



**Our Rights Today!** 

# Our Rights Today

Voices of Ugandan children on the status of enjoyment of their rights

Uganda Child Rights NGO Network (UCRNN) is a coalition of over 200 national and international NGOs working for the rights and welfare of children in Uganda. Established in 1997 to undertake monitoring and reporting on the situation of children in Uganda, UCRNN has over the years expanded its programs for the promotion and protection of children's rights. The Network aims to build strategic alliances at all levels for children, avail a platform for collective advocacy by members and partners, carry out research and strengthen institutional capacity to advance the cause of children.



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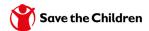
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# **Voices of Ugandan children**

am ten years old r dear Trasident His treellency lower, Kaguta Mysereni. I Write this letter to you because of the denial of children's rights in our country Uganda many people abuse children in the following ways, Kidnoppingchildren, denial of food, raping children, denial of education because many children in our community are suffering because of lack of school fees to go he rabels and strangers kidnap children So parents teachers and police officers show diensinghts eg anght to have education, anight to be hoppy, and loved and somarny. Jorg our prasident we ask you to help us and me fight childabuse.

# **Abbreviations**

AIDS Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome

CWD Children with Disability

FGD Focus Group Discussion

HIV Human Immune Virus

IDP Internally Displaced Persons

NGO Non-Governmental Organisation

UCRNN Uganda Child Rights NGO Network

UPE Universal Primary Education

USE Universal Secondary Education

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Lastly, UCRNN is indebted to all individuals, member organizations and partners not mentioned herein for their invaluable support during the consultation, development and production process of this report.

Olive Birungi Lumonya Chairperson Board of Directors Uganda Child Rights NGO Network Stella Ayo-Odongo, Executive Director Uganda Child Rights NGO Network

# **Foreword**

The Children's report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child was prepared in accordance with article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child that places an obligation on State parties and all persons working with children to avail an opportunity to children who are capable of forming their own views to express such views freely in all matters concerning them. The Children's version supports the main CSO report that examines progress in the implementation of the Convention in Uganda.

It is worth acknowledging that considerable progress has been registered in promoting the realization of the rights of children in the country. However, the voices of children put out in this report plus facts and figures from every part of Uganda paint the full and most up-to-date picture that children are not fully enjoying their rights to survival, development, protection and participation. A lot remains to be done.

It is therefore my sincere hope that all parties engaged in the child rights discourse take into consideration recommendations from children themselves and take appropriate policy and programmatic action to improve the wellbeing of children in Uganda. The responsibility to change the situation of children cuts across all levels: from young people to National Government; communities to civil society actors; we all have an important and unique role to play to make a difference in the lives of our children. But first, we will need to work together to achieve a better place for children. Now let the walk start!

Olive Birungi Lumonya Chairperson Board of Directors

**Uganda Child Rights NGO Network** 

Stella Ayo-Odongo, Executive Director

Uganda Child Rights NGO Network

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# Background and purpose of the Children's Voices Report

This report presents the views of children about the enjoyment of rights they are entitled to in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This children's version supports the main NGO report that examines progress in the implementation of the Convention in Uganda. Children spoke about their rights they feel are being respected and the rights they are denied. Children also explained how and why particular rights are respected or denied and recommended actions to enable them enjoy their rights better.

Consultations were done with 1,281 children (643 girls and 638 boys) in 21 districts across the four major regions of Uganda. All categories of children, including those facing abuse or at risk of being abused were involved in the consultations. These included school-going children, orphans, children with disabilities, children living with HIV and AIDS, children in street situations, children in remand homes and rehabilitation centres, working children, and children without parents.

Other categories included children belonging to ethnic minority groups, children affected by conflict, internally displaced children, children out of school, children having sex for money, child refugees, children in communities practicing female circumcision, children in non-formal education and children in child care institutions.

The views of the children were collected through participatory child-friendly methods of letter writing, drawing, group discussions and detailed individual interviews.

The views of children that emerged from the consultations are grouped into six parts, namely:

- The right to be recognised, listened to and protected from harm
- 2. The right to be cared for by parents and families
- 3. The rights of children with disability.
- 4. The right to healthcare
- 5. The right to education, relaxation and play
- 6. The right to special protection for children in difficult circumstances

### Children's views about the enjoyment of their rights

# 1. The right to a name and nationality, to be listened to and protected from harm

From the conversations, the children were not satisfied with the status of the above rights. This concern came second among the children who participated in the drawing sessions with 39 drawings (20%) of the 199 drawings showing that children were unhappy about an issue related to these rights at home, in the community or at school.

### 1.1 The right to a name and a nationality

During the conversations, very few children mentioned being registered at birth as a right they are enjoying or are being denied. Yet again, only a few children throughout the districts mentioned the right to a name as one of the rights that children were enjoying or are being denied.

'We have never seen a birth certificate or ever heard anyone talk about it.

FGD, Batwa Children, Ntoroko District

# 1.2 Children's right to express their views, and to look for, receive and share information

Children said that a small number of children were enjoying the right to look for, receive and share information and to express their views. The children enjoying these rights included those living in urban areas, children in school, children with both parents alive, children in religious families, children with educated parents, and children in families with fewer children.

These rights are enjoyed mainly by children who have both parents alive, living in urban areas, coming from religious families, families with educated parents and families with few children.

FGD, Secondary, School, Iganga district

In the community, there is a leader for the youth who listens to children if they are not being helped at home...

FGD, Secondary School, Kampala Central

On the other hand, the children said that the majority of children had few chances of communicating their views. The children with few chances included those living in rural areas, orphans, children of illiterate parents, children in street situations, and children in big families, girls and children with disabilities.

We are always beaten by the Police and Municipal Council... and not given chance to explain our side

(FGD, Boys on the Street, Mbale district)

Children with disabilities are denied these rights because they are looked at as incapable...

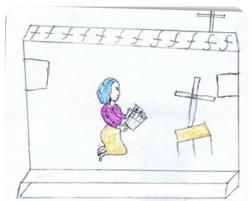
(Girls' FGD, Secondary School, Kiboga district)

At school, there is no freedom of expression. We are not allowed to say anything on any issue

(FGD, Girls with Disabilities, Masaka district)

## 1.3 The right to practice own religion

The majority of the children did not mention freedom of worship as a right that children were enjoying or are denied Children in approximately 10 focus groups reported that they were enjoying the freedom of worship Some of the children in remand homes and child care institutions said that they were denied this right s they could not attend prayers in their chosen places of worship.



