



# From Streets to Home: Creating Opportunities for Children and Young Adults Who Live on the Streets through Life Skills

## Evaluation Report



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## TABLE OF CONTENT

<b>Acronyms</b> .....	3
<b>Summary</b> .....	4
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	5
<b>2. Context</b> .....	6
2.1 Description of the Project .....	6
2.2 Evolution of the Local Context during the Project .....	6
<b>3. Methodology</b> .....	7
<b>4. Limits of the Evaluation</b> .....	8
<b>5. Results of the Evaluation</b> .....	9
5.1 Relevance: Is the Intervention Doing the Right Things?.....	9
5.2 Effectiveness: Is the Intervention Achieving its Objectives?.....	9
5.2.1 Output 1: The beneficiaries are equipped with enough skills to make them fit for the job market .....	11
5.2.2 Output 2: The beneficiaries are organized in an association.....	18
5.2.3 Output 3: Employers commit to hire the beneficiaries .....	19
5.2.4 Output 4: Conducting sensitisation and advocacy campaigns to ease the reintegration process of young people living in the street.....	21
5.2.5 Unexpected effects of the project .....	22
5.3 Efficiency: How Well Are Resources Being Used? .....	22
5.4 Impact: What Difference Does the Intervention Make? .....	23
5.5 Sustainability: Will the Benefits Last?.....	23
<b>6. Recommendations</b> .....	24
6.1 post-Project Recommendations.....	24
6.2 Future Project Development Recommendations .....	24
6.3 Broader Program Recommendations.....	27
<b>7. Conclusion</b> .....	28
<b>Appendices</b> .....	30
Original Logical Framework of the Project .....	30

## ACRONYMS

CBO	Community Based Organisation
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
G2G	<i>Gudi 2 Gang</i> - From Street to Home (name of the project)
NUWECSI	Northern Uganda Women and Children Support Initiative
SCCY	Street-Connected Children and Youth
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association
WHO	World Health Organisation

## **SUMMARY**

This report presents the results of the evaluation of the project “From Streets to Home: Creating Opportunities for Children and Young Adults Who Live on the Streets through Life Skills” implemented by Hashtag Gulu in Gulu City, Northern Uganda from January 2020 to April 2021. Data were collected through surveys of beneficiaries and employers and focus groups with beneficiaries, trainers and key informants. Overall, the evaluation of the project is positive, especially considering the evolution of the context and the fact that it was the first formal project implemented by the organisation. The training and the sensitisation and advocacy components received largely positive reviews, although some areas such as material/space and follow-up can be improved. The evaluation shows that the creation of a duly registered association and work placements have not fully reached their objectives, yet promising results remain encouraging for future projects. Unintended effects such as reintegration of beneficiaries within their family and the establishment of a temporary shelter during the peak of the restrictions linked to COVID-19 were also possible thanks to this project. Hashtag Gulu managed well their transition from an informal to a formal organisation. They have shown unwavering commitment, despite a sometimes heavy workload (especially when operating the shelter) and a tight budget. Although the overall impact of the project is beyond the scope of this evaluation, there is no doubt that this project was a crucial step towards the reintegration of the beneficiaries within society and the restoration of their dignity. Thoughtful future planning will be key moving forward and this report provides multiple post-project, future projects and broader program recommendations.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The project, “From Streets to Home: Creating Opportunities for Children and Young Adults Who Live on the Streets through Life Skills” (hereafter referred as G2G for *Gudi 2 Gang*, meaning street-to-home in the local language), was implemented by Hashtag Gulu in Gulu City, Northern Uganda to support the reintegration of Street-Connected Children and Youth (SCCY) into society. It was the first funded project implemented by the organisation, after operating informally and on a voluntary basis for years. The main goal of this evaluation is to assess how well Hashtag Gulu performed and to provide relevant recommendations for future projects and follow-up activities with the beneficiaries.

SCCY are among the most vulnerable and overlooked populations in Uganda. They are exposed to heavy stigmatisation from the local community and public servants, and they are subject to violence, poverty and poor health outcomes. The accelerating socioeconomic development of Gulu City attracts increasingly more young people who seek to escape extreme poverty in rural areas, leading to an increasing number of SCCY in town. They struggle to survive and some of them have no choice but to resort to violence, robbery and drug trafficking in an attempt to secure their most basic needs. This results in a constant cat-and-mouse game with police forces and a generally hostile behaviour towards SCCY from the population. Many people are prone to blame SCCY for every problem in town, making it even harder for SCCY to reintegrate society. Due to the complexity of the situation of SCCY, supporting them is as challenging as it is needed.

The changing context in which the project took place further complicated the implementation of the project, as COVID-19 struck two months after the project’s launch. As much as Hashtag Gulu managed to transform the harsh restrictions imposed by the Ugandan government into an opportunity, they suddenly had to operate in a very different environment that no one could have predicted. Changes were made to adapt the project, including reallocation of funds to establish a temporary shelter for SCCY in Gulu. A no-cost extension of four months was granted to allow for the completion of the third cohort of training.

Despite these challenges, the G2G project was overall successful. In this report, we first briefly present the project and the evolution of the context. We then describe the methodology used to evaluate the G2G project and the limits of the analysis. We subsequently discuss the results of the evaluation in Chapter 5. The evaluation is based on the criteria of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), with a specific focus on effectiveness, which discusses the achievements of the project in relation to its objectives. Particular attention is given to the four outputs of the project, as genuinely assessing the goal of the project would have called for more resources. Finally, we provide multiple post-project, future projects and broader program recommendations based on the findings of the evaluation.

## **2. CONTEXT**

### **2.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT**

The G2G project was implemented by Hashtag Gulu with funding from Eirene Suisse from January 2020 to April 2021. The main objective of the project was to support SCCY in Gulu City in northern Uganda in their process of reintegration into society by increasing their employability and undertaking advocacy campaigns to positively influence the mindset of the community and main stakeholders towards SCCY.

In order to provide SCCY with income generating opportunities, the project initially aimed at offering vocational training of three months each to 90 SCCY in three different domains, namely bricklaying and concrete practices (BCP), carpentry and tailoring. Hairdressing was subsequently added to match the wishes of some beneficiaries. The project included professional linkages to potential employers who could offer apprenticeship positions or paid positions for 20 SCCY, as well as the creation of an association of SCCY under the supervision of Hashtag Gulu for them to work together and/or obtain funding from national and regional programs.

The sensitisation and advocacy components included school sensitisations, community dialogues, radio talk shows and online campaigns on social media as well as stakeholders meetings. Reducing the stigma attached to SCCY was indeed regarded as paramount to favour their reintegration in their community and society at large. Besides being the first formal project implemented by Hashtag Gulu, the project was very ambitious due to the high vulnerability of SCCY, especially considering its short duration (i.e., one year) initially planned and subsequently extended for four months due to reasons detailed hereafter.

### **2.2 EVOLUTION OF THE LOCAL CONTEXT DURING THE PROJECT**

The context in which the project was implemented was highly influenced by the measures taken by the Ugandan government in order to fight the spread of the coronavirus disease (Covid-19). The lockdown imposed by the authorities was among the strictest in the world, including a ban of all public and private transports for many months, the introduction of a curfew that lasted almost the entire project, school closures and ban on public gatherings that made it difficult if not impossible to organise vocational training and sensitisation activities. These restrictions had not only a negative impact on the ability to complete planned activities within the project timeframe, but they also placed the lives of the beneficiaries immediately at risk as they depended on the street to survive. Moreover, economic activity in Gulu slowed significantly, making it harder for trained SCCY to access formal employment.

Hashtag Gulu managed, however, to turn these challenges into opportunities, which is explained in greater detail below. Despite limited financial and human resources and political turmoil, the organisation managed to open a temporary shelter where they offered a safe and secure place to 70 SCCY. The shelter enabled Hashtag Gulu to start the first vocational training and strengthen their relationship with the beneficiaries, which subsequently appeared to be key for the success of the project. Hashtag Gulu also seized the opportunity to place themselves as a leading actor in supporting SCCY in Gulu.

Another important contextual aspect to be mentioned here was the national elections that occurred at the beginning of 2021. SCCY are often used by local politicians to destroy the advertising material of opponents. Furthermore, many voting days and insecurity made it difficult for Hashtag Gulu to implement their activities, especially in January 2021.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The project evaluation used a mixed method approach using in-person questionnaires, focus group discussions, phone survey, and key informant interviews administered to all pertinent parties to the project, including SCCY beneficiaries, project staff and trainers, and employers. Primary data on project details, including beneficiary demographics and training enrolment were also provided to the evaluators to support this evaluation.

All survey instruments were designed by the external evaluators based on previously existing guidelines and tools, namely from the World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines on monitoring and evaluating projects with SCCY, which helped to inform the methodological approach. Specific questions for assessing the training were sourced from the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) YouthMap Uganda Evaluation Report 2015.

Considering the complexities inherent in collecting data from SCCY, this evaluation conducted semi-structured in-person questionnaires with a sample of SCCY (who participated in the project) that sought to collect key information of their experiences with the training and project. Likert-scale questions were adapted for some questions to use a 3-point scale, which is recommended when collecting data from low literacy respondents. These were administered by Hashtag Gulu staff who had built a rapport with the SCCY, as per WHO recommendations. These questionnaires were followed up with 1-hour focus group discussions (FGD) with SCCY, who were selected for participation using convenience and purposive sampling. The FGDs supplemented the questionnaire by allowing for a richer and fuller in-depth discussion of the experiences of SCCY to support analysis. Participants were recruited and placed into separate groups for the FGDs as follows: one group for SCCY who completed the training and are currently employed, three groups of SCCY still completing the training, and two groups of SCCY who completed the training but are not currently employed.

