



No child forced to live on the street

EXPLORING ECONOMIC STRENGTHENING WITHIN FAMILY REINTEGRATION



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1. Introduction

1.1 Retrak Ethiopia

Retrak has worked with children on the streets in Africa for twenty years and for eight years in Ethiopia striving to offer them a real alternative to life on the street. Reasons for children moving to the street are complex but include family conflict, abuse, behavioural problems and poverty which underpins many of the other factors¹. Retrak believes that no child should be forced to live on the streets and aims to provide alternatives which are easily accessible, as well as strengthening families and communities so that children are less likely to end up on the streets to start with.

Retrak Ethiopia currently reaches out to children on the streets and invites them to participate in counselling, catch-up education, food, shelter, life-skills training, healthcare and opportunities to play whilst at drop-in centres in Addis Ababa and Hossana (a town 250 km to the south through which many children pass heading towards Addis Ababa). Retrak's work is centred on attachment theory which states that it is key to a child's development for them to form secure attachments with adults who care for them. Based on this theory and Retrak's considerable experience, support is offered to children and their families to reintegrate children back to their homes where this is possible and in the child's best interests. For other children foster care, support to become independent or other alternative care options may be more appropriate.

Retrak Ethiopia is also pioneering an approach to preventing children separating from their families, in locations from where many children come to the streets². This involved a combination of family and economic strengthening, women's empowerment and community education around child protection issues and the dangers of life on the streets.

1.2 Reintegration

A core focus of Retrak's work is providing reintegration programmes for children, and within this undertaking monitoring and learning activities and documenting good practice in relation to reintegration. Retrak considers reintegration to be:

*"The process through which a child is returned back to his/her immediate or extended family (either where s/he lived before or with another family member), and is able to reintegrate into family and community life where s/he receives the necessary care and protection to grow and develop."*³

Although not suitable or possible for every child, Retrak considers family reintegration to be the first priority for any child who is ready to move away from street life. There is considerable research that shows how children thrive when cared for in a family setting and how damaging residential care can be⁴. However, not all families can provide adequate and appropriate care for their children. Indeed children whom Retrak have met have clearly shown the dilemma many children face. They frequently report how their families are both the reason they left as well as the most positive thing about life at home and the reason they want to return. Retrak's experience has shown that whilst helping children to return⁵ to the care of their family is far from easy and straight forward, that it is what many children and families want and that it is possible with appropriate support. Retrak's Family Reintegration SOPs outline the principles and steps for Retrak's reintegration work, highlighting the key elements of strengthening and supporting families to care and provide for their children⁶.

¹ Wakia, J (2010) *Why children are on the streets?* Manchester, Retrak (internal document)

² Retrak (2015) *2014 Reintegration Maps*, Retrak

³ Retrak (2012) *Retrak Standard Operating Procedures: Family reintegration*, Manchester, Retrak, p11

⁴ Williamson, J & A Greenberg (2010) *Families, Not Orphanages*, Better Care Network Working Paper 9,

New York, Better Care Network; Bakermans-Kranenburg, M.J, Steele, H, Zeanah, CH, Muhamedrahimov, R.J, Vorria, P, Dobrova-Krol, NA, Steele, M, van Ijzendoorn, MH, Juffer, F & MR Gunnar (2011) 'Attachment and emotional development in institutional care: Characteristics and catch-up' in RB McCall, MH van Ijzendoorn, F Juffer, CJ Groark, & VK Groza (Eds), 'Children without permanent parents: Research, practice, and policy',

Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 76(4), pp62-91; Johnson, R, K Browne & C Hamilton-Giachritsis (2006) 'Young Children in Institutional Care at Risk of Harm', *Trauma, Violence and Abuse*, (7)1, pp1-26

⁵ Wakia, J (2015) *Why children are on the streets?* Manchester, Retrak (internal document), forthcoming

⁶ Retrak (2012) op cit

1.3 Economic strengthening

It is clear from both academic studies and Retrak's experience that poverty is a common push factor for children to move to the street and is often the root of many other push factors⁷. Whilst it may not be a reason for every child, and is rarely the only cause, poverty is a major barrier to successful reintegration which must be addressed. Retrak Ethiopia currently gives income generating activity (IGA) grants to families who are deemed to be living in such extreme poverty that they are unable to care for their child and fulfil Retrak's child protection and family strengthening aims. The grant is intended to enable families to start or grow a business which can then help them meet their basic needs.

Retrak Ethiopia believes that its child protection and family strengthening goals are addressed well within the reintegration process, but that interventions addressing economic issues could be improved. The distance between the families that Retrak works with means that follow-up is expensive and time-consuming limiting the interaction that staff have with children and families after reintegration. This is a major challenge for any economic strengthening interventions implemented by Retrak.

Therefore this small research project was conceived to help look more deeply at the issues surrounding economic strengthening with Retrak Ethiopia's reintegration programmes with the aim of seeking new ways to address the challenges. Economic strengthening in the context of this research project is taken to be: actions taken by governments, donors and implementers to improve livelihoods including capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living⁸.

Research objectives

The objectives of this research project were:

- To evaluate the extent to which the economic strengthening interventions currently used by Retrak Ethiopia have impacted the reintegration process. Specifically the extent to which the IGA grant helps meet child protection and family strengthening goals.
- To consider how theory and good practice in current literature may relate to the families involved in reintegration programmes.
- To use the current literature and the findings of this study to make recommendations about how Retrak Ethiopia could improve its economic strengthening interventions.



⁷ Dybicz, P (2005) 'Interventions for street children: An analysis of current best practices', International Social Work, 48(6), pp763-771; Wakia (2010) op cit; Wakia (2015) op cit

⁸ Based on Chambers, R & G Conway (DFID 1992) as quoted in CPC Livelihoods and Economic Strengthening Task Force (2013) *Children and Economic Strengthening Programs: Maximizing*

Benefits and Minimizing Harm, Child Protection in Crisis Network, FHI360 & Women's Refugee Commission

2. Methodology

2.1 Systematic literature review

A literature review was conducted using a systematic approach. This meant that the researcher undertook some reading of literature so that search terms could be agreed based on common themes and terms. Search terms were then used to reduce the risk of researcher bias. These search terms included the main economic strengthening interventions found to be important to child reintegration during the initial search combined with other reintegrated groups of children such as child soldiers and OVC.

The searches were conducted using Google search and Google Scholar between November 2014 and February 2015 for the period 2004 until present.

2.2 Primary data collection

Data was collected through direct engagement with Retrak Ethiopia's beneficiaries over two weeks at the end of January 2015. Families from the regions of SNNPR, Oromia and Amhara were included in the study as most of the children Retrak Ethiopia helps in Addis Ababa come from these regions.

