



THE JUVENILE SUPPORT PROGRAM LEARNING BRIEF

The Rapid Response Monitoring and Evaluation Support for the
Education for Resilience Project

OneAfricanChild Foundation for Creative Learning
Grant: Resilience Fund Rapid Response M&E Support
Date: December 2025

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Executive Summary

This learning brief summarizes the Juvenile Support Program (JSP) under the Rapid Response Grant, focusing on the program's purpose, activities, key findings, lessons learned, and implications for future work with at-risk youth in Nigeria. The purpose of this brief is to share what the program achieved and how it was evaluated, to guide future initiatives that strengthen resilience among young people in correctional settings.

The program aimed to equip boys and girls with important life skills, including anger management, conflict resolution, self-confidence, communication, and teamwork. Activities were designed to be interactive and practical, including role-plays, peer discussions, reflective exercises, and scenario-based learning. These methods helped participants practice new skills in real-life situations.

Monitoring and evaluation were carried out to understand how well the program worked and the impact it had on participants. Four boys at the Boys' Correctional Centre were interviewed in-depth to capture their personal experiences. In addition, 79 boys and 39 girls were evaluated using structured reflective questions, quizzes, and written exercises to understand the wider effect of the program. While the girls could not be interviewed individually like the boys, their learning and experiences were still assessed effectively. Stakeholders, facilitators, social workers, and the project team were also consulted to gain insights on program delivery and outcomes.

Follow-up counseling sessions by an educational psychologist provided further support in emotional management, goal-setting, and readiness for reintegration.

Key findings show that participants improved in anger management, conflict resolution, communication, empathy, and self-confidence. Positive behaviour changes were observed, including reductions in bullying and harmful attitudes, as well as increased awareness of sexual harassment and emotional trauma. Facilitators and stakeholders also reported personal and professional growth, which supported effective program delivery.

The main lessons learned include the value of interactive and reflective learning methods, the importance of guidance and follow-up, and the benefits of engaging participants in peer-led activities to strengthen understanding. Regular feedback and reflection for staff were also essential for maintaining quality and impact.

These findings highlight that future programs should continue to focus on building resilience through practical skills, mentorship, and monitoring. By using evidence-based, learner-centered approaches, similar initiatives can better support juveniles in developing emotional regulation, social skills, and readiness for life beyond correctional settings.

Background & Context

The Education for Resilience - Juvenile Support Program was designed to equip at-risk youth with essential skills to handle conflict, build emotional resilience, and make positive choices. The program focused on anger management, conflict resolution, self-confidence, communication, and peer interaction, aiming to prevent harmful behaviours and support the personal growth of participants. It targeted young people in correctional and vulnerable settings, where exposure to trauma and challenging environments often affects their emotional and social development.

Evaluation and aftercare were especially important because the program dealt with sensitive issues such as trauma, bullying, and reintegration concerns. Monitoring and reflection helped ensure that participants could process their experiences safely, apply what they learned, and develop skills that would support their wellbeing both during and after the program. Without careful follow-up, there was a risk that the program's lessons might not be fully retained or practiced.