Short, 15-minute semi-structured interviews were administered by phone to collect experiences from employers who employed (whether formerly or currently) direct beneficiaries of the project training. These were administered by the Hashtag Gulu staff. FGDs were also conducted by the evaluators with the project trainers to explore their experiences training the SCCY and the support received by Hashtag Gulu. The evaluators also conducted. Finally, key informant interviews were conducted with project staff from Hashtag Gulu by the evaluators.

Data collected and analysed includes the following: 55 respondents (29 m, 26 f) to the in-person questionnaire administered to the SCCY, including those who did or did not complete the training (i.e., drop-outs and SCCY still in training). This is fairly representative of official project enrolment figures (i.e., 53 m, 37 f). A total of six FGDs were conducted with SCCY for 46 participants (24 m, 22 f). Phone interviews were conducted with 8 employers (all male). One FGD was conducted with 4 project trainers (2 m, 2 f) and one key informant interview was conducted with 2 Hashtag Gulu project staff (all male).

Data was collected over a 3-week period in March to April 2021. The evaluators used summary statistics for quantitative data and axial coding for qualitative data.

#### **4. LIMITS OF THE EVALUATION**

There are some limitations to take note of concerning the present evaluation. Considering that this is an end-line project evaluation which gathered cross-sectional data, these results represent the views and experiences of those surveyed at a particular time. Yet, considering the paucity of evaluation data for development projects centring on SCCY in East Africa generally, this evaluation can provide valuable insight into future programming targeting this complex and vulnerable population. Additionally, the current employment status of the SCCY beneficiaries and their challenges should be assessed regularly and after at least one year after the project's closure to determine further effects of the interventions on primary beneficiaries.

Due to a no-cost extension, this evaluation took place before the end of the project, meaning that some SCCY respondents are still currently in training. However, considering the difficulties collecting data from a vulnerable and often inaccessible group such as SCCY, the evaluators believe the data collected from those beneficiaries still in training remains valid and can provide precious insights into the project.

Another limitation is that this evaluation did not measure the impacts of the project's advocacy efforts to de-stigmatise SCCY among the general public. The reason for this was because this is resource intensive and beyond the scope of the current project evaluation.

Finally, it could be argued that some of the responses may contain social desirability bias, especially for the primary beneficiaries and employers whose data was collected by project staff. The WHO guidelines for evaluating projects targeting SCCY recommends that trust and rapport with the respondents is critical to obtain access and data from SCCY. For the employers, the evaluators chose to have staff conduct phone interviews so that they could translate questions into the local language as well, for better understanding of both the questions and responses. Training by the evaluators for the project staff conducting data collection was also conducted beforehand to ensure that they enable respondents and participants to feel comfortable being forthright and honest while providing responses.



## **5. RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION**

In this chapter, we provide a detailed evaluation of the project following the evaluation criteria of the OECD, with adaptations made according to the Principle Two of the OECD. We discuss the relevance, the effectiveness, the efficiency, the impact and the sustainability of the project. The criteria coherence is voluntarily left aside as the evaluators are not well aware of other projects targeting SCCY in Gulu, as well as local and national plans in that regard, and do not have the resources to assess this aspect. The focus is mostly on the effectiveness of the project, which assesses whether or not the project achieved its objectives.

### **5.1 RELEVANCE: IS THE INTERVENTION DOING THE RIGHT THINGS?**

The G2G intervention conducted by Hashtag Gulu was timely and relevant to respond to the needs of the SCCY. SCCY are a consistently overlooked and underserved group of people within Uganda. Additionally, SCCY face deep stigmatisation from the community at large, as well as government and social service providers. In order to achieve both national global development goals, it is imperative to “leave no one behind”, meaning vulnerable groups such as SCCY must be explicitly targeted and included in support interventions. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic saw wide sweeping strict lockdowns put in place and this invariably increased the vulnerabilities of the SCCY. As such, this evaluation illustrates the positive impacts that interventions targeting SCCY can have, especially considering the significant lack of any such programming in Gulu and elsewhere in northern Uganda.

In Gulu and its surroundings, there are currently no other organisations that are explicitly targeting support for SCCY. Part of this is because they are a complex group to support with high ranging needs. Due to their ongoing stigmatisation, it is essential to gain the trust of SCCY and develop lasting relationships with their community to ensure continued access. Hashtag Gulu represents the only local organisation that specifically targets SCCY and has developed sound knowledge and expertise of the needs of SCCY and nurtured good relationships with them which meant they were best placed to run this type of intervention.










The type of intervention (i.e., a skilling project) is also relevant to the lives of the SCCY. There is increasing hesitancy among development organisations with investing in institutionalised support for SCCY (e.g., shelter) due to the risks of unsustainability and the potential for cultivating dependencies. This is why the choice to implement a skills training program to help equip SCCY with knowledge to seek employment is a good option to open up livelihoods opportunities. Regardless of what transpires in the future, the beneficiaries will have gained concrete skills that can enable them to generate an income and improve their socioeconomic conditions.

Finally, the advocacy efforts are critical to transforming public attitudes towards SCCY for a plethora of reasons. Clearly shifting public perceptions of SCCY would help to improve their prospects of integrating into the wider community, family reunification, and even for employment opportunities.

### **5.2 EFFECTIVENESS: IS THE INTERVENTION ACHIEVING ITS OBJECTIVES?**

Table 1 shows an overview of the evaluation of the G2G relative to the indicators as stated in the logical framework of the project, followed by a brief discussion. Detailed analysis for each output is provided below.

**Table 1: Main indicators of the project**

Expected results	Indicators			Evaluation
	Description	Target	Result	
<b>Outcome:</b> Youth living in the street are organized in an association and acquire the skills to reintegrate in the society	(1) 90 youths can support themselves and reintegrate their community	90	149 (80 male and 69 female)*	
	(2) Stakeholders undertake 8 concrete actions in favor of 400 youth living in the street	8	9**	
<b>Output 1:</b> The beneficiaries are equipped with enough skills to make them fit for the job market.	(1) Number of beneficiaries equipped with professional skills	75%	100% (53 Male and 37 Female)	
<b>Output 2:</b> The beneficiaries are organized in an association.	(1) An association is created	1	1	
	(2) Participation rate of the association's meetings	75%	N/A	
<b>Output 3:</b> Employers commit to hire the beneficiaries	(1) Number of employers contacted	30	13	
	(2) Number of employers willing to employ the beneficiaries	20	9	
<b>Output 4:</b> Conducting sensitisation and advocacy campaigns to ease the reintegration process of young people living in the street	(1) Number of campaigns conducted	13	22	
	(2) Number of actions undertaken by the stakeholders	8	9**	

\* The amount represents the total number of SCCY supported in a way or another during the project. However, this evaluation focuses on the outputs, as the impact and the outcome statement would require more research. They are also more recognized as long-term expected results and should therefore be analyzed through that lens later.

\*\* This figure represents the amount of actions undertaken by stakeholders in favor of SCCY in Gulu thanks to Hashtag Gulu's intervention. This is a complicated metric to measure and a thorough analysis goes beyond the scope of this evaluation.

As shown in the table above, results have exceeded expectations in certain aspects, and objectives have not been reached in others. The indicator for the core activity of the project (i.e., the training) shows that 90 SCCY successfully completed their training (100%). It is worth mentioning here that the drop-out rate was higher than expected, considering that 149 SCCY were enrolled throughout the project (drop-out rate of 40%). Indicator 1 for Output 4 is also much higher than expected (target: 13; result: 22 - 170%). Hashtag Gulu enhanced efforts toward sensitisation and advocacy as a response to the increasing stigmatisation of SCCY in Gulu, partially exacerbated by COVID-19 and fear of infection. They quickly adapted to the ban of

gatherings and closure of schools and used this period as an opportunity to position themselves as an important actor working with SCCY.

Indicators for Outputs 2 and 3 did not achieve all of their targets. While an association was created, it has not yet been registered due to too few members, leading to an inability to meet legal requirements. There will be, however, an increase in members upon the last training cohort’s graduation, which is taking place at the time of writing this report. As explained in Section 5.2.2, Hashtag Gulu has developed an approach centred around creating and supporting social businesses. While more sustainable, creating a successful social business takes a longer period in order to be functional. Linkages with employers and work placements are also lower than targeted. Before deepening the analysis of each output, it is worth mentioning that COVID-19 had a more significant impact on both Outputs 2 and 3.

### 5.2.1 Output 1: The beneficiaries are equipped with enough skills to make them fit for the job market

In this section, we present the main results of the evaluation related to Output 1. For clarity, this section is divided into two main subsections. The first focuses on the training itself and the second on the employability of SCCY who successfully completed the training.

