

TOOL 54

Assessing whether reunification is in the child's best interests in complex cases

When dealing with complex cases, staff assessing whether reunification is in the best interests of a child should consider:

- **What was the reason for separation?** If separation was voluntary, have the original issues been resolved? If the child decided to leave home, do the same conditions exist? Does the child want to be reunited or is it likely that he/she will leave home again after reunification?
- **Is there a history of relationship problems in the family before separation, such as neglect, violence or abuse?**
- **Have there been significant changes in the family since separation, such as the death, illness or disability of family member(s)?**
- **What concerns does the family have about reunification and what can be done to address them** – for example, lack of resources/financial capacity or child's behavioural, social or emotional issues?
- **What concerns does the child have about reunification, and what can be done to address them?** Are these related to specific experiences since separation, such as an association with armed forces or armed groups, or sexual violence?
- **Does the child require health care beyond what is normally available in the community to which he/she will return?** Would conditions make it difficult to provide optimal care?
- **Is there any hostility to returning children in the community to which he/she will return?** What is the situation of the family within the community? How much social support do they have? Further assessment must be undertaken if there is hostility towards returning children, especially children associated with armed forces and armed groups.
- **Is there continuing insecurity in the area to which the child will return?** How much of a risk does this present? How much is the family's day-to-day life affected?