

June  
**2023**

**An Analysis**  
Of Year **2022**  
Programmes By  
**UCRNN** Member  
Organisations



**FINAL REPORT**

**JUNE 2023**

## Acronyms

<b>CWDs</b>	- Children with Disabilities
<b>CSEC</b>	- Child Sexual Exploitation of Children
<b>CBR</b>	- Community Based Rehabilitation
<b>CBOs</b>	- Community Based Organisations
<b>CM</b>	- Child Marriage
<b>COVID 19</b>	- Corona Virus Disease 19
<b>DHIS</b>	- District Health Information System
<b>FAWE</b>	- Forum For African Women Educationalists
<b>HMIS</b>	- Health Management Information System
<b>MDAs</b>	- Ministries, Departments and Agencies
<b>NDP</b>	- National Development Plan
<b>NGOs</b>	- Non Governmental Organisations
<b>NPHC</b>	- National Population and Housing Census
<b>SG</b>	- Safeguarding
<b>SVAC</b>	- Sexual Violence Against Children
<b>MGLSD</b>	- Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development
<b>NSTCM&amp;TP</b>	- National Strategy on the Prevention of Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy
<b>TP</b>	- Teenage Pregnancy
<b>UBOS</b>	- Uganda Bureau of Statistics
<b>UCRNN</b>	- Uganda Child Rights NGO Network
<b>UNCRC</b>	- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children
<b>UNFPA</b>	- United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNICEF</b>	- United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UPE</b>	- Universal Primary Education
<b>VHTs</b>	- Village Health Teams

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# Executive Summary

## A. Introduction

This Annual Situational Analysis on the state of Child Safeguarding and Prevention of Child Marriage in Uganda is based on the Consultations carried out through contacts with Non- Governmental and Community Based Organisations that are members of Uganda Child Rights NGO Network- UCRNN. UCRNN is a coalition of child-focused organisations including community-based, national and international organisations working for the welfare and the rights of children in Uganda. The Network was started in 1997 to spearhead the generation of the NGO Alternative report on the progress of implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This report aims to document the achievements of Uganda Child Rights NGO Network and its member Organisations for the year 2022. It is based on the seven thematic areas which are all focused towards prevention and response to Child Marriage and Teenage pregnancies.

(CM&TP). These include End Sexual Violence Against Children; Child Trafficking, Child Labour & Street connected children; Access to Justice for children; Education; Alternative Care; Children with Disabilities; and Health (Mental and physical Health).

The Analysis also includes a review of existing Literature to broaden the scope of the issue at hand. Efforts were made to analyse the Child Rights situation in the country during the year 2022 for this report to be a useful resource to inform programming at all levels.

The report highlights key actions being taken by the different member organizations in child safeguarding and the prevention of and response to the issues of Child Marriage, and Teenage Pregnancy in Uganda.

## B. Conclusion

This report confirms that child abuse and neglect are common in communities with high

rates of poverty and fewer neighbourhood support systems that have been shown to violate the rights of children. Child marriage resulting in Teenage Pregnancies are highly exacerbated by economic factors.

Poverty leads to transactional sex, early marriages and risk of intergenerational sex. Therefore organisations that are keen on uplifting the standards of people through family and structural support have the appropriate preventive strategies. The report also notes that School dropout is preventable. Systems, such as the Dropout Checkpoint Scorecard, if put in place to deliberately identify promptly who is at risk of dropping out; and instituting early interventions to curb potential dropout incidents. It also brings out child marriage as a form of violence and sexual exploitation against girls. Efforts to prevent child marriage, particularly concerning laws, policies, attitudes and customs that promote or condone the practice, should therefore aim at eliminating all forms of violence against women whether young or old.

Violence against women is a major contributing factor to the incidence of violence against children. Whereas in reported cases of domestic violence, one in every five cases is associated with intimate partner violence involving child marriages, therefore if not curbed such cases will continue rising.

## C. Recommendations

Below is a highlight of some general recommendations made by various stakeholders

### a) Education and Development

Education for children ensures that all children of school-going age are enrolled and access school. These interventions promote holistic development and learning for all children as a means to retain children in gainful education and delay their involvement in sexual activities hence decreasing teenage pregnancies.

### b) Systems Strengthening

Government can direct resources and efforts to this cause of strengthening the child protection and justice systems.

Strategy 3 and 4 of this priority area hinge on strengthening the capacity of National child care and protection sector, Local Governments, Community structures for effective response to prevention and protection of all children against all forms of violence and exploitation.

### c) Addressing poverty and Conflict as drivers of Child marriage

Understanding the dynamics that promote child marriage in a particular society is the starting point in addressing them. Cultural factors appear to play a predominant role, though economic considerations can also be a factor. Where early marriage is condoned and poverty is acute, a young girl may be regarded as an economic burden and her marriage to a much older man is always a family survival strategy.

Where both poverty and conflict are present, child marriage can be seen as a form of economic or physical protection.

The same holds true in communities caught in the grip of AIDS. Therefore, the most effective strategy for overcoming Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancies can easily be reflected through preventive strategies that promote and recognise the rights of all children. These very strategies are presented in Uganda's National Child Policy of 2020.

## Recommendations to Government

### a) Invest in Social Protection

As efforts are being made to strengthen human capital, the need to invest in social protection is crucial. The social protection programme would ensure that every child in Uganda can access their basic needs and address the risks that hinder their development.

### b) Strengthen institutional mechanisms with well-co-ordinated stakeholder forums

Member Organisations need to further collaborate on matters of Safeguarding and Child Protection since interministerial, institutional and structural coordination produces results quicker and that they are long lasting.

### c) Initiate funding areas and Increase on existing budgetary allocations

It would be imperative that Government takes this up as a priority so that all Government Ministries, Agencies and Departments that are responsible for Child Protection services are fully financed to ensure continuity and sustainability of services.

### a) Social cultural and Legal issues

There is therefore need to continue working with cultural, religious, judiciary and other relevant institutions to facilitate the attainment of the desired behavioural change for informed positive response

## Recommendations to Civil Society

a) Follow and Contribute to the Implementation Plans as provided for in the National Child Policy and the National Strategy on CM&TP to ensure due accountability of the plans that are laid out by Government as the Primary duty bearer.

b) Monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the legal framework for child protection systems as laid out by Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.

c) Strengthening the coordination and collaboration between CSO and Government agencies, Formal and informal actors to ensure that child protection services are delivered in a

coordinated and effective manner. This will in turn promote prevention of Teenage Pregnancy hence delaying the onset of child birth among children.

### ***Recommendations to Communities***

Communities and families are called upon to support and protect all their members in raising their children as responsible citizens.

Communities can also support particularly vulnerable families to uplift their standards of living and desist from promoting Teenage Pregnancy and Child Marriage whether directly or indirectly.

Community members whose communities are most affected are called upon to realise this as a negative vice that will rob children of their youthfulness, by engaging in mobilising resources to improve the care and support for children.

## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Overview

This Annual Situational Analysis on the state of Child Safeguarding and Prevention of Child Marriage in Uganda is based on the Consultations carried out through contacts with Non- Governmental and Community Based Organisations that are members of Uganda Child Rights NGO Network- UCRNN. The Analysis also includes a review of existing Literature so as to broaden the scope of the issue at hand. Efforts were made to analyse the Child Rights situation in the country during the year 2022 for this report to be a useful resource to inform programming at all levels. The report highlights key actions being taken by the different member organizations in child safeguarding and the prevention of and response to the issues of Child Marriage, and Teenage Pregnancy in Uganda.

### 1.1 About UCRNN

UCRNN is a coalition of child-focussed organisations including community-based, national and international organisations working for the welfare and the rights of children in Uganda.

The Network was started in 1997 to spearhead the generation of the NGO Alternative report on the progress of implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Network has over the years played a leading role in mobilising child-focused organisations and has been the CSO Voice on Child Rights in Uganda. UCRNN's head office is located in Ntinda, Valley Drive Plot 70 in Kampala District. UCRNN has got presence in all the sub regions of the country through its member organisations. The member organisations are listed in the annexures.

### 1.2 Aim and objectives

This report aims to document the achievements of Uganda Child Rights NGO Network and its member Organisations for the year 2022. It is based on the seven thematic areas which are all focused towards prevention and response to Child Marriage and Teenage pregnancies. (CM&TP).

#### ***These include:***

1. End Sexual Violence Against Children;
2. Child Trafficking,
3. Child Labour & Street connected children;
4. Access to Justice for children;
5. Education;
6. Alternative Care;
7. Children with Disabilities; and
8. Health (Mental and physical Health)

### 1.3 Methodology

The compilation of this report involved the use of both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques to source for appropriate information from the respondent Organisations. This involved administering an online Google questionnaire to all member Organisations. The approach enabled data to be collected by the seven themes as detailed above, reflecting on the interventions executed by the various organisations to uphold the rights of children in the country. The report hinges on UCRNN's interest in addressing Teenage Pregnancy and Child Marriage and implementing Safeguarding models.

### 1.4 Limitations

Some of the data collected included interventions had adults as beneficiaries. This made it difficult for the team to specify the data for children only. We experienced delays from member organisations in submitting the programme Information and for some sections, the data was incoherent. Nevertheless the Consulting team worked with the data that had been submitted and endeavoured to seek clarity as much as possible.

## SECTION 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.0 Introduction:

This Section reports on desk reviewed literature on Teenage Pregnancy and Child Marriage in Uganda. It summarizes at both the national and regional levels as recognised by the State. Teenage Pregnancy refers to conception that occurs in persons between the ages of 13 to 19 years that may be incidental. In the National strategy, teenage pregnancy is extended to refer to pregnancy in girls aged between 10 and 19 years. Child Marriage refers to a formal or informal marriage or union in which either or both parties are below the age of 18 years (NSTCM&TP 2022/2023 – 2026/2027).

### 2.1 Situational Analysis of Teenage Pregnancy / Child Marriage - the National Context

In Uganda, 8.9 million girls aged 10-19 are at risk of harmful practices including child marriages despite the various legal provisions under the 1995 Constitution of Uganda and the Global community's pledge to end Child Marriage and other forms of violence against Girls. (UNFPA, UNICEF 2019). Teenage Pregnancy rate of 25% in Uganda, is worrying though it may seem low compared to 28% in Sub-Saharan countries and West and Central Africa. Conversely, in the Ugandan local context, the term Child Marriage is used fluidly to refer to both formal and informal unions involving girls below the age of 18 years.

Over 50% of Uganda's population falls under the age bracket below 18 years and is considered one of the world's youngest populations. The teenage stage is one of the most critical age ranges (13-19) in defining the future of the individual among the country's population segment. This age range accounts for over 16 percent of the total population and yet, Uganda continues to post high incidences of child marriage and teenage pregnancy, as reported that 34 percent of girls get married before age 18, 7.3% before age 15. The situation is worsened by the high school child drop-out rate of 64.5 % in 2016.

In Uganda, as was the case for the rest of the world, the effects of COVID-19 left more serious consequences on some of the most vulnerable populations, particularly adolescent girls who have been among the most adversely affected in many different ways. The COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns declared by the Government of Uganda led to increased adolescent pregnancies and marriages among girls aged 10-14 years recording the incidence of pregnancies which increased by 366.5% compared to girls aged 15-19 years (25.5%) . The lockdown period provided ground for increased sexual risks especially to the girls which has led to escalated teenage pregnancies and child marriages. Most of the vulnerable girls were reported to engage in transactional sex to meet their basic requirements such as food, sanitary towels and niceties among other personal needs. The Uganda District Health Information System-2 (DHIS-2) reveals that as of 2021, the country recorded 31,565 pregnancies every month which translates into 1,052 pregnancies recorded daily up from 29,835 cases recorded in 2019 and 29,557 in 2020 and a daily rate of 994 and 985 respectively (DHIS-2)2. In 2021, about 31,566 teenage girls got pregnant monthly an equivalent of 1,052 daily and about 250 children aged below 15 years got pregnant monthly.

*sexual-health/ teenage-pregnancy UNFPA Uganda (2021). Fact Sheet on Teenage Pregnancy, 2021. UBOS (2021). The 2019/2020 National Household Survey Report.*

*Battling the perfect storm: Adapting programmes to end child marriage during COVID-19 and beyond. <https://www.unicef.org/mdia/94761/Battling-Perfect-Storm-Adapting-child-marriage-programmes...>*

*FAWE Report (2021). Research Findings on the Situation of, and Impact of Covid-19 on School going Girls and Young Women in Uganda.*

*Budget Monitoring and Accountability Unit (BMAU), 2020 – COVID-19 and Girl Child Education in Uganda. **What are the Emerging Issues?***

The Second National Strategy To End Child Marriage And Teenage Pregnancy (2022/2023 –2026/2027) is a holistic comprehensive framework that reflects the global and national commitment of the Government of Uganda to end the practice of child marriage and other forms of violence against girls including teenage pregnancy. In this regard, the Government of Uganda is applauded for putting in place the policy framework for addressing the issues of teenage pregnancy and child marriage.

However, some of the policies are only on paper and many have not been enforced to address the actual issues under discussion.

The key determinants for Teenage Pregnancy in urban and peri-urban centers are mainly incomplete primary education and the age at first sex. And for those in rural areas, the risk factors are high household poverty, and belonging to the Muslim faith. These observations point to the role education, poverty and early age of sexual introduction in increasing the risk of teenage pregnancy and early marriage. It is also observed that in Uganda, Muslim girls were found to be at higher risk of pregnancy than their Christian counterparts (Amongin et al. 2020).

Several efforts have been made and proposed to reduce the problem of child marriage, revolving around change of social norms that support child marriage, educating families and communities using a variety of communication channels, providing education to girls on life skills, non-formal and formal education by keeping girls longer in school, and livelihood and vocational skills as well as legislation and policy issues.

Discussion on Teenage Pregnancy and Child Marriage (TP&CM) needs to be multi-layered and multi-sectoral in nature and approach. It has multi-dimensional causes and no one entity can begin to address this issue on their own. The role of CSOs, schools, media, local community members including parents, opinion leaders, religious and cultural leaders, Government Officials at the District and Sub-county levels as well as health workers and children cannot be underscored.

( UCRNN 2022; Enhancing evidence-based programming and reporting on Teenage Pregnancy and Child Marriage in Uganda, Baseline Report) It is because of this grim situation that UCRNN and ERIKS Development partner have invested in compiling this situational analysis of the just concluded year of 2022 so as to use the information generated to inform Programming in the country.

**Dinah Amongin<sup>1,2\*</sup>, Lenka Benova<sup>3,4</sup>, Annetee Nakimuli<sup>1</sup>, Mary Nakafeero<sup>5</sup>, Frank Kaharuzza<sup>6</sup>, Lynn Atuyambe<sup>6</sup> and Claudia Hanson<sup>7,8</sup> (2020). Trends and determinants of adolescent childbirth in Uganda.**

**<https://reproductive-health-journal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12978-020-00925-8>**

**United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2020). Right(S) Here: Delivering SRHR Under COVID-19 World Bank (2017). Educating Girls: A way of ending child marriage and teenage pregnancy. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/uganda/publication/educating-girls-a-way-of-ending-child-marriage-and-teenage-pregnancy>**

## **2.2 The Situation of Teenage Pregnancy / Child Marriage in the Regions**

Evidence shows regional variations in the prevalence of Child Marriage among girls with the Northern Region having the highest prevalence rate estimated at 59%, followed by the Western Region (58%), Eastern Region (52%), East Central (52%), West Nile (50%), Central (41%), Southwest (37%), and lowest in Kampala (21%) (UNFPA, 2013). According to Lubaale (2013) the highest proportion of children in marital union was registered in the Eastern Region (5.4%) followed by the Northern Region (5.2%) while Central and Western regions had the same proportion of 3.8% of children ever married. The median age at first marriage for women (20 – 49 years) living in Northern Uganda is lower (16.9) as compared to Western and South-Western (18.1 and 19.9 respectively) (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012).

### **2.2.1 Central Region**

The Buganda Sub region which is located in the Central Region, shows the prevalence of child marriage standing at 41%, and for Kampala alone, a prevalence of 21% is on record. Notwithstanding, data collected (FAWE

Report, 2021) during Covid19 pandemic show that Kampala (29,591) and Wakiso (28,472) were among the districts that registered the highest cases of pregnancy among girls aged from 10–24 years who attended antenatal clinic (ANC) services between March and October 2020. However, for the cases of pregnancy among the 15–19 year olds in the same period, Wakiso (6,826) and Kampala (5,507) recorded the highest numbers (FAWE Report, 2021; extracted from HMIS Data, March – October 2020).

### 2.2.2 Eastern Region

According to an April 2018 UNICEF Publication; in Namutumba, a district of Eastern Uganda, 8 out of 10 girls are married off before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. The Probation Officer confirms that an average of 5 child marriage related cases are received every month, while many go unreported. A 12 year old school girl was forced into “marriage” by her father so that he could get money in turn. She later got pregnant and was thrown out of the union by her in laws. This is one of the few cases that are usually reported. In 2019 the prevalence of Child marriage was said to be highest in Eastern Uganda at 30% .

In 2020, the Government of Uganda declared a lockdown due to the COVID19 pandemic which was followed by the closure of schools. Many girls were sexually abused, in Eastern Uganda alone, over 6000 girls were impregnated in the district of Iganga.