2.2.1 Sampling

The families included in this study were purposively sampled. It was a requirement that all families included in the study had a child who had been reintegrated with their family and had received an IGA grant from Retrak. Retrak only works with boys in Addis Ababa as the majority of the child population on the streets is boys. The seven families included in the study were then chosen based partially on the ease of access and partially to include families from a range of locations and contexts.

2.2.2 Semi-structured interviews with families

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with care-givers to give an understanding of the context of the reintegration of their child, how they used the grant, the impact the grant had and their hopes for the future. One of the research aims was to assess the impact of the IGA grants that Retrak gives. It was therefore important that the interviews asked the families themselves how successful they felt it had been. Using semi-structured interviews meant that factors considered important by the families, but not previously by the researcher, could be included.

These interviews were conducted in Amharic or Oromifa. They were therefore recorded so that they could then be transcribed, translated and analysed. Notes were also taken.

2.2.3 Semi-structured interviews with Retrak staff and staff from other NGOs

Retrak Ethiopia staff were interviewed to give the researcher an understanding of what is currently happening and what staff felt were the strengths and weaknesses of Retrak's economic strengthening intervention. It was important to consider the opinions of the staff as they have extensive experience reintegrating street children and of providing IGA grants. Notes were taken during these interviews in bullet point form. The researcher interviewed two social workers, the head of social work and the monitoring and evaluation manager.

Staff from two other NGOs were interviewed to give the researcher a knowledge of what economic strengthening approaches other NGOs are using. Hope for Children Ethiopia and OPRIFS (Organisation for the Prevention, Rehabilitation and Integration of Female Street children) were included because they both work with children on the street and use economic strengthening interventions within the reintegration process.



Hope for Children offers the children that it works with the opportunity to learn a skill, such as weaving, which they can then use to earn an income when they return home. When a child returns home they also receive the tools for their business, such as a loom, some materials and seed money of between 4,000-5,000 birr. Hope for Children acknowledges that not all of this money will be spent on the business but want to ensure that the child does not burden the family and create conflict when they return. The NGO also links children with a government run micro-finance group when they return. They encourage the children to initially save around 20% of their seed money with the organisation and to seek business advice and loans from the group as their business grows.

OPRIFS (Organisation for Prevention, Rehabilitation and Integration of Female Street Children) works with girls on the street who are from Addis Ababa itself or from elsewhere in the country. OPRIFS provides a grant to families it deems most in need either as cash or in-kind support. The maximum value of the support is 2,000 birr. OPRIFS gives the grant to the family but part of the business and income is given to the girl to take care of and to use the revenue to support herself.

2.2.4 IGA grant assessment

Retrak Ethiopia currently uses an IGA assessment to inform decisions about whether a family should receive an IGA grant. This assessment was adapted based on current literature which emphasises the importance of including a market analysis, considering vulnerability to economic shocks and capacity. The questions asked included what products or services the household felt were lacking in the local economic and a description and frequency of economic shocks experienced in the previous twelve months.

The questions relating to the IGA assessment were asked after the interview although the assessment was completed in full by the social worker afterwards. The assessment was conducted twice, once to ask retrospectively about the household's situation before the grant was given and again to ask about their present situation. A comparison could then be made to see how the support that Retrak provided changed the economic stability and capacity of the household. Also it was conducted to assess the extent to which households felt they understood the local market.

2.2.5 Child wellbeing assessment

Retrak has been using a child wellbeing assessment, based on the Child Status Index developed by Measure Evaluation⁹, since 2011. It is used by Retrak to assess a child's wellbeing when they arrive in the drop-in centre, during their stay at the drop-in centre, at reintegration and at follow-ups. The 12 indicators (Table 1) are scored between 1 and 4. Children who score 1 or 2 in any domain are deemed to be at risk and requiring an intervention. To reduce the risk of subjectivity all Retrak social workers are trained to use the child wellbeing assessment tool. The child wellbeing assessment is the standard tool used by Retrak for case management and monitoring.



Table 1: Child wellbeing assessment domains and goals¹⁰

Domain	Sub-domain	Goal
1. Food and Nutrition	1a. Food security	Child has sufficient food to eat at all times of the year
	1b. Nutrition and Growth	Child is growing well compared to others of his/her age in the community.
2. Shelter and Care	2a. Shelter	Child has stable shelter that is adequate, dry, and safe
	2b. Care	Child has at least one adult (age 18 or over) who provides consistent care, attention, and support
3. Protection	3a. Abuse and Exploitation	Child is safe from any abuse, neglect, or exploitation
	3b. Legal Protection	Child has access to legal protection services as needed
4. Health	4a. Wellness	Child is physically healthy
	4b. Health Care Services	Child can access health care services, including medical treatment when ill and preventive care
5. Psychosocial	5a. Emotional Health	Child is happy and content with a generally positive mood and hopeful outlook.
	5b. Social Behaviour	Child is cooperative and enjoys participating in activities with adults and other children
6. Education	6a. Education Performance	Child is progressing well in acquiring knowledge and life skills at home, school, job training, or an age-appropriate productive activity.
	6b. Education Access	Child is enrolled and attends school or skills training or is engaged in age-appropriate play, learning activity, or job.

⁹ O'Donnell, K, Nyangara, F, Murphy, R, Cannon, M & B Nyberg (2009) *Child Status Index: a Tool for*

Assessment the Well-Being of Orphans and Vulnerable Children – Manual, MEASURE Evaluation

¹⁰ Ibid

2.3 Translation

Translation of the semi-structured interviews with families was conducted by social workers who work for Retrak Ethiopia using audio recordings taken during the interview. It was decided that they would translate because they understood the context of the interviews but were briefed about ensuring that only what the participant said should be translated. This meant that words or terms used by the families which were potentially ambiguous in their meaning could be translated by the social worker who had knowledge of their situation. The translation took a domestication approach which may mean some information is lost from the original language but would make the translation more understandable to English readers.

2.4 Data analysis

A thematic analysis was used for the qualitative data collected in the semi-structured interviews with Retrak staff, other NGOs and beneficiary families. The researcher first read through all of the interviews for each interview group identifying common themes and patterns. The researcher then defined themes and allocated codes which were identified in the interviews. By examining where codes could be found and the frequency with which they occurred, links were made between the codes and broader themes. Finally, the themes within the data were compared to other qualitative and quantitative data collected as well as to the literature to identify similarities and differences.

The data from the IGA assessments was analysed using codes to identify for each family whether before and after the grant they were able to meet their basic needs, experienced economic shocks and if they had concerns about the capacity of their household to work. Then a table was used to compare the results from each family to give an indication of where they would have fallen on the graduation model (see literature review findings) before and after the IGA grant was given.