I enjoy worship because I chose my mother's Muslim faith but my father is a Christian...

FGD, Secondary School, Kampala

Children are enjoying the rights to education, medical care, parental care, shelter, food and freedom of worship...

FGD, Primary School, Kabale District

Some teachers segregate children of other religions...

FGD, Primary School, Iganga District

#### 1.4. Freedom to associate with others

This right was mentioned by a small number of children. While some of them reported that they were enjoying this right, others felt that their parents were very strict and did not allow them to associate. They explained that the parents feared that children would learn bad manners from their friends. Some children said that they were denied the right to associate with members of the opposite sex while at school because the teachers feared that this could lead to sexual relationships and pregnancy.

Children, including those in the vulnerable groups, mentioned also that the segregation of orphans, children with disabilities and children living with HIV from other children was limiting their right to associate with their friends. Children heading households and those working also reported having no spare time to associate with others.

My father does not want to see me playing football with other children because he thinks that they will teach me bad manners...

FGD, Primary School, Maracha District

I spend most of my time looking for what to give to my siblings and this gives me no time to socialize and participate in other things that

I should enjoy as a child...

IDI, Girl heading a household, Maracha District

At times children at school do not want to play with us. They insult us with words like, "you are dogs". Our parents also do not see us as important people in the home and community...

FGD, Children living with HIV, Kiryandongo District.

## 1.5 Protection of the privacy and the image of children

Children's voices about the protection of their privacy and image were rare. However, in most of the FGDs with children living with HIV, the children appreciated that senior women teachers, counsellors and health workers generally kept their information confidential, except a few workers who they said gossip about their status with their neighbours.

At school, adults (counselors) teach the children how to take medication and take care of themselves; they have a positive attitude towards children living with HIV ... At home, parents remind the children to have meals and medication on time; some parents do not disclose the secret to neighbours because they know they are the source of the child's infection and do not want the gossip to spread...At home it is only my mother who knows that I am HIV positive and on ARVs. She has not told other family members....

FGD, Boys living with HIV, Kampala District

## 1.6. Access to appropriate information through the mass media

The majority of the children reported the media as their main source of information on the rights and responsibilities of children. All children involved in FGDs mentioned at least one of radio, television and newspapers as a source of information on their rights. The children mentioned a few cases of harmful media content.

Children are getting exposed to pornography through the media, which is increasing the risks of them getting involved in sexual relations at an early age...

FGD, Secondary school, Nakawa Division, Kampala District

## 1.7. Mistreatment and harsh punishment

In some districts, such as Kamuli, Adjumani, and Kampala Central, some of the children reported that corporal punishment in school had reduced, while in others such as Napak and Maracha, it was said to be increasing.

(The number of children being mistreated is reducing because of bye-laws put in place. If anybody is found mistreating or subjecting a child to corporal punishment he or she is arrested and taken to a child protection committee in the community. Now, our parents cannot punish us harshly because they fear to be arrested by the police...'

FGD, Primary school, Adjumani District

There was a teacher who used to over-beat children in class. Even if he found two children not reading their books, he would beat the whole class using a big cane. There was a child whom he beat and wounded his arm. The child brought his parent and since then the teacher has tried to change...

FGD, Primary School, Kiboga district

Children are abused in schools where teachers subject them to corporal punishment, especially caning...

FGD Primary School Boys, Kween District

Children are subjected to corporal punishment even for small mistakes, such as failing a question in class...

FGD, Secondary School, Kamuli District

In schools, children are denied the right to play, they are beaten and verbally abused by teachers...

FGD Primary School, Napak

...Other children do not attend school because of the corporal punishment in schools....

FGD, Child Labourers, Sugarcane, Kamuli District

Children in a number of schools, including those where corporal punishment was said to be reducing, reported that they had ever been subjected to corporal punishment in school and at home. Some children said that they had been forced to the streets because of mistreatment at home. They further reported that those who live with step mothers were more likely to face corporal punishment.

When you are mistreated at home you are forced to the street because you are denied a family. Some children start taking drugs; girls become prostitutes and when they produce children they abandon them on the street...

FGD, Primary School, Kampala District A child stole things then his dad burnt him with a plastic...

FGD, Primary School, Iganga In my village, a school boy was beaten up badly by a drunken man and nobody in the community came out to help him. Even when the parents reported to the Police, the Police did not come to arrest the man...

FGD, Primary School, Ntoroko

To my mother.

Dear mother,
How are you from there?
From here I am steed okay.

I am writting this letter to tell you some of my problems I am facing from both School and home.
From School Some times some teachers likes bealing us Just because of a simple traistake that was not even made by all pupils in the class.

And from the road when ad we are going back home.
And from the road when add we are doing us and or coming to school some children likes abusing us and

At School I am not felling because am kicked, obused, and libbed by Some of my friends like me we share eats, we play together in class when tell a labor answer and when teachers goes out of he class am abused because a telling a collect answer when I eat a lot of tood at School also lam a bused that am very big so I need help. I want to help me to tell the teachers and pay for med school fees.

Boy 9, Jganga District





#### 1.8 Recommendations

- 1. Allow us to talk about the problems that we face.
- 2. allow us to be friends with our schoolmates at school and in the community
- 3. Stop the media from giving information that reduces our dignity.
- 4. Help teachers and parents to use other forms of punishment other than corporal punishment

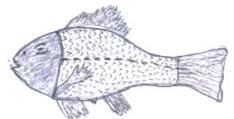
# 2.0. The right to be cared for by parents and families

### 2.1 Provision of children's basic needs by parents

The provision of basic needs was the second leading group of rights that children involved in the drawing sessions were most happy about. Out of the 235 drawings that showed what children were happy about at home, community or school, 62 drawings (26%) showed that their basic needs were being met. Some children appreciated the role of parents in providing children's basic needs.

We enjoy some rights because our parents are able to provide for us. The rights include the right to education, clothing, health care, and food....

FGD, Primary School, Iganga District.



Boy 13, Budaka District, happy about eating fish

Children said that some vulnerable receive assistance from NGOs and religious leaders to cover the gap caused by the absence of parents. For example, a one Susan, who is a formerly abducted child in Pader district used to receive scholastic materials from ZOA, an NGO. The children also appreciated religious leaders for providing guidance and counselling services to their friends.

