Day of the African Child

Messages from govt & leaders
Day of the African Child gives us chance to reflect
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Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development

The Republic of Uganda
The passion and commitment to positively impact the lives of children in Uganda remains a focus for Trailblazers Mentoring Foundation. The initiative was started in 2013 by former child mothers who turned their negative experiences into a positive action and by 2015 became a fully registered Non-Governmental Organization operating in 17 districts of Uganda in Karamoja, West Nile, Busoga, Eastern and Central regions of Uganda. The mandate of TMF is to promote gender equality and empower adolescent girls and young women through holistic programs that address their critical needs while putting greater emphasis on ending teenage pregnancy, child marriages and supporting girls to stay in school and complete school.

TMF promotes in and out of school clubs as an important tool to increase meaningful engagement of children in activities that enhance their ability to speak out, advocate and make decisions on issues that affect their lives as well as challenge negative cultural barriers to their education and wellbeing. The community theatres and boy champions’ methodology was established to strengthen advocacy for policy change and practice right from the grassroots, District and National level in regards to prioritisation of education and budgetary allocation towards intervention to end teenage pregnancy and child marriage. This has been made possible through the Girls Advocacy Alliance (GAA) project supported by Plan International Uganda and the Basic Education and Adolescent Development Programme by UNICEF Uganda and Irish Aid. As a result, a total of 13,700 children in school (8,245 girls and 5,455 boys) and 400 out of school girls and 90 out school boys have been reached. The 3,390 boy champions of change have fully been engaged in hot spot visits towards creating awareness on child rights, Gender Based Violence and importance of education.

The Go to School, Back to school, and Stay in School (GBS) campaign by TMF supported by UNICEF and Irish Aid has led to the return of 835 children (203 Boys, 502 Girls) back to school and learning in Karamoja sub region.

As part of the GAA project, advocacy and lobby structures on ending child marriage have been established and strengthened in the six districts of Tororo, Alebtong, Bukeeda, Lira, Kamuli and Buyende, called the district level, the District Child Marriage Advocacy Champion’s Committees comprising of 120 key technical and political officials who are now focusing on budgetary allocation towards implementation of the National Strategy to end Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy (NSCM&TP). The committee members continuously engage on a quarterly basis as part of commitment towards formulation/ implementation of laws and policies that protect girls from child marriage in their respective districts.

TMF focus in 2018 is to consolidate the gains made in education and empowerment of children, scale up interventions and strengthen partnership with government, development partners, CSO, private sector and media.

Our sincere appreciation to development partners particularly UNICEF, Irish Aid, Plan International Uganda and government (Gender Unit-MoES, MoGLSD, District Local Governments, Family and Child protection Unit Police) and Media.
The 2018 Day of the African Child (DAC) theme at the continent level is "Leave No Child Behind for Africa’s Development." This theme has been domesticated by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development to fit our context.

Parents give ideas on what ought to be done for the betterment of the African child.

Keeping children safe in the wake of kidnaps.

If we are serious about fulfilling the right to education for all, ensuring that every child develops the skills that a good education brings. The only solution is to ensure that every student has a quality teacher.

Children speak out on what they want from government.
Welcome to the 2018 Day of the African Child official souvenir magazine. This year’s theme “Leave No Child Behind for Africa’s Development” could not have been timelier. We are in an era where children are increasingly becoming aware of their rights and are learning how to demand for them. Unfortunately, not all children are part of this wave of change. Children with disabilities, children without parental care, girls and children in rural areas among others are being left behind. This year’s theme is a call to change this narrative so that all and not some children are included.

Uganda has one of the youngest and most rapidly growing populations in the world. According to the world fact book, 48% of the Ugandan population is aged below 15 years. This makes the statement that children are the future of the country accurate. It also makes the task to include all children very important.

Governments and other stakeholders should therefore broaden opportunities for children’s participation in all programming as they equally affect children. Opportunities need to be created for children to express their views and to contribute towards the accomplishment of those goals for Africa. Simply put, children should be involved in development activities both as agents of development and as beneficiaries of development.

By investing in children now, Uganda stands to gain by ensuring no life is lost, children live to their full potential and are productive citizens of this country. Inclusion of all children is a win for us all.

This souvenir magazine highlights gains and gaps in children’s development and inclusion efforts. It discusses areas in which children have been left behind, things that continue to make children vulnerable and how to correct the wrongs.
Children are change agents

LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND FOR UGANDA’S DEVELOPMENT. This localised theme highlights an important principle of inclusion of children for the country to develop.

In Uganda, the Day of the African Child is majorly commemorated to take stock of what different stakeholders are doing to contribute to the wellbeing of children in different capacities and levels. On this day, adult stakeholders are reminded that children are change agents in their own right and therefore platforms must be created to allow them space to express their views and opinions. Specifically speaking, Children should not be viewed merely as subjects of protection, especially concerning the realisation of the SDGs, they should be viewed as agents of change.

The 2018 Day of the African Child (DAC) theme at the continent level is “Leave No Child Behind for Africa’s Development.” This theme has been domesticated by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development – National Organising Committee to fit our context. The focus has been maintained and hence the Ugandan theme is “Leave No Child Behind for Uganda’s Development.” It highlights an important principle of inclusion of children in order for the country to develop. The theme is in line with what we do as a ministry.

It means that whenever undertaking to develop programs and policies for implementing Agenda 2030, children should be at the centre-stage, therefore government and all stakeholders should ensure that no child is left behind in the drive towards sustainable economic development. This is particularly important in the Ugandan context where children form the majority of our population.

We need to focus on the groups of children that are most vulnerable and at a greatest risk of being left behind. These include children with disabilities, children without parental care, girls, and children in rural areas, among others. The Sustainable Development Goals have a strong focus on inequality, with a particular emphasis on reaching the poorest, most excluded, and most vulnerable in order to ensure that no child is left behind. This who we must strive to reach. By focusing on these, we will make great strides in ensuring that no child is left behind.

I wish you happy celebrations.

For God and my country.

Pius Bigirimana

Permanent Secretary Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development
The Day of the African Child (DAC) is commemorated annually on June 16, by member states of the African Union (AU) and its partners. The occasion is celebrated in memory of the 1976 uprising in Soweto, South Africa, when a protest by school children against the then apartheid – inspired education resulted in the public killing of unarmed young children. DAC also provides an occasion for government; international, regional and national institutions to take stock and renew their efforts towards improving the plight of vulnerable children.

This year’s national theme for the day of the African Child; “leave no child behind for Uganda’s development” is a call to action for all of us, as stakeholders, to re-enforce our commitments, and to refocus our different programmatic interventions to progressively address children’s rights.

The theme underscores the importance of all stakeholders both state and non-state actors to refocus and assess the status of rights of children in general and to embark on child rights priority areas. It is for this purpose that we need to create an enabling environment for children. We should also mobilise adequate resources for child rights protection initiatives. These include programmes that comprehensively consider the survival, development, protection and participation of the child. Communities must also work hard to address the negative attitudes, traditions and harmful cultural practices that foster child abuse and exploitation such as early marriage, female genital mutilation. Some people use their power or authority to take advantage of children for their own economic gains. This may take the form of child prostitution, child pornography, child labor, where the child is kept out of school or denied a chance to be a child.