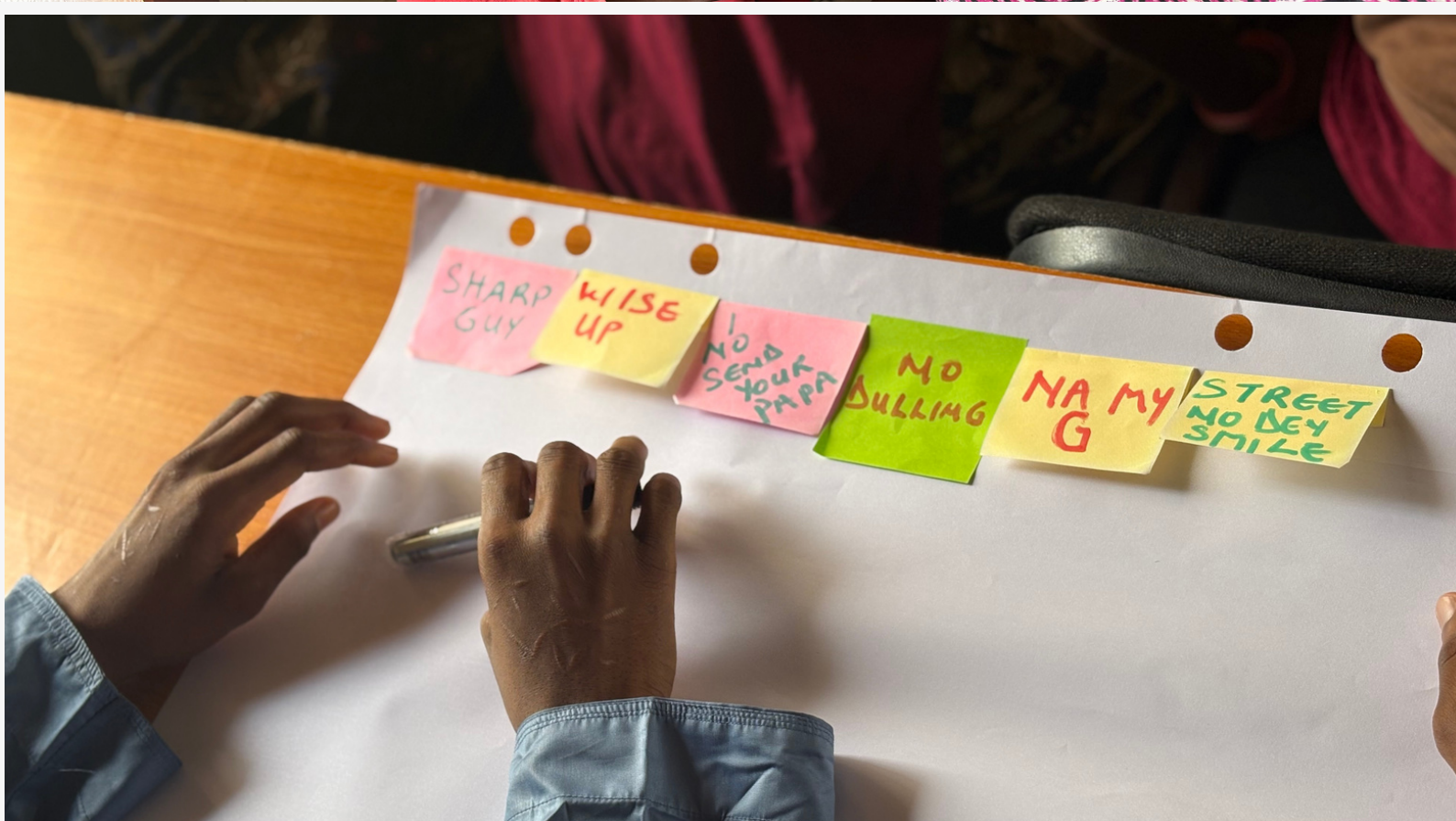
The Rapid Response Grant allowed the project team to expand the reach and depth of support beyond the main project budget. The funds made it possible to conduct additional visits to both the Boys' and Girls' Correctional Centers, particularly the Boys' Center, to provide more personalized attention and follow-up sessions with participants through counseling and psychosocial support. We also continued our efforts with contact tracing to maintain engagement and track participants' progress.

Additionally, the grant supported structured reflection sessions with facilitators, social workers, and stakeholders, enabling them to give feedback on program implementation and inform adjustments for future programming.

Overall, the Rapid Response Grant strengthened the Education for Resilience - Juvenile Support Program by allowing closer monitoring, deeper evaluation, and ongoing psychosocial support. These activities helped participants build essential life skills, reinforced positive behaviours, and improved the program's effectiveness. The grant also contributed to learning for the project team and stakeholders, ensuring that lessons from the program can be applied to future interventions for at-risk youth.



