

**Important Points
from the
Conference on Reintegration Challenges faced by Care leavers
23rd and 24th October 2014**

Shalom House, Nairobi



At the CCI, I felt protected. I was provided for and I did not have to struggle for most things!

Out here I have to struggle for everything. Most of the time I do not succeed. I am full of fear.

I feel that I was not adequately prepared for life after CCI!

The Conference Prioritizes a Great Need: Reintegration of Children and Youth Leaving Care Institutions

On 23rd and 24th October 2014 stakeholders of vulnerable children and institutions of child care from East Africa met to discuss their associated reintegration challenges within communities and in families. The event brought together women County leaders from Bungoma, Vihiga, and other counties, Dagoretti Constituencies, Faith Based Organizations, Children Care Institutions, Universities, Governmental Institutions and non governmental organizations with a direct interest in the reintegration needs of these children.

The conference was organized by KARDS, Institute of Social Ministry in Mission (ISMM) and Consolation East Africa (CEA) under the Auspices of Kenya Peace Network (KPN) supported by Mensen met een Missie (MM), Amani NGO, Koinonia Community, Koinonia Alumni Association (KOBWA), Kenya Society of Care Leavers (KESCA), Undugu Society of Kenya,

Marist International University Center for Life Skills, IDAY Kenya, St. Joseph Cafasso Halfway Home in Kamiti Medium Prisons, Caritas Italiana, Africa Sanaelimu Arts Ensemble (ASAE), Banjuka Arts, Apostles of Jesus Polytechnic, Marengoni Technical Institute, Shepherd Self Help Groups of Riruta, Practical Action, Radio Mtaani, Diakonia Institute and Shalom House.

The Chief Guest Mr. Naftali Oenga representing the County Children Director in Nairobi.

Mr. Oenga expressed gratitude on behalf of the government to all organizations working with vulnerable children in the county. He acknowledged that reintegrating care-leavers is a challenge. The government in its service provision mandate, would like to learn and also receive constructive criticism.

Presenting during a plenary session, Mr. Naftali elaborated resources set aside by county governments to assist ease children reintegration pain and also assist other vulnerable populations. They include Constituency Bursary Funds, Constituency Development Funds, Street Families Fund, OVC Transfer Fund (OTF), Uwezo Fund, Women Empowerment Fund (WEF), Youth Empowerment Fund (YEF) and the transfer fund for the elderly.

Another government representative was the County Youth Coordinator for Dagoretti Sub-County Mr. Jackson Kayaga. He discussed deeply on how the Uwezo Fund, Youth Empowerment Fund (YEF) and Women Empowerment Fund (WEF) could be used as resources to aid reintegration.