- Rights and responsibilities of children and roles of different duty bearers in handling child rights issues

Following the continued violation of children’s rights, the Children’s Authority will share an in-depth perspective of what children’s rights are below. We will share the corresponding responsibilities expected of children. We will also highlight the roles of various duty bearers including the Local Councilors (LCs) while handling children issues. Below are some of the rights and responsibilities of children as stipulated in the following international, regional and national legal framework:

- The Constitution of Uganda (1995) (Article 34) provides for: children’s right to basic education (Section 52) - the right for all school going age to be registered at school.

- The Children (Amendment) Act, Cap. 59 of the Laws of Uganda, (Section 5) gives children a right to; education and guidance; immunisation; adequate diet; clothing, shelter and medical attention; and offering appropriate treatment and facilities for the rehabilitation and equal opportunities to Children with disabilities, among others.

- The Prisons Act 2006 (Section 58) 7 provides for: right of a juvenile not to be incarcerated with adults.

- Obligations/ responsibilities expected to be fulfilled by children

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC 1999) in Article 31 outlines some of the duties and responsibilities of a child. They include:

- Being disciplined at home and respecting parents, superiors, elders, fellow children and assisting them when in need.

- Serve the national community physically and intellectually.

- Work towards the unity of the family and contribute to the moral well being of society.

- Going to school to study hard and excel, as well as being obedient while at school.

- Being grateful for what the parents are able to provide and participate in domestic chores at home.

- Role of Local Councils (LCs)

Under the Children Act and the Executive Committees – Judicial Powers (1987) it is the duty of every Local Government Council from village to district level to protect and promote the rights of children in their areas. The Secretary for Children’s Affairs is particularly responsible for the welfare of children. Other duties of the Local Councilors are:

- To promote and protect children’s rights within their areas.

- To act as mediators when the rights of the child have been abused.

- To protect the property of the child. This does not include the power to distribute the property.

- To provide assistance and accommodation to any child in their area who appears to need of help.

- To carry out birth registration within their respective communities.
right from the LC 1 level.
● How the public can help in case of risk of child abuse
● Call the government Toll-free Child help-Line (116); children can use the same service.
● Report the case to the nearest Police Child & Family Protection Unit/Department.
● If a child has been sexually abused, do not wash the child as this could destroy evidence.
● Seek medical assistance as quickly as possible. In case of sexual abuse, medical help within 72 hours may help prevent HIV.
● Create awareness, do not be silent; talk about violence in your community and work together to take action against child abuse.
● Protect the identity and respect the rights of children who have been abused — ensure they are not victimised at home, school, or in the community.
● Things children should avoid that put them at risk of sexual abuse
  ● Moving alone at night
  ● Going to adults’ bedrooms and teachers’ houses alone
  ● Taking presents from strangers
  ● Reading pornographic information, this means reading newspapers, magazines, etc. with pictures of naked people or information about sex
  ● Taking lifts from strangers (by car, bicycle, and motor cycles, etc)
  ● Having friends who have bad behaviour
  ● Being in a new

environment with new cultures
● Absence of the family role model and taking over the adult roles, i.e. child headed families
● Lack of opportunity to be enrolled in school

As we commemorate this day, measures that are crucial in the promotion of children’s rights must be adhered to by all stakeholders. This will enable the realisation of the survival, development, protection and participation of the child. While the Government has put in place legal and policy frameworks on Child protection, child rights duty bearers ought to scale up efforts in implementing the aforementioned instruments.

In line with its expansive mandate, the Children’s Authority will continue with her oversight monitoring and evaluation function for effective protection and promotion of children’s rights in Uganda.

For God and My Country

Martin Kizza
Executive Director, National Children Authority

INVESTING.
“If you do not invest in young children today, you will have no business tomorrow.”

Lydia Wasula
Programme Co-ordinator, Orphans and other Vulnerable Children

The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development congratulates you upon reaching this day. The ministry has enjoyed a good working relationship with you many partners coordinating efforts to ensure the Uganda child receives a comprehensive package of services in all the four domains of rights that is survival, development, protection and participation.

This relationship is especially anchored in a number of children programs that different partners have supported over the years and we greatly appreciate all these efforts.

In particular, the Ministry would like to thank all of you who are involved in this year’s DAC 2018 celebrations; for the collaboration and partnership exhibited in preparations. I want to encourage you to continue with this collaboration in all initiatives aimed at ending violence against children in Uganda.

Transforming the lives of our children is not only a mandate of Government but also for all its stakeholders including Local leaders, the private sector, teachers, parents and the children themselves.

Please continue investing in the wellbeing of Uganda’s Children and you will automatically be contributing to the realization of the goals and objectives of the Social Sector Development Plan which seeks to realize economic, social, cultural and civic rights as well as improved livelihoods of people of Uganda with particular focus on protection of the poor and vulnerable groups like children.

Lastly, we would like to thank you for coming to participate in the celebrations to mark the Day of the African Child in Kibale District at St. Kiriwajjo Secondary School under the theme ‘Leave no Child Behind in Uganda’s Development’.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY
By DAVID MAFABI

The 2018 Day of the African Child (DAC) will be commemorated under the theme “Leave No Child Behind for Africa’s Development.” This year’s theme builds on the momentum created by the DAC 2017 theme “The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for Children in Africa: Accelerating Protection, Empowerment and Equal Opportunity.”

Ms Florence Nakiwala Kiyingi, Minister of State for Gender, Labour and Social Development (Youth and children affairs) says the theme emphasises the need to mainstream children’s rights in all (Agenda 2030) developmental programmes implemented by government.

She explains that while the 2017 DAC theme focused on locating Africa’s children generally within the 2030 Agenda, the 2018 theme highlights the need to ensure that no child is left behind by targeting those who are not benefitting from Uganda’s growth and development.

“The principle is inclusive development for children, that is, whenever undertaking to develop programs and policies for implementing Agenda 2030, children should be at the centre-stage and government should ensure that no child is left behind in the drive towards sustainable economic development,” says Ms Kiyingi.

“African governments need to promote children’s rights, to make them [children] agents of change for sustained socio-economic development and security in Africa. By enforcing the children education, government will be making an important investment for the future of the country as a factor in reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development goal 4,” she adds.

The Minister of State says that as Uganda celebrates DAC, there is need for one to ask the following questions; How important is this day to Uganda, Africa and the rest of the world? What is the significance behind the commemoration? And how did this day come about?

Ms Kiyingi explains that it is important to teach about child rights. The child rights approach empowers children to bring about change in their immediate environment and the world at large by ensuring that the rights of all children are fully realised.

Child rights education is teaching and learning about the provisions and principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the ‘child rights approach’ – in order to empower both adults and children to take action to advocate for and apply these at the family, school, community, national and global levels.

She said child rights education promotes a vision, articulated in the Convention, that “the child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society, and be brought up in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity. “By building...
capacity, child rights education aims to support rights-holders – especially children – to claim their rights and duty-bearers to fulfil their obligations. It helps adults and children work together, providing space and encouragement for the meaningful participation and sustained civic engagement of children,” said Ms Kiyingi.

Child rights education should seek to:

- Embed the provisions and principles of the Convention and the child rights approach in formal and non-formal learning curricula and learning environments; as well as in the curricula and training of professionals working directly with children, or on issues affecting children.

- Raise awareness of the provisions and principles and the child rights approach through mass media and other channels to reach caregivers, community members and other members of the public.

- Build the capacity of children (as rights-holders) and adults (as duty-bearers) to advocate for and implement these provisions, principles and the child rights approach in daily life and professional practice.

Mr Martin Kiiza, the Executive Director, National Children Authority says that since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) ‘child participation’ has been the subject of an increasing flood of initiatives.

