualified as such, the Durable Solutions Platform advocates¹⁰⁶ for refugees’ access to tailored and unbiased information on living conditions and available reintegration support in their country of origin, as well as legal documentation they

¹⁰¹ EU–IOM Knowledge Management Hub, Seminar on the Return and Reintegration (see footnote 51).

¹⁰² UNICEF, Child-Sensitive Return | Upholding the Best Interests of Migrant and Refugee Children in Return and Reintegration Decisions and Processes in Selected European Countries (Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom) | A Comparative Analysis (2019).

¹⁰³ While BIA should be conducted for all types of child returnees, regardless of whether they are accompanied or not, BID should be conducted for all UASC and deported children. In voluntary return schemes BID could be conducted among accompanied child returnees in specific cases such as suspicion of violence or abuse.

¹⁰⁴ UNHCR, Guidelines on Assessing and Determining the Best Interests of the Child - 2018 Provisional Release (2018), page 60.

¹⁰⁵ UNICEF, Child-Sensitive Return (see footnote 102).

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

will need to secure, and guidance on how to do so, to access services upon return. Cassarino further theorizes this under the idea that willingness and readiness to return¹⁰⁷ are critical in fostering adequate preparation and, ultimately, sustainable reintegration outcomes. Furthermore, children and their families often lack information that would be conducive to their reintegration, possibly because those processing migrants in host countries themselves are not equipped to convey relevant information, but also due to an administrative vacuum when it comes to international coordination.

Nonetheless, there are encouraging approaches undertaken in European countries that have witnessed a considerable influx of migrants since 2015. For example, countries such as the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Sweden and Germany sometimes identify child-specific needs to tailor and quantify reintegration support and offer financial assistance for the voluntary returns of both UASC and accompanied children.

Recent research by DELMI in Iraq and Afghanistan also highlights the need for better referrals mapping in returns context as returnees sometimes do not know where to go for support on return.¹⁰⁸ For example, states could prepare a tailored list of organizations and government departments responsible for key administrative procedures or proposing targeted support in to address common needs on return.

With regards to child returnees, case studies emphasize that UASC often find themselves in situations of extreme vulnerability and they often perceive return as their only option, and that children who travelled accompanied were generally not part of the decision-making process surrounding the return. This means that they are unlikely to have a solid understanding of the context to which they are returning. Even simple information sheets, designed in coordination with children who have returned, to provide an understanding of the challenges they may face – and positive experiences they may have – could make a significant difference.

3.1.3 LEVERAGING CHILDREN'S ECOSYSTEM TO FOSTER REINTEGRATION

A child returnee's family and community – their ecosystem – act as key vectors of reintegration. Existing programming capitalizes on this through family tracing and reunification programmes. Good practices among these programmes include assessments to determine whether reunification is in the best interest of the child, undertaken by SOS Children's Villages and the Child Protection Network in Nigeria, as well as IOM in Honduras. In certain cases, for instance for UASC whose immediate family is no longer alive or in the country, next-of-kins or legal guardians can be reluctant to take child returnees in, especially if they are financially struggling. The Child Protection Network conducts an assessment of the family environment a child returnee will be going back to, to decide whether the child can be reunited with their family, and if the family has the financial resources to take care of the child, or if it is instead in the child's best interest to let them stay in shelters for a certain period of time while building the family's capacity to take care of them.

"You don't only need a plan for children, you also plan for the entire family."

SOS Children's Villages KII, Nigeria

In Honduras, where domestic violence was reported by a Human Rights Watch researcher as one of the main drivers of migration, reuniting child returnees with their parents or caregivers does not always act in the best interest of the child – at least not immediately upon return. Beyond an assessment, effective

¹⁰⁷ Jean-Pierre Cassarino, "A Case for Return Preparedness," in *Global and Asian Perspectives on International Migration*, ed. Graziano Battistella, Global Migration Issues (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2014), 153–65.

¹⁰⁸ Larrucea, Lindberg and Asplund, Those who were sent back (see footnote 67).

reintegration programming needs to work with the child's legal guardians to ensure that child returnees can safely return to their family environment. Certain programmes mobilize the family and community networks to maximize child returnees' chances of reintegration. This is the case of UNICEF in Nigeria, where it implements a community-based rehabilitation project focused on returnees in Ilupeju, a neighbourhood of Lagos, to ensure that child returnees are taken care of and welcomed back into their area of return.

3.2 MULTIDIMENSIONAL INTERVENTIONS

- Good practices are holistic in nature, meaning that they tackle a range of issues ranging from socioeconomic difficulties to psychological distress, and they are specific to child returnees' individual needs (i.e. donors provide them with the flexibility to cater to each child's needs).

3.2.1 LIFTING FAMILIES OUT OF ECONOMIC POVERTY TO ENABLE THEM TO TACKLE CHILDREN'S NEEDS

Economic support is foundational to sustainable reintegration. Initiatives such as vocational training, business grants (monetary support) or in-kind support to set up businesses, have been implemented in all countries chosen for this research. This type of support, while not targeting children directly, serves to attempt to lift a returnee, including a head of household, out of poverty, and, if successful, increases the chances of child returnees' needs being addressed. IOM provides economic support to returnees, through its AVRR and PARA programmes around the world, including assistance to launch micro-businesses. In Honduras for instance, IOM has assisted returnees with opening businesses such as a car wash, a beauty salon, or small-scale cattle rearing (pigs, chickens). According to a KII conducted in Honduras, returnees typically receive between 2,500 and 3,500 euros in in-kind material that helps them open their business. In the same country, by the time monitoring occurs however, around two to three months following support provision, some businesses have shut down and there does not appear to be any follow-up to understand what happened. This type of support fosters empowerment and well-being, especially when it is done in partnership with local authorities and establishes linkages with the private sector. This is the case with GIZ's German Centre for Jobs, Migration and Reintegration in Erbil and Baghdad, which includes returnees among its beneficiaries.

BOX 7. ETHIOPIA | SUPPORTING CHILDREN ECONOMICALLY AND SOCIALLY – POSITIVE ACTION FOR DEVELOPMENT

In Ethiopia, authorities lead reintegration efforts, particularly for UASC who represent many of the child returnees, and have dedicated a team of social workers to work with IOM case managers to assess UASC's needs through a BIA/BID and a vulnerability assessment. Upon return, UASC undergo a medical screening and receive sanitary items, including a hygiene kit for women and girls. Authorities lack the capacity and resources to follow up on these children and struggle to carry out family tracing efforts, but the local organization PAD¹⁰⁹ provides reintegration support. As an EU–IOM Joint Initiative partner, PAD was trained to implement IOM's integrated approach to sustainable reintegration. PAD facilitates and supports school enrolment for child returnees, providing them with in-kind items where required, but also assists older children who wish to engage in income-generating activities with their endeavour. This is particularly

¹⁰⁹ PAD, "Positive Action for Development (PAD) Ethiopia",¹¹⁰ Casa Alianza Honduras, "Covenant House: Casa Alianza Honduras".

relevant in contexts where UASC returnees can be perceived as a burden by legal guardians, or their family lack financial resources to support them.

D. sold plastic waste on the streets of Djibouti, when an organization called "Bare Bare" identified him and he willingly returned to Ethiopia:

"I interact with PAD social workers and social service facilitators in our community. The PAD workers, I see them at their office because they prepare different meetings and discuss our future and the support for child returnees with my family. [I interact frequently with] the social service facilitator around our home because she registers poor families for public services such as school and others, for poor families."

3.2.2 PROVIDING CHILD-SENSITIVE ECONOMIC SUPPORT

Beyond financially supporting returning families to ensure that they are equipped to address children's needs, economic support that is child-sensitive, namely that considers how children can be supported via both child-focused and broader approaches, are critical in fostering sustainable reintegration. In certain cases, this can mean supporting adolescents who lack financial resources with both economic and education support. In Ethiopia, MOLSA focuses on families or adult returnees, while MOWCYA works with IOM in tracing families of unaccompanied migrant children and to assess other children's needs prior to their return, to better identify the type of support they will need upon arrival. MOWCYA assigns social workers to child returnees' case management, to refer them to local administrations or organizations, such as Hope for Justice and PAD. The latter, PAD, assists older child returnees and aged-out minors with setting up businesses, by providing them with in-kind support to, for instance, open grocery stores or do cattle rearing. A 13-year-old child returnee emphasized the positive impact of PAD's support on his reintegration; in his own words, PAD social workers are helping him plan for his future, in close coordination with his family and are supporting him financially. An Ethiopian social worker in Shukriya further recalled a project launched by Dire Dawa's Bureau of Women, Children and Youth called "Egnaw le Egnaw" ("We for each other and We for Us") providing beneficiaries with a lump sum of Br 4,000 (about EUR 75 at current rates). In certain cases, beneficiaries were able to reimburse their debt and ended up with savings.

3.2.3 ENHANCING CHILDREN'S ABILITY TO COPE THROUGH PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT AND LONG-TERM CASE MANAGEMENT

To date, long-term case management seems sparse and rarely goes beyond six months after children have returned. Similarly, overall PSS and protection support are often not included within reintegration programming, or not to the extent that child returnees need. Reports from case studies with children however highlight that it is relevant to mainstream PSS and protection in each type of reintegration support, as well as to adjust it to the country of return based on the challenges that child returnees are expected to face upon return. Certain reintegration initiatives focusing specifically on assisting children through PSS and sustained case management have yielded positive results that could guide programming across the world.

This is the case of CAH¹¹⁰ which stopped due to a lack of funding but yielded positive outcomes. Key informants familiar with CAH's programme praised it as an exceptional type of child-focused reintegration support programme. It does so through PSS (involving family and community mediation as relevant) that is

¹¹⁰ Casa Alianza Honduras, "[Covenant House: Casa Alianza Honduras](#)".

critical to enable child returnees to address, and deal with, psychological distress, notably in cases where they have been trafficked or felt strongly against returning and find themselves in an environment that they are no longer familiar with. While CAH's funding has decreased and the NGO is no longer able to run such a programme, it used to rely on a team of social workers, with experience working with children and adolescents, to tailor support to each child returnee's needs and involve both the community and family members to foster reintegration, often over the course of several years. This approach seems to have been particularly relevant to the context in Honduras, where many child returnees are UASC.

BOX 8. CASA ALIANZA HONDURAS | FRONTERA PROGRAMME | TACKLING CHILDREN'S INDIVIDUAL NEEDS AND CREATING SAFE SPACES

CAH started working with child returnees in 2010, as part of their programming targeting vulnerable children, including street children, providing them with material support and addressing safety, protection, and human rights issues. CAH primarily works in San Pedro Sula, a city located near the border with Guatemala, ranked among the most violent cities in the world and where Mexican authorities regularly return deported Honduran youth by bus. Thousands of children and adolescents live off the streets of San Pedro Sula, with many of them having experienced abuse. CAH focuses on tracing UASC's families, proposes reintegration services in cases where it is deemed feasible and in the best interest of the child, and provides shelter to those who cannot safely return home. Their "Every Child Deserves a Future" programme has received international recognition through the Ockenden International Prize.¹¹¹ By mid-2020, the program had supported more than 450 children, including child returnees, since 2015. CAH provides legal assistance to secure formal documentation, such as birth certificates, ID cards and passports, and has referred 220 children to UNHCR.

"Casa Alianza [...] had the best model I have seen for the return and reintegration of child and adolescent migrants. They had a team of social workers with previous experience working with children and adolescents, they really cared about [them] as human beings, not as numbers they had to process. [They] had the flexibility to tailor their programming to children and adolescents' interests and needs, and also included the families and communities. They regularly held group events but also events tailored to individuals. They made sure to provide assistance with education and nutrition when needed, with health [support]; it was a holistic model and did not have time restrictions, so if a child only needed three months to [get back on their feet], it was fine, but it was also fine if a child needed five years. This is the kind of messy programme that donors do not like to fund, but it is the type of programme that works for children and families and communities in difficult circumstances."