The child wellbeing assessment data was analysed using bar graphs which show the domains of wellbeing on one axis and the score from 1 to 4 on the other. A graph was generated for each of the seven families who participated in the research and included data about the child's wellbeing at placement and at the research visit. The graphs enabled visual comparison of the changes in child wellbeing before and after the IGA grant was given.

2.5 Ethics

In order to ensure the research complied with ethical standards it was important to gain informed consent. This involved ensuring that participants understood the purpose of the research, that they did not have to participate, that information would be kept confidential and that they would not receive any extra support from Retrak Ethiopia as a result of their participation or answers. Participants were read an explanation of the purpose of the research and the interview and assessment as well as a consent form. This was read either in Amharic or the regional language. Participants were then asked to sign a consent form. This was essential as participants were often very poor and had previously received services from Retrak Ethiopia. It was therefore important for them to understand that the purpose of the visit was not to assist them directly at that time.



2.6 Limitations

The study focused on just seven families who have received support from Retrak. This small sample size means that the results cannot reliably be generalised. The use of mostly qualitative data does however provide deeper insight into questions such as why the family made certain decisions than a larger quantitative sample would provide.

The sampling of the families was based on convenience sampling because of time and budget limitations. This sampling based on ease of access excludes families living in more remote areas and who may as a consequence experience different challenges. Furthermore, families were often difficult to contact prior to the interview and in most cases, the child was either at school or work and therefore unable to participate. This is therefore a weakness of the study as their opinion was not always included.

Although Retrak currently uses an IGA assessment, the assessment used in the study was adapted based on literature to include questions about capacity, economic shocks and the local market. This IGA assessment was also piloted which meant that some of the social workers translated the questions differently although the researcher was present when the assessment was conducted and therefore able to identify most mistranslations. The IGA assessment also asked retrospective questions. It is possible that participants did not remember all of the information being asked accurately. This is therefore a potential limitation of the study.

As the translation was conducted by social workers from Retrak there is a risk of translator bias. The translators may have added their knowledge of the situation to the translation beyond what the family said.



3. Findings from literature review

Although there is no substantial research examining the impact of economic strengthening on the reintegration of children from the streets, multiple studies have examined the impact economic strengthening has had on Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) including people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) and child soldiers. All these programmes begin from the premise that poverty is a barrier to child protection and wellbeing¹¹ which ES has the potential to address¹².

This literature review focuses on three economic strengthening interventions: cash transfers, training and micro-finance. These were found to be the most common economic strengthening interventions mentioned in literature within the OVC context. In combination, they also are appropriate interventions for families experiencing different levels of poverty. In addition the challenge of stigma, the use of the graduation model as a theoretical basis and assessments of economic strengthening interventions were all significant themes in the literature reviewed. The findings in the literature relating to these interventions and themes are discussed below along with how they relate to Retrak Ethiopia's current reintegration practice.

3.1 Graduation model as a framework

The graduation model attempts to explain the different levels of poverty that households may be experiencing and appropriate economic strengthening interventions for each. In one version of the model household needs are divided into three stages; provision, protection and promotion¹³. At the provision stage households are unable to meet their basic needs on a regular basis and need consumption support before they are able to begin saving or investing. Households at the protection stage are able to meet their basic needs most of the time but are vulnerable to economic shocks. Such families need assistance to prepare for economic shocks and increase income to match expenditure, this may be through interventions such as savings groups or vocational training. Households at the promotion stage are able to meet all of their basic needs and are economically stable but need assistance to help increase their income to improve their welfare further. This assistance may include interventions such as access to micro-finance or vocational training.

Table 2: Graduation model¹⁴

Household livelihood phase	Economic strengthening strategy	Types of interventions	Anticipated outcome
Families prepared to grow	PROMOTION	Vocational training, IGAs, microcredit	Grow income and expenses
Families struggling to make ends meet	PROTECTION	Food gardens, saving groups	Match income to expenses
Families in destitution	PROVISION	Social grants, household food support	Meet basic needs

¹¹ Marcus, R, & E Page (2014) *Economic strengthening activities in child protection interventions: an adapted systematic review*, ODI-Oak Foundation

¹² Save the Children(2012) *What cash transfer programming can do to protect children from violence, abuse and exploitation: Review and recommendations*, London, Save the Children

¹³ LIFT (2012) *Economic strengthening for orphans and vulnerable children*

¹⁴ LIFT (2012) op cit

It is vital to ensure that households with OVCs quickly move away from destitution as this poses a risk to the child as the household is more likely to engage in dangerous behaviours such as transactional sex¹⁵. Within the OVC or street child context, the graduation model can therefore also give an indication of children protection risk as a result of the family's economic situation if, for example, the family is unable to meet their most basic needs.

3.2 Cash transfers

Cash transfers are not a common intervention within child protection programmes and those that do exist have had little robust evaluation¹⁶. The child protection programmes included in the study encompass preventative and responsive programmes dealing with the abuse, exploitation or inadequate care of children. Although cash transfers can help families at the 'provision' stage of the graduation model, without progressing to later interventions there is little evidence that cash transfers alone lead to sustainable income generation¹⁷.

One of the biggest considerations of cash transfers is whether the cash is given with or without conditions. Several studies have highlighted the positive impact both conditional and unconditional cash transfers can have on school attendance of often excluded groups such as girls¹⁸. This highlights that although cash transfer programmes should consider if their aims are currently restricted by social or economic factors¹⁹, conditionality has the potential to enable cash transfers to target social behaviours. The cost of enforcing conditions can be significant but conditions could be monitored by teachers or other community workers²⁰.

3.3 Training

Vocational training is the most common economic strengthening intervention within child protection programmes²¹. Most are targeted at the children themselves rather than caregivers despite it being overall household poverty that is a strong push factor for children engaging in risky behaviours²².

Vocational training should be offered to families who are able to grow their businesses and who are therefore already able to meet their basic needs²³. Such training may be offered through formal training facilities providing official accreditation such as Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) or through mobile training programmes²⁴. Mobile training may be a more appropriate option than TVET for households which are geographically spread out²⁵. Follow-up is also likely to be needed to help graduates find employment and to overcome other constraints such as a lack of access to capital²⁶. It is essential that the training offered is aligned with a market analysis to increase the likelihood of the training leading to income generation²⁷.

3.4 Microfinance

Savings-led micro-finance is most suitable for households at the 'protection' phase of the graduation model and credit-led micro-finance is most suitable for those ready for 'promotion'²⁸. If there are large geographical distances between reintegrated households it may be more appropriate for partnerships to be created so micro-finance can be implemented by organisations who have more experience and expertise in this field and who may be geographically closer²⁹.