Collaborative Learning



Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

The Rapid Response Evaluation was designed to strengthen evidence of the Juvenile Support Program's impact and outcomes for at-risk youth in correctional centers. Its main purpose was to support data collection, documentation, and analysis activities, ensuring that the lessons learned from the program were accurately captured to improve reporting and inform future programming. The evaluation also aimed to enhance the quality of final reports through participatory reflection sessions and structured feedback, while improving program visibility by providing clear insights linked to results.

This evaluation sought to understand how participants were applying the skills and lessons learned from the program, including conflict resolution, anger management, self-confidence, emotional intelligence, and resilience. The evaluation explored how lessons were internalized and applied by the participants, highlighting both personal growth and behavioral changes. The program's delivery methods i.e. interactive lessons, reflective exercises, role-play scenarios, peer-led discussions, counseling, and therapy sessions, were examined to assess their effectiveness and relevance to participants' needs.

The scope of the evaluation was multi-dimensional. It included visits to the Boys' and Girls' Correctional Centres, particularly the boys' centre, where follow-up counseling and therapy sessions provided deeper insights into participants' emotional and psychosocial needs. .

Structured reflections and exercises were conducted with the participants to assess understanding and application of lessons. Stakeholder engagement was also central to the evaluation, with input from team and stakeholders, helping to capture program outcomes and identify lessons learned.

Observation visits by the grants manager provided an additional external perspective on program delivery, participant engagement, and the practical use of skills. Contact tracing with families was initiated to support reintegration pathways and ensure continued follow-up beyond the centers.

Overall, the Rapid Response Evaluation allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the program's impact, documenting participant growth and providing evidence to guide future programming. It highlighted the importance of structured follow-up, psychosocial support, and stakeholder engagement, ensuring that interventions continue to strengthen resilience and positive development for at-risk youth.

Reflections and Feedback

The Sessions. it was Very Impactful and Educating. I enjoyed myself and truth to be told, they met all my expectation and was inspiring. And I noticed a change in me though. it's about Managing Conflict. And with the teaching and God's help, I have learnt to Settle

This Session has imparted ~~to~~ my life. It help me to ~~know~~ be bold and It help me to know how People feel when they have been bully.

Description of Evaluation Activities

As part of the Rapid Response activities, four follow-up and aftercare visits were conducted to assess the progress of participants in both the Boys' and Girls' Correctional Centres. These activities included structured reflection sessions, individual check-ins, and one-on-one therapy sessions with an educational psychologist. During these sessions, the boys reflected on their experiences in the program, discussing improvements in anger management, conflict resolution, self-confidence, resilience, emotional regulation, and understanding of sexual abuse. Extracts from the boys' interviews highlighted significant personal growth. For example, one boy shared that he had learned to control his anger and now takes a moment to walk away when situations could provoke him. Another boy explained that he stopped being a bully and instead uses his strength to help friends, while a third discussed speaking up for himself and others more confidently.

Therapy sessions also revealed positive changes; one boy who had previously reported suicidal thoughts is now feeling brighter and more hopeful, while another boy has made meaningful progress in managing anger and responding calmly to conflicts. These sessions uncovered participants' emotional challenges, fears, and readiness for reintegration, providing valuable insight into the program's impact on their personal and social development.

Contact tracing was an important part of the Rapid Response evaluation. Efforts were made to reach the families of two participants to inform them about their wards' presence in the correctional centers and to support possible reintegration. One boy is scheduled to reunite with his mother in December. Another boy's family was visited by a team member, though contact has not yet been established. Challenges in contact tracing included difficulties reaching families due to absence, relocation, or lack of direct contact information. Despite these challenges, we are continuing to follow up with families we are able to reach to keep them informed and support the boys as best as we can.