- It is their right for children to grow up in a happy environment where they can fully exercise their rights.

CHILD PARTICIPATION.
Since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) ‘child participation’ has been the subject of an increasing flood of initiatives.

- Information sharing: young people are informed to facilitate collective and individual action.

- Consultation: young people are consulted and interact with an organisation which can incorporate their feedback and perspectives.

- Decision-making: young people can own the decision making process or share the role with others on specific issues of a project.

- Initiating action: young people are proactive and able to take the initiative.

Mr Bhatnagar Bhuvan and Mr Williams Aubrey in their research entitled; Participatory development and the World Bank conducted for the World Bank in 1992 say children's roles should include;

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- Consultation: young people are consulted and interact with an organisation which can incorporate their feedback and perspectives.

- Decision-making: young people can own the decision making process or share the role with others on specific issues of a project.

- Initiating action: young people are proactive and able to take the initiative.
Measures govt is taking to protect children in Uganda

By DAVID MAFABI

Government of Uganda has gone to great lengths to protect children in Uganda. This includes the establishment of a national Child toll-free emergency number (116) by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development that children or adults can use to report situations of violence against children and abuse to laws, polices and institutions.

The government has put in place an enabling Legislative and Policy Frameworks for Children Rights to better the wellbeing of children in Uganda, starting with The Constitution of Uganda, 1995.

The Constitution specifically stipulates that is the duty of a Uganda citizen to protect children and vulnerable persons against any form of abuse, harassment or ill-treatment. It further expounds on the rights of children who are foundlings or adopted, to citizenship. The government has put in place an enabling Legislative and Policy Frameworks for Children Rights to better the wellbeing of children in Uganda, starting with The Constitution of Uganda, 1995.

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Ms Janat Mukwaya the Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development says the constitution adds that, “Children may not be separated from their families or the persons entitled to bring them up against the will of their families or of those persons, except in accordance with the law.”

“And Article 34 elaborates the rights of children in Uganda in diverse aspects, it is in these areas that laws and policies have been passed since 2007, to give effect to the constitutional rights, responsibilities and protections to the children of Uganda,” adds Ms Mukwaya.

Laws passed to protect children

- Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act, 2009 expressly prohibits the trafficking of children.
- The Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act, 2010 prohibits the harmful cultural practice against girls.
- The Anti-Pornography Act, 2014 provides specific provisions to criminalise all acts of pornography and includes specific provisions on combatting child pornography.

Policies, strategies and plans to protect children

A number of policies have been adopted by the government to facilitate and guide the implementation of the child related laws in the area of civil, economic, social and cultural rights. Uganda has also institutionalised various action plans and strategies to facilitate implementation of child friendly practices in all spheres of life and national development. These include;

- The National Strategic Programme Plan of Interventions for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children 2011/12—2015/16 a
follow-up to the first plan implemented from 2005/6 to 2009/10. It provides a blue print to enable progressive realisation of the rights of orphans and other vulnerable children.

- The National Strategy to End Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy 2014/2015 – 2019/2020 which seeks to address the situation of early and forced child marriage as well as the elimination of teenage pregnancy.


- The Gender in Education Policy (2016) provides guidance on effective mainstreaming of gender throughout the education and sports sector in order to achieve gender equality in education and sports learning outcomes. This will enhance equal access and participation for girls and boys in the sector.

- The National Disability Inclusive Planning Guidelines for Uganda 2017 that seeks to address issues of disability in Uganda. Uganda has officially recognised local sign language to enable children with disability overcome communication barriers.

- The Special -Needs Education and Non-Formal Education Policy 2013 promotes broader learning frameworks for children and young persons with disabilities.

- The National Child Participation Strategy 2017/18 - 2021/22 will ensure that children are given voice and agency to articulate their views and perspectives at all levels of government.

**Institutional developments**

A periodic report to the African committee of experts on rights and welfare of the child on implementation of the African charter on the rights and welfare of children 2018 by Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development says the government is focusing on reforms and strategies to meet the survival and development needs of children at the national and local government level. There is increasing emphasis on child participation, stakeholders’ responsiveness and promoting the rights of all children.

The report adds that several bodies and entities are charged with the protection and promotion of children’s rights like the National Children’s Authority, Uganda Human Rights Commission-Vulnerable Persons Unit, Uganda Equal Opportunities Commission and the Uganda Police Force.

Others are the Office of the Directorate of Public Prosecutions (ODPP), the Family and Children Courts handle cases of children accused of crime, Uganda Bureau of Statistics, National Child Protection Working Group, Uganda Parliamentary Forum for Children, the Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Programme and Management Information System OVC-MIS and several partners that supplement the government’s efforts to ensure that Uganda’s children enjoy their constitutional rights.

**Enaction of protective laws.** The government has put in place an enabling Legislative and Policy Frameworks for Children Rights to better the wellbeing of children in Uganda, starting with The Constitution of 1995. The government also prohibited female genital mutilation through the Female Genital Mutilation Act, 2010, among others.
SOS Children’s villages is an independent, non-governmental international development organization which has been working to meet the needs and protect the interests and rights of children since 1949. SOS Children’s villages work focuses on abandoned, destitute and orphaned children. Although Uganda’s living conditions for large sectors of the population remain difficult, SOS Children’s villages have taken on the responsibility of ensuring that children have healthcare, education, and a secure and stable childhood. Ms Olive Birungi Lumonya, the organisation’s national director says that no child is left behind in the drive towards sustainable economic development.

SOS Children’s villages contribute to improving the lives of children in Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD), sexual and reproductive health, education, participation and governance and child protection. Mr Mondo Kyateeka, the Commissioner of children affairs at the ministry of Gender, Labour and Social development said Uganda ratified the UNCRC in 1990 as progressive measure to protect and promote children’s rights.

He added that SOS Children’s Villages is part of the leadership team at the forefront of lobbying the legislators of Uganda to:

i) Prioritize children’s issues in all agendas including: planning, budgeting among others as Uganda joins the rest of the world to commemorate 25 years of the Child Rights Convention.

ii) Put in place and implement legislations that protect children from erroneous acts like inter-country adoption under the guise of foster-guardianship, child trafficking, forced marriages, child labor, among others.

Ms Lumonya revealed that SOS Children’s villages have been advocating the ECD policy and that the Action Plan will ensure integrated services for children from conception to 8 years of age in the form of health, nutrition, education, protection, and parenting support services.

She revealed that several amendments especially in the areas of adoption, child trafficking, child labour among others have been passed by Parliament. “The reason for our existence is Children. We cater for children from two years to 23 years and many of them have come back to even hold their marriage ceremonies because we are good parents to them,” said Ms Lumonya.

A PROGRAMMES AT SOS CHILDREN’S VILLAGES

Family like care programme

According to Ms Lumonya, SOS Children’s Villages builds families for orphaned, abandoned and other vulnerable children, “we give them a safe home, together with their siblings, where they can grow up in one of our SOS families,” she adds.

“A Loving Home for Every Child”

Ayebale Pauline karabo moderating the children’s panel discussions at the National Child Symposium of DAC 2018.
She said that SOS Family-Based Care is based on the following four guiding principles:

a) The SOS Mother, a trained caregiver who nurtures each individual child in her care.
b) Brothers and Sisters, both biological siblings and SOS siblings develop natural family bonds.
c) The Home, each SOS family creates a loving environment marked by safety, a sense of belonging and shared responsibilities.
d) The Village, a safe, supportive community of neighbors, with access to psychosocial support, medical centers, schools and recreational facilities.