Child Jund and UNHCR support children by meeting their basic needs and providing social services.

FGD, Secondary School, Kiryandongo District)

NGOs such as Compassion International, Child Restoration
Outreach and Hope Affairs help to pay school fees for abused children
and to reunite street children with their families...

FGD, Secondary School, Masaka District

There is Compassion International and Abundant Families and Children as organizations that give support to orphans and needy children...

FGD, Secondary School, Kampala District

However, children had major concerns about the limited access to basic needs. It was the third leading concern for children who wrote letters on issues that needed to be put right at home, community or school, appearing in 67 letters (24%) of 281 letters. Children said that poor parents were not able to meet the needs of their children. They added that some parents spent much of their money on alcohol and less on the basic needs of the family. Children reported that there was not enough support from the extended family for orphans. They also noted that some parents are uneducated and do not send or keep children in school. Some children noted that some of the helpless children, such as orphans, ended up on the streets or in Children's Homes because they lacked anyone to care for them.

Children reported that some vulnerable children live in bad conditions. These include children who live with poor caregivers, those without caregivers, children in slums, and those living in areas that are at a risk of floods and landslides. It was also reported that some of the children have to take care of themselves or even their families, which affects their education, health and childhood in general. Children at Kampiringisa National Rehabilitation Centre said that they had limited access to basic needs, such as beddings, clothing and mosquito nets; and yet a staff member reported that the Centre offered good accommodation.

Some orphans do not get to know their relatives who could support them to go to school and end up on the streets...

FGD, Primary School, Kiboga District

The reason we were brought to the Centre is that our parents were not able to take care of us and some of us lost our parents ...

FGD, Children's Home, Kiboga District

Children with poor single parents do not have some of the basic needs because their parents cannot afford them. Children whose parents cannot provide lunch stay hungry all day at school. Some children staying with old grandparents do not receive parental care and their basic needs are not catered for. Many orphans are denied the right to education and in case they go to school, many lack the basic scholastic items....

FGD, Primary school, Masaka District

Poor parents are not able to provide all the basic requirements for their children...

FGD, Primary School, Iganga District

Step parents only care for the children they have produced and mind less about other children they live with....

FGD, Primary School, Ntoroko District

Children who return from the streets face a challenge of adjusting to local conditions, they also find difficulties in terms of feeding well. They are isolated, especially those who got diseases such as AJDS while away from home....

FGD Street Children, Napak District

Some parents don't pay school fees for their children; when asked to pay, they say, am not educated, but am J not alive.....

FGD, Primary School, Kampala District

In other instances, children blamed some parents for meeting the physical needs without providing love and guidance. The children further reported that they had to meet some conditions in order for their needs to be met by their parents - being obedient and respectful to parents as well as taking part in doing housework. They noted, however, that grandmothers who live with their grandchildren are very lenient and do not ensure that such children are properly guided to handle the challenges of life. Vulnerable children, such as orphans and children in child headed households were said to be lacking parental care.

Our father died when we were only one year old. As much as our mother works hard to provide our basic needs, we are not enjoying our rights fully because we lack parental care and guidance as she works far away from home and returns only once in many months....

IDI with a Girl Heading a Household, Masaka District

Street children do not have permanent places to sleep and they do not go to school. They are mistreated by relatives especially their uncles, so they never have peace...'

FGD, Secondary School, Luwero District

Orphans, street children and children with disabilities are not enjoying their rights because of poverty and absence of parents...

FGD, Primary School, Lira

I spend most of my time looking for work to get money to take care of my siblings. I dropped out of school in P.5. I am currently working as a maid for a fee of UG\_X 10,000 per month.

(IDI, a Girl Heading a Household, Maracha District).

At times we fail to get all the basic needs because our mother is the only one supporting us and she does not stay with us... we are looking at our mother as the only saviour and no other support is available... We do not know of any service providers to help us.

(IDI, a Girl Heading a Household, Masaka District)

J have to do casual work of digging to provide basic needs for myself and my siblings. Sometimes, there are no digging jobs and we suffer.

(IDI, a Boy Heading a Household, Pader District)

During menstruation, we cut the donated mattresses for pads and when the mattress is finished, we use polythene papers as mattress.

FGD, Batwa children, Ntoroko District



Orphaned boy, 14, Budaka District, showing that children without parents work for themselves

de 112 Years lex = FEMAIC:	
	6/8
	P-0 BOX 89 (U)
	GODAKA -
	30° septemberzous
DEAR SIR MADAM	
How are you and how	are your daily duties.
am oleg and I do well at school.	• •
lam writing this letter to b	ell you my problems.
hèse problems are on me al home o	nd at school. but I reed
help from you because at school loc	k the following things
books, pens, and others. I request you	to help me become my
Porent are left me when lam still goons	and larew with my
rand mother and my grand father died	. He no any one could
care for me but because of your for for	with your managed to
Come of Coal blass woulded	Lough you aging day
care for me my God bless you sond	wish gov white ong

Orphaned girl, 12, Budaka District, seeking help from well wishers

## 2.2. Protection of children from mistreatment in the family

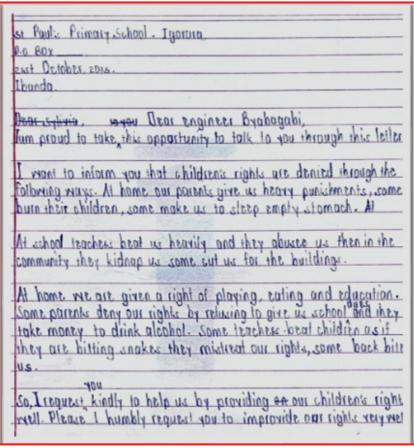
The majority of the children pointed out that many of the forms of child abuse occur in homes. The children involved in FGDs cited parents and step parents as the most common abusers in homes. Maternal uncles were cited as those who frequently abuse girls sexually while house maids were said to often deny children food.

Children are mainly abused by step parents, uncles and house maids. Uncles defile girls while house maids deny children food, refuse them to play and beat them ~ causing body injuries...