#### 5.2.1.1 Evaluation of the training

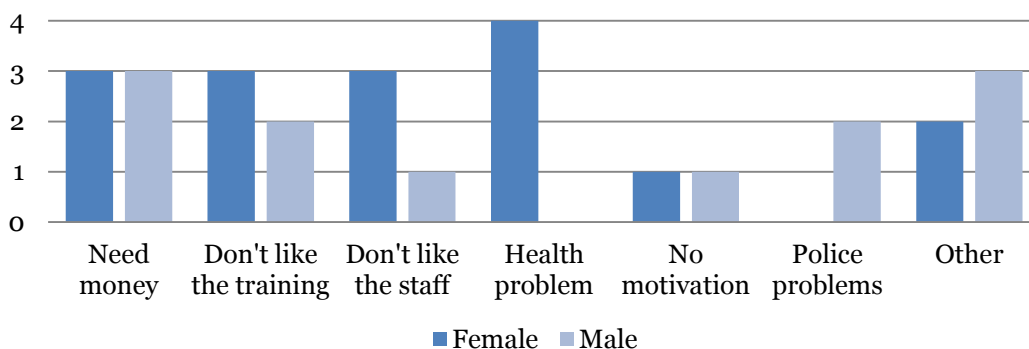
The participation rate of the beneficiaries, their own evaluation of the training as well as the impact of the training are developed in this subsection.

#### Participation to the training

As mentioned above, the drop-out rate is high (40%) meaning that almost half of the SCCY enrolled left the training before it ended. Considering the high degree of vulnerability of the beneficiaries, a high drop-out rate was expected. To counter the expected high number of drop-outs, Hashtag Gulu offered the training to a larger quantity of SCCY through over-recruitment, resulting in 53 males and 37 females successfully completing their training, higher than the target of 75%. This is however due to the high number of SCCY enrolled and the real drop-out rate still exceeds the expected rate of 25%.

To understand better why the drop-out rate is so high, Graph 1 shows the reasons for drop out mentioned by the respondents of the survey who did not complete the training (n=9).

**Graph 1** Reasons mentioned for not completing the training (N=9)

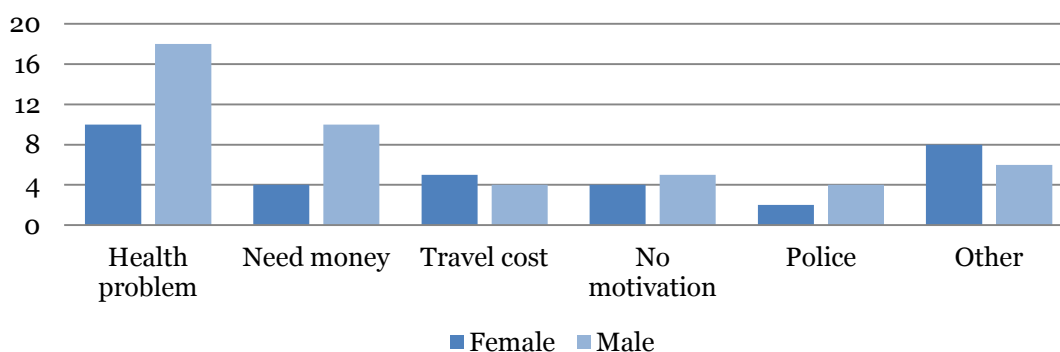


The most commonly provided reason for drop-out was the need for money (n=6, 3 f and 3 ma), as SCCY usually have to “hustle” during the day to secure their meals and accommodation, where

possible. Respondents also mentioned that they did not like either the training and/or the staff, while ‘health problems’ was the fourth most frequent response and was mentioned exclusively by females. Absence of motivation and issues with the police were mentioned by two respondents. Stigmatisation, pregnancy, a job, struggling to go to school and not finding the training useful were also raised by the respondents.

FGD with SCCY and the trainers confirmed that drop-outs were due to a multitude of factors. Reasons for dropping out of the training provided by the participants related to the struggles faced by SCCY. It is worth looking at the reasons why most of the beneficiaries who completed the training did not attend all the sessions. Indeed, the attendance rate was been highly erratic and only 11 out 46 respondents (24%) managed not to miss at least one day of training. As shown in Graph 2, the reasons mentioned for missing classes are similar to dropping out.

**Graph 2** Reasons mentioned for not attending all the sessions (N=46)

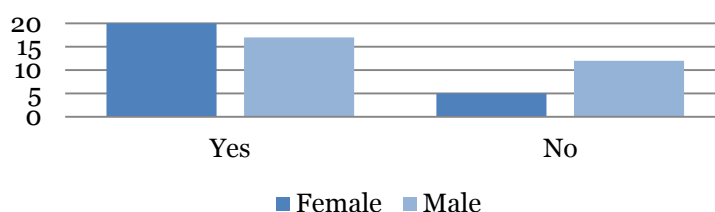


Health problems really appear to be the main source of SCCY not showing up for the training (61% of the respondents), followed by the need for money (30%). SCCY are known to have poor health outcomes, which makes everyday life harder for them. Not only illnesses impede their ability to physically attend the training, but they also have to hustle to find a way to access medications. Some SCCY indicated confusion about the training, troubles the previous night before class and burials to explain why they missed one or more classes.

SCCY face complex challenges, which makes it difficult to provide for their unique needs without creating serious dependencies. The approach taken by Hashtag Gulu is appropriate in that regard, but challenges inevitably arise when attempting to transfer knowledge and skills to an oft-neglected and excluded segment of the population. Drop-out and attendance rates are two important metrics that should be improved in future training to increase impact, while bearing in mind the sensitive context in which Hashtag Gulu operates.

Another important component is to ensure as much as possible that the beneficiaries are taught a topic they are interested in. The results of the evaluation shows that about 30% of the respondents could not pick what they would like to study, as illustrated in Graph 3.

**Graph 3** Was it your preferred training option? (N=55)



Mechanics was the domain the most commonly requested by the respondents, followed by driving. Some respondents from the first and second cohort mentioned hairdressing, which was added by Hashtag Gulu for the last cohort of training. This shows that the organisation was able to listen to the wishes of the beneficiaries, which is particularly important when working with SCCY as building trusting relationships are essential.

### Evaluation of the training by the beneficiaries

The following Table 2 shows the respondents' questionnaire responses regarding their appreciation of different aspects of the training. The most important results are discussed hereafter.

**Table 2** Evaluation of the training by the SCCY (N=55)

	<b>Totally agree</b>	<b>Partially agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
The training was easy to understand	67%	33%	0%
I would recommend this training to other SCCY	96%	4%	0%
The trainer was a good communicator	84%	11%	5%
The trainer was knowledgeable on the topic	84%	15%	2%
The training was well organized	89%	9%	2%
The training was well paced (number of hours, logical, ...)	69%	25%	5%
I would be interested in attending another training on the same subject	78%	16%	5%
The material/tools was appropriate to help me learn	46%	39%	15%
Each day of training was the appropriate length	76%	22%	2%
The training space was appropriate	89%	5%	5%
I felt supported during the training	87%	9%	4%
The training was helpful for my life	80%	13%	7%

In general, the satisfaction rate is very high, which is encouraging. The training overall as well as the trainers were well-graded, as well as the support received from Hashtag Gulu. About two-thirds of the beneficiaries found that the training was 'easy to understand' (in another question, 62% found the training 'just right', 33% 'easy' and 5% 'too hard'). Most SCCY found the training helpful for their life.

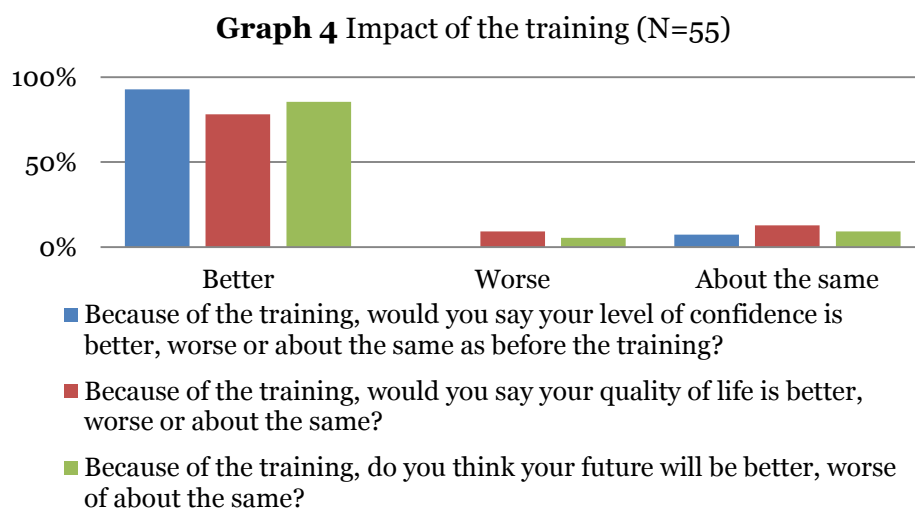
The pace of training was less well rated by the respondents. From the FGDs, the main reason for the lower ratings is that most SCCY struggle to earn income by day and need more time to secure

their evening meal and their place for the night, which makes it hard for them to commit to an entire day in training.

Although the training space was well-rated, the material was the least appreciated aspect by the beneficiaries. FGDs with SCCY, the trainers and key informants highlighted that the material and the space were not adequate. It appears indeed that the material in particular was under-budgeted. The training took place at Hashtag Gulu’s premises, which is not entirely well-equipped for it (with the exception of the first cohort whose training took place at the temporary shelter). While this aspect requires substantial improvement in future project design and planning, it is worth noting that this was the first financed project of Hashtag Gulu, which inevitably comes with challenges. Altogether, Hashtag Gulu managed to provide impactful training with a very limited budget while dealing with transitioning from an informal to a formal organisation, all in the midst of a global pandemic.

### Impact of the training

This part focuses on the psychological impact as well as behavioural changes resulting from the training. The specific aspect of the employability of the beneficiaries is treated in the next subsection.



