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# A CHILD RIGHTS APPROACH TO THE SUSTAINABLE REINTEGRATION OF MIGRANT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

# 6



This Module was developed in collaboration with





## OVERVIEW

In 2019, the number of international migrants reached 272 million; 33 million of them were children.<sup>51</sup> Migrant children are considered vulnerable whether accompanied by parents or caregivers, unaccompanied, meaning they are not being cared for by adults legally responsible for them, or separated from their primary caregivers but not necessarily other adults.<sup>52</sup> This vulnerability may be situational, arising from their dependence on irregular migration routes, conveyance by smugglers, exposure to traffickers, or inherent, based on their status as children.<sup>53</sup> Migrant children's vulnerability including the risk of violence, exploitation and abuse is intensified when they are unaccompanied or separated.<sup>54</sup>

The motivations for migrating are often mixed, complex and may overlap; whether children migrate alone or simply accompany their families, the decision having been made by adults. Motivations include escaping conflict and persecution, the pursuit of safety and protection, and the fulfilment of personal aspirations. Often, options for long-term stay in transit and host countries are limited to the right to seek asylum, complementary pathways such as humanitarian visas, family reunification, temporary permits and other regularization schemes. Children who are unable to regularize their stay or lose their status in the course of their stay in host countries are faced with the possibility of return. Return to countries of origin can be assisted or spontaneous. It is prompted by changes in conditions in the country of origin or host country, a desire to reunite with family members, exhaustion of viable options to regularize their stay in the host or destination country, forced return or deportation. Ultimately, children return unaccompanied or with their families because they are unable or unwilling to remain in the host country.

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. Return (and reintegration) is one of the possible sustainable solutions for migrant children. This module focuses specifically on this sustainable solution, whilst local integration and resettlement are not discussed.

Children should never return to a situation where they would be at risk of harm, or their life would be in danger, in contravention of the principle of non-refoulement. To ensure the best interests and welfare of the child including their development into adulthood within an environment that promotes their rights, the return process should be accompanied by sustainable reintegration assistance. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) refers to reintegration as the process of reinclusion or reincorporation of migrants into their society following their return (see [Annex 10](#) for a list of key terms and definitions).

Further, IOM recognizes that the complex process of reintegration requires a holistic and rights-based response at the individual, community and structural level while establishing strong partnerships with key stakeholders. This ecological approach recognizes the importance of families, communities and the laws, policies and frameworks that guide them. Sustainable reintegration begins before the child leaves the host country by ensuring appropriate reception and care arrangements are made in the country of origin prior to the child's return.

51 See: <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-migration-and-displacement/migration/>.

52 UNCRF, General Comment No. 6 (2005) *Treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin* p. 5.

53 IOM, *Handbook for Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse* p. 251 (Geneva, 2019).

54 IOM, *Addressing the Needs of Migrant Children* (Geneva, 2018).

## SCOPE

The focus of this module is the reintegration of returnee children and their families. It represents a collaborative effort between the IOM and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and is based on a literature review, and consultation with child protection, development and reintegration experts. As part of the development process, field visits were conducted to Central America, and East and West Africa to inform case studies and practical examples. The module is conceived as a hands-on tool on how to integrate and promote appropriate reintegration practices for returnee children. It focuses on strengthening child protection and social welfare systems, case management to facilitate referral to education, social protection, health care, access to justice and other appropriate services, and recommends the prioritization of community and family resources and practices.

The module targets a range of stakeholders involved in the provision of reintegration-related support at various levels and stages, including child protection actors, migration authorities, local service providers, and development partners, among others. It caters to a range of returnee children including unaccompanied and separated children returning to their families, legal guardians and caregivers as well as children returning with their family members to their countries of origin. Age and gender-specific considerations are integrated throughout.

As forced returns are rarely assessed to be in the best interests of the child, the module focuses on the assisted voluntary return and reintegration of children and families in line with the child's best interests, with a recommendation that assistance be offered throughout the entire process.<sup>55</sup> However, it is recognized that migrant children may return and reintegrate in a number of contexts and circumstances which may include forced or spontaneous return with minimal or no assistance at any given segment of the return process. The module offers guidance which can also inform the reintegration assistance of children and families returning to their country of origin under these circumstances.

The module borrows practical examples from a range of reintegration, social integration, community development and other contexts which share common dynamics surrounding the reintegration process. All of the examples and guidance strive to provide suggestions to problem solve, work within available resources and ignite creative thinking in finding solutions to support returnee children and families. The module is not intended to be prescriptive but should be used flexibly in line with the context, available resources, profile and specific needs of returnee children and families.

## CONTENTS

The module follows the structure of the handbook with the aim of demonstrating child rights and child-sensitive approaches to reintegration assistance within the integrated approach. The module has five parts covering key principles for a child rights and integrated approach, child-sensitive reintegration at the individual, community and structural level and indicators for monitoring and evaluating reintegration assistance. The overall target audience are programme managers and developers, case managers, service providers, local and national government staff, implementing partners, donors and monitoring and evaluation officers. The target audience varies slightly in relation to each chapter and will be indicated accordingly.

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<sup>55</sup> Natalia Alonso Cano and Irina Todorova, Towards child-rights compliance in return and reintegration, *Migration Policy Practice: Special Issue on Return and Reintegration*. Vol. IX, Number 1, January–March 2019; pp. 15–21.

## 6.1 Key principles for a child rights and integrated approach to reintegration

### Key Messages

- The complex, multidimensional process of reintegration requires a holistic perspective to address the needs of returnee children and families.
- The integrated approach to reintegration focuses on the economic, social and psychosocial dimensions while responding to the needs of individual returnees, the families and communities they return to, and the structural factors that regulate them.
- A child rights approach to reintegration begins with a return decision arrived at in line with the child's best interests. Children who are returning as part of a family unit should be treated as individual rights holders, including applying the 'best interests' principle at all times. While forced returns are never assessed to be in a child's best interests, they still require child protection and social welfare authorities to identify and provide reintegration assistance to returnee children and families in their communities of origin.
- Sustainable reintegration is reinforced by supporting pre-departure planning where possible, and promoting cross-border cooperation between child protection, social welfare, immigration and other authorities.



### 6.1.1 An integrated approach to the reintegration of children and families

Module 1 examines considerations for an integrated approach to reintegration assistance. The premise of the integrated approach is that the complex, multidimensional process of reintegration requires a holistic response to address the needs of returnee children and families, taking into consideration their environment and personal circumstances. The integrated approach to reintegration focuses on the economic, social and psychosocial dimensions while responding to the needs of individual returnees, the communities they return to and the structural factors that regulate them.

The integrated approach consists of three levels of support:

- The individual level which addresses the specific needs and vulnerabilities of returnee children and returning family members;
- The community level which responds to the needs, vulnerabilities and concerns of communities to which migrants return;

- The structural level which promotes good migration governance, integration and engagement with local, national and transnational actors to facilitate social cohesion and access to support services for returnee children and their families.

Within each of these three levels, the integrated approach addresses three dimensions of reintegration:

- The economic dimension covers aspects of reintegration that support re-entry into economic life and promotes sustained livelihoods for families;
- The social dimension covers access to public services such as health, education, housing, justice and social protection schemes promoting the child's enjoyment of their economic, social and cultural rights;
- The psychosocial dimension covers the reinsertion of returnee children and their families into support networks involving friends, relatives, neighbours and civil society structures as well as reengagement with the values, ways of living, language, moral principles and traditions in the society of the returnee's country of origin, contributing to the enjoyment of cultural rights. This includes capitalizing on the resilience of returnees and reconciling their personal experiences and opinions with the values of their home communities.

Implementing an integrated approach through a child-rights and child-sensitive lens calls for an examination of the impact on the child of the role of families, of child protection and social welfare authorities, schools, communities, and policies and legislation. The levels and dimensions are not linear, mutually exclusive or prioritized in any order but in fact often influence and interact with each other.

Practitioners should ensure that information obtained about factors affecting children's reintegration, as a result of stakeholder-mapping and information-gathering, is used to work with and advocate to donor governments with regards to their reintegration support strategies, policies and programmes, to ensure that they give adequate consideration to the rights and needs of returnee children. Often the focus of reintegration assistance strategies on economic support for individual adults and for households can mean that children's specific needs are not sufficiently addressed. Social and psychosocial needs of returnees should be integrated into reintegration programmes along with economic needs. Donors should work with authorities in countries of origin to incorporate programming for child returnees into national structures and systems, and should provide consistent, long-term support through bilateral, regional or international programmes, prioritizing interventions and capacity development at the local level.

## 6.1.2 Establishing a comprehensive reintegration programme

The reintegration process is guided by the implementation of the best interest procedure and reintegration planning undertaken prior to return in the case of assisted returns, or upon arrival and identification in the country of origin following forced return. For assisted returns, reception and care arrangements including family tracing for unaccompanied children in line with the child's best interests are conducted prior to return. Upon arrival in the country of origin, integrated, cross-sectoral interventions supported by multi-stakeholder engagement help to advance sustainable reintegration.

### 6.1.2.1 Guiding principles for a child rights integrated approach to reintegration

The international legislative framework, policy instruments and guidance tools below form the basis for a common understanding, set of standards and guiding principles to ensure the protection, safe and dignified return and sustainable reintegration of migrant children and families to their countries of origin. The guiding

principles apply throughout the reintegration process, including before a return decision is arrived at in the host country:

- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol
- The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
- Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration
- UN Guidelines on Alternative Care (2009)
- UNGA Resolution on Children without Parental Care
- Child Protection Minimum Standards (2019)
- Inter-Agency Guidelines for Case Management and Child Protection

**The best interests of the child.** The best interests of the child should be ensured explicitly through individual procedures as an integral part of any administrative or judicial decision concerning the entry, residence or return of a child, placement or care of a child, or the detention or expulsion of a parent associated with his or her own migration status.<sup>56</sup> Considering the best interests of the child in the case of migrant children means finding a sustainable solution that secures their long-term protection, survival and development needs whether they are within a family, unaccompanied or separated from their parents or caregivers.<sup>57</sup> For unaccompanied children, family tracing and reunification if found to be in the child's best interests, alternative care and guardianship arrangements need to be ensured prior to return and to support the reintegration process. Return should not be pursued where it is contrary to the best interests of the child.

**Non-discrimination.** States are obliged to respect and ensure the rights of all children whether they or their parents are migrants in a regular or irregular situation, asylum seekers, victims of trafficking, stateless or returnee children.<sup>58</sup> Assistance should be provided to migrant or returnee children without discrimination or prejudice on the basis of nationality, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, language, social or any other status. It is recommended in practice to include the principle of non-discrimination in service providers' child safeguarding policies and other service delivery agreements.

**Promoting meaningful child participation.** Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) recognizes the child's right to be heard. It promotes respect for the child's right to express his or her views freely and for those views to be taken into account in all decisions in line with the child's age and maturity. The child should be involved in exploring available sustainable solutions and possible outcomes. If a decision on return is arrived at in accordance with the child's best interest the child should be kept informed at every stage of the return and reintegration process. Appointed guardians and legal representatives should facilitate information dissemination in an age-appropriate manner to ensure informed consent for unaccompanied and separated children.

56 Article 3(1) UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNCRC/CMW Committee, 2017, Joint general comment No. 3 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 22 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the general principles regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration, para 30.

57 Natalia Alonso Cano and Irina Todorova, *Towards child-rights compliance in return and reintegration, Migration Policy Practice: Special Issue on Return and Reintegration*. Vol. IX, Number 1, January–March 2019; pp. 15–21.

58 Article 2, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNCRC/CMW Committee, 2017, Joint general comment No. 3 (2017) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 22 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the general principles regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration, para 9.

**The principle of non-refoulement.** The principle of non-refoulement protects migrant children from return to countries where there are substantial grounds for believing they will be at real risk of irreparable harm. Considerations include a substantial risk to the child's life, survival and development as well as deprivation of liberty, and requires careful consideration of child-specific human rights violations and child-specific drivers of migration, such as threats of child marriage and other forms of gender-based violence, forcible recruitment into state and non-state armed groups, trafficking and other forms of exploitation and abuse, including the worst forms of child labour.

**Implementing a rights-based approach.** A rights-based approach requires the integration of human rights standards, norms and principles in all steps of the reintegration process. Sustainable reintegration efforts should be based on the rights and principles enshrined in the UNCRC and national legislation and applied taking into consideration the age, gender, ability or other status of the child.<sup>59</sup> Child protection, social welfare and other authorities involved in the reintegration process should strive to implement the full range of child rights during the reintegration process in accordance with their interdependent and indivisible nature requiring no child right to take precedence over another.<sup>60</sup>

**Confidentiality and Privacy.** Information-sharing protocols taking into consideration data protection standards should be developed between relevant States and among service providers. National authorities, social workers, case managers and service delivery organizations should appropriately secure confidential information including children's biodata and their migration or returnee status by sharing it only on a need to know basis, in accordance with the families' or guardians' consent, and the best interests of the child. Data protection protocols and firewalls should prevent sharing of information for immigration enforcement purposes.

**Do no harm.** Actors providing assistance have a duty of care and should assess the potential for harm of any proposed action. Assistance should not be provided, or it should be deferred if there is reason to believe that it might leave a migrant or returnee child worse off than before. Support for returnee children vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse should cause no harm to their family nor stigmatize them in their wider community.

**Prioritizing family unity.** A child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures, that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child.<sup>61</sup> Families have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. Thus, every precaution should be taken to preserve family unity, end child immigration detention, promote family strengthening to support a child's development and improve their immediate environment. This may include providing legal status to a child's family members in the host country or family tracing and reunification for unaccompanied children prior to return or upon identification and registration in the country of origin, if determined to be in the child's best interests.

