



**EVALUATION OF
RAILWAY CHILDREN
AFRICA FIT PERSON'S
PROGRAMME**



INTRODUCTION

In May 2021 RCA commissioned a consultant to evaluate its Fit Person intervention that is being implemented by RCA and partners to provide safe, emergency and temporary care for vulnerable children up to the age of 14 years, who have been rescued from the streets.

The Fit Person intervention is the intervention that relies on community volunteers to provide temporary care for children without parental care. The RCA Fit Persons intervention is informed by the Tanzania Law of the Child Act (2009) and in particular, the 2013 Fit Persons Regulations.

The intervention has involved a collaboration between RCA and the Government of Tanzania, to incorporate the government-managed Fit Persons programme into the project activities of the RCA implementation partnership.

The recruitment and assessment of each fit person is led by a District Social Welfare Officer from the local government authority (LGA) Department of Social Welfare. Alternatively, the departmental head has the power to delegate this function to an agency or body that has been identified as having the appropriate capacity to complete the required task.

The purpose of the evaluation has been to inform continued investment by RCA in its Fit Persons intervention. In support of this process, the analysis of the Fit Persons intervention has aimed to identify best practices and lessons learned from project implementation. The results of the analysis have further been used to develop forward-looking recommendations to enhance the work of RCA and the implementing partner organisations, as well as agencies that are involved in similar work.

The specific objectives of the current analysis have been to:

1. Look at the process of fit persons from identification; screening and assessments; training; placement and then the experience and outcomes for children, as well as the follow up by the district social welfare officer (DSWO) and civil society organisations (CSOs), post placement

Definition of a fit person

A person of full age who is of high moral character and integrity and of sound mind, who is not a relative of the child, and [is] capable of looking after a child, and who has been approved by a social welfare officer as being able to provide a caring home for a child.

Source: Adapted from Tanzania Law of the Child Act 2009, paragraph 3

2. Evaluate at each stage how effective the process was/ what worked well and what were the challenges or things they did not address adequately. Critique it in relation to the actual guidelines/regulations, looking at what the policy requires and how it was and is being implemented to see whether there are any incongruences
3. Determine:
 - How many children were placed with fit persons (August 2020 to February 2021)
 - How many children dropped out from the fit persons programme (August 2020 to February 2021) and for what reasons
 - How many children are placed in each family at the same time and whether there is a limit
 - What was the referral point into the fit persons' homes (e.g. from the street; court; abuse case removed from the community; abandoned/ dropped at social welfare; others (specify))
 - How long each child remained in the fit person's home before they were reintegrated back home
 - How many children are still at family/ community home after final reintegration
 - How children experienced their time with the fit person? What did they like the most? What bits did they like the least?
 - For those back home, what has changed at home for the young person? How safe do they feel?

SCOPE

The scope of the analysis has been the full duration of project implementation, from 2018 to 2021, with a focus on service delivery by the implementing partners in four project cities (Arusha; Dar es Salaam; Dodoma and Mwanza). To allow the evaluation to delve further into the Fit Persons intervention, additional data collection was conducted in Mwanza. The rationale for this approach was the engagement of RCA in direct implementation in this city, through the RCA Kivuko project, and independent implementation by Cheka Sana Tanzania, an implementing partner organisation that also operates in Mwanza.

TECHNICAL APPROACH

The technical approach to the overall evaluation was theory-based and aligned with a client-approved evaluation matrix. The theory-based approach was used to structure all evaluation activity around the project theory of change and the logical framework, to identify the contribution of contextual factors towards the achievement of the expected intervention results. With the support of the evaluation matrix, therefore, the evaluation was conceptualised under five main criteria (relevance; effectiveness; efficiency; impact; and sustainability) and incorporated other criteria that were pertinent to the analysis, namely, gender; lessons learned and recommendations.

To enhance the theory-based approach, an inclusive and participatory design was used to draw on the experience of the project stakeholders as key informants of the implementation experience.

Purposive sampling based on a sequential approach was used to address the anticipated diversity in data sources for the evaluation, namely documents and project stakeholders. It supported consultations with data sources that were best suited for providing accurate responses to the evaluation questions. Moreover, the use of a sequential approach allowed for the engagement of additional data sources throughout the evaluation, where required.

MAIN FINDINGS

The discussion on the findings aligns with the evaluation criteria namely, relevance; effectiveness; efficiency; impact; gender; and sustainability, as defined by OECD-DAC. The analysis within this section has a particular focus, therefore, on the effectiveness and efficiency of the intervention.

RELEVANCE

The intervention has responded to the need for rescued CLWS to be accommodated in a nurturing household environment, in preparation for reunification with their families, followed by household reintegration. In line with this process, the intervention has further aligned with the local government mandate to safeguard the well-being of vulnerable young persons under its care.

EFFECTIVENESS

The intervention has supported the successful reunification of CLWS and their families and has facilitated the development of a standardised process to quality assure child placement. Fit persons have also benefitted from an opportunity to enhance their childcare capacities, but at times have displayed negative views about CLWS.

EFFICIENCY

The intervention has created potential for a sense of results ownership at the community level. A change of community mindsets, combined with the facilitation of adequate post-placement follow-up support for rescued CLWS, is a work in progress.

IMPACT

The intervention has contributed to an aversion to the life of the streets among rescued young persons. Yet, some CLWS have become attached to the households of the fit persons, posing a challenge to their reintegration into their family homes.

GENDER

While the pre-selection of fit persons by the implementing partners has been independent of gender, the gender criterion has been prioritised by local government during the selection process. In line with the initial specifications of the Fit Persons programme, the local government authorities also have a preference for child placements that are assigned to a married couple/ fit family.

SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability criterion was measured as the likelihood for a continuation of project benefits beyond the implementation timeframe, with a focus on the potential for results sustainability, as well as the continuation of project activities.

Consequently, the results of the analysis have shown that there is potential for the RCA intervention to continue beyond its end date, given its alignment with the LGA Fit Persons programme.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

By facilitating access to a nurturing household environment and support services to enable street-connected young persons to prepare for family reunification and household reintegration, the RCA Fit Persons intervention has made it far more likely for CLWS to exit life on the streets. Given the close alignment of the intervention with local government programming, there is potential for ongoing collaboration between the implementing partners and local government. Equally, there is an opportunity for registered fit persons to continue to offer services that can be used to rehabilitate CLWS and other vulnerable young persons. Moreover, insofar as efforts have been made to actively engage communities in the pre-selection of fit persons, there has been scope for generating a sense of community ownership for the intervention and its anticipated results. Notably, the collaboration between the implementation partnership and local government, as well as the active engagement of communities in the pre-selection of fit persons, are examples of good practice that have been generated through the intervention.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Continue to work closely with the local government authority to support the street exit and rehabilitation of street-connected young persons using the fit persons facility.
- Invest further in community awareness-raising about the situation of CLWS and the fit persons facility, to support the creation of 'community allies' through an emergent sense of ownership for the rehabilitation of street-connected young persons.
- Continue to engage communities in the pre-selection of fit persons to support community ownership of the effective resolution of the situation of street-connected young persons.
- Revisit their approach to managing the fit persons facility to ensure timely maintenance support for CLWS accommodation, including financial support for emergent issues.
- Collaborate with the Department of Social Welfare to re-visit the assessment process for child placement and the development of individualised care plans to ensure the adequacy of the placement timeline and the completeness of the therapeutic intervention.
- Collaboration with Department of Social Welfare to conduct a detailed enquiry into the reason for CLWS drop-out of the Fit Persons intervention, to rectify possible implementation gaps in future similar interventions.

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