### 2.2.3 Northern Region

While child marriage is common in Uganda, prevalence was highest in the Northern region (59%), (according to UNFPA 2013). In this region Forced marriages are a common phenomenon since the region was affected by prolonged armed conflict – where young girls and women were abducted and coerced into marriage with the rebels (Rubimbwa and Komurembe, 2012). This has since remained a norm that is quite disturbing. According to Women’s Global Empowerment Fund, 68% of girls are married before the age of 18 in Northern Uganda (August 2019).

### 2.2.4 Western Region

In Western Uganda, teenage pregnancies and early marriages are highly prevalent. According

to NSCM&TP, (2022–2027) , the teenage pregnancy rate is over 25% and the early marriage rate is over 50%. These rates are high compared to the global average of 18–24 years and 25–29 years, respectively. There are various reasons why these rates are high in Western Uganda.

This region has a high fertility rate, which is nearly six times the global average. This high fertility rate is due in part to the low contraceptive use and high prevalence of sex before marriage. The report further reveals that Western Uganda has a high rate of early marriage which is over 50%, (this is much higher than the global average of 25–29 years). There is a general belief amongst parents in Western Uganda that early marriages help to prevent teenage pregnancy and keep their family together.

**UBOS (2021): Uganda National Survey Report, 2019–2020. [https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/6-000-girls-were-impregnated-in-iganga-during-the-lockdown-3681086](https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/09_2021Uganda-National-Survey-Report-2019-2020.pdf&ved=Research Square, Oct: 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019; Early marriages in Uganda: a comparative assessment of Determinants across Regions <a href=)**

However, high rates of teenage pregnancy and early marriage lead to high rates of abortion, childbirth, and HIV/AIDs. These consequences are especially harmful to women, who are already struggling to live healthy and productive lives. (NSCM&TP, 2022–2027).

### 2.3 Interventions by Civil Society Organizations Investment in ending child marriage and teenage pregnancies (CM&TP) is a global concern.

In Uganda, there are efforts from the Government, NGOs (international and local) as well as community based groups to address child marriage and engender positive changes in people’s attitudes toward girls’ education. (Joy for Children Uganda, 2013, Bantebya et al., 2014). The initiatives range from legal to policy; increasing access and retention of girls in school; promotion and protection of children’s rights and skills building for the out of school youth. (Uganda E. C.) (A Formative Research to Guide the Implementation of the National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage

and Teenage Pregnancy in Uganda).

There are several other examples of innovative interventions executed by NGOs and CBOs in collaboration with other key stakeholders in other sub-regions of the country with impressive outcomes. For example, High Sound for Children (HSC) a Ugandan NGO that operates in five districts (Kampala, Iganga, Jinja, Mukono and Wakiso) started reaching out to schools where it runs media clubs and discovered that many girls experience sexual violence. HSC went ahead to offer counselling services using door-to-door approach in addition to provision of basic needs like clothes, and food.

Child Aid Uganda (CHAU) was involved in several programme activities aimed at reducing teenage pregnancy in their areas of operation. These included continuous awareness creation in communities of Lyantonde, Sembabule and Kyotera Districts. CHAU also supported the formulation of byelaws that have sanctions for those who aid Child marriages: and also provided Economic strengthening interventions for families of girls who had dropped out of school which enabled the return of these girls back to school.

Other major players in the Child Safeguarding and Child protection space are World Vision Uganda, Plan International Uganda and Compassion International. World Vision shared their impact stories and experiences during a re-launch of "It takes a World" to end violence against children. They employ a multi-tier level of collaborations and partnerships ranging from faith-based institutions, local and international organizations, schools, private sector, communities and individuals. World Vision's successes are leveraged on the strengths of their partnerships and collaborations. Notwithstanding, further pragmatic interventions have been highlighted that can be replicated with minimum modifications to address the plight of Teenage Pregnancy and Child Marriage in Uganda.

The National Strategy on the Prevention of Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy, 2022-2027.

World Vision Uganda (2020). It takes a world to end violence against children.

CUAMM Report, Doctors with Africa (2020). Teenage Pregnancy, Uganda. <https://doctorswithafrica.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/02/teenage-pregnancy-uganda.pdf&ved>

Save the Children, AfriChild, ChildsIfoundation,

FIDA, Efforts for the Key Population Initiative, Raising Voices and Joy For Children all have contributed to efforts to delay Teenage Pregnancy and Child Marriage.

Members of UCRNN under the sub group of End Sexual Violence Against Children (End SVAC) have during the years, engaged in several activities aimed at prevention of CSA and supporting the victims/ survivors. A documentary on Teenage mothers was produced during the COVID-19 pandemic and launched in 2022. The highlights from this documentary are very informative. The sub group has continued to attract other member organisations to participate and by the close of the year 2022 there were 31 participating members. Much of this is reflected in the next section of Findings, where the participating member organisations are listed while others are recognised in the appendix.

These and other interventions that may not have been covered in this report are guided by various national legislation and policies. Worth noting in this publication is the application of The National Child Policy and the 2nd edition of the National Strategy to end Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy.

## **2.4 The National Legal framework**

### **2.4.1 The National Child Policy**

The National Child Policy (NCP) demonstrates the commitment of the Government of Uganda to ensure the well-being of all children. It is another big stride in the Country's efforts to uphold children's rights and protect them from all forms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence. The National Child Policy recognizes that children from very poor households experience higher vulnerability to sexual exploitation. Both girls and boys experience violence in a range of settings, much as more girls than boys face a higher risk of sexual exploitation and abuse in schools hence making staying at home or getting married safer alternatives (MGLSD, et al, 2018). This is an indicator that the Policy understands that both boys and girls are at risk of being sexualized.

Early sexual activity is a growing concern for adolescent development in Uganda. In the National Cross Sectional Study of Adolescent Health Risk Behaviours in Uganda, almost 22 per

cent of adolescents (girls and boys) reported some form of sexual activity. Up to 10 percent of the sexually active adolescents aged 15–19 years had their first sex encounter before the age of 15 (MoH, et al., 2016). The overarching goal of the National Child Policy is; improved realization and enjoyment of all children's rights to survival, development, protection, and participation by all children in Uganda.

## **2.5 The National Strategy to end Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy.**

The 2022 launch of the reviewed strategy on Ending Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy 2022/23–2026/2027 provides hope to practitioners and commitment from Government aimed at ending the increasing incidence of teenage pregnancy . The strategy articulates the principles, strategic objectives, actions, coordination mechanisms and resources that will ensure effective implementation of the actions and interventions to end child marriage and teenage pregnancy by both government and non-government actors.

## **2.6 The Children Act Cap 59 as amended In 2016, the Parliament of Uganda approved the Children Act Amendments to strengthen care and protection of children in the country.**

In the Children's Act, Cap 59 Section 42A (1) states Every child has a right to be protected against all forms of violence including sexual abuse and exploitation, child sacrifice, child labour, child marriage, child trafficking, institutional abuse, female genital mutilation, and any other form of physical or emotional abuse. While Section 42A (2), a person who on reasonable grounds believes that a child has been abused or is in imminent danger which may result in physical injury, sexual abuse, deliberate neglect, or is in need of care and protection may report to a designated child protection organization or authority.

Uganda: Civil Society says Teenage Pregnancy still a Bottleneck to Uganda's Development. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202208260071.html>

## **SECTION 3.0 THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN**

### **3.1 The Promotion and Protection of Rights of Children.**

According to the UNCRC (United Nations

Convention on the Rights of the Child), there are four broad categories of rights of children; Protection, Participation, Survival and Development. They are a commitment on the part of the Governments and society to make it a priority to care for their children putting their best interests ahead as a guarantee for a better future.

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child – ACRWC duly recognises that; "that the child, due to the needs of his physical and mental development requires particular care with regard to health, physical, mental, moral and social development, and requires legal protection in conditions of freedom, dignity and security".

The same Charter goes ahead to emphasise that the promotion and protection of the rights and welfare of the child also implies the performance of duties on the part of everyone. Therefore the whole of humanity is responsible for ensuring the rights of the child are promoted and respected. Rights of children are anchored in Four Broad categories; Survival, Protection, Participation and Development and therefore once these are not fulfilled they lead to issues in Child Protection.

In Uganda children have been subjected to various violations of rights, these are clustered into 11 categories; Physical violence against children, Sexual Violence against children, Emotional and Psychological Violence against children, Child trafficking, Child Labour, Denial of basic needs and services, Inadequate parental care, Denial of property inheritance rights, Denial of the right to life, Harmful traditional and religious practices against children and Protection of children in the justice system.

The categorization above fits in very well in our current compilation since this publication is hinged on making reflections on protecting and upholding the rights of children in Uganda.

b) INSPIRE Strategies

In 2016, the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children released INSPIRE: a technical package that includes evidence based strategies with demonstrated success in preventing and responding to violence in childhood. The seven strategies that INSPIRE encompasses are Implementation and enforcement of laws; Norms and values; Safe environments; Parent and caregiver support;

Income and economic strengthening; Response and support services; and Education and life skills. INSPIRE aims to replace children's experiences of violence with safe, stable, and nurturing environments and relationships in which they can thrive (WHO, 2016). This in turn is meant to promote the rights of children holistically.

c) UCRNN Secretariat

Governance:

UCRNN conducted its first Annual General Meeting AGM in over 3 years, bringing together 39 members of the Network who deliberated on key issues concerning the Network. Key to this was the election of the new Board of Directors to include the following with respective roles on the UCRNN Board: Mrs. Lydia Nyesigomwe Board Chairperson, Mrs. Olive Lumonya Vice Chairperson, Mr. Timothy Opobo Secretary to the Board, Mr. Brian Mukalazi Treasurer, Mrs. Stella Ayo Odongo Honorary Member, Mr. Lauben Tushemereirwe Board Member, Ms. Marjorie Sseruwo Board Member.



The NGO Complementary report to the UNCRC: 57 CSOs under the Uganda Child Rights NGO network (UCRNN) came together to generate, and validate an alternative report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC). The final validation meeting finally took place in November, 2022. This is in line with the NGOs' moral responsibility towards;

- supporting children's access and enjoyment of their fundamental rights
  - monitoring the Government's implementation of national laws and international treaties;
- and
- holding the Government of Uganda accountable for the fulfilment of their legal obligations towards these rights, among others.

Child Participation as a cardinal Right

UCRNN, in partnership with the South African Parliamentary Support Trust (SAPST) conducted a training for 15 selected child leaders (10F, 5M) on child participation and Parliamentary engagements; with a specific purpose to provide a platform for engagement with children, and strengthen their capacity in engaging policy makers in Uganda. The training contributed to enhanced knowledge on child participation and the role of Parliament in the realization of children's rights, children discussed and agreed on strategies and activities to promote children's engagement with Parliament in Uganda, as well as the child rights advocacy issues to be brought before the Parliament of Uganda. The training took place on 8th October 2022 at the Golf Course Hotel in Kampala.

### 3.2 The Current Situation

This section presents an outlook into the current situation spanning over the last 10 years; herein presented under seven thematic areas that are outlined below;

#### **Theme 1 - End sexual Violence Against Children (Sexual Exploitation / ECPAT & Teenage Pregnancy/ HIV/AIDS, child marriage);**

The practice of Child Marriage continues to affect nearly half of all girl-children in Uganda with districts in Busoga, Acholi, Bunyoro and Tooro regions having high levels of child marriages (UNFPA 2020; UBOS 2019) Child marriage is linked to early sexual activity. Studies conducted in Uganda indicate high levels of early and unsafe sexual activity among adolescents, which often starts in their early teenage years (Neema et al., 2006; World Health Organisation (WHO), 1998).

According to the UDHS 2011 women with at least some secondary education start sexual relations almost two years later than less educated women. While there are limited studies on child marriage among boys, Bantebya et al. (2014) study in Eastern Uganda reveals that child marriage was also common among the boys – with boys commonly marrying at the age of 18 years.

The Uganda Police Annual crime report of 2021 indicates that 14,436 cases of defilement were reported to Police, compared to 14,134 cases reported in 2020. 3,783 were aggravated defilement. 14,570 victims were defiled in 2021 (of these 1,166 were below the age of 8 years). 14,226 females and 344 males.

Summary of Major Causes of Sexual Violence Against Children which lead to Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy / in Uganda)

In summary, the root causes of Teenage Pregnancy (TP) have been coined, and include;

- i. lack of information about sexual and reproductive health and rights especially in the rural areas and country-side;
- ii. inadequate access to services customized to teenagers;
- iii. family, community and social pressure to marry;
- iv. defilement; – one in four (25%) of Ugandan females have given birth before the age of 18 ;
- v. child, early and forced marriage, which can

be both a cause and a consequence;

- vi. high school drop-out rates.

Teenage pregnancy also varies greatly with a woman's education, a total of 16% of girls with secondary education began their reproductive life later compared with 45% of those with no education (UBOS and ICF International Inc, 2012).

CM and TP have common root causes and social drivers such as gender inequality, social and cultural norms, poverty, and inadequate access to education and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Right (SRHR) information and services (UNICEF 2019). In addition, they have comparable impacts on the health, education, economic opportunities, decision-making and future of young women and girls. Besides sharing common causes and consequences, these two practices can be mutually reinforcing (World Vision 2018)

Another major driver of CM and TP is alcohol and drug abuse. The Uganda National Household Survey of 2019/2020, reveals that persons 10 years and above consume alcohol and drugs. The daily alcohol consumption is at 23.8% for rural dwellers and 19.5 for urban dwellers; while those who use drugs were at 35.1% for rural dwellers and 58% for urban dwellers. The lack of funding for school costs was cited as one of the reasons for leaving school for both boys (43%) and girls (41%) followed by school costs not being affordable or being expensive reported by 24% for boys and 22% for girls that had left school.

Kwesiga Doris, 2021. Teenage Pregnancies: Let's deal with root causes, not outcomes. <https://www.cehurd.org/early-pregnancies-lets-deal-with-root-causes-not-outcomes/>

Casey Foundation. Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy in Uganda: A case study of Kasese District, 2021. <https://www.caseyfoundationafrica.org/child-marriage-in-uganda/>

UBOS, 2018 Statistical Abstract. [https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/05\\_2019STATISTICAL\\_ABSTRACT\\_2018.pdf](https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/05_2019STATISTICAL_ABSTRACT_2018.pdf)

UBOS, 2021. The Uganda National Household Survey 2019/2020. Kampala, Uganda; UBOS

Therefore, costs associated with education accounted for about six in every ten persons that had left school. Pregnancy among girls accounted for 8 percent of the females that left school in the age bracket of 6 years to 24 years .

Disability is a cause of sexual violence among girls. One of the reasons why CWDs are more prone

to sexual abuse more than their peers is Cultural beliefs and myths: Some cultures believe that disability conditions such as albinism bring wealth to a man who has sexual relations with them. It also believed that having sexual relations with a virgin is a possible cure for HIV and people will choose children with disabilities with the mind that these children will not have had sexual relations with any other person yet. (Special Children's Trust, Ug;2022). In addition to the physiological risks, there is a negative effect on the socio economic status of the mother, and the child. ICWR (2014) reports teenage pregnancy as one of the top contributory factors to high school dropout rates for girls in Uganda.

Theme 2 - Child Trafficking, Child Labour & Street connected children

### Child Trafficking

Human trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, using threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, the abuse of power or a position of vulnerability or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. (UCRNN, Concept note; World Day Against Trafficking in Persons 2022). While almost everyone is vulnerable to trafficking, women and children (both boys and girls), refugees and persons with disability seem more prone to trafficking. In Sub-Saharan Africa 72.5% of human trafficking concerns children, according to the United Nations.

Child trafficking refers to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation includes personal gratification and even sexual exploitation where the child is up for "sex sale" something that already affects the child's growth and development and also violates his/her rights as a child. A large number of residents in East Africa still live below the poverty line, especially in rural areas increasing their vulnerability to Child Trafficking

Uganda is a source, transit, and destination country for children trafficked for Sexual Exploitation. However the numbers of children trafficked for sexual exploitation are unknown due to the clandestine nature of the practice. Young girls are usually the preferred targets for trafficking for sexual exploitation However reports also show that traffickers exploit boys for sexual exploitation as well. Trafficking for sexual exploitation manifests through early and forced marriages, production of child sexual abuse material (child pornography), and sexual engagement of children in travel and tourism. Street connected children in Kampala and

other major towns have either been trafficked or are at risk of trafficking by people known to them and those unknown to them. Many times Ugandan children have also been trafficked out of Uganda for the same purposes.

Karamoja is the most vulnerable sub-region for Child trafficking and unsafe migration (CTM) internally. Each year, 400-900 children (90% girls) are trafficked for sexual exploitation and street begging. Women in Karamoja also hire out their children to Kampala-bound colleagues to be used as street beggars at a fee .

([https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/09\\_2021Uganda-National-Survey-Report-2019-2020.pdf](https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/09_2021Uganda-National-Survey-Report-2019-2020.pdf))

[https://www.newvision.co.ug/new\\_vision/news/1455506/busoga-karamoja-vulnerable-human-trafficking](https://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1455506/busoga-karamoja-vulnerable-human-trafficking)

Women and children are particularly vulnerable to domestic servitude, commercial sexual exploitation, forced begging, and forced in cattle grazing.