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59 Delap, E. and J. Wedge, *Guidelines on Children's Reintegration*, p. 7 Inter Agency Group on Children's Reintegration (2016).

60 Ibid.

61 Article 9 (1) UNCRC.



**Multisectoral approach.** Supporting the ecology around the child as well as the multiple dimensions of a child's development requires a multidisciplinary and multisectoral approach involving a range of stakeholders, including the health, education and justice sectors, social and child protection actors, children, families, communities, civil society organizations, faith-based organizations, parliamentarians and the private sector. An assessment of the reintegration context, mapping of available reintegration assistance and developing referral mechanisms facilitates a multisectoral approach through coordinated reintegration assistance and related services.

**Strengthening child protection and welfare systems.** The sustainable reintegration of returnee children is best supported by a responsive, well-developed, child protection and welfare system which can identify, assess, address and monitor the needs of vulnerable children. Although targeted support for returning migrant children may be necessary upon arrival, the success and sustainability of community-based follow-up and reintegration will be dependent on the capacity of the child protection and welfare system. Therefore, reintegration efforts should focus on linking and integrating returning migrant children to child protection systems as well as strengthening the capacity of the social welfare authorities to respond to all vulnerable children. Bilateral cooperation to enhance cross-border case management and referral mechanisms at the national and community level promote a continuity of care for returnee children and families.

### 6.1.2.2 Key considerations for child-sensitive sustainable reintegration checklist

The key considerations checklist below provides suggestions for information gathering at the individual, community and structural level and applies across the economic, social and psychosocial dimensions taking into consideration the age, gender, ability and other characteristics of the child, as well as the stage of the return and reintegration process. In situations where return is decided by administrative or judicial authorities in the host country, the key considerations will impact the reintegration planning process. The key considerations checklist can be applied upon arrival in the country of origin or following identification as appropriate. The checklist applies to unaccompanied and separated children, and children in families during the pre-return, return and reintegration phase as relevant. It can be used to ensure that the return and reintegration process, identified priority needs and the best interests of migrant and returnee children, are aligned with the guiding principles above.

Individual level	Questions	UASC <sup>62</sup>	Children in families	Pre-return	Return	Reintegration
Safe environment	Is the family and household safe for the child?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Has there been past harm? If so, what is the frequency, pattern, trend? Do the unsafe conditions continue?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	What are the risks of child marriage, child labour, child trafficking, female genital mutilation (FGM) and other child rights violations?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

62 Unaccompanied and Separated Children.

Individual level	Questions	UASC	Children in families	Pre-return	Return	Reintegration
Family and close relationships	What have been and are now the child's significant relationships?	✓		✓	✓	✓
	What is the quality (including issues of safety and safeguarding) and duration of all the child's close relationships: parents; caregivers; siblings; other family members; other adults; and children in the cultural community?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	What is the child's attachment to them (length of any separation, age at separation and so forth)?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	What has been or would be the effect of separation from any significant relationship (in past and proposed future)?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	What could be the potential effect of a change in caregivers of the child?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	What is the capacity of parents, caregivers and those with close relationships?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	What are the views of caregivers and those close to the child?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	What is the possibility of family reunification (after tracing, verification and assessment of relationship)?	✓		✓		
Identity rights and development Rights	What child specific characteristics such as age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability or other characteristics have been considered?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	How can the child's identity, including nationality, name and family relations best be preserved?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	How can the child's upbringing (cultural and community network) best continue?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	How can the child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background best continue (that is, that the child's culture and traditions be best understood)? If a child has spent a long period outside his or her country of origin, he or she may have had different experiences. How can possible conflicts be explored and resolved before reunification?	✓		✓		
	How can rest and leisure, and engagement in play and recreational activities appropriate to his or her age be best realized?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	What action(s) will meet the child's right to physical and mental health?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	How can older youth be linked to the appropriate skills development, vocational training or sustainable microenterprise if there may be barriers for older youth choosing or enrolling in formal education?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	How can the child or young person best secure prospects for successful transitions to adulthood (employment, marriage, own family)?	✓	✓	✓		✓
Active consideration of child's views	Is information being given to the child about the process, options being considered, and the relevant considerations and consequences of each sustainable solution being considered in a manner the child understands?	✓	✓	✓		
	Have the child's views, wishes and feelings about each factor above been obtained (in the past, present and for the future regarding all possible sustainable solutions including return)?	✓	✓	✓		
	Has the child's understanding and maturity been assessed, that is, the child's ability to comprehend and assess the implications of the options?	✓	✓	✓		
	Has consideration been made as to what weight to place on the child's views (in light of above understanding)?	✓	✓	✓		

Community level considerations	Questions	UASC	Children in families	Pre-return	Return	Reintegration
Safe environment	What are the safety levels in the geographical locations under consideration, for instance, violence, child trafficking, risk of reprisals, recruitment of children into armed forces?	✓	✓	✓		✓
	What are the safety levels in the community, for instance community attitudes that may stigmatize certain children, including those who have migrated and return?	✓	✓	✓		✓
	What monitoring mechanisms are in place to ensure ongoing safeguarding assessments of the family context?	✓	✓			✓
Family and close relationships	What continuity (of people and places) is vital to a child's feelings of security and stability?	✓	✓	✓		✓
Identity rights and development rights	What is the level of access to and quality of education and learning outcomes – both current accessibility and the prospects for continuing in education? What are some sustainable solutions for payment of school fees and school-related costs?	✓	✓	✓		✓
	What is the level of access to and quality of health care and specialized support for children with additional needs, including psychosocial support?	✓	✓	✓		✓
	How can the child best secure a standard of living adequate for their physical, mental and psychological, spiritual, moral, and social development? What are the systems in place to provide adequate access to services?	✓	✓	✓		✓
Active consideration of child's views	What are the opportunities and community structures that allow the child to share their views and voice their priority needs?	✓	✓	✓		✓
Structural level considerations (such as national and local legislation or policy)	What is the level of safety in the society at large?					
	What is the prevalence of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community violence</li> <li>- Gender-based violence</li> <li>- Gender disparities or inequalities</li> </ul>					
	Are there groups or people who are particularly vulnerable and marginalized?					
	Is the child or family part of the identified vulnerable or marginalized groups?					
	Are there other social norms or stigma which may impact on the child's sense of safety?					
	What are the relevant frameworks, regulations and policies and laws in place to protect children, including the capacity of child protection and social welfare authorities?					
	What competency and professional development framework exists to ensure that the professionals conducting safeguarding assessments and service provision for children have the relevant training and background to carry out these activities appropriately? <sup>63</sup>					
	What is the availability of community-based service provision, case management and a functioning referral network to address the economic, social and psychosocial developmental needs of children over time?					
	What are the policies and practices that promote active child participation or prioritize the child's view in decisions made on their behalf?					
	What are the public health requirements including immunization, testing, medical assessments or isolation requirements for returnee children?					

63 IOM, Greece, *Addressing the Needs of Unaccompanied Minors (UAMs) in Greece* (Athens, 2014).

## 6.2 A child rights approach to return and reintegration assistance at the individual child and family level

### Key Messages

- A child rights approach to reintegration addresses the child's immediate and long-term needs within the framework of the UNCRC. These needs include nurturing relationships, social, emotional and life skills, and access to education, health, economic and community participation of the family or caregiving unit as the child develops.
- A combination of individual factors, the child's developmental stage, the ecology that surrounds the child, factors that promote resilience and the child's own views in line with their age and evolving maturity will best inform reintegration assistance for the individual child.
- Case management is a way of organizing and carrying out work to address an individual child's (and their family's) needs in an appropriate, systematic and timely manner, through direct support and referrals.
- The Best Interests Procedure (BIP) consisting of a Best Interests Assessment (BIA), process planning and a Best Interests Determination (BID) is the standard for the assessment and general case management for migrant and returnee children seeking sustainable solutions.
- Reintegration is not a single event, but a longer process involving extensive preparation and follow-up support. An assessment of reintegration options must be factored in when arriving at a return decision in line with the best interests of the child.
- Reintegration assistance should be anchored within a comprehensive child protection and welfare system that meets both national and international obligations towards returnee as well as the social, economic and psychosocial dimensions of reintegration.



Programme managers/  
developers



Case managers/  
other staff



Implementing  
partners



Service  
providers



Local government  
(host and origin)



Policymakers

### Introduction

A child rights approach to reintegration addresses the child's immediate and long-term needs within the framework of the UNCRC. These needs include nurturing relationships, social, emotional and life skills, and access to education, health, economic and community participation of the family or caregiving unit as the child develops. A multiplicity of factors including personal characteristics and aspects of the migration experience impact reintegration at the individual level. Resilience informs individual factors within the context of the ecology that surrounds a child, their developmental stage, and their individual capacities and skills, in relation to the adversity associated with their migration journey. Potential protective and risk factors can

contribute to or undermine a child's resilience and progress towards sustainable reintegration. Risk factors include exposure to child trafficking, child labour, aggravated smuggling and other forms of exploitation.

Key factors affecting the reintegration of children include:

- The support and acceptance of family, community and peer groups. A failed migration journey following substantial investment by the family and community often results in stigma or reprisals for returnee children and families.
- Access to educational and training opportunities.
- Access to health services including mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services.
- Child specific considerations such as age, sex, gender, identity, sexual orientation, ability or other individual characteristics of the child. For instance, older children require appropriate and viable economic reintegration assistance options.

Chapter 6.2 examines the case management approach to responding to the needs of returning children and families. It highlights the importance of the social service workforce and provides guidance on the various steps of the case management process which should be adapted to the local context.

### Establishing and strengthening case management in various contexts

The case management system should be embedded in a functioning national child protection system. The primary objective of a child protection case management system is to ensure that children receive quality protection services in an organized, efficient, and effective manner, in line with their needs. A social service worker, or group of workers – professional or paraprofessional – undertake key tasks associated with the case management process, from assessment of children's needs to organizing and coordinating appropriate services, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of service delivery. Some key resources required for effective case management include Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and tools, trained workers, safeguards for handling personal data, transport, telephone or other communication devices, a place to hold meetings, and a system of documentation including use of technology. Building on formal mechanisms while strengthening the technical and financial capacity of informal and community actors, addressing the security and individual risks to the child, mapping of available services, developing referral mechanisms, and awareness-raising about available service provision can address potential gaps while case management systems are being established and strengthened. Civil society organizations and multisectoral coordination supplements case management to ensure timely reintegration assistance for vulnerable migrant or returnee children.

The diagram below outlines the case management steps proposed by the Inter Agency Guidelines for Case Management and Child Protection and aligns them with the reintegration assistance process at the individual level described in Module 2. The steps outlined below are interconnected and each one may require a return to an earlier stage in the process while steps may be repeated several times before a case is closed.<sup>64</sup> There is no specified duration within which each step should be completed. However, national authorities and relevant stakeholders can develop guidance to set appropriate time limits.

<sup>64</sup> The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, *Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action*, p. 200 (2019).

## CHILD-SENSITIVE REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL



### IDENTIFICATION AND REGISTRATION

- Identify child in host or transit country
- International or regional child rights legislative framework
- Child-sensitive safeguarding protocols for migrant children and families



### ASSESSMENT

- Best Interest Assessment comprehensively assesses individual child or family and community vulnerability and needs pre-departure in host or transit country or at reception in the country of origin
- Facilitate child participation in the assessment process
- Assess social, psychosocial and economic needs of the family in the country of origin
- Assess country of origin context, referral network and infrastructure (structural context)
- Coordinate cross-border, consent and data management issues, pre-departure and after arrival in country of origin
- For unaccompanied minors, identify family or guardian, trace and assess the appropriateness of reunification



### REINTEGRATION PLANNING

- Create individualized reintegration plan addressing the economic, social, psychosocial needs at the individual child, family and community level
- Facilitate child participation in reintegration planning
- Create short-term (one-off or several weeks) versus long-term (several months or 1–2 years) sustainable reintegration plan



### IMPLEMENTING THE REINTEGRATION PLAN

- Engage referrals and community-based support and local community protective mechanisms
- Coordinate between relevant child and family-focused referral network actors and community-based structures
- Engage across education, health, social protection, access to justice and other related sectors
- Facilitate child participation in implementing the reintegration plan



### FOLLOW-UP AND REVIEW

- Monitor and follow up on individual child and family reintegration plan and assessing ongoing vulnerability
- Engage child protection community-based structures in monitoring and follow up
- Agree and develop monitoring and evaluation tools and protocols and frequency for follow up
- Coordinate with child protection and multi-sector actors which will be involved in future child-focused monitoring and follow up
- Facilitate child participation in the follow up and review process



### CASE CLOSURE

- Measure and document sustainable reintegration success for children/families in their communities
- Use standardized indicators for sustainable reintegration which informs when reintegration support ends
- Document good practice to informing structural intervention and policies which reinforce sustainable reintegration
- Facilitate child participation in determining when to end assistance



Programme managers and developers • case managers and other staff • implementing partners • service providers • local government (host and origin) • policymakers.

## 6.2.1 Introduction to Case Management

Case management is a way of organizing and carrying out work to address an individual child's (and their family's) needs in an appropriate, systematic and timely manner, through direct support or referrals.<sup>65</sup> The case management process commences with identification and registration and ends with the implementation of a sustainable solution. It involves working with children and families to establish reintegration goals, creating reintegration plans to achieve those goals, providing services to meet needs identified in assessments, monitoring progress toward achievement of the reintegration plans, and closing cases when goals have been achieved.