¹⁵ CPC Learning Network (2013) Children and Economic Strengthening Programs: Maximising Benefits and Minimising Harm, Child Protection in Crisis Network, FHI360 & Women's Refugee Commission

¹⁶ Marcus & Page (2014) op cit

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Akresh, R, D De Walque & H Kazianga (2013) *Cash transfers and child schooling: evidence from a randomized evaluation of the role of conditionality*, Washington DC, World Bank; Adato, M & L Bassett (2012) *Social protection and cash transfers to strengthen families affected by HIV and AIDS*, Washington DC, International Food Policy Research Institute; Ward, P, Hurrell, A, Visram, A,

Riemenschneider, N, Pellerano, L, O'Brien, C, MacAuslan & J Willis (2010) Cash Transfer Programme for Orphans and Vulnerable Children, Kenya: Operational and impact evaluation 2007-2009, Final Report, Oxford Policy Management

¹⁹ CPC Learning Network (2012) op cit

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Marcus & Page (2014) op cit

²² Ibid

²³ LIFT (2012) op cit

²⁴ Chaffin, J (2011) *The impacts of economic strengthening programs on children*, CPC Learning Network

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid; Marcus & Page (2014) op cit

²⁸ James-Wilson, D, Torres, V, van Bastelaer, T, Yamba, B, Parrott, L, Brand, M & B Fowler (2008) *Economic strengthening for vulnerable children: Principles of program design and technical recommendations for effective field interventions*, United States Agency for International Development; LIFT (2012) op cit

²⁹ Chaffin, J (2011) op cit; James-Wilson et al. (2008) op cit

A study examining the impact of micro-finance on OVCs and their caregivers in Ethiopia found that OVC families were often excluded because they were perceived to be too poor to participate³⁰. Uptake amongst OVC households was higher when NGO staff supporting the families in other ways worked with the micro-finance provider to provide social collateral on behalf of the household³¹. Similarly, several studies have found that social cohesion amongst women in savings and loans groups has strong positive impacts on their decision making power and their children's education and well-being³². The group element of micro-finance therefore seems to be an obstacle for OVC caregivers initially joining but the social cohesion it provides is beneficial to both the caregiver and the OVC.

3.5 Targeting and stigma

Numerous studies have found that selecting households for economic strengthening programmes based on their status in regard to HIV/AIDS, or as OVC or child soldiers, can lead to stigma within the community³³. A UNICEF report concluded that child soldiers should not be provided with cash transfers because it is against a child's human rights to be recruited as a soldier³⁴. It is important that economic strengthening programmes are not seen to reward the vulnerable status of children. Specifically within the reintegration of children, it is important that access to economic strengthening does not become the sole factor in households choosing to care for children as this may limit reintegration and wellbeing³⁵.

3.6 Assessments

Currently literature recommends two types of assessments within economic strengthening programmes to help inform programme development: a family baseline assessment which can then be repeated and used as an evaluation tool, and a market analysis³⁶.

Initial assessments can be used as a baseline but can also be used to determine appropriate economic strengthening interventions for a household. Although multiple studies and NGOs have acknowledged the relevance of the graduation model, there is currently no standardised assessment which can be used in conjunction with it to determine the level of household poverty. Furthermore there are very few assessments which take into account vulnerable children. For example, both the Grameen Foundation and Land O'Lakes International Development have recommended assessments or approaches to creating context specific assessments, however neither take into account the situation of OVC³⁷.

The literature also recommends that a market analysis is conducted at the beginning of an economic strengthening programme so that opportunities for households to create successful businesses can be identified³⁸. This can be a particular challenge for organisations working with OVCs as they often lack expertise in this area and therefore make decisions based on their limited knowledge of economic strengthening interventions³⁹. Many market analysis tools require extensive resource and time allocation to conduct observations, focus groups and stakeholder meetings⁴⁰.

³⁰ Bahng, GB (2009) Collaborating to provide microfinance to caregivers of orphans and vulnerable children in Ethiopia (Doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California)

³¹ Ibid

³² Holvoet, N (2004) 'Impact of Microfinance Programs on Children's Education: Do the Gender of the Borrower and the Delivery Model Matter?', *Journal of Microfinance/ESR Review*, 6(2), pp27-50; Swarts, B, Bukuluki, P, Mwangi, G & JR Wanyama (2010) Evaluation of economic strengthening for OVC: Using the WORTH model in Uganda, Seep Network

³³ Wolfe, J (2009) Household economic strengthening in Tanzania: Technical guidance for PEPFAR II programming, Microlinks; Kibombo, R & S Kayabwe

(2009) An assessment of economic strengthening interventions for orphans and other vulnerable children in Uganda, Development Research and Social Policy Analysis Center; CPC Learning Network (2013) op cit

³⁴ Jaspars, S, P Harvey, C Hudspeth, L Rumble, & D Christensen (2007) A Review of UNICEF's Role in Cash Transfers to Emergency-Affected Populations, United Nations Children's Fund Office of Emergency Programmes

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ CPC Learning Network (2013) op cit; Miehlabratt, A & L Jones (2007) Market research for value chain initiatives. Information into action: A toolkit series for market development practitioners, Mennonite

Economic Development Associates; Women's Refugee Commission (2008) Market assessment toolkit for vocational training providers and youth: Linking vocational training programmes to market opportunities

³⁷ Grameen Foundation (2011) Targeting the poorest: A solutions for the poorest use case, Consultative Group to Assist the Poor; Land O'Lakes International Development (2014) Economic strengthening toolkit