FGD, Primary School, Luwero District







Girl, 13, Igorora Sub County in Ibanda District, wrote to the Area Member of Parliament

#### 2.3 Recommendations

- 1. The Government and NGOs should give money to help needy children, such as orphans, to start activities that make money to help them to meet their needs.
- 2. Families should be taught about how to care for children who have been abused.
- 3. Children should be taught about their responsibilities just as they are taught about their rights.
- Parents should be taught about the difference between disciplining children and mistreatment.

# 3. The rights of children with disability

Children involved in the conversations reported that children with disabilities do not get equal chances as other children at home and in institutions. Both children with disabilities and those without disabilities mentioned that there was continued discrimination of children with disabilities. They did not have equal access to education, food, shelter, leisure, parental care, healthcare and clothing.

It's rare for parents with disabled children to take them to school, they think that it is wasting time and money and that there is no future for such children...

FGD, Girls with Disabilities, Masaka District

Children with disabilities do not enjoy their rights because they cannot help themselves. For instance, they might want to go to school but they don't have legs or devices to help them to get to school...

FGD Primary School, Ntoroko

At home and in the community, children are denied the right to education, medical care and freedom. Children with disabilities are segregated and discriminated against....

FGD, Secondary School, Napak District

Children with disabilities do not enjoy their rights because their parents and people in the community do not mind about them....

FGD, Secondary School, Kabaale District

Children with disabilities, especially the deaf, are denied the right to education by their parents because they do not perform well in school. The lame are also denied the right to education and medical care because they have no wheel chairs to ease their movement...

FGD, Primary School, Kamuli District

Children said that the children with disabilities could not enter buildings at the points of service delivery, such as schools and service providers, such as teachers were not sensitive to the special needs of children with disabilities.

Disabled children do not have access to education because their parents cannot afford school fees and the buildings do not have fittings to allow them to move through them...

FGD, Secondary School, Napak

School children noted also that children with disabilities are usually left out of sports and games activities. They explained that this is because of the lack of special facilities and sports events for CWD and also because their friends without disabilities think that their disabilities cannot allow them to participate.

Even when a child with a hearing problem begs for a pardon from a teacher in class, some teachers do not repeat for them...

FGD, Boys with Disabilities, Kiboga District

Children mentioned that those with disabilities are teased by their peers in school and also often do not want to sit next to them in class. Some children raised the problem of talking to children with hearing difficulties as limiting the help that they receive.

In my village, there is a nine-year old girl with a disability.

Her parents have not taken her to school and other children isolate her and do not play with her...

FGD, Secondary school, Ntoroko District

### 3.1 Recommendation

Teach parents about the rights of children with disabilities

# 4. The right to health

#### 4.1. Access to health services

A few children praised the government for providing them with free check-up at the health centres. The majority of them, however, complained about having to wait for long hours to be attended to as many people sought help. They added that the health centres always lacked medicines and people were told to buy from private clinics. They complained also about few health facilities and health workers.

I do not like to go to the health centre because the waiting time is more than two hours and many times there is no medicine. People are asked to buy drugs from drug shops; which they cannot afford...

IDI, Formerly abducted boy, Pader District

Without money, it is very hard for me to get medical treatment, especially when I am referred to another hospital or told to buy the medicine...

IDI, A Girl Heading a Household, Maracha District

Sometimes there is no medicine at the health centre and the health workers advise that we buy from a pharmacy yet there is no money. Sometimes the health workers are not there to provide health care...

IDI, Out of School Boy, Ibanda District

In Rwebisengo, an 18 year old girl was defiled by the teacher and taken to the health centre where she did not get any treatment, she was brought back home with no treatment...

FGD, Primary School, Ntoroko District

#### 4.2. Access to food

Limited access to food was a concern for the majority of the children, especially those based in the rural schools. Although parents were required to meet the costs for children's lunch at school, the children reported that the majority of the parents failed to pay. They further said that the affected children were being given lunch by their peers or were studying on empty stomachs until they returned home.

Children reported also that there were specific categories of children who faced a bigger challenge of finding food. They mentioned street children, children in child headed households, children living with stepparents or under kinship care and children in refugee settlements. They cited that within homes, the main problem leading to poor harvests and food shortage was dependence on natural weather. Because the food is not enough, the children also reported not getting enough nutrients from it. In other instances, they reported failing to complete doses of medicine because of lack of food.

In families with step mothers or where children live with their relatives, in poor households and family we where parents fight, feeding is difficult.

(Boys' FGD, Primary School, Kampala District)

Children share the little food they have with their friends. Sometimes, teachers give them food or talk to their parents encouraging them to provide what the children need at school...

Girls' FGD, Primary School, Masaka District

This year, the rains have not been enough. We have had two seasons with little rain and the beans I planted have dried up. We shall not have enough beans this season...

IDI, Girl Heading a Household, Pader District

#### 4.3. HIV and AIDS

In several FGDs with children living with HIV and those whose status is unknown, children reported that senior women teachers, counsellors and health workers generally treated children with HIV and AIDS well and kept as secret information about their status. Several children also appreciated the support of parents for children with HIV, including the provision of food, school fees and scholastic materials.

The children living with HIV are treated well at home, school and in the community by both adults and fellow children. There is no discrimination or any kind of mistreatment.

(FGD, Girls with HIV, Kabale District).

In spite of the good treatment reported, children noted that discrimination of children known to be living with HIV existed. The forms of discrimination pointed out by the children included the fear to associate with friends who are living with HIV and gossips about them by both teachers and pupils at school. Children said that those with HIV and AIDS are sometimes denied the chance of going to school. Such mistreatment, according to some children, has affected the wellbeing of the children living with HIV, some of whom end up giving up medication or committing suicide.

My grandmother denies me food and makes me stay inside the house so that I do not interact with anybody. She says that I am just living for one term and I will die.

(FGD, Boys living with HIV, Kiryandongo District)

At school, when one of my fellow children discovered that I was living with HJV and on treatment, she decided to tell everyone in the dormitory. So, the other children took away everything I had, claiming that children living with HJV are not supposed to have things that the HJV-negative children do not have.

(FGD, Girls with HIV, Kamuli District)

When children living with HIV go to see teachers, these teachers normally pity them and do not want to help them. They keep on telling them, "Come back later". Whenever a child living with HIV falls sick, the teachers say it is because of HIV. Fellow children do not want to play with them, eat with them, move with them or seat next to them thinking they might get injected with HIV.