**Family Strengthening Programme**
This programme supports families to take good care of children from their own biological settings to prevent children from losing their protection and care and strengthening the safety nets for vulnerable children and their families. The programme rolled out to Uganda in February 2006 and has spread to all four locations.

Children most at risk of losing the care of their family are target group. Children have access to essential services for their health development. Families are empowered to build their capacity to protect and care for their children effectively to the situation of vulnerable children and their families. Ongoing planning, monitoring and evaluation make the programmes relevant and effective.

**Education**
A number of schools in East Africa has not kept pace with the high population growth. Demand for education is highly competitive which means that many children are left out, so the SOS Children's village institutions strive to create secure and caring environments in which children of different abilities can achieve their potential within a broad and balanced curriculum.

Holistic programme of activities
- High quality teaching and learning
- Child-centered teaching programmes
- Moderate class size of 30-35 students
- Sensitive to plight of every child
- High standards of skill-based training
- Composition – 10-20% children and 80-90% community children
- Regular monitoring and evaluation to enhance and sustain quality

**SOS EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN UGANDA**
- Kindergarten 4 (Kakiri, Entebbe, Gulu and Fort Portal)
- Primary 2 (Kakiri and Gulu)
- Secondary 1 (Kakiri)

“Our aim is to prepare children become respectful and contributing members of the communities in which they live,” says Ms Lumonya

**Preventive Services**
- Antenatal & Postnatal Care
- Immunization
- Health Education
- Family Planning
- Counseling and Guidance

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAMMES**
The Medical centers extend nutritional support, hygiene and environmental health through medical camps and mobile clinics. She said the Patient/Client categories under the health programme include children, youth, mothers, aunts and administrative staff, school medical center, dependants of workers and patients from the wider community. All the services mentioned are offered by well qualified trained medical staff who include; Clinical Officers, Registered Nurses/ Midwives, Nursing Assistants, Laboratory Technicians, Counselors and a Consultant (Pediatrician) and Volunteers.

**ADVOCACY**
Mr. Ssanyu Marvin Livingstone, Programme Manager Gender & Advocacy says that SOS children’s Villages Uganda believes that ‘Every Child Should Belong to a loving home’. In collaboration with local governments, line ministries, Civil Society organizations, SOS advocates for the rights of vulnerable children at National and Local levels. We are active members of the Uganda Child Rights NGO Network (UCRN) and Parenting African Network Uganda Chapter (PANI). We actively participate in development, implementation and review of key related legal frameworks and strategies. We are currently implementing an advocacy strategy (2016 - 2020) focusing on:
- Children’s participation
- Male caregivers’ participation in family care at family level
- Alternative care reform
- Employability and decent work for young people

**PARTNERS**
- Mildmay Uganda
- Uganda Health Marketing Group
- Government of Uganda
- District Local Government
- Uganda Muslim Medical Bureau
- Joint Clinical Research Center, Mengo
- Nu Health
Children’s Voices

African children face many challenges, which one needs the most attention?

**Parental care, love and communication**
From the many challenges African children face, the one that needs most attention is parental care, love and communication. Most parents are too busy for their children making children look for love from elsewhere.

Paul Emorut, Kamuli Boys School

**Moral and spiritual guidance**
To me the biggest challenge is moral and spiritual attention. Many parents do not give their children moral and spiritual guidance. The parents can go to church alone and leave the children behind.

Desmond Nadiope, Ebenezer Primary School

**Menstrual hygiene management**
The most pressing challenge is menstrual hygiene management. The girls need provision of sanitary pads, special washrooms and soap during periods so as to be comfortable at school.

Flavia Mutesi, Kamuli Township School

**Security**
Poor security; many children are being kidnapped because there is no security. Communities, homes and schools should improve their security so that children are safe. CCTV cameras can be installed so that security is improved.

Bakhita Ogili Ayebare, PSViolet, Hillside Primary School

**School fees**
Children are not going to school because they lack school fees. Some children in my school have dropped out of school because of this challenge.

Joyce Tendo Nakacwa, P4, Nansana SDA Primary School

**School fees**
Lack of school fees which is caused by too much poverty in the communities is the challenge that needs the most immediate attention.

Joseph Muhumuza, P5, Kibbuka Mixed Primary School

**Early marriages**
The greatest challenge is school dropouts caused by early marriage, early pregnancies and poverty. Early marriages should be stopped.

Joy Jovia Nakiitto, P7, Kibuuka Mixed Primary School

**School fees**
Lack of school fees; some children don’t go to school because their parents do not have money. Sickness like flu and cough is also a challenge to children.

Esther Nakyanzi, P2, Risar junior School

**Homelessness**
African children face the problem of homelessness. The problem of street children is rampant. We need to find homes for all the children on the streets. We need to make Africa a better home for children.

Antonia Barungi; P6 Green - Greenhill Primary School, Buwaate.

By WINNIE NAJJUMA
**Child labour**
Child abuse in form of child labour is a challenge that needs attention. This causes mistreatment of children. It can also lead to disability of bodies, fear and death.

Jemimah Namunjasi, P5, Little Muheji School

**Kidnappers**
Killing of children by asking their parents for money when the children are kidnapped. Kidnappers always ask parents for money but even when it is given, they kill the children.

Divine Naluyomba, P2, Kisa Primary School

**School fees**
The most challenging problem to African children is poverty because many have failed to attain education that would have made them good citizens in the future. This is because their parents can’t raise school fees since they are poor.

Steven Bwanika, 11, P5, Kasaana Junior School Masaka

**Kidnappers**
Kidnapping children; some end up suffering from early pregnancies when they are raped. Early marriages caused by lack of money is another challenge that needs attention. Children end up being forced into marriages just so parents get money.

Agnes Nakato, P5, Namugongo Girls Boarding Primary School

**Domestic violence**
Domestic violence remains one of the major problems affecting us. Violence is right at our doorsteps. This has deeply affected us as children. Parents fight in the presence of their children. Sometimes parents extend their aggression on their own children. It is really bad.

Rosemary Lamwaka, 15, P6, St Mauritz Obiya Primary School, Gulu

**Child labour**
Child labour needs attention because it affects children’s mental and physical growth. It also affects children’s education since they are in markets and on streets vending merchandise during the time when they should be at school.

Allen Juuko, 12, P7, Kasaana Junior School

**Kidnappers**
Kidnapping is the most pressing problem to African children because it leads to deaths and sacrifice for monetary issues.

Rona Nantaba, 13, P7, Kasaana Junior School Masaka

**Lack of skilled teachers**
Lack of skilled teachers; some go into teaching because of lack of jobs and or because they failed examinations at school. Government needs to see that there are skilled teachers in schools.

Patrick Nuwamanya, P5, Mbarara SDA Primary School

**Poor feeding**
Poor feeding is one of the biggest challenges children face. Most of them are always sick. Because of this they perform poorly and miss school. Parents and government need to see to it that children have enough food and feed well.

Devick Kabara, P7 Mbarara Municipal School

**Child abuse**
Most children suffer from child abuse, at home, school and in the community. Because of this they drop out of school, end up as street children; join bad groups like prostitutes, thieves. Some child also kill themselves but others die because of being denied food, beatings and not treating them when sick.

Sophia Nakitende, P6, Star Junior School
Poem

Children of Africa
Most on the streets.
Nowhere to go
Nowhere to sleep
Begging passers by
What shall we do?