Effects of child trafficking: the affected children lose the chance for the needed proper guidance in the basic aspects of life and normal upbringing; children also develop unrealistic mentality of behaviours which turns some of them into criminals. Children learn bad habits, including drug abuse and prostitution which affects their lives negatively (Dwelling Places; 2022)

"Trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation is by far the most identified form of trafficking (53%) in Africa, followed by forced labour (37%)"; UN Office on Drugs and Crime (2014)

### Child Labour

Globally, child labour presents a special child protection concern. Child labour is defined in the Uganda National Child Labour Policy as work that is hazardous or exploitative and threatens the health, safety, physical growth and mental development of children and therefore constitutes an urgent policy priority. It is absurd that traditionally children are expected to provide labour in the family and in the community. The types of work they do and amount of hours they put in depend on the culture. According to a study carried out by ECLT (Elimination of Child Labour and Trafficking) Poverty is contributory factor for child labour. Other factors include Child Marriage, broken homes, irresponsible parenthood, orphan hood and children dropping out of school. Abusive child labour is usually in the form of domestic chore exploitation and sexual abuse of the girl child. The UNHS (2019/20) measured only the worst forms of child labour constituting "work which by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children". This

category is also called hazardous work by children. It may be noted that some economic activities that children engage in are generally acceptable but may become hazardous if certain conditions are not met. The female orphan child head of household might also be forced to join the child labour ranks in order to earn a living, perhaps as a housemaid, child care provider, or cook. Sometimes the labour is in exchange for room and board without pay. In her new home she is responsible for housework, including fetching water, which is often quite a distance away and takes a lot of time. She is responsible for cleaning child minding, washing and cooking. If she is not absorbed into a family, she may join the service industries to work in bars, restaurants or hotels where she may even be more vulnerable to being preyed upon by men and boys.

This affects their education journey, never rejoin school and hence being candidates for marriage at a very early age. Child labour affects children mentally, physically and socially hence being morally dangerous and harmful to children.

#### Children living on the streets

Living on the street is a desperate situation no person and especially no child should have to experience. It is estimated that about 10,000 children are living on the streets of Uganda. Street connected children are among the most vulnerable groups found in almost all urban areas. They are subjected to difficult living conditions, many times turning into hard core criminals. They are often rejected by society as unmanageable children. They adopt behavior that sometimes increases their risk to HIV infection.

A 2018 enumeration report by Retrak found that there were 15,476 street connected children in 4 major towns of Kampala, Jinja, Mbale and Iganga. In each of these towns, the local tribes were the dominant on the streets, followed by the Karamojong people, making the latter the single largest ethnic group on the streets. Of these, at least 4,071 children aged 7-17 years old were living and working on the streets of Kampala City alone. In Kampala, the Baganda comprised of 39% living on the streets, and 35% working on the streets, while among the Karamojong, 25% were working on the streets, and 4% were living on the streets, with girls occupying 96% of the Karamojong children on the streets of Kampala.

[https://www.newvision.co.ug/new\\_vision/news/1322309/begging-ugly-human-trafficking-kampala](https://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1322309/begging-ugly-human-trafficking-kampala)

<https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2016/258884.htm>

Many street connected children are denied the rights for survival and development and are subjected to physical, psychological and emotional torture

through harassment by members of the community, or by fellow street children especially the older boys and girls. These street connected children are subjected to poor health, psychological stress, shortage of food, unsuitable sleeping places, lack of money and medication.

Children in the company of parents or adults while on the streets are a child protection and safeguarding concerns. Many times the younger children are attracted to the streets to beg and fend for the "families". Begging on the streets is a form of forced labour and actually considered to be among the worst forms of Child Labour. The element of Baby trade is quite evident in this practice and always manifests in poverty stricken families whereby babies are smuggled to non-birth parents for personal reasons.

#### Theme 4 - Access to Justice for children

Child Justice refers to the system of laws, policies and practices that aim to protect and promote the rights of children who come into contact and conflict with the justice system. Justice for children in Uganda is a priority concern for the Justice, Law and Order Sector (JLOS) of the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs. Accessing justice is a significant challenge for children and young people in Uganda. Despite important progress in recent years, in many cases prevention, protection, rehabilitation and reintegration are not sufficiently taken into consideration for children who come into contact with the law in Uganda. The processes of interacting with the justice system can be immensely frightening and damaging for a child; and both child victims and witnesses, as well as those accused, have a right to a system that protects their best interests. For this reason several international rules and guidelines exist that explicitly require certain standards to ensure that court systems are child-friendly. Unfortunately, although Uganda has ratified the major international instruments regarding children in contact with the law and translated these into national legislation through various Acts and Codes, the implementation of these remain limited..

<https://www.jlos.go.ug/index.php/com-rsform-manage-directory-submissions/services-and-information/press-and-media/latest-news/item/489-documenting-institutional-workflows-for-better-outcomes-for-children-in-contact-with-the-law#:~:text=Accessing%20justice%20is,these%20remains%20limited>

Children in contact with the law as survivors of violence and witnesses in the case handling process, or as direct participants in a justice process need care and protection as a result of being in harmful situations that have endangered them, belittled them, exposed them to being degraded and terrorised.

Child justice still remains a challenge not only in the justice system, but also within Ugandan

communities, more especially for survivors of sexual abuse and exploitation, children affected by HIV/AIDS, and children with disabilities. Globally, and particularly in Uganda, the COVID-19 lockdown measures exposed children to more sexual, physical and emotional abuse and neglect, with a continued rise in the incidence of child abuse. The psychosocial impacts of COVID-19 greatly disrupted the living conditions of children, limiting their access to basic needs such as food and health care. This, coupled with the lack of social support, put children at an increased risk of different forms of child abuse. A 2020 Ugandan National Violence Against

Guraish Sserwanja , <sup>1</sup> Joseph Kawuki <sup>2</sup> and Jean H Kim<sup>3</sup>(2020), Increased child abuse in Uganda amidst COVID-19 pandemic: <https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/jpc.15289.pdf>

Children survey showed that one in three girls and one in six boys, suffer sexual violence during their childhood, hence contributing to the current estimate of the over 8 million Ugandan children believed to be vulnerable. Yet not all cases are reported. For those cases that are reported, other challenges are also encountered including inappropriate handling of petty child offenders who are processed within the justice system, non-observation of timelines to handle children's cases and a weak rehabilitation system, which have all denied access to justice to survivors of child sexual abuse.

There are several challenges in the child justice system which include the lack of separate cells for children at many police stations (e.g., in the districts of Kyegegwa, Kole, Lwengo, Kalungu, Sembabule, Bukomansimbi, Kyotera and Rakai), lack of bedding facilities in police cells, overcrowding in remand homes (Gulu, Fort Portal, Naguru), lack of separate court holding cells, bribery and influence peddling, inaccessible and unfriendly courts and prosecutors and intimidation of reporters. There is also limited cooperation by relatives in pursuing justice, and fear among members of the general population to testify as witnesses especially in cases of sexual abuse of children. Only 40.0% of Ugandans are confident in the judicial officers and 57.0% are confident in the local police force.

#### Children of Prisoners

Data indicates that about 11 percent of the female prison population is being detained with a child (PILAC 2017). Children living in prison with their mothers often live in intolerable conditions with inadequate access to care, protection, nutrition, play and education. They suffer from the trauma of separation, stigma and discrimination are deprived of care and protection.

Capacity gaps: apart from Justice system actors who have been trained especially under the J4C Programme of the JLOS, many lack the knowledge, skills and experience required to handle children. Every person serving a child ought to appreciate that children need to be listened to; they need empathy and understanding. Stakeholders need to appreciate that time is of the essence in matters concerning children and decisions regarding them, unlike those regarding adults cannot wait. (2015; Save the Children, LASPNET, UCRNN; Position Paper on Restorative and Child Friendly Justice in Uganda)

Poor access to Justice: The justice system is not accessible to many persons with disabilities as there are no reasonable accommodations put to facilitate the reporting, recording, timely judgement of cases involving children and persons with disabilities in general. There are no state paid sign language interpreters, the conditions set for the abused child /family to produce evidence (usually these children cannot communicate effectively) or remember details is not favourable which causes the majority of causes to go unreported. It is therefore of paramount importance that in all matters relating to children, Government agencies, judicial

UBOS, National Survey on Violence in Uganda, Qualitative Report, 2020. Available from: [https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/02\\_2022VAWG\\_qualitative\\_report.pdf&ved=](https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/02_2022VAWG_qualitative_report.pdf&ved=)

UNICEF, Uganda. Child Protection: Keeping Children Safe from Harm and Danger. Kampala: UNICEF Uganda; 2018. Available from: <https://www.unicef.org/uganda/what-we-do/child-protection>

Ibid, 70% of the annual statistics handled by JLOS institutions are petty offenders.

Uganda Human Rights Commission (2022). Annual Report of the Uganda Human Rights Commission, 2021.)

officers and any other person who is a caretaker or provider for a child should adopt the rights-based approach which is replicated in the African Charter and domesticated in the Uganda's Children Act.

Access to free psycho social support, legal aid, and representation during legal proceedings;

The Ugandan laws do not make any specific provision for psycho socio support to children during investigation and legal proceedings. Nevertheless the Children Act entitles every child the right to protective services which include support and protection of children during proceedings in family and children courts. In addition the Children Act guarantees every child the right to legal aid and the right to legal representation

Theme 5 - Education

According to a communique for Media release from the Directorate of Basic and Secondary Education

in the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES, March 2023), Celebrating 25 Years of Universal Education in Uganda: UPE has led to a great impact in the country through the following,

- Increased access to education, Following the introduction of UPE in 1997, gross enrolment in primary schools increased from a total of 2.5 million in 1996 to 5.3 million in 1997, an increase of 73% in one year and to over 8.6 million in 2023, according to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics.

- Improved Quality of education, the pupil-teacher ratio, which indicates contact between pupils and teachers in classrooms, has improved. Large quantities of learning materials have been supplied to schools which have reduced the pupil-textbook ratio. In 1993, there were 37 pupils per book, compared to today's 3:1 for P3 and P4, for core subjects. The increase in education inputs explains the gradual improvement of some education quality indicators from the time UPE was introduced

- To achieve gender equity, there is evidence that UPE has contributed to increased equity in education. The post-UPE period witnessed a narrowing gap between the number of girls and boys enrolled in primary schools. The number of girls attending school has also increased, with the gender parity index improving from 0.88 in 1997 to 1.04 in 2021.

- Ensuring Inclusive education after the introduction of UPE, by 2003 the number of children with disabilities in primary school was 247,953, and the Government has continued with affirmative action to address the special needs of children with disabilities. In rural areas, children who were previously excluded from primary education are now benefiting as a result of UPE.

- The Universal Education programme in Uganda demonstrates that a Country with a committed Government can fight poverty by ensuring access to education for its citizens.

Despite these achievements, there are still challenges to be addressed. Many children, especially those in rural and hard-to-reach areas, still do not have access to quality education. There is also a need for more investment in teacher training, infrastructure development, and curriculum improvement to ensure that children receive a quality education.

Child marriage violates girls' human rights and robs them of their childhood. It's estimated that 12 million girls under the age of 18 are married each year globally. For millions of girls, their education comes to an abrupt stop once they are married. They end up adding to the burden of Teenage pregnancy and this swiftly terminates their path in education, giving them adult responsibilities before they are ready. They are more likely to experience domestic violence and to fall pregnant early – forcing them to drop out of school. There is also less chance for girls to return to school once they have had their children. While there is a Government

ibid; section 1)(k)

ibid, section 16(1)

pronouncement for pregnant girls to remain in school and for young mothers to return to school (National Strategy for Girls Education 2015-2019), implementation of this policy has been weak.

Low educational attainment is linked with early marriage. According to the Uganda Demographic Health Survey of 2006, education is associated with the prevalence of child marriage in Uganda. 67% of women aged 20-24 with no education and 58% with primary education were married or in union at age 18, compared to only 14% of women with secondary Education or Higher (Uganda J. F.) (Child Marriage in Uganda; A call for Urgent Action).

The Capitation grant for pupils in primary schools stood at 14,000 UGX per learner in 2019/2020 having been increased from 10,000 UGX in 2016/2017; However, this is still low to provide the expected and required services for quality and equitable education including the observance of standard operating procedures in case of any epidemic or pandemic; such as the one that ravaged the country; COVID -19. The same challenge exists in the secondary school subsector despite the allocation increasing from UGX 45,000 per learner in FY 2016/17 to UGX 55,000 per learner in FY 2020/21.

School attendance for both Primary and Secondary education is still low, to the extent that 10% of children aged 6 and 18 years had never attended school. This partly results in Non- Participation" since participation for children in Uganda is mainly school based.

Main barriers to boys' access to education

While girls are the major victims of Child marriage and Teenage pregnancies, the boys are also affected. Their failure to continue with education manifests in various dimensions; Individual risk factors for failure to continue with education include: Low socio economic status, Pessimism about the future and sometimes many of the boys fail to have the actual feeling of being school connected hence low expectations regarding academic achievement. This in the end triggers their involvement in non-school related activities such as drug use, alcoholism and sexuality. Family, school, and community factors contribute to risks for academic failure for boys (NSTCM & TP 2022).

Learners faced challenging situations that led to poor family communication or conflict, keeping friends who are disruptive in class or drop out of school. Negative school environment, such as poor attitudes or unconstructive interactions among students, teachers, and administrators; classroom disruptions; or feeling unsafe at school. Lack of educational resources, such as libraries.

The above factors make it difficult for the marginalized children in urban slums and rural communities where IMS operates to access quality education, and enjoy their fundamental right to education. Additionally, about the indivisibility and interdependence of children's rights, barriers to the enabling right to education affect the children's ability to enjoy other rights, hence exposing them to further human rights abuses, exploitation that in the long run result in unemployment, poor livelihoods, high disease burdens such as HIV for young girls who

end up seeking survival in prostitution, and living in intergenerational chronic poverty among other life threatening social barriers.

Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2020). Uganda Demographic and Health Survey 2019/20.

## Theme 6 - Alternative Care

The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children and Uganda's legal and policy framework on care and protection for children recognise the right of every child to grow up in a family environment. Safe, stable, nurturing family environments are integral to the healthy development of children. For example, having a positive relationship with a parent or another caring adult family member is a consistent protective factor for children against a variety of negative health and social outcomes. The National Framework for Alternative Care (NFAC) seeks to enhance the current legal framework and existing practices for children without and/or at risk of losing parental care.

In Uganda, as in other developing countries, some children are temporarily or permanently deprived of their parental family environment and therefore require alternative care. Children lose parental care for many reasons ranging from the death of parents to abandonment, deprivation, abuse, search for school fees, endemic poverty, HIV/AIDS, migration, disability and family breakdown. (MGLSD, 2010,2012; Walakira, Ochen, Bukuluki & Allan, 2014).

Alternative Care refers to care options available to children who are temporarily or permanently separated from their parent/parents, deprived of their family environment, or in whose best interests cannot be allowed to remain in that environment. Alternative care options include kinship care, foster care, other forms of family based care or family like placements, supervised independent living arrangements for children and residential care.

Alternative Care in Uganda was started after research showed the negative experiences of children after a longer period of stay and poor handling in institutional care, resulting in physical

and emotional damage. The Children Act (Cap 59) clearly states that institutional care of a child should always be a last resort however over the years this has not been adhered to by both Government and Non-Government practitioners. The Principles of Necessity and Suitability are very pertinent in determining the care options for children due to being separated and those already separated from their usual parental home.

High quality level Institutional care has not been spared from the suffering and negative effects on the growth and development of children. Child care institutions cannot replace the loving care of a family and too often fail to meet the social, emotional, cognitive and developmental needs of children (Boothby et al.,2012).

The Alternative Care Framework, which underscores the need to strengthen and support families to care for children and prevent unnecessary family-child separation, and establish and strengthen systems to ensure quality alternative family-based care; is also in line with the National Child Policy, 2020. The correlation between proper Alternative Care practices to Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy is seen in its emphasis on parental care and safety of all children in all the care options. This translates into both boys and girls being guided to avoid sex until they attain the age of majority, thereby prevented from marriage and teenage pregnancies.

Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 44/25 of 20

November 1989 and entered into force 2 September 1990. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>.

Organization of African Unity (OAU), African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 11 July 1990, CAB/LEG/24.9/49 (1990), available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b38e18.html> [accessed 10 August 2022]

United Nations General Assembly 64/142, Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, 2010, retrieved from < [https://www.unicef.org/protection/alternative\\_care/Guidelines-English.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/protection/alternative_care/Guidelines-English.pdf) >

Marjoribanks, K (2005) Family Environments and Children's Outcomes, Educational Psychology, 25:6, 647-657, DOI: 10.1080/01443410500344704; Viner, R. M., Ozer, E. M., Denny, S., Marmot, M., Resnick, M., Fatusi, A., & Currie, C. (2012). Adolescence and the social determinants of health. Lancet (London, England), 379(9826), 1641-1652. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(12\)60149-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(12)60149-4).

United States Agency for International Development (USAID). (2019, July 17). Advancing protection and care for children in adversity: A U.S. government strategy for international assistance (2019-2023). Retrieved from <https://www.usaid.gov/documents/1866/advancing-protection-and-care-children-adversity>.