(FGD, Girls living with HIV, Kamuli District)

## 4.4 Traditional practices that affect the health of children

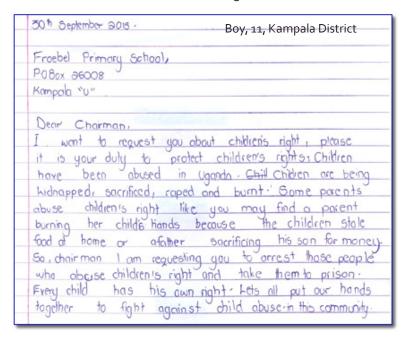
Children said that marriage of children and child sacrifice were common. They noted that their peers are given away in marriage by their parents or members of their family out of greed for bride price or because of poverty in the home.

...their parents marry them off young because they want to get bride price.

(Boys' FGD, Primary School, Kampala District)

### 4.5. Protection of children from drug and alcohol abuse

Children mentioned that their colleagues in street situations and in slums were exposed to drug abuse, which puts them at a risk of being abused or committing crimes. They noted too that children who are mistreated at home or who drop out of school usually abuse alcohol, drugs and cigarettes, which are harmful to their health. They appreciated the work being done by NGOs, such as Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL), to protect children from drug abuse, including rehabilitation services and life skills training.



#### 4.6. Recommendations

- 1. Help families to produce enough food for children
- 2. Fathers should care more about the health of their children and stop sending children and their mothers to the garden when they are both sick
- 3. Parents should care for their children living with HIV because they have a bright future ahead of them. Parents should be reminded that children living with HIV have got special needs.
- 4. Organisations should support children living with HIV by providing food, medication and education.
- 5. Government should build more hospitals and supply them with enough staff and medicine so that children can get good health care.
- 6. The Government should teach parents and community members about HIV and AIDS so that they can treat well children living with HIV.

# 5. The right to education, relaxation and play

#### 5.1 Access to education

Most of the children who participated in the group discussions and drawing sessions were happy about getting education because they saw it as a means to a better future. Out of the 235 drawings that showed what children were happy about at home, community or school, 80 drawings (34%) were about access to education. The children were pleased about the support provided by their parents, teachers and NGOs to promote their right to education. Churches and some NGOs, such as Child Restoration Outreach, UYDEL and Retrak were appreciated for giving vocational training to children living out of their homes.

At the Centre, children are rehabilitated and helped to reunite with their families. We learn skills that help us to find employment when we leave the Centre... we are positive about the future because of the skills we are gaining at the Centre, which will enable us find employment when we leave the Centre...

(FGD, Boys in Commercial Sexual Exploitation, Kampala City).

The existing churches have been praying and providing scholarships to enable children to join Vocational training institutions.

(FGD, Secondary School, ABIM District)



Boy, 10, Kampala District, happy about teachers teaching pupils

However, children raised concerns about their peers who are not in school and those who have challenges in continuing with education. Although getting education was the right that the majority of the children that participated in the drawing sessions were happy about, it also was the main area of concern to children who were asked to write a letter about an issue of concern at home, community or school. Out of the 281 letters that children wrote, 92 letters (33%) were speaking about the challenges of realising the right to education.

Several categories of children, including orphans, girls, child labourers, children with disabilities and children in street situations were mentioned to be missing out on education. Some children in poor households or without parents saw sponsorship by NGOs as their only source of help to get education. Children reported several problems that they face at school, such as lack of lunch, the inability or unwillingness of parents to provide uniforms and scholastic materials, plus teachers not being sensitive to the needs of children with disabilities and those living with HIV.

Orphans and street children do not enjoy the right to education because there is no one to pay their school fees.

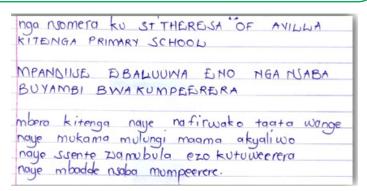
(Girls' FGD, Primary School, Kiboga District)

I have no money to pay school fees and buy scholastic materials, and no one is willing to support me.

(IDI, Formerly Abducted Boy, Pader District)

I have land at home but I cannot go back because we have witchcraft at home. Sometimes I spend a night with friends who accommodate me for a day but the rest of the days I have to find my way to survive...

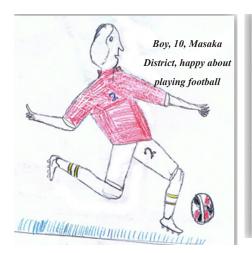
IDI, Boy out of School, Kiryandongo District)



Girl, 11, Masaka District, is seeking help with school fees. She lost her father and her mother does not have the capacity.

## 5.2. Relaxation and play

The right to relaxation and play was the third leading group of rights that children involved in the drawing sessions were happy with. Out of the 235 drawings that showed what children were happy with at home, community or school, 56 drawings (24%) focused on children's enjoyment of the right to relaxation and play. Although their number was not big, the children who reported enjoying this right said so because they were given such opportunity at home and in institutions, such as schools and remand homes.





Children reported that they had limited time for relaxation and play at home and school. Children reported that they spent most of their time on academic activities while at school. They reported being given work during class breaks without considering their right to rest and play. They further said that they were at times punished for participating in play activities. Children in remand institutions also mentioned being denied time for play and rest. Child labourers noted that they had limited time for relaxation because they left work late and tired. Children living with HIV and children with disabilities reported being left out of play and other recreational activities.

Children's talents, for example in music, are not promoted at school because the emphasis is on academic subjects such as physics and mathematics

(Boys' FGD, Secondary School, Kampala District)

We play once only in a very long time, may be once in three months and for less than 30 minutes.

(Boys' FGD, Remand Home)



Boy, Pader District, is unhappy about teachers beating and stopping children from playing.

lgreet you in the name of Jesus crist.

I would want to comment about playing teachers they refuse us to play when it is brake or lunch they give us work. Another thing is about beeting ous, when they are paering us using to metalic things is about food they give us little food.