The psychosocial support and therapy sessions were conducted individually by the educational psychologist, providing a safe and confidential environment for participants to share personal experiences. During these sessions, some of the boys discussed emotional challenges, bullying by peers, and frustrations related to family separation, and how they are coping. For example, one boy who initially struggled with suicidal thoughts is showing significant improvement in mood and outlook. Another boy is learning to manage anger more effectively, taking deliberate steps to control his reactions in challenging situations. These sessions helped the evaluation team understand both behavioral progress and areas needing continued support, strengthening the evidence for program outcomes.

The grant manager, Mr. Jacques, was also present for a three-day observation visit and closeout covering the correctional centers. During this visit, he participated in stakeholder meetings, engaged with the social worker, program facilitators, and team members, and observed sessions with the boys and girls.

His independent observations added value to the evaluation process by confirming the program's impact, providing an external perspective on participant engagement, and enhancing the visibility of program outcomes. The observation visit revealed the importance of follow-up, therapy, and participatory reflection in supporting at-risk youth.

JSP Closeout Session with Team and Officials



Evaluation Approach

The evaluation of the Rapid Response activities employed a mixed qualitative approach to capture a comprehensive understanding of the program's impact. Methods included interviews with participants, observation of sessions, follow-up assessments, quizzes, reflective exercises, documentation of therapy sessions, and discussions with stakeholders. This allowed for the collection of both direct feedback and behavioral observations, ensuring that multiple perspectives were considered.

Engagement involved the boys and girls at the correctional centers, correctional officers, one social worker, community partners, and project team members, ensuring that the voices of both beneficiaries and implementers were included. Ethical considerations were central throughout the process, with confidentiality, trauma sensitivity, and informed assent guiding all interactions and data collection.

Stakeholders and project team members provided valuable insights that complemented participant feedback. For instance, they highlighted the program's effectiveness in strengthening interpersonal skills, empathy, and resilience among participants. They also reflected on their own growth, noting that engagement in the program improved their ability to manage sessions, provide mentorship, and support the youth in navigating challenges. This feedback reinforced the importance of participatory evaluation and helped validate observations from the boys and girls, providing a fuller understanding of the program's outcomes.

Key Evaluation Findings

The evaluation revealed meaningful progress across emotional, behavioral, and social areas. Drawing on interviews, observations, therapy reports, follow-up assessments, and discussions with stakeholders, the findings show clear improvements among the boys and girls in the correctional centers, as well as personal and professional growth among the facilitators and the program team.

To begin with, one of the strongest findings was the noticeable improvement in the emotional and behavioral stability of the participants. Many participants became more open about their feelings, especially during therapy and group reflection sessions. For example, one boy who had been struggling with suicidal thoughts showed remarkable progress as he began to express himself more freely and respond better to therapeutic support. Another boy who previously reacted with anger during minor disagreements gradually learned to regulate his emotions. Therapy notes highlighted examples where he practiced pausing, breathing, and politely asking for space whenever he felt overwhelmed. These behaviors were uncommon for him earlier.

In addition, the participants showed reduced aggression and isolation. Participants who initially avoided interaction gradually became more engaged in group activities. During one session, a boy who once refused to talk openly shared the difficulties he faced at home and expressed relief at having a safe space to speak. This shift reflected growing trust, emotional safety, and strengthened confidence.

Many boys also demonstrated a greater sense of accountability. During follow-up quizzes and discussions, they reflected on their past decisions and expressed clearer understanding of consequences, showing that key messages of the program had been internalized.

The evaluation further showed improvements in social skills and peer interaction. The beneficiaries communicated more respectfully, collaborated better in groups, and practiced conflict resolution skills taught during sessions. For instance, during a group activity, the boys who usually appeared uninterested collaborated with their peers, answered questions, and even presented on behalf of the team. Also, some of them helped mediate a disagreement between peers in the dormitory. Follow-up from the social worker described how the Resilience Ambassadors increasingly checked on others who appeared sad or withdrawn and encouraged them, demonstrating growing empathy. Therapy documentation also noted that participants benefited from sharing experiences, as this helped reduce shame and gave them a sense of belonging.