KII, Honduras

In addition to its work with vulnerable children, CAH gathers data related to risks faced by children and youth, often related to gangs, which has fuelled tensions with the government. In the words of CAH Executive Director, José Guadalupe Ruelas García, CAH has a team dedicated to finding children living off the street and bringing them to health centres.¹¹² CAH eventually assesses their family situation, to envisage reunification or instead offering them the alternative to stay in a residence centre. In both cases, CAH

¹¹¹ Ockenden International, "Casa Alianza Honduras."

¹¹² Eric Kingrea, "[Thousands of Homeless Children in Honduras Now Have a Place to Call Home](#)".

implements family reintegration programmes and carries out weekly visits to families, working on the adoption of healthy behaviours, non-violent conflict resolution and business consulting. CAH's work is particularly critical in light of the top cited migration push factors, identified by a UNICEF study,¹¹³ such as urban violence and insecurity, and family violence, including sexual abuse at home.¹¹⁴

3.2.4 PROMOTING AND FACILITATING RETURN TO SCHOOL

Despite COVID-19 further challenging access to school for child returnees in countries such as Georgia and Iraq, in Honduras the Red Cross provides schooling stipends for children whose families lack financial resources to cover costs associated with school, namely uniform, stationary, books and transportation. In Georgia, the government has secured laptops for vulnerable children, including child returnees, to enable them to attend online classes. In countries such as Ethiopia and Nigeria, where several child returnees who took part in case studies reported that they had never been enrolled in school, or that they could not attend school in the host country, IOM has been providing them with support to pay for school fees or to supply school equipment.

3.3 MULTILEVELLED INTERVENTIONS

- Programmes are more effective when they capitalize and coordinate between various stakeholders at various levels of society, including political institutions, children's close network and ecosystem, and civil society organizations.

3.3.1 INDIVIDUAL LEVEL (1): SUPPORTING VULNERABLE CHILDREN TO OBTAIN CIVIL DOCUMENTATION

Documentation is a needed prerequisite for accessing many services. Upon arrival in their country of origin, returnees may struggle with securing IDs, including for their children, which constrains their access to basic services and housing. This is particularly the case in post-conflict settings such as Iraq, where millions of Iraqis have been displaced since 2014. In Iraq, NRC does outreach with displaced populations who lack civil documentation and have often lost their home to ISIS. This is particularly problematic for children whose parents or legal guardians do not possess birth certificates. Without legal documentation, these children are not allowed to access health care, enrol in school and benefit from other public services, and their caretakers are unable to reclaim their house in their area of origin.¹¹⁵ Findings from qualitative interviews with Georgian stakeholders emphasized similar issues. For instance, Belgium provides birth certificates online, a procedure that is not recognized by Georgian authorities, who request notarized hard copies of birth certificates to enable children to access health care and enrol in school. NRC provides guidance, including legal advice, on how to obtain civil documentation, through group-information sessions, legal counselling and the production of flyers and banners. NRC further coordinates with governmental authorities to assist vulnerable populations, including IDPs, in obtaining civil and legal documents that they have lost throughout the conflict with ISIS.

¹¹³ UNICEF, "Uprooted in Central America and Mexico | UNICEF".

¹¹⁴ Women's Refugee Commission, *Forced from Home: The Lost Boys and Girls of Central America* (2012).

¹¹⁵ NRC, "Iraq".

3.3.2 INDIVIDUAL LEVEL (2): CAPITALIZING ON OLDER CHILDREN AS VECTORS OF PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT ACTIVITIES

Children have a role to play as actors of reintegration. Older children, if adequately trained, can operate as vectors of PSS, as they are likely to be better able to build trust with younger children suffering from trauma and to engage in play therapy activities. UNICEF leveraged their abilities with a programme called "Retorno de la Alegria" (namely Return to Joy), which may benefit young returnees from abroad who often struggle with psychosocial issues. UNICEF has previously implemented this programme throughout Latin America, including Ecuador, Colombia, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Paraguay;¹¹⁶ through it "children are given the space to explore any trauma they have experienced".¹¹⁷ In Colombia for instance, UNICEF supported children of soldiers, while it responded to children's needs in Nicaragua after Hurricane Mitch in 1998. The programme provides psychoemotional support to child returnees, typically between 6 and 13 years old, who have suffered psychological trauma. Adolescent volunteers are trained, over a couple of days, to conduct play therapy sessions with child returnees, providing them with safe spaces to resume their emotional, intellectual, and cognitive development that may have been impaired by trauma. Play therapy sessions include activities such as storytelling, music, games and drawing for children to express their feelings and recollect their stories. The programme leverages relationships between children, on the assumption that it may be easier for younger children to place trust into another, slightly older, child.¹¹⁸

3.3.3 COMMUNITY LEVEL: FOSTERING SOCIAL COHESION AND CHILDREN'S ACCEPTANCE

Fostering social cohesion can be done at a community level. War Child is piloting a social cohesion programming to foster former child soldiers' acceptance into their community of origin. While different dynamics are at stake, social cohesion can be lacking in contexts with a recent violent history, such as Iraq or Honduras, and reintegration programming could foster reintegration by addressing possible frustrations between returnees and the host community. War Child's work is particularly interesting in the lens of reintegration initiatives. War Child supports former child soldiers with their transition to reintegrate into society and seeks to help them deal with stigma and trauma to prevent another incidence of recruitment by an armed group. This work would be relevant in countries such as Iraq for Sunni child returnees, who – or whose families – can be discriminated against for perceived affiliation with ISIS.¹¹⁹ War Child recommends implementing multiple initiatives, spanning across children, families, and communities, tackling economic issues and leveraging child protection networks. Reintegration programmes should also be contextualized through a thorough understanding of the local settings, as what may work in Iraq may not be culturally appropriate in Honduras. A key variable that seems to be almost consistently missing from child reintegration programs is the presence of a case worker. War Child advises that a social worker oversees each child's case, to ensure the child has access to adequate support and has a safety net within their family and/or community. The discrimination and stigmatization faced by child returnees may be to a lesser extent, but the issues and distress are similar – often leading to social isolation. An adapted model of de-stigmatization and reintegration approaches such as the ones implemented by War Child may be beneficial to child returnees. War Child is currently piloting a "stigma reduction" approach in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, whereby the

¹¹⁶ UNICEF, "Paraguay: 'Return to Happiness' Programme Helps Children Recover from Trauma - Paraguay," (13 August 2004).

¹¹⁷ UNICEF, "UNICEF supporting the return to normality after devastating crises" (18 September 2018)

¹¹⁸ Universalia, "Evaluación de La Implementación de La Estrategia Retorno de La Alegría Para La Recuperación Psicoafectiva de Los Niños, Las Niñas y Los Adolescentes En El Contexto de La Situación Humanitaria de La Niñez Migrante En Honduras," (2017).

¹¹⁹ Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: School Doors Barred to Many Children," (28 August 2019).

organizations identify care enablers within a child's ecosystem, to provide a holistic set of adequate services and assistance to affected children.

3.3.4 STRUCTURAL LEVEL: COORDINATING WITH INSTITUTIONS AND LOCAL STRUCTURES FOR REFERRALS AND PARTNERSHIPS

In several instances, key informants pointed to a lack of institutional support towards reintegration initiatives while emphasizing the need for decentralized initiatives, involving authorities such as municipalities, to foster the implementation of effective reintegration programming. This is the case in Iraq for instance, where two different entities – the federal government, based in Baghdad, and the Kurdistan Regional Government in Erbil – handle returns. Furthermore, in KRI this has been done by both the Joint Crisis Coordination Center and the Bureau of Migration and Displacement. Other settings however, including Ethiopia and Nigeria, seem to have 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. The policy encourages reintegration through AVRR schemes and advocates for the reinforcement of community development initiatives in return areas. It also led to the establishment of the Technical Working Group on Migration and Development, comprising both state and non-state actors, under which five thematic working groups exist, including the Forced Migration and Return, Readmission and Reintegration Working Group. Beyond this recent institutional landscape, which is providing a framework for reintegration initiatives and capitalizing on partnerships between various stakeholders, SOS Children's Villages is an NGO that has been providing reintegration to child returnees and their families. SOS Children's Villages follows a "Family Development Plan" whereby it provides support to a child returnee's family over two to three years, regularly assesses a family's needs, status and social environment, and proposes PSS and counselling. When a child returnee's family is in an area where SOS Children's Villages is not present, the NGO links the child and their family with the government's welfare office and religious entities, and touch bases with relatives in the area to replace in-person monitoring.
- In Ethiopia, authorities are actively engaging on child reintegration issues, in partnership with IOM. Multiple entities deal with reintegration, ranging from ministries to federal institutions and local authorities. Some of these entities include MOLSA, MOWCYA, FUJCFSA, and, at the local level, CCCs), CRCs and TVET colleges. CCCs are comprised of individuals and/or organizations working to expand and enhance care for vulnerable populations, with a particular focus on social protection. With regards to vulnerable children, including child returnees, CCCs seek to coordinate efforts undertaken by formal and informal stakeholders and entities. Formal entities include governmental and CSOs, while the informal support system comprises local community members and social networks. Child right committees CRCs are composed of representatives from several governmental offices as well as development agents, community leaders and more. Although all CRCs are not operational at the same level, the stronger ones have assisted minor migrant returnees to access education (sport and tuition fee, and others), medical (free at medical/health centres and health posts with formal agreement) and training services, generally through referrals. There however seems to be a lack of data related to child returnees, both to keep track of them upon return and to monitor and evaluate reintegration initiatives. The government lacks a centralized database gathering

information pertaining to returnees. Save the Children is however supporting the government in developing a related information management system, starting in Metema, located along the Sudanese border.

TABLE 6. KEY ETHIOPIAN INSTITUTIONS AND ENTITIES WORKING ON CHILD REINTEGRATION ¹²⁰

ENTITY	MANDATE RELATED TO CHILD RETURNNEES
MOLSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes overseas employment to protect migrants in the host country. • Provides psychosocial and economic reintegration support to returnees.
MOWCYA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family tracing to reunite UASC with their relatives, as well as reintegration, sensitisation, and coordination. • Coordinates and collaborate with various entities to set up structures and mechanisms tackling child returnees' needs. • Operates through community-based mechanisms to strengthen protection services. • Platform strengthening referral mechanisms to bridge the gap between returnees and assistance programmes, resources, and service providers, and facilitate access to financial resources, education, health, employment and shelter.
Bureaus of Justice and Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigates child smuggling cases, charge smugglers and traffickers, and conduct awareness activities. Limited role in terms of awareness activities due to lack of outreach to children who intend to migrate and inability to counter push factors.
National Partnership and Coalition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinates and leads support and reintegration efforts of all main governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, under the authority of the Federal General Attorney Office.
FUJCFSA's Job Creation Directorate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leads national protection working groups for the reintegration of returning migrants, as well as oversees a unit focusing on women, children, and youth. • Supports returnees including food, educational material, medical treatment, psychosocial support and transportation.
CCCs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports vulnerable populations, through expanding and enhancing the care they have access to, with a focus on social protection.
CRCs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support to children, including child returnees across sectors, often through referrals.

In Honduras, there are encouraging signs of partnerships with governmental entities. IOM reportedly trains government actors on safeguarding and protection mechanisms to improve their approach with child returnees. Furthermore, the Ministry of Governance and Justice is devising a community-based approach to locally coordinate the provision of assistance. In Honduras as well, UNHCR gets referrals from the Centro de Atención para la Niñez y Familias Migrantes - Belén, NRC, public schools and hospitals. Key informants also reported that there are various initiatives seeking to help adult returnees, or families, that would benefit from coordination between implementing entities, to promote the involvement of municipalities and communities in providing returnees with livelihood reintegration mechanisms. In practice however, the complex and gang-filled context in which these initiatives are implemented may challenge relationships between implementing organizations and authorities.

¹²⁰ IOM, A Study on Child Migrants from Ethiopia (2020).