While a well-developed social service workforce is critical to ensuring coordinated, integrated and tailored reintegration assistance across all sectors, the responsibility for child protection case management is often shared among various sectors and agencies such as social welfare, education, health, security and justice and involves actions taken by both formal and non-formal or community actors. Social service workers tasked with case management contribute to sustainable reintegration by providing pre-departure or postarrival information and connecting returnee children and families to available services at the community, local and national level. Reintegration assistance should be anchored within a comprehensive child protection and welfare system that meets both national and international obligations towards children irrespective of their nationality or immigration status.

### 6.2.1.1 Competencies for the social service workforce, case managers or workers

The following competencies and areas of training are recommended for the social service workforce supporting reintegration assistance for returnee children.

- a. **Good understanding of child development.** 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.
- b. **Child-sensitive psychosocial assessment.** Case managers should have training or experience conducting comprehensive psychosocial assessments. This includes the ability to assess the intersection between stage of development, health, education, ability or disability, family, environment, community and other risk and protective factors and personal psychological traits and psychosocial influences as they impact on the child's level of resilience.
- c. **Informed consent with children and caregivers.** Case managers should understand issues regarding consent, including the process of gaining informed consent from the parent, caregiver or guardian as well as being able to engage the child using child-friendly communication to facilitate receiving informed consent from the child in accordance with their developmental stage.
- d. **Red flags, signs and symptoms of child abuse and distress.** Case managers working with children should have knowledge of the different signs and presentations of abuse, neglect, distress and exploitation in children according to their developmental stage and cultural or social context. As an extension of this, case managers should understand these signs and symptoms enough to know when and at what level follow-up or referral for additional services is needed for the child.

<sup>65</sup> Inter Agency Guidelines for Case Management and Child Protection, *The Role of Case Management in the Protection of Children: A Guide for Policy & Programme Managers and Caseworkers* (London, 2014).

- e. **Ethics and appropriate boundaries with children.** Case managers should understand the complexity of issues related to ethics and boundaries when working with children. This includes knowing how to establish professional boundaries but to also be able to appropriately engage and earn the trust of children, abiding by a code of conduct and applicable child safeguarding policy, managing the limits of confidentiality when sharing information with guardians, caregivers or other professionals and fostering meaningful child participation while always keeping the best interests of the child in mind.

### 6.2.1.2 Facilitating meaningful child participation during case planning

#### Case counselling

Engagement and establishing trust are a priority for encouraging meaningful child participation. The quality of the social worker or case manager's engagement and ability to establish trust facilitates all other steps and objectives for the counselling session. The counselling session can then facilitate:<sup>66</sup>

- Establishing a helping relationship;
- Helping children to tell their story from their own point of view;
- Attentive listening to children;
- Helping children to make informed decisions;
- Helping children build on and recognize their strengths.

### 6.2.1.3 Techniques to advance case counselling and child participation

Engagement of children in the case management and counselling process can be facilitated by employing different techniques depending on the child's age, developmental stage and individual history and circumstances.<sup>67</sup>

- **Counselling modality.** Counselling modality types include individual, group or family counselling. Each modality has its benefits depending on the focus of the objectives of the work the case manager hopes to do with the child or young person. Individual counselling provides one-on-one attention and is specific to the needs of the individual child. Group counselling can help address social isolation and normalize the child's experience. Family counselling can help engage family members in supporting the child while exploring family dynamics which may impact the sustainability of reintegration support.
- **Use of creative activities.** The use of creative activities can help children engage in the case management and counselling process. Activities can include the use of play, art, music, drama, storytelling and other creative activities which allow a child to express themselves and their wishes beyond the use of language. Case managers can also create child-friendly content and explain material which might otherwise be overly complex for a child to understand by using the above creative techniques to present ideas, information or concepts.
- **“Joining” with children.** It is important to take time at the beginning of the case management relationship and first counselling session to build a good relationship with the child. This can include greeting the child and talking about something that is easy or light-hearted, allowing the child to guide the case manager to discuss what is important and comfortable for them. This technique is called “joining” because the case manager is joining the child where they are rather than imposing the case manager's agenda. Joining can look like a fun, creative activity for a child under 12 or speaking about a young person's likes and dislikes for an older child.

<sup>66</sup> Catherine Moleni, Sofie Project, Institute of Education, London, [Guidelines for Counselling Children and Adolescents: A Training Manual for Teachers and SOFIE Club leaders](#) (London, 2009).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.



## 6.2.2 Case management steps

### 6.2.2.1 Identification and Registration

Returnee children and families can be identified by immigration actors, child protection or social welfare authorities and community members in a variety of ways:

- In transit or at border points while they seek to access a State territory;
- In a host country having recently arrived;
- Following longer-term stay in a host country having fallen out of regular status or remained undocumented;
- Once they return to their countries of origin and communities.

Protecting the rights of the child during identification and registration	UASC	Children in families
<p><b>Child friendly and gender sensitive.</b> Consider the child's specific vulnerabilities including whether the child is unaccompanied or separated, their age, gender, disability status and their resilience, taking into consideration the ecology surrounding the child. Facilitate referral to direct services including urgent medical assistance.</p>	✓	✓
<p><b>Registration.</b> Conduct initial interviews to collect the child's biodata and social history in an age-appropriate and gender-sensitive manner, in a language the child understands and by professionally qualified personnel.<sup>68</sup> Data collected begins the case documentation process and should be kept confidential and allow for easy retrieval on a need to know basis. The child and family (or guardian in the case of unaccompanied children) should give informed consent to registration.</p>	✓	✓
<p><b>Context specific.</b> Conduct or access a country of origin assessment broken down by region or municipality cross referencing child specific vulnerabilities. The assessment conducted in the country of origin should inform the social, economic, political, security and institutional conditions at the local and national level. Stakeholder and service provision mapping are important aspects of such assessments to be further explored in the reintegration planning phase. They require frequent updating on the capacity, needs, willingness, potential for multisectoral partnerships, and the criteria for service provision at the local and national level.</p>	✓	✓

### 6.2.2.2 Assessment for the individual needs of the child and family

The assessment explores the child's and family's protection needs, vulnerabilities or risk factors, resilience capacities and resources. (See [figure 2.2, Module 2](#) for suggested assessments to be carried out before developing a reintegration plan). The Best Interests Procedure (BIP) consisting of a Best Interests Assessment (BIA), process planning and a Best Interests Determination (BID) is the standard for the assessment and general case management for migrant and returnee children seeking sustainable solutions. The BIA is an

<sup>68</sup> UNCRRC, General Comment No.6, 2005.

assessment tool for the protection of individual children. The BIA can take place at various points throughout the BIP to assess any actions taken that may have a direct impact on the child's best interests. The BIP should be part of a comprehensive child protection system with support from international and civil society partners where national capacity to conduct the BIP is not yet fully operational. *Part 6, IOM Handbook on Protection and Assistance for Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse* provides further information on how the best interests principle can be applied in practice.

Protecting the rights of the child during the assessment	UASC	Children in families
<b>Identifying individual vulnerabilities.</b> Conduct a BIA when unaccompanied or separated children are identified, or children within families that exhibit risk factors such as abuse, violence or exploitation.	✓	✓
<b>Referral to child protection authorities.</b> Refer unaccompanied children identified in transit, at border points, in a host country or in their countries of origin to child protection and welfare authorities.	✓	
<b>Access to a qualified guardian.</b> Provide access to a qualified or trained guardian and legal representative with whom the child can build a trusting relationship, have an overview of the child's activities and provide consent on education and social life decisions. The guardian should be appointed through an administrative or judicial process.	✓	
<b>Safe and accessible.</b> Ensure access to safe accommodation, education and health services including pre-departure planning and consider family circumstances and social relationships. <sup>69</sup>	✓	✓
<b>Appropriate care provision.</b> Ensure appropriate accommodation separate from adult migrants or returnees, for unaccompanied and separated migrant children. Prioritize family-based alternative care and prohibit child immigration detention in the host country.	✓	
<b>Initiate family tracing as soon as possible.</b> For unaccompanied and separated migrant children, the family should immediately be traced and assessed to reunify, if it is established to be in the child's best interest. <sup>70</sup>	✓	
<b>Best Interests Determination.</b> Return has long-term implications for the child's survival and well-being and must be informed by a BID. The BIA leads to the BID in situations where a child is in need of a sustainable solution. It should take place in the host country pre-return but should also inform the long-term care for returnee children identified in their country of origin. A BID case manager should convene the social worker, guardian, legal representative, child psychologist and other relevant child protection actors and stakeholders in a case planning meeting that contributes to informing a sustainable solution. It should be documented, consider immediate, interim and long-term measures and involve the child's participation.	✓	✓

69 Natalia Alonso Cano and Irina Todorova, *Towards child-rights compliance in return and reintegration, Migration Policy Practice: Special Issue on Return and Reintegration*. Vol. IX, Number 1, January–March 2019; pp. 15–21.

70 Family tracing and assessment should be conducted unless determined not to be in the best interest of the child. See: EC, *Comparative Study on Practices in the Field of Return of Minors* (2011), p. 166.

Protecting the rights of the child during the assessment	UASC	Children in families
<p><b>Facilitate child participation and understanding.</b> Where the child disagrees with a BID that concludes that return is the best sustainable solution, the child must receive adequate support to understand the situation and the available options<sup>71</sup> and should have access to an appeal and review process. Children in families should also be kept informed at each stage of the process and their views taken into consideration in line with their age and maturity.</p>	✓	✓
<p><b>BID report.</b> The BID manager relying on information gathered from the country of origin assessment, home study report for unaccompanied children and other experts working with the child such as the social worker and guardian drafts the BID report which should also capture implementation of the sustainable solution. During this process, information sharing between the host country and country of origin child protection and social welfare actors should be ongoing. Information shared between national authorities should adhere to established transnational data-sharing protocols including data confidentiality and privacy.</p>	✓	✓



### Case Study 1: Arriving at a sustainable solution informed by the BIP in the country of origin: Ethiopia

Many children in Ethiopia leave their home for a variety of reasons including poverty, persecution, gender and social discriminatory norms, peer pressure, compulsion to support the family or ease their burden and aspirations that they feel cannot be met in their village. They travel along migratory routes that may put them at risk of violence, abuse and exploitation, including child trafficking. In the Tigray region, 360 children were recorded to have left a particular district (“Woreda”) at the end of 2019. These children aim to reach the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia through Djibouti and Yemen. Many of them are intercepted in transit in Yemen and assisted or forced to return to Ethiopia. Two teenagers who joined other migrants to attempt the journey to Saudi Arabia were intercepted by law enforcement authorities before they set sail for Yemen and taken to a Red Cross shelter in Djibouti.

From the shelter in Djibouti, IOM provided transportation assistance to the teenagers to facilitate their return to Addis Ababa, as part of their voluntary return and reintegration programme. Reception was provided at the IOM transit centre for temporary shelter, support and child protection services with additional support from UNICEF. At the transit centre in Addis Ababa, once children are received, depending on the amount and quality of information shared in advance by the IOM mission, each child is profiled to verify their available data. Following identification, profiling and case counselling conducted by a social worker, an assessment of the child’s short, medium and long-term needs including family tracing is undertaken leading to a BID. The conclusion of the teenagers’ BID, conducted through an individual procedure, was family reunification.

71 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Returning unaccompanied children: fundamental rights considerations* (Vienna, 2019).

The teenagers were escorted to their Kebele (the smallest administrative unit in Ethiopia) by a social worker from the transit centre and received by a social worker from their Kebele who verified their origin and contacted the families through the Kebele community service worker. The children were reunited with their families and their case files handed over to the Kebele community service worker for follow-up implementation of their care plans.

The community service worker first assessed how the children had settled back with their families and secondly followed up with their care plans. One of the teenagers wanted to open a small kiosk in the market area while the other one wanted to engage in small scale goat rearing. The community service worker accessed the family's criteria to obtain small loans and approached the local Community Care Coalition (CCC) for financing for the business ventures proposed. CCCs are voluntary community level structures at Kebele level that provide support to identified vulnerable members of the community including loans and grants for microeconomic activities.<sup>72</sup> CCCs are part of the less formal child protection structures at community level in Ethiopia supported and supervised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.



#### Tips for success:

- Strengthen stakeholder collaboration to support timely identification and assessment.
- Involve community service workers in the implementation of reintegration assistance, monitoring and follow-up due to their closeness to the community and critical role in identifying and facilitating available support for vulnerable children in the community.
- Facilitate child participation throughout the return and reintegration process.
- Engage less formal child protection structures in developing contexts at the community level to reinforce economic, social and psychosocial dimensions of reintegration.

### 6.2.2.3 Reintegration planning

Reintegration is not a single event, but a longer process involving extensive preparation and follow-up support.<sup>73</sup> Basic planning for reintegration should inform the return decision and accelerate when return has been determined to be in the best interests of the child. The detailed reintegration plan should be developed in coordination with the child and family in the country of origin by the social worker, case manager or service delivery organization responsible for reception. Care should be taken to provide accurate information about available services based on current service and stakeholder mapping. The following considerations are recommended during the reintegration planning process which should ideally commence in the host country but can also take place in the country of origin in the case of forced returns (see [Chapter 6.1](#), key considerations checklist for guidance on specific questions to explore).