Children of Africa
No one to take us in
No one to take care of us.
At home we are mistreated
On the streets no one cares
What shall we do?

People of Africa
Let us stand together and help
all homeless children.
Let us give them homes
Let us give them food
They deserve better
Let us make Africa a better place for children.

Composed by
Antonia Barungi, P6 Green
Greenhill Primary School
Buwaate

We can help African children by...

Mentoring young parents
Parenting is taking on a leadership role and everything falls on leadership. Children are lacking parenting and have grown to be drug addicts, school dropouts and mental and social deficits. This is reflected in increased crimes, engagement in non productive activities and increase in drug and sexual activities at a young age. The church must emphasise family with a strong focus on family leadership.
Edson Twesigye, Project coordinator

Stopping child abuse
Children are being mistreated by giving them heavy punishments. It leads to children abandoning homes and they end up on the streets, which leads to several challenges like assault, kidnaps and child sacrifice among others.
Fahad Malik, editor

Being better parents
We need to be there for children. Nurturing in children builds great character and integrity. Such excellent values cannot be attained through education alone. That’s why we have so many educated and qualified students but their character cannot allow them to sustain a job.
Alice Kansime, businesswoman

Providing necessities
Providing them with all the necessary necessities to keep them in school. This is especially applicable for children in rural areas who miss school because they do not have school requirements. Parents also need to be sensitised on the benefits of educating their children as it can improve their lives.
Sharifu Kiragga Tusuubira, health advocate

Parliament has passed three significant legislations; namely the Domestic Violence Act 2010, The Prevention of Trafficking in Person Act (2009) and the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act (2010) and that there is also the Penal Code (Amendment) which Prohibits defilement of girls and boys. The Children’s Act Cap. 59, provides the legal framework to protect and promote the rights of children and the Local Government Act Cap. 234 mandates the local administration to provide services to children within their areas of jurisdiction without discrimination.”
Ms Janat Mukwaya, the Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development

Important Quotes

Voices

By Antonia Barungi; P6 - Greenhill PS, Buwaate

Parliament has passed three significant legislations; namely the Domestic Violence Act 2010, The Prevention of Trafficking in Person Act (2009) and the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act (2010) and that there is also the Penal Code (Amendment) which Prohibits defilement of girls and boys. The Children’s Act Cap. 59, provides the legal framework to protect and promote the rights of children and the Local Government Act Cap. 234 mandates the local administration to provide services to children within their areas of jurisdiction without discrimination.”
Ms Janat Mukwaya, the Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development
The National Policy for Orphans and other vulnerable children also exists to provide guidance on programming and coordination of efforts for effective service delivery for children. The revised strategy for girl’s education has an expanded scope to address children’s rights. Efforts are under way in tackling vices such as teenage pregnancy and defilement. To protect children, the ministry is also responsible for remand and rehabilitation homes. As a ministry, we have also developed the National Parenting Guidelines to create awareness among parents to fulfill their roles and ensure that every child enjoys positive parenting as a human right...

Mr Pius Bigirimana, PS, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development

Poem

By Nakaima Viola; S.3 - Nakalama S.S, Iganga

The African Child

African child! African child!
I wonder why you are suffering,
You are unfed from morning up
to sunset
You are tortured by your own,
Kidnappers, rapists and murderers.
What a pity African child!

African child! African child!
You are denied education,
Pushed into marriage by your
family,
Being enslaved as a child
mother,
What wife can a child be? Does a child have to be a wife?

African child! African child!
Cry no more, Wipe your tears away.
Your pleas, cries and sobs must end
Suffer not in silence. Stand up and report.
Your rights must prevail. Your potential is boundless.
Fight for your rights. Let everyone know.
Gleaming is your future. Stay in school, complete school.
Your future will never be questionable.

Go to school, stay in school and complete school.
Keeping children safe in the wake of kidnaps

By PAULINE BANGIRANA

The increased number of cases of kidnap in the country are cause for alarm. One of the most popular cases is that of Susan Magara who was kidnapped in Lungujja in Rubaga Division on her way home. The kidnappers asked for a huge sum of money from her parents as ransom. Unfortunately, Magara was eventually killed by the kidnappers despite efforts from police to rescue her.

Joseph Gwaidho Bakaleke, the Division Police Commander, Central Police Station notes that in the last five months, 40 cases of kidnap have been reported. Of these, 20 were self-kidnap cases. Eight of these resulted into rescues. Unfortunately, seven of the kidnapped people were killed. In all cases, children especially girls and women are the main target. Below the commander gives a few safety tips to keep children safe from kidnappers;

For children

Avoid moving alone during the weird hours of the mornings and evening. Do not leave school with anyone that claims to have come to pick you. Insist that the teacher (or whoever is in charge if you are not at school) calls your parent or guardian so that you talk to them and confirm before setting off with that person. It is also a good habit to ensure that your parents or any adult at home knows where you are or are going at all times.

Beware of strangers. If you must, just say hello and move on. Do not accept
Keeping children safe in the wake of kidnaps

The responsibility of security stems right from the home. As parents, what values are you instilling in your children? Who can they rely on? Do the children call anyone they meet uncle or aunt? Who should they be comfortable around? There are people who consider them to be assets or commodities that they can use to earn money.

Caution. Children need to know that not everyone is good and wishes them well. There are children who tend to have a liking for everybody especially at a given age. They need to be warned.

For adults

Protect children. Do not allow them to move alone especially early in the morning (when it is still dark), in the late evening or at night. Escort them to school regardless of the class they are in because the roads are not safe.

Teachers should talk to students about kidnaps and how to avoid them frequently so that they are alert. The DPC says, “We have made people participate in debates so that they perceive this vice of kidnap correctly. We also let them know why people kidnap.” He insists that there is need for constant emphasis, guidance and counselling.

The DPC adds that, “The responsibility of security stems right from the home. As parents, what values are you instilling in your children? Who can they rely on? Do the children call anyone they meet uncle or aunt? Who should they be comfortable around? There are people who consider them to be assets or commodities that they can use to earn money. Children need to know that not everyone is good and wishes them well. There are children who tend to have a liking for everybody especially at a given age. They need to be warned.”

He cautions parents saying, “Dear parents, let your children know that not everyone who smiles at them has good intentions so that they are careful.”

It is also important for children to know the name of where they stay, parents’ full name and phone numbers at heart. They should also always move with something that identifies them.

In case of a kidnap

Kidnappers may put you in a sack right away. When you get to an area or place with say traffic jam or in a trading centre, shout and scream. One or two people will wonder why you are shouting. This will draw attention and raise suspicion.

The DPC says that there are kidnappers who are doing it for the sake of earning money. “If they take you to a neighbourhood (this might be their place of residence), study what is around you. Try to establish where you can go to get help, do not choose to stay quiet. There might be people who can pay attention to you and come to your rescue if they get to know that you are in the wrong hands,” he says.

He adds that for those with phones, “In case you get kidnapped, you might not get time to call someone immediately but when a chance presents itself, call any number that you can. This will alert the other person that you are in a bad situation and they will ask for help and come to your rescue.”

For those who get such calls for example parents it is important that you inform the police immediately so that you are helped.