3.4 SUCCESS FACTORS AND CHALLENGES OF REINTEGRATION INITIATIVES

Table 7 summarizes findings related to child reintegration initiatives, or approaches beyond the realm of child returnees’ reintegration, as guidance on what *can* work and where.

TABLE 7. - SUCCESS FACTORS FOR SUSTAINABLE CHILD REINTEGRATION AND ASSOCIATED GOOD PRACTICES

DIMENSION	THEME	SUCCESS FACTOR(S)	EXAMPLE(S) OF A GOOD PRACTICE FROM POLICY OR PROGRAMMING FOR IMPLEMENTING THE SUCCESS FACTOR	OBSTACLES/CAVEATS
Preparedness for returns	Children's best interests	Ensuring BIA and BID procedures are properly carried out	Bringing together a range of stakeholders in BID/BIA processes can provide further information to strengthen these assessments.	All data related to the child has to be securely stored; additional information should not drown out the perspective and opinions of the child.
	Child-relevant information sharing	Improving information sharing from the child's perspective	Countries such as the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Sweden and Germany sometimes identify child-specific needs to tailor and quantify reintegration support and offer financial assistance for the voluntary returns of both UASC and accompanied children.	Child returnees and their families must be supported in knowing where and how to access support on return for this to be helpful, as research shows this is often a gap.
	Leveraging the ecosystem	Leveraging children's future ecosystems to foster reintegration, in particular using the BID to identify future members of children's return ecosystem.	In Nigeria, UNICEF implements a community rehabilitation project focused on returnees in Ilupeju (Lagos) to ensure that child returnees are taken care of and welcomed back into their area of return.	Return modalities may prevent the BID from occurring, for instance in countries where deportations are common. Children may have a very limited ecosystem, namely no family or no one willing to take them back in.

Multidimensional interventions	Supportive household economics	Targeting a family of returnees as a unit and enhancing caretakers' ability to financially support the household	IOM and GIZ provide economic reintegration to returnees by allocating grants or in-kind support, and providing trainings for beneficiaries to launch or further expand a business.	Sophisticated M&E frameworks (long term) should be developed, considering donors' interests and priorities as part of comprehensive mechanisms, to better understand reintegration and to adjust support if relevant.
	Child-sensitive economic support	Considering specific children's economic needs, in particular for older children, to ensure smoother transitions to economic activity	Organizations in Ethiopia for example provide specific economic support to adolescents when appropriate, in some cases helping them to set up businesses.	M&E exercises should confirm that support is going to the intended purpose, and that economic support is not providing negative incentive with regard to younger children's schooling, nor contributing to perceptions that returnees are favoured.
	Children's ability to cope	Enhancing children's ability to cope through psychosocial support and long-term case management	CAH relied on a team of social workers, with experience working with children, to tailor support to child returnee's needs and involve both the community and family members to foster reintegration, often over the course of several years.	Financial resources and donors' lack of flexibility with programming tailored to each child returnee may be a major constraint.
	Continued education	Promoting and facilitating return to school via in-kind support	To mitigate risks of school dropouts upon return, which may contribute to perpetuating a poverty cycle, IOM has been providing in-kind (school equipment) or financial support to child returnees seeking to return to school in Nigeria and Ethiopia.	M&E exercises should assess whether support has effectively enabled child returnees to go back to school. Authorities sometimes do not recognize school certificates from abroad, disrupting children's education.
Multilevelled interventions	Individual civil documentation	Localized assessments to identify challenges and provision of administrative and/or legal guidance	In Iraq, NRC is providing vulnerable populations who have lost documentation papers with guidance and support to recover them.	Governmental institutions may establish barriers to obtaining these documents, and definitions/requirements around documents will vary by country. Requires sustained coordination efforts to advocate for these populations.

	Individual children as actors of support	Trusted relationship between children and providers of PSS and protection support	UNICEF's "Retorno de la Alegría" provides psychoemotional support to child returnees, typically between 6–13 years old, who have suffered psychological trauma. Adolescent volunteers are trained, over a couple of days, to conduct play therapy sessions with child returnees, providing them with safe spaces to resume their emotional, intellectual, and cognitive development that may have been impaired by trauma.	Requires a thorough understanding of the local context and solid referral mechanisms to ensure that this approach does not do further harm to children suffering from psychological distress.
	Community social cohesion	Leveraging the community network to promote de-stigmatization, reinsertion and reintegration	War Child is piloting a "stigma reduction" approach in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, identifying care enablers within a child's ecosystem to provide a holistic set of adequate services and assistance to affected children.	There must be a context of local or national reconciliation, in settings such as Iraq where ethnic and sectarian tensions remain vivid. Coordination with local authorities and community leaders. Close monitoring to verify that this approach does not further put children at risk. Finally, social worker oversight requires sufficient sustainable funding.
	Structural coordination and partnerships	Collective approaches to programming through the inclusion of multilevel actors	Nigeria's SOS Children's Villages follows a "Family Development Plan" to provide support to a child returnee's family over 2–3 years, regularly assesses their needs, status, and social environment, and proposes PSS and counselling. When a child returnee's family is in an area where SOS Children's Villages is not present, the NGO links the child and their family with the government's welfare office and religious entities, as well as touches base with relatives in the area, to replace in-person monitoring.	Coordination may be an additional layer or burden, preventing timely and effective responses. Less feasible in contexts such as Honduras, where there are tensions between local organizations and authorities. National databases should be established to keep track of child returnees.



PART II: PRESENTING THE CHILD REINTEGRATION MONITORING TOOLKIT

4 A NEW APPROACH TO MONITORING

4.1 RATIONALE AND APPROACH

Part I of this research detailed the challenging situation faced by actors wishing to support children reintegrate sustainably: limited information around children's specific reintegration experiences to develop and justify potential approaches, 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.

Existing monitoring mechanisms consider the numbers of children supported through programming (including via their household) and the types of support received. Such output type monitoring, however, does not allow stakeholders to understand children's return and reintegration experiences, nor does it identify the priority support 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, in all contexts where this Toolkit was piloted, practitioners recognized the differentiated needs of children who return, as opposed to households and adults, both for UASC and children returning with their families, and echoed the need for better means of supporting children who return. This is of particular concern as sustainable solutions for migrant children – including for return and reintegration processes – must be informed by the “guiding principles of the Convention of the Rights of the Child including the best interests of the child, the principle of non-discrimination, the right to survival and development and the right of the child to be heard in line with their age and maturity.”¹²¹ Doing so requires understanding of the exact situation faced by the child, even though in most cases, actors lack the data to consistently do so.

Understanding these situations – and having detailed evidence for them – will support stakeholders in three ways, according to one key informant:

- Programmatically and operationally, allowing for better targeted responses before, during and after return, and identifying means to also better prepare families and communities for children's return;
- From an advocacy perspective, giving stakeholders the needed evidence to influence response, policies and legal environment in each context;
- From a frameworks perspective, enabling stakeholders to develop, in the medium and long term, stronger frameworks for cooperation in return and reintegration processes.¹²²

This study thus develops a child reintegration monitoring toolkit designed to, as called for by IOM and UNICEF, “contribute not only to supporting individual children and families, and identifying rights' violations, but also to filling existing evidence gaps about what works in making reintegration sustainable for children and families.”¹²³ The Toolkit includes a questionnaire designed to provide a Child Reintegration Monitoring Index, providing a snapshot of an individual child's return and reintegration situation, across three main dimensions,

¹²¹ IOM and UNICEF, Module 6, page 197 (see footnote 53).

¹²² Save the Children, KII (November 2020).

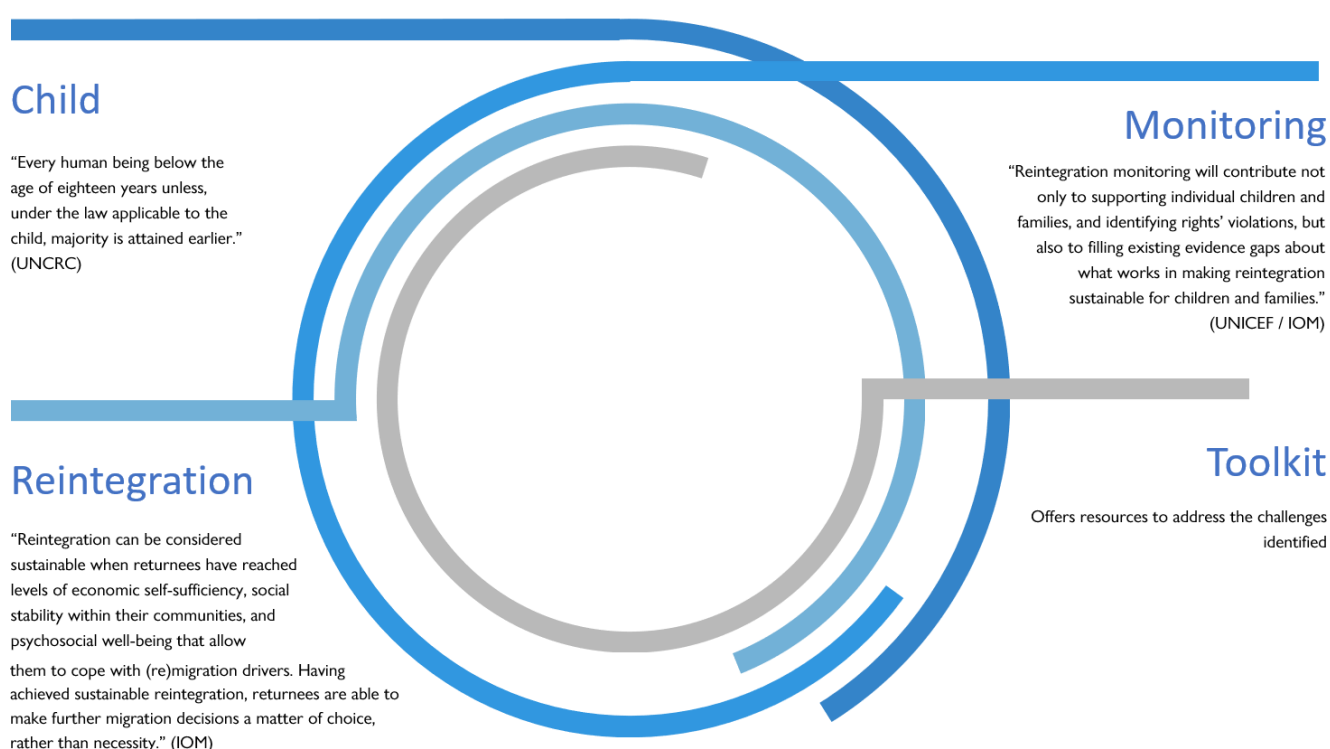
¹²³ IOM and UNICEF, Module 6, page 242 (see footnote 53).

and flag major violations of children’s rights. When tracked longitudinally, this index allows users to assess a child’s reintegration over time; when considered in aggregate, it allows users to paint a broader picture of the situation faced by child returnees to a particular context.

4.1.1 DEFINING A CHILD REINTEGRATION MONITORING TOOLKIT

Figure 9 defines the four components of a Child Reintegration Monitoring Toolkit, key to frame the Toolkit and ensure its purpose is clear.

Figure 9. Key concepts for a child monitoring reintegration toolkit



The pilot phase found several actors conflating monitoring with M&E, which is problematic in ensuring appropriate use of the Toolkit. These terms carry with them certain connotations. M&E, jointly, can be defined as follows:

“Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is used to assess how a reintegration programme is performing, and whether it is meeting its intended objectives. Monitoring is concerned with the short and medium term and can feed into programme changes. Evaluation takes this a step further and looks at the ultimate impact of a programme on the changes it seeks to make.”¹²⁴

¹²⁴ Ibid., page 169.