In their 2019 Annual Report, ANPPCAN states that

with the high prevalence of child abuse and neglect, not all children who are assessed for reintegration suffice to re-join their families especially if the abuser was a family member. Children may therefore need other forms of temporary care such as kinship care, short and long term foster care, smaller residential care facilities and supervised independent living. (ANPPCAN, 2019) These are considered whilst permanent family homes are found for them especially abused, displaced or children in conflict with law. Among the abused category could be children who have been impregnated or violated by family members.

Over the years, a robust body of evidence has demonstrated that families provide the best environment for a child's development. Alternative Care largely promotes the nurturing of children in safe family care as opposed to institutional care; all children need the security and support of a well-functioning family. Evidence, indicates that safe, stable, nurturing relationships and family environments are essential to preventing child maltreatment and ensuring that all children can reach their full potential. While family-centred care for children is ideal, millions of children in Uganda are at risk of being separated from their parents and families; with many families struggling to effectively care for, protect, and provide for their children, putting at risk their immediate well-being and long-term development.

Theme 6 - Children with Disabilities (also referred to as Children with Special Needs)

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, direct Governments to ensure all children, irrespective of any disability, enjoy their rights without discrimination. CWDs are almost four times more likely to experience violence than non-disabled children, according to a review commissioned by WHO and published in the medical journal *The Lancet*. Findings from the review indicate that children with disabilities are: 3.7 times more likely than non-disabled children to be victims of any sort of violence; 3.6 times more likely to be victims of physical violence; and 2.9 times more likely to be victims of sexual violence. CWDs associated with mental illness or intellectual impairments appear to be among the most vulnerable, with 4.6 times the risk of sexual violence compared with their non-disabled peers.

Risk factors: Children with disabilities are at higher risk of violence due to the following stigma, discrimination, and ignorance about disability, as well as a lack of social support for those who care for them. In these settings and elsewhere, children with communication impairments are hampered

in their ability to disclose abusive experiences. Over the past decade, actors in East Africa have resorted to placing children in institutional care, however studies show that placement of children with disabilities in institutions also increases their vulnerability to violence.

Experiences of physical, sexual, emotional violence or neglect are nearly universal among primary school students in this setting, with more than 95% of all students reporting experiences of violence. Patterns of experiences of violence differed for male and female students, and for disabled students.

Overall, disabled and non-disabled boys reported similar levels of any form of violence, from any perpetrator, however disabled girls were more likely to report violence exposure than non-disabled girls. Disabled girls experience slightly more physical violence overall and nearly twice as much sexual violence as non-disabled girls. For disabled boys, levels of sexual violence are nearly double those of non-disabled boys.

Levels of emotional violence and neglect are similar between disabled and non-disabled boys and girls. In Uganda, disabled girls are at particular risk of violence, notably sexual violence. Schools may be a promising avenue for intervention delivery.

There is no sufficient evidence regarding the extent of the problem of child sexual exploitation and abuse among children with disabilities. There is a mis-match between the hype about cases of Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in CWDs and the number of cases reported to the authorities. Moreover, this is worsened by insufficient disaggregated data on the few known and reported cases of CSEA in CWDs. (UCRNN; Enhancing Access to Justice for Children in Uganda; Double Pain; Disability and Abuse!)

Neglect has been cited as a common occurrence for CWDs; "Many children with especially severe physical and intellectual disabilities are often left on their own by their families. Either locked away in an isolated house, tied to a post or left to wander freely in the communities. This makes them more susceptible to abuse than other children." Perpetrators of abuse take advantage of the fact that many children with disabilities will not be able to identify them or report the incident accurately. (Special Children's Trust Ug; 2022)

Theme 7 - Health (Mental and Physical Health)

The Uganda National Health Policy II states that Uganda is facing an upsurge in the occurrence of non-communicable diseases including mental illness and that mental health disorders confer a heavy

non- fatal disease burden on the nation. Children are not spared either. Children and adolescents are at a greater risk of developing mental health problems since they experience disrupted nurturing and trauma as a result of deprivation and violence. A child's social and emotional development is highly compromised when a parent or primary caregiver is unable to provide the clear boundaries, firm guidance, care, and love that a child requires. The loss of these critical support systems is even more significant when the death is due to terminal illnesses, due to the extra burden of care on the child.

There are several common psychological problems among children depression, aggression, Insomnia, Failure to thrive, Worry about the future, (where they will go, and who will care for them,) helplessness; loss of control, Behavioural problems.

As mentioned earlier, Child marriage increases the risk of teenage pregnancy, which can have a profound effect on the health and lives of young women and contribute to high fertility rates. Current evidence shows that 25 per cent of the 1.2 million pregnancies recorded in Uganda annually are from teenage mothers, with more than 300,000 pregnancies ending in unsafe abortions. While these statistics are gloomy, only 1 in 5 (21 per cent) of girls aged 15–19 are currently using any modern contraceptive method, and the risks of maternal death are even higher among teenage mothers, about 28 per cent. Child marriage violates the health rights of girls and women by negatively affecting their physical and mental health.

Sexual Exploitation and HIV/AIDS are both drivers of Child marriage and / or effects. Another effect that we should all be concerned about is the continued occurrence of teenage pregnancy and child motherhood which has remained a major health and social concern in Uganda because of its association with higher morbidity and mortality for both the mother and child.

Through its National Health Policy, the government of Uganda has planned and implemented the Public Health interventions that include school health. School Health encompasses the provision of health education, screening for and treating common ailments, improvement of environmental sanitation and personal hygiene, and promotion of appropriate nutrition practices. Another area is the one of Strengthening mental health services; its objective is to address the heavy and increasing burden of mental illness in the country, Government will promote and support a basic Primary Mental Health Programme supported by appropriate referral services at the regional and national levels. (Ministry of Health; The Second National Health Policy).

Section 4: Programme Interventions by member Organisations of UCRNN in the promotion and protection of children's rights in respect to Safeguarding and prevention of Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy

#### 4.1 Introduction

Uganda has made important achievements in advancing and promoting the general welfare of children through legislation, programme implementation and national plans for its children. However in order to appreciate the actual realization of these policy implementation and programming one has to look at certain sectors of Violations and Neglect against children. One such core sector is the Right to Protection. In this collective, we look at the situation of Child marriage and Teenage Pregnancies in particular. The information herein is presented both descriptively and thematically. An inventory of the respondent Organisations is appended to this report as an annexure.

#### 4.2 Programmes and Interventions by member Organisations of UCRNN

This section unveils the programmes that were implemented by Member Organisations only under the Umbrella Network of Uganda Child Rights NGOs. These programmes were aimed at preventing and responding to the ills of Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy. The beneficiary districts for these programmes are depicted hereunder for purposes of tracing the impact of these activities. Efforts have been made to cluster the activities in accordance with the intervention themes and not the seven thematic areas of UCRNN. Nevertheless, the themes are still depicted in the narrative.

Districts of coverage by member organisations include:

Central Region; Buikwe, Kampala, Kayunga, Luwero, Mpigi, Gomba, Kyotera, Rakai, Wakiso, Kalangala, Gomba, Mukono,

Masaka

Eastern Region; Bugiri, Busia, Iganga, Katakwi, Mbale, Jinja,

Northern Region; Oyam, Lira, Napak, Nakapiripirit, Moroto, Arua, Gulu, Zombo,

Western Region: Masindi, Hoima, Isingiro, Ibanda, Kisoro, Rukungiri, Mbarara, Kibaale

##### 4.2.1 Community Engagements and Capacity Building

These were in the form of Community dialogues, community drives, workshops and seminars targeting children, local leaders, youths and their parents. Family visits that involved counselling and evangelism sessions. The targeted children included children with disabilities (CWDs) as well;

- Topics included, positive parenting practices,

youth empowerment, prevention of teenage pregnancies, menstrual hygiene, Child rights, how to detect abuse among CWDs, enhancing Legal Aid service provision.

Awareness raising campaigns were carried out in schools; Menstrual management and Rights of children as components for the sensitisation.

- Concern for the Girl Child reported 65 home visits conducted in Kampala and Luwero districts

- During the commemoration of the day of the African child, child advocates conducted community consultations, in which they identified child marriages and teenage pregnancies as one of the harmful practices against children.

The advocates led by Somero Uganda prepared a position paper that was presented to key duty bearers such as the Senior Probation and Social Welfare officer, District Education officer, resident district commissioner and child family protection unit of Police.

- Children were supported to identify child protection issues in their communities through the existing child rights clubs in 20 schools in Busia and Bugiri.

- 1,502 parents/caregivers of children with disabilities trained/skilled with basic disability rehabilitation, nurture and care. 1,670 parents/caregivers of children with disabilities trained with skills and knowledge in promoting Inclusive Education. 180 teachers trained in disability and inclusive education (KATALEMWA CHESHIRE HOME)

- At least 23 caregivers were equipped with HIV prevention, treatment and care skills. 116 children attended the annual Christmas party and every child received a Christmas gift. The children were engaged in group counseling sessions, interactive learning sessions and council meetings. (WOHM)

- RAHAB UGANDA engaged in prevention activities at the community level by creating awareness of the risks of trafficking and CSEC.

Community Case Conferencing:

- 22 community case conferences were conducted in Napak District as a sustainable platform for community members to report cases but also attain a joint effort by stakeholders to address emerging cases as well as providing necessary support to the victims. The total number of people that attended these conferences was 1060 (466 males and 594 females). Among the key stakeholders that participated were child advocates, Local Council chairpersons, Cultural leaders, Community Development Officers, Officers from the Child and Family Protection Unit, officers from the Criminal Investigation Department of the police, Parish Chiefs, Child Protection Champions and Civil Society Organizations. (DWELLING PLACES).

#### **4.2.2 Radio talk shows/ programmes:**

These were aired on various radio stations with a purpose of informing communities on dynamics of child safeguarding and protection.

#### **4.2.3 Production and distribution of IEC materials:**

Efforts were made to produce and distribute IEC materials especially during the off school days (holidays). This was often done by the peer leaders while at the same time they did engage the young people/ children with life skills during the time when they were not attending school.

#### **4.2.4 Child Protection Trainings:**

Organisers of staff trainings engaged both staff and parents as beneficiaries of these, while in Lira (Barr, Agali and Itek sub-counties) District Child Protection committees benefitted as well. These trainings targeting the child protection committees were aimed at strengthening the child protection structures at community level. The existing Child Protection policies were reviewed and signed off rendering them more authentic.

Trained 220 community leaders on the rights of children with disabilities, Trained 22 staff members of local partners on child safeguarding. (KATALEMWA CHESHIRE HOME FOR REHABILITATION SERVICES)

Made logistical and technical contributions (training) to district and sub county child well-being committees in Busia and Bugiri districts. During these meetings, strategies to prevent and respond to emerging and existing child protection issues such as child marriage and teenage pregnancy were discussed and action points developed for further implementation. (SOMERO UGANDA)

#### **4.2.5 Case Management:**

Member organisations received and attended to cases of sexual violence that had been brought to their attention. The successes that were registered in handling these cases were attributed to the support that was provided for enabling referrals. Community based Child protection actors in some areas under SOMERO UGANDA were facilitated with case management funds to respond to urgent identified and reported VAC cases including those related to child marriage and teenage pregnancy.

#### **4.2.6 Research:**

PLAN INTERNATIONAL UGANDA (PIU) carried out a study on social norms and child marriage in four districts in North Western Uganda i.e Adjumani, Nebbi, Pakwach and Zombo. The report is ground breaking in providing useful information to inform strategic programmatic direction on interventions to address social barriers and norms that drive Child, Early and Forced marriage in Uganda. The report shows a high prevalence of child marriage

at 48% among girls, higher than the national estimates of 34% (UNICEF 2019). PIU has since signed Memoranda of Understanding with cultural institutions in West Nile and Eastern Uganda to proactively tackle negative social norms. The leaders of these cultural institutions have made public pronouncements denouncing child, early and forced marriages and other negative social norms driving violence against children and young people and were proactive in the Government multi-media campaigns against the campaign to end child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) and harmful social practices and norms.

AfriChild presented key highlights in regard to Research; AfriChild exists to generate research that informs policy and practice for the wellbeing of children in Uganda and in Africa at large. In this regard therefore, the following were realized;

Launch of the National Child-Focused Research Agenda 2016 – 2020 – This research agenda represents a real opportunity for the Government of Uganda to establish a systematic approach to generating a timely and constant flow of rigorous research to inform policy discussions and decisions and to advocate for sustained and cost-effective investments in children at national and sub-national level.

Budget Analysis for Child Protection Services with ChildFund; AfriChild Centre in partnership with ChildFund International Country office commissioned this Budget Analysis of the Child Protection in Uganda aimed to analyze Government of Uganda (GoU) national and sub-district level budget allocation trends; disbursements and expenditure for the past five financial years from 2017 to 2022 with a specific focus on children's issues.

#### **4.2.7 Education support:**

PLAN INTERNATIONAL UG implemented the school re-entry campaigns and 24,334 girls and boys were able to return to school. Other implementers, such as Initiative for Mtoto Wa Shule, UNBOUND, Zima Child Hope Africa, Every Child Ministries were at the helm of supporting school going children with provision of tuition and scholastic materials.

185 children and young people were supported with educational materials and costs under the Education support programme; of these 57 sat for Leavers' examinations at primary and both levels of secondary education. 5 of the total number graduated in various disciplines including one at University – WELLS OF HOPE MINISTRIES.

One member organization reported an enrollment increase from 55 in 2021 to 74 in 2022 and 85%

retention of children at the Early Learning Program at their center, while 5 of these were enrolled in the mean stream schools in Wakiso Municipality on the inclusive education program. These children also benefited from other services that were provided at the Centre such as speech and language, physiotherapy and occupational therapy. Over 60 children on the Community Rehabilitation Program were also supported with therapy services.

RAHAB UGANDA reported efforts in supporting formal education at all levels so that pupil /student retention is upheld. In this way children that have been exposed to CSAs are enabled to continue with education. The Organisation registered 18 of these with their support. The organisation also encouraged the creation and functionalising of safe spaces where children can pray, read, rest and play to benefit from the coaching activities aimed at them becoming renewed children. This form of survivor rehabilitation provides a safe alternative so as to break the cycle of violence and exploitation

100 primary school going children in Kyotera District were under the Organisation's sponsorship programme of SUCCESS. This number included 17 children who had stayed out of school even after the lockdown was lifted. SUCCESS; Students with Urgent needs for Comprehensive and Continuous Education Support for School retention Program was implemented in Kyotera District and slums of Kampala Capital City. Overall, UGX 10, 449, 800 was raised locally through PEIS; Parents Education Insurance Scheme innovation between May and December 2022. A total of UGX 7,000,000 was disbursed to the partner school for the PEIS beneficiaries' education, and UGX 3,449,800 (33%) was raised by parents in PEIS groups and saved for their children's education after PEIS sponsorship. (INITIATIVE FOR MTOTO WA SHULE).

In a bid to reduce or prevent out migration especially in the Karamoja as well as reduce the risk of school dropout, 156 children/ youth (58 Male and 98 Female) were supported to have access to education, a fundamental right for children in Uganda. Although the target was 80 children for the year, the organisation was able to support more children to complete the school year and transition to the next level of education. 120 children (80F, 40M) from Karamoja region and 36 children (18F, 18M) – Outside Karamoja. Children were supported with school fees, scholastic materials and personal effects for private use, thus fulfilling the right to education. (DWELLING PLACES).

#### **4.2.8 Promoting Girls' Education**

Through the Keeping Children at School agenda, FAPAD collaborated with the American Council for Women, Peace and Security (ACWPS) to replace

the roofing of 1(One) classroom block at Alao Public Primary School in Oyam District, Northern Uganda. Engaging Learners in matters affecting them: 739 children participated in education chats, raising over 50 key issues putting them at risk of academic failure, poor attendance and expanding their dropout risk. 328 parents and 28 teachers were engaged in discussions to address matters raised by the parents.

Child Aid Uganda – CHAU was at the helm of paying school fees and provision of scholastic materials in the districts of Kyotera and Ssembabule. All these initiatives were aimed at keeping the girl child in school especially after the Government lockdowns caused by the Covid19 pandemic.

#### **4.2.9 Restoration of Emotional Wellbeing:**

a) In addition to Case Management practices, service providers extended counselling services and carried out activities that integrate counselling into survivor case management to ensure that survivors return to a supportive environment. The benefitting children received psychosocial support through physical & online counselling, therapy and Interactive Learning Sessions.(WOHM)

b) The Psychosocial and counselling sessions with adults demonstrated client participatory engagements that resulted into supporting their families with proper and adequate diets as bread winners.

c) Through the drop in centre that was set up by RAHAB UGANDA psycho-social support, job skills training and legal aid was provided to both children, their families and the young people.

#### **4.2.10 Health**

a) 150 Families in the target communities (Mende, Wakiso Municipality, Nansana Town Council, and Nabweru) were supported with nutritional food hampers to minimize cases of malnutrition.(ANGELS CENTRE FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS)

b) 45 children were inspired to test for HIV after the sensitisation sessions within the respective communities

c) 5,644 children that were infested with jiggers were treated out of the 7,547 hence reaching out to 75% of the total number. They all received basic health education on the causes, prevention and effects of jiggers and ways of living jigger free – (SOLE HOPE) safety items such as 18,358 pairs of shoes were distributed to the children as a mechanism to prevent jigger infestation. Vulnerable women and the elderly as well were beneficiaries of these items.

d) ZIMA CHILD HOPE AFRICA held preventive campaigns with the aim of improving the healthy lifestyles of children and young people. These campaigns were code named; True Love waits, Sex

Must wait. Positive parenting tips were handled in communities while boys and girls were sensitised on issues of early sexuality.

e) 2,112 CWDs were supported to receive health rehabilitative services including therapies, corrective and cosmetic surgeries and other specialized health care interventions. (KATALEMWA CHESHIRE).

f) 12,000 households reached by a trained health worker with timely maternal child health and nutrition messages. (WORLD VISION).