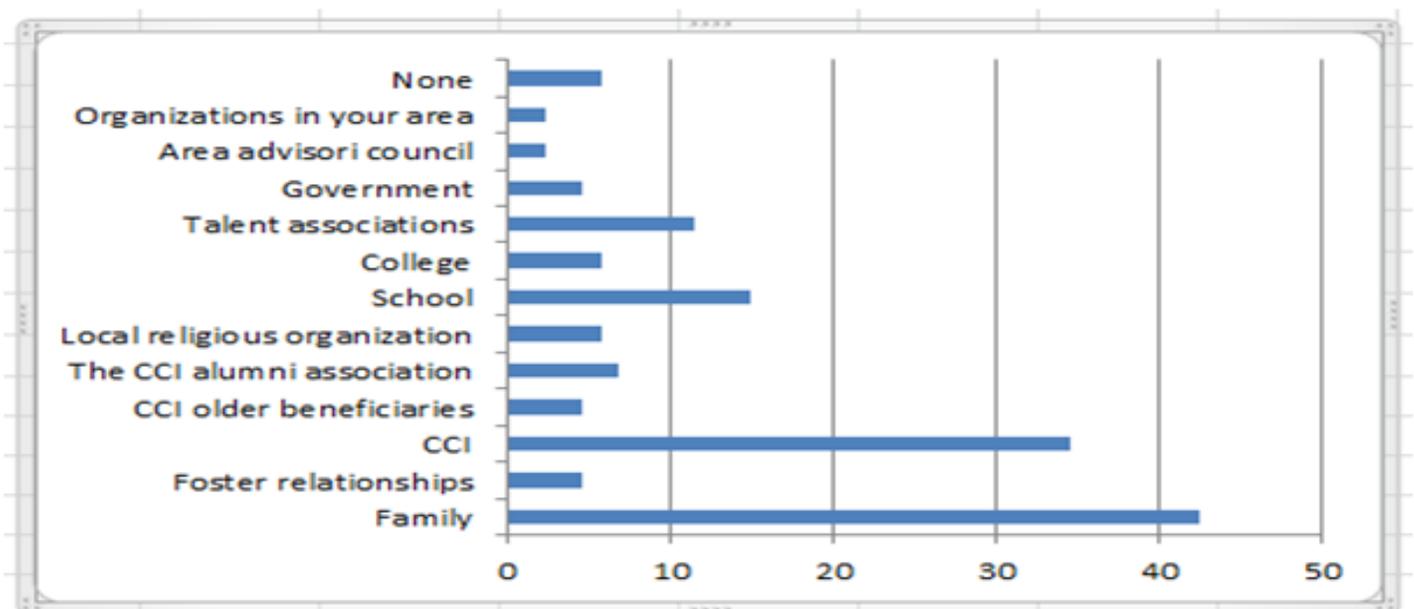
Message from County Assembly Leaders

The assistant speaker of the County Assembly of Bungoma speaking on behalf of other County Assembly Members, emphasized on the need for county governments to support vulnerable people within them. Accordingly, counties have a responsibility to ensure easy access of resources for meriting stakeholders. The speaker also shared about the difficulty facing defiled girls to access justice.

The Vihiga county assembly representative indicated that violence and community rejection that youth leaving care face is a key hindrance to re-integration. She emphasized that youngsters still require all manner of support and accompaniment till they become self-reliant. County leaders were urged to consider vulnerable populations in their budgets.

MP Simba Arati of Dagoretti North though his representative expressed the fact that the plight of the vulnerable children needs urgent redress highlighting some efforts already being put by his constituency to address education, talents and life skills. In this constituency children and youth

Factors Facilitating Good Reintegration amongst the Care-leavers



Care Institutions Share experiences on Challenges in reintegrating care-leavers

Speakers shared their varied experiences in this theme. For example Grazia Orsolato from the Amani NGO, one of the main sponsors of the conference highlighted the importance of thinking about the reintegration needs of young women. She highlighted the vulnerabilities faced by young girls once they leave institutions of care. These vulnerabilities if not addressed in time will render the girl vulnerable forever.

Mr. Protus Lumiti of Nyumbani Childrens home presented the experience of working to re-integrate children with HIV. The experience of re-integrating young ex-prisoners was shared by St. Joseph Cafaso Institute of Kamiti Medium Prison while that of rescuing and reintegrating young Maasai Girls escaping circumcision and early marriage was shared by the children department in Ngong. Other experiences included those of Raha Kids and Sellessians of Don Bosco.

Entering Care



Several presentations were made (kindly find them on the website www.kards.or.ke).

The first was a joint research funded by Koinonia Community and Amani Onlus. It was conducted by KARDS, Datastat, KOBWA and KESCA. The study presented findings from a dataset of 90 care leavers.

The study was presented by Dr. Richard Muko of KARDS and Tangaza University College (Institute of Social Ministry in Mission), Martin Ndichu of KOBWA and Stephen Njove of KESCA.