M&E is thus directly tied to understanding *programmatic* and *performance* results: according to the definition adopted by IOM, “evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of the design, implementation and results of an ongoing or completed project, programme or policy. It differs from monitoring in that it involves a judgement of the value of the activity and its results.”¹²⁵

This tool is specifically designed to conduct child returnee monitoring (and will be used in many cases for beneficiary monitoring) rather than programme monitoring. It will contribute to “supporting individual children and families, and identifying rights violations, [as well as] filling existing evidence gaps about what works in making reintegration sustainable for children and families.”¹²⁶ The remit of this tool thus 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).¹²⁷

Therefore, this Toolkit is:

- **NOT** intended to specifically reference existing programming;
- **NOT** designed for the establishment of causal linkages between *specific* programme and degree of reintegration.

This latter point is very important; using the Toolkit to conduct programme evaluation will provide incomplete results, as the quantitative survey has been designed to rapidly assess children’s status vis-à-vis key indicators rather than unpack these and to what responses can be attributed. Therefore, it should not be used on its own as an impact evaluation tool. Rather, by allowing reintegration practitioners to understand the situation faced by individual children returnees, and, eventually, aggregate this data at the country level, users will be able to:

- Design programming better adapted to the dimensions of reintegration where child returnees locally face the most challenges;
- Identify instances where selected key rights of children are being violated, and require referrals or further action;
- Conduct advocacy with key stakeholders around whether or not returns to a particular location are in the best interests of a child – based on whether or not children returning there are able to sustainably reintegrate.

4.1.2 DESIGNING THE CHILD REINTEGRATION MONITORING TOOLKIT

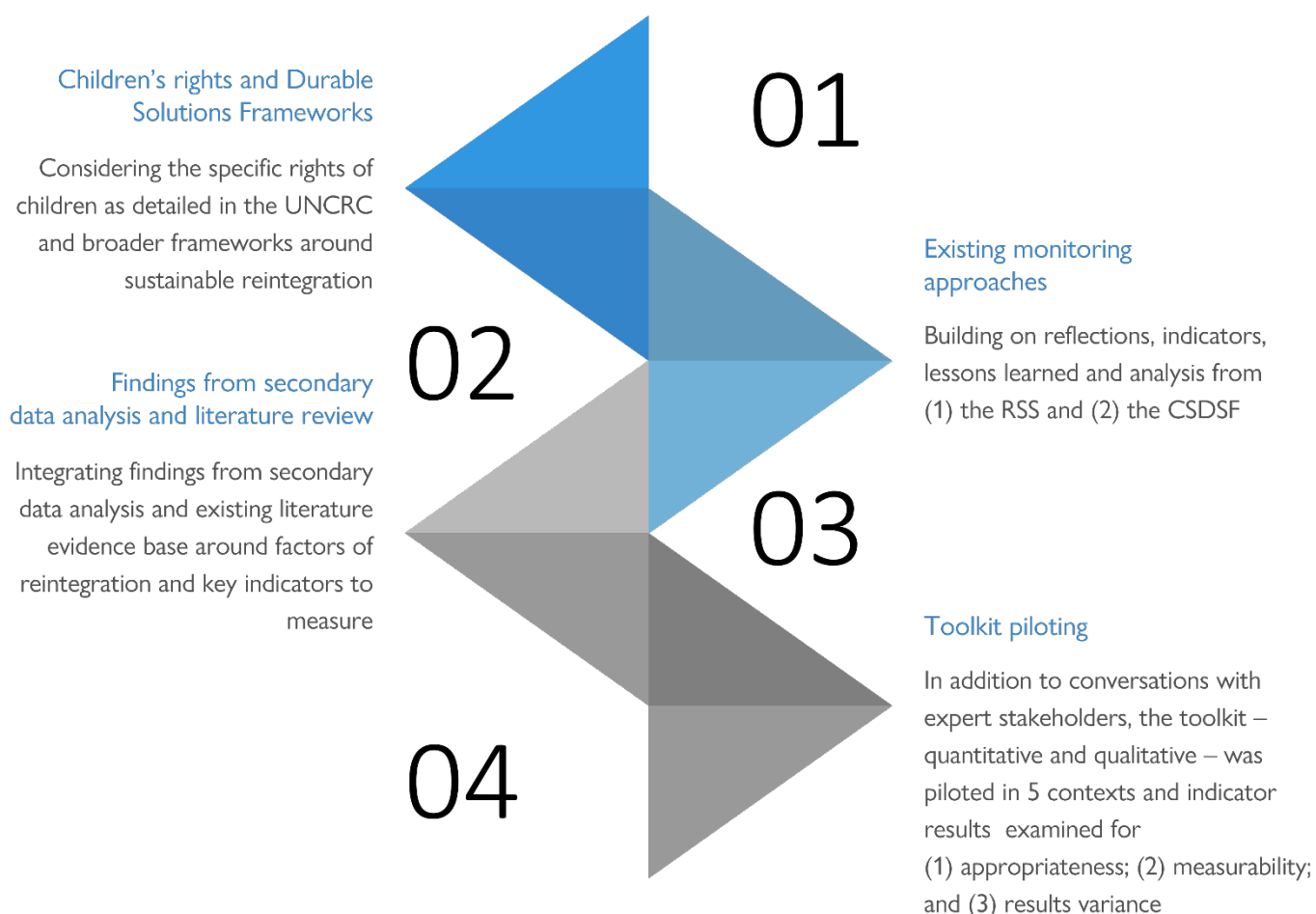
This Toolkit has been designed based on a multistep process. Key factors impacting reintegration and indicators of reintegration have been identified and refined based on several dimensions (children’s rights and reintegration principles; existing frameworks; existing evidence; piloting results). This has resulted in a toolkit which 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.

¹²⁵ IOM, Reintegration Handbook: Module 5 - Monitoring and Evaluation for Reintegration Assistance (2019), page 172.

¹²⁶ IOM and UNICEF, Module 6, page 242 (see footnote 53).

¹²⁷ Samuel Hall and IOM, Setting Standards for an Integrated Approach (see footnote 18).

Figure 10. Approach taken to toolkit design



Based on the above, the following factors, indicators and sub-indicators were tested. Selected indicators were designed to be explored directly with all children, while others required information from a parent/guardian for the younger group.

TABLE 8. TESTED TOOLKIT INDICATORS

		CHILD UNDER 14	14–18* YEAR OLD CHILDREN	PARENT/GUARDIAN INTERVIEWS**
ECONOMIC DIMENSION	1. Main household source of income		X	X
	2. Involvement of child in income-generating activities	X	X	
	3. Household indebtedness		X	X
	4. Food security	X	X	
	5. Self-assessment of economic situation satisfaction	X	X	
	6. Household savings	X	X	
SOCIAL DIMENSION	1. Adequate housing situation	X	X	
	2. Access to documentation	X	X	X
	3. Access to family/guardians	X	X	
	4. Child marriage	X	X	
	5. Access to health services	X	X	X
	6. Access to education	X	X	
PSYCHOSOCIAL DIMENSION	1. Social and community involvement	X	X	
	2. Non-discrimination	X	X	
	3. Feeling of belonging	X	X	
	4. Signs of distress	X	X	X
	5. Feeling safe and secure in daily activities	X	X	

* 18 here refers to the aged-out minors who may be interviewed.

** Parent/guardian interviews included additional questions around support received and returns.

These indicators were directly integrated into a quantitative survey designed to translate into a reintegration score, providing information at the dimensional level as well as overall.

4.2 SCORING THE INDEX

4.2.1 TRANSLATING INDICATOR RESPONSES TO SCORES

Twenty-two indicators (six economic, nine social, and seven psychosocial) were thus utilized to calculate dimensional and overall reintegration scores. Annex 1 presents a mapping of answer choices to binary indicators. While the majority of indicators were designed for binary responses, for some of these, in particular those around child labour, more complex rules were utilized to assess whether a response was contributing to reintegration or the opposite. In some cases, where indicators were deemed especially important based on the sources detailed above, several questions were separately considered in the dimensional and overall scoring (e.g. education). This allows the user to obtain more information on the specific situation of the child (for instance as regarding education), while ensuring via the PCA approach (see below and Annex 2 for further information) that correlated indicators are not overweighted in the final results. The approach used for calculating weighting scores for the index centred on PCA.

BOX 9. PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS

In the context of thematic indices derived from indicator sets, PCA is a form of dimension reduction, whereby a set of variables (the indicators) are reduced to a single (semi-) continuous digest. Once the values of all the indicators (in binary true/false form) have been determined for each subject in our sample, a set of weights is determined, one for each indicator, such that the variation in the weighted sum of the indicators over the sample is maximized. PCA is thus used to reduce the data to a smaller number of dimensions designed to explain as much of the variation/dispersion in the data as possible. The weights computed from observed data produce an index whose scores have maximal variance in the observed sample. *It is important to note that all scores and weightings are based on the sample in this study, that is 146 returnee children across five countries. As more data is gathered, the technique should be re-performed to improve the accuracy of the weightings.*

Further technical details on the PCA scoring methodology are presented in Annex 2.

4.2.2 EXPLORING REINTEGRATION BASED ON INDEX RESULTS

Exploring the scores and findings

While sample sizes from the fieldwork are low, indicatively exploring results shows reintegration scoring – and concerns – in line with the broader findings from the secondary literature. Scores are only calculated in the different dimensions, but aggregated via simple average into an overall child reintegration metric.

- More than anything else, the country in which respondents are located stands out as a key differentiator along reintegration scores. Table 9 below highlights, for example, the fact that children in Iraq are worse off across the board and children in Georgia comparatively the best off, on average. While child returnees in Ethiopia appear to be doing particularly well, this is largely driven by their economic score, and in particular that of girls, which is disproportionately high (0.63 for girls compared to 0.35 for boys), suggesting the small sample size on this subgroup may be responsible for this.

TABLE 9. AVERAGE REINTEGRATION SCORE BY COUNTRY AND DIMENSION

	AVERAGE OF ECONOMIC SCORE	AVERAGE OF SOCIAL SCORE	AVERAGE OF PSYCHOSOCIAL SCORE	AVERAGE SCORE
ETHIOPIA	0.47	0.69	0.72	0.62
GEORGIA	0.36	0.83	0.76	0.65
HONDURAS	0.23	0.71	0.62	0.52
IRAQ	0.19	0.66	0.33	0.39
NIGERIA	0.24	0.60	0.50	0.45
OVERALL	0.30	0.70	0.60	0.53

The results in Table 10 below for female’s economic scores are similarly impacted by the results in Ethiopia; without these, the average economic score for females would be 0.25, further driving down the overall average score for females, which is worse than that of males.