<sup>72</sup> Community Care Coalitions (CCCs): Community organizations formed by a group of individuals or organizations to provide care and support to vulnerable people. The goal of CCCs is to foster resilient communities that develop local strategies, identify resources, prevent and respond to vulnerabilities at community level, strengthen social capital and promote social norm changes. The specific objectives of the CCCs include: strengthening economic capacities of the vulnerable, strengthening social capital to promote mutual support, promoting social norm change, supporting vulnerable people to access basic social services, social protection and legal services, mobilize local resources and supporting the development endeavours. Government of Ethiopia Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, National Strategic Framework for Community Care Coalitions, authored by [BDS Center for Development Research](#), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (August, 2018).

<sup>73</sup> Delap, E. and J. Wedge, *Guidelines on Children's Reintegration*, p. 7 Inter Agency Group on Children's Reintegration (2016).

Protecting the rights of children during the reintegration planning process	UASC	Children in families
<b>Safeguarding of children.</b> This should be ensured before and during the return and reintegration process.	✓	✓
<b>Cross-border communication between the host country and the country of origin.</b> Cross-border communication facilitates the case management process and marks the start of reintegration assistance.	✓	✓
<b>Provide updated accurate information</b> on the reintegration options and conditions in the country origin.	✓	✓
<b>Discuss</b> and ascertain the returnee child and family's wants and needs, covering the economic, social and psychosocial dimensions. This can include but is not limited to economic and vocational training, access to education, health care, housing, social services, documentation, food and water, and psychosocial services.	✓	✓
Identify who should meet the identified needs, what should happen to meet them, and when the actions should take place.	✓	✓
Confirm the family and household is <b>safe for the child</b> and investigate any present or past situations of violence and abuse.	✓	✓
<b>Review family and close relationships</b> of the child including length and effects of separation for unaccompanied children, and the capacity of parents, care givers and other close relationships.	✓	✓
<b>Consider the child's identity and development rights</b> such as actions to meet their physical and mental health needs, access to education and vocational training for older children, in accordance with their age, sex and other characteristics and engagement in recreational activities in line with the child's age, sex and other characteristics, linguistic background and cultural upbringing.	✓	✓
<b>Active consideration of the child's views</b> including providing timely and accurate information, an assessment of the child's understanding and maturity and what weight to place on their views.	✓	✓
Consider immediate, short-term support (one-off or several weeks) versus long-term (several months or one to two years) planning with provision for periodic monitoring whose frequency is based on the level of risk and needs of the child.	✓	✓

If possible, children and families should sign off on the reintegration plan and copies should be made available to them for their follow-up. The components of a reintegration plan should include immediate assistance such as the provision of basic needs, medical and cash assistance and long-term support focused on the social, economic and psychological dimensions (see [Annex 3 of the Handbook](#) which outlines a Reintegration Plan Template).

### **Economic reintegration assistance**

Returnee children and families can face numerous challenges upon return due to security issues, potential recruitment or enslavement by armed groups, possible requirements to repay debts incurred for the journey, and poor access to education and livelihood opportunities, among other concerns. The resilience of parents has been highlighted as a key factor for families receiving assisted voluntary return and reintegration assistance who contend better with challenging circumstances upon return. It is noted that if parents are resilient, their children tend to cope better as well. Economic reintegration assistance can promote resilience through creating or strengthening income-generating activities, opportunities for microfinancing, collective or community initiatives, job placement, skills development and vocational training. For youth who used to work prior to return or those who are of working age and want to engage in income-generating activities, a reintegration grant can be provided, which needs to be carefully assessed. Generally economic reintegration assistance should supplement capital for existing family businesses or help families in establishing an income-generating activity. It can also include job placements. Economic reintegration measures should fit the specific needs and skills of the returnee, the local labour market, the social context and the available resources and should be accompanied by a healthy social life and psychological state (see [Module 2, Chapter 2.4](#) for an overview of the various types of economic reintegration).

### **Social reintegration assistance**

Social reintegration assistance involves direct assistance and referral to appropriate services guided by formal and informal national, local or community referral mechanisms. It includes housing, educational and social support, access to health care, birth registration and legal documentation, skills development, legal services, social protection schemes, childcare, special security measures, interim and alternative care options, family tracing and reunification, parenting classes and access to justice (see [Module 2, Chapter 2.5](#) for an overview of the various types of social assistance recommended for a reintegration plan).

### **Psychosocial reintegration assistance at the individual level**

Provision of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) is a critical component of reintegration assistance and involves individual, family and community-level activities. Distress caused by or during the migration journey can impact children's ability to cope, if only temporarily. MHPSS services allow children to engage in the reintegration process and gives them the tools and space to recover after periods of distress or separation. Different children will need varying levels of mental health and psychosocial support and a few children may need specialized MHPSS interventions. Mental health and psychosocial needs range from basic services which can be made available on a more universal basis to specialized services for people with previous or emerging mental health issues. Most people when provided with a safe, protected and nurturing environment after a period of distress will have the resilience to bounce back given some time. The focus should not be on providing specialized services right away but on fostering resilience through appropriate activities and promoting a conducive environment.

#### **6.2.2.4 Implementing the reintegration plan**

A family-centred approach that identifies the needs of the child and focuses on strengthening the capacity of the family to protect and care for the child is crucial to achieving sustainable reintegration. Ideally, reintegration assistance should commence in the host country and continue in an interconnected manner in the country of origin through the sharing of the initial assessments, identity documentation, education and skills certificate as appropriate. However, the assessment and reintegration plan should cater to whatever stage of the

migration journey the child is identified, whether it is in transit, in the host country or upon return to the country of origin.

The appointed social worker, case manager or case worker should work with the child and family throughout the case management steps unless a specific qualification is recommended during the process or the child and the family are unhappy with the case worker. Ultimately the case manager or social worker is responsible for following up on the case plan and the service provider to ensure that the needs of the child have been met.

Protecting the rights of the child during implementation of the reintegration plan	UASC	Children in families
<b>Direct services</b> such as psychosocial support or parenting programmes can be provided by the social worker, case manager or case worker or accessed through referral to available service providers.	✓	✓
<b>Facilitate routine child-friendly consultations</b> with the child and family to review actions and progress.	✓	✓
<b>Refer children and families to appropriate services</b> covering the economic, social and psychosocial dimensions proposed in the reintegration plan.	✓	✓
<b>Economic and vocational training.</b> If economic assistance is deemed an appropriate support option, facilitate the provision of income support to families (or to the child directly depending on their age, applicable legislation and policies) for basic needs to address multiple drivers of family-child vulnerabilities which may contribute to root causes of family separation or triggers of irregular migration.	✓	✓
<b>Access to health care.</b> Assist children and families in accessing required medical assistance.	✓	✓
<b>Access to documentation.</b> Assist children and families in obtaining civil registration documentations such as birth registration and other documents needed such as school transcripts.	✓	✓
<b>Remain updated on existing services,</b> referral mechanisms and networks with documented referral pathways and focal points, to facilitate access to appropriate services.	✓	✓
<b>Confidentiality and privacy</b> should be maintained through agreed standard operating procedures and protocols among referral partners including obtaining consent from the child and family to share information for referral to appropriate services and the transfer of case files.	✓	✓
<b>Target support for complex vulnerabilities.</b> Assess and provide additional targeted and specialized support to children with intersecting vulnerabilities such as unaccompanied or separated children, adolescent girls, pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers, those who have experienced being trafficked, violence, abuse and exploitation, children with HIV/AIDS, children with disabilities and other children with complex needs. <sup>74</sup>	✓	✓

74 UNGA Seventy-fourth session, 26 July 2019 *Report of the Secretary General, Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children* (United Nations, New York).

### 6.2.2.5 Follow-up and review

The purpose of the follow-up and review is to make sure that the case plan is being implemented in accordance with agreed actions and continues to meet the needs of the child and family. Follow up and review should be conducted routinely with the child, family and other stakeholders to review progress, confirm service provision, identify gaps, assess whether the reintegration plan continues to meet the needs of the child, and where necessary review and modify agreed actions. The frequency will depend on the level of risk, and whether the case management process is focused on immediate, interim or long-term actions. Follow-up can be as frequently as daily, while review takes place over a period of time ranging from several months to two years or more and involving a multisectoral and interagency approach. Follow-up can be conducted through phone calls, meetings with the child and family, home visits; or through community mechanisms supporting the child, such as a health worker, teacher or community worker. Review provides an opportunity for the child, case manager and the supervisor to assess progress of implementation and whether the child or family require additional or a variation of services.

Follow-up and review can be adapted as case management progresses and the situation of the child improves. The table below illustrates actions that can be subjected to periodic follow-up and review.

Follow-up and review	UASC	Children in families
<b>Routine child friendly consultations.</b> The social worker or case worker should facilitate routine child-friendly consultations with the child and family to review actions and progress.	✓	✓
<b>Improved home environment.</b> Support parents to implement strategies and knowledge gained in parental classes resulting in improvement of the home environment.	✓	✓
<b>Economic and vocation training.</b> The case worker should regularly review the status of the income-generating activity or vocational training and adjust.	✓	✓
<b>Access to health care.</b> Children and families have access to required medical assistance or have reported back barriers which are being addressed.	✓	✓
<b>Access to documentation.</b> Parents are able to access the civil registration and vital statistics office to obtain birth registration and other civil registration documentation, and other offices for relevant documentation such as school transcripts.	✓	✓
<b>Continuous assessment.</b> Consider immediate, short-term support (one-off or several weeks) as well as long-term (several months or one to two years) planning with provision for periodic monitoring whose frequency is based on the level of risk and needs of the child. Assess and review existing and arising risks to the child and family.	✓	✓



### 6.2.2.6 Case closure

Case closure occurs when the child and family's reintegration has been met, appropriate care and protection has been identified and is ongoing and there are no further additional concerns. A case can also be closed in the following situations:

- The child and family no longer want support.
- The child turns 18. A period of transition and connection to independent living and other services is however recommended.
- The child dies.

Case closure should be authorized by the case manager and require that monitoring visits continue thereafter for at least three months depending on the complexity of the case. Case records should be stored in a safe and secure manner for a defined period in accordance with existing agency protocols and national legislation.



#### Case Study 2: Multidimensional reintegration assistance for returnee children in Côte d'Ivoire

In Côte d'Ivoire, IOM regularly assists Unaccompanied and Separated Children, children returning with their parents, as well as single mothers. Between May 2017 and August 2020, IOM assisted 539 children returning with their parents and 162 unaccompanied and separated children, 11 per cent of the total number of returnees assisted through the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration.

For unaccompanied and separated children, the BIP and family tracing takes place before the child returns to Côte d'Ivoire. Upon arrival, once children are reunited with parents or guardians, the IOM protection and reintegration teams screen the parents and the child through counselling sessions to understand the specific family situation. As part of this project, during these counselling sessions the child, parents and IOM staff work together to develop a holistic reintegration plan that considers the economic, social and psychosocial dimension of not only the child but the entire family.

For the social dimension, which is often the most urgent need, IOM staff help children and their families to access medical services as needed, through an IOM doctor; referrals can be made to specialists. A specialized shelter is available for unaccompanied children who cannot reach their parents immediately. If a returning family needs to find housing, IOM can help to cover the security deposit and rent for the first three months. IOM staff also assist in enrolling children in school, in many cases covering school fees for a few years at a time, so that children are more likely to remain in school.

For the economic dimension, IOM staff work with the children's parents to establish or supplement existing income-generating activities. Young people who want to earn an income rather than go to school are encouraged to take part in vocational training in sectors that have been identified as promising, such as mechanics or agriculture, following an initial mapping.

For the psychosocial dimension, psychoeducational group sessions have been organized for returned unaccompanied and separated migrant children in Abidjan and Daloa, in addition to individual sessions with an IOM psychologist. These groups give the opportunity to offer a safe space for open dialogue, free discussions on challenges, dreams, plans for the future, education, psychosocial difficulties, and have the benefit of strengthening peer-to-peer support mechanisms and resilience. Other psychosocial groups, including art-based and creative therapeutic methods such as group drawings sessions, have also been organized for accompanied minors (aged 3–12 years old) and their parents.

Single and pregnant mothers have been identified as a particularly vulnerable group, since they often return with very young children and therefore require more intense case management. For example, IOM provides them with kits for their young children and assists in covering childcare costs to allow the mothers to work.

Follow-up with the children and their parents is carried out regularly by a joint IOM protection and reintegration team.







#### Tips for success:

- Develop a reintegration plan that takes into account the entire household that the child lives with;
- Emphasize the psychosocial dimension which can positively influence the other reintegration dimensions;
- Establish a network of partners and services in areas of high return to facilitate swift referrals.

## 6.3 Child-sensitive reintegration assistance at the community level

### Key Messages

-  Community-based reintegration assistance caters to the needs, vulnerabilities and concerns of both returnees and their host community, utilizes their strengths and skills building on resources and competencies already present in the community, and can mitigate or address any potential tensions that may arise between them, while enabling the community's capacity to actively support the sustainable reintegration of returnee children and families.
-  Reintegration interventions that are community-led (by returnees, civil society, employers and so forth) and that are designed and implemented at the local level (by both returnees and host community members) are more likely to be successful, and to foster dialogue and social cohesion.
-  The social worker, case manager or organization supporting reintegration should work closely with community members and community led interventions to improve assistance for children returning to specific areas.
-  The stronger the emphasis on community members' mobilization to care, provide peer support or build community networks for vulnerable children, families, or caregivers, the stronger the community level referral network will be for the social service workforce.



Policymakers

Programme managers/  
developersCase managers/  
other staffLocal government  
(origin)Implementing  
partnersService  
providers

### Introduction

Community-based reintegration assistance supports the ecology around the returning family and child. It promotes the participation of children and families with their communities of return to meet their needs and concerns. Community-based reintegration assistance caters to the needs, vulnerabilities and concerns of both returnees and their host community, utilizes their strengths and skills building on resources and competencies already present in the community, and can mitigate or address any potential tensions that may arise between them, while enabling the community's capacity to actively support the sustainable reintegration of returnee children and families. Chapter three of the module focuses on various methods to engage communities in protecting children, safeguarding their rights, and promoting their meaningful participation in various aspects of community life.