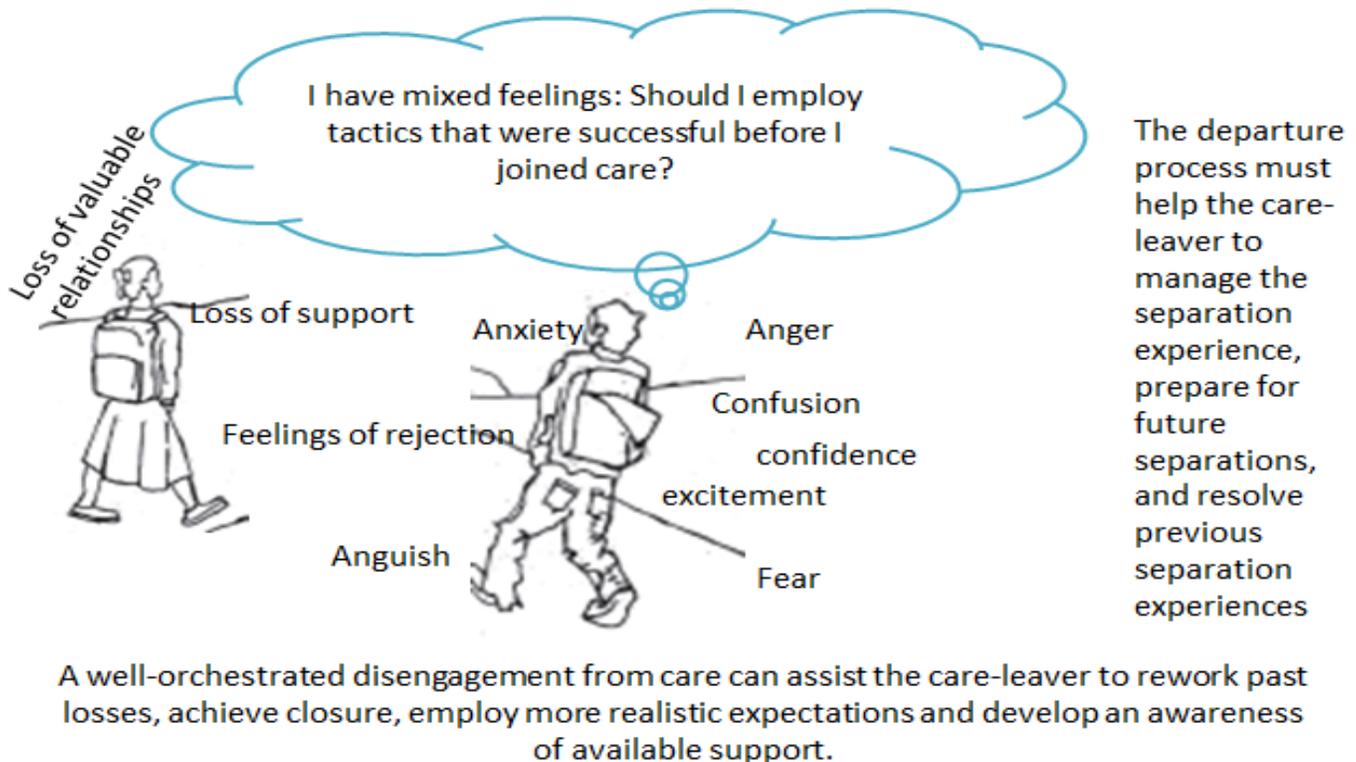
A study covering Psychosocial dimension of reintegration was presented by Mr. Sammy Mwangi of Kenya Institute of Professional Counsellors and Egerton University.

Another looking at the effects of the reintegration process on former street children was presented by Mr. Kevin Otieno of the University of Nairobi.

A study focusing on transformation of the lives of street children was presented by Elena Magoni of the Amici di Bambini.

Emphasis was placed on the need to recognize idiosyncrasies and challenges facing different youth. A model on tracing, family reunification and reintegration of institutionalized children was shared by Tracy Kyangulani of Child's I Institute and Terres de Hommes in Uganda. While the reintegration mediation triangle model of reintegrating vulnerable children was shared by Mr. Boniface Okada of Koinonia Community.

At the time of leaving care



Life Skills a Need of the Hour : an integral component in the formation of the vulnerable youth

In recognizing the importance of life skills in enhancing a successful re-integration of care-leavers, the conference dedicated a special session for it. Dr. Peter Changilwa of the Marist International University Center (MIUC) for life skills presented a model of life skills.