TABLE 10. AVERAGE REINTEGRATION SCORE BY SEX AND DIMENSION

	AVERAGE OF ECONOMIC SCORE	AVERAGE OF SOCIAL SCORE	AVERAGE OF PSYCHOSOCIAL SCORE	AVERAGE SCORE
FEMALE	0.32	0.69	0.56	0.52
MALE	0.28	0.71	0.64	0.55
GRAND TOTAL	0.30	0.70	0.60	0.53

- Exploring age as a dimension of reintegration finds that, generally, younger children seem to reintegrate more easily socially (average score of 0.76 in the social dimension, dropping steadily with age to reach an average of 0.60 for those now 18 and older), but that older children appear to cope

Figure 11. Average reintegration scores by age

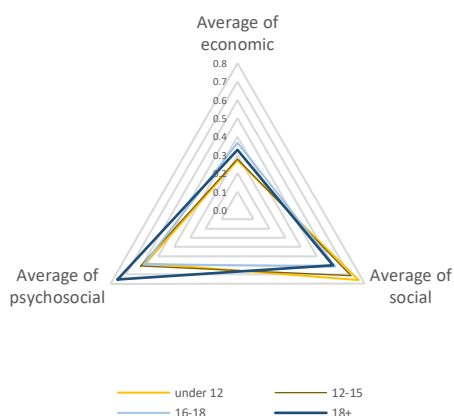
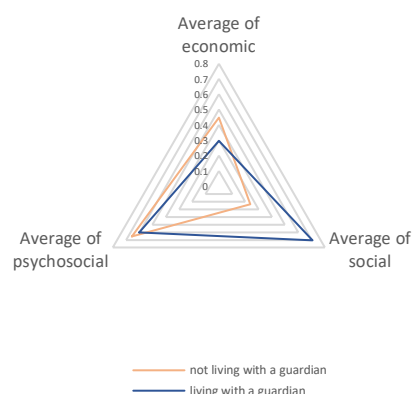


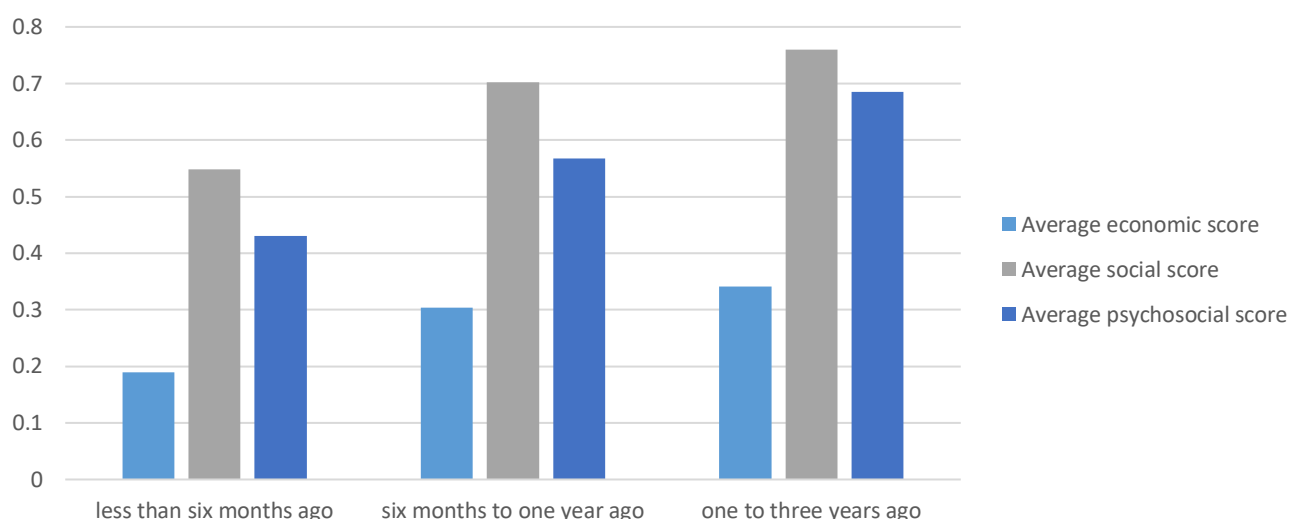
Figure 12. Average reintegration score living with a guardian



better psychologically. From a methodological perspective, this underlines the need for caution with psychosocial questions for the youngest children in particular, to avoid causing (further) distress.

- Speaking the local language indicatively has the largest impact on the economic scores – (0.31 on average for those who to speak the language versus 0.21 for those who do not). On the social front, the influence of this variable appears minor (0.70 for both groups), despite literature suggesting a key impact on the social side; this will require further tracking as the population who do not speak the local language is very limited. Living with a guardian (Figure 12) primarily impacts the social score; this was confirmed by regression analysis.
- Research conducted for IOM under the MEASURE project, funded by the United Kingdom Department for International Development, had underlined that reintegration is generally not linear; “the qualitative data illustrate how the economic, social, and psychosocial dimensions vary over time, as shown in the W model used in this research”.¹²⁸ While initially respondents’ scores improved with the length of time since their return, after three years scores went down again. The severity of the initial reintegration may have been worsened in this case by COVID-19. However, more broadly, this suggests that after a certain amount of time, when support (such as it is) tends to cease and conditions remain difficult, returnees’ reintegration score may decrease again possibly prompting further migration. Confirming this tendency via regression analysis nuances this, showing that the longer time since return raises social scores, controlling for country, age, sex, time abroad, language skills, agreement with decision to return. In addition to time since return, time spent abroad also matters, in particular on the psychosocial dimension. The longer the time spent abroad, the worse respondents scored psychosocially. This reinforces the importance of better understanding questions of belonging.

Figure 13. Average scores, time since return



¹²⁸ Samuel Hall and IOM, MEASURE Project Final Internal Report.

4.3 STRENGTHENING THE TOOLKIT: LESSONS LEARNED FROM PILOTING

The Toolkit was piloted in five countries: Ethiopia, Georgia, Honduras, Iraq and Nigeria. This research experience provided:

1. Conceptual lessons learned, identifying points in the overall approach requiring refining;
2. Methodological lessons learned, allowing the team to assess which questions provided the expected information and selected specific questions which proved confusing or less interesting, requiring adaptations to the approach;
3. Operational lessons learned, highlighting areas where further guidance is needed in terms of how to utilize the Toolkit and key safeguarding considerations the team will need to factor in.

4.3.1 ASSESSING THE INITIAL APPROACH

Broadly, the pilot did not highlight any significant issues with the draft version of the Toolkit. However, two areas emerged as requiring further consideration: how to best – and most appropriately – capture the voices of younger children, and how best to assess psychosocial well-being.

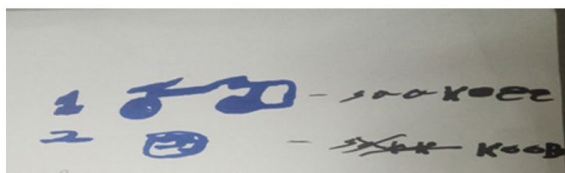
Capturing the voices of children of different ages of maturity.

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 significantly simplified case study format the former.¹²⁹ However, just as children on turning 18 do not immediately turn into adults with a completely 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. While with the oldest children, the current tools generally functioned smoothly, the younger age groups (7–9 and 10–13) varied greatly in their development and maturity. This poses methodological implications around both which tools are best suited to each child, and how to identify whether a child is – or is not – comfortable to participate in the research.

Considering the case study interviews conducted with 7–9-year-olds exposes a wide range of understanding and ability to respond to the questions posed, which in turn provided responses of varying degrees of relevance to the objectives of the interview. For example, when asked to draw about the most important parts of their lives, seeking to build a better picture of their current living situation, respondents drew images ranging from their families to their homes, to favourite toys and animals they like – all prompted by the same question (Figure 14).

¹²⁹ The tools for the older two age groups largely followed the same structure with the 10–13 age group asked fewer questions.

Figure 14. Question: Can you draw here a picture of the most important parts of your life here?
 What are the best parts of living here?



Yeah sure I can tell you about it [the picture]. This is a bicycle, [referring to the first picture], and this is also a ball [referring to the second picture]. So, my picture shows the two most important things I have loved since I came here. I have chosen to draw a bike because I enjoy biking with friends. I drew a ball because I love playing it and I want to be a professional footballer in the future.

Young boy, aged 9, Dire Dawa, Ethiopia



I drew Burney. He can jump, it can eat carrot too much and is my favorite animal.

I like dolphin too, because it can jump, it can't eat somebody.

Young boy, aged 8, Lagos State, Nigeria

I like the sky and I like the fields. I like living there with my family and run and play. I also play with my cousins and my friend in my neighborhood.

I like my school and I like playing under a tree in front of my school. My teacher is good and I have many friends. I like playing ball in the field of my school.

I like the days where the sky is blue and the sun is shining. I can play outside in the fields. I can run and play all day. I also like the rain because it's fun to play in the rain, although my mother does not let me do it because she says I can get sick.

Young girl, aged 7, San Pedro Sula, Honduras



Case studies guidelines were also deliberately designed in line with recommendations on conducting research with children of younger ages, including interactive elements, and prompting the enumerators not to force children to respond to questions. Despite this, even experienced and careful enumerators, then, may struggle to prompt children back onto the path of the research; in these exchanges, relevant points of information will likely appear, but require careful data review to identify. For example, in the case of a young boy in Nigeria (who drew the bunny in Figure 14), when asked to share his favourite things at home, responded as follows:

Interviewer: Do you have any of your favourite toys here now?

Respondent: Yes

Interviewer: Can I see

Respondent: I did not have it here but I know it

Interviewer: But you know it

Respondent: Motor (toy Car to play with)

Interviewer: But do you have any of the toys

Respondent: No

Interviewer: But you like it but you don't have them here now

Respondent: Yes

Interviewer: This is where you live, why are your toys not here?

Respondent: I don't have but my mum will buy them for me but she does not have money to buy it.

Interviewer: Your mum will buy it

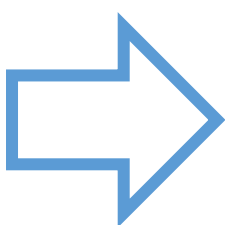
Respondent: When she has money, she will buy it

This exchange exemplifies the need for careful prompting to follow up to children's responses, to ensure their situation is understood, as children may not elaborate when points seem obvious to them. It further underlines that interviewers cannot assume that their answers will directly speak to the question posed. There

is thus a clear trade-off for reintegration practitioners. In seeking to ensure that the experience of being interviewed is appropriate to children, the relevance of what is said may be diminished, or more complicated to interpret. Significant time and efforts may be given to interviews with limited immediate trade-offs in terms of being able to directly monitor reintegration, but which could flag major problems. Furthermore, interviewers will require training to be able to appropriately conduct interviews with children.

UNICEF, in its 2017 Global Programme Framework on Children on the Move, underlines that “in many contexts, migrant and refugee children are perceived as distinct from other children and not seen and treated as children, regardless of their status. This is partly due to a lack of public knowledge on child rights, including the awareness that adolescents up to age 18 need to be considered as children.”¹³⁰ The qualitative research in particular from this pilot further underlines the degree to which giving clear guidelines differentiating maturity within this category may be more arbitrary – and yet is key as age shapes the reintegration experience of children and their capacity to communicate about it.

While developmental milestones can provide clear means of differentiating between younger children’s developmental stages, for the age group under consideration this is more complex. Key reference documents such as IOM and UNICEF’s Child Rights Approach to the Sustainable Reintegration of Migrant Children and Families rightfully underline the need to take into account children’s views “in line with the child’s age and maturity” in decision-making around durable solutions. However, no age-based guidelines are given around what this means; rather, it underlines that “case managers working with children should have a thorough understanding of the age of the child or children in relation to the stage of development. This means being educated on the physical, intellectual, emotional, social and language development of children from early childhood through adolescence.”¹³¹



From a toolkit perspective, this carries two main implications:

- Limits of age guidelines: While age-related guidelines are provided, users must recognize the limitations thereof; these should be taken as guidance, rather than hard and fast rulings on appropriateness. Users should consistently take the best interests of the child as the priority – and when in doubt, use the tool meant for younger children, or not at all.
- Assessing which children can safely participate: Following the above, there will be children who should not be interviewed using the Toolkit; the potential benefits of the information not outweighing the potential harm. Alternative approaches may be considered to assessing their reintegration such as interviews with parents/guardians or interviews with a stronger counselling approach.

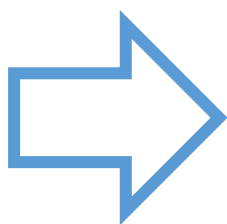
¹³⁰ UNICEF, Global Programme Framework on Children on the Move (2017), page 28.

¹³¹ IOM and UNICEF, Module 6, page 209 (see footnote 53).

Psychosocial well-being

Linked also to the question of developmental capacity is that of psychosocial well-being. In speaking about the impacts of conflict and forced displacement on children, UNICEF underlines: “Through it all, children often lack access to mental health and psychosocial support, with potentially devastating long-term effects. Anxiety, depression, and other stress-related problems threaten their ability to grow up healthy and happy. Violence can take a lifelong toll on their emotional health, physical health, and social development. If exposed in early childhood, the experience can even hamper a child’s brain development.”¹³² Some children interviewed directly detailed or alluded to psychologically distressing experiences. “I left my house with the coyote and crossed Guatemala, on bus and part in a motorcycle until we got to a place called Peten and then to Los Naranjos. There, a contact of the coyote helped us pass the border through a mountain to Mexico. There we stayed at a hotel waiting for another person that was also going to cross to the United States with us. When we stayed in Mexico something bad happened to me, I was abused by the coyote.” (16-year-old female, Honduras). In other cases, parents felt the need to explain sources of stress experienced by children.

