RIGHT2CHANGE
Juvenile justice reform in policy and practice in Northern Uganda

Social Return on Investment Study
Executive summary

Chance for Childhood
July 2018
Background

This report presents the results of a social return on investment (SROI) study of Chance for Childhood’s Right2Change programme.

Right2Change (R2C) is a four-year initiative funded by Comic Relief and running from 2015 to 2018 in the districts of Agago, Kitgum, Pader and Lamwor, Northern Uganda. R2C targets both children at risk and in conflict with the law. It provides rehabilitation and alternatives to detention through a structured community-based diversion approach which brings together both formal and informal justice systems.

The project is a partnership between Chance for Childhood and Passion4Community, a Northern Uganda grassroots organisation. Other organisations involved are KATI, the only current Northern Ugandan youth-led social enterprise, the UK and Uganda Law Societies, and the International Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience (CABI). Together the collective agencies won the Collaboration Award of the BOND International Development Awards 2017 for their combined achieved outstanding outcomes through this programme.

Purpose of the research

The main aim of the study was to estimate the benefits and assess the social return and potential cost-savings that the community structured diversion approach in support of children at risk and in conflict with the law embedded within the project. The study also aims at investigating and determining key rationale for the sustainability and the potential for scale up of Right2Change. Lastly, this research provides an opportunity to reflect on the applicability of SROI methodology to R2C and justice for children programmes in general.

Approach and methodology

The study design focused on two main components: comparing the cost per beneficiary of R2C to the detention; and most importantly, estimating the social value created by R2C.

To compare the financial cost of both approaches, the study estimated the average cost of maintaining a juvenile in detention for a one-year period in relation to average annual expenditure per core beneficiary of R2C.

The SROI was estimated by comparing the value of the materially valuable benefits directly attributed to the programme as reported by the children, frontline workers, families and communities (key stakeholders affected by the intervention) against project costs (programme, social and economic costs). The identified benefits were then assigned a monetary value using the ‘willingness to pay’ approach; and eventually calculating the SROI ratio by comparing the investments (inputs costs) and the social benefits or returns.

The SROI analysis was conducted retrospectively, focusing on already implemented project processes, activities and outcomes of intervention for the period 2015 to 2018 - the period within which the core beneficiaries (children in conflict, or at risk of being in conflict, with the law) received services from the project.
Data collection used a mixed method and participatory approach in consulting and gathering the information from various stakeholders:

- Discussions of seven focus groups made up of public officials (Local Council 1), girls and boys who had been in conflict with the law, agribusiness beneficiaries and caregivers/parents.
- 14 key informant interviews with government officials and social workers who had directly engaged in the project.
- In-depth interviews with 75 children.
- Additional data was collected through a desk review of programme and government documents, including official budget reports.

**Impact**

The total net social benefit to the material stakeholders is estimated at £5,528,782 against a total financial cost of £538,912, resulting in a SROI of 10.30 to 1. This implies that for each £1 invested, the project has generated a social benefit of over £10.

The study also clearly demonstrates that the average cost per child under detention, estimated at £174, is over three times the cost per beneficiary under the R2C community diversion approach (£58).

Findings confirm community structured diversion approach embedded within R2C can be robustly considered as more effective to reduce offending and create positive social value for communities compared to detention. Considering the SROI ratio of 10:1, the project generated a high value-for-money investment and resulted in long-term socially valued outcomes to the intended beneficiaries. Most of the outcomes were assessed to be sustainable and the project scored high on scalability, making a strong case for R2C replicability and scale-up.

> I used to be very sad most of the time and I would love staying alone and when I start over-thinking I usually break into tears. But when this project took me in, I was able to learn many things, how to live with others among other things.”

- Child assisted by Right2Change

The study shows that most important benefits created by R2C were:

- Improvements in social service provision (including rehabilitation aspects such as opportunities to enrol in vocational training or reintegration back into school).
- Reduction of crime and offending within the communities. Young people at risk of getting into criminal activities now have a place to gain skills for economic growth, vocational training and life skills which have improved self-discipline and general knowledge of the law and child rights.
• Psychosocial support and the promotion of positive behavioral change (including provision of counselling and cognitive behavioural therapy at both individual level and within the community).
• Diversion from the mainstream Juvenile Justice system, saving the children, families and frontline workers the cost and emotional drain of the formal system; and critically, the reduction in juvenile crime cases in the intervention-supported districts.

“ That (training opportunity) would have not been possible without Right2Change. Where would we get the money from to pay ourselves? We would still be living our old life of poverty.”

These estimates validate the significant financial savings associated with implementing a structured diversion approach compared to the detention of juveniles. The non-financial benefits of the diversion approach compared to detention reported by frontline workers and benefiting families included shorter periods of delivering justice to the children, reduced stigma and reduced social conflicts between families.