

UGANDA YOUTH DEVELOPMENT LINK (UYDEL)

Study on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Uganda

Report on the dissemination meeting for Senior Police Officers

Grand Imperial Hotel, Kampala, 1/7/2011

Supported by: Acting For Life/Groupe Developpement/Air France

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Introduction

This meeting followed the release of the findings of a study on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) in Uganda conducted by UYDEL in 2010 and 2011 with support from Acting for Life. The study was conducted in 11 urban, rural-urban and fishing community districts of Uganda pointed out weak and in some areas no enforcement at all at district and local levels of laws relating to commercial sexual exploitation of children. It recommended that law enforcement be strengthened to prevent CSEC from happening, prosecute offenders and ensure that victims receive the necessary support to recover. The meeting was attended by 13 senior police officers from the departments of training, child and family protection, anti-child trafficking task force and human resources; and officials from partner government departments and ministries.

Welcome remarks

Dr. Sekiwanuka James, the meeting chairperson/moderator welcomed participants, led them to introduce themselves and explained the objective(s) of the workshop. They included:

1. To disseminate the findings of the study
2. To increase awareness on CSEC among high ranking officers working in police departments
3. To identify avenues of incorporating CSEC in the training programmes of police.

Dr. Sekiwanuka emphasized that CSEC in Uganda is one of the most heinous crimes committed against children and that trafficking networks around the world, including Uganda mostly target children for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

Key note address from the Ministry of Internal Affairs

Ms. Josephine Wasike represented the Minister of Internal Affairs Hon. Hillary Onek to make this key note address. She highlighted the lack of enough documented evidence on the magnitude of CSEC in Uganda and the deteriorating role of the family to protect children. She implored stakeholders to forge meaningful partnerships for sustained action against CSEC. *See Speech attached for details*



Presentation on the findings of the study on CSEC in Uganda

Mr. Rogers Mutaawe, one of the researchers that participated in this study made a presentation that highlighted the background of the study, study objectives, findings of the study in terms of trafficking, pornography and prostitution of children, regional representation of CSEC in Uganda, national legal and policy responses, conclusions and recommendations of the study.



Key issues raised during the discussion about the study findings

1. There was an initiative by Kampala City Council, to sensitize communities about children rights issues that sometimes included protection of children from CSEC. There also used to be operations to round up people using children in nude dancing (“Bimansulo”) but these are not done anymore.
2. There is also no regulatory/policy frameworks on pornography in print and broadcast media which has led to many children accessing pornography from the streets and at home.
3. There is no policy on preventing/handling human trafficking in Uganda. Stakeholder do what they see fit in relation to their capacities. Majority are gambling due to limited technical and financial capacity.
4. The lack of a national identification system and poor birth registration practices make it difficult to identify minors. The traffickers coach children to mention that they are 18 years and above. There is no proof otherwise that the children in question are under age.
5. Poverty, orphanhood and school drop-out are important issues underpinning the trafficking and eventual sexual exploitation of children in Uganda. Poor parents send their children to work to contribute to family income *“why should we (adults) send children to work for us? It is a*

shame to this country”. Probation Officer, Kampala. Many children are dropping out of school only to end up on the streets and the informal labour activities where they are exploited.

6. There are many cases of missing or trafficked children reported at police stations and because there are challenges of temporary shelter, police officers give children to strangers to take care of. In this sense, children are trafficked knowingly and unknowingly through the legal system.
7. Parents are reluctant to take up their responsibilities of total care for their children. They are also deceived by traffickers that they (traffickers) can better take care of their children. Upon trafficking the children, parents don't follow up to know what is happening to their children at destination areas.
8. Local Councils (LCs) at parish level are no longer active and majority NGOs shun to provide support to children on the street because they believe they (children) are spoilt and will spoil other children.
9. In Namutumba District, girls are employed/staged as bar maids, told/forced to dress skimpily and in some instances assigned particular customers. In the event that a drinking reveler wants to buy one of them for sex they approach bar managers. Once bought, the children wouldn't mind where they are taken, narrated one of the participants. They are paid as little as 1,000 shs. One girl I met was trafficked from Kamuli, made pregnant and employed to work in one of the bars.
10. There is a general lapse in security organs to enforce laws related to social issues such as CSEC, some LCs connive with pimps or conceal the activities of traffickers and exploiters. There are also elements in the police force that sexually abuse children (PLAN experiences). Some of them say that they are tempted to do so as they make operations.
11. Exploitation of children is highly linked to trafficking and the fact that Ugandans have not yet understood that trafficking is a crime and that there is a law against it. The people who know CSEC including the politicians also talk about it haphazardly because they do not have enough information. The police force itself has not mastered what trafficking is, how to recognize it and how to deal with cases.
12. Human trafficking does not only relate to children but also to adult men and women. Women for instance are deceived by traditional healers to move to other areas so they can get married.
13. Poor family planning is one of the underlying factors that contribute to CSEC. People produce children they can't look after. They end up dropping out of school or running away from home in the hope of better care in cities. There are incidences of politicians who manipulate poor

people for votes, telling them to produce more children which increases populations of poorly looked after children.