Such experiences are frequently identified in descriptions of migration journeys of children. Existing literature on the topic underlines that “the risk for mental health conditions and psychosocial problems among children and adolescents is exacerbated when they are exposed to poverty, violence, disease or humanitarian crises. In recent years, the changing humanitarian contexts have created a more dangerous environment for children and adolescents’ well-being and development. Prolonged conflict, mass displacement, violence, exploitation, terrorism, disease outbreaks, intensifying natural disasters and climate change all present greater instability and more difficult conditions for children’s mental health and psychosocial well-being.”¹³³



From a toolkit perspective, this carries two main implications:

- Toolkit design: Elements such as drawing for the younger children, queries about favourite items and lifelines/open-ended questions have been included in the Toolkit to allow children to express themselves in a comfortable fashion. Pushing too hard to have a child answer these elements goes against their initial intent – and additionally, they are unlikely to result in strong data. Users can also consider active communications techniques which should help calm children and support them in expressing themselves, reinforcing the monitoring as a positive experience of itself. This can include active listening, normalization, and generation.¹³⁴
- Toolkit utilization: Save the Children *Psychological First Aid Training Manual for Child Practitioners – One-day Programme* includes a list of common signs of distress in children of ages targeted by this Toolkit (Figure 15).¹³⁵ Users should be carefully trained on these to ensure they understand when it may be appropriate to stop an interview to avoid harming a child, and furthermore when to refer the child to external psychosocial support.

¹³² UNICEF, “Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergencies” (2020).

¹³³ Ibid., page 8.

¹³⁴ For further recommendations, see Save the Children, “Psychological First Aid One Day Programme Manual,” (2017).

¹³⁵ Ibid., page 37.

Figure 15. Common signs of distress in children, as per Save the Children's psychological first aid training

COMMON SIGNS OF DISTRESS IN CHILDREN AGED 7-12 YEARS:	COMMON SIGNS OF DISTRESS IN CHILDREN AGED 13-18 YEARS:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their level of physical activity changes. • Confused feelings and behavior. • Withdrawal from social contact. • Talk about the event in a repetitive manner. • Show reluctance to go to school. • Feel and express fear. • Experience a negative impact on memory, concentration and attention. • Have sleep and appetite disturbances. • Show aggression, irritability or restlessness. • Have physical symptoms related to emotional stress. • Concerned about other affected people • Experience self-blame and guilt feelings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel intense grief. • Feel self-conscious, or guilt and shame that they were unable to help those that were hurt. • Show excessive concerns about other affected persons. • May become self-absorbed and feel self-pity. • Changes in interpersonal relations. • Increase in risk-taking, self-destructive and/or avoidant behavior or show aggression. • Experience major shifts in their view of the world. • Feels a sense of hopelessness about the present and the future. • Become defiant of authorities and caregivers. • Start to rely more on peers for socializing.

4.3.2 STRENGTHENING THE TOOLS

The piloting identified specific points to address within the draft Toolkit from a methodological perspective.

Refining the reintegration score indicators

The analysis conducted in developing the reintegration score, as well as feedback from teams in the field, underlined six indicators which may require revisiting based on responses.

- Unpaid labour. “Do you work, unpaid, regularly?” is counter-correlated with the rest of the indicators in the economic dimension. This may be due to the range of elements that can be understood by respondents as falling under this category. To keep it within the index would require splitting it into two questions, for example: “On an average day, how many hours do you spend doing unpaid work around the house/chores?” and “On an average day, how many hours do you spend doing unpaid work which contributes in some way to the household income?” Based on this the revised Toolkit eliminates this indicator and splits it into two questions for precision.
- Psychosocial indicators. The draft Toolkit asked children to assess how often they experienced seven different feelings: anger, sadness, fear, loneliness, feelings of low self-worth, stress and difficulty concentrating. While the spread in responses was not necessarily correlated, suggesting each was indeed considered separately by children, enumerators reported that some children struggled to distinguish between all of these. To ensure that the results are indeed representative of the experiences of children being monitored, we have recommended to reduce these to a core set of emotions – anger, sadness, fear and loneliness – which appear more consistently understood across contexts.
- Indicators where there is very little variance. In cases where nearly all respondents gave the same answer, variables are less interesting to include in the reintegration score, from a scoring perspective, as they do not allow for further distinction between children’s reintegration experiences. However,

these have been kept, when of interest for case management purposes. Four indicators showed very little variance, as noted in Table 11.

TABLE 2. REINTEGRATION SCORE INDICATORS SHOWING LEAST VARIANCE IN RESULTS

	SCORED FALSE	SCORED TRUE
1. Main household source of income. The household's income is sufficient to cover its needs	138 (95%)	8
2. Involvement of child in income-generating activities. Young children do not work at all, youth do not work too much, young adults do not work more than ILO standards recommend	9 (6%)	137
3. Access to parents/guardians. Respondent lives with parent/guardian.	2 (1%)	144
4. Child marriage. No plans for child marriage.	2 (1%)	144

Given the importance of these in the longer term and in specific contexts, and to flag potential key rights violations, we recommend keeping them in the Toolkit for the time being. This can be revised following broader testing of the Toolkit.

Wording selection

Based on feedback from children interviewed, as well as the teams' field experiences, the pilot test has also prompted several suggested rewordings. These generally centred around the simplification of questions in both the quantitative and qualitative tools. In the quantitative tool, for example, the younger children interviewed struggled to give clear/authoritative answers on the economic questions. The entire Toolkit has been revised for simpler language and to propose definitions and alternative wordings where they may be needed (e.g. five point scales to three point scales).

Country-specific priorities

As raised earlier, in each context, interviews and workshops identified specific factors of vulnerability of interest to reintegration practitioners locally in monitoring reintegration and vulnerability.

- Ethiopia: Source of original migration funding in Ethiopia
- Georgia: Physical/mental health of the child in question due to a higher prevalence of migration for medical reasons
- Honduras: Security in location of return
- Iraq: Sensitivity of conducting research, broadly
- Nigeria: Single parenthood

While, to allow for cross-context comparability, the reintegration index should remain consistent across locations. However, the revised Toolkit provides guidance around allowing country teams to determine 2–3 additional targeted questions to add to the main body of the tool, for the monitoring of these trends identified as important. These questions will not be included in the scoring, keeping comparability of scores across countries, but can be used by countries for case management purposes. In cases where this is done, this would require each country team responsible for leading the use of the Toolkit to agree to these prior to

launching monitoring, and review this selection of additional questions and the data stemming from them to confirm that they will indeed better inform programming. This could also provide an opportunity for teams to develop a carefully worded question tied to country-specific programming, as in several country workshops this was raised as a valuable potential add on.

Ensuring a “crisis-proof” Toolkit

The COVID-19 pandemic greatly complicated data collection in all contexts: governmental restrictions on movement limited access to potential participants in some contexts, while more broadly necessary precautions to ensure the research did not cause harm required adaptations to planned research methods. However, these were not the only crises to impact the research: in Honduras, recent hurricanes had displaced potential respondents from their homes, while in Ethiopia research location selection had to account for severe ongoing conflict in Tigray. Accordingly, the tools were also tested remotely. To allow for simpler implementation of remote tools, the Toolkit now proposes remote adaptations for its use, as well as guidance around remote research (for which we recommend using the younger child version of the Toolkit for all, to ensure scoring can still be conducted. See also [Section 4.3.3](#) for additional considerations). While the Toolkit includes specific guidelines around utilization, and potential modifications, this confirms that it cannot be considered a static one; there needs to be a willingness to consider adaptations to approaches (while keeping safeguarding prioritized and based on a core set of indicators to allow for comparability across countries) given the realities of the field which can rapidly change situations.

Assessing the broader environment in which tools are being used in the future is also needed to identify methodological adjustments needed due to the context. For example, currently, many of the questions around social belonging/integration are not necessarily symptomatic of reintegration, with for example households on lockdown in Georgia. Interviewees were instructed to respond to these COVID-19 aside, when possible, but of course more recent returnees that have returned since the COVID-19 outbreak, have not experienced return without restrictions. The weighing on these indicators may thus require further flexibility in the future due to this or other crises.

4.3.3 ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE FOR UTILIZATION

The Toolkit provides guidance on utilization, added based on pilot findings, as follows:

Translation. In each context, careful work must be done to translate – and back-translate – tools and consent forms into local language prior to use, and translations must subsequently be refined based on initial use. Children may, for example, find some formulations difficult to understand – the “ pilot highlighted several cases where children required a simpler translation, or cases where local wording differed from the standard.

Respondent identification. Across all five contexts, the identification of eligible respondents – both supported by IOM through AVRR or PARA programmes) and those who were not supported by IOM, which could include any type of child returnee not supported by IOM – proved more difficult than anticipated in initial discussions with country teams and field coordinators, as did securing consent to participate. While COVID- 19 has complicated the research landscape, other factors included the limited contact information across actors for children who had returned and out of date contact information. This calls for an improved means of storing and updating child returnee contact information. Country teams will need to ensure appropriate and safe means of storing this information to allow for monitoring.

Securing parental consent. One of the objectives of the Toolkit is to allow for the monitoring of the breadth of experiences of child returnees. This will include unaccompanied children, who should return to

parents/guardians.¹³⁶ Older children, especially, may not be still living with their parents/guardians at the time of research. While this situation did not occur during the research, country teams require clear guidance on consent procedures to follow in such cases. Practices and best practices require the consent of a parent or guardian prior to a child interview.

Prioritizing safeguarding. To avoid potential harm to children, or accusations of such, during the research, safeguarding procedures required that parents be within eyesight of interviews conducted, when these were conducted in person. In several instances, across contexts, parents attempted to interject themselves into the interview, seeking to answer questions which were not posed to them. This may discourage children from answering and expressing their points of view, which may differ from the experiences of the parents. Their presence can also pose a deterrent to the honest answering of certain questions by the child, in particular around their comfort in their home environment. However – the absence of this requirement poses a different, more concerning, set of risks. This underlines the need to identify safe and appropriate environments in which to conduct future monitoring, when done in person. This could include child-friendly spaces, or, when the weather and security permit it, research outdoors with space to ensure privacy.

Conducting remote research with children. The question of remote work – and how to conduct it on sensitive topics – is of relevance when faced with access restrictions. This has led to the development of guidelines for remote MHPSS activities. IOM Iraq's *Internal Guidelines for Remote MHPSS Working Modalities* provides guidance around remote consent and how to introduce work to parents, troubleshooting potential issues and the need for clear referral mechanism even in remote work.¹³⁷ UNICEF's *COVID-19: Operational Guidance for Implementation and Adaptation of MHPSS Activities for Children, Adolescents and Families*, underlines the need for child-adapted approaches to remote work and provides a reminder of some of the specific, age-differentiated challenges faced by minors under which may impact how they can participate in monitoring and the responses which they give.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ As defined in Article 1 of the UNCRC, unaccompanied children are children who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so. See footnote 2.

¹³⁷ IOM, *Internal Guidelines for Remote MHPSS Working Modalities | IRAQ MISSION* (2020).

¹³⁸ UNICEF, *COVID-19 Operational Guidance for Implementation and Adaptation of MHPSS Activities for Children, Adolescents and Families* (2020).



5 LOOKING AHEAD – ROLLING OUT THE TOOLKIT ACROSS RETURN CONTEXTS

5.1 WAY FORWARD

Existing guidance highlights that sustainable durable solutions for children must be “informed by the guiding principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child including the best interests of the child, the principle of non-discrimination, the right to survival and development and the right of the child to be heard in line with their age and maturity.”¹³⁹ Without information around the contexts of return, and the specific experiences of children on return, organizations and States cannot hold to this approach. Past research – and the responses of children in this study – underline the degree to which children’s voices are not being appropriately heard, with their involvement in returns decisions inconsistent, challenging sustainable reintegration from the start. When they have been heard, the focus has been on unaccompanied and separated children, generally rightfully identified as facing greater risks. Yet, thousands of children are returning with their families, and they also have the right to be heard.