Graph 4 shows that a majority of respondents think that their level of confidence (93%), their quality of life (78%) and their hope about their future (85%) are ‘better’ than before the training. For many of them, the training was less about strictly acquiring skills than getting the feeling to be supported and acquiring a sense of belonging, which in turn built their self-confidence, which is usually quite low. In the FGDs, SCCY feeling ‘worse’ regarding their future or their quality of life usually mentioned not having enough support by Hashtag Gulu in other aspects of their life such as accommodation. In that regard, managing beneficiaries’ expectations is quite challenging, especially considering the amount of urgent needs that they have and their lack of trust towards people more generally.

During the FGDs, some SCCY mentioned that they have learnt how to communicate with others and how to better take care of themselves. They also said that having a better diet (as lunch was provided during training class) has made them feel healthier. They also feel that their hygiene has improved as they had the possibility to wash at the training premises. They feel more positive about their future as they are more optimistic about the possibility to earn an income

and “their attitude toward life changed” for the better. Overall, the beneficiaries who took part in the questionnaire and the FGDs have a good perception about the training and the impact it had on their lives, which is a noteworthy success of the project.

The trainers and Hashtag Gulu’s staff all observed concrete behavioural changes, which is at the core of the project as reintegration into society could hardly be attained without it. They particularly noticed that the self-confidence level of the beneficiaries increased during the time of the training, as well as the respect SCCY trainees showed toward their teachers.

At times, and despite all trainers having previous experience with vulnerable students, trainers reported that it had been difficult to manage classes of SCCY. The two main reasons mentioned by the trainers were drug abuse and gang-related issues. As one trainer put it; “when they go to Jamaica they don’t respond to us anymore”. Violence in the street sometimes also follows the SCCY in the training, especially as they belong to different gangs. The trainers however noticed an improvement in that regard over time. They also recognized that once you understand how to deal with this specific group, they become fun to work with.

Overall, the training part of the project exceeded its objectives, even still there is room for improvement. According to key informants, a big initial challenge was to gain the beneficiaries’ trust - an especially difficult endeavour as many SCCY had felt betrayed by NGOs in the past. Cultivating trust with SCCY remains extremely challenging, yet was paramount for the success of this project. Despite this challenge compounded by limited resources, the SCCY who took part in the training really enjoyed it and recognised that the project positively impacted their life. While not being sufficient for a successful reintegration into society, this represents an important step forward towards achieving reintegration.

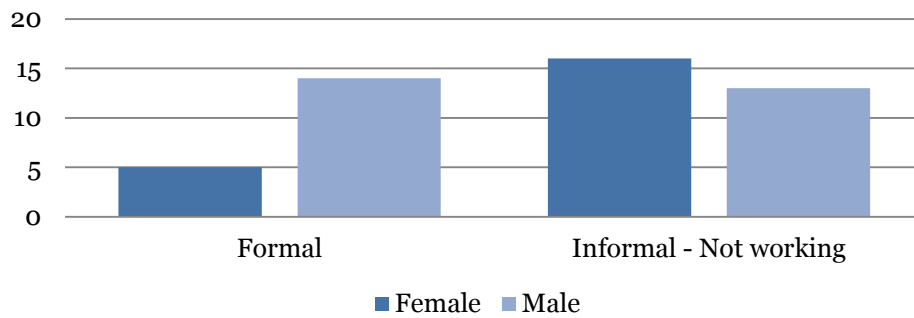
#### **5.2.1.2 Employability of the beneficiaries**

In this subsection, we discuss the main results related to how well-prepared for the job market SCCY are after the training and how those who found a source of income managed to do it. The specificities of the association and the linkages to employers, which are part of the overall employability aspect, are treated separately in subsequent sections.

#### **Employment status of the beneficiaries**

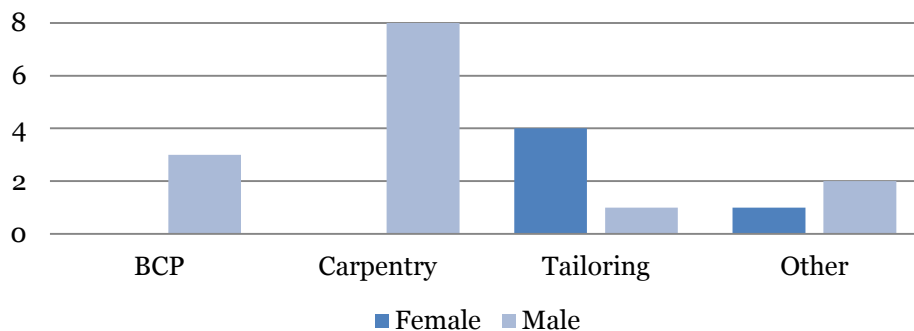
Graph 5 shows that three-quarters of the female respondents are not formally employed (either by someone or self-employed) and about half of male respondents are formally employed. It may indeed be easier for men to find a formal job considering the pervading gender inequalities and dynamics that are culturally entrenched, yet many reasons could explain this difference and we cannot draw any conclusion based on these figures as such. However, 19 out of 55 SCCY surveyed have managed to find a more stable source of income, which is an important objective of the project. We do not know however how stable these positions are.

**Graph 5** Employment status of the beneficiaries (N=48)



Out of the respondents formally employed, 3 are self-employed and 16 have found a place to work for someone else. Graph 6 shows that 8 males are working in carpentry, 3 in BCP, 1 in tailoring and 2 have found jobs unrelated to their training. 4 females work in tailoring and 1 in an unrelated field. Due to time constraints, the evaluation of the project does not provide employment data about the last cohort, which would have also included hairdressing as a skill.

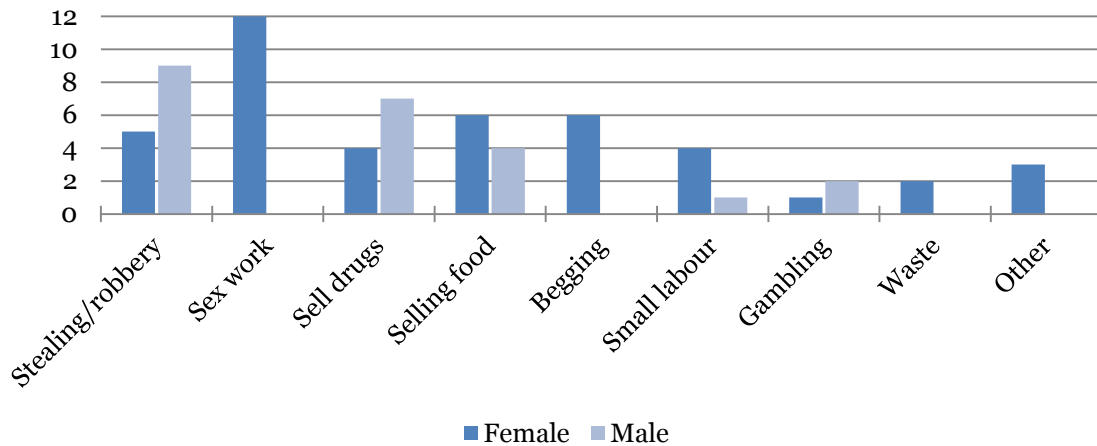
**Graph 6** Type of work in which beneficiaries are engaged in (N=19)



Interestingly, half of SCCY mentioned that they found their job in part due to the support provided from Hashtag Gulu. 7 said that they found it themselves, 7 got help from friends and family, and 3 received support from the trainers. Supporting the beneficiaries to find a job is quite a challenging task (see Section 5.2.3), yet some respondents could secure positions through the support provided by the project. We still lack the necessary foresight to gauge how stable and sustainable these employment positions will remain, but the present results show that it is indeed possible to provide vocational training to SCCY, which can lead to a job and ultimately allow SCCY to get off the street. Many variables are obviously influencing the success of such a process, from SCCY's personal features (motivation, commitment, etc.) to external factors such as stigmatisation and overall economic situation.



**Graph 7** Income generating activities of SCCY not formally employed (N=29)



While those formally employed have felt supported, it was not the case for all the beneficiaries. Indeed, a number of them mentioned feeling not supported enough by Hashtag Gulu and failed to find a job. They belong to the category of respondents with informal sources of income, as they still need to hustle to survive. Graph 7 shows the type of income generating activities that these SCCY are engaged in and, though beyond the scope of this evaluation, it seemed pertinent to include these data here. A concerning revelation was the alarming number of young women involved in sex work considering the small sample size; this leads us to believe that the true magnitude of female SCCY involved in sex trade work is much larger. Additionally, stealing and selling drugs were also among the most common means to earn an income. These are high-risk behaviours that are often accompanied by a plethora of potential serious social and health consequences.

### **Income**

It is important to mention at this point that 33% of female respondents mentioned earning 'more' than before training and 67% 'less' than before. 50% of male respondents said that they now earn 'more', 21% earn 'less' and 29% earn 'about the same' than before. These results should be interpreted with caution, especially considering that COVID-19 has placed a lot of added pressure on SCCY who rely on the street to survive. SCCY'S income is by definition very erratic and one could not draw straight conclusions based on these figures. Nevertheless, it points to an important potential consequence of the training. Indeed, SCCY spend less time in the streets while they are getting trained, limiting their opportunities to hustle for petty cash. This view is supported by previously mentioned data citing the need to hustle as a main reason for drop-out or not being able to attend all the sessions.

