

Community-based Reintegration Programs: Promoting Rootedness and Opportunity for Central American Migrant Children

There are many root causes of child migration from Central America, including violence, climate change, instability, and food scarcity. Unfortunately, these conditions often persist when a child returns to their country of origin. Without reintegration support, many children may struggle to adjust and manage their mental health and be unable to access or prioritize educational opportunities, which puts them at risk for a host of challenges within their families and communities as they transition to adulthood. Facing a lack of viable alternatives, combined with the stigma of a forced return and persistent economic and relational challenges, many of these children will attempt to remigrate.

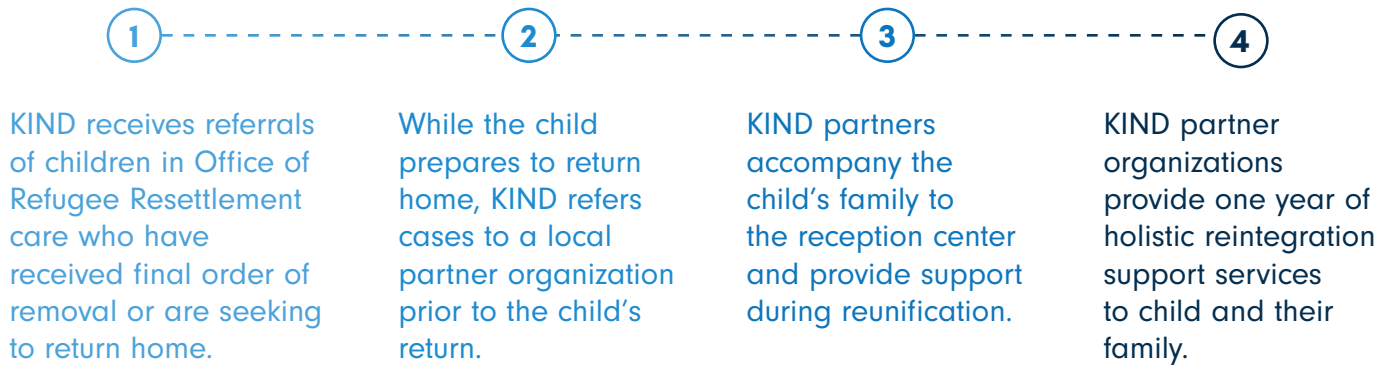
Community-based reintegration: Response and prevention of forced migration

Since 2010, KIND's Central American Child Migrant Return and Reintegration Program (CMRRP) has worked with returning unaccompanied children before their repatriation from the United States to screen for safety concerns upon return, assess the needs and particular vulnerabilities of individual children and families, and coordinate reunification and reintegration support. Upon return to their home country, children participating in the program receive comprehensive, long-term support from KIND's community-based partner organizations in Honduras and Guatemala. Resources include psychosocial support and assistance accessing educational and health services, economic opportunities, education, and job skills training. Through KIND and its partners' programming, returning and potential migrant youth are empowered to interact with each other, learn about their rights, and help find solutions to the many challenges facing their communities.

"The interest and hope that the families themselves have; we are not changing the lives of their families, they are changing their lives and giving hope for the future."

- KIND Programming Partner

KIND's reintegration program is designed to help children and families navigate the complex emotional dynamics of reintegration, to identify the child and family's strengths and resources, as well as resources available in the community, and to develop a plan that supports the child in a positive developmental trajectory and avoids a forced remigration. Through this work, participants are empowered to tell their stories and identify strategies to move forward.



KIND's reintegration model: locally designed, locally led, holistic services

KIND and partner civil society organizations use a trauma-informed, rights-based approach throughout the provision of short-term basic services, as well as longer-term support for children and families. Civil society partner organizations provide wraparound support to children and families. Through regular home and community visits and telephone calls, partner organizations provide psychosocial support to address trauma, logistical and financial assistance with enrolling in educational and vocational training programs, and referrals to health, mental health, and legal services as needed. Through a robust case management model, families have proactively become involved in their child's reintegration process and demonstrated the role of families as agents of change.

The program seeks to engage families and communities to reinforce broader protection mechanisms. When a government is unable to provide resources or coordination of child protection services, community partners play a fundamental role as the first line of response for children at risk of becoming victims of violence. Local civil society organizations can develop preventive and remedial activities and provide social assistance and services to prevent family disruption and support child-focused family coping strategies.

One of the biggest changes we have had are the children who have improved their relationships with their families. Ties are severed when they migrate, and with reintegration those ties are strengthened. They return to school, resume their lives, and improve their situation."

- KIND Programming Partner



Photo by Asociación Pop No'j, Huehuetenango, Guatemala

The impact of reintegration programs

Over 90 percent of children who participate in KIND's reintegration program do not remigrate, demonstrating that this type of engagement with children provides alternatives to migration. While the program focuses on returning children, it also supports their family members, including siblings who have not migrated, recognizing that the drivers of migration equally affect children who have not yet been displaced. The educational, vocational, psychosocial, and case management services that support returnee children to remain home also address the needs of potential migrant children.

Protecting children, providing space for them to grow and thrive, and accompanying them in their journey to reintegrate into their families and communities is vital work that addresses the impacts of child migration in Central America. KIND's reintegration work demonstrates that reintegration programming is both necessary and possible and provides a model that governments and international and local organizations can replicate on varying scales, to better serve returning and potential migrant children.

Central America implementing partners



For more information, please read KIND's **infographic** and **policy brief**.