There was also progress in the participants' cognitive engagement, especially in sessions focusing on life skills, safety, and education. The follow-up assessments showed increased attention and better understanding of concepts such as emotional regulation, peaceful communication, and safety. Facilitators observed that the boys began asking more thoughtful questions and showed improved comprehension. Importantly, the evaluation highlighted strong outcomes among the facilitators, stakeholders, and the program team. Many reported personal and professional growth as a direct result of engaging with the program.

Facilitators described becoming more patient, empathetic, and attentive, especially when guiding participants through sensitive topics. One facilitator shared that witnessing the boys' emotional journeys helped her improve her own communication and listening skills. The social worker explained that the program encouraged her to take additional steps in supporting the boys, including following up on released wards to ensure safe reintegration- an action she felt was necessary because of the impact she witnessed.

The program lead and team members also reflected on significant improvements in collaboration, problem-solving, planning, and managing complex situations. For example, working closely with correctional officers helped them better understand the environment and challenges the boys and girls face daily, which strengthened their ability to design better interventions. Team members spoke about stepping outside their comfort zones, learning to adjust quickly, and engaging with sensitivity when handling difficult emotional cases.

During stakeholder discussions, the principal at the Boys' Correctional Center shared an important observation: there has been a shift in the local government areas from which many of the boys are coming. While the center previously received a higher number of cases from the Mushin axis, more recent admissions show an increase from the Alimosho Local Government Area. This insight offers valuable information about changing community trends that may influence where future prevention efforts should focus.

Overall, the evaluation showed that the project's blend of therapy, follow-up assessments, and reflective activities created a safe environment where participants felt seen, supported, and valued. The participants demonstrated stronger emotional resilience, better communication, improved behavior, and greater awareness of their personal choices. At the same time, the team supporting them experienced notable growth in empathy, leadership, and professional capacity.

Reflections and Feedback

O.A.C PROGRAMME

This programme is a Programme that has impacted my life alot and from the beginning of the Pro- we where though about Confident which really helped my life because I ~~was~~ a person that cannot speak out even if I know. but after that day, I learnt that Confident is a door opener. it can really help you stand out for your self. we ~~where~~ thought alot but this was what that stood out for me most. and I want to use this medium to thank ONE AFRICAN CHIDE PROGRAMME FOR BRINGING THIS PROGRAMME TO US.

Okechukwu

Reflections and Feedback

I learnt that Bullying is Not Good because I used to be a bully but when DAC came and thought us on bully, I learnt that I should not be a bully but a body to my friends around me.

Lessons Learned

One of the key lessons from the Juvenile Support Program Rapid Response initiative is that early aftercare is essential to prevent reoffending. The follow-up visits, check-ins, and therapy sessions helped the boys and girls feel supported beyond the classroom sessions, and this continuity made it easier for them to apply the skills they had learned. Many of the youths were more open during follow-up activities than they were during the initial sessions, showing that consistent engagement builds trust and allows deeper issues to surface.

Another important lesson is that trauma-informed practice cannot end when the project timeline ends. Many participants showed signs of emotional pain, including fear, shame, anger, or unresolved trauma from family conflicts, abuse, or street experiences. The therapeutic progress observed such as boys learning to regulate anger, express difficult emotions, or seek help when overwhelmed, reminded the team that healing takes time. Short-term projects provide an important beginning, but longer-term support is needed to maintain and build on the progress achieved.

The evaluation also showed that reconnecting children with their families can be a turning point in their emotional stability and readiness for reintegration. Even when families were far away or difficult to reach, attempts at contact gave the boys a sense of hope and belonging. Some of the boys showed relief knowing that someone was trying to inform their parents about their situation. These reactions highlight the emotional importance of family links and the need to integrate family engagement into future programs.