### 6.3.1 Defining and engaging the community in community-led child protection

Understanding the community and the specific context into which a child and family might be returning is crucial for planning and ensuring that children and families are able to access support upon their arrival in their community of origin. A community can also be understood from the ecological approach which recognizes that each returnee child exists within a system of actors that can either support or hinder the child's reintegration. This system should be considered in the design and implementation of the reintegration assistance. The system includes:

- Family and peers;
- Civil society, faith-based and community-based organizations;
- The public and private sector;
- Social norms.

In this regard, a child-sensitive approach to reintegration assistance at the community level focuses on activating and engaging community-based child protection structures encompassing formal child protection mechanisms, as well as actively supporting initiatives that strengthen and empower community-based structures that contribute to the provision of services for children such as education, health care and psychosocial support. It also includes financial support for activities that include and bring together both returnees and host communities (especially those with a specific focus on children, young people and families), and initiatives that enhance social cohesion, facilitating the integration of child returnees and their families.

Formal child protection structures are often supported by government and civil society organizations. On the other hand, community-led approaches focus on community-derived empowerment, community dialogues, and decision-making that takes into consideration the views of children. They take various forms such as child protection committees, traditional leaders' and women's associations and youth organizations. The benefit of community-led approaches is that they generate higher levels of community ownership and contribute to defining the parameters of available service provision. They also generally enable stronger harm prevention and sustainability by building on resources and competencies already present in the community.

The Child Resilience Alliance has developed a *Guide for Supporting Community Led Child Protection Processes* and a *Toolkit for Reflective Practice* that offers guidance on sustainable community-led approaches to child protection. The toolkit identifies the following criteria for a community-led approach to child protection<sup>75</sup> and can be considered for the design, implementation, monitoring and follow-up of reintegration programming.

- Community identifies the child protection issue to be addressed (reintegration);
- Community decides how to address the issue (integrated approach);
- Community decides what local capacities and resources to use;
- Community designs the action;
- Community implements the action;
- Community conducts its own evaluation of the action;
- Relatively low reliance on outside facilitators or actors;
- Inclusive community participation;
- High level of community ownership;
- Minimal reliance on outsiders.

<sup>75</sup> Wessells, M.G., *A Guide for Supporting Community-led child Protection Processes*, Child Resilience Alliance (New York, 2018).

### 6.3.2 Child-sensitive community assessments

The IOM Reintegration Handbook proposes a focus on migration drivers, community perceptions, economic systems' analysis, stakeholder and service mapping, along with other sociodemographic factors outlined in Table 6.1 below to help inform an in-depth, child-sensitive, context specific community assessment or profile. A community assessment or profile helps define the criteria for reintegration programming and the appropriate reintegration approach. Community assessments:

- Present an opportunity to comprehensively assess the ecology of the child beyond the family;
- Highlight vulnerabilities and strengths which exist in the environment and how they can contribute or detract from sustainable reintegration;
- Maintain a focus on the developmental needs of children while gathering information about what exists in communities to support children's development;
- Identify potential risks and challenges of community led interventions which if addressed, should be reviewed regularly;
- Are a good way of gauging any source of potential conflict or tension between returnee children and families, and the host community;
- Should be reviewed and updated frequently in cooperation with local actors to reflect changes, new challenges and risks or new opportunities.

**Table 6.1: Proposed research questions for in-depth child-sensitive community analysis**

Phase	Proposed research questions	Data collection methods
Community profile	<p><b>Migration drivers</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the role of children's mobility in the community (past and present)?</li> <li>2. What are the key drivers that influence child, youth and family migration (economic, governance, social, political, environmental, structural, security dimensions)?</li> <li>3. What are the personal motivations for return and is return voluntary?</li> <li>4. What is the role of collective decision-making on migration?</li> <li>5. Who are the key actors shaping migration decision-making?</li> <li>6. What factors influence irregular migration for children and families?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk review</li> <li>• Focus group discussions</li> <li>• Individual survey</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Reintegration programming</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. What are the factors that prevent or foster children's reintegration at economic, social and psychosocial levels?</li> <li>8. What type of reintegration support do children and families need to make reintegration sustainable (at economic, social and psychosocial levels)?</li> <li>9. Which actors are appropriate for the implementation of these activities?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk review</li> <li>• Focus group discussions</li> <li>• Individual survey</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Community perceptions</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. What are sources of tension and sources of social capital in the ecosystem?</li> <li>11. What perceptions do community members have of each other?</li> <li>12. What are key events that have shaped this community in the recent and distant past?</li> <li>13. What are the existing levels of awareness and attitudes towards migrant and returnee children, youth and families?</li> <li>14. What are the communities' perceptions of migrants and returnees as actors in the ecosystem?</li> <li>15. How do community members engage with returnees and how do returnees engage with community members?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk review</li> <li>• Focus group discussions</li> <li>• Individual survey</li> <li>• Community consultations</li> <li>• Community historic mapping</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Economic systems' analysis</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16. Identify concrete and immediate opportunities for employment, income generation and self-employment.</li> <li>17. Identify concrete and immediate opportunities for strengthened access to quality services and social protection.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk review</li> <li>• Key informant interviews with private actors</li> <li>• Individual survey</li> <li>• Labour market assessment</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stakeholder and service mapping</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18. Who are the stakeholders directly and indirectly involved in the provision of reintegration support at the national and local level?</li> <li>19. How do they interact and coordinate?</li> <li>20. What community-based projects exist that are related to reintegration generally and reintegration of children and young people in particular?</li> <li>21. What are the referral mechanisms in place at the various levels (individual, community, regional, national, international level) that can support reintegration activities?</li> <li>22. What are the existing services available to returning migrant children and families that could support reintegration activities?</li> <li>23. What complementary approaches are available? Who implements these?</li> <li>24. Are there opportunities to develop new or strengthen existing partnerships to support reintegration activities?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desk review</li> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> </ul>
<p><b>Capacity assessment</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25. What are the human and financial resources available for stakeholders to intervene at the three dimensions (economic, social, psychosocial) and three levels (individual, community, structural) of reintegration?</li> <li>26. What are the capacity-building activities required to effectively support partners in the provision of reintegration assistance?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key informant interviews</li> </ul>

Source: Module 3.

### 6.3.3 Community-based reintegration projects for economic reintegration

In communities with limited formal resources there can be few opportunities to study or work, leaving children and youth at high risk of being out of school, unemployed, underemployed and in conflict with the authorities. This can lead to feelings of hopelessness and when combined with other risk factors, can act as a driver for migration, lead to negative coping strategies and even suicidal thoughts or behaviour. In such settings of limited economic resources, parents may struggle to find employment and face challenges in meeting their children's basic needs, such as adequate amounts of food, and access to health care and education. They may also be unable to provide emotional support to their family as they face discrimination and social exclusion while trying to adapt to their new environment.

Economic reintegration assistance at the community level should consider the economic needs and opportunities accessible at the community level and the impact returnee children and families will have on these. The aim should be to reduce the vulnerability of the community as a whole to economic shocks while promoting dialogue, social cohesion and empowerment, which requires short and long-term strategies. Relying on local knowledge to inform interventions, participation of returnees and non-migrant populations and connecting to local development plans is likely to foster sustainability. Programmatic approaches can include community profiling to assess the needs and priorities, mapping of existing initiatives and interventions with active participation of returnees and non-migrant communities, analysis of market labour trends, and identification of skilled and unskilled labour opportunities in the local context including vocational training, mentorship and apprentice opportunities. Partnerships with the private sector to create employment or collaboration with the public sector to implement development projects such as road construction are some practical examples that can be pursued for economic reintegration (see [Module 3 of the Handbook](#) which examines collective income-generating activities, community-based local development and livelihood activities and community financial support activities as options for organizing community level economic reintegration support).

The key to child-sensitive economic reintegration assistance is to consider which of these types of economic reintegration assistance will support the best outcomes for the child. This requires a multi-dimensional assessment which not only considers which type of economic assistance is the most viable for the adult income earners in the household, but also how income from livelihood activities can be used to best benefit children. In addition, an economic strengthening assessment can integrate health, education and training opportunities, build the participation of children and families in the assessment process, and consider the economic condition of the family and child to determine appropriate financial reintegration assistance.

These types of assessments are best done with a multidisciplinary team working with all members of the family. The multidisciplinary team can be embedded in a community-based or community-led structure which links with or is part of a formal or informal child protection structure. The stakeholder and service mapping which should be part of the child-sensitive community assessment process can help to identify existing structures. In practice, the multi-disciplinary team can be part of a joint field mission consisting of child protection and economic strengthening capacity. The focus of the assessment can be to identify appropriate skills tailored for the community through a market analysis, exploring the most appropriate use of available resources at individual, household or community level, and to build in evaluation of identified strategies.



### Case Study 3: The community-based reintegration programme: IOM Nigeria

IOM Nigeria is supporting a Community-Based Reintegration (CBR) programme in communities where there are high numbers of returnee migrants and families. CBR is an example of economic and social reintegration assistance at the community level which is focused on improving the accessibility and availability of social, psychosocial and economic opportunities in communities of return benefitting both returnees and other members of the community. In this regard, CBR-target beneficiaries are both returnees and potential migrants (unemployed youth) in order to respond to the local community needs.

To inform the design of the CBR intervention, IOM conducted an assessment in 18 local government areas in Nigeria. The assessment identified the type of needs and risks that existed in communities where there were high numbers of residents migrating and returning, along with feasible projects. Returnees and potential migrants were grouped together based on their skills, interest and location in the community. They were provided an initial business skills' training followed by a specialized practical and vocational skill training course depending on the type of CBR project established. These groups allow returnees who were living in isolation from other returnees or were identified as particularly marginalized to be grouped together to mitigate isolation and the social stigma some of them were encountering in their communities.

The CBR set up pineapple and cassava processing factories at the identified locations to create employment opportunities for returnees and unemployed youth in the community. The project also indirectly benefit farmers, beneficiary family members and other community members to mitigate unsafe and irregular migration practices and enhance their livelihood opportunities. CBR promotes a public-private partnership model. It engages qualified and experienced private sector actors to partner and oversee the management and operationalization of projects for a pre-defined period while cooperatives (made up of returnees and potential migrants) own the established projects. The partnership promotes the smooth running of the agroprocessing facilities by providing managerial experience of the private sector while tapping into their existing market position to avoid challenges related to market penetration and investment requirements.

Vulnerable community members who had not migrated benefitted both directly from the group employment but also indirectly through awareness-raising and livelihood support, since for farming households the processing factories would bring stable demand by off-taking their produce, prevent loss on returns by avoiding price drops during harvest season, and preventing loss associated with the perishable nature of the produce. This included farmers and others who benefit from CBR to mitigate unsafe and irregular migration practices. Advocacy with government for the allocation of land for the CBR, strengthened partnerships with the private sector to promote group employment schemes and returnees' access to shared capital, and creating a returnee cooperative society to advocate for and represent their collective interests, are some of the programmes notable achievements.





### Tips for success:

- Conduct assessments to help determine and prioritize where community-based reintegration projects should be established.
- Strengthen private sector partnerships to promote employment opportunities.
- Include both returnees and members of the community in interventions.

## 6.3.4 Community-based reintegration projects for social reintegration

Social reintegration at the community level is focused on improving the accessibility and availability of social services and social cohesion in communities of return. Community-level reintegration helps returnees access services they need and also connects them with other returnees who have similar needs and vulnerabilities. Family strengthening interventions prioritize family engagement, empowerment and develop and strengthen family-centred policies, including access to community-based support services and parenting and parent-led support,<sup>76</sup>empowering families to help children socialize and learn about their culture, religion and identity. Community engagement can also shift norms which put children and families at risk, targeting schools, community leaders, and community-based structures to reinforce sustainable community-based support.<sup>77</sup>

The social service workforce, case manager, civil society organizations or other actors responsible for reintegration can connect with community-level interventions to support access to housing or appropriate care arrangements for children, particularly where the community is experiencing a high number of returns. Community-level interventions can also support education, skills' development and training by putting in place assessments to gauge the academic level, and inform the placement, of returnee children to complement school record and training certificates from host countries, when available – or by setting up flexible learning pathways where going back to formal education is not possible. Access to health (including mental health and psychosocial support) is usually a primary concern for children and families returning to their communities, as well as public safety and infrastructure, and access to justice mechanisms. Projects can provide direct support for returnee children's health needs by addressing legal and practical barriers they face in accessing health care, training needs for health workers, providing equipment, improving infrastructure and developing health-related information specific to the community particularly where it relates to infectious diseases. Access to justice can be collectively promoted by addressing barriers to birth registration and other documentation for children that may be a necessity for service provision.

### 6.3.4.1 Community Care Coalitions

Community Care Coalitions (CCCs) are groups of individuals and organizations at the local level which connect for the common purpose of expanding and enhancing care for the most vulnerable members of the community. The CCC model exists in a number of countries to complement the formal social service workforce in meeting the needs of vulnerable children and families. The CCC can be a resource in providing families with economic and social assistance and access to services. In Ethiopia, CCCs are highlighted as a primary source of support for returnee children and families in remote rural communities.

<sup>76</sup> UNGA Working Group, *Key Recommendations for 2019 UNGA Resolution on the Rights of the Child with a Focus on Children without Parental Care* (New York, June 2019).

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.