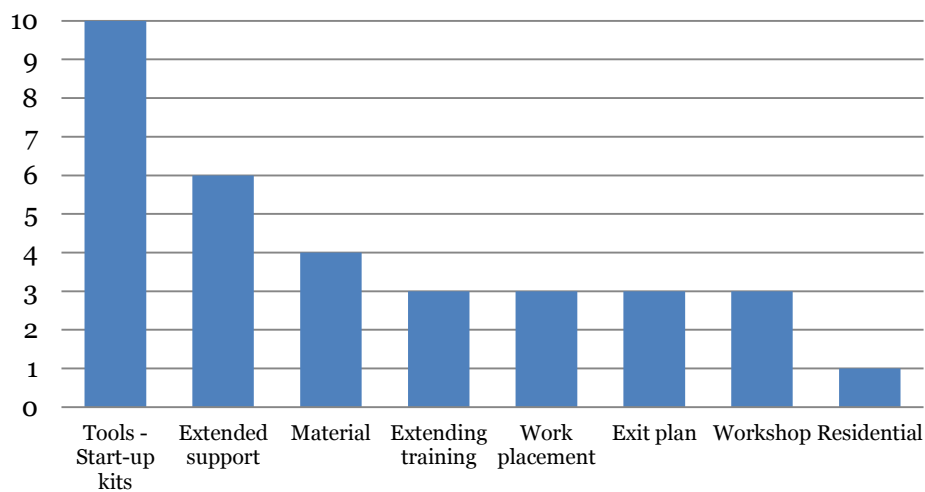
### **Are SCCY ready to work?**

The question of whether or not the project sufficiently prepares the beneficiaries for the job market is paramount, as training per se does not provide any income for them to leave the street. Before discussing the findings of the evaluation in that regard, it is important to keep in mind that multiple external factors influence the ability of SCCY to effectively find a job. Many variables, such as the overall economic situation, are out of the control of Hashtag Gulu and will impact the outcome of the project either negatively or positively. That being said, several observations can be made from the evaluation process.

First, many SCCY and the trainers in FGDs agree that the training period was too short for the beneficiaries to acquire all the needed skills. Considering the challenges faced by SCCY, a longer training with less hours per day would be more appropriate.

Second, beneficiaries and trainers also highlighted the importance of providing start-up kits for the trainees. Indeed, for BCP especially, employers often ask workers to bring their own basic tools. Although such tools are not expensive, it is hard for SCCY to acquire them and store them in a safe place. Providing a small start-up capital was also mentioned as a type of support that could help the trainees to set up their own small business if need be. The employment situation is generally bad in Uganda, which drives many people to become self-employed. With a small capital, many respondents believe that they could quickly generate a stable income. This should however be carefully considered and implemented, considering that it requires strong support, teaching and follow-up among other risks associated with providing free tools and/or capital.

**Graph 8 Recommendations from the beneficiaries**



Graph 8 displays the recommendations made by the beneficiaries for future project improvements, including suggestions on how to improve the support provided to increase their ability to secure employment (N.B., these recommendations have been integrated in the Recommendations section of this report). FGDs confirmed the desire from some beneficiaries to be more supported to find a job. Some SCCY also mentioned their wish to have the training provided in a residential facility so that they do not need to struggle for their food and shelter for the night.

Overall, the training had a positive impact on the beneficiaries of the project, in both personal and professional terms. Despite limited material and space and the short period of training, the beneficiaries acquired skills that helped some of them find a job afterward. While there is margin for improvement regarding the training program itself, there is more work to do to help SCCY integrate into the labour market and/or to start their own small business (see discussion about Outputs 3 and 2, respectively).

### **5.2.2 Output 2: The beneficiaries are organized in an association**

The objective of this output was to form a legally registered association for the beneficiaries to potentially access a government-funded support program. However, the association failed to

reach the minimal number of members required for a cooperative society to be duly registered by the government. Hence the association was formed but not legally registered by Hashtag Gulu, mostly to support the SCCY enrolled in the tailoring and carpentry workshops.

The evolution of the context, particularly impacted by COVID-19 and the general elections, considerably slowed down the process to legally register a cooperative, as gatherings were banned for several months. Moreover, the last cohort of training just recently ended and more SCCY will be interested in joining the cooperative, which remains an objective of Hashtag Gulu beyond the project's closure.

In order to continue offering income generating opportunities for the beneficiaries while waiting to reach a sufficient number to legally register the association, Hashtag Gulu decided to go beyond the objectives of the project and created two workshops in tailoring and carpentry where SCCY can use available tools and get support from a former trainer as part of a newly formed of small social business. At this stage, there is not enough information to estimate whether or not this strategy will work, as not much sales and work have been achieved yet. Nevertheless, considering the difficulties faced by SCCY to find formal employment and/or acquire tools on their own, developing social businesses is an attractive endeavour. If social business start-ups work well, they could even generate some revenues for the organisation and decrease their dependency to external funding, while directly providing employment opportunities and income for their beneficiaries.

Developing and sustaining social businesses is however resource intensive and needs proper planning and monitoring. The risk exists that it may end up costing more money than it generates and this could inadvertently divert some investments away from more pressing concerns. Expectations from SCCY about the workshops also need to be properly managed, at least until a stable, functional and sustainable structure is in place. Hashtag Gulu should also not neglect the creation of the cooperative, which has important advantages and could potentially help SCCY get off the street.

### **5.2.3 Output 3: Employers commit to hire the beneficiaries**

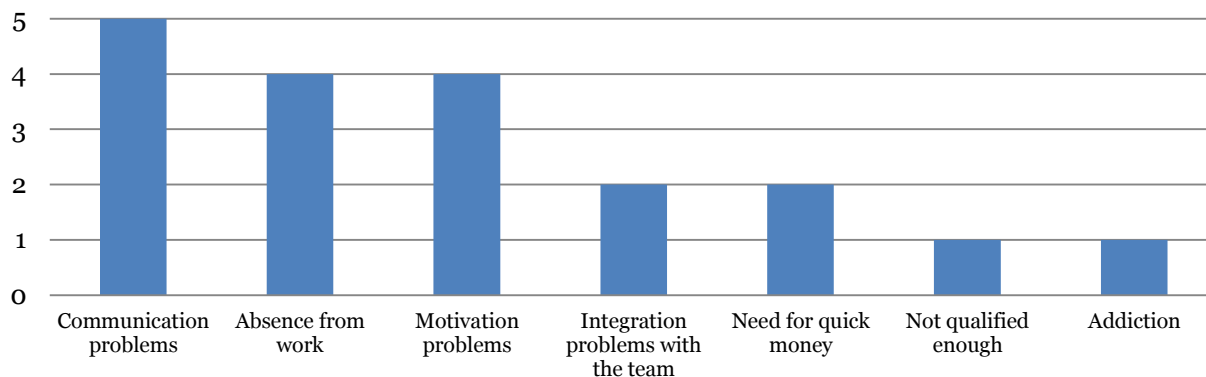
In this section, we discuss how well Hashtag Gulu did regarding securing employers' commitment to hire SCCY and the challenges encountered. Overall, the target of contacting 30 potential employers and compelling 20 of them to hire SCCY was not met during the project, as only 13 employers were successfully contacted and merely 9 were willing to employ SCCY. According to Hashtag Gulu, the main reasons for this failure were the economic downturn related to the measures taken to counter COVID-19 in Uganda and the lack of employers' trust in SCCY. Moreover, even if most of the employers contacted expressed interest in employing Hashtag Gulu-trained SCCY, they were unwilling to sign a memorandum of understanding. Prospective employers did not feel like committing to a long-term partnership commitment before having the opportunity to work with a beneficiary first.

For the evaluation of the project, 8 employers were contacted. 5 of them are currently employing a total of 8 SCCY; 2 employers employed 2 SCCY in the past but not at the moment, and one has not yet hired one for economic reasons (i.e., not enough work to offer). 6 employers mentioned that they specifically wanted to support the project by hiring SCCY as they were in need of new employees.

In terms of challenges, Graph 9 demonstrates that communication problems, unreported absence from work and motivation issues are the main difficulties met by employers who employed or are currently employing SCCY. Two employers noticed an integration problem

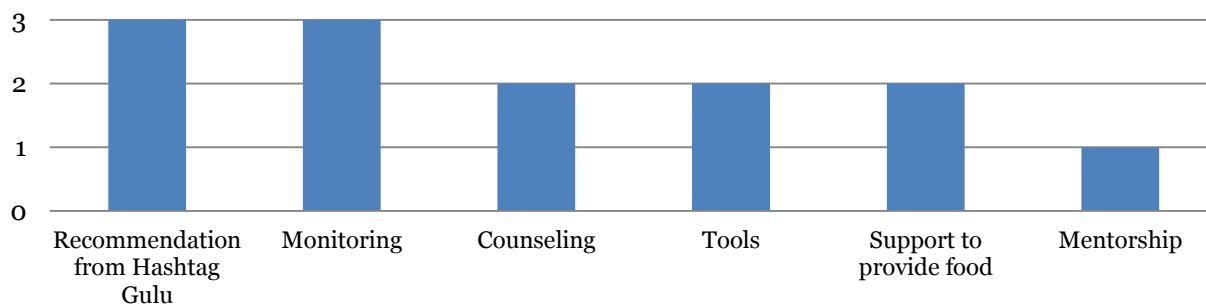
within the staff and that the need of SCCY for quick money (i.e., being paid daily) was difficult to manage. Lack of qualifications and addiction issues were also reported as problematic. This may signify and reinforce the notion that the history and vulnerability of SCCY is likely to impede their ability to integrate into a team and respect the duties that come with being employed by someone.