M&E and Documentation Lessons

The monitoring and evaluation process demonstrated that on-site visits provide richer insights than surveys alone. Being physically present at the correctional centers made it possible to observe changes in behavior, group interaction, and emotional expression more clearly. The direct interaction also allowed the team to ask follow-up questions, clarify responses, and understand context, something that a written survey alone cannot achieve.

The experience also showed that contact tracing is a crucial part of reintegration, but it requires time, transport, and continuous follow-up. Families may be unavailable, may have relocated, or may lack functioning phone numbers, which slows down the process. These challenges highlighted the need to plan more resources for family engagement in future projects.

Another lesson learned is that youths need multiple points of follow-up, not a single check-in at the end of the program. Many of the most significant behavioral changes—such as improved communication, clearer emotional regulation, or openness about trauma—were observed only after repeated visits. Continuous follow-up also allowed the team to monitor progress, identify emerging risks, and provide timely guidance.

Partnership and Stakeholder Engagement

The program also reinforced that strong cooperation with correctional center officials is foundational to success. The support from principals, vice principals, and the center's social worker made it easier to conduct sessions, gather feedback, and arrange follow-up visits.

Their willingness to participate in discussions during the evaluation provided essential insights into the daily realities and challenges of the boys and girls in their care.

Another key lesson came from the external observation conducted by the grant manager, whose visit added credibility and accountability to the evaluation process. His independent perspective helped validate the program's outcomes and confirmed the progress observed among the participants. It also strengthened communication between the project team and partners, showing the value of transparency and direct engagement.

Overall, the lessons learned from this process highlight the importance of early aftercare, trauma-informed engagement, consistent follow-up, and strong collaboration with partners. These insights will guide improvements in future programs and contribute to stronger, more sustainable outcomes for the beneficiaries served.

A Note from One of the Participants

Yeah. The Program has helped me alot. Then, I get to see a Conflict and just Pass by without trying to resolve it. But, now with the help of Conflict Management, I respond to the Situation. Because

not responding to the Situation can affect you and lots of People.

Implications for Future Programming

The insights gained from the Rapid Response evaluation offer clear direction for strengthening future programming for at-risk youth. To begin with, the findings highlight the need for a more structured and long-term reintegration support framework. Many of the boys expressed fear, uncertainty, or mixed emotions about returning home, and the contact tracing experience showed that some families are unaware, unavailable, or unprepared to support their ward's return. This suggests that reintegration should not be treated as a one-time event but as a gradual process that includes family engagement, emotional preparation, and continuous follow-up. Future programs will therefore benefit from building stronger links between correctional centers, families, and community support systems so that each child has a clearer pathway back to society.

In addition, the evaluation offers valuable lessons for designing future projects. The participants' progress in emotional regulation, conflict resolution, openness, and coping skills shows that interactive and trauma-informed activities are especially effective. Techniques such as reflective discussions, one-on-one counseling, role-play, and practical exercises made it easier for the boys to express themselves and apply what they learned. These methods should remain central in future program designs, with even more time allocated to follow-up mentoring so that the skills gained are consistently reinforced.

The feedback from facilitators and stakeholders also showed that staff development plays a huge role in project success, meaning future programs must continue investing in training for facilitators, especially on empathy, communication, and trauma-sensitive approaches.

The evaluation also highlighted the importance of closer collaboration with social welfare services. Working directly with the principal officers, social workers, and other officials made it clear that sustainable change requires shared ownership. Their observations, including shifting patterns in where many of the boys come from, provide essential context for targeting future prevention efforts. Strengthening collaboration with these agencies will improve referrals, communication, and coordinated support for both the beneficiaries and their families.

Furthermore, the lessons reinforce the need to scale trauma-informed prevention programs. Many of the issues raised by the participants, such as past violence, emotional wounds, neglect, or experiences with drugs, require early and consistent support. The changes observed during therapy and follow-up sessions show that progress is possible when participants have safe spaces and trusted adults to talk to. Scaling such interventions (within correctional centers and at the community level) can help reduce vulnerability to reoffending, exploitation, and negative peer influence.