#### **4.2.11 Access to Justice For Children:**

Under the Rights and Justice Activities Public dialogue meetings on enhancing Legal Aid Service Provision in Uganda were held. Three (3) legal awareness radio talk shows in collaboration with actors of Justice, Law and Order sector, 646 complainants of Human rights violation in Lango Region managed through Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms during mobile legal aid clinics and on-spot legal aid. Additional services provided to beneficiaries included psychosocial and referral services to underscore the often-intersectional experiences they faced.

RAHAB UGANDA engaged with law enforcement officers in a bid to and activate legal reforms so as to protect victims and survivors of trafficking. Some Organisations such as CHILD AID UGANDA – CHAU spearheaded the formulation of byelaws in so as to bring perpetrators of Child marriages to face the law.

#### **4.2.12 Economic Empowerment:**

Communities were trained on the need to operate Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) to support and boost family income. Parents were encouraged and empowered to join in the VSLAs as a means to maintain their children in schools and access essential services. In total 10 saving groups were established so as to help increase income for members instead of waiting for their spouses to provide Kameza money (money commonly left on the table by husbands for groceries and meals). (CONCERN FOR THE GIRL CHILD).

38 families of CWDs were supported with Income Generating Activities aimed at increasing opportunities for employment and livelihood. 43 young people with disabilities were supported with tools and equipment as a boost for improved livelihoods. 10 Village saving and loan associations (VSLAs) for caregivers of CWDs to improve household income were established. (KATALEMWA CHESHIRE HOME FOR REHABILITATION SERVICES).

### 4.2.13 Strengthening partnerships

Partnerships and Collaboration with like-minded organisations were initiated and registered progress of growth;

#### KATALEMWA CHESHIRE HOME FOR REHABILITATION SERVICES

- Engaged in 13 local and international networks and partnership meetings to promote rights of children with disabilities
- Engaged in 16 advocacy meetings with decision makers that include, government, MDAs and CSOs.

#### COMPASSION INTERNATIONAL

- In May 2022, a team from Compassion International met with a representative from the Child and Family Protection Unit of the Uganda Police Force to discuss Child Protection ahead of the National Martyrs' day celebrations. A press release concerning Protection of children during Martyrs' Day was aired. This supported the safety of children at the Namugongo shrine and the neighboring areas on Martyrs' Day. Compassion International contributed 1,300 wristbands with a provision for parents'/guardians'/caretakers' phone numbers and the tagline; Known, Loved, and Protected for brand awareness. As a result of this engagement, Compassion International established a relationship with the office of the Commissioner of the Child and Family Protection Unit (CFPU) and have since collaborated with Compassion International on other engagements.
- In addition, Compassion, together with UCRNN, Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Child Development, coordinated a virtual campaign to celebrate the World Children's Day.
- On 8th December 2022, a Communication, Advocacy, and Media Working Group (CAMWG) under UCRNN was formed to bring together communication professionals from the member organizations and enable them to harness resources and collaborate on joint communication, media, and advocacy initiatives. The Public Relations Specialist of Compassion International was voted Chairperson of the CAMWG. The organizations currently represented on the working group include ChildsiFoundation, The AfriChild Center and Every

#### CHILD MINISTRIES. AFRICHILD

Two papers were presented at the Sexual Violence Research Forum in Mexico namely.

a) Childhood Sexual Violence and Low Education Attainment Among 18–24-year-olds in Uganda. Findings from the National Violence Against Children Survey (2018)

b) Risk Factors for Sexual Violence Among

13–17-year-old Girls In Uganda: Findings From The National Violence Against Children Survey (2018)

#### DWELLING PLACES

Strengthened collaboration with the Napak District Local Government with a view to work together so as to ensure a reduction in the influx of children to the streets of Kampala and other major towns. The results of this collaboration also ensured that children and youths received a positive reception.

#### UCRNN Secretariat

Meanwhile, at the Secretariat, UCRNN worked throughout the year to engage the Government in different ways including providing supplementary funding during the organizing of the Day of African Child Children's side event which took place on 21st June 2022 at Hotel Africana in partnership with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development; the Safe to Learn symposium which took place from 1st to 3rd, 2022 at Speke Resort, Munyonyo in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Sports; and continuous support in handling child protection cases in partnership with the Uganda Police, Child and Family Protection Unit; among other key partnerships.

#### 4.2.14 Alternative Care Placement into Foster care:

21 children were thriving in foster families and through the support of well-wishers the families received Christmas packages. (WOHM)

EVERY CHILD MINISTRIES reported having engaged with five children from special circumstances that necessitated their placement in foster care. Due to the background of each of the children, the foster care placements were necessary and reflected Organisational efforts to have them protected.

10 children were generally placed into short-term foster care with non-relatives and school authorities to access education and enjoy a safer space. (UNBOUND)

12 children (6 males, and 6 females) were fostered by Ugandan nationals, while 1 male child was fostered by non-nationals. 17 children were reunited with their families; under the alternative care program of SANYU BABIES HOME, follow-up visits were made to 50 families as a means to ensure that the children in foster care and those that had been reunited settled well in their new environment.

#### Reintegration

The Reintegration process of rehabilitating girls back into their families and communities was a great achievement for RAHAB UGANDA.

Note: Organisations such as Angels Centre for

Children with Special Needs reported not to have placed any child in Foster Care

### Gate Keeping

All the Children that were served by ANGEL'S CENTRE FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS remained in their families under the Principle of gatekeeping. Their homes were their points of contact for support services as planned by the Organisations.

Protection of Children

Dwelling Places conducted 65 street outreaches on the streets of Kampala and interacted with 682 children (349 boys and 333 girls). out of these 205 children, 90% of girls from Napak District were rescued, rehabilitated, and reintegrated back with their families in the year 2022.

### 4.2.15 Combating Child Trafficking

Journey of Hope, Mass Awareness Campaign

In the year 2022, DWELLING PLACES conducted a mass awareness campaign dubbed Journey of Hope. The mass awareness campaign with #SchoolsNotStreets climaxed with an 18-day walk from Kampala to Napak District majorly focussing on Child Trafficking, Unsafe Migration, and Child Sexual Exploitation, especially of the Karamojong children, through street begging, sexual exploitation, and other hazardous forms of labor among other factors. The Flag Off was officiated by H.E Dr. Karin Boven the Dutch Ambassador at the Parliament of Uganda on the 4th of July 2022. In her speech, she declared "May each step of the Journey Of Hope be a proclamation that these children deserve better."



Journey of Hope participants during the flag off event at the Parliament of Uganda.

### Development and Launching of 4 sub-county bylaws in Napak District

DWELLING PLACES in partnership with Terre des Hommes Netherlands supported four sub-counties in the Napak district (Lokopo, Lopeei, Lorengecora, and Matany) in the development of bylaws on the prevention of child trafficking and sexual exploitation of children. These were developed and

approved by the district in June 2022, printed, and launched in July of the same year at Napak District Headquarters.

### National Dialogue

On 22nd September 2022, a national dialogue on child trafficking in Uganda was held. This was organized by TdH Netherlands and Dwelling Places in collaboration with Uganda Child Rights NGO Network and Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons in Uganda under the theme "Taking Stock of the Child Trafficking Response: Has Justice been served?". The National dialogue was hybrid with both online and physical participation with seventy-two attendees that included government officials, CSOs, and media. The chief guest was the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs. There was also social media engagement through Twitter where more than 2,403 posts were made with a potential impact of 9,728,636 people and a reach of 2,060,113 People.

### 4.2.16 Child Empowerment

A total of 1,150 (552 Boys; 598 Girls) children were engaged through 38 child rights clubs including 8 community-based clubs targeting out-of-school children. These were engaged through training, club exchange visits, experience sharing and learning, debate and music dance, drama, poetry, and child-friendly competition. These were part of efforts aimed at the delivery of information and knowledge on advocacy against all forms of social norms that make girls and boys vulnerable to exploitative labor, child trafficking, and child marriage.

### Children in Refugee settings

On the whole, WORLD VISION reached out to 1.1 million children through different Child protection interventions. Reached out to 12,000 refugee children with vital services through child-friendly spaces.

### 4.3 Outcomes

This section outlines how the prior detailed achievements contributed to the welfare of the children and the communities within the respective districts.

#### 4.3.1 Realisation of rights

Through the various program interventions as depicted in the previous section, enormous achievements were recorded and realized. All these have a reflection towards the realization of the rights of children generally.

a) Through Service provision, children of incarcerated parents were able and continue to grow up into healthy and more responsible citizens and change

agents in their communities.

WELLS OF HOPE used the mobile phone call mode of communication to reach out to reconnect parents in prison to their children who had been left at home. "All hope was not lost", the communication reignited the bond between parents and their children.

b) The knowledge that was acquired from the partnership training, enabled the organizations to make informed decisions in matters that concern rights violations of children as well as staff and stakeholders.

1. According to Sole Hope the implemented activities helped to holistically restore the well-being of the vulnerable people, mainly children, in the communities of the Busoga sub-region, Bugisu sub-region, and part of Buganda region specifically Buikwe and Kayunga Districts, as well as part of Western Kenya.

2. Children were supported to remain and re-join school after the COVID-19 pandemic; a lot was done to ensure that girls especially do not make careless choices of indulging in sexual, activity hence underage pregnancies.

### **4.3.2 Rights referral Pathways enriched**

Access to information and awareness on the existing referral pathways, rights of children, and access to justice greatly benefitted the communities where they were carried out. The interventions enhanced the capacities of the Community Child Protection Structures in case of management through for example the Alternative Dispute Resolution at the grassroots level and also contributed to promoting education for children and ensuring that the children enroll and remain in school as a means of reducing redundancy that could have otherwise led to child marriage and teenage pregnancy.

### **4.3.3 An empowered community of CwSN**

Due to the interventions for children with special needs (CwSN), the children gained a degree of independence evident from their attempts at practicing self-help skills. Their expression and interpersonal communication greatly improved.

"Because of our achievements in 2022, children benefitting from our programs have achieved a higher degree of independence compared to their earlier state; they exhibit improved fine and gross motor skills as well as self-help and self-regulation skills such as bathing and feeding on their own. Their expression and communication skills are full of creativity and lead to better understanding by the recipient, in addition to writing and reading skills."

### **4.3.4 Strengthened capacity of community child actors**

Child protection actors were facilitated with case management funds to respond to urgent identified and reported VAC cases including those related to child marriage and teenage pregnancy. Dialogues were conducted to sensitize the community on the dangers of child marriages and teenage pregnancies.

### **4.3.5 Reduced Mortality:**

In 2022 there was a decrease in the number of malnutrition cases and number of deaths attributed to malnutrition among families of children with special needs in the target communities. (Wakiso and Kampala). Deaths resulting from neglect were also prevented since parents and guardians became more responsive to the needs of their children. This was a result of community sensitization and interactions in over 12,000 households under the support of World Vision.

Correlation with the National Child Policy: The above outcomes do correspond with the National Child Policy which emphasizes priority actions that aim to achieve the specific policy objectives across health and survival, education and development, Child Protection, and Participation.

### **4.4 Children affected by Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation in numbers (CSA&E)**

In this section, we highlight in numbers the number of children affected by CSA&E that the Organisations were able to reach out to;

1. Six organizations did not encounter cases of CSA&E; explanations for this were given. For example, an organization whose scope was to work with CwSN did not at any one time interface with such, while others were just setting up the community structures, therefore, cases had not yet been reported to them

2. 2,509 children were reached directly by 10 organizations; the highest having handled 2,268 while the lowest handled 1 child. Among these were 30 girls who had been rescued from prostitution and 15 girls with disabilities; 13 of these were pregnant. The variance in the figures depended on the scope of the organization, its staff capacity, and its financial base. Another factor was the duration of working with this category of children in the respective community.

a. SOMERO UGANDA alone handled 2,268 children

b. RAHAB UGANDA 30 Girls

c. UNBOUND handled 98 children

d. KATALEMWA CHESHIRE 15 girls

3. Plan International Uganda reached out to 83,227 children and young people with both direct and indirect services, information, and preventative

strategies such as economic empowerment to families.

The number of children and young people affected by CSA that were handled during the year 2022 by member organizations was close to 86,000. This established number does not however distinguish between the number of males and females. In the same regard, some organizations did not have a definite record of the actual figures that were handled. Organizations are advised to improve on this aspect in the next year of reporting.

#### **4.4.1 Enabling structures for access to children exposed to Child Sexual Abuse & Exploitation**

To ensure the effective delivery of the above-mentioned interventions member organizations were enabled to reach out to the children affected by CSA&E through both external Government and community structures such as Probation and Welfare officers, Community Development officers, Police, Local Council Authorities, Child protection committees, Village Health Teams, NGOs, cultural and traditional institutions, refugee welfare committees, caregivers and parents, School structures (teachers, senior women and men), Para social workers and Peer

#### **Educators.**

According to member organisations: The problem of sexual abuse is bigger than what the Government and practitioners expect and project. The vice has been normalized in various communities hence the increased incidences of sexual violence among children. Many actors only relate to the results of sexual violence which is pregnancy but there are many underlying issues i.e. sexual harassment, ignorance from communities on the dangers of sexual violence, absentee parents, and poor health outcomes including mental health. All these and others require maximum attention for programmatic intervention all the time.

#### **4.5 Prevention of CM&TP Components that were difficult to implement**

Prevention of Child marriage and Teenage pregnancy formed major program areas for most of the Organisations. Out of the all responses from 22 Organisations, 2 of these did not implement this particular thematic area, while 3 others did not encounter any planned components that were difficult to implement. The most common shortfall in this regard was the lack of adequate resources to fulfill the planned programs.

#### **Overall, the following components were difficult to implement:**

1. Case management,
2. Provision of vocational skilling to vulnerable

children and survivors of CM&TP

3. Some actors registered that the child safeguarding policies that were developed were dormant and that limited involvement of the beneficiaries was registered

#### **Other disabling factors that were documented in this regard included:**

1. Influencing deep-rooted negative social norms is still a challenge.
2. Ensuring children enroll and remain in school until completion is still challenging
3. There is non-disclosure of marriages involving children especially when child actors and other stakeholders such as Local Council members are involved.
4. Efforts to break through the traditionally rooted beliefs of indulging in child marriages seem to be far-fetched. Even with several efforts through mass awareness, mindset change was not easy to attain.
5. Community dialogues that relate to Gender Based Violence (GBV) did not attract the interest of men. Their reaction to the principles associated with GBV was very negative. They did not support the programme and due to such attitude programme implementation was affected. This had been hitherto planned as one of the ways to curb the vice of Child Marriage.

### **SECTION 5 MAJOR BARRIERS TO CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES AND RIGHTS IN 2022**

This section presents the major barriers faced by member organizations in their desire to support children to fully enjoy their rights through basic service provision.

5.1 Basic services for children are a fundamental right and cannot be underrated; neither are they negotiable. However, due to certain conditions and barriers, these rights may not be fully achieved as expected. This section outlines some of the major barriers faced in the quest for access to services as recorded by the member Organisations. Every situation is complex and children have faced several barriers simultaneously. Inaccessibility to basic services and rights for a particular set of children may be a result of a combination of multiple barriers, in such cases, problems can be adequately and sustainably addressed only through a combination of strategies that recognize the complexity of barriers.

- a. Household Poverty and failure to have reliable income:  
One of the main barriers that various families face in accessing basic services and rights is poverty at

the household level which facilitates poor or limited access to service delivery. This very situation limited the ability of parents to provide basic services to their children. This led to girls dropping out of school to work and financially support their families. Such situations as well have led to food shortages, girls often miss out or are fed at least and last. Then when they are too weak and unwell to attend school, they either miss class or are withdrawn from school altogether to help with domestic chores thus leading to being over-burdened.

This situation also led to families not being able to access medical care for their children who in the end succumbed to Pneumonia (5 lives were lost)

The cost of living during the year was so high that parents/guardians could not afford basic needs such as food and other expenses towards the welfare of their children.

b. Inability to access social services and planning programs

Currently, children and families of children with disabilities (CWDs) are still stigmatized in their communities which affects their access to different services, for example, some mainstream schools fail to admit children with disabilities and the teachers themselves do not have the capacity, and skills to teach them alongside the "ordinary" children. This hindered a large number of children with disabilities from accessing education services in mainstream schools.

Inclusion of CWDs as outlined in The Special Needs and Inclusive Education Policy (Uganda) is yet to be fully implemented due to non-financing from the Government in this sector. Financial and Human Resources are not adequately aligned to meet the provisions as fully addressed in the National Disability Inclusive Guidelines for Uganda; 2017 thus posing a big challenge to practitioners and service providers

In the same regard, preventative and rehabilitative packages of services are not comprehensive enough to ensure holistic inclusion and participation for the CWDs. Where they exist they are only in referral hospitals where just a few caregivers or children can easily access. The same rehabilitative package does not exist even for victims of Child trafficking and CSEC.