## Case Study 4: Community Care Coalitions in Ethiopia

CCCs in Ethiopia are established at the Kebele level (the lowest government administrative unit) and bring together a variety of stakeholders including traditional leaders, youth, teachers, social workers, health extensions workers, church leaders, women's groups and law enforcement authorities. They are community-based support systems which mobilize resources by collecting monthly contributions from community members who can afford the contribution. Community members are also encouraged to contribute in kind (including crops or practical support, such as labour) to the coalitions. These assets are distributed to vulnerable households in need, protecting children's health, education and well-being. The governance structure, which is adapted to the local context, consists of a taskforce chaired by the local administration, and various committees, including an executive group with permanent staff members, an auditor group that is voluntary or assigned to perform financial functions, and specialized thematic committees focused on particular interventions such as resource mobilization, access to justice (para-legals), social protection and so on.

The Government of Ethiopia and UNICEF are supporting and investing in CCCs as a valuable system of social support that protects children at the local level, and links and refers them to other child protection services. For example, a family of five including a husband, wife and their three school-going children were identified as vulnerable and needing support. The Kebele and CCCs stepped in to provide practical support, and links to services. The family received cash from the CCC to ensure the children could continue to attend school. An economic assessment revealed that the family although living in a rented house had a piece of land listed among their resources. They could not afford to build on the land so the CCC mobilized community members to build them a modest two-roomed house, now surrounded by beautiful plants. This intervention not only provided shelter but made it possible for the family to stay together.

Further, the CCC connected the family to social services support from the Bureau of Women, Children and Youth and health support from the local medical centre. The family received medical care from a medical centre that works closely with the CCC through referral by a Community Service Worker (CSW) assigned to the Kebele to identify vulnerable families in need of child protection services. The medical centre is identified as one of the community assets that facilitates free medical care to community members from Kebele.

The social worker at the Regional Bureau of Women, Children and Youth, supported the husband in accessing part-time work having achieved a greater skill level. The income the husband earns is enough to sustain the family. Due to these interventions one of the children successfully graduated from high school and obtained a part-time teaching position.



### Tips for success:

- National authorities should support CCCs to strengthen their capacity at local level.
- Assets at the local level should be identified and used to promote reintegration assistance through a community led approach.

- Individuals at the local level should be included in the CCCs because they are best placed to identify vulnerabilities, needs and strengths.
- Appropriate referral mechanisms to available services within the community should be developed and kept updated.

### 6.3.5 Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) at the community level

As outlined in [Chapter 6.2](#), children and families will have a level of resilience that allows them to reintegrate successfully. Reintegration MHPSS services focused on basic service provision and family and community support can benefit such returnee children and families. Community based MHPSS activities should aim to reinforce the bond between children and their caregivers, connect children with peers and facilitate children and family's social integration into their community. They can also include sensitization activities to counteract potential stigma and foster a welcoming and inclusive environment. Meeting the MHPSS needs of young children and caregivers, and supporting parenting programmes and teachers, promotes the developmental needs of returnee children.

Engaging and building the capacity of the social service workforce facilitates MHPSS at the community level. As such, building the capacity of MHPSS providers should complement the development of the social service workforce at the community level. This means strengthening social, counselling, educational and health services, including mental health to respond to the needs of returnee children. It also means focusing efforts to building dedicated MHPSS capacity (counselling, clinical psychology) where it is lacking.

This can be done through the development of MHPSS interventions for caregivers and children, then engaging community facilitators (who are parents themselves) to develop and implement the intervention. These groups can:

- Extend the social support network and help build a sense of community (many parents express that they feel isolated and that they are the only ones experiencing this; groups counteract that).
- Capitalize on existing specialized MHPSS resources, expanding access to care to underserved communities.
- Provide a safe space, creating opportunities to practice new ways of being seen, relating to others and understanding patterns in interpersonal dynamics (many parents had lost the ability to trust other parents, anticipated feeling judged and judged themselves about their parenting).

Group interventions can include art, music and dance, and should use the innate ways that communities have to connect. The case study below shows how this methodology was used in Colombia. The community context in the case study is similar to many contexts where children and families may return to a country of origin with low resources for reintegration support, ongoing high levels of displacement or migration and high levels of violence or economic factors which destabilize social cohesion. This methodology can be helpful when assisting parents who return to their children that they had left with other family members and may be having difficulties reconnecting with them. Training for group facilitators focused on family strengthening helps to develop an additional referral network resource to support sustainable reintegration, while promoting social cohesion by creating spaces where the community can come together to learn these skills.



### Case Study 5: Child-parent psychotherapy group intervention in Tumaco, Colombia

In Tumaco, Colombia, communities are regularly displaced by and exposed to armed conflict. This can have serious repercussions on children's mental health and psychosocial well-being as they grow up, that remain with them once they become parents. In order to protect child development in these violence-affected communities, Dr. Andres Moya from the Universidad de los Andes led on the research, in partnership with the University of California which created "Semillas de Apego" ("Seeds of Bonding" in English) a group-based psychosocial intervention for primary caregivers and children under five.

Semillas de Apego is built upon the work of Alicia Lieberman and Vilma Reyes, who adapted child-parent psychotherapy (CPP) to a group model informed by the socioeconomic, geopolitical and cultural context of two communities in Colombia. It aims to foster the child-parent attachments that promote healthy emotional development in the midst of adverse circumstances, explore ways in which experiences impact parenting, increase caregiver's mindfulness and restore trust in the community. The group intervention is based on the precept that the best predictor of how children cope after experiencing distressing experiences is how their parent or caregiver copes with the event. It consists of 15 sessions with topics and exercises that aim to build trust within the group, promote reflection, insights and strategies into repairing the child-parent bond and enabling the parent's ability to meet their child's developmental needs.

Groups in Tumaco were facilitated by locally recruited facilitators who were trained by the clinical team who led the pilot in Bogota. A supervisor was identified among the Tumaco group facilitators who then cascaded training-of-trainer sessions to a group of future facilitators. All of the facilitators were parents themselves and reported learning about and improving their relationship with their own children as well. They were trained in CPP principles, trauma theory and group facilitation. They also received reflective supervision which allowed them to reflect on their own parenting, apply the various theories and activities they learned and to experience what it was like to participate in a reflective space so that they could recreate this for group participants.

As part of the clinical trial and piloting of the intervention in Colombia, pre and post intervention outcome measures were completed. Outcomes for parents and children included:

- Reduced severe anxiety and depression symptoms of caregivers;
- Reduced parenting stress;
- Improved parenting self-efficacy (satisfaction with one's parenting);
- Improvement in the child-parent relationship;
- Reduction in symptoms of trauma, emotional dysregulation and cognitive, social and language skill impairment in children.



### Tips for success:

- Recruit and train group facilitators who know and are part of the community.
- “On-the-job” training and coaching is essential in implementing the model.
- Adapt the model to the cultural frame and context.

For more information please go to <https://uniandes.edu.co/en/news/regional-development/sowing-the-future-in-a-land-of-violence>.

## 6.4 Child-sensitive reintegration assistance at the structural level

### Key Messages



- Strengthening reintegration for children and families at the structural level requires engaging key stakeholders in mainstreaming reintegration considerations into national and local policies and strategies that affect children and families. These stakeholders include national and local governments and their agencies, and foreign governments and donor agencies, as well as NGOs and other associations and organizations, including those led by returning migrants themselves.



- Structural level reintegration assistance should strengthen systems and services for all children in the area to which children are returning, for instance child protection, education, health care, housing, access to justice, social protection and so forth. Such structural interventions through a multisectoral approach – long-term capacity-building of these sectors, in alignment with national and local development priorities – promotes children’s sustainable reintegration.



- With regards to child protection services, structural level reintegration assistance should guide and inform the ongoing development of protection mechanisms for vulnerable children and families. In some cases, the vulnerabilities which trigger migration or hinder reintegration efforts are similar to the vulnerabilities which undermine children’s development and weaken families’ and communities’ resilience. Capacity-building efforts at the structural level develop case management frameworks, including referral mechanisms, and strengthen the social service workforce who carry out case management activities for vulnerable children.



- Stakeholder mapping and information gathering as part of the situational analysis contributes to providing context, including vulnerabilities, strengths, relevant laws, donor policies, national and local government policies and priorities, services and systems which impact children and families in countries of origin. IOM and UNICEF processes allow for the regular gathering, analysis and updating of country of origin information and can serve as a starting point to better understanding the national context and infrastructure to which a child might be returning.



- Practitioners should ensure that information obtained about factors affecting children's reintegration, as a result of stakeholder mapping and information gathering, is used to work with relevant stakeholders (including governments in countries of origin, host countries, and donor countries) and to advocate with them to ensure that children's rights and children's needs are included when developing reintegration processes and policies.



Programme managers/  
developers



Case managers/  
other staff



National  
government  
(host and origin)



Local government  
(host and origin)



Service  
providers  
(national)



Local partners



Donors

## Introduction

Political, institutional, economic and social conditions directly impact the chances of sustainable reintegration for children and families. Creating a conducive environment for the design and implementation of child and family-focused reintegration assistance requires:

- Engagement and capacity-building of key stakeholders in host countries and countries of origin, as well as advocacy with all relevant government counterparts to ensure that children's rights and needs are taken into account when designing and implementing reintegration policies and programmes.
- The strengthening or development of coordination mechanisms among all key stakeholders throughout the return and reintegration process.
- The development or strengthening of international (both multilateral and bilateral) cooperation systems and practices focused on reintegration of returnees.
- Mainstreaming reintegration considerations into national legislation, policies, strategies and practices relating to child protection and social welfare, and to other services including education, health care, housing, access to justice, social protection, as well as policies and strategies affecting employment.

In contexts where there are fewer number of returnee children and families or where child protection and social welfare mechanisms systems and other services of particular relevance to children are well established, structural level interventions can focus on ensuring returnees are incorporated into existing systems. In general, structural level reintegration assistance should guide and inform the ongoing development and adaptation of protection mechanisms for vulnerable children and families. In some cases, the vulnerabilities which trigger migration or hinder reintegration efforts are similar to the vulnerabilities which undermine children's development and weaken families' and communities' resilience. In this sense, the sustainable reintegration of returnees can serve as an opportunity to:

- Expand resources for local and national services;
- Further engage and expand the range of key stakeholders acting to promote child rights and address the needs of all children in returnee communities of origin;
- Strengthen systems which not only support returnee children and families but ensure protection and assistance to all children and families alike, with particular attention to those in situations of vulnerability.

This chapter focuses principally on strengthening child protection and social welfare mechanisms through capacity-building, as an example of the kind of structural interventions that should be prioritized to support the sustainable reintegration of children. Other services that are of particular relevance to returnee children include education, health care, housing, social protection and access to justice.

### 6.4.1 Stakeholder engagement

Engaging with national and local authorities in the early stages of designing the reintegration assistance process is beneficial due to their proximity to the community and in-depth knowledge of available services. Stakeholder mapping can, for example, allow for the identification of child protection and welfare authorities during the pre-departure phase or immediately after a child or family arrive back in the country of origin. Stakeholder mapping and information gathering as part of the situational analysis contributes to providing context, including vulnerabilities, strengths, relevant laws, readmission agreements between States, donor policies, national and local government policies and priorities, services and systems which impact children and families in countries of origin.

- IOM and UNICEF processes allow for the regular gathering, analysis and updating of country of origin information, national surveys and situational analyses and can serve as a starting point to better understanding the national context and infrastructure to which a child might be returning.
- The child and family's individual circumstances can inform the identification of key stakeholders.
- The reintegration plans for individual children and families as well as the implementation of larger reintegration programmes in communities welcoming many returnees should consider all relevant stakeholders. Relevant stakeholders include national and local level authorities, the private sector, civil society organizations (including those that are youth-led), migrant, returnee and diaspora associations, and foreign governments and donor agencies (typically those of host countries who return migrants).
- Stakeholder mapping and the situational analysis are an extension of the BIA which should be completed for all children (see [Table 4.1, Module 4](#) for a description of the stakeholder categories, their relevance and possible functions).
- Engagement of the stakeholders who manage the systems which govern the delivery of economic, social and psychosocial reintegration assistance is essential to safeguarding the best interest of the child. This includes the private sector which is key to the economic and social reintegration assistance for the child and family.



## Case Study 6: Stakeholder engagement at national and municipal level in El Salvador

Reintegration assistance in El Salvador involves the engagement of stakeholders across multiple ministries at the national and municipal level, beginning with an adequate reception process (with more than 11 national institutions providing services post arrival). On arrival adults, family units, children and adolescent returnees are received at the national reception centre, led by the Directorate of Migration (DGME) and supported by international organizations and civil society. Each institution implements a quick individual assessment, with special focus on children and family units, in coordination with the child protection system. Unaccompanied children are referred to the National Council for Childhood and Adolescence (CONNA). The national services provide referral and follow-up at local level in communities of arrival.

In several prioritized municipalities with high levels of homicides, the Government of El Salvador, with the support of international, institutional and social actors launched “Plan El Salvador Seguro” in 2015, which then evolved into “Plan Control Territorial” in 2019. The objective is to address community violence through the recovery of safe and rehabilitated public spaces for the enjoyment of families and community members. This included the creation of workshops to deliver life-skills training, the promotion of entrepreneurial projects, reintegration into the education system through flexible education modules and the opening of youth employment offices focusing on populations at risk.

The programme prioritized more than 60 municipalities. To complement this, IOM, based on official government data, tracks the number of returnees arriving to El Salvador from the United States of America and Mexico. This data allowed IOM with the support of USAID, to prioritize municipalities with both high homicide and high return rates, to work on reintegration and prevention of irregular migration. An example is the municipality of Zacatecoluca.