³⁸ CPC Learning Network (2013) op cit

³⁹ Chaffin (2011) op cit

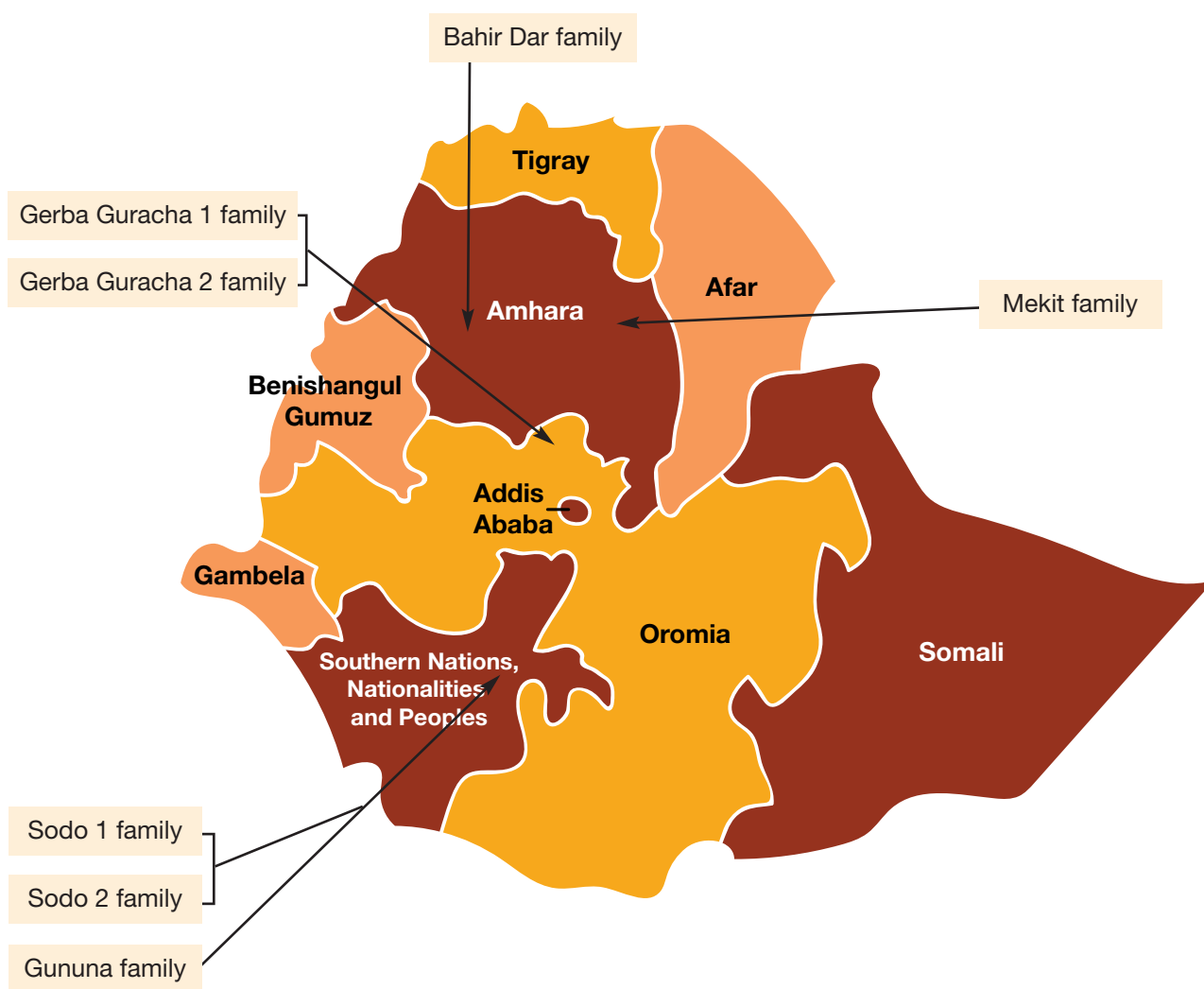
⁴⁰ Miehlabratt & Jones (2007) op cit; Women's Refugee Commission (2008) op cit

4. Findings from beneficiary and staff interviews and assessments

4.1 Families' characteristics

The families who were interviewed for this research project were in different locations: two in Oromia, three in SNNPR and two in Amhara. Of the seven families, four are headed by single parents, and three

have both parents living together. All the families are living in rural areas and engaged in small-scale businesses, often linked to petty trade or local agriculture. For more information see Annex 1.



4.2 Use of IGA grants

The research findings show that the families of children who had scored lower on the child wellbeing assessment at reintegration were less likely to invest their grant in business. Specifically, the food, shelter and healthcare scores on the wellbeing assessment were worse for families who had not invested their grant. Although many families reported illness, the families who had not invested their grant said that they had instead spent the money on healthcare costs. These families also reported little or no improvement in the child wellbeing assessment after the IGA grant had been given whereas all other children had made some improvements.

The interviews with families show that those who had invested their grants in businesses felt differently about the grant's impact from those who had not. Those who had invested their grants in businesses reported a mostly positive impact on their household. Those who had not invested their grant reported a neutral impact. Although all families said they were unable to save before the grant was given, those who had invested their loans in businesses were now all able to save whilst those who had spent their loan in others ways were not.

The family in Mekit woreda was the only family included in the study who reported that they were able to meet their basic needs and did not experience capacity problems or economic shocks before the IGA grant was given. None of the families felt that women working for their businesses had a negative impact on the community perception of these women.

Three social workers and the monitoring and evaluation manager from Retrak were asked about the IGA grants and what they feel are its strengths and weaknesses. When asked about the weaknesses of the IGA grant all of the social workers said they thought that the grant needed to be higher. All of the staff acknowledged that not all of the families use the loan for its intended purpose. None of the families interviewed said that they felt the grant should be higher. It could be that they didn't feel comfortable to discuss this, or that the social workers who are living in Addis Ababa had a different view of costings.



4.3 Social exclusion

Social exclusion was not directly addressed by the semi-structured interviews with families although three out of the seven families mentioned that they had felt excluded from the local community. This was because they were unable to participate in community events as expected, because they did not have the money to do so. Since families mentioned issues related to social exclusion unprompted, it suggests that this was an important issue for the families.

4.4 Children's participation

All but one family said why they thought their child had stayed at home. One family did not say and was not asked as the social worker did not think it was appropriate. The families and children interviewed said the reintegrated child had remained at home for four main reasons. These were, a change in the child's behaviour, a decrease in poverty, because household conflict had stopped or in order to care for the caregiver. The most common reason was a change in the child's behaviour which was given by three families, followed by a reduction in poverty which was mentioned by two families.

In the interviews two of the families also mentioned that they thought the paid work that the reintegrated child was doing had contributed to them staying at home. This was because the child's work either kept them away from negative peer pressure or because it contributed to a reduction in household poverty.

Two staff members said that they thought a weakness was that the IGA grant could encourage the child or another child to go to the street in order to obtain another grant.



5. Discussion

5.1 Using the graduation model

The graduation model explains different levels of poverty that households may experience and appropriate interventions for each. The model provides three different broad categories for household needs: provision, protection and promotion as shown in table 2 on page 11⁴¹. Retrak Ethiopia's economic strengthening interventions within the reintegration process are not currently based on any theoretical model. The graduation model would provide a clear framework for choosing an appropriate intervention. The IGA grant that Retrak Ethiopia currently gives falls within the promotion category. Households in this category are thought to be ready to invest in businesses and therefore, according to the graduation model, they should be able to meet their basic needs and withstand shocks. Yet this research has revealed that not all families are in the promotion category when given an IGA grant by Retrak Ethiopia.

5.1.1 Most at risk families

Child wellbeing data collected at the time of reintegration shows two children to be mostly at risk (scoring 1 or 2), which requires an intervention according to Retrak's SOPs since they are unable to adequately meet basic needs such as food and shelter. The graduation model suggests that such families are not able to invest in their businesses until they are economically stable and first require provision interventions such as cash stipends or food transfers⁴². Supporting this, the research found that the families of the children with the lowest wellbeing were unable to invest in their businesses and instead spent the money on meeting immediate medical needs.