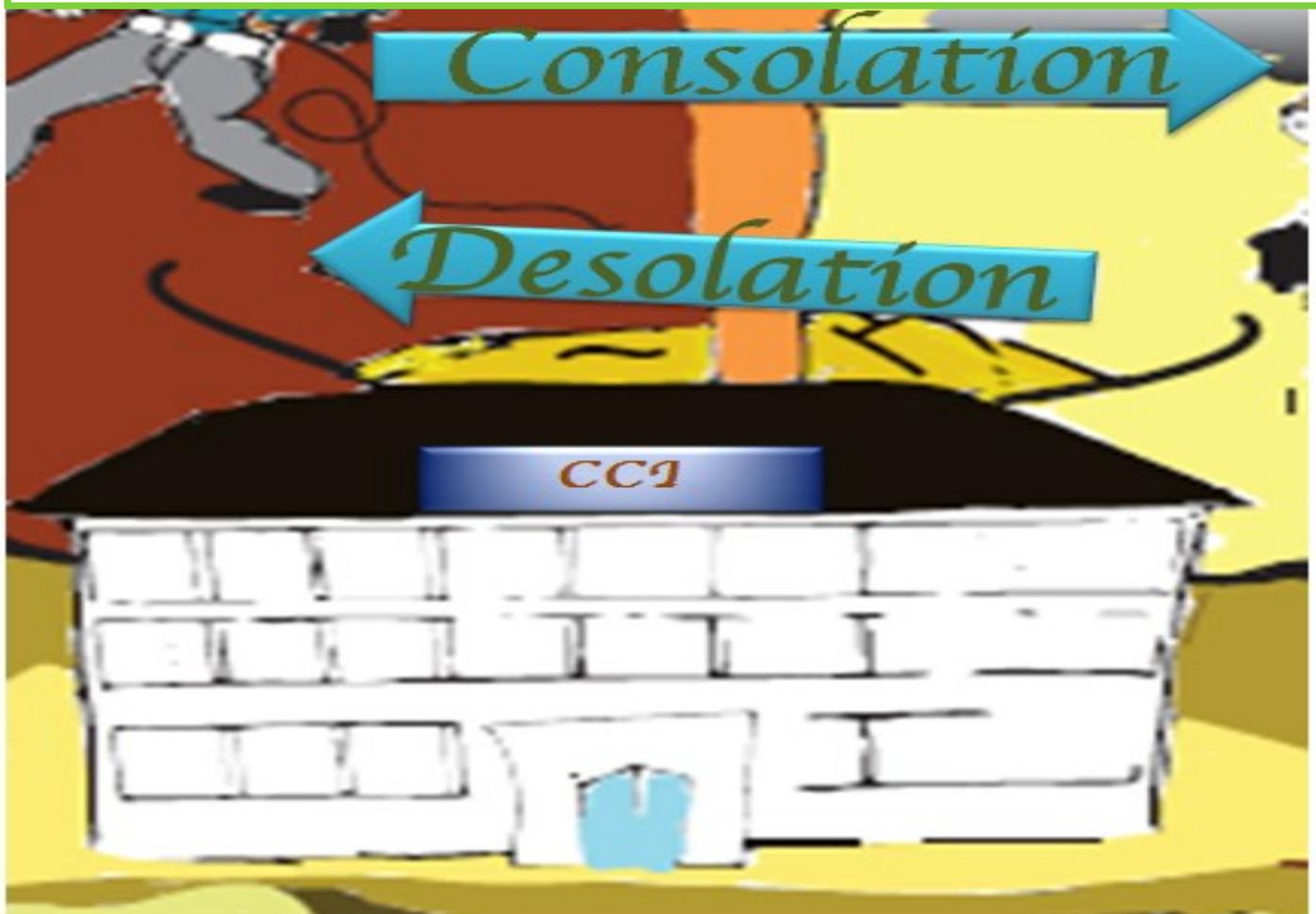
MIUC emphasized on the need for different care institutions to equip themselves with staff who understand how to impart life skills on the children. The theme of the life skills was also emphasized by Sr. Patricia Lanygan of the Tangaza University College's Institute of Social Ministry in Mission. Sr. Patricia resented a summary of different studies on care and protection of vulnerable children among the BA and MA students of social ministry institute from TUC.

Art Speak

The conference visual artist Mr. Ernest Muthoka from Daystar University, painted a picture depicting consolation or desolation as the final reintegration states for the care-leavers. In his painting children enter the CCIs with baggage and leave either empty finding themselves having failed and on the cruel side of the world or as successful stories in the sweeter part of the world.

Mike Kasongo the performing artist from ASAE left the conference participants with a message that care-leavers are part of the community story. Since they originally emanated from the community, their successful reintegration shows a more integrated and healthy community.

The Banjuka artist Jack Atulo has one message for communities: any form of stigma is a hindrance to successful reintegration for the youth leaving care.



By the end of the conference, it emerged that reintegration posed a great challenge.

Institutions and stakeholders on child protection and vulnerable youth interested in helping ease the reintegration pain should seek to collaborate and share experiences time and again to enhance more success stories.

Hot Points