Due to limited funding during the year 2022, out of the 120 children under the CBR program only 60 children were able to receive free therapeutical services as planned, others were literary not supported hence the failure to receive their needed daily therapy.

c. An overwhelmed Child Protection sector  
Child protection actors are overwhelmed with multiple roles, for example at the county level the Community Development Officer (CDO) is responsible for family, women, and children affairs, and this contributes to being overwhelmed by the workload. This situation is coupled with low or no budget to handle reported cases at the sub-county and district levels.

Most of the Child Protection structures that were assigned the role of handling child-related matters in many of the places were non-functional and therefore posed a big gap in implementing policies, laws, and guidelines that were in place to protect our children.

Realistically families and their children were not reached easily at the time of need hence abrogating the principle of "avoidance of delay"

d. Inadequate finances for the Organisations to implement planned programs and activities

Organizations usually fail to attract as much finances as required to implement planned programs for the protection and promotion of children. Government structures at the Local Government level as well have been ill-funded for long including Central Government Ministries that promote child protection and promotion of Rights (Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development among others)

The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic left a financial constraint in many sectors; The Rights and Justice activities by different stakeholders were affected by negative donor relations caused by the pandemic and the cuts thereafter.

Many Government and Non-governmental bodies today are yet to stabilize, which has hindered children's access to basic services and rights.

Insufficient funding to facilitate activities such as legal representation, medication, and community dialogues among others. Most organisations and public sectors are not self-reliant, they all depend on donor funds which aren't reliable at all since most Organisations have suffered budget cuts even with running Contracts.

In one of the Organisations that experienced donor cuts, girls who were being accommodated in hostels prior resorted to paying their rental bills and other basic needs with difficulty.

e. Ignorance about the Rights of Children

The Ignorance about their rights has also been a huge barrier to children's access to most of the basic services and rights in 2022, many children have had no access to education services while those who may have the opportunity have denied themselves the right to because of bad peer groups

and other negative associations. Children have not stood up to challenge their parents on the need for them as children to continue with education amidst the escalating educational costs and poor health of parents.

Upholding children's rights to education, health, and dignity is an essential role of the parent. When a parent becomes sick or dies, protection of these rights suffers. Studies show that HIV infection in mothers has a strong impact on the health of their children.

Additionally, the barriers hindering the right to education, the same affect the children's ability to enjoy other rights, hence exposing them to further human rights abuses and exploitation that in the long run result in unemployment, poor livelihood, high disease burden such as HIV for young girls who end up seeking survival in prostitution, and living in intergenerational chronic poverty among other life threatening social barriers.

The Government too often falls short in its efforts to raise awareness about the rights of children, but children with disabilities are especially vulnerable to being deprived of the knowledge and tools they need. This is in part owing to their social isolation; for example, schools are often focal points for sharing knowledge and awareness of children's rights but millions of children with disabilities do not attend mainstream schools, excluding them from this source of information about where to go and whom to call for support.

f. Poor Parenting:

Most parents have not had positive parenting practices which has hindered the children from accessing the major and basic services. Parenting has been a focus of much interest and research for a few decades. Effective parenting has been almost universally acknowledged as being an essential part of child development.

The quality of parenting provides a crucial developmental setting that influences children's growth and well-being. Previous findings have shown that parents in resource-constrained societies are significantly more likely than more affluent parents to face a variety of problems.

Effective communication with children is described as one of the foundations of good parenting the children have fallen short of it, They have eventually lost a good parental relationship and end up losing most of the information and then failed to access different kinds of services. As children become adolescents, they normally get more involved with

peers and talk less to parents, a situation that sometimes causes conflict and misunderstanding in the parent-adolescent relationship.

g. Family Separation

Many children who are being served by member Organisations were separated from their families due to the socio-economic hardships in communities and the country at large. Parents migrated to neighboring Kenya in search of job opportunities and spousal relationships. This has rendered the children to remain without parental care.

Such children could not easily access basic services due to the limited alternative care options; and the failure for them to reconnect with their biological families again. Worth noting here is that some children were heading households hence no proper parental guidance concerning their rights and provision of basic needs.

h. Corruption tendencies

During the year 2022, member organizations encountered pockets of corruptive tendencies by both local leaders and enforcement personnel. This was in the form of "conditional requests" to cater for fuel expenses, lunch, and communication "airtime" to facilitate the arrest of perpetrators and others abetting crimes and violations against children. Failure to extend this form of finances greatly hindered access to justice for the children within the jurisdiction where the injurious crimes were committed. The duty bearers were seen to become Uncooperative due to the failure of partners to finance the operations resulting in nonresponse to complaints of violations.

In one of the Approved Children's Homes, the PSWOs were reluctant to furnish Courts and stakeholders with the required progress reports hence delaying the placement processes. The delays were not satisfactorily justified hence dubbed as fraud.

Corruption poses a significant threat to our country Uganda and the children that we are mandated to protect. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) provides for the Protection of Children from Abuse and Neglect. (Art 19) Children shall be protected from abuse and neglect. States shall provide programs for the prevention of abuse and treatment of those who have suffered abuse. The same Convention also provides for the right to be protected from harmful traditional practices and Sexual Exploitation (Art. 34); Children shall be protected from sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution and involvement in pornography. Therefore, corruption undermines democratic institutions hence contributing to governmental instability and eroding the trust that is already created for the protection of children.

i. Escalating cases of Domestic violence  
This had effects on family social cohesion and household production. In Rakai and Wakiso Districts, for example, organizations with active programs there decried the many cases of family wrangles and broken relationships resulting in Domestic violence. In such scenarios children are exposed to violence and separation from their parents; ultimately appropriate alternative care options may not be followed. As researchers continue to study the behavioral, emotional, and psychological impact of exposure to violence on children, a complex picture is unfolding. Although there is substantial evidence to suggest a relation between exposure and adjustment problems, there is considerable variability in the extent to which children are affected, some children may appear relatively resilient to problems. Domestic violence disrupts the social cohesion within families and communities.

j. Cultural practices  
Parents force children into marriage in exchange for monetary value due to poverty as the basis for their actions. This applied to most major towns in rural districts. The scenarios in Kyotera and Luwero are no different. The double burden of being both young and female relegates thousands of adolescent girls to the margins of society where their rights are disregarded and their safety is affected. Some communities and traditions believe that if girls are introduced to marriage at an earlier age it prevents “unwanted pregnancies”. The cultural rules and social norms that influence the behavior of females and males are often felt most acutely as the young person moves into adulthood. Girls, in general, face a host of disadvantages. Although many more girls are receiving a basic education, they are often denied the same opportunities as boys, treated as inferior, and socialized to have low self-esteem. At the onset of puberty, or even before, many girls are pulled out of school and forced into early marriage and pregnancy. Both girls and boys were as well forced into exploitative labor as a means of survival.

k. High costs of education/ school dropouts  
Learners who are not on the current programs of member organizations experience high drop-out rates according to member organizations; while those on the programs for educational support sometimes drop out of school due to family instability and additional costs that are exorbitantly high. 133 learners supported by UNBOUND were unable to complete basic education (Primary Seven), 33 out of these were children below 18 years.

6 out of 10 Children in Uganda drop out of school due to costs associated with education. This conforms with a report titled, “Measuring education

sector performance in Pallisa District; Comparative Uganda Primary Education analysis for 2012/2018 and 2014/2020 primary schools cycles- 3rd edition” which was conducted by Citizen Initiative for Democracy and Development – Uganda (CIDD-UG), an NGO, which revealed that 6 out of 10 female pupils in Pallisa district dropped out of school before completing primary education;

l. Hostile communities;  
In some instances, community members were hostile to Organisational staff for example when social workers returned the children to their families. They threatened staff and the children stating that the children were not accommodative especially those that had been rescued from the streets. This attitude made the situation complex since social workers could not easily work in some communities due to the risks involved.

## 5.2 Challenges within Member Organisations

*This section provides insight into what member organizations presented as challenges within their organizations.*

a. Inadequate manpower – some organizations cited the inadequacy of social workers and case workers in their quest to practice proper safeguarding and protection of children through timely response. Organizations working with street-connected children and sexually abused children were overwhelmed with the numbers of children within their reach to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in resettlement, medical examinations, case assessments, rehabilitation, and referrals

b. Funding instability; the donor funding curve was very unstable hence rendering organisations unable to meet the many demands of the communities with respect to protection of the vulnerable families and children

c. Unmet Training needs; the section of Learning and Development was still very wanting to the extent that member organizations sometimes served without the actual technical knowledge and expertise to handle children’s issues safely.

## SECTION 6 KEY LESSONS LEARNT DURING PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION IN THE YEAR 2022

6.1 Collaborative Synergies:

A big number of organisations cited working with Government structures as being very key in Programme implementation and that it contributes

to faster realization of results and is sustainable. "Working within the existing government structures is effective and sustainable" according to UNBOUND KAMPALA

SOLE HOPE Inc recognised that strengthening stakeholder engagements at the different levels of contact i.e. families, community, Police units and Local Governments for more accountability and re-echo institutional and stakeholder's roles to curb the vice of Child marriage and Teenage Pregnancy. These also highlighted the need to collaborate amongst one another as CSOs leading to bigger results with less resources, yet efficient and effective. A multi-sectoral approach amongst one another was also among the lessons learnt in addition to Advocacy - David Bwangu; Inclusion Support.

### 6.2 Gaps in the Quest for Justice for Children

- Existing structures and Platforms in place for reporting and receiving Violations against children are not child-friendly. These avenues (Phone lines, suggestion boxes) are administered by adults who are sometimes perpetrators, sympathizers, or accomplices.
- The Litigation process for Capital offences is quite lengthy to the extent that witnesses and other concerned parties lose interest hence the successful management of the case is futile.
- Children fear to provide evidence against perpetrators who may have authority over them such as teachers, local leaders, and parents/guardians.

### 6.3 Psychosocial support and counseling

- To ensure successful re-integration of children that have faced the wrath of marriage and related sexual violence it is very important to have individual and family counselling initiatives. RAHAB UGANDA realized that it is also pertinent to integrate family and community counseling into survivor case management to ensure that survivors return to a supportive environment.

Family and community counseling initiatives should always be integrated into survivor case management to ensure that survivors return to a

- supportive environment. A member Organisation, Rahab Uganda, set up a drop-in center to offer psycho-social support, job skills training, and also Legal Aid, instead of full-time shelters. Drop-in centers generate results faster.

### 6.4 Participation of Children

Child participation is key in ensuring child protection gaps are closed; it promotes self-esteem and confidence for the children. (SOMERO UGANDA).

Young adults are an important resource in supporting the participation of children. According to youths the space and opportunity to share their

knowledge and experience, facilitates the younger children to draw lessons and make different healthy choices. Child participation must be built into every aspect of the planning for an event or process involving children. This may not only involve them to just take part but also to allow their opinions to influence planned activities that will benefit them. (DWELLING PLACES).

### 6.5 Schools and Safe Places

Schools are a safety net for the resettled children in their community and lead to sustainable reintegration. The school closure exposed children to sexual abuse, trafficking, and exploitation which has led to the increase of children in street situations. Some of the children who were sent home for school fees, especially in Karamoja did not go back to school to complete their last term in school instead they were sent to look for jobs through street begging and other casual work. So the disruption in school attendance should be eradicated as much as possible

### 6.6 Other Factors

Children with disabilities have got specific needs that need to be addressed on a case by case basis; the type of disability and the socioeconomic status of the family must always be put into consideration during intervention - Ekisa Ministries

Partnership is key in addressing issues of Child Abuse with both state and non-state actors including community structures such as VHTs, Local Council Leaders, and Religious leaders - Concern For The Girl Child

Child-friendly and age-appropriate information is essential to give children the same access to information as adults - Dwelling Places

## **SECTION 7: SUPPORT FROM GOVERNMENT AND DUTY BEARERS**

7.1 The Local Governments (Community-Based Services Department) in the respective districts provided the required support whenever requested; this included partnering with member organizations and other organizations to commemorate the Day of the African Child that takes place every June of the year. This way the State, through the Local Governments, was renewing its commitment to the protection of all children. These also spearheaded the task of sensitizing communities on their responsibilities towards the care of children, Police were at the forefront of arresting perpetrators and investigating cases of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation.

Through Local Government support one organization was able to have access to free medication for the children at a Government health

facility very first Thursday of the month. In the same regard, the organization received a grant for young mothers to start up businesses; sewing machines were procured for

8 mothers which they will use after the training in tailoring skills. In this way, it was envisaged that through this training and support, they would be able to cater to the needs of their children.

Member Organisations pride themselves in Government support through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the respective Department at both Local Government and Central Government levels. "Duty bearers provided us with a conducive environment to operate in the respective districts by signing Memoranda Of Understanding which enabled us to operate"

A member Organisation applauded the "R model" of Child Protection within the communities. The R model is a professional practice that entails RECOGNIZE, RECORD, REPORT, AND REFER any form of exploitation. This was ranked the highest form of support that they received from duty bearers in partnership with Civil society.

According to Wells Of Hope Ministries;

- Uganda Prisons Service provided access to inmates who are Wells of Hope direct beneficiaries. Children were able to interact with their parents which enhanced bonding.
- Local council leaders in communities helped to identify and follow up with families. Their recommendations helped in decision-making.
- Probation Officers helped to ensure that children are placed in families.
- The Police (Child and Family Protection Unit) helped in identifying children in need of support.

The Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development together with Kampala Capital City Authority provided oversight direction to Dwelling Places and other partners in ensuring the interception of 235 children from the "feeder towns" and another 252 children rescued from the streets of Kampala.

Duty bearers such as the Child and Family Protection Unit officer, Probation and Social Welfare Officer, and other Police Enforcement personnel engaged in the planning meetings in Napak to ably coordinate the above activity of Rescue and Resettlement. Community grassroots structure representatives also participated in the development of a plan for successful reconciliation and reintegration of all children involved.

Benefits

Collaboration and working together with the Government and other CSOs are critical to achieving more with fewer struggles aiming at

efficiency and effectiveness. Every programmatic effort has to be complemented by advocacy and continuous lobbying of Government actors. Working together also promotes joint efforts in monitoring, advocacy, and planning. This led to listening to and appreciating the voices of children as well as incorporating their interests in programming; increased momentum in prevention campaigns. The capacity-building component was elevated.

7.2 While all the above was ably addressed, some member organizations did not in any way benefit from any support accorded by duty bearers. The reasons for this were not given though. It is always advisable as a child protection principle that Civil society recognizes the Government as a primary duty bearer, this recognition can always be initiated by member organizations through engaging the duty bearers in the annual planned interventions.

In Kyotera district, the District Education Officer provided support related to authorization to pilot the programs in one of the public UPE schools in the district and provided technical inputs in the program design. In the Slums of Kamwokya, Banda, and Kawempe in Kampala local council leaders including women councillors were very vital in mobilizing parents to take part in IMS- Integrated Management Systems program activities. Teachers and school administrators in partner schools were very cooperative in planning and implementing activities in the schools. All of the above aimed at furthering the work of promoting children's right to education.

## **SECTION 8: DISABILITY PROGRAMMING: SHORTFALLS AND LESSONS LEARNED**

Over 60% of the respondent organizations did not have functional programs to do with Children with disabilities (CWDs). Hence this section applies to about forty percent of the total number of organisations; these Organizations include the following; INCLUSION SUPPORT UGANDA, ANGELS CENTRE FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY, EKISA MINISTRIES, KATALEMWA CHESHIRE HOME FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

8.1 The following were documented as shortfalls that hindered adequate programming, fulfillment of planned programs, and realization of the rights of CWDs and children in general;

- a. Lack of educational assistive devices and other instructional materials in schools; Inadequate professional teachers to handle CWDs in schools
- b. Neglect and isolation by parents and caregivers at the family level hence rendering the

CWDs isolated and unable to access planned services for both rehabilitative and developmental purposes. As these children grow they fail to fit into the education system due to registered delayed speech, stunted growth, loss of self-esteem, and stigma.

c. CWDs were abused, neglected, and discriminated against by other children and hence denied access to other therapeutic services including health, education, justice, and play CWDs are prone to sexual exploitation and abuse mainly as a result of their disability.

a. Violence against Children With Intellectual Disabilities affects their cognitive skills and performance, they are withdrawn and traumatized, which can cause self-harm and them being violent as well.

b. Children with severe disabilities or multiple disabilities are usually deterred from associating with other children within the surrounding community. This has many times broken their confidence hence affecting service provision.

to defend themselves. This ultimately perpetuates the cycle of sexual violence, Child marriage, and Teenage Pregnancy.

## SECTION 9: STRENGTHENING SAFEGUARDING SYSTEMS

### 9.0 Introduction

Safeguarding refers to the values and procedures to be upheld by those working with children and young people to protect them from all forms of abuse, exploitation, and violence. Safeguarding provides organizations with the responsibility of ensuring that their staff, operations, and programs do no harm to children and adults at risk nor expose them to abuse or exploitation. This concept consists of two major components; Internal Safeguarding and External Safeguarding. In External safeguarding practitioners are required to keep communities where the beneficiaries are found, safe from harm. It is a practice that should be prioritized by organizations and institutions. In this section, we look at how far the member Organisations of UCRNN have adopted Safeguarding practices at their workplaces and the communities that they serve.