The limited existing evidence around the reintegration of child returnees substantiates the breadth of migration journeys they have had, and the differentiated challenges they may face upon return, including from others in their same family. In addition to the child-specific rights they must be able to access, as per the UNCRC, the time they have spent abroad, the languages they speak, their experiences abroad all contribute to how they experience returns and whether or not sustainable reintegration is achievable. In some cases, children are returning to completely unfamiliar environments. Returns are not linear, and as such to effectively support children, actors must be able to understand, over time, how children’s reintegration journeys are proceeding, with age-appropriate tools to doing so.

The Toolkit developed and field-tested through this study represents an important step in allowing these experiences to be consistently monitored, enabling organizations to develop more appropriate responses to ensure returns can represent a real durable solution. It allows actors not just to monitor individual reintegration journeys – and, over time, to understand whether or not these are in fact occurring – but also to develop an evidence base, which will allow for the development and refinement of more adapted programming based on responses, as well as needed evidence for effective advocacy. The combination of quantitative and qualitative interactive tools allows for the monitoring of children of different ages and background and takes into account the different changes of development, which children have attained. This Toolkit comes in the sequence of work begun by IOM with Samuel Hall in 2017 under the United Kingdom Department for International Development-funded MEASURE project to operationalize a more principled approach to sustainable reintegration.

The recommendations are designed to ensure the relevance and usability of this Toolkit. Monitoring children’s reintegration requires trained staff, appropriate environments in which to conduct the research, and a willingness to invest funding, time and energy into a process which will not consistently deliver usable results as interviews with adults. Truly exploring the sustainability of reintegration will require shifts beyond implementing agencies, to the donors behind this, to ensure the willingness to support this monitoring process

¹³⁹ IOM and UNICEF, Module 6, page 197 (see footnote 53).

not just as they tie to specific, short-term processes but also for long-term monitoring to better understand child reintegration.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USE

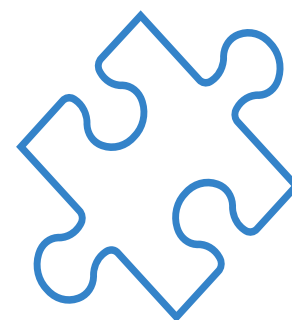
Recommendations for use are proposed around three key areas:

Figure 16. Recommendation themes



I. MONITORING APPROACHES – Preparing effective, appropriate and efficient child reintegration monitoring

During the research, the need for further guidance within reintegration practitioners and stakeholders on how to appropriately prepare interviews and monitoring efforts with children emerged strongly. Conducting interviews with children, especially those who have been through experiences causing psychological distress, requires a range of skills, depending on the age and background of the child. To ensure that the Toolkit can be implemented placing the well-being of children at the heart of the approach, institutionalized within operational processes, it is recommended to:



1. Conduct detailed trainings around the purpose of the Toolkit and its utilization

Reintegration practitioners and other potential Toolkit users (government and staff of partner organizations) will require detailed training prior to use. This should cover: the Toolkit itself, ensuring users fully understand all of the questions; guidance on conducting research with children, including how to organize it, and where to hold it; safeguarding trainings, including a module around securing parent/guardian consent and child assent; guidance around potential signs of distress/when to stop an interview; guidance on conflict sensitive approaches. From the workshops conducted as part of this research, it was underlined that this training should be provided not just to M&E or case management staff but also to other staff who may use the Toolkit. Particular training should be given around conducting interviews with the youngest group covered by this toolkit (7–9-year-old children).

2. Prepare a referral mechanism to be used with research participants

When such a mechanism does not already exist, prior to conducting any interviews, Toolkit users must develop a referral mechanism for child returnees. Where it does exist, it must be updated to the locations where interviews will be conducted. This process should:

- Identify and understand existing referral procedures, including local and national laws;
- Be aligned and integrated with safeguarding procedures;
- Map/identify referrals focal points who can support Toolkit users in making referrals;
- Detail reintegration support available through partners, organizations and local authorities and governments, and map out where it is available;
- Detail broader education and child protection support mechanisms to which referrals can be made as needed;
- Liaise with each referral organization, agreeing on modes of referrals and needed information sharing;
- Assess the capacity of each organization (to avoid overloading organizations and assuming children's needs have been addressed);

This will allow Toolkit users to address violations of children's rights uncovered through the research. Once such a mechanism is in use, it will require a regular monitoring, to ensure it is functioning as planned, the identification of any gaps and action points, and the refinement of the referral process.

3. Mainstream the Toolkit at the country organizational level

Staff may not immediately start implementing the monitoring Toolkit with all child returnees. A clear rationale should be developed with whom it will be used, and why, as well as any factor used to make decisions in terms of which children to prioritize interviewing at the country level. Given the fact that this requires time investment, and in some cases emotional investment, on the part of children, users should be able to justify the decision to interview these children – and planned use of data – clearly. During the workshops organized, participants across the different countries underlined that monitoring of child reintegration – when it exists – tends to be project-focused rather than mission-focused, as are the resulting databases. Once data is collected, information gathered using it should thus be considered at a country level, allowing for stronger programming and evidence-based decision making.

4. Ensure data protection and safeguarding within organizations

Monitoring children requires tracking their personal contact information. Returnee contact information is not always stored at a country level, with data often gathered programmatically. Data collection conducted using the Toolkit should abide by industry standard data protection principles and GDPR guidelines (when applicable), specifically those on purpose limitation, data minimization, storage limitation and confidentiality. The data should be used only for the stated purposes. Particular attention should be paid to ensure the personal information of children and their experiences is not compromised when teams are coordinating and sharing child returnees' personal information for use with the Toolkit. Any external data sharing and coordination requires specific data sharing agreements. This will be of particular importance in any coordination with local authorities.

5. Identify appropriate monitoring interview locations

Conducting research with children while taking appropriate precautions to do no harm requires the identification of appropriate locations to conduct interviews. These should allow for a comfortable

conversation between the child and the interviewers; parents should be within eyesight, but if possible, not listening to the interview, to allow children to answer questions without feeling parental pressure. On balance, should parents insist on listening to the interview, Toolkit users should make a note of this in their transcripts, to make clear that certain answers may have been influenced by this. Child-friendly safe spaces, quiet spaces outside and more can prove conducive environments to allow children to express themselves freely.

II. MONITORING STAKEHOLDERS – Building monitoring participation across the ecosystem

One of the purposes of this monitoring Toolkit is to build broader participation in children's reintegration across their ecosystems, including giving children themselves a voice about their experiences. This voice can – and should – go beyond participating in the Toolkit. The Toolkit opens a further dialogue on this, including questions to allow children to provide feedback and recommendations around their needs and experiences, but this is not enough. Beyond children, official and unofficial coordination networks, and more localized members of children's ecosystems can be key partners.



1. Integrate a child feedback loop on experiences

The Toolkit provides specific questions to allow children to not just raise needs but also to share advice for other children in their situation as well as to governmental and other authorities. This advice provides valuable insights into the perspectives of what children themselves view as priorities. There is a tendency to consider children only as beneficiaries of support, rather than as agents in their own right.

2. Co-designing future programming

Building on Toolkit findings, users could seek to co-design in the future reintegration programming with children themselves. Rather than a top-down approach taking a purely rights-based approach, or building on what has succeeded elsewhere, this would allow for a more localized approach building on what children themselves consider to be important. That being said, children will vary in their ability to give concrete, actionable feedback depending on their age and development.

3. Work through existing coordination networks and local ecosystems

In some contexts, coordination networks of actors exist - whether very local such as the CCCs in Ethiopia or national-level such as the cluster system - but are rarely utilized to support child reintegration despite the significant need for referrals evidenced by this research. In contexts where no formal coordination networks exist, a number of stakeholders could positively contribute to children's reintegration and may not currently be involved in doing so. The results from this pilot underline that in most cases, child returnees' ecosystems are currently very constrained. Programming seeking to identify such potential stakeholders and develop means for them, within their current responsibilities, to more easily support child returnees will be key to the sustainability of returns.

III. MONITORING STANDARDS – Ensuring safe and adaptive monitoring practices

The Toolkit was piloted in contexts with access limitations due to both COVID-19 and security issues. It tested initial remote adaptations via phone surveys. Others may eventually be further tried (e.g. self-assessments via tablet or phone, child group discussions where individual interviews may not be appropriate and so on) to ensure the appropriateness of the Toolkit to the local situation.



1. Mainstream the Toolkit within existing approaches

To reduce the risk of respondent fatigue, and maximize the impact of the Toolkit, the country-level monitoring strategy should consider how the Toolkit will fit into existing user (monitoring- and programming-linked data collection efforts, and how it may also fit within broader country-level initiatives, in particular with national governments. For example, this Toolkit could be integrated within existing national case management frameworks.

2. Conduct regular context and access assessments

The COVID-19 situation makes it challenging to implement face-to-face data collection. While it is understood that the current context and restrictions will evolve, the situation makes it challenging to anticipate what will be needed to adequately implement the Toolkit. While there are certain areas where data collection can be conducted in person, additional approvals are required to do so. Both access and safety must be regularly monitored given the rapidity with which a situation can evolve to ensure the safety of both staff and children being interviewed.

3. Ensure a conflict-sensitive approach in all monitoring

Beyond the broader security of the context and access, actors using the Toolkit must take a conflict-sensitive approach in preparing and implementing it. Part of the training previously mentioned should consider conflict sensitivity; during Toolkit use, organizations must ensure the information from the context and access assessments is taken into account, and regularly updated. An adaptive approach is needed to ensure that contextual evolutions do not result in monitoring participants being placed in harm's way.

These recommendations are not designed to be used independently; holistic progress is needed across all three dimensions. Strong partnerships with local organizations, for example, are crucial to being able to take a conflict-sensitive approach in all monitoring, as well as to preparing referrals mechanisms and co-designing programming.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Initial findings highlight several areas around which further information is required to be able to develop stronger methodological approaches for monitoring and programming:

1. Intersectionality of vulnerabilities. Additional participatory research is needed to better understand how different vulnerabilities can together impact children's reintegration. Given the important role which context plays in this, it is recommended to focus on 1–2 countries or contexts of particular

interest (or with multiple known vulnerabilities, and working with children) to develop stronger models to address these vulnerabilities holistically through programming.

2. MHPSS services for child reintegration. Findings from the piloting underline the massive gap in psychosocial support for returning children across contexts – despite widespread psychologically distressing or destabilizing experiences during migration and on return. Additional research with MHPSS practitioners and major stakeholders to develop an initial plan of action to address this gap in the short and long term can provide a basis for both advocacy and action within return contexts.
3. Research with very young children. Many child returnees are quite young - in some cases, babies or toddlers born during a parent's journey abroad. The current Toolkit is not designed for use with them; however, it is very likely that they too present differentiated reintegration experiences, and, crucially given existing evidence around the importance of the 'first thousand days', differentiated needs to ensure their positive development. Specific research is called for to develop safe, appropriate means of conducting research with this population and their ecosystems to also monitor their return.
4. Research on education continuity. Educational journeys are interrupted both by migration itself and by returns. The profiles of child returnees' educational journeys vary dramatically by context; in some cases, they will have received better access to education in displacement than before, in others, migration may have stopped their education. Additional work is needed to profile these in more depth and identify a range of appropriate solutions which stakeholders can implement to promote continuity of education across contexts.
5. Research on referrals. Referrals form an important part of reintegration success; returnees are directed to organizations outside of those providing original support (if any) to support them on return. Yet, limited cross-context and cross-programme monitoring has been conducted to understand the quality and effectiveness of such referrals.¹⁴⁰ This is especially important when considering referrals for children, as referral organizations must take into account the differentiated needs and rights of children to provide appropriate support.
6. Child-led returns research. The present underlines the importance of considering children's voices – and the potential offered by children as actors rather than simply participants in their reintegration. This could be mirrored in a research piece drawing on participatory action research approaches to better understand reintegration and returns experiences and identify any 'missing pieces'

¹⁴⁰ The EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub's second Knowledge Bite begins to address this gap by exploring sustainable reintegration outcomes following referrals and understanding the effect of referrals on returnees' satisfaction with the reintegration assistance received. A forthcoming qualitative study will further build on these findings to understand the reasons behind the negative effect of outwards referrals on sustainable reintegration scores and the levels of satisfaction among returnees. See EU-IOM Knowledge Management Hub, Knowledge Bite #2. Sustainable Reintegration Outcomes Following Referrals for Reintegration Support (2021).