#### 5.3 Recommendations

- 1. NGOs should help schools to give lunch for children because children cannot concentrate in class when they are hungry.
- 2. NGOs should give fees to poor students who perform well and those with talents in sports to help them finish their education.
- 3. The Government should give more money to Universal Secondary Education.
- 4. The Government should bring more and well trained teachers in universal education primary and secondary schools.
- Government should pay teachers better and in time to keep them loving their work and to prevent strikes so that children do not suffer during the strikes.
- 6. Government should give more items to laboratories in schools so that children can carry out experiments; and computers to promote practical training for the children.
- 7. The Government should build a permanent classroom and a store for the ABEK Centre, give more school items (pens, plates, and books), uniforms and food for the students. Government should build a good play ground and provide items for playing (such as balls and tyres) to help children to play.

# 6. The right to special protection for children in difficult circumstances

Children were concerned about special protection for children in difficult circumstances. Out of the 199 drawings that showed what children were unhappy with at the home, community or school, 96 drawings (48%) were saying something about special protection for children. It was also the second leading concern of children who wrote letters on issues that needed to be put right at home, community or school, with 71 letters (25%)of the 281 letters mentioning special protection.

## 6.1 Migrant and Displaced Children

Panyadoli Camp, Kiryandongo, is good because it receives refugees from different countries like DRC, South Sudan and Rwanda. They live well with Ugandan children. The community also gives refugees land to carry out farming within the camp...

(FGD, Refugee Children, Kiryandongo District)

The refugee children in Kiryandongo District, that hosts internally displace persons and refugees, reported getting support from non-government actors such as Windle Trust, Child Fund and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Children further reported that the community in the District contributes significantly to the protection of refugees and internally displaced children and their families by providing land for farming, which reduces their dependence on food aid that is sometimes not enough.

Children felt that refugee children are one of the categories whose rights are denied. The child refugees in Kiryandongo District had concerns about the poor quality of the temporary shelter, limited access to education and the inability of their sickly parents to care for them. Some of the children had no parents or guardians to provide for their basic needs, such as clothing and soap.

The shelters provided by UNHCR are not good; we feel unsafe. Sometimes when the wind blows off the shelters, we sleep outside without mosquito nets. Some of us suffer from jiggers because of too much dust and rats. Some children miss out on school because UNHCR does not pay school fees or provide scholastic materials in time. Sometimes support provided by NGOs, such as school fees comes late. The delay in provision of blankets makes children's lives in the camp difficult. We lack a balanced diet because we eat only posho and beans.

(FGD, Refugee Children, Kiryandongo District)

## 6.2. Children in armed conflict

Formerly abducted children in Pader district appreciated the little support and protection provided by their communities. They also reported that NGOs, such as Friends of Orphans in Pader district were supporting orphans and former abductees through vocational education. However, formerly abducted children reported that support towards their recovery and reintegration is limited.

I worry a lot about my survival and that of my siblings especially when I don't have money to provide for their food... At times we are told by health workers to buy our medicine, but it is costly and we cannot afford. There is no organisation that supports me and my siblings. Some of my peers treat me badly, especially older ones, because I am a former rebel. I always report to the LC1 chairperson and he helps by speaking to them.

(IDI, Formerly abducted Boy, Pader District)

# **6.3.** Children in situations of exploitation

# 6.3.1 Economic Exploitation, including Child Labour

Children identified household poverty, being orphaned and dropping out of school as the main cause of child labour. The children noted that several girls had been moved to urban areas to work as maids, which has caused them a lot of suffering. Child labourers faced several challenges. For example, those employed in sugar cane plantations in Kamuli District mentioned being stung by bees and injured by machines when cutting sugarcane because their employers did not

provide protective wear. Girls working in the rice fields in Kamuli district observed that some of their peers had been defiled because they leave far fields late.

When we are squeezing sugarcane, the bees bite us. Sometimes, the machines cut our fingers. We are sometimes bitten by snakes. We do not have protection; and we are not helped with treatment...

FGD for Child Labourers, Sugarcane Plantations, Kamuli District

Children who work on the streets in Kampala City cited being beaten by the policemen as they collect scrap at night. They also mentioned that criminal gangs of adults (Abayaye) stole their money and sometimes left them with nothing to buy food. They also reported being harassed by the public and the Police who see them as wrongdoers and were often the first to be accused whenever an incident of theft was reported.

Some of the girls have been defiled because they leave the gardens late, yet the rice fields are mostly located in swamps where there are no homes or people to rescue us...

FGD, Child Labourers, Kamuli District

We have to walk late at night collecting scrap. Sometimes we meet policemen who beat us calling us thieves....

FGD, Child Labourers, Kampala District

The child labourers consulted in Adjumani District mentioned that some of them work for 9-10 hours a day and yet they are at times paid late or not paid at all. Child domestic workers in Kampala City complained about the daily work that took the whole day late into the night, with some of them sleeping at 1.00am and waking up at 5.00am.

Children noted that abused house maids hardly report for fear of being chased or harassed further by their employers. The FGD with Child Domestic Workers in Kampala City showed that they feared to report the employers who mistreat them because they had nowhere else to stay and did not believe that they would be helped.

## 6.3.2. Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse

School children noted that commercial motorcycle riders (Boda Boda) lured young girls into sex in exchange for small gifts. They also cited specific incidents of sexual abuse, particularly by male teachers. In Kampala City, school children mentioned that those living in slums were having a greater risk of sexual abuse. Children involved in sex activities said that they were treated as wrongdoers rather than victims that need support.

## 6.3.3 Trafficking of children

Being kidnapped or sacrificed were some of the concerns that children raised through the FGDs, letters, and drawings.

Most of the children who have sex for money do not get any support because they are seen by the community as doing something illegal.

(FGD, Girls in commercial sexual exploitation, Gulu District)

Girls are denied education because their parents marry them off young because they want to get bride price

(Boys' FGD, Primary School, Kampala District)

Children are increasingly exposed to pornography through the media, thus increasing the risks of children getting involved in sexual relations at an early age.

(Girls' FGD, Secondary School, Kampala District)

Girl, 12, Budaka District

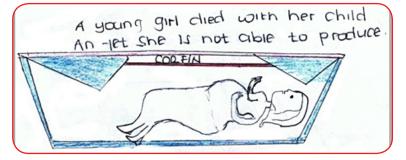
Dear police officer

How are you?

Black to me law not ak happy.