Specifically the food, shelter and health domains included in the child wellbeing assessments appear to give an indication of whether a family will be able to use an IGA grant for its intended purpose. This is likely to be because these factors all require economic

inputs to improve which the most impoverished households will lack. The IGA grant was used as 'provision' support by these families. Evidence suggests families in this situation will not be able to create sustainable livelihoods without further interventions⁴³. This research found that these families felt no long-term impact of the IGA and had not been able to begin saving. These results also suggest that the child wellbeing assessments used by Retrak may provide a helpful indication of whether the household is likely to be able to use the grant for its intended purpose before it is given.

Within the reintegration context, families who are in need of 'provision' interventions should be helped to meet their basic needs as quickly as possible and child protection should be considered. This is because destitution increases the chance of the household engaging in risky behaviours such as child labour or transactional sex⁴⁴. Indeed one of the children from the families who had not invested their grants said he had stayed at home to care for his mother who was sick.

Most of the families interviewed mentioned that at least one caregiver was experiencing health problems which affected their ability to work. Although most of these families acknowledged that this had impacted on their livelihood, the two poorest households had been least able to cope with health problems and spent their IGA grant on meeting healthcare costs. This suggests that health problems amongst the poorest households strongly affect their ability to invest a grant. Supporting this, Save the Children found that within the reintegration of child soldiers it was vital to address health and education barriers before economic strengthening programmes could be effective⁴⁵.

It is especially important that 'provision' needs are met to ensure children are protected. Families who are destitute could be provided with both 'provision' and 'protection' interventions at the same time to

⁴¹ LIFT (2012) op cit

⁴² Grameen Foundation (2011) op cit

⁴³ Marcus & Page (2014) op cit

⁴⁴ CPC Learning Network (2013) op cit

⁴⁵ Save the Children (2007) *Interagency guidelines for developing reintegration programmes- For*

children affected by armed conflict based on an experience in West Africa: Practitioner's Summary

encourage sustainable economic change and decrease the cost to the NGO⁴⁶. It is vital that NGOs such as Retrak Ethiopia develop economic strengthening interventions which can target families at different stages of the graduation model, especially those in need of ‘protection’, to ensure that children are not left in harmful situations.

5.1.2 Struggling families

Families of children who recorded scores of mostly 3 or 4 in the child wellbeing assessments are not considered to be at risk, but given the previous separation of a child they can be considered to be struggling and in need of support. These families also reported experiencing economic shocks in the twelve months before reintegration. Although the child wellbeing assessment scores were higher, the social workers reported that all apart from one of these families were unable to meet all their basic needs at reintegration suggesting there were still some ‘provision’ concerns. According to the graduation model, these families therefore fall within the ‘protection’ category as they are able to meet their most of their basic needs most of the time, but are vulnerable to economic shocks meaning that they could be pushed back towards destitution.

Despite this, all of these families reported spending the entire IGA grant on their businesses and experienced an increase in household income and improvement in wellbeing as a result. Therefore, this suggests that the IGA grant and training was able to help households to protect, as well as to grow, their livelihoods. Although the Retrak Ethiopia social workers interviewed felt that the IGA grants should be bigger, none of the families themselves mentioned this and the positive outcomes reported suggest that a grant of 1,000-1,500 birr is enough for the families to improve their income generating businesses.

Savings are an important indication of households meeting protection needs as savings increase resilience to economic shocks (CGAP, 2011, 4). All of the households in need of ‘protection’ interventions apart from one, who had recently built a new home, reported that they were now able to save which none had previously been able to do. These results therefore suggest that the IGA grant was able to help families become economically stable who had previously been able to meet their basic needs most of the time but were still vulnerable to economic shocks. Although only a small sample, this suggests that providing cash to families who are not yet economically stable can help them to create or grow successful businesses.

One possible explanation for why these households invested the IGA in business is that the explanation and training given by social workers about how the grant should be spent had discouraged spending on basic needs. This explanation is supported by two studies in Burkina Faso and Turkey which found that conditional rather than non-conditional cash transfers were more likely to increase school attendance amongst marginalised children including girls⁴⁷. This shows that conditionality can have a strong impact on how cash transfers are spent even if this challenges community norms. Both of these studies however included cash transfers programmes that consisted of regular transfers therefore increasing the incentive to ensure that conditions were met so that the next transfer would be received. The training given by Retrak Ethiopia social workers is not a condition of receiving the grant in the same way that child education was in the programmes included in the studies. It therefore would be surprising that recipients of one-off grants would also feel such a strong incentive to spend the grant on business even if basic needs were not being met.

⁴⁶ CPC Learning Network (2013) op cit

⁴⁷ Adato & Bassett (2012) op cit; Akresh et al. (2013) op cit

5.2 Community exclusion

Three families mentioned that they were or had been unable to participate in community activities as stipulated by social norms and expectations. Families mentioned social customs such as giving gifts at a wedding, buying gifts for their children during a holiday or taking food to someone from the community who is in prison. They reported being excluded from these because they could not afford to or because of stigma associated with the parent's job status. One household commented that this exclusion led to them feeling ashamed and unequal. However, subsequently the IGA grant had enabled them to start a business and the mother had been able to join a savings and loans group. The father noted the significance of this for the household saying that 'if she [his wife] does not associate with that group she is ignored and is at home. Nobody knows who she is'. These findings are similar to those of Bahng⁴⁸ who found that OVC caregivers in Ethiopia were often excluded from micro-finance groups because they were perceived by others to be too poor to join despite those who did join becoming successful members.

Unlike the findings of other studies⁴⁹, none of the families mentioned that they had experienced stigma or community exclusion as a result of the status of their child as having lived on the streets. Instead, three families reported that they felt excluded from the community or from participating in social norms because of their economic status.

Bahng's study also found that if the NGO working with the families was able to work with the micro-finance provider they could provide social collateral on behalf of the family enabling them to join the group⁵⁰. NGOs working with street children could therefore provide this link to families who require 'protection' or 'promotion' interventions and therefore offer them a safe place to save, borrow and feel part of the local community.

Community inclusion or exclusion also impacts on Retrak's family strengthening and child protection goals. One social worker noted that a child whose mother is a beggar was teased by other children because of his mother's status and this impacted negatively on the boy's self-esteem. It is therefore important that social exclusion is acknowledged as an important factor in the reintegration process and economic status can form an important part of this.

Although social norms and expectations were considered important by interviewees, exclusion from them did not mean that households were excluded from receiving help from the local community. One mother said that her neighbours were going to hold a fundraising event for her because they 'understood my [health] problem and as my pain is so bad'. Another said that despite being excluded because she is a beggar, her husband had belonged to a local funeral insurance group [idir] meaning that when he died other members paid the costs of improving her house. Therefore although some parents perceived themselves to be socially excluded, further research needs to be conducted to assess if this is a perception shared by the wider community. The research does however suggest that the perception held by the families interviewed impacted negatively on the parents' wellbeing and in some cases on the wellbeing of the child.