**Graph 9** Challenges experienced by employer with SCCY (N=7)



In order to address these challenges, employers have expressed what they would need from Hashtag Gulu, summarized in Graph 10 below. Having SCCY directly recommended as well as proper monitoring from Hashtag Gulu are the most common needs mentioned, followed by counseling SCCY, providing them with tools and food. The most important seems to be that employers would feel comfortable to hire the beneficiaries of the project on the condition that Hashtag Gulu would keep following up, advising and counseling them, at least until they are well integrated into their work team and are able to work autonomously.

**Graph 10** Support needed for employers to employ SCCY (N=8)



To conclude on this output, even if the quantitative targets were not met for the aforementioned reasons, Hashtag Gulu managed to successfully find work placements for some of the beneficiaries. The emerging contextual challenges that transpired during the project period put a lot of pressure on the team, who had to work round the clock for several months in a row (see Section 5.2.5), while delaying the implementation of the activities. The initial target of 30 employers was therefore too much to handle. Hashtag Gulu chose instead to focus on fewer employers, who they were assured would be open to support hiring SCCY. The bottom-line is that Hashtag Gulu has demonstrated the possibility exists to find employers for their beneficiaries. Collecting feedback from these employers will be key for the success of future work placements.

#### **5.2.4 Output 4: Conducting sensitisation and advocacy campaigns to ease the reintegration process of young people living in the street**

Despite COVID-19 disrupting activities planned for sensitisation and advocacy, especially schools outreaches and community dialogues, Hashtag Gulu was quick to adapt and deliver more than its target objectives. They organized 22 campaigns to promote the rights of SCCY and positively influence the mindsets of community members towards them. Considering the high degree of stigmatisation experienced by SCCY, these activities appeared to be instrumental in restoring the dignity of the beneficiaries and facilitating their reintegration in society.

In detail, Hashtag Gulu organised 10 radio talk-shows, 5 online campaigns on their social networks, 4 dialogues, 2 school outreaches and one interview on national TV to talk about SCCY and prevent more children from abandoning school and living on the street. While evaluating the exact impact of these campaigns is beyond the scope of this evaluation, it is worth highlighting the great efforts done by the implementing organisation with regards to this output. Moreover, Hashtag Gulu took advantage of the COVID-19 crisis to position themselves as a leading actor supporting SCCY in Gulu by being members of the District Taskforce on COVID-19 and regularly exchanging with local politicians on the matter of SCCY. They grew and strengthened their network, which has positioned them to increase the impact of their advocacy work in the future.

The second indicator for this output is the number of identified actions undertaken by stakeholders following advocacy work from Hashtag Gulu. It is obvious that one could never say for sure that something would not have been done without the intervention of Hashtag Gulu, let alone measuring their exact contribution for actions taken by others. However, thanks to the many sensitisation and advocacy campaigns organized and their active role in shaping the support offered to SCCY in Gulu during the peak of the COVID-19 restrictions (see Section 5.2.5), there is little doubt that Hashtag Gulu positively influenced many stakeholders. The main actions identified are the following:

- The plight of teenage commercial sex workers was discussed in the district council meeting and an investigation opened on Buganda Pub, a hub known to harbor all kinds of sex workers in Gulu town.
- Three temporary shelters were opened by Favor of God, Hashtag Gulu and Generation in Action during the period of Covid-19 crisis, additionally Northern Uganda Women and Children Support Initiative (NUWECSI) initiated a street feeding program prior to the shelters opening.
- 4 street connected girls who were victims of rape during this covid19 period were treated at PACTA Rehabilitation center in Gulu town courtesy of NUWECSI.
- The regional police committed to take a keen interest in the issue of street children by building their capacity and also investigating and arresting criminal elements in our society who use SCCY's for their selfish interest.
- VIVO International has been offering free counseling and psychotherapy to all the SCCY's taking part in the skills training including those in 1st and 2nd cohorts who still require counselling.
- Together with VIVO, ST Phillips and Reproductive Health Uganda, a new health project that seeks to improve the health seeking habits of SCCY's have been developed and implementation is scheduled to start in September 2021.

### 5.2.5 Unexpected effects of the project

Two main effects were identified during the evaluation of the project. It is important to mention them here as they were only possible due to the G2G project and were not initially planned. These two effects are the temporary shelter when COVID-19 hit Uganda and the reintegration of SCCY within their family.

#### **Temporary shelter**

From April to August 2020, Hashtag Gulu hosted 70 SCCY in a temporary shelter in Gulu. The health, security and economic situation worsened for people living in the street, as the measures imposed by the government of Uganda to fight the spread of COVID-19 were among the most stringent globally. Restrictions included a lengthy nightly curfew that inadvertently put SCCY at very high risk. Despite very limited resources, Hashtag Gulu opened a shelter and worked 24/7 to make sure that the beneficiaries were properly taken care of. They also offered adequate food, entertainment activities, clothing, medical treatment and counselling in partnership with various organisations and well-wishers.

#### **Reintegration of SCCY within their family**

During the timeframe of the project with the available resources, Hashtag Gulu successfully reintegrated 6 boys and 5 girls (including two who were pregnant) within their family. This was conducted only when it was determined by Hashtag Gulu to be a safe and secure option and only when SCCY expressed their will to reunite with their families. When successful, reintegrating SCCY within their family and continually monitoring the situation is among the best solutions toward restoring their dignity and offering them a better future. However, this process is time consuming as it needs to be undertaken extremely carefully, considering that there are various reasons why children and youth leave his/her home initially. While Hashtag Gulu was fully occupied and committed to the evolving health and political situations unfolding throughout Uganda, being able to successfully reintegrate SCCY highlights Hashtag Gulu's steadfast commitment to SCCY. The G2G project exceeded expectations in several realms and it appears as though the organisation strove to support as many SCCY as possible during a health and political crises period.

### 5.3 EFFICIENCY: HOW WELL ARE RESOURCES BEING USED?

The *efficiency* indicator shows to which extent the intervention delivered results in a cost effective and timely manner. In terms of time efficiency, the intervention benefited from a no-cost extension of 4 months in order to finish the activities, notably the third cohort of training. The implementation of the intervention was considerably delayed by COVID-19 and the general elections. It also took more time than expected at project initiation to reach out to SCCY in Gulu and gain their trust. Hashtag Gulu managed nevertheless to implement all the activities planned in the project documents within the initial allocated time plus the extension.

Economically, Hashtag Gulu used the funds allocated for this project in a very efficient way, especially considering that some activities were under-budgeted. Hashtag Gulu used the limited inputs available to them in a careful and measured way to best serve beneficiaries' shifting needs and to institutionally strengthen their organisation. Practical parts of the construction training, for example, were dedicated to the construction of a more appropriate training infrastructure itself. Hence, material purchased in that regard served two purposes, namely the vocational training and the sustainability of the organisation (see Section 5.5). Hashtag Gulu also

demonstrated their potential to raise additional funding as needs arose, (e.g., to open a temporary shelter in response to the COVID-19 lockdown).

#### **5.4 IMPACT: WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES THE INTERVENTION MAKE?**

Considering the limitations of the present evaluation, it is difficult to describe the overall potential impacts of the G2G intervention. Some SCCY are still undergoing training, while others will continue to be supported by Hashtag Gulu staff to secure employment. This project has, however, demonstrated its effectiveness in skills training SCCY, as well as supporting their securement of employment. This evaluation revealed that SCCY feel more self-confidence and have greater confidence in their future as a result of their involvement in G2G.

Transformational change at the societal level is also beyond the scope of this evaluation. For this, there would need to be a regular assessment of public attitudes towards SCCY in order to measure the true impacts of advocacy efforts. However, this is a necessary element in order to begin shifting the public narrative around SCCY.

#### **5.5 SUSTAINABILITY: WILL THE BENEFITS LAST?**

The benefits of the training will last as beneficiaries acquired tangible skills that they can now use to earn an income. The creation of the workshops bolsters this, while additional support to find a job will be needed for some SCCY who took part of the training. Due to the material acquired during the project, the infrastructure built and the burgeoning network of partners, it will be cheaper for Hashtag Gulu to set up new training cohorts or refresher training in the future. Once the association is registered as a cooperative, members will also be able to access further support from the Ugandan government.

The contacts created with potential employers for SCCY during the project will also have long-lasting effects, as several employers are now either already employing some beneficiaries or intend to do so. In the same vein, the relationship built between the trainers and certain beneficiaries will benefit them beyond the scope of the project, especially since the trainers are able to either offer some work to the trainees or link them to other employers.

Finally, the sensitisation and advocacy efforts conducted by Hashtag Gulu have certainly contributed to raising awareness about the issues faced by SCCY in Gulu. According to key informants, by the end of the project more attention was given to this issue by local politicians. This is an important step towards opening dialogues with politicians and the public more generally in order to de-stigmatise and shift attitudes towards SCCY and it appears that SCCY in Gulu will receive more support in the future due in part to the campaigns and political work undertaken by Hashtag Gulu.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the present evaluation, the evaluators have devised a series of recommendations at various levels: post-project recommendations, future project development recommendations, and programming recommendations for working with SCCY.