The Zacatecoluca municipality launched a municipal office for returnees and their families. This office receives returnee referrals and offers assistance with other national services for their reintegration process. The municipal office also raises awareness on the risks of irregular migration and helps returnees to maintain links with Salvadorans abroad.

Furthermore, the Municipal Committees for the Prevention of Violence (CMPV) opened a local victim support office and promoted artistic and cultural activities through the establishment of dance and painting schools. Efforts like this allow for a more comprehensive approach for each returnee, according to their profile.

In parallel, IOM with the leadership of the municipality, strengthened local efforts towards social cohesion based on the development of small-scale infrastructure projects, promoting local engagement and community leadership. IOM also strengthened communal capacities for reintegration ownership and the prevention of irregular migration.

The engagement of multiple layers of stakeholders has resulted in community public spaces which promote the social cohesion and social reintegration of returnee families and other marginalized members of the community, mitigate migration drivers and raise awareness on the risks of irregular migration.





### Tips for success:

- Engage a wide variety of stakeholders at various levels including the national, municipal and local level, and define a local leader.
- A thorough understanding of an adequate and dignified reception process, including a thorough mapping of actors and services available, is the first step for developing the needed approaches for reintegration.
- Ensure immediate psychosocial support and form support groups for returnees.
- Foster evidence-based strategies through analysis of available data from returnees and the community of origin.

## 6.4.2 Capacity-building and strengthening

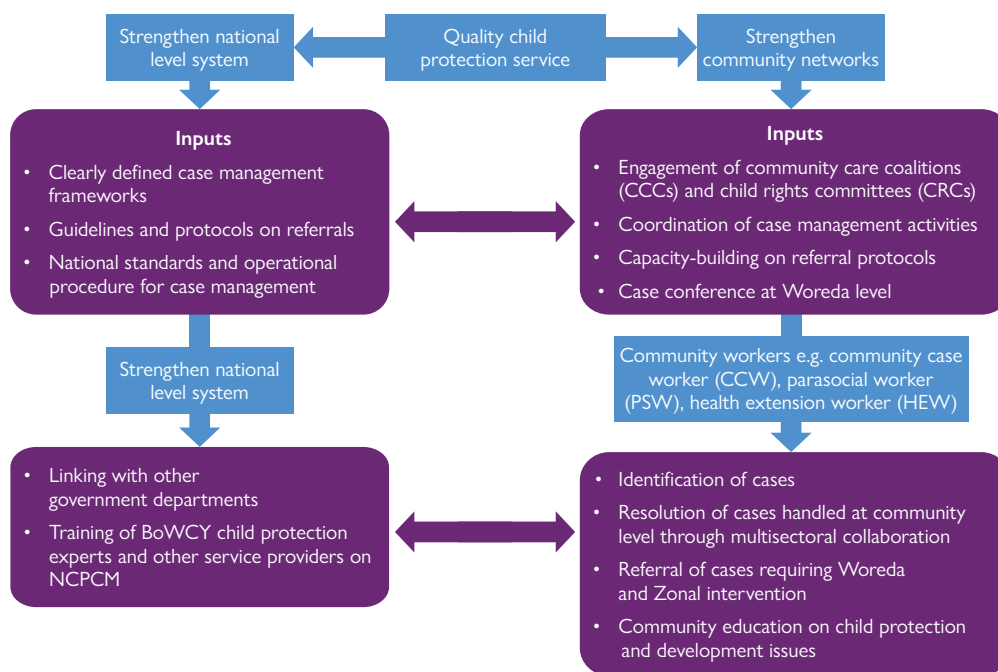
Capacity-building can be targeted at any stakeholder playing a role in reintegration assistance and involves strengthening their skills, structures, processes or resources so they can facilitate the sustainable reintegration of returnee children and families.<sup>78</sup> IOM and UNICEF work jointly as key stakeholders in promoting the sustainable reintegration of returnee children and families in their countries of origin. UNICEF has adopted a systems' approach to child protection. The systems' approach seeks to ensure that children are being protected in a manner consistent with their rights. Systems-strengthening, in turn, involves enhancing the capacities of institutions and systems to achieve this aim.<sup>79</sup> UNICEF implements the systems'-strengthening approach to child protection by promoting a holistic and integrated structure of service provision and policies which identify and support all vulnerable children in a non-discriminatory manner. Along with capacity-building to strengthen systems, UNICEF's strategy emphasizes a unified system where every vulnerable child can access necessary support rather than establishing parallel mechanisms that are not integrated or coordinated.

Key stakeholders in the child protection system strengthening approach are national ministries and civil society organizations mandated to safeguard and promote the rights of children and families. Capacity-building for the government and civil society partners coordinating or providing support to children and families is core among the systems strengthening interventions. In [Chapter 6.2](#), child-sensitive case management was highlighted as an effective means for delivering individualized support for children and families. Capacity-building efforts at the structural level develop national and cross-border case management frameworks, including referral mechanisms, and strengthen the social service workforce who carry out case management activities for vulnerable children.

<sup>78</sup> *IOM Reintegration Handbook*, p. 146 (Geneva, 2019).

<sup>79</sup> UNICEF, *Strengthening Child Protection Systems: Evaluation of UNICEF Strategies and Programme Performance*, (Geneva, 2018).

**Figure 6.1: Systems-strengthening in Ethiopia**



### Case Study 7: Strengthening reintegration assistance through the national case management system: Ethiopia

IOM and UNICEF work jointly as key stakeholders in promoting the sustainable reintegration of returnee children and families in their countries of origin within the context of the National Case Management Framework in Ethiopia. Systems'-strengthening involves enhancing the capacities of institutions, procedures and processes to ensure that children are being protected in a manner consistent with their rights.

UNICEF and IOM support the strengthening of mechanisms and structures that allow all children including returnee children and their families to connect to support at the national level in predeparture and postarrival planning for the child followed by the continued support and follow-up with the child and family in their local communities. For returnee children in Ethiopia, this has included a partnership with IOM and the Ministry of Women Children and Youth (MoWCY) to provide social workers at the IOM transit centre who support the identification, registration and assessment of returning unaccompanied and separated children. The social worker initiates family tracing in accordance with the child's best interests, accompanies the child to their village and hands over to a local social worker to oversee family reunification and implementation of the child protection case care plan in coordination with relevant stakeholders.

This approach has been informed by a national case management framework incorporating the needs of all children including returnees. The case management approach brings together and coordinates

all actors with a child protection concern. The multisectoral approach requires the involvement and support of all levels within the system, from national to community, with structures in place for coordinating the views, priorities, approaches and interventions of all stakeholders. The result is a web of interlinked agencies, coordination mechanisms as well as a standardized case management practice. UNICEF is supporting the testing of the national case management framework in various locations by, among other activities, increasing the number and enhancing the capacity of the social service workforce including community social workers through specialized training. Relevant standard operating procedures and tools have been developed to transition the paper-based case management system to a digital platform to facilitate more efficient case follow-up, monitoring and referral to appropriate services.



#### Tips for success:

- Invest in increasing the social service workforce including community social workers and enhancing their competency by conducting specialized courses on return and reintegration.
- Identify certified qualified social service workers under the relevant national authority to oversee and supervise reintegration assistance at the local and community level.
- Strengthen national child protection, social welfare and education systems to cater for the needs of returnee children and families.

### 6.4.2.1 Social service workforce strengthening

An appropriate staff profile, staffing structure and recruitment approach for a reintegration project for children and families begins with a functioning social service workforce. The Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Service Workforce for Child Protection 2018, developed by UNICEF in consultation with the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance (GSSWA), are informed by evidence of 'what works' and lessons learned in the field. They are designed to accelerate UNICEF regional and country offices' programming on social service workforce strengthening, and support work to better plan, develop and support the social services workforce with national and regional partners.

The guidelines outline recommended strategies and interventions to strengthen the social service workforce – an important component of the child protection system – by:

- Increasing the understanding of the role and function of the social service workforce within the child protection system.
- Increasing the understanding of the composition of the workforce and the key actors that constitute the workforce.
- Recommending evidence-based strategies and interventions for strengthening the social service workforce in the short, medium and long term.
- Highlighting the specific role that UNICEF can play in strengthening the social service workforce at the regional and national levels.
- Strengthening country-level, regional and global monitoring for measuring progress on strengthening the social service workforce, and its impact on child protection prevention and response services.

In addition, the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance (GSSWA) has developed guiding principles and competencies for para professionals in the social service workforce. Good para professional social workers are trained in providing care that is child focused and family centred through an “ongoing process of assessment, care management, service coordination, quality improvement, capacity-building, and direct support”.<sup>80</sup> The second edition (2017) *Para Professionals in the Social Service Workforce: Guiding Principles, Functions and Competencies* includes:

- Guiding Principles for the Development of Para Professional Social Service Workers.
- Generic/Core Functions and Competencies for Para Professional Social Service Workers.
- Functions and Competencies for Para Professional Child and Youth Care Workers.
- Functions and Competencies for Para Professional Social Workers.
- Functions and Competencies for Para Professional Community Development Workers.

These set of competency frameworks are child focused and are intended to assist managers in developing programmes, designing job descriptions as well as assessing training and supervision needs and complement the reintegration staffing profile provided in [Module 1, Chapter 1.4.3](#).

### 6.4.3 Establishing coordination mechanisms

The previous chapters have emphasized the importance of considering the ecology and best interests of the child. The complexity of these key considerations is reflected by the web of stakeholders, support mechanisms and service providers necessary to ensure the child’s ecology and best interests are supported and promoted. Most countries of origin will have some level of coordination mechanisms for accessing protection, services and assistance, but these mechanisms may not be organized around the needs of individuals and families returning to countries of origin. In fact, it is likely that the lack of access and coordination of support mechanisms to meet the needs of vulnerable individuals or families may have contributed to the motivation to migrate.

In countries of origin with under-resourced or underdeveloped coordination mechanisms, [Module 4](#) provides guidance for setting up a context-sensitive coordination mechanism. Mapping available services, establishing standard operating procedures, referral mechanisms and promoting government ownership including national coordination of the referral mechanism and connecting key actors are some of the steps highlighted in [Module 4](#). Establishing a coordination mechanism specifically to address the needs of individuals and families returning to their countries of origin can be an immediate or emergency response to provide support for returnees in countries of origin where there are no existing mechanisms to reintegrate and support returnees. Sustainable reintegration for returning children and families will be reliant on enhancing the capacity of systems at the national level to respond. The Ethiopia National Case Management Framework demonstrates a methodology for strengthening the social service workforce and establishing the necessary coordination mechanisms to ensure all children and families who need it have access to individualized support and follow-up, including returning migrants.

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<sup>80</sup> Linsk et al., 2010, p. 996.

## 6.4.4 International coordination

As the reintegration process begins before departure from the host or transit country, the information gathered for the BIP, the motivation or drivers for migration and the circumstances regarding the migration journey are important considerations to take into account for reintegration planning. The timing and arrangements for the physical return of children and families also requires planning and coordination made possible by available and effective cross-border communication and coordination mechanisms. Stakeholders integral to this process are governments of the host and origin countries, at their national and local levels, particularly child protection and social welfare actors, international organizations, NGOs, CSOs, schools, faith-based organizations, private actors and migrant, returnee and diaspora associations in host, origin and transit countries.

Effective cross-border communication and coordination is facilitated by developing agreements and cooperation frameworks that are child and family focused and bring together local and international partnerships to facilitate cooperation and effective case management across borders. It helps to coordinate individual support for returnee children and identify, track and mitigate risks and vulnerabilities that children may face before, during and after the migration journey. It can bring together host countries and countries of origin, facilitate provision of reintegration support at the predeparture stage, inform the adaptation of reintegration mechanisms to the country of origin context, tailor measures to the needs of children and families and promote monitoring and evaluation to measure sustainable reintegration. Particular risks to be taken into consideration during this process are child trafficking, various forms of child exploitation and the identification and protection of unaccompanied and separated children. With these risks and vulnerabilities identified, child-sensitive protocols should be developed and incorporated into bilateral and cross-border child protection agreements as well as local partnerships and readmission agreements.

Effective cross-border communication and coordination supports the reintegration process by facilitating:

- Cooperation between actors in host, transit and origin countries;
- Provision and coordination of reintegration assistance starting at the pre-return stage;
- Adaptation of reintegration measures to the needs and capacities of the countries of origin;
- Tailoring reintegration assistance to the individual needs of returnees through shared information;
- Monitoring and evaluation to track the progress and success of return and reintegration measures.

**Cross-border case management** can be built on existing national systems that are inclusive of children on the move, sensitive to their specific protection needs, and promote domestic and transnational coordination. Cross-border case management establishes a continuum of care where services between places of origin, transit and destination are coordinated based on interlinked systems for data and case management (taking into account data protection standards). In such a system, children on the move who require protection are identified, referred to child protection authorities, and supported to find and implement a sustainable solution based on a best interests procedure and a comprehensive assessment in the host country, country of origin or a third country. This requires different national case management systems to work together to provide streamlined care, protection and services.



### Case Study 8: ECOWAS Care Protocols and Standards for the Protection and Reintegration of Vulnerable Young Migrant Children on the Move

The ECOWAS Care Protocols and Standards were put forth in November 2011 by the West Africa Network for Child Protection (WAN) steering committee with the support of the International Social Service, Switzerland (SSI Switzerland). WAN is a network of governments, civil society organizations, individuals and other actors working in countries across West Africa. WAN under the supervision of ECOWAS serves as a protection group for children in West Africa, and a viable mechanism for the protection and transnational care of children on the move.