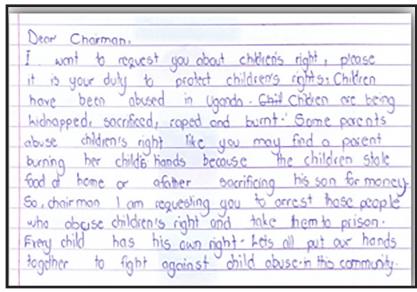
The reason why law writing this letter is to inform you that they is a man yo who defiled a going girl and the girl is pergant but the is under 18 years but law telling reporting to you to come and arrest the man because he even infected the girl whi with HIV/AID the girls even being fored by her parents to remove the boby in her please (ome before the matters worse for the side of the girls.)

I will be happy it you come quickly.





Boy, 14, Kampala District, is unhappy about



Boy, 11, Kampala District, requested Chairperson kidnapping children

#### 6.4. Children in street situations

Children in street situations reported that they got some support from NGOs, including feeding, spiritual nourishment, and reintegration with families, among others. However, they identified a number of challenges that affected their wellbeing. These included inability to get the basic needs (food, clothing, medical care and shelter), protection and education because the support from NGOs was inadequate. They reported also that they are exposed to sexual abuse by adults. Other children reported that some of the children who are withdrawn from the street by NGOs and taken back home return to the streets. They said this happens because of inadequate preparation of the family, and inadequate support of the child and the family.

There are some organizations such as Surface Uganda, Charity of Peace and YAWE that helps street children with food, spiritual growth, and taking children back to their families.

(FGD, Children on the Street, Gulu District)

Men sexually abuse street boys. They force us into homosexual acts.

(FGD, Children on the Street, Iganga District)

In the night, we have to move around to find a comfortable spot to sleep. It is most difficult during the rainy season.

FGD, Street Children, Pader District

We do not enjoy our rights because there is no one to care for us. To survive, we have to steal or grab food and other items from people, which sometimes gets us into trouble with those who keep the law. Some of us collect empty plastic bottles and scrap metal for sale. There is some support to street children by NGOs, but it is not consistent.

(FGD, Children on the Street, Gulu District)

## 6.5. Children who commit offenses

The conversations with children revealed that the government is keeping the standards for handling children who commit offenses. For example, in a FGD with boys at Gulu Remand Home, the children reported that they had received training on how to defend themselves during court sessions. At Naguru Remand Home, the children reported that they talked to the Probation and Social Welfare Officer at the Home, and sometimes to the visiting counsellors when they needed emotional support.

However, children identified several challenges, including inadequate basic needs (food and accommodation) and denial of the right to play and relaxation. Children mentioned also that they are not given a fair hearing and sometimes miss the representation of a lawyer.

We play only once in a very long time, maybe once in three months and for less than 30 minutes.

(Boys' FGD, Remand

We feel that some of our rights are neglected, including the right to play.

(Boys' FGD, Remand Home)

The remand home has a playground, but we do not have balls. There are also no indoor games.

(Boys' FGD, Remand Home)

## 6.6. Protecting children belonging to ethnic minorities

During the conversations with children of ethnic minorities, the boys belonging to the Batwa community said that they were treated well by health workers when they visited the health facilities with money, but were sometimes treated badly when they had no money. The girls reported that non-Batwa children beat Batwa girls and denied them seats in class. The girls also said that none of them had ever heard about or seen a birth certificate. The boys reported both good and bad treatment by the non-Batwa children.

In the community, other children associate well with Batwa children. They do not fight each other unless they are insulted. When a Batwa child fights or disturbs a Non-Batwa adult, they are beaten heavily. At school, other children abuse Batwa children saying that they smell. They avoid playing with us, which makes us feel isolated from other communities...

FGD, Batwa Children, Ntoroko District

When we go to the health centres with money, the health workers serve us very fast. Sometimes we feel discriminated against because we are poor. We have never seen a birth certificate or ever heard anyone talk about it.........

FGD, Batwa Children, Ntoroko District

The Batwa children said that they did not feel comfortable studying with Non-Batwa children, they expressed a need for a special school that would use their language and where they could access food, clothes and shoes. This would keep them in school and prevent them from being insulted.

#### 6.7. Protection of children from all forms of abuse

In at least one of the FGDs held with children in some districts, including Abim, Ibanda, Adjumani, and Gomba, the children reported that the number of children experiencing abuse was reducing. They mentioned that the implementation of the existing laws had led to a reduction in child abuse.

Abuse has reduced because government has put in place rules and regulations about children's rights. Children are more able to report cases of abuse to police, sub county and local councils.

More parents, teachers and community members are following the rules to ensure that children enjoy their rights..

FGD, Primary School, Iganga District)

The number of mistreated children is reducing because the Police, working with the Probation Department at the district, arrests any person found abusing a child.

(Girls' FGD, Secondary School, Adjumani District)

On the other hand, children in the districts of Lira and Ntoroko noted that the number of children experiencing abuse and violence was on the rise. Children cited parents, stepparents, guardians, teachers, maids and relatives as the main abusers of child rights. In the event of abuse, some children reported getting some support from different sources, including family members, local council members, child protection committees, religious institutions, community members, NGOs, peers, teachers, and the Police.

Some parents do not send their children to school, while others chase them from home to get married. Some teachers do not teach, others teach when they are drunk. There is no food at school and sometimes children study when hungry. Some girls are sexually harassed by teachers...

FGD, Primary School, Ntoroko District

Some girls are not given sanitary towels and pads by parents and once a girl's dress gets stained in class, she feels ashamed and fears to come back to school and eventually drops out...

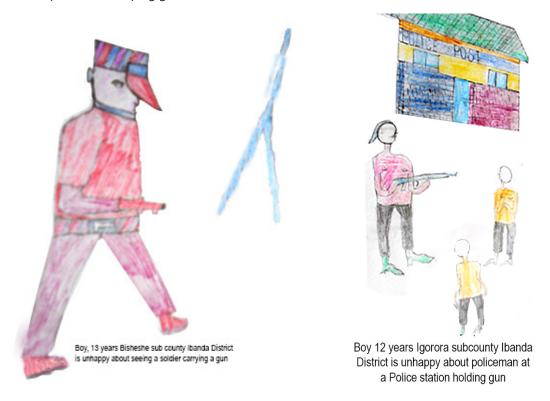
FGD, Secondary School, Ntoroko District

The number of children being mistreated is increasing in homes because parents do not know the value and rights of children. Some parents keep children at home to graze cattle and dig during morning hours and by the time they reach school, they are too tired to study.....