5.3 Children's participation in economic strengthening

The children and families interviewed gave four main reasons for the child remaining at home. These were: a change in the behaviour of the child, decrease in poverty, reduction in family conflict or to care for their caregiver.

Specifically, two families noted that the work their children were engaged in had contributed to them staying at home. Both children were engaged in paid

⁴⁸ Bahng (2009) op cit

⁴⁹ Wolfe (2009) op cit; Kibombo & Kayabwe (2009) op cit; CPC Learning Network (2013) op cit

⁵⁰ Bahng (2009) op cit



work outside of the home such as helping others collect water from the local water tap or selling clothes at the market. The Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour include slavery, prostitution, illegal work or work that is likely to harm the child physically or their morals⁵¹. The work that these children were engaged in was not therefore the worst forms of child labour, but it could be work that interferes with their education.

One family commented that the ‘work makes him [the boy] settled and stay with us. From the small business I add my own money and whatever he asks I am able to fulfil’. It is widely recognised in the street child sector that a strong push factor for children moving to the street is the belief that they will earn money to send back to their families⁵². Another family noted that the business the boy had begun meant that he spends ‘most of his time at the market so he has no time to spend with friends who are bad influences’. Although this boy did not leave home because of economic problems, the provision of the IGA grant seems to have helped him change behaviours that were part of what caused him to move to the street. One study noted that children on the streets often want more control over their lives and this can be manifested in their desire to earn an income⁵³. Therefore, it is important that practitioners consider

the role some children may want to have in helping their families earn a sustainable income. Children should not be seen as passive actors but can be active participants who often desire independence but lack empowerment⁵⁴. Recognising this OPRIFS, who work with girls in Ethiopia, give grants on reintegration, a portion of which is intended to be used just to meet the girls’ needs (OPRIFS). This is because OPRIFS recognises that children on the street often desire independence and therefore it is important to help provide them with an income which they can control when they return home. Consequently the provision of economic strengthening interventions may be especially important to the reintegration of some children both to reduce household poverty and to empower children and young people.

5.4 Targeting economic strengthening support

Providing families with an IGA grant because their child had been living on the streets risks the money being seen as a reward or a means of earning an income. Save the Children found aiding only children who had already been stigmatised for their role in war led to perceptions that they were being rewarded for their involvement and consequently were excluded by their community⁵⁵. In the case of children returning

⁵¹ ILO (n.d.) *Worst forms of child labour*, International Labour Organisation; UNICEF (n.d.) Fact sheet: A summary of the rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations International Children’s Fund

⁵² Dybiczy (2005) op cit; Wakia, J (2015) *Making the Invisible Visible: An Enumeration of Children on the Streets of Malawi*, Retrak, Manchester

⁵³ Hewitt, T & I Smyth (2013) *Street lives and family lives in Brazil*. In *Culture and Global Change*, New York, USA: Routledge

⁵⁴ Thomas de Benitez, S & T Hiddleston (2011) *Research paper on the promotion and protection of the rights of children working and/or living on the street*, OHCHR, Consortium for Street Children

⁵⁵ Save the Children (2007) op cit

from the streets this is exacerbated because so many move to the streets to try and earn an income, and they then appear to return home with that income, in the form of a grant. One family commented that they gave their son some of the IGA grant to start a business 'because the money was given to us because of him going to Retrak'. A Retrak staff member acknowledged in an interview that this is a problem and can lead to other children joining the streets or the same child returning to join another organisation in order to receive a grant.

Consequently, some NGOs involved in reintegration programmes have decided to target the wider community beyond the single child⁵⁶ although this increases the cost of economic strengthening interventions. Holistic, community-wide economic strengthening support can be provided by ensuring that the most vulnerable children in a community are targeted regardless of whether they have been reintegrated⁵⁷. Charities should adopt a multi-sectoral approach and work with all levels of the family, local community, government and international economic factors⁵⁸. Provision of economic strengthening interventions should not be understood as an exit from a reintegration programme, but instead as ongoing support which is required until a family and community can support themselves⁵⁹.

5.5 Business training

Just over half of the families mentioned the business training they had received from Retrak Ethiopia. This is provided to all families who receive IGA grants and to older children in drop-in centre programmes. The content and extent of training for families varies between social workers and the situation at reintegration. One carer commented that the training 'was greater than the money' as it had helped her think about how to expand her existing business, and she had consequently saved more than the value of

the grant. The two families who spoke most about the impact of the training had received a full-day business training course organised by Retrak Ethiopia in their town. It is possible that for the other families the short training given at placement and the heightened emotions at that time meant that the training had not impacted them as much.

Similarly the Christian Children's Fund found short two-day training programmes and follow-up to be an effective intervention for the reintegration of women and children who had been involved with fighting forces in Liberia⁶⁰. They did however find that it is particularly important to adapt training programmes for agricultural communities who may have a strong preference to work within agriculture or already have relevant knowledge and assets⁶¹. Although Retrak Ethiopia had not conducted a market analysis in the area, one mother commented that 'we were trained about what businesses are really important for this kind of environment'. It is important that Retrak Ethiopia considers the different local markets if their whole day training programmes are expanded to other areas.

Given the desire and ability children have to engage successfully in work, business training for these children should also be considered. This should be accompanied by measures to ensure that this work is safe for children. Such measures could include contracts with employers on working hours and conditions, as well as wider community education on the dangers of child work⁶². Retrak Ethiopia already provides business training to some of the older children whilst they are at a drop-in centre. However, neither of the families who reported positive economic and behavioural changes as a result of their child working mentioned the business training their child had received within the Retrak Ethiopia programme. This is an area which needs more research.

⁵⁶ Jaspars et al. (2007) op cit; Save the Children (2007) op cit

⁵⁷ Save the Children (2007) op cit

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ Christian Children's Fund (2007) *Revitalization of war affected communities and reintegration of women and children associated with the fighting forces (RWAC): Final report*, United States Agency for International Development

⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶¹ Malawi Ministry of Labour (2010) *National Action Plan on Child Labour from Malawi 2010-2016*

⁶² Malawi Ministry of Labour (2010) *National Action Plan on Child Labour from Malawi 2010-2016*

6. Conclusion

6.1 Graduation model

This study has highlighted that IGA grants are not suitable for all of the families that Retrak Ethiopia works with. The poorest households are likely to spend the grant on providing for their most basic needs which they frequently struggle to meet. The graduation model may provide a helpful theoretical framework which Retrak Ethiopia could use to structure their economic strengthening interventions. The child wellbeing assessments that Retrak currently uses can, as part of a wider case management system, provide helpful information on a family's ability to use a grant effectively or whether other interventions should be considered. However, since the child wellbeing assessments were not designed for this purpose other tools should be sought to complement this assessment and provide further clarity.