Below are other scenarios not directly linked to programming:

- "CWDs are locked up in houses and not considered in most of the community activities because of the stigma associated with their disability" Ekisa Ministries
- "CWDs are neglected, abandoned and this sometimes leads to death" Sanyu Babies Home

## 8.2 Lessons Learnt

Violence against CWDs affects their self-esteem and hinders their growth and development of expected milestones despite the provision of physiotherapy. Violence breeds mental instability hence affecting social interaction. CWDs have been victims of sexual violence due to their inability

### 9.1 Training on Safeguarding: Relevance, New Strategies and Documented Outcomes

UCRNN Training on Safeguarding for member CSOs: 35 child-focused organizations in Buganda (17), Bunyoro (9), and Karamoja (9) benefited from the training and committed to develop and/or review safeguarding policies for their organizations in a bid to strengthen safeguarding within their operations, processes and the people involved within their respective organizations. This resolve was made after the Safeguarding training; children's rights; and causes, effects, prevention, management, and reporting of teenage pregnancy and child marriage in their sub-regions. The organizations were grouped into specific teams and supported to come up with action plans that will be followed up in 2023.

Damon Wamara talking to the participants in Hoima about legal frameworks and their implications on safeguarding

From the respondent's Organisations FIFTEEN organizations benefitted from the Training conducted by UCRNN, and for most of them this was a new concept that they had never had the opportunity to be exposed to. Some had heard about it and thought that it was meant for international organizations. On the whole, the training was relevant to especially those organizations who benefitted from the training. 76.5% stated that the training was important to the operations of their organizations, while 17.6% indicated it wasn't relevant and this ratio included those who were not informed about the training. The relevance of the organization was confirmed through the following statements; "The training enabled our organization to identify gaps in existing policies, some of these risks and gaps have already been addressed".

Several Organisations stated that they instituted new measures and/or changes within their space concerning the drafting and approval of Safeguarding – SG policies in addition to the already Child Protection policies that earlier existed. Among the actions taken were; updating the existing Safeguarding policy to include a child safe zone, persons contacted and acting on behalf of the Organisations were contacted/ had to endorse the Policies, meetings were scheduled to popularise the Safeguarding policy amongst staff and benefactors; several organisations indicated that they had started on the process of drafting the SG policy, sharing the SG policy with staff and also inducting staff on what transpired at the training on Safeguarding. One program staff noted that Children were freely interacting with others who were in the same space, unlike before.

Organizations that benefitted from this SG training greatly appreciated it. Several participants cited that their organizations work mainly with vulnerable children who require safeguarding which is provided for by a functional SG Policy. "Staff also need to be safeguarded as they execute their roles and responsibilities hence being catered for in the Safeguarding Policy", Concern for the Girl Child.

Member organizations already involved in taking action included, **UNBOUND, HIGH SOUND FOR CHILDREN, RAHAB, ZIMA CHILD HOPE AFRICA, and CONCERN FOR THE GIRL CHILD among others.**

Meanwhile, Wells of Hope Ministries (WOHM) reported that before the SG training, the organization periodically conducted children's council meetings where children were able to share

their concerns in a safe environment. The issues raised were thereafter followed up through both individual and group counseling sessions before they were forwarded to management. The duration here depended on the severity and urgency.

## 9.2 Member Organisations documenting outcomes to embrace Safeguarding

Member Organisations having realized the need to have functional SG Policies went ahead to put in place functional policies so that the purpose of their existence is realized. Find below some of the documented outcomes a few months after the training that was conducted by UCRNN with support from ERICKS.

- Organizational staff appreciated the purpose of the SG Policy, understood it, and were able to recognize and respond to abuses at the workplace
- Improved staff communication through written consent by beneficiaries in instances where it was required
- Safer implementation strategies since staff applied the risk assessment protocols and were able to recognize risky areas in the work plans
- Formation of safeguarding committees, these committees will remain functional due to the regular meetings that have commenced
- Rahab Uganda reported to have carried out SG training for both children and adults among their staff, volunteers, and partners

A few organisations had not popularised their SG policy hence outcomes had not been realised though they were eager to apply these components in their day-to-day affairs. Others cited this as a big shortfall on their side since they had delayed designing a Safeguarding Policy.

## 9.3 Risks and Vulnerability within Member Organisations

These can be classified as physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Sexual abuse includes rape, defilement, sexual harassment and exploitation. All these can lead to physical, psychological, and emotional abuse.

External risks - these are perpetuated outside the organizational workspaces including hiring children as domestic workers, corporal punishments, the perpetuation of GBV, and child marriages.

Children and young people who need support and since most fall in the age bracket of 3 and 18 years, are considered vulnerable due to their age and are prone to abuse and neglect, most of them come from very impoverished families so they can easily succumb to abuse. New staff, volunteers and interns, and high and low-level staff are all vulnerable and they can succumb to abuse. Children in the communities are prone to abuse due to high poverty levels in the communities, early marriages and teenage pregnancy, and conservatism on cultural practices that infringe on children's Rights. (Every Child Ministries).

The SAFEGUARDING WALK introduced the fact that Sexual Exploitation and Harassment – SEAH can be perpetuated by Staff, Partners, and any other persons who get into contact with the Organisation. Therefore all staff must recognise that Safeguarding is a responsibility of everyone. In some instances, the presence of abusers within that very environment poses a great risk, since it places both children and staff in compromising situations. Other risk factors include:

- Inconsistency in donor funds to prevent violence against children, traditional beliefs and norms, and high monetary expectations from the community.
- High monetary expectations from the Community exposed the organizations at risk and this scenario was highly linked to inconsistent donor funding, thus limited resources to implement planned programs
- Failure to design and implement a Safeguarding Policy at the Organisational level already posed a risk to both the managers, the beneficiaries, and the authorities at large.
- Problems that arise from the multiplicity of cultural norms and traditions that undermine the safety of Children and expose adults to vulnerability as well

#### 9.4 Safety in Organisations for Purposes of Programming

Commitment by Directors to safer recruitment practices including screening, induction, and orientation for paid staff, trustees, and volunteers. All these details have to be followed keenly.

- The SG Policy for the organization has to be all-encompassing so that it does not accommodate concerns that may not be addressed, and a safeguarding committee to handle emerging issues

with a clear reporting mechanism reflected in the implementing guidelines.

- Staff commitment to work and service to the people that they serve. Partners that are responsive to the Organisational values realize that it is important that children and parents/guardians participate in program design and implementation.
- An organization that has components of preventative abuse to both children and staff.
- Government Policies that address and promote safeguarding for both children and Organisational staff.

### 9.5 Reviews in Safeguarding

Organizations that benefitted from the SG training realized the need to review their past practices to align with the provisions of the ideal Safeguarding Protocols.

#### These included;

- Endorsement of the safeguarding and protection code of conduct was elevated to include consultants and persons acting on behalf of the Organisation. Efforts shall also be made to request a Letter of Good Conduct from the Ministry of Internal Affairs in addition to the letters from References in case of staff recruitment
- Capacity development and implementation of action plans
- The realization that SG does not stop at individual consent but ensuring that all persons are knowledgeable on all ongoing safety protocols, hence putting this into practice
- The realization that SG is not about children alone but ensuring escalation to all adults who get into contact with the Organisation.
- Drawing standard operating procedures (SOPs) that have penalties in case of encounters with offenders.

#### 9.6 Key lessons learned (Safeguarding workplaces and beneficiary environment)

##### Member Organisations

- Safeguarding is a holistic approach that requires commitment on the part of all who are concerned

- Safeguarding is a holistic and overarching concept that covers several topics such as child protection, child safeguarding, programming, safe recruitment, communication, human resource-related aspects, abuse, and risk management. Understanding the entirety of safeguarding will take much effort and time on the side of lead managers of Organisations so that they are enabled to guide others well.

- Safeguarding is a continuous programmatic concept that relates to Organisational staff and beneficiary communities

Partnerships are a good catalyst

Partnerships are a good catalyst for keeping safeguarding alive and active because Organisations and Government Institutions can share good practices and advise one another on replication. In partnerships, staff and volunteers can make informed decisions while prioritizing prevention activities.

Safeguarding works well with proper documentation

All the protocols must be duly signed by all concerned and the risk register always be updated among others

It is important to have an updated risk register on safeguarding. Organisation heads should always be accountable to others with documented evidence and above all sound implementation of the SG policy.

### **At the UCRNN Secretariat**

The existence of a safeguarding policy in an organization does not automatically translate to its effective implementation: During training on child safeguarding with the selected NGOs, it was realized that it is not just enough to have safeguarding policies in place without adequate budgets and functional structures; as this will not guarantee its effective implementation. As such, all participants that were engaged committed to ensuring that their policies had clear action work plans and budgets, with clearly assigned roles and responsibilities to individual staff members, including functional structures for prevention and response to safeguarding issues, and with periodic reviews and appraisals. This lesson is very key in ensuring that child rights organizations are deliberate about safeguarding all children and vulnerable persons from all forms of abuse, exploitation, and harassment as they interact with different organizational processes, people, and policies; given the moral responsibility that NGOs have in child protection and child rights promotion.

## Section 10: Voices of Member Organisations

This section depicts the candid voices of member organizations regarding advancing the rights of children that they serve and the vision to have a stronger Network of Child Rights Organisations in the country.

a. We recommend that UCRNN in its capacity and mandate should provide technical support aimed at encouraging linkages amongst new and traditional organizations so that through such collaboration and partnerships we can benefit from new learning techniques, share resources, and carry out joint fundraising. With such partnerships, there will be deliberate efforts to engage with the local governments within our localities in addition to inviting appropriate stakeholders in our members' learning and sharing meetings.

b. We have created awareness of disability amongst children, their families, community structures, and the organizations that operate within our jurisdiction (Wakiso District). As we seek to grow to be able to serve our communities and children better we look forward to having capacity-building sessions and training in various aspects that the Network can offer. (Angels Centre for Children)

c. Regarding Advocacy and awareness creation on disability matters, every year as an Organization we join the rest of the world to commemorate International Days of Persons Living with Disabilities (PLWDs) such as World Down Syndrome Day, Autism Day, Cerebral Palsy Day among others. We plan to extend invitations to all Network members so that we further our collaboration as a Network.

d. We request that in the next review, elements that are also applicable to Babies' Home be included in the survey tool. (Sanyu Babies Home)

e. Concern For The Girl Child is grateful for the partnership with UCRNN and for involving us in attending most of the Network activities including the training of staff on Child safeguarding and drafting

## Section 11: Conclusions and Recommendations

### **11.1 CONCLUSIONS FROM DATA PRESENTED BY MEMBER ORGANISATIONS**

a) Connecting Alternative care Practices to CM&TP

Organisations did not report failed placements for alternative care after family separation since there

was a minimal interaction in this particular thematic area. Therefore incidents of Child marriage and Teenage pregnancy were not directly related to failed placements such as reunification or short term foster care. The incidences that were recorded were majorly of teenage pregnancies for children within their original communities, this portrays laxity in child safe guarding approaches.

#### b) Poverty trends

This analytical documentation confirms that child abuse and neglect is common in communities with high rates of poverty and fewer neighbourhood support systems that have been shown to violate the rights of children. Child marriage resulting into Teenage pregnancies are highly exacerbated by economic factors. Poverty leads to transactional sex, early marriages and risk of intergenerational sex. Therefore organisations that are keen on uplifting the standards of people through family and structural support have the appropriate preventive strategies.

#### c) Education Support

In documented learnings from interventions, some member organisations learnt that; School dropout is preventable! Lessons from their programs showed that dropping out of school is a gradual process with ongoing and consistent signs. Once systems, such as the Dropout Checkpoint Scorecard, are put in place to deliberately identify in a timely manner who is at risk of dropping out and also institute early interventions that curb potential dropout incidents.

#### d) Detest Violence Against Women

Finally, child marriage is a form of violence and sexual exploitation against girls. Efforts to prevent child marriage, particularly with respect to laws, policies, attitudes and customs that promote or condone the practice, should therefore aim at eliminating all forms of violence against women whether young or old.. It is important to note that violence against women is a major contributing factor to the incidence of violence against children. Whereas in reported case of domestic violence, one in every five cases is associated with intimate partner violence involving child marriages, therefore if not curbed such cases will continue rising.

#### e) Implementing the Uganda National Child Policy

The National Child Policy identified five core priority areas that have informed the Policy objectives, strategies and interventions. The four priority areas are hinged on four cardinal rights of a child: Survival, Development, Protection and Participation. The

fifth priority area is System Strengthening

Priority Intervention Area 2 makes reference to Education and Development. UCRNN member Organisations did actually give this area a lot of attention and high priority. This was exemplified through the number of organisations that implemented educational support for both ongoing school children and those that had earlier dropped out of school. Most programmes were designed to ensure that all children of school going age are enrolled and access school.

- These interventions were aimed at promoting holistic development and learning for all children as a means to retain children in gainful education and delay their involvement in sexual activities hence decrease in teenage pregnancies.

- Much as challenges in the learning area for children with special education needs and disability were registered; this was because member Organisations realised that it was not always possible that these children were provided for with appropriate learning aids, devices and equipment such as hearing aids, reading glasses, Braille materials, and appropriate ICT equipment and software, as well as for co-curricular activities.

- Under the same intervention area of Education and development, suggestions for improvement in service delivery have been made. Some of these are; policy research priorities, Infrastructure Teacher effectiveness, Child-friendly curriculum and gender-sensitive school environment, proactive targeting in Education for vulnerable children.

Priority Intervention Area 5, Systems Strengthening; member organisations actually acknowledged the technical support that they received from local Government duty bearers and still yearn for more support so that they are able to fulfil the planned interventions in accordance with the required standards and due adherence. In addition, the presence and support from duty bearers enabled continued interventions in the direction of safeguarding children from teenage pregnancies and child marriages. It is therefore necessary that Government directs resources and efforts to this cause of strengthening the child protection and justice systems. Strategy 3 and 4 of this priority area hinges on strengthening the capacity of National child care and protection sector, Local Governments, Community structures for effective response to prevention and protection of all children against all forms of violence and exploitation.

Generally, many girls find themselves pregnant with

little or no partner support during the pregnancy and later on at child birth. Societal pressures further compound the decisions that these young girls who are mothers have to make including the return to school to complete their education. The stereotyped view of young girls as mothers causes stigmatization in the absence of family and community structures to support them. Unless, there is sponsorship or scholarships on offer to aid the young mother return to school, school ends when she is pregnant and becomes a mother eventually. This sort of scenario affects many young girls in different communities especially in the rural areas and perpetuates a vicious cycle of poverty and lack of personal growth and development.

## 11.2 Conclusions from Available Literature

### a) Poverty and Conflict as drivers of Child marriage;

Understanding the dynamics that promote child marriage in a particular society is the starting point in addressing them. Cultural factors appear to play a predominant role, though economic considerations can also be a factor. Where early marriage is condoned and poverty is acute, a young girl may be regarded as an economic burden and her marriage to a much older man is always a family survival strategy. Where both poverty and conflict are present, child marriage can be seen as a form of economic or physical protection. The same holds true in communities caught in the grip of AIDS. Reports from AIDS researchers in Eastern Africa suggest that marriage is seen as one option for orphaned girls by caregivers who find it hard to provide for them. Therefore, the most effective strategy for overcoming Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancies can easily be reflected through preventive strategies that promote and recognise the rights of all children. These very strategies are presented in Uganda's National Child Policy of 2020

### b) Delayed detection of abuse

Since a high number of child abuse cases are usually detected early and reported by educational personnel where children spend most of their time. The closure of schools and places of worship, which act as safe havens for many children meant limited access to reach trusted adult figures who often can detect early signs of abuse and help families to institute reporting and cope with the added stress. Given the fact that the reporting channels and referral pathways were severely affected by the lockdown, the Covid19 pandemic worsened the living conditions of children, putting them at an increased risk of different forms of child abuse. Therefore the year 2022 was a period of handling the after effects of the pandemic.

### c) Education opportunities and Support

Universal Primary Education (UPE) and the resultant effects of the Policy have shown that vulnerable children with support of their caregivers can meet massive enrolment at the onset of Primary education in Uganda if the supplementary needs associated with attending school are addressed. Most children will spend most of their formative years in primary school and therefore the quality of that education is key to laying solid foundation for their productivity in the future. Greater tangible efforts need to be undertaken by Central Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), Local Governments, Community Based Organisations, national and international NGOs to reach out to schools in vulnerable communities and support them with their educational needs so as to attain quality education that is all embracing.

### d) A Journey to Youthfulness and Adulthood

Children are on their journey to youth fullness and adulthood and therefore efforts should be made to ensure that they enjoy their childhood, their youth fullness and later the adult years as responsible and productive citizens. The National Youth Action Plan which operationalises the Uganda National Youth Policy were both developed through participatory processes and enriched with Priority areas. The priority areas therein are presented in terms of specific objectives to be undertaken by various stakeholders. The objectives and actions reflect the policy theme of 'Unlocking youth potential for sustainable wealth creation and development'. The Priority Action areas identified are: - i. Sustainable livelihoods, employment promotion and enterprise development; ii. Information, Communication and Technology (ICT); iii. Education, training and capacity building; iv. Youth and health v. Youth involvement, participation and governance vi. Youth, culture and gender vii. Recreation, sports and leisure viii. Environmental management ix. Management, coordination and partnerships. The objectives and activities that are reflected in the Youth Action Plan all mean well and promote development for our youths. We can only achieve these once we offer Safeguards through a conducive non abusive environment to our children.