Finally, the rapid-response grant proved how helpful flexible monitoring and evaluation support can be in sensitive contexts. It allowed for more timely follow-up visits, in-person interviews, observation, and documentation.

Future projects working with high-risk youth can greatly benefit from similar rapid-response M&E support, especially for activities like therapy follow-ups, family tracing, staff reflections, and real-time learning. This kind of funding strengthens program accountability, ensures continuous learning, and ultimately leads to more effective interventions that support resilience and positive transformation among at-risk youth.

Recommendations

Strengthening the Juvenile Support Program Rapid Response requires a coordinated effort across institutions, communities, and policy spaces. Each stakeholder has a unique role in ensuring that children-in-conflict with the law receive timely support, rehabilitation, and safe pathways back into society. The recommendations below outline practical steps that can deepen impact, improve collaboration, and promote long-term resilience for the boys and girls we serve.

The Resilience Fund

- Provide continued support for follow-up and aftercare activities, as these help prevent reoffending and strengthen reintegration.
- Maintain flexible funding windows that allow organizations to respond quickly to emerging needs such as therapy, contact tracing, and additional center visits.
- Consider supporting family-focused interventions, since reconnecting juveniles with their families is often a turning point in their progress.
- Continue funding participatory monitoring and evaluation, including reflective sessions and observation visits, as these improve the quality of reporting and learning.

Correctional Centre Authorities

- Strengthen collaboration with implementing partners to ensure continued access for mentoring, therapy, and follow-up sessions.
- Improve record-keeping systems, especially for family contacts, to make reintegration smoother and reduce delays.
- Encourage more structured emotional support activities within the centers, building on what the boys and girls responded positively to during the program.

- Facilitate regular feedback sessions between staff and external facilitators to identify early signs of distress or behavioral changes.

Community Organizations

- Expand community-based support groups that can receive young people after release, helping them adjust and stay engaged positively.
- Work more closely with families to prepare them for reintegration, addressing fears, misunderstandings, and gaps in communication.
- Share learning materials, simple reflective tools, and session guides with local groups so that program benefits continue beyond the project timeline.
- Encourage community mentors and volunteers to participate in resilience and trauma-awareness training to improve the quality of support they provide.

Policy Stakeholders

- Strengthen policies that support early aftercare and long-term reintegration services for juveniles leaving correctional centers.
- Improve coordination between correctional centers, social welfare departments, and community-based organizations to create a unified response system.
- Support data collection and research to better understand trends in juvenile cases and design preventive strategies accordingly.

OneAfricanChild Foundation

- Continue investing in trauma-informed training for facilitators and team members, as this has shown strong results in emotional and behavioral change among participants.

- Allocate specific time and resources for family engagement in all future youth programs, given its proven importance for reintegration.
- Use insights from this evaluation to design future resilience programs that combine mentoring, therapy, skills training, and community involvement for greater impact.



Conclusion

The Juvenile Support Program Rapid Response has shown that meaningful crime prevention begins at the community level, where local organizations understand the lived realities of vulnerable young people. By working directly within the correctional facility and maintaining close engagement with caregivers, social workers, and volunteers, the program demonstrated how early intervention, psychosocial support, and education can reduce the risks that push children toward organized crime.

The Rapid Response grant played a critical role in strengthening this work. It enabled timely action when the needs of the boys and girls were highest, provided evidence on what effective rehabilitation looks like, and increased visibility for a model that prioritizes dignity, healing, and resilience. With these resources, OneAfricanChild was not only able to respond quickly but also to document insights that will guide more informed solutions within the juvenile justice system.

As the program closes this cycle, the commitment remains firm that OneAfricanChild will continue to stand with vulnerable youth, advocate for safer and more supportive environments, and expand programs that build skills, confidence, and hope. The journey to lasting change is long, but with the combined strength of communities, partners, and young people themselves, it is both possible and within reach.

THE JUVENILE SUPPORT PROGRAM



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