Also, believe in God because without His will, there is nothing that can help us. “When someone has divine elements, there is a way they are protected. There is a way the Holy Spirit protects those who believe,” DPC Bakaleke.
Earlier this year, a video of a father beating his child because the child had not gone to school went viral on social media. The parent was convicted. He apologised to the public and promised to never beat the child again. In Uganda, many crimes are committed against children and the commonest is violence against them. This manifests in many forms such as physical, sexual and psychological. During a survey conducted by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and social development in 2016, 43,682 cases of violence against children were reported countrywide.

But who is more vulnerable? Lydia Najjemba Wasula, the coordinator OVC National Implementation Unit with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development notes that children with disabilities, children without parental care, street children, children in rural areas, conflict situations and adolescent girls among others are at most risk. Sadly, children are offended at the hands of their protectors. It is these categories of children that this year’s Day of the African Child celebrations focus on.

The Assistant Superintendent of Police, Sulea Khatundi Officer in Charge of the Child and Family Protection Department says some of the common crimes committed against children include; child abuse, neglect, torture, kidnap and child labour.

In a bid to fight child neglect, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development in conjunction with the police, created Sauti, a child toll free helpline. Anyone can call 116 to report any form of child abuse free of charge. This is done with an aim of creating a safe haven for the children to enjoy their rights.

Sensitisation about child abuse is also being done through various media outlets. Through these messages, parents are called upon to stop child abuse. Wall hangings are in different parts of the police station warning against child violence as it is the most prevalent crime committed against children.

A 2005 study by Raising Voices and Save the Children found that 98 per cent of children from five districts aged between eight and 18 years had experienced physical or emotional violence. According to the study, children are usually beaten and humiliated for various reason such as coming late or delaying at the well.

In order to get the culprits, the public should be sensitised so that it is everyone’s duty and responsibility to keep the children safe.

Khatundi says that family cases are referred to the family court and usually, restoring peace is the first option. Counselling and guidance is given to the perpetrators (parents and caretakers).

In a bid to prevent recurrence in crimes against children, Khatundi says that police also works with several non-governmental organisation to help children. These include;
Raising voices, Retrak and VIVA crimes. Some of these NGOs take on the children and train them in various skills.

It is everyone’s duty to keep children safe.

The numbers

- In 2018 alone, the department has so far registered 14 cases of domestic violence, 18 cases of child neglect, 2 cases of child desertion, 12 cases of missing children, 5 cases of child abuse, 1 case of child labour and 1 case of unruly children.
- In a report released by police in 2016, cases of child torture increased to 808 in 2016 from 660 cases in 2010. Cases of child neglect rose from 4,967 in 2010 to 5,692 in 2016.
- The 2017 Child Helpline Report notes that a total of 201,153 calls were made, of which 2,844 related to child abuse. In 2016, a total of 238,629 calls were made, of which 2,251 were made by children, who reported 294 of the 2,878 cases of child abuse, 1,118 callers sought counselling services and 15,825 callers made inquiries about various services. In 2015, 239,420 calls were made through the Helpline. 0.85% or 2,029 children utilised the help line to report cases of abuse. Overall, 3008 cases of abuse were reported, of which 1609 were referred to the justice system and probation officers. In 2014, 338,052 calls were made to the child helpline resulting in the identification of 3,820 cases of abuse, of which 241 of these cases were referred to the justice system.

The 2017 Child Helpline Report notes that a total of 201,153 calls were made, 2,844 related to child abuse.

Children’s Anthem

Chorus
We young women and men of Uganda
Are marching along the path of Education
Singing and dancing with joy together
Uniting for a better Uganda

Stanza I
We are the pillar of tomorrow’s Uganda
Let us rise now embrace true knowledge
Yielding discipline resourcefulness
To build a great, great, pearl

Stanza II
We know the way into the land of enlightenment
has thorns, creepers, vales, and mountains
Come what may we shall overcome
For the glorious time to come

Stanza III
Parents and teachers and the youth of this nation
Rise with us, support our endeavors
Lead by God who is the Sources of life
To Uplift our motherland.
The Day of the African Child has been celebrated for the last 27 years. A lot has changed over the years regarding the African child. Each year, a theme is coined with an aim of drawing attention to a specific issue. This has seen a number of strides being made and an inevitable evolution of the life of the African child.

Paul Masembe, the founder of Shalom for Africa, a non-governmental organisation explains that the African child has evolved from the days where children were mostly born in plantations by traditional birth attendants to being born in maternity wards.

In the past, it was difficult to separate the African children from their mothers who would go digging with their children on their back. While some mothers still do that, times are seeing more women contributing to the family’s financial needs. As a result, mothers are increasingly getting help when it comes to taking care of children.

There has also been evolution from children being raised by a community to a more individualistic kind of parenting. Today, many parents will not be happy with anyone disciplining their children. And as awareness of children’s rights increases, children are also less likely to accept punishment from anyone and for anything. This has called for more creative ways of punishing children for example reduction of entertainment time as opposed to canning. Because of appeals to respect children’s rights, adults are increasingly embracing talking to children about bad behaviour and the need to reform instead of canning like was the case in the past.

Today, more African children are embracing...
and attending a formal education system in place of the informal education in the past. Today’s child is also getting a lot of exposure. Unfortunately, this is to both good and bad things especially through the different media channels. It is this exposure that makes some adults lament about the rate at which today’s child is growing claiming it is very fast. This definitely calls for a lot of guidance to children regarding the things they are being exposed to. It also calls for the need to monitor and limit what children are being exposed to because some of it is not good for their age.

There is also increased equality when it comes to how the boy and girl child are being treated. Nonetheless, a lot still needs to be done to ensure that the girl child is not disadvantaged but strides for example in girl child education need to be applauded.

But even as all these changes take place, some things have remained constant even though they do not exactly favour the African child. These include; child marriages, female genital mutilation, child sacrifice among others.

The African child’s life has obviously evolved tremendously but a lot more can be done to make it a lot better. As more challenges are dealt with, the sky is the limit for the African child.

Facts about the African child

- By the year 2050, almost one in three of the world’s children under 18 will be African.
- Half of the continent’s population is children, up to 20 per cent of which are disabled. An ever-increasing number are growing up stunted because of the challenges of malnutrition.

  - The children of African women with at least five years of schooling have a 40 per cent higher chance of survival.
  - The poorest children in sub-Saharan Africa are four and a half times more likely to be out of school than the richest children.
  - Child poverty is about more than just money. For children, poverty means being deprived in crucial aspects of their lives such as nutrition, health, water, education or shelter. UNICEF estimates that 2 in 3 children across 30 sub-Saharan countries suffer from two or more of these deprivations.

- Thirty million of the world’s 57 million children out of school are in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Diseases like HIV/AIDS are leaving kids orphaned and in charge of their households at very young ages. An estimated 50 million orphans live in Africa.
- Malaria kills 3,000 African children per day.
- Hunger is a major issue, and Africa is producing less food per person, with the average plot of land being too small to feed a family. Children’s growth and health is heavily affected by their nutrition.
The Day of the African Child is celebrated on June 16 of every year. This has been so since 1991 when it was first initiated by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). This day honours those who participated in the Soweto Uprising in 1976 that day. It also raises awareness of the continuing need for improvement of the education provided to African children.

In Soweto, South Africa, on June 16, 1976, about 10,000 black school children marched in a column about 1Km long. The children were protesting the poor quality of their education and demanding their right to be taught in their own language.

Hundreds of young students were shot and more than a hundred people were killed in the protests of the following two weeks, and more than a thousand were injured.

On June 16, governments, non-governmental, international organisations and other stakeholders on the African continent will gather to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing the full realization of the rights of children Africa.