### e) The Cost of Inaction;

According to the National Strategy to End Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy (2022 – 2027) "If no action is taken to reduce childhood sexual abuse then child marriage and teenage pregnancy will continue with 50 per cent of teenage girls at risk each year. About 64% of teenage mothers will not complete primary education level". This poses

a great burden to the nation. Much of the would be productive age group will be overburdened with unplanned pregnancy and the after effects associated with premature responsibility including emotional distress and poor health resulting into only 5% of teenage mothers getting employment in professional occupations.

### **11.3 Recommendations to Government**

#### **a) Invest in Social Protection:**

As Uganda works to achieve its 2040 vision of being, "a transformed Ugandan Society from a Peasant to a Modern and Prosperous Country within 30 years", it is crucial that it invests in its children by establishing a child-sensitive social protection programme. A programme that will be fully funded so as to avoid the cracks that ultimately promote violations indirectly through non fulfilment of existing laws and legislation. As efforts are being made to strengthen the human capital, the need for investing in social protection is crucial. The social protection programme would ensure that every child in Uganda can access their basic needs and address the risks that hinder their development.

#### **b) Strengthen institutional mechanisms with well-co-ordinated stakeholder forums;**

As provided for in the National Strategy on Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy (NSTCM&TP) Strategic area of focus No. 8 which relates to strengthening multi-sectoral coordination; It was evident that member Organisations cited the need to further collaborate on matters of Safeguarding and Child Protection since inter-ministerial, institutional and structural coordination produce results quicker and that they are long lasting. It is therefore important that this strategic focus area together with others in the National Strategy are given due attention. Well co-ordinated stakeholder forums will result into application of concerted efforts in order to end these violations against children and also ensure improved safeguarding and protection.

#### **c) Initiate funding areas and Increase on existing budgetary allocations**

In accordance with Strategy 3 of Priority Area 5 of the National Child Policy that gives a provision to promote Systems Strengthening through development of Resource Mobilisation Strategies for child protection services and Ensure that all local governments and child care institutions have comprehensive, functional financial management systems, financial controls, procedures and processes for budgeting and spending resources for child care and protection work. It would be

imperative that Government takes this up as a priority so that all Government Ministries, Agencies and Departments that are responsible for Child Protection services are fully financed so as to ensure continuity and sustainability of services

#### **d) Social cultural and Legal issues**

The existing Laws have not been adequately reviewed to promote those positive aspects of the culture and discourage the negative ones in order to enhance the status of vulnerable children. There is therefore need to continue working with cultural, religious, judiciary and other relevant institutions to facilitate the attainment of the desired behavioural change for informed positive response

### **11.4 Recommendations to Civil Society**

Civil Society Organisations are commended for the efforts in ensuring safeguards for Ugandan Children both at regional and community levels. A lot more has to be done as CSOs compliment Government efforts in upholding the rights of children and in particular preventing Teenage Pregnancy and Child Marriage.

a) Follow and Contribute to the Implementation Plans as provided for in the National Child Policy and the National Strategy on CM&TP so as to ensure due accountability of the plans that are laid out by Government as the Primary duty bearer.

b) Monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the legal framework for child protection systems as laid out by Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development

c) Strengthening the coordination and collaboration between CSO and Government agencies, Formal and informal actors to ensure that child protection services are delivered in a coordinated and effective manner. This will in turn promote prevention of Teenage Pregnancy hence delaying the onset of child birth among children.

### **11.5 Recommendations to Communities**

Communities and families are called upon to support and protect all their members in raising their children as responsible citizens. Communities can also support particularly vulnerable families to uplift their standards of living and desist from promoting Teenage Pregnancy and Child Marriage whether directly or indirectly. Community members whose communities are most affected are called upon to realise this as a negative vice that will rob children of their youthfulness, by engaging in mobilising resources to improve the care and support for children.

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# THE GALLERY



Adolescent girls and young women during the creation of awareness on dangers of child marriage and teenage pregnancy (CHILD AID UGANDA)



IMS Programme Officer engaging children and their parents (IMS)



**HIGH SOUND FOR CHILDREN - HSC**  
Community Leaders after the Dialogue; under the Break the Silence programme




School Engagement at Kingstone High School

## COMPASSION INTERNATIONAL



A team from Compassion International worked together with the Child and Family Protection Unit of the Uganda Police Force to handle Safety and Protection of children during the National Martyrs' day celebrations in June 2022.

*Happy World Children's Day*  
"Inclusion, For Every Child"



As we think about the many children we interact with and serve at Compassion International, I ask you to consider what you can do beyond what you are already doing to create environments that include every child and ensure that every child, irrespective of their circumstances, is known, loved, and protected.

Lenny Mugisha  
National Director, Compassion International



**Initiative For Mtoto Wa Shule; IMS,**  
Field Co-ordinator For Kyotera District orienting members of Kisubi PEIS how to use Cash books in recording their Savings



A peer led catch up Community Group of out of school children undergoing literacy lessons in Kifumbira slums; Kampala City.



Protecting the children at Sanyu Babies Home, Kampala; "We smile"



"We are ready to eat home grown maize"



#### UCRNN Secretariat

Damon Wamara, Executive Director at UCRNN, addressing participants in Hoima about legal frameworks and their implications on safeguarding.



A child at St. Andrew's Sec School in Lugazi town explains to her peers what they had learnt from the trainings on children's rights and how to access justice.(Mukono District)

## **Annexure I**

Laws and Policies relating to each of the thematic areas

### **General**

- The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1985
- The Penal Code Act (Cap 120)
- The Children's Act as Amended (Cap 59)
- The National Action Plan for Child Wellbeing (2016 to 2021)
- The Local Government Act Cap 243
- The Police Act 2006 (As amended).
- The Criminal Procedure Code Act Cap 116
- The National Child Policy 2020
- The National Youth Policy 2016
- 3rd National Development Plan (NDP III) 2020/21 – 2024/25
- The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy 2015
- The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy and Action Plan of Uganda 2016 –2021

### **End Sexual Violence Against Children**

- The National Strategy on Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy 2022/2023 – 2026/2027

Child Trafficking, Child Labour and street connected children

- The Trafficking in Persons Act; 2019
- The Occupational Safety and Health Act
- The National Child Labour Policy
- The National Employment Act
- National Employment Policy of Uganda
- National Action Plan for the Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour

### **Access to Justice for Children**

- Magistrates Court Act 1971
- Access to Justice Sub programme Strategic Plan 2020/21- 2025/25

### **Education**

- Universal Primary Education Policy 1997
- Universal Secondary Education Policy
- The National Strategic Plan on the Elimination Against Violence in Schools 2015 / 2020
- The Education Act 2008
- Gender in Education Sector Policy 2016
- National Strategy for Girls Education in Uganda (2015–2019)

### **Alternative Care**

- The National Framework for Alternative Care
- The Approved Homes Rules and Regulations

- The Uganda National Parenting Guidelines
- The Uganda National Culture Policy 2006

### **Children with Disabilities**

- National Disability Inclusive Guidelines for Uganda; 2017,
- Persons with Disability Act; 2020,
- The National Policy on Disability In Uganda
- The Special Needs and Inclusive Education Policy 2011
- The National Disability Inclusive Planning Guidelines for Uganda 2017
- National Action Plan for Children With Disabilities 2016/17 – 2020/21 MGLSD

### **Health (Mental and Physical Health)**

- The National Adolescent Health Policy for Uganda 2004
- The Second National Health Policy; Ug July 2010
- Ministry of Health Strategic Plan 2020/2021 – 2024/2025

## Annexure ii

Respondent's information; Name, Organization; Position and Contact details)	Thematic areas handled by the Organization in the year 2022
Sophie Akello, Every Child Ministries Uganda Programs Manager - 0782485980	Education
Inclusion support uganda	Children with Disabilities
Alexandria Nabayinda, Unbound Kampala, Communication and Advocacy Officer, 0709750054	Education
Allen Niwagaba (Executive Assistant) on behalf of Angels' Centre for children with special needs 0775214079	Children with Disabilities
Achot Grace Akullu, Facilitation for Peace and Development-FAPAD, Program Manager, 0772374061	Access to Justice for Children
Hadijah Mwanje, High Sound for Children, Founder and board chair, 0776997923	Education
Jackson Olobo, Sole Hope Inc; Monitoring, Evaluation, Research & Learning (MERL) Manager, 0703201605/ merl@solehope.org	Health (Mental and Physical health)
Dorah Musiimire, Technical Advisor, Protection and Safeguarding. Plan International, Uganda	End Sexual violence Against Children (E-SVAC/ ECPAT)
Bwangu David Team leader , 0779531833	Children with Disabilities
Careen Nyine , Rahab Uganda , Programs Officer, 0786043225 ,lilcareen@gmail.com	End Child trafficking and Exploitation (Child trafficking, child labor and street connected children)
Nakakande Irene,	
Somero Uganda,	
Deputy Executive Director	
0705184775	End Child trafficking and Exploitation (Child trafficking, child labor and street connected children)
Genesis Achan,Ekisa Ministries,Social worker..0775226957	Children with Disabilities
Turakira Brian, Zima Child Hope Africa, CEO, +256 771 449 555	Education
Name: Fredrick Kayiira	
Position: Founder & Executive Director	
Organisation: Initiative for Mtoto wa Shule [IMS]	
Mobile Contact: 0754444316, WhatsApp 0781603449, Email: fredrickkayiira@gmail.com	
Official: fredrick@imsuganda.org	Education
Faidah Rose Byaruhanga Grants and Partnerhips Officer,Concern for the Girl Child,0781530314	End Sexual violence Against Children (E-SVAC/ ECPAT)
Juuko Stephen Charles	End Sexual violence Against Children (E-SVAC/ ECPAT)
Namulinde Jesca, Sanyu Babies' Home, Social worker, 0704420856 and 0772015460	Alternative Care
Katalemwa Cheshire Home for Rehabilitation Services	
Amasse Jackline Ogalai;	
	Children with disabilities
Cwinyai Bright   Communications and Advocacy officer   communicationsofficer@dwellingsplaces.org.uk  Dwelling Places	

	End Child trafficking and Exploitation (Child trafficking, child labor and street connected children)
Alternative Care	
World Vision Uganda, Irene Kagoya; Irene_kagoya@wvi.org	
General Child Protection	
Education	
End Sexual violence Against Children	
Tushemereirwe Lauben; Executive Director; Child Aid Uganda childaid_uganda@yahoo.com	End Sexual violence Against Children

## Annexure 2

A list of UCRNN Subscribed member organizations

1. Abaana Ministries (0783005064; 0776788571)
2. Afri-Child Centre (0776190469)
3. Angels Center For Children with Special Needs (0772717245)
4. Change Development Initiative (0774545003)
5. Child Fund International (Dillis: 0774826327; Lydia: 0772369744)
6. Child's i Foundation (David: 0782422708)
7. Compassion International (0787617790)
8. Concern for the Girl child (0784983197)
9. Children At Risk Action Network CRANE (0776522601)
10. Dwelling Places (0775882636)
11. Ekisa Ministries (0775226957)
12. ERIKS Development Partner (0777482463)
13. Every Child Ministries (0781814033)
14. Facilitation for Peace and Development (Eunice: 0782389278)
15. FAWE Uganda (0782530100)
16. Help Disabled Children Excel (Paul: 0772159524, 0200904464)
17. High sound for children (0776997923)
18. Hope for Justice (0777116850)
19. Inclusion Support Uganda (0782878701)
20. Initiative for Mutoto wa Shule (Fredrick: 0781603449; Angel: 0782661470)
21. Kasese community, health and education system (Veronica: 0772538633; 0703538633)
22. Katalemwa Cheshire (0772412383)
23. Kyampisi Child Care Ministries (0392968052)/ (0704997370)
24. Partners for Child World Wide (0454461619; pfcwuganda@gmail.com)
25. Plan International (0782308148)
26. Rahab Uganda (0754060860)
27. Remnant Generation (0704183647)
28. REPSSI (0772420575)

29. Sanyu babies Home (0788162147)
30. Save the Children International (0772560388)
31. SAVIDIDO (0774251634)
32. Sole Hope (0772575424)
33. Somero (0772092318)
34. Unbound Uganda (0772982344)
35. Voice up Teenage Advocacy Platform (0773247667)
36. Wells of Hope (0758335857)
37. World Vision Uganda (0775110881)
38. Zima Child Hope Africa (0771449555)
39. SOS Children's Villages (Lorna: 0773678942)
40. Child Aid Uganda (0752835889)
41. Raising Voices
42. Karamoja Intergrated Development Programme

Annexure 3

### **UCRNN SURVEY TOOL FEBRUARY 2023**

This questionnaire has been developed in order to collect and analyse information from different member organisations that are affiliated to UCRNN. The collected information shall then be used to compile and publish an annual situational analysis on the state of Child Marriage in Uganda to inform programming. You are kindly requested to set aside 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire and please stick to 2022 programmes ONLY.

We therefore on behalf of UCRNN seek for your consent to participate in this study by endorsing your agreement hereunder and thereafter give candid responses to the questions that follow. (return to [faith.chagara@ucrnn.org](mailto:faith.chagara@ucrnn.org) and [cbankusha@gmail.com](mailto:cbankusha@gmail.com))

### **RESPONDENT'S INFORMATION**

Names ..... Age..... (optional)  
 Gender..... Profession/ Occupation.....  
 I do consent in giving my views in this study; Initials.....

### **ORGANISATIONAL INFORMATION**

Name of Organisation.....  
 Districts of operation.....  
 Years in Operation.....  
 Thematic areas handled by the Organisation in the year 2022;

- a) End sexual Violence Against Children (Sexual Exploitation / ECPAT & Teenage Pregnancy TP/ HIV/AIDS, child marriage CM);
- b) Child Trafficking, Child Labor & Street connected children;
- c) Access to Justice for children
- d) Education
- e) Alternative Care

- f) Children with disabilities
- g) Health (Mental and Physical health) (Please delete all that do not apply)

**Please give answers to the questions below;**

1. What has been done by your Organisation in the area of Promotion of Rights of children
2. What according to you did you successfully implement in relation to the 4 broad categories of Rights? (Protection, Development, Participation, Survival)
3. State briefly the activities that were accomplished and their contribution to the children and the communities served
4. What were the main barriers to education of both boys and during the year 2022?
5. What programmes /activities were implemented in order to prevent and respond to the issues of Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy in your jurisdiction.
6. How many teens 13 – 17 were successfully placed in alternative care options during the year? has the failure to implement good alternative care practices led to CM and TP?
7. What were the shortfalls encountered during Programme implementation (within the 7 thematic areas); choose up to 3 thematic areas in which your Organisation is involved
8. Briefly narrate the kind of support that was received from duty bearers and Government and how did that culminate into promotion of rights of children?
9. How many children already affected by sexual abuse and exploitation did your organization reach out to during the year 2022? What structures enabled you to reach them.
10. How did Violence against children affect the development of children with Disabilities generally?
11. Are there any prevention of CM and TP components that were difficult to implement? If yes which are those?
12. Kindly provide any other information here that you would like us to know that you have not already provided in your answers above?

**Note: please provide as much information as you can and type right in the space where the question is placed. Ignore any question that does not apply to your operations.**

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR RESPONSES**

## SAFEGUARDING

### UCRNN REVIEW TOOL / FEBRUARY 2023

This questionnaire has been developed in order to collect and analyse information from different UCRNN member organisations that benefitted from the Safeguarding Training during the year 2022. The collected information shall then be used to enrich the annual situational analysis on the state of Child Marriage in Uganda. You are kindly requested to set aside 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire and please consider ONLY the trainings conducted in 2022.

We therefore on behalf of UCRNN seek for your consent to participate in this review by endorsing your agreement hereunder and thereafter give candid responses to the questions that follow. (return to [faith.chagara@ucrnn.org](mailto:faith.chagara@ucrnn.org) and [cbankusha@gmail.com](mailto:cbankusha@gmail.com) )

#### RESPONDENT'S INFORMATION

Names ..... Profession/ Occupation.....

I do consent in giving my views in this study; Initials.....

#### ORGANISATIONAL INFORMATION

Name of Organisation.....

Month/Year of Training on safeguarding.....

Direct Participant; Yes/No.....If No is the direct participant still with the Organisation?

• At what level was the training on Safeguarding of relevance to your operations as an Organisation? (type Y underneath your choice)

VERY RELEVANT	QUITE RELEVANT	FAIRLY RELEVANT	NOT RELEVANT AT ALL
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In case your response is in the affirmative, please provide details.....

.....

- What strategies / measures have you put in place so far after the Safeguarding training?
- What are the documented outcomes so far and how do you intend to maintain them so as to advance the good practices in safeguarding?
- At what level is your Safeguarding Policy currently? (type Y underneath your choice)

FULLY ENDORSED AND APPROVED	IN DRAFT FORM AND AWAITING APPROVAL	FAIR DRAFT AWAITING DISCUSSIONS	NO DRAFT YET
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Are there any challenges that you met OR envisage? Please explain

- What is your expectation in terms of functionality?
- Please share any lessons learnt after the training and during interface with promoting a safe environment
- On a level of 1-10 How comfortable do you feel explaining the safeguarding concepts to another individual? Give reasons.

Note: please provide as much information as you can and type right in the space where the question is placed.

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR RESPONSES**