RIGHT2CHANGE

Juvenile justice reform in policy and practice in Northern Uganda

Final Evaluation Report
Executive Summary

Chance for Childhood
January 2019
Background

Right2Change (R2C) is a community-based structured diversion programme targeting children in conflict with the law and young people at risk. The programme has been implemented by Chance for Childhood in partnership with local Northern Uganda community-based organisation Passion4Community across the four Northern Uganda districts of Agago, Pader, Kitgum and Lamwo between 2015 and 2018.

Objectives of the final evaluation

The objectives were two-fold. Firstly, accountability: the evaluation was to assess and report on the performance of the implemented activities and related outputs and the results of the R2C programme in Uganda. Secondly, learning: the evaluation was to assess and identify key achievements and challenges to determine and draw lessons and best practices for learning.

Methodology

A mixed method approach utilising both quantitative and qualitative data collection was adopted with the use of desk review of project documents, key informant interviews, structured interviews, focus group discussions and a validation workshop. 320 project beneficiaries were proportionately sampled to represent districts and sex. Purposive sampling was used for the selection of key interviews and focus group participants. Electronic capture of quantitative data (beneficiary interviews) was done using tablets and manual data collection for qualitative data. Kobo Toolbox software was used to capture real time data from the field using tablets. Research ethical clearance was obtained from Mildmay Uganda Research Ethics Committee and the Uganda National Council of Science Technology.

“The probation officer from Kitgum district visited me while I was in Gulu remand home to follow up my case and he also made regular visits at home to counsel me and talk to my parents.”

- Child assisted by Right2Change
FINDINGS

Relevance

Right2Change’s objectives are aligned to key national and international development frameworks such as the National Development Plan II, the Uganda Children Act cap.59 (which includes a comprehensive outline of the rights of children in conflict with the law in Uganda), and international treaties such as United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights of the Child amongst others. The innovative structured diversion approach of this project has been recognized by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and UNICEF as something that is useful in the resettlement and rehabilitation of children in conflict with the law (CiCL).

In the context of northern Uganda, the programme proved to be relevant and respond to the needs of communities, as well as to fill the gap northern Uganda is currently facing in terms of human and financial resources within the formal justice apparatus. R2C came in at a time when the district authorities and local leaders in the region were grappling with the enormous task of re-integration of former abductees and child soldiers of the civil war into the communities.

Effectiveness

The results achieved by the programme are notable. Right2Change improved access to fair legal assistance for children caught up with the justice system: **83% of the juvenile offenders interviewed obtained legal advice and counselling on how to handle their cases.** At baseline in March 2015, only 3% of children and young people in conflict with the law in Agago District had received information about the procedures of their cases compared to 55% at final. This is a significant improvement representing a change of 1733%.

Right2Change also successfully promoted structured community-diversion for those cases involving petty, minor crime as 60% of recorded cases were handled at community level instead of within the criminal justice system. 69% of CiCL (Pader 72%; Agago 62%) also reported to feel safe with how their cases were handled by the community. The communities were generally satisfied with the structures in place such as the community protection committees, probation officers and local councils.

In terms of rehabilitation outcomes and reducing likelihood of re-offending, R2C made reasonable achievements. 40% of the interviewed children and young people who have left remand homes or prison completed vocational training courses at P4C Youth Centre. 68% of the respondents (69% in Pader; 67% in Agago) reported to be satisfied with the training and had utilized the skills gained, while 99% did not reoffend after receiving the training. The evaluation assessment also reported significant positive change in behaviour among CiCL. For instance, the rating on the feeling of ‘failure’ before enrolling into the programme was significantly higher (38% for Agago; 36% for Pader) than after enrolling (3% for both Agago and Pader). 138 (M84, F54) children under 14 years of age were successfully reintegrated into mainstream school compared to a target of 72 (M43, F29), which represents an achievement
of 192%. The children continue to receive ongoing support from trusted mentors. Most importantly, through access to formally recognised alternatives to detention and through supportive rehabilitation work, the rate of reoffending amongst the overall beneficiary group has been kept down to less than 1%.

Efficiency

The overall efficiency of implementation of the R2C project was assessed as adequate and the programme was implemented on time, within budget and to the adequate standard. In the four years of implementation (2015 – 2018), R2C project has been considered to be implemented with good practice given that a significant portion of the project funds (62%) was spent on partner project costs that were associated with delivery of results of the project, followed by expenditure on monitoring and evaluation (17%), and only minimal expenditure on project overheads (3%). The outputs are also well aligned to the outcomes in the project’s framework and achievement of planned outputs directly contributes to outcomes.

“...The rate of drinking alcohol among the youth has reduced in our community. I personally used to drink almost daily but, since I came into contact with Right2Change through the youth centre, I am now engaged in cotton farming. This year I planted 2 acres of cotton from which I managed to get 250,000 Shillings.”

Impact

The community-based structured diversion approach embedded within R2C has been appreciated by the majority of relevant stakeholders as an approach useful to complement the Government of Uganda Juvenile Justice System. The programme is responding well to rehabilitation needs of CiCL, filling the gap where rehabilitation services are inexistent and districts’ resources scarce. R2C led to significant positive behaviour changes of supported CiCL, who have become active and productive members of their communities and enhanced their social integration.

Through work at community level and strengthen community-based child protection safety networks, there has been a reduction of stigma towards CiCL, especially girls. At the baseline 50% of the CiCL reported feeling accepted by their communities upon being released, while at the final evaluation 74% of respondents (77% in Agago and 72% in Pader ) mentioned they felt accepted by community members. Through the vocational skills trainings, the project has also empowered CiCL to engage in income generating activities which have enabled them to become self-reliant. The continuous psychosocial support has helped beneficiaries become resilient and cope positively with psychosocial problems.
Sustainability

The evaluation found the design of the project has a strong sustainability component embedded. The project design was premised on a sustainability model that proposes a deliberate shift from service delivery to capacity building and finally to empowerment of communities and district structures. Through the training of frontline workers and probation officers, the project aimed to ensure sustainability of the interventions by working through the existing district structures which will potentially guarantee continuity of services. Other important ways to prepare for sustainability include the Community Development Officers and communities in identifying the needs and priorities of juvenile justice systems as well as strengthening existing networks of community-based peer educators. Additionally, strengthening the institutional and technical capacities of district officials through training, empowering communities by providing them with knowledge and skills to find local solutions, emphasising psychosocial support and engaging meaningfully in income-generating activities will further ensure sustainability.

The phase out activities included sensitization of communities and preparing them about the end of R2C project by the end of December 2018, referral of the on-going cases of CiCL to the Uganda Law Society and the evaluation of the project.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Right2Change demonstrated to be relevant to the national Juvenile Justice System and the local community needs.

The provision of rehabilitation services to CiCL drastically reduced the chances of reoffending. The reformation programme has contributed to a significant positive change of behavior of CiCL. Regular psychosocial support to CiCL and community stakeholders is crucial in changing attitudes, reducing stigma towards CiCL and facilitating reintegration.

Training on child protection and juvenile justice standards to actors involved in handling cases of CiCL at district and community level also demonstrated to be filling a considerable gap. Right2Change’s approach has therefore the potential to build capacity of Ugandan state and non-state stakeholders on the delivery of a structured diversion approach at both regional and national level.