This year’s Day of the African Child will be commemorated under the theme “Leave No Child Behind for Africa’s Development.” This year’s DAC theme builds on the momentum created by the 2017 theme “The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for Children in Africa.”

In Uganda, celebrations will be held in Kibale district under the theme “Leave No Child Behind for Uganda’s Development.”
We take this opportunity to once again join the World to Celebrate the Day of the African Child under the national theme Leave No Child Behind for Uganda’s Development.

We believe in the children of Uganda and we are playing a big role in empowering children and young people to become key agents in the critical phases that contribute to the country’s development. Through our programs we support children to build their capacities in critical skills and survival mechanisms picking a leaf from a methodology known as SCREAM in full, Supporting Children’s Rights through Education, Art and Media. It is a method that focuses its strength on the power of children in advocating for change.

One of Somero’s core programming targets the girl child. Skilling the girl child widens their knowledge and skills which contributes to their safe surviving mechanisms, sexual reproductive health rights knowledge enabling them to directly participate in the country’s programs.

In line with the theme of DAC, the skills, knowledge and opportunities offered by our programs contributes (85 per cent) to mitigating the various challenges children and young people face in order to realise their potential.

The popular poverty cycle has not excluded children. In all business places, children are abused and engaged in the worst forms of child labour including gold mining, commercial sex exploitation, domestic workers and some work as beggars.

SOMERO GAINS

- Moroto and Kampala were enrolled for vocational training at Nile Vocational Education schools were supported with scholastic materials to enable them stay in school and avoid falling into child labour. A children petition was presented by child social change agents in the districts of Bugiri, Kampala, Busia and Moroto, and this was presented to district officials for change in policies.

Let this DAC be a reminder to every country men about their role in uplifting the rights of African children. May we all support them to realise their potential. May all country men realise the power of children’s voice on issues concerning them.
The Hunger Project Uganda (THP-U) is a strategic non-profit International Organisation founded in 1977 with its Headquarters in New York, USA. The Hunger Project operates in 22 Countries around the globe with eight of them in Africa. In 1999, The Hunger Project Uganda Country office was opened and currently operates in nine Districts namely; Mpigi, Butambala, Wakiso, Kiboga, Kyankwazi, Mbarara, Kiruhura, Iganga and Mbale.

THP-U is committed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 3– Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages, 4-Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all and 5-Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. We therefore, join child actors in Uganda and the global community to commemorate the Day of African Child (DAC) 2018 under the theme “Leave No Child Behind for Uganda’s Development”.

This years’ DAC seeks to highlight issues specific to our national context, specifically focusing on the groups of children that are most vulnerable, and at greatest risk of being left behind. In implementation of development programmes in the 11 Epicenters across the Country (clusters of villages), The Hunger Project Uganda has strategically focused on identifying and empowering vulnerable children. These include children with disabilities, children without parental care, adolescent girls and children in rural areas. This directly contributes to attaining SDGs that focus on inequality, with a particular emphasis on reaching the poorest, most excluded, and most vulnerable in order to ensure that no child is left behind.

Since the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Uganda, eight million children have been able to access primary education. Out of these, only 200,000 are children with disabilities. UNICEF (2015) Report estimates that on average, only 201,190 pupils with disabilities were in primary school during 2009 – 2011. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), 98 per cent of children living with disabilities in low and middle-income countries are not enrolled in school.

The Uganda Society for Disabled Children (USDC) estimates that one third of all children out of school in Uganda are children with disabilities. According to them, children with disabilities constitute the largest minority group that fail to complete primary school “even though about 60 per cent of all children with disabilities could attend school with no special adaptations”. This means that with the right systems in place, most children with disabilities should be able to fit and study in ordinary schools.
What THP-Uganda is doing

In the past decade, Government of Uganda has attained significant progress in responding to the sexual and reproductive health needs of Ugandan youth in general. But even then, THP-Uganda recognises that girls with hearing impairment in Uganda face a multitude of barriers in accessing sexual and reproductive health information and services and remaining in school. Girls with disabilities have largely been overlooked when it comes to their sexual and reproductive rights. Because of their often isolated and marginalised position in families and communities, girls with disabilities are more likely to be exposed to risks of sexual violence, rape, early pregnancy, forced marriage and HIV infection than girls without disabilities.

Since 2015, The Hunger Project Uganda has run a comprehensive child marriage prevention programme (‘Her Choice’, financed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs) in several districts in Uganda. The programme is aimed at creating child marriage free communities where every girl is free to decide if, when and whom she marries. Child marriage, a serious human rights violation, upsets a girl’s life forever. She quits school, will likely get pregnant too early for her body to bear and she will have less opportunities to support herself and her family. An end of child marriage is one step closer to the end of hunger and poverty. An important component of the Her Choice programme is improving girls' access to sexual and reproductive health information and services.

In an effort to ensure that girls with hearing impairment are not left out from benefiting from the Her Choice programme and owing to the fact that they are more vulnerable to being victims of school dropout, poverty and child marriage.

THP-Uganda has sought partnership with the Uganda National Association of the Deaf (UNAD) to do the following:

1. Empower girls with hearing impairment to make safe choices related to their sexuality and reproductive health (SRH) including menstrual hygiene management. This has increased the capacity of girls with hearing impairment to make safe choices regarding their sexuality and reproductive health which has been attained by training them as peer educators in school to reach out to their peers in and out-of school.

2. Equip health workers with basic sign language skills and knowledge of SRH needs of girls with hearing impairment. THP-U has also set-up and equipped youth-friendly corners to provide youth friendly and disability sensitive health-care services.

3. Engage communities and local governments on the rights and needs of young people with hearing impairment. THP-U has also created a supportive environment for people with hearing impairment and girls in particular by ensuring their rights are protected and promoted at family and community level.

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Facebook:https://www.facebook.com/mustbeHERCHOICE
Twitter:https://twitter.com/mustbeHERCHOICE
The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) particularly goal 4 focuses on quality education for all and not merely education for all (mass enrollment) as was the case with the 2015 Education For All (EFA) goals.

This came after the realisation that despite ongoing mass enrollment in countries such as Uganda, poor school conditions among others eventually push most learners out of school with less than 40 per cent completing the basic cycle of education. As a signatory to the SDGs, Uganda must commit to providing a holistic and quality education for all children as a key to development.

In Uganda, more emphasis is usually placed on the learning outcomes. For example, when a child celebrates attaining aggregate 4 in the Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE). Do we automatically assume that this learner benefitted from a quality education system owing to the fact that they managed to answer a set of standard questions set by UNEB correctly? It is of crucial importance to discuss what one learns and of what relevance it is to their particular environment. Our learners need to be equipped with the necessary life skills to enable them ably compete with others in this continuously globalised world.

**What then should be done to attain quality education in Uganda?**

- Government of Uganda should:
  - Develop recruitment strategies to meet the gap in trained teachers and deploy those teachers equitably. We need quality teachers for quality education.
  - Develop and enforce high national standards of training (pre and in-service), developed with the teaching profession and in reference to our national development needs. Free continuous professional development should be prioritised
  - Ensure that all teachers are being paid a decent, professional wage; negotiate and agree pay scales with teachers’ unions;
  - Strengthen school leadership and promote the establishment of school management committees that include students, teachers, parents and local community members who should be empowered to make decisions on the contextual environmental learning needs.
  - Support the establishment of Teaching Councils to develop and enforce professional standards and ethics
  - Open planning and budgeting processes to civil society organisations, including teachers’ unions, for example through participation in official government-partner groups in the education sector (e.g. Local Education Groups).
  - Reconsider a single teacher development and management agency, which should be held accountable for action and inaction on all such issues related to teachers and teaching.
  - Have open and participatory processes on curriculum reforms. Involve the key stakeholders such as teachers who are supposed to deliver the curriculum. There is nothing for us (teachers), without us).
  - Implement a social dialogue framework to bring together all stakeholders in the education sector to jointly discuss and agree on feasible solutions to the quality education issue in Uganda.