ANNEX 1. INDICATOR MAPPING

DIMENSION	INDICATOR	QUESTION	NOTE	ANSWER MAPPING		
Economic	The child's household's income is sufficient to cover its needs.	Is your household's income enough to cover its needs?	Not enough income considered negative. Guardian answer used where available.	Yes = TRUE No = FALSE N/A = FALSE		
	Young children do not work. Youth do not work too much. Young adults do not work more than is considered acceptable by the International Labour Organization (ILO).	Do you work for pay regularly?	Considered negative for children under the age of 13 if working at all. Considered negative for children between 13 and 16 if work hours exceed 16 hours per week. Considered negative for children and youth over the age of 18 if working more than 48 hours per week pas per ILO standards.	If age < 13: Yes = FALSE N/A = FALSE No = TRUE	12<age<17 Yes & number of hours per week >16 = FALSE Yes & number of hours per week <16 = TRUE No= TRUE	If age >16 Yes & number of hours per week >48 = FALSE Yes & number of hours per week <48 = TRUE No= TRUE
	The child's household is not in debt.	Is your household in debt?	All debt considered negative. Guardian answer used where available.	Yes = FALSE No = TRUE N/A = FALSE		
	The child does not remember having had less or worse food because of a lack of money since return.	Do you remember having had less or worse food because of lack of money since you returned?	Worse or less food considered negative.	Yes = FALSE No = TRUE N/A = FALSE		
	The child is satisfied or very satisfied with the household's	How is the situation with	Bad or very bad considered negative. Guardian	Very bad = FALSE Bad = FALSE N/A = FALSE		

	current economic situation*	money in your home?	answer used where available.	Ok = TRUE Good= TRUE Very good= TRUE
	The household has savings.	Is your household able to save any money?	No savings considered negative.	No = FALSE N/A = FALSE Yes = TRUE
Social	The child likes the house they live in.	How much do you like the house you live in?	Not liking dwelling considered negative.	Yes, a lot = TRUE Yes, a little = TRUE Neither like nor dislike = FALSE No, I dislike it = FALSE No, I strongly dislike it = FALSE
	The child has at least one official identification document (ID).	Do you have at least one official identification document?	Not having ID considered negative.	Yes = TRUE No = FALSE N/A = FALSE
	The child lives with a parent or guardian.	Do you live with your family or a guardian?	Not living with guardian considered negative.	Yes = TRUE No = FALSE N/A = FALSE
	The child is happy with the people they are living with.	Are you happy with the people you are living with right now?	Not doing so considered negative.	Yes = TRUE No = FALSE N/A = FALSE
	The child is not subjected to child marriage.	Are you married or are you getting married in the next few months?	All child marriage considered negative.	Yes = FALSE No = TRUE N/A = FALSE
	The child has access to health care.	Do you have access to formal health care?	Not having access considered negative.	Yes = TRUE No = FALSE N/A = FALSE
	The child has received schooling abroad which is recognized upon return.	Is your schooling abroad recognized here?	Absence of recognition considered negative. Those who have not had access to schooling abroad classed as FALSE.	Yes = TRUE No = FALSE N/A = FALSE
	The child is currently attending school.	Do you go to school currently?	Not going to school considered negative.	Yes = TRUE No = FALSE N/A = FALSE

	The child is currently attending school regularly.	How often do you attend your classes?	Sometimes and rarely considered negative. No school attendance at all considered negative.	Very often = TRUE Often = TRUE Sometimes = FALSE Rarely = FALSE N/A = FALSE School_attendance = FALSE = FALSE
Psychosocial	The child regularly participates in social activities.	How often, if at all, do you participate in social activities within your community?	Often and very often considered positive.	Very often = TRUE Often = TRUE Sometimes = FALSE Rarely = FALSE Never = FALSE I returned since COVID has started = FALSE
	The child has friends in the community.	Do you have friends in this community?	No friends considered negative.	Yes = TRUE No = FALSE N/A = FALSE
	The child has access to a space where they can socialize.	Is there a space where you and your friends can safely meet to socialize?	No such space considered negative.	Yes = TRUE No = FALSE I returned since COVID has started = FALSE
	The child is discriminated against due to their returnee status. **	Do you feel that you are treated differently because you are a returnee? If yes: Are you treated more positively or more negatively than others because of this?	Being treated differently <i>and</i> negatively is considered negative.	Not treated differently = TRUE Positively = TRUE Negatively = FALSE I don't know = FALSE Prefer not to say = FALSE
	The child feels like they belong.	Do you feel like you belong to the community?	Not belonging considered negative.	Yes = TRUE No = FALSE N/A = FALSE
	The child does not often experience symptoms of psychological distress.	How often to you experience: - feeling angry	Experiencing at least one of these often or very often is	Number of "often" or "very often" > 1 = FALSE Else TRUE

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sad - afraid - stressed - lonely - feeling of low self-worth - difficulty concentrating 	considered negative.	
	The child feels comfortable and secure outside.	Do you feel comfortable and safe outside of your house?	Not feeling safe considered negative.	Yes = TRUE No = FALSE N/A = FALSE

*Question adjusted in post-piloting phase. Previous wording: How satisfied are you with your household's current economic (financial) situation, with the answer options ranging from satisfied to dissatisfied.

**Question added in post-piloting phase. Previously, one the question "Do you feel that you are treated differently from others because you have come back from abroad?" was asked, with all positive answers deemed negative and scored accordingly. The current phrasing reflects that the child returnee might also be perceived in a more positive light than their peers who have not migrated.

ANNEX 2. PRINCIPAL COMPONENT ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

In the context of thematic indices derived from indicator sets, PCA is a form of dimension reduction, whereby a set of variables (the indicators) are reduced to a single (semi-) continuous digest. The most important quality of this digest is that for any two subjects that have all the same indicator values but one, the subject with the better indicator value has a greater digest value, or “score”. This we can call the strict incrementality condition.

In the creation of this index, we require all indicators to have binary (true/false) values, and the true value to be clearly preferable to the false. To this end, the choices of one survey question or combinations of choices of several questions are each mapped to either true or false, where the choices that reflect a more desirable state map to true.

Once the values of all the indicators have been determined for each subject in our sample, a set of weights is determined, one for each indicator, such that the variation in the weighted sum of the indicators over the sample is maximized (in this weighted sum, the value of “true” is 1 while the value of “false” is 0, so that the sum is actually the sum of the weights for which the indicator is true). This weighted sum is called the first principal component (PC1) of the observed values of the indicators. This weights optimization is performed through some relatively simple linear algebra computations in R.

That said, the selection of weights is not guaranteed to assign a positive weight to every indicator. For example, it may assign a negative weight to every indicator, since variation does not depend on the sign. In this case, we reverse all the signs without affecting the validity of PC1. Under some circumstances, one or more weights may be negative or so close to zero as to be negligible. This generally happens when an indicator is counter-correlated or statistically independent from all other indicators. This might or might not suggest this indicator is not appropriate for inclusion in the index. However, allowing negative weights violates the strict incrementality condition. Thus, we set negative weights to zero, but then this might lead to eliminating indicators that we explicitly wish to consider a priori.

To address this possibility, we introduce another common index weighting scheme, the uniform weight index (UW). This index assigns an equal weight to every indicator, regardless of its contribution to the overall variation, thus guaranteeing that every indicator gets a voice, so to speak. Once we have computed these weights, we average PC1 and UW for each indicator, thus resulting in a hybrid index that ensures a high (though not maximal) degree of variation of the scores in the sample while ensuring that all indicators are given significant weighting.

It should be noted that indices built from categorical variables are never strictly continuous since “n” indicators with true/false values can only assume “2n” combinations of values whereas a continuous variable must be able to take on an uncountable infinity of values.

Finally, the values were mapped to values between 0 and 1 for ease of interpretation.

Mathematical presentation

The PCA methodology for computing the index computes a weighted sum of the indicators coded as true = 1 and false = 0. The weights computed from the first principal component of the observed data produces an index whose scores have maximal variance in the observed sample. However, for small, non-random samples, such an index can be unstable to small variations in the sample pool and may produce counter-intuitive results such as zero or even negative weights. To improve this instability, we create a hybrid index, whereby we:

1. Constrain the PCA-computed weights to non-negative values;
2. Average the thus constrained PCA-computed weights with a set of uniform, weights (equal weight to each indicator).

Thus, ensuring significant inclusion of all selected indicators in the index. The various dimensions of the child integration index are constructed as weighted sums of the possession of various desirable characteristics or situations. Thus, a household "k" has a score "y_k(t)" at time "t" where t=0 at the time of the baseline.

$$y_k(t) = \sum_{i=1}^n w_i x_{ik}(t)$$

x_{ik}(t) is a binary variable which indicates whether household "k" possesses or evinces quality "i" at time "t", and the constant weight "w_i" is a compromise between a uniform weight and a variance based weight "w_{-i}". This ensures that all characteristics are considered, but that those which explain a larger fraction of the total variance in the sample are weighted more heavily:

$$w_i = \frac{1}{2} \left(\frac{\bar{w}_i H(\bar{w}_i)}{\sum_j \bar{w}_j} + \frac{1}{n} \right)$$

Here the heaviside function HH is defined:¹⁴¹

$$H(x) = \begin{cases} 0 & x \leq 0 \\ 1 & x > 0 \end{cases}$$

to ensure w_i>0. The variance based component "w_{-i}" is computed as the first principal component of the observed values of x_{ik}(0) at the baseline.

$$\tilde{\mathbf{w}} = \text{PCA}_1^+ [\mathbf{X}]$$

$$\mathbf{X} = \begin{bmatrix} x_{11}(0) & x_{21}(0) & \cdots & x_{n1}(0) \\ x_{12}(0) & x_{22}(0) & \cdots & x_{n2}(0) \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ x_{1m}(0) & x_{2m}(0) & \cdots & x_{nm}(0) \end{bmatrix}$$

Where:

$$\text{PCA}_1^+[\xi] = \begin{cases} \text{PCA}_1[\xi] & \sum \text{PCA}_1[\xi] \geq 0 \\ -\text{PCA}_1[\xi] & \sum \text{PCA}_1[\xi] < 0 \end{cases}$$

is the first principal component oriented such that the sum of its elements is non-negative.

¹⁴¹ HH here stands for household.

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Credits:

Page 10. Unaccompanied migrant child awaiting to be reintegrated plays football at IOM's transit centre. © IOM 2021/Haimanot ABEBE.

Page 37. Children show off their various artwork they made during class at the SSG in Hatay. © IOM 2016/Muse MOHAMMED.

Page 51. Children take part in gym activities in a special school in Quito for migrant children. The school also provides meals for the children, whom many come from poor families that might not be able to afford the most basic of supplies. © IOM 2019/Muse MOHAMMED.

Page 68. This school in the Bahamian capital Nassau opened its doors to hurricane-affected children, including Haitian migrants, displaced from Abaco Island in the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian. © IOM 2019/Muse MOHAMMED.

Page 86. Celebration of International Day of the African Child in Burkina Faso. © IOM 2019/Alexander BEE.



Samuel Hall

Samuel Hall is a social enterprise that conducts research, evaluates programmes and designs policies in contexts of migration and displacement. Our approach is ethical, academically rigorous, and based on first-hand experience of complex and fragile settings.

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