14. The law enforcement officers are trapped in the dilemma of false adoption since there are no shelters for unaccompanied children. In most cases they are forced to keep children in their own homes. So when an opportunity comes to hand this child over to another person, it becomes easy to do so. Police officers are also not trained to handle adoption procedures. Other challenges include limited capacity (logistical and technical) to follow up children from their places of origin and tendencies to take bribes from strangers who want to flout adoption procedures.
“Police officers are usually forced to keep children in their homes. Can you imagine in this 21st century there is no shelter for children at police stations? Uganda should sober up and build institutions.”
15. Labour officers are not brought on board in discussions on CSEC and they are not usually consulted on the same, yet they are key partners since CSEC falls within their mandate, as one of the worst forms of child labour.
16. The borders are porous that traffickers can find their way in cases of cross border trafficking. The traffickers also have tricks to coach their child victims to tell lies about their age and origin, as well as calling them biological relatives titles e.g. “aunt” “baba” e.t.c.
17. There is a growing trend of small populations of children coming to Kampala streets positioned by their parents/adult caregivers to beg. It is not clear whether the parents are arrested and when they are wiped out of the streets in operations, where they go.
18. There is need for more research to increase understanding of how the boy child is sexually abused (involved in CSEC) because there is a tendency for research and interventions to assume that they are less vulnerable



Recommendations

1. Popularize the trafficking in persons law and push/lobby the government to have the political will to consolidate the anti-trafficking in persons unit as well as efforts to prevent, prosecute and protect victims.
2. Maintain regular interface with police departments particularly CFPU and training and Human Resources Departments to that they are informed of such issues as CSEC and the seriousness that have since there is a tendency for the police to concentrate on riots, murders and public order management which are viewed as serious issues.
3. Educate the population on good family planning methods so they can produce the numbers of children they can adequately take care of.
4. Strengthen education system to keep children in school and strengthen interventions to eradicate household poverty since they are underlying issues that lead to CSEC.
5. Strengthen education system to keep children in school and strengthen interventions to eradicate household poverty since they are underlying issues that lead to CSEC.
6. Sensitize police officers and officials that handle immigration and custodianship/guardianship of children about trafficking and legal proceedings for custodianship and guardianship so that children are not handed over to strangers for care.
7. Sensitize parents to always take precautionary measures and to be vigilant to know where their children are at all times.
8. Local leaders should take the initiative to know the residents in their communities including children such that cases of missing children can easily be identified and followed.
9. Support Local Councils to enact and enforce bi-laws to prevent and handle CSEC in their localities drawing from the example of Lira District.
10. Involve religious institutions to preach to their congregations on the issues related to CSEC that affect children.
11. Government should establish shelters for orphans and homeless children so they can be cared for and reintegrated with their families.
12. The Uganda Police Force together with UNIFEM has developed curricula on Gender Based Violence which can be reviewed further to include specific content on CSEC.
13. Partners can work with a few shelters available such as one run by UYDEL to refer and provide support and reintegration services to child survivors of human trafficking.

14. There is need for government to evaluate the reasons why despite Universal secondary and primary education is in place, there is a high rate of school dropout, majority of whom end up in exploitation and on the streets.

Comments from the Lead Researcher

Mr. Kasirye Rogers, the lead researcher on this study (Commercial Sexual Exploitation of children in Uganda 2011) commented that the in all study areas, there was a great need to strengthen law enforcement, sensitization and action at local levels through training and awareness raising campaigns in communities at the lowest levels, training police officers (including mobile patrol police) to identify cases/situations of CSEC (as informers) and create a good working relation between police and community members. He also identified the need for Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development to continuously engage partners/actors and lobby for increased budget allocations from government so as to overcome perennial underfunding of government departments such as police, responsible for child protection. He stated that CSEC is a hidden problem that needs to be addressed from the root causes. To this effect he recommended strengthening the family and working with families and communities using the social approach to protect children while they are still young.

Presentation on the National Action Plan on Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation

Mr. Geoffrey Bamuteta from Uganda Child Rights NGO Network (UCRNN) made this presentation on the National Action Plan (NAP) on CSAE, which was still a draft. This plan is intended to among other things provide a framework for the prevention, protection and prosecution of child sexual abuse including CSEC. The presentation highlighted the history of the development of the NAP, national situation of CSEC, national goals, justification, target groups, key actors, priority areas of intervention and strategies.

Arising out of the discussion on the presentation, participants identified the following:

- Researchers and MoGLSD to seek appointment with the Uganda Human Rights Commission to present the findings of this study so that CSEC can be recognized and highlighted as one of the human rights abuses in Uganda with the seriousness that it deserves, and also to mount pressure on government to take action.
- Continuously review the NAP as it is implemented so