### 6.1 POST-PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

Post-project recommendations comprise suggestions that can be implemented in the short term, with limited resources. These include:

1. More **consistent follow-up with SCCY beneficiaries** from Hashtag Gulu. Both SCCY and trainers mentioned the importance of checking in with graduated SCCY on a regular basis to help counsel them and determine their ongoing challenges for support. Considering SCCY are a vulnerable group that can be difficult to access, it is of the utmost importance the Hashtag Gulu continue nurturing relationships built on trust and mutual understanding.
2. **Better follow-up by Hashtag Gulu for SCCY who are employed.** This is to ensure that SCCY are satisfied in their employment positions and to maintain positive relationships with the current employers. Social attitudes towards SCCY continue to be plagued by stigmatisation of SCCY and it is pertinent to work towards transforming these attitudes so that more employers are open to hiring SCCY who have completed Hashtag Gulu training.
3. **Increased institutional visibility** of Hashtag Gulu to support strong partnerships and promote the interests of the organisation and SCCY. This action will help to further develop the institutional capacity of the organisation by attracting potential new partnerships and donors to channel more support for and attention to SCCY and related issues. This will also support the sustainability of Hashtag Gulu's efforts by better signalling to SCCY of a dependable organisation devoted to their needs and interests, perhaps improving SCCY's future prospects and confidence.
4. Other **interim interventions** that are low cost to continue outreach and engagement of the SCCY community. These can range from organising job coaching and life skills mentorship, entrepreneurial training, offering sports and recreational event opportunities, and creating community awareness of the value of SCCY's contribution to society through community art murals and pieces made by SCCY. SCCY, too, thought being asked to speak at an event or radio talk show could help with de-stigmatisation, but coaching by Hashtag Gulu would be required.

### 6.2 FUTURE PROJECT DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Next, future project development recommendations have been compiled to highlight suggestions for a similar project supporting SCCY with skills and job market linkage opportunities. Future project recommendations are as follows:

1. **Improve budgeting** process for future projects. The current project was under-budgeted and there were several suggestions of additional costs that could be considered to improve students' continued enrollment and attendance, as well as the quality of the training. Further, trainers and SCCY alike stressed that not enough, inappropriate, and/or poor quality materials used during training sessions potentially impeded the full impact of the training. Trainers suggested including them in the budgeting process to ensure that enough funds are devoted to procuring adequate supply of good quality



- materials for the trainees. This requires better collaboration and cooperation between trainers and Hashtag Gulu staff when budgeting and procuring materials required.
2. **Longer training curriculum.** Trainers and some SCCY mentioned that a longer overall period was required to thoroughly transfer skills to SCCY. Especially significant in this consideration is to understand that SCCY can be a difficult beneficiary group to support due to their complex needs and personal experiences. It would be advisable to ensure that training programs are adequate in length to give SCCY trainees ample time to practice their skills and build their confidence.
  3. **Improve initiation period** of project. In the same vein as the previous point, SCCY may need more intensive interaction and support from Hashtag Gulu to forge relationships with the trainers and to support their behavioural development throughout the program. Trainers themselves revealed their own stereotypes of SCCY, which means there also needs to be sensitisation conducted for trainers and any on-boarding Hashtag Gulu staff.
  4. **Better organisation by, as well as more interaction with, Hashtag Gulu staff.** Both SCCY and trainers indicated a desire for better organisation from Hashtag in setting up and running the project, as well as more interaction with them while training is underway. Also, they were considered with a lack of exit plan or strategy for the project; this needs to be more clearly and regularly communicated and adapted with ongoing feedback from these stakeholders through regular monitoring.
  5. Provide **more food or make training days shorter.** SCCY complained that the full-day training schedule prohibited them from earning money throughout the day, resulting in them having to go to bed hungry, struggle for a safe place to sleep, or work throughout the night to earn income. This increases SCCY's vulnerability to violence, propensity to crime or to being persecuted by security officials, and overall health. While it can be recognised that providing a food package at the end of each day can result in further dependencies and/or the SCCY selling the food to respond to other needs, this could be monitored and tested to explore potential benefits and drawbacks. Otherwise, shorter days of training could also liberate SCCY to continue earning income while completing their training - but the program would need to be extended, inflating the costs.
  6. Provide SCCY with a **start-up kit** with materials relevant to their training. This was a suggestion repeatedly identified by SCCY and trainers and could serve to better set-up SCCY when seeking employment upon training completion. Some employers, for example, only hire employees who possess their own tools/equipment. Other SCCY who are interested in setting up their own business could benefit from start-up kit provision.
  7. Include **job placement** as part of the services offered by a future skills training project. SCCY expressed greater support needs to help them find and secure employment. They also wanted a kind of assurance or agreement in the form of an internship at a job placement to continue building their skills and gaining some employment experience.
  8. Conduct a **job market assessment** to inform the selection of skills for the training. There is a serious lack of information on the current job market in Gulu and its surroundings. In order to avoid saturating the job market, it is imperative to get an up-to-date job market assessment in order to better select skills to respond to the demands of the labour market and increase the potential for successful employment of SCCY training graduates.

9. Ensure SCCY beneficiaries are offered the **skills option of their choice**. A surprising number of beneficiaries mentioned that they were not enrolled in their preferred training program (i.e., specific skill). This means that Hashtag Gulu needs to ensure that training options are selected to reflect the interests of the SCCY and that good coordination ensures that SCCY are appropriately enrolled in the option of their choice. This could enhance attendance and completion rates, as well as potentially boost their motivation within the training and post-training to secure employment.
10. **Diversify the skills training options**. SCCY mentioned interest in learning other skills that were not offered under the current intervention and provided some suggestions which have been supplemented by input from the evaluators. Skills to consider for training selection include:
  - Basket weaving
  - Metal working
  - Sculpture and woodworking
  - Bicycle assembly and repair
  - Mechanics
  - Craft making and art
  - Makrame and jewelry making
  - Fabric dyeing and printmaking
  - Soap making
  - Production of honey and candles
  - Construction of home decorations
  - Greeting cards
  - Cooking
  - Tanning and leather working
11. **Increase the number of trainers per cohort or decrease the size of cohort by training**. Trainers stressed their difficulty in supervising and managing large class sizes. While they did mention that Hashtag Gulu should over-recruit trainee candidates to account for high drop-out rates, even with these drop-outs trainers struggled to manage their students.
12. Select skills that require **less or cheaper materials and/or equipment**. If cost restraints become an issue, training selected can be made to shift to lower cost training options. This can also help to decrease potential costs of a start-up kit.
13. **Improve training infrastructure**. SCCY, trainers and project staff indicated that training could be disrupted by rain, despite improvements that have seen the construction of covered areas for some skills. However, further improvements can help to motivate students to attend training and to be able to fully focus on the training. Furthermore, separate rooms or clearly demarcated spaces need to be set up to store and keep track of training materials.
14. Provide **storage lockers** for SCCY to store materials. Funds permitting, it could be advisable to provide a no-cost or low cost storage locker for SCCY to keep their tools and materials for an agreed upon period of time. Considering many do not have their own safe place to keep their belongings, providing such a storage place may support their ability to work and keep themselves safe.
15. Enhance Hashtag Gulu **community visibility and follow-up of SCCY**. While better follow-up of beneficiaries was mentioned in the previous section, we repeat it here to

stress the importance of planning and budgeting for increased follow-up. Hashtag Gulu must also increase its presence in the community as an organisation to continue gaining the trust of other SCCY, as well as the general public, including prospective employers and partners.

### 6.3 BROADER PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Finally, presented as follows are broader program recommendations to better support SCCY in Gulu and its surroundings, as part of a holistic approach to social transformation:

1. Conduct **annual community surveys** to measure **changes in attitudes towards** SCCY in the general population. There is a dearth in reliable data about the public's perceptions of SCCY, yet SCCY and those who have had the opportunity to engage with them through this public understand there is a pervading stigmatisation of SCCY. Consistently collecting such data would help the development of programming to counter lingering negative stereotypes about SCCY which could greatly benefit upcoming advocacy campaigns and strategic direction.
2. Train government officials, cultural leaders, police and security personnel, teachers and educational staff, health workers, and journalists to **understand the experiences, potentials and needs of SCCY**. This training is crucial to ensure that these important social actors are not perpetuating stigmas regarding SCCY and to improve their interactions with SCCY.
3. Provide **VSLA training and group formation opportunities to SCCY**. Whether as part of a second skills training project or as a stand-alone initiative, providing support to SCCY to start VSLA groups is an interesting idea with several potential benefits. SCCY may struggle with being able to save money, especially considering their lack of access to banking or merely a secure storage location. VSLA training can increase their knowledge on how to save and provide them access to a safe place to store their earnings. Furthermore, group formation can serve to increase solidarity among SCCY, however caution must be taken to ensure the viability and security of this option.
4. Develop and initiate **complementary programming interventions to tackle ongoing challenges faced by SCCY**, such as health service provision support and education, including access to sexual and reproductive health services. Other considerations can include programs for alcohol and substance abuse, sex work and HIV, conflict transformation, sexual and gender based violence, family reunification, peer support groups, etc.
5. Hire a staff member solely focused on **developing social enterprises** to benefit SCCY and Hashtag Gulu. This would need investment in a job market assessment as well as expertise to support the selection and development of a successful social enterprise. One suggestion that was made was to open a tool "library" where members could "rent" tools to conduct their work. Another suggestion was to open a bicycle repair shop.
6. Create a **community garden** to increase solidarity among SCCY, improve their relationship with the wider public, and to increase food security of SCCY affiliated with Hashtag Gulu.