6.2 Children's participation in economic strengthening

Many children move to the street because of poverty and want to earn money to send back to their families. It is important for some children to be able to earn an income when they return home. This may be so that the child contributes to the household income or to empower them. It is important that Retrak Ethiopia considers its economic strengthening interventions from a rights-based approach, understanding that children must be active participants in their reintegration if it is to be a success. Consideration must also be given to any child protection concerns that arise from children engaging in work.

6.3 Targeting economic strengthening support

Providing families with an IGA grant because their child had been living on the streets risks the money being seen as a reward or a means of earning an income. Retrak Ethiopia should consider ways of minimising this risk, including targeting the wider community beyond the family of a single child.

6.4 Community exclusion

Community inclusion is very important to families and exclusion is often experienced because they do not have the economic capacity to participate in social events as dictated by norms and customs. This exclusion may affect children's wellbeing if they also feel excluded. Mothers who had joined a savings and loans group thought this had reduced their social exclusion by reducing their economic poverty but also by increasing their empowerment and interaction with the local community.

6.5 Business training

Full-day training courses for families, organised by Retrak Ethiopia had the biggest impact and were most valued. Providing the training away from the highly emotional time of a child's return home, and over a whole day, appears to improve the family's use of the training. If Retrak Ethiopia was to organise more training days it would be important to consider the local market at each location and especially the differences between rural and urban markets.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are made for consideration by Retrak Ethiopia. They may also be of use to other practitioners involved in economic strengthening within reintegration programmes.

- **Graduation model:** It is recommended that Retrak Ethiopia adopt the theoretical framework of the graduation model. The model recognises the need to provide different economic strengthening interventions to different families. Tools should be adopted or developed to help identify families who are likely to benefit from an IGA grant or another more appropriate intervention. This may include the child wellbeing assessments already in use, since the health, food and shelter domains in particular can be helpful in making decisions about economic strengthening interventions. A range of interventions should be on offer, this could include consumption support to the poorest families, alongside an IGA grant.

- **Economic strengthening support to whole communities:** Retrak Ethiopia should consider providing holistic, community-wide support at reintegration. This could reduce the risk of isolating the reintegrated child and their family further or encouraging other children in the community to go to the street to receive similar economic support. It is important that barriers to successful livelihoods such as health and education are addressed to ensure that every child in the community has their basic needs provided for. Economic strengthening should not be seen as a final stage of reintegration but as necessary ongoing support which should be continued until a family is able to support itself.



- **Savings and loans groups:** Retrak Ethiopia should consider linking the families it works with to savings and loans groups. Ethiopia has one of the fastest growing micro-finance sectors in the world including many government run groups which have a focus on reaching the poorest and most rural areas⁶³. These groups would provide a safe place for families to save and also increase their sense of inclusion within the local community. Linking families with micro-finance groups at placement when the IGA grant is given would provide families with a place to save whilst they grow their businesses. The graduation model recognises savings to be an important step towards financial stability.

⁶³ MFTransparency (2011) *Promoting Transparent Pricing in the Microfinance Industry, Country Survey: Ethiopia*

- **Business training:** This study found an organised day of training to be more beneficial than training conducted during the placement of the child. Retrak Ethiopia should therefore consider organising business training courses in towns where there are a high number of families close by. Such courses should be adapted to the local market and especially should consider the differences between agricultural and non-agricultural economies.
- **Social inclusion:** The study showed that some of the families who joined savings and loans groups felt that these improved their sense of social inclusion and that this had potential benefits for children remaining at home. Further research is needed to understand the role of social inclusion on children and families in the reintegration process and ways to build this inclusion, such as membership of savings and loans groups.
- **Economic strengthening support to children:** Retrak Ethiopia should continue to offer economic strengthening support to some children directly as the findings from this study suggest this may help children to remain at home. In addition, more research is needed to understand the best ways to do this appropriately and safely and how this links to children's sense of reintegration and desire to remain at home.



Annex 1

Household Characteristics

Characteristics	Gerba Guracha 1	Gerba Guracha 2	Sodo 1	Sodo 2	Gununo	Bahir Dar	Mekit
Region	Oromia	Oromia	SNNPR	SNNPR	SNNPR	Amhara	Amhara
Parents	Single parent	Single parent	Single parent	Parents together	Parents together	Single parent	Parents together
Business	Water collection	The mother is a beggar	Sell sugarcane, fruit, charcoal, firewood and bake injera. The child also works in a garage and rears chickens.	Bake injera	Grow crops, own cows and sell homemade alcohol	Sell charcoal and vegetables	The family is engaged in small scale arable farming. The child owns some cows and a donkey as well as sometimes selling clothes.
Siblings	One younger sister	No siblings	Two younger sisters	One younger sister	Unknown	One younger brother	Two younger brothers and one younger sister
Size of IGA grant	1,000 ETB	1,100 ETB	1,500 ETB	1,500 ETB	1,500 ETB	Two grants Σ 2,500 ETB	Unknown
Grant spending	Healthcare	Healthcare	Business	Business	Business	Business	Business
Health problems	Mother has problems with her feet meaning she cannot work	Step-father recently died of TB and mother now displaying symptoms	None	Father is sick	Father has haemorrhoids	Mother had a throat tumour	None
Reason child left	None given	Poverty	Poverty	Poverty and child's behaviour	Poverty	Conflict in the home	None given
Reason child stayed after reintegration	To care for the caregiver	None given	Decrease in poverty	Change in child's behaviour	Change in child's behaviour	Conflict stopped	Change in child's behaviour and decrease in poverty

Household Characteristics continued

Characteristics	Gerba Guracha 1	Gerba Guracha 2	Sodo 1	Sodo 2	Gununo	Bahir Dar	Mekit
Child working outside household	Yes	No	Yes	Unknown	No	Unknown	Yes
Social exclusion	Family mentioned feeling socially excluded	Not mentioned by family	Family mentioned feeling socially excluded	Family mentioned feeling socially excluded	Not mentioned by family	Not mentioned by family	Not mentioned by family
Other support	Community	Community	Micro-finance	Micro-finance	None	Community	None
Saving before IGA grant?	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Saving now?	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Child wellbeing score*							

* **Score:** 1=very bad, 2=bad, 3=fair, 4=good

Domains: 1a Food Security, 1b Nutrition & Growth, 2a Shelter, 2b Care, 3a Abuse & Exploitation, 3b Legal Protection, 4a Wellness, 4b Health Care, 5a Emotional Health, 5b Social Behaviour, 6a Education performance, 6b Education access

Annex 2

Literature included in review

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