The aim of the Standards is to ensure that the child is at the centre of all care concerns as well as the child's family and community, which is paramount for the development and well-being of the child. In addition, the Standards promote a holistic consideration of the child's individual needs, resources, opinions and relationships.

The Standards propose a conceptual framework of vulnerability which offers a common framework for ECOWAS countries to assess and address the risks and vulnerabilities of children on the move. The conceptual framework demonstrates the impact of vulnerabilities in the child's environment, identifies the root causes and intervention steps which can be implemented to reduce risks, manage cases and promote children's rights. The ECOWAS Care Protocols and Standards identify eight steps for transnational case management which are integrated into the ECOWAS Child Protection Monitoring and Assessment Framework and its implementation guidelines. The eight steps include identification and emergency treatment of the child, study of the child's personal situation and assessment of the family and the child's environmental situation, alternative care, social, educational and professional reintegration, monitoring follow-up after return and family and community support.



#### Tips for success:

- Ensure that the child is placed at the centre of any intervention.
- Include a chain of actors made up of State actors, NGOs, family and community to provide protective support to the child.

For more information see ECOWAS Support Procedures and Standards for the Protection and Reintegration of Vulnerable Children on the Move and Young Migrants: [www.ssiss.ch/sites/default/files/2018-11/04001\\_ssi\\_content\\_EN\\_RZ\\_web\\_72dpi.pdf](http://www.ssiss.ch/sites/default/files/2018-11/04001_ssi_content_EN_RZ_web_72dpi.pdf)

## 6.4.5 Strengthening national and local policy frameworks

At the structural level, reintegration policies and strategies, including reintegration assistance, should be embedded in national and local policy frameworks that ensure that children's rights and needs are at the forefront.

Embedding reintegration assistance and support in national policies can facilitate cross-border coordination. This can include labour needs, vocational training and certification of skills, qualifications and education to enable returning youth and caregivers to utilize the education and skills acquired abroad in their communities of origin.

Strengthening reintegration for children and families at the structural level requires engaging with and supporting key stakeholders in mainstreaming reintegration considerations into national and local policies and strategies that affect all children and families. Structural reintegration assistance interventions should use a multisectoral approach as well as long-term capacity-building of these sectors, in alignment with national and local development priorities. For children and families, the best interests and ecology of the child can help policymakers identify priority sectors and opportunities for mainstreaming. The identified sectors for mainstreaming can include labour, education and training, child protection, social welfare, health and well-being, gender, justice, environment, private sector, business and finance. Also important for children and families is social connection, which would include reducing any stigma or marginalization which may be caused by membership of a particular socioeconomic class, ethnic group or even any stigma which might be associated with being a returnee. Children and families' abilities to feel connected, valued and supported by their communities and peers will often determine whether reintegration will be sustainable. Thus, social inclusion policies which focus on promoting socially cohesive communities and ensuring that minority or marginalized groups are fully integrated into society offer another opportunity to mainstream return and sustainable reintegration.

Finally, minimizing protection risks associated with irregular movement requires the expansion of regular migration channels and pathways. The lack of education and income-earning opportunities are also key drivers for migration among caregivers and young people who migrated alone. The development of national, regional and international policies on regular migration routes and frameworks should always consider the impacts on children and include robust processes to enable swift family reunification.

## 6.5 Monitoring and evaluating child-sensitive reintegration assistance

### Key Messages

- Child-sensitive indicators for sustainable reintegration provide guidance for implementing, monitoring and evaluating a holistic approach including addressing some of the root causes of migration.
- Reintegration monitoring will contribute not only to supporting individual children and families, and identifying rights' violations, but also to filling existing evidence gaps about what works in reintegration. Evidence on reintegration should also inform when returns should take place and how they are conducted.
- The monitoring of child-sensitive reintegration indicators can guide practitioners in measuring progress and identifying risks and vulnerabilities of returnee children and families as they move from one step of the case management process to the next.
- Children, families and other stakeholders involved in the reintegration process should be consulted on the development of indicators and learnings documented to strengthen the wider child-protection system.
- Monitoring should continue for long enough to detect stability in a child's life (recommended two years).



Programme managers/  
developers



Case managers/  
other staff



Donors



M&E Officers

### Overview

Monitoring and evaluation provide a link between the different levels of the integrated approach. Reintegration monitoring will 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. Evidence on reintegration should also inform when returns take place and how they are conducted. Monitoring tools link progress made on the individual and family level with indicators playing an important role in the case management process. The monitoring of indicators can guide practitioners in measuring progress and identifying risks and vulnerabilities of returnee children as they move from one step of the case management process to the next. Child-specific indicators also consider the developmental needs of children as they grow. The use of multidimensional, child-sensitive indicators can help practitioners develop sustainable reintegration plans which take into account a child's needs and choices over their lifespan, helping practitioners monitor and assess when reintegration interventions and support have not been "successful". This allows practitioners the opportunity to review and revise reintegration plans to ensure their effectiveness and sustainability. Monitoring should continue for long enough to detect stability in a child's life (recommended for two years).



## 6.5.1 Common challenges in monitoring reintegration assistance

Challenge	What can be done
Logistical and other challenges in maintaining contact with returnee children and families interfere with the monitoring and review process.	Incorporate community-support mechanisms to facilitate monitoring during the design phase.
Inadequate investment in mechanisms which ensure and promote returnee children's participation.	Keep children informed throughout the return and reintegration process.
Children, particularly those who are accompanied by their caregivers as they return to their country of origin, experience an extra barrier, where the focus of contact, participation and monitoring is on the parent or caregiver as the head of the household rather than on the individual child.	Design and develop child-centred monitoring mechanisms including play, art and drama as appropriate to the community.
Monitoring may draw unnecessary attention to the returnee child or family. It can create unrealistic expectations from returnees who have not adequately understood the limitations of assistance. It can also trigger resentment or endanger returnee children and families due to the perception that they have received particular resources. Finally, it can draw resentment from caregivers who may feel that their authority is being undermined.	Outline the limits of assistance and the purpose for monitoring and if possible and appropriate, engage and build the capacity of community members to conduct monitoring and evaluation.
Lack of independent monitoring mechanisms for returnee children and families. Evidence gathered through monitoring is rarely used to adapt reintegration support programmes or in the design of new interventions (M&E is disconnected from programme design).	Engage national human rights' institutions or local civil society organizations. Strengthen national and local monitoring and evaluation exercises by ensuring adequate resource allocation and capacity-building.

Children, families and other stakeholders involved in the reintegration process should be consulted on the development of indicators and learnings documented to strengthen the wider child protection and other systems and services in place.<sup>81</sup> Monitoring and evaluation can be considered at three levels:

- The individual level to track the progress of the child;
- At the agency level to evaluate the efficacy of the programme;
- At the multisectoral level to identify potential gaps in service provision.

### Child protection monitoring visits

Child protection monitoring visits ensure continued support and guidance to the child and caregiver, the reintegration plan is reviewed to identify gaps in service provision, confirm implementation is on track and agreed actions remain relevant. Monitoring visits can also facilitate the variation of the reintegration plan

<sup>81</sup> Delap, E. and J. Wedge, *Guidelines on Children's Reintegration*, p. 7 Inter Agency Group on Children's Reintegration (2016).

in accordance with the child's and family's prevailing situation. Child protection monitoring visits serve to promote child safeguarding by mitigating the risk of abuse or exploitation and establishing appropriate reporting channels. During child-monitoring visits specific questions to be considered can revolve around how the child feels about the reintegration assistance provided thus far, what has worked well, what could have worked better, and what could strengthen the process going forward.

### Community monitoring

Community monitoring can be implemented through child protection committees, volunteers or trusted members of society such as a religious leaders or traditional elders. Community monitoring can facilitate review and monitoring on an ongoing basis to strengthen service provision and reintegration programming. Where there is no individual case manager, there may exist a community-based child protection structure. Community level child protection structures can monitor the progress of individual children as well as provide vital information to inform the development of policies and initiatives at the structural level. A group approach to monitoring can be applied to a larger number of children in a specific community. This can be done by periodically reviewing the reintegration support they have received through ongoing reintegration programmes that bring them together such as education, vocational and business skills training.

## 6.5.2 Child-sensitive indicators for sustainable reintegration

Child-sensitive indicators for sustainable reintegration cross-reference individual child and family needs with accessibility to the means and resources to mitigate environmental or community vulnerabilities. They can also take into account 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 or community of origin. Child-sensitive indicators for sustainable reintegration provide guidance for implementing, monitoring and evaluating a holistic approach including addressing some of the root causes of migration. Whereas this is important for designing reintegration specific programming, it is important to remember that similar structural considerations apply to all vulnerable children in a community. As highlighted in Chapter 6.4, sustainable reintegration assistance does not seek to create a parallel system of support for returnee children and families. Instead it makes the link between reintegration support and the vulnerability factors which serve as migration drivers in communities of origin. This enhances the sustainability of a reintegration programme by linking it to larger systems and resources without creating unintended incentives or disincentives for any vulnerable child or family seeking or receiving support.

## 6.5.3 Generating knowledge: towards the development of a child-sensitive results monitoring framework

IOM has developed a standardized Reintegration Sustainability Survey (RSS) tool to evaluate the sustainable reintegration of returnees in the economic, social and psychosocial dimensions. The survey and its accompanying set of indicators help to assess to what extent returning migrants have achieved a level of sustainable reintegration in their communities of origin. IOM's integrated approach to reintegration as well as the RSS tool and indicators are currently in use in reintegration processes for returnee children. However, when considering the specific needs of children, it is recognized that a more tailored approach should be used. It is understood that the experiences of returnee children and their specific needs and vulnerabilities require dedicated indicators and monitoring tools to measure the sustainability of their reintegration and

identify good practices to best plan for and implement reintegration programmes for returning children and families.

*The Durable Solutions for Children Toolkit* developed by Save the Children in 2019 establishes indicators for the return and reintegration of children. The Toolkit covers the process of determining, advocating and implementing solutions for migrant children, including those returning from abroad and internally displaced persons (IDPs). It includes an indicator framework to measure the progress of solutions for children.<sup>82</sup>

## CHILD RIGHTS GOVERNANCE

### Material safety

- Children have access to education
- Children do not suffer from poverty

### Physical safety

- Children are protected from conflict
- Children are protected from abuse and exploitation



### Psychosocial safety

- Children are healthy
- Children's mental health is supported
- Children have a sense of belonging

### Legal safety

- Children have civil documents
- Children are united with their families

## BREAKTHROUGHS

### Survive, Be Protected and Learn

To best adapt this Toolkit for use in reintegration programmes with child returnees, IOM is undertaking a joint research study with Save the Children to refine the Toolkit indicators for returnee children. This joint IOM and Save the Children project will also develop child-specific monitoring tools and identify good practices to monitor and evaluate sustainable reintegration of children in the context of return. The outcome of this study should directly improve the design, implementation and evaluation of reintegration support programmes for children as well as feed into recommendations for child return and reintegration policy and advocacy. The results of the study, along with the accompanying tools will be available in early to mid-2021.

<sup>82</sup> *The Durable Solutions Toolkit for Children's Indicator Framework* can be found on page 38 of the document. This guidance package establishes clear standards, advocacy and programming guidance, and an indicator framework, to ensure children are incorporated into durable solutions' assessment for the first time. It is entering its second phase of roll-out, with an ongoing development of planning methodologies and specific indicators, thus connecting to Save the Children work on triple nexus and child recovery.

## USEFUL RESOURCES

### Better Care Network

- 2015 [Household economic strengthening in support of prevention of family-child separation and children's reintegration in family care](#). Family Health International, Durham, USA.
- 2019 [United Nations General Assembly \(UNGA\) Resolution on the Rights of the Child](#). New York. [Key Recommendations](#) with a focus on children without parental care.

### Child Resilience Alliance

- 2018 [Toolkit for reflective practice in supporting community-led child protection processes](#). Child Resilience Alliance, New York.

### Delap, E. and J. Wedge

- 2016 [Guidelines on Children's Reintegration](#) Inter Agency Group on Children's Reintegration.

### International Organization for Migration (IOM)

- 2019 [IOM Handbook on Protection and Assistance for Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse](#). Geneva. Part 6 provides guidance on how the best interests principle can be applied in practice.

### Save the Children

- 2014 [Inter Agency Guidelines for Case Management and Child Protection](#). London.
- 2019 [Durable Solutions for Children Toolkit](#). Save the Children Migration and Displacement Initiative (MDI), London.
- The Durable Solutions for Children Toolkit* developed by Save the Children's Migration and Displacement Initiative (MDI), offers a framework for developing child-sensitive durable solutions. The framework has four domains: material, legal, physical safety and mental health and psychosocial safety. The framework can help case managers and other members of the workforce implementing or designing reintegration plans for children and families to reflect on the context-specific risk, vulnerability and protective factors which may contribute to or undermine a sustainable child-sensitive reintegration plan. It can also be considered to inform the child's Best Interest Assessment and can be used in conjunction with the Vulnerability Assessment, Risk Assessment, Family Assessment, Skills Assessment and Reintegration Sustainability Survey Tools and Guidance outlined in the Handbook.

### UNICEF

- 2019 [Guidelines to Strengthen the Social Service Workforce for Child Protection](#), New York.

### United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child

- 2017 [Joint general comment No. 3 \(2017\)](#) of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and No. 22 (2017) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the general principles regarding the human rights of children in the context of international migration. New York.

### Wessells, M.

- 2018 [A guide for supporting community-led child protection processes](#). Child Resilience Alliance, New York.