Finally, if we are genuinely serious about fulfilling the right to education for all, ensuring that every child, youth or adult learner develops the skills that a good education brings – from literacy and numeracy to creative and critical thinking – then the only solution is to ensure that every student has a quality teacher. This means putting in place policies and financing to produce a sufficient, well-trained, well-supported, equitably distributed professional teacher workforce.

Because we are, the nation is

Filbert Bates Baguma
General Secretary, Uganda National Teachers’ Union (UNATU)
Hope Nankunda Mwijuka is an adolescent counsellor in schools with Raising Teenagers Uganda. She also works with Girls Not Brides Uganda national alliance. Their aim is to end child marriages. The alliance believes that if they end teenage pregnancies, they are preventing early marriages and as a result, keeping girls in schools.

So far, they have reached out to over 10,000 girls with sanitary pads. As a result, this has improved school attendance since children missing out on school has greatly reduced. Before girls would miss school for five days every month. Nankunda also does human rights advocacy at national level.

Nankunda lost her father when she was four years. She says she has managed to make it because she was not abandoned. Because someone was there for her, she wants to be there for another. This is one of the things that drives her to do what she does.

“I do my work out of passion. No one pays me to reach out to children in the different parts of the country telling them to stay in school,” says Nankunda.

Nankunda focuses on the girl child while doing her work because girls are more prone to drop out of school especially when they get pregnant. “We educate the girl so that she can keep herself safe and stay in school,” she explains.

As the world celebrates the Day of the African Child, Nankunda says there is a lot more to be done especially in the home. “Sexual abuse happens today in homes and is done by relatives. Moreover, children are being threatened from speaking out which calls for the need for caretakers to be very vigilant,” she adds.

One of her most memorable encounters is of a child who requested her to speak to the head teacher. The young girl was scared of going back home because she was going through sexual abuse. Unfortunately, not all children get to speak out and be helped.

This is why her heart bleeds whenever she is forced to leave a children gathering before all children share what is their mind because of time constraints.

Because there is so much to do, Nankunda believes that money meant for stakeholder meetings should be used to sensitise the parents. “Focus should be put on those in these rural areas. It is amazing how talking to these parents can change their mind-set,” she says.

Talking to these parents makes them realise the need to educate their children and provide the necessary requirements to help them succeed.

The rights’ activist says there is hope for the child if parents are willing to go an extra mile to ensure that they not only provide but also motivate and look out for children.

Nankunda says that we must start small if we are to see the change that we need. Communities should be responsible so that perpetrators of the law are punished. We can start with naming and shaming in a bid to create a difference. It starts with local leaders, councils, parents and the children.
Refugee children are encouraged to study with Ugandan children in regular schools but the national education sector itself is faced by a number of challenges, underlying poverty, limited teaching capacities, poor infrastructure, overcrowded classes, poor learning environment and girls’ limited school enrolment, retention and completion rates. In addition, the presence of refugees exacerbates existing vulnerabilities and renders the population in the refugee hosting communities less resilient to economic and or environmental shocks.

As per the theme of this year 2018, Day of African Child, No Leaving any Child behind for Uganda’s Development, Quality education is key in transforming the lives not only of the children but society as whole. UWESO in partnership with United Arab Emirates is contributing towards reducing this gap.

Uganda Women’s Effort to Save Orphans (UWESO) is an indigenous National NGO established in 1986 to respond to the needs and concerns of Orphans and Other vulnerable children (OVC). UWESO exists to promote the Survival, Development, Participation and Protection of OVC in Uganda.

The thematic areas in UWESO’s Strategic Plan; 2016 – 2020 are:


In partnership with the Government of Uganda and with support from United Arab Emirates (UAE), UWESO is implementing a project, Advancing Rights and Opportunities to Education for Vulnerable Children in Uganda for the period; 2018 - 2019. The Districts of implementation are; Mbarara and Isingiro. The districts of implementation are; Mbarara and Isingiro. The districts of implementation are; Mbarara and Isingiro. The districts of implementation are; Mbarara and Isingiro. The districts of implementation are; Mbarara and Isingiro. The districts of implementation are; Mbarara and Isingiro. The districts of implementation are; Mbarara and Isingiro. The districts of implementation are; Mbarara and Isingiro. The districts of implementation are; Mbarara and Isingiro. The districts of implementation are; Mbarara and Isingiro. The districts of implementation are; Mbarara and Isingiro. The districts of implementation are; Mbarara and Isingiro. 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Isingiro Districts by the end of the project, December 2019.

Providing integrated financial services to 22,500 women and men through formation of not less than 750 Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) and promotion of collaboration and linkages to other Financial Services Providers (FSPs) out for the mature VSLAs are key in the AROC Project.

The VSLA methodology is a savings-based financial service which facilitates the mobilization of group members’ savings and on-lending among members only with no external liabilities. The VSLA model emphasizes provision of simple and accessible financial services, to the vulnerable and poor communities in the rural and peri-urban areas of Uganda.

Self-selected members agree to form a VSLA these (members) are trained on group cohesion, savings and credit management, development of internal rules and regulations, election of committee members and simple record keeping. Minimum amount to be saved is determined by the group members and the highest saver does not exceed five times of the minimum saving value.

A VSLA operates with a metallic cash box where important records and any un-borrowed monies are kept. The VSLA methodology therefore reduces dependency syndrome hence empowering rural communities both socially and economically.

In Uganda this intervention was designed to mitigate the gaps in the finance sector where formal financial institutions see the rural poor as a high risk segment and more often than not put emphasis on collateral as opposed to promotion of micro savings thereby exposing the poor to greater risks.

The long waiting period for funds due to the legal requirements of the institutions and the expensive processing fees make VSLAs the best convenient and affordable alternative for the rural communities.

Best practices and lessons learnt have been documented by UWESO and other implementers as a result of implementing VSLA and they include:

- Improved saving culture of the poor and marginalized communities of rural communities.
- Increased incomes.
- Improved livelihoods (nutrition, clothing, etc.).
- Improved capacity to meet requirements like medical and education.
- Increased asset accumulation notably like furniture for home, radios, bicycles, mobile phones and ox ploughs to increase agricultural productivity.
- Improved social networks and capacity to take up leadership roles at community level by VSLA members.
- Improved self-esteem and control of household resources especially by women.
- VSLA acting as platforms to discuss Child Protection issues

In addition, the project will advocate and create awareness on the rights of the child and education, through children clubs at school, paintings on the walls – Murals, disseminate 30,000 IEC materials among other interventions.

There is going to be improved retention of learners especially girls in the participating schools where the girl child will be provided with sanitary pads and all the 4,500 children will be supported with scholastic materials.

Ultimately the project aims at creating a collaborative environment between the Schools, VSLAs and the local authorities thereby strengthening structures such as Parents Teachers Association (PTA), School Management Committees (SMC), Child Protection Committees (CPCs) for better provision of socio economic interventions for the child.