Consider training interested SCCY small business development and management skills. All SCCY expressed interest in starting their own business but lack the knowledge and skills to do so. Another consideration could be to set up a cooperative to pool SCCY together for business purposes.

## 7. CONCLUSION

In light of this evaluation, it should be noted that Hashtag Gulu has generally managed this project very well, particularly given the global health crisis that emerged in 2020 coupled with political tensions and violence seen in the Ugandan election campaign. The organisation was able to adapt and deliver beyond expectations in terms of supporting SCCY in Gulu City. The fact that it was the first project of Hashtag Gulu and that the organisation faced the unavoidable challenges inherent in moving from an informal to a formal entity, including managing a budget and human resources, the organisation's ability to persevere and perform to meet its objectives is clear.

The positive aspects of the project according to this evaluation are the following. First, Hashtag Gulu's intervention answers a real problem, namely the precarious situation that SCCY face in Gulu. While a small-scale, one-year project will clearly not resolve all of SCCY's issues, this project represents a big step in the right direction. Hashtag Gulu outperformed the expectations with regards to Outputs 1 and 4 as 25% more SCCY than targeted successfully completed their training, and more sensitisation and advocacy campaigns were launched, despite COVID-19 restrictions. Results indicate that, overall, SCCY survey respondents really appreciated the training. Some respondents managed to find a job as a result of the training and the support provided by Hashtag Gulu.

Important behavioural changes were also identified by the beneficiaries, the trainers and the staff members of Hashtag Gulu. Overall, the beneficiaries feel more self-confident and are more optimistic about the future than they were before the project, which is an important step towards reintegration. The organisation managed to foster good relationships with the beneficiaries, which is crucial to gain their trust and effectively work with them. Hashtag Gulu also contributed to increasing the visibility of the SCCY situation in Gulu and the importance of supporting them, even though the stigma attached to SCCY remains pervasive in the region.

Hashtag Gulu has demonstrated its ability to manage a budget efficiently and adeptly. Even with a relatively low budget and a lack of appropriate infrastructure, the organisation was able to optimize its expenses. In addition, the creation of social enterprises should in the future generate small amounts of self-financing as well as provide a source of income for the beneficiaries. Hashtag Gulu went beyond the scope of the project when COVID-19 struck and was able to provide a safe shelter, including food, clothing, medication and entertainment, for 70 SCCY in Gulu, despite a lack of human resources that forced the existing staff to work many extra hours at night and on weekends. Hashtag Gulu was also able to successfully reintegrate 10 SCCY within their family, which requires a lot of time and energy. The organization has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to supporting the needs, rights and interests of SCCY.

There are certain aspects of the project, however, that should be improved in future similar projects. Specifically, the objectives of Outputs 2 and 3 were not fully reached, as the cooperative could not be registered by the time this evaluation took place and less employers than expected were contacted and willing to employ SCCY. It is important to mention that the challenging contextual dynamics of 2020 and 2021 heavily affected these activities. Another negative point was the short length of training according to the trainers and several beneficiaries. The lack of materials and inadequate training space was also noted. These aspects were due to an overall budget that was underestimated, especially regarding the training costs.

The lack of follow-up post-training was also often mentioned by the beneficiaries; a few said that they felt not supported at all by the organisation. In general, a proper exit strategy after the

training was lacking, or at least not properly communicated to the beneficiaries. One negative aspect worth mentioning is the deleterious financial impact that attending the training had on some SCCY, particularly for females. This can have dire consequences considering the situation in which SCCY live and Hashtag Gulu should carefully think about this potential problem for future training. Finally, the drop-out rate was very high, pushing the organisation to over-recruit, resulting in a high number of trainees at the beginning of the training, which is not optimal. The attendance rate was also not optimal, mostly due to the living conditions and health status of the beneficiaries.

This report provides ample recommendations for Hashtag Gulu. Some of them can be almost immediately implemented and the organisation should consider acting rapidly in order to leverage on gains already made and to maintain the good relationship that they developed with the beneficiaries. Continuously engaging with SCCY will be key to being able to continue supporting them and helping them to get off the streets. Other projects targeting the complex and varied needs of SCCY should also be considered, such as physical and mental healthcare and basic literacy. New vocational training should also be carefully planned and budgeted for in order to improve the quality of the service delivered to the beneficiaries, based on the recommendations provided in this evaluation report.

The evaluation of the G2G project conducted illustrates promising results. Hashtag Gulu masterfully managed its transition to a CBO and the staff members repeatedly went above and beyond themselves to ensure that SCCY in Gulu would be supported. Although there is still much work to undertake in order to change the mindset of the wider community towards SCCY, Hashtag Gulu's effort to raise awareness has already shed light on the issue surrounding SCCY in Gulu City. The organisation has established itself as a key player in drawing attention towards the plight of SCCY and it should continue to strengthen its support to SCCY, as it remains a vulnerable and long-neglected segment of the population. While several SCCY were successful in getting off the street as a result of their participation in the G2G project, many remain in a desperate situation. This 16-month project has enabled Hashtag Gulu to gain valuable practical experience working with SCCY to improve their lives. This evaluation report illuminates the successes and challenges in working to support SCCY; considering the positive impacts of the G2G project, Hashtag Gulu has demonstrated its ability to effectively implement a challenging project, while navigating unforeseen difficulties. It is the evaluators assessment that Hashtag Gulu is well-suited and placed to make a greater impact in the lives of SCCY and should continue its work to support as many as SCCY as possible.

## APPENDICES

### ORIGINAL LOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE PROJECT

<b>Goal</b>	Teenagers and young adult living in the street in Gulu benefit from employment opportunities and successfully reintegrate their community.		
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Means of verification</b>	
<i>Youth living in the street are organized in an association and acquire the skills to reintegrate in the society</i>	<p><b>Indicator 1:</b> 90 youths can support themselves and reintegrate their community</p> <p><b>Indicator 2:</b> Stakeholders undertake 8 concrete actions in favor of 400 youths living in the street</p>	<p>Sources :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quarterly report of the youth association</li> <li>- Monitoring of youths placement in local enterprises</li> <li>- Individual interviews</li> <li>- Local governments reports</li> </ul>	
<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Means of verification</b>	<b>Activities/Inputs</b>
<b>O1:</b> <i>The beneficiaries are equipped with enough skills to make them fit for the job market.</i>	<p><b>Indicator 1:</b> Number of beneficiaries equipped with professional skills (15 years old&lt;, 15 years old +, gender)</p> <p><b>Baseline:</b> <i>no training</i></p> <p><b>Target:</b> <i>75% of the beneficiaries are fit for the job market</i></p>	<p><b>Value at the end of the project:</b></p> <p>...</p> <p>Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>List of beneficiaries of training</i></li> <li>- <i>Skills assessment</i></li> </ul>	<p><i>a. Recruitment of beneficiaries</i></p> <p><i>b. Bio data collection</i></p> <p><i>c. Training 3 cohorts of 30 youths each in 3 different professions</i></p> <p><i>d. Monthly evaluation</i></p> <p><i>e. End of training evaluation and certificate ceremony</i></p>
<b>O2:</b> <i>The beneficiaries are organized in an association.</i>	<p><b>Indicator 1:</b> An association is created</p> <p><b>Baseline:</b> <i>no association</i></p> <p><b>Target:</b> <i>The association is officially registered</i></p> <p><b>Indicator 2:</b> Participation rate of the association's meetings</p> <p><b>Baseline:</b> <i>no association</i></p> <p><b>Target:</b> <i>75% of the youths participate to the meetings</i></p>	<p><b>Value at the end of the project:</b></p> <p>...</p> <p>Sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Certificate of registration of the association</i></li> <li>- <i>Participation rate (attendance sheets)</i></li> <li>- <i>Association reports</i></li> </ul>	<p><i>a. Organizing a meeting to create the association</i></p> <p><i>b. Overseeing the appointment of key role within the association</i></p> <p><i>c. Officially register the association</i></p> <p><i>d. Monitoring of the association meetings</i></p> <p><i>e. Supporting the process to access governmental funds</i></p>

<p><b>O3:</b> <i>Employers commit to hire the beneficiaries</i></p>	<p><b>Indicator 1:</b> Number of employers contacted  <b>Baseline:</b> 0  <b>Target :</b> 30 employers contacted</p> <p><b>Indicator 2:</b> Number of employers willing to employ the beneficiaries  <b>Baseline:</b> 0  <b>Target:</b> 20 employers agree to employ the beneficiaries</p>	<p><b>Value at the end of the project:</b>  ...  Sources:  - Memorandum of Understanding signed with the employers  - Monitoring visits reports</p>	<p>a. Contact 30 employers  b. Signing MoUs  c. Frequent monitoring at the workplace</p>
<p><b>O4:</b> <i>Conducting sensitization and advocacy campaigns to ease the reintegration process of young people living in the street</i></p>	<p><b>Indicator 1:</b> Number of campaigns conducted  <b>Baseline:</b> 0  <b>Target:</b> 13 campaigns</p> <p><b>Indicator 2:</b> Number of actions undertaken by the stakeholders  <b>Baseline:</b> 0  <b>Target :</b> 8 actions undertaken</p>	<p><b>Value at the end of the project:</b>  ...  Sources :  - Reports of the local partner  - Photos/videos</p>	<p>a. Organizing a stakeholder meeting at the beginning of the project  b. Organizing 5 sensitization campaigns in schools  c. Organizing two community dialogues  d. Organizing two radio talk shows to sensitize the community  e. Organizing a stakeholder meeting at the end of the project  f. Conduct 4 online campaigns</p>