FGD, Primary School, Ntoroko District

The children listed various reasons that discourage them from reporting abuse cases. Some children noted that they feared being beaten by abusers, especially if it is a parent or a relative. They also mentioned the lack of transport to move to distant Police stations or take the victims to the hospital as another difficulty.

Children involved in FGDs in the districts of Iganga, Ibanda, Luwero, Lira, Ntoroko, Kamuli, Maracha, Kampala Central, and Nakawa were concerned that the Police accepted bribes, showed lack of interest, or mishandled cases. In other circles, children were scared of police and army officers carrying guns.



Children noted that only a few children who get abused get adequate help. They mentioned several challenges faced by such children, including long procedures in getting help, slow response from responsible persons, limited interest in children's issues, and shortage of food and money for such children. They identified NGOs as the main source of support, but also raised concerns that the services of NGOs were rarely available in the rural areas.

Children are not helped even when in trouble because most people are not bothered about their issues. Very few children receive help when the abuse is reported to the elders and local leaders.

(FGD, Primary School, Maracha District)

Children who are mistreated do not get any help because of fear. Some children are threatened by those mistreating them that they would kill or beat them if they tell anyone or seek help.

(FGD, Primary School, Luwero District)

## 6.8 Recommendations

# Children affected by armed conflict

- 1. The Government should provide the basic needs of formerly abducted children.
- 2. The Government should teach formerly abducted children (e.g. through videos) about their rights and the importance of education.
- 3. The Government and NGOs should give some money to formerly abducted children to carry out small

# Child sexual abuse and exploitation

- 1. Stop the circumcision of girls because it leads to bad health.
- 2. Support the education for girls in Kween District by putting secondary schools for them in all Sub-Counties. Education will help girls to refuse being circumcised.
- 3. Implement the law by arresting all those who support and those who carry out circumcision of girls, including the leaders of those areas.
- 4. Teach the community about the bad results of circumcising girls.
- 5. Work with girls who have been circumcised to teach the community because they know the pain of circumcision.
- 6. Put police stations in rural areas to implement the law that stops the circumcision of girls.
- Help those who have been carrying out the circumcision of girls with other ways of making money.
- 8. Help women with ways of making money to meet the basic needs of their daughters until they complete school.

- 9. Help children who play sex for money to be taken back to their families (for those who have them) by giving them school fees and other basics items.
- 10. Stop discriminating against children who have sex for money.
- 11. Teach children who have sex for money how to use condoms.

## Working children and children in street situations

- 1. The Government should give food to families to prevent hunger that forces children to go to the streets.
- 2. Children should be encouraged to love their homes and not go to the streets.
- The Government should help families of children who have come back from the streets by providing food, school fees and scholastic materials for children to go to school because parents are not able to provide.
- 4. Group homes should be set up for child labourers and street children so that they can get where to sleep.
- 5. The Government or NGOs should help brick makers to get water easily by providing transport (bicycles, wheel barrows, etc.) to water points or bringing the water points nearer to brick making sites. The Government and NGOs should give machines and training on making good bricks to increase the money children make.
- 6. The Government and NGOs should give more attention to working girls because their work puts them at the risk of getting involved in early sex which leads to early pregnancy.
- 7. The Government should help child workers to be given training in vocational work such as carpentry, tailoring, mechanics; so that they can support themselves. After going back to school, the children would become champions; encouraging their peers who stubbornly drop out of school to work in sugarcane plantations, to stay in school.

# Children belonging to ethnic minorities

- 1. The Government should help Batwa families by giving them land and building good houses for them because they do not want to go back to the forest.
- 2. The Government should provide good houses, chairs, saucepans, mattresses, blankets, water cans, land, clothes, shoes, stockings, school uniform and bags to Batwa children.

#### Protection of children from all forms of abuse

- The Government should make more laws to protect children from being abused.
- 2. Children should avoid bad groups which bring bad behaviour.
- 3. The Government should teach parents about the rights of children so as to stop abusing

- children such as making them do hard work and giving them for marriage.
- 4. The Government should sponsor children and provide scholastic materials so as to keep them in school.
- 5. The Government should teach children to ask for help when they have been abused or when they sense the danger of being abused.
- 6. Children should report cases of mistreatment to a police station or an adult as soon as it happens.
- 7. Police Officers should stop being harsh when arresting children.

# Appendix: Members of UCRNN that supported data collection

Action for Children (AFC)

Action for Community Development (ACODEV)

Action on Disability and Development (International)

Adina Foundation

African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect - Uganda

Chapter

AKijul

Awakening Smiles Initiative

Child Aid Uganda (CHAU)

Child Empowerment Development Organisation (Uganda)

Child Fund International

Child Restoration Outreach (CRO)

Christian Childcare Program Mbale

Coalition of Uganda Private Schools Teachers Association

Community Development Network (CODEN)

Community Voluntary Initiatives for Development (COVOID

Compassion International

**Dwelling Places** 

Eden Ministries Uganda

**Every Child Ministries** 

Federation of Uganda Women Lawyers (FIDA-U)

Facilitation for Peace and Development (FAPAD)

Fida - Uganda

Forum for Education NGOs in Uganda (FENU)

Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI)

Foundation for Open Development

Health Gap

Integrated Community Based Initiatives (ICOBI)

Joy for Children Uganda (JFCU)

Leaders of Children and Elderly People at Risk (PEPA-NGO)

Legal Aid Service Providers' Network (LASPNET)

Love of the Child

NAPADEC

National Association of Women Organisations in Uganda (NAWOU)

Nurture Africa

PAG-KIDEP

Parenting Uganda

Plan International Uganda

Platform for Labour Action (PLA)

Prince of Peace Orphans and Widows' Vision (POPOW)

**Raising Voices** 

**RIDE Africa** 

Rural Initiatives for Community Empowerment (RICE)

Save Street Children Uganda (SASCU)

Save the Children International Uganda

Share an Opportunity (SAO)

SIDO TORORO,

SOS Children's Village Uganda

Straight Talk Foundation

Uganda Child Rights NGO Network-Lead Agency

Uganda Society for Disabled Children (USDC)

Uganda Deaf Blind Children Association

Uganda Women Concern Ministry

Uganda Women Efforts to Save Orphans (UWESO)

Wells of Hope

World Education Inc. /Bantwana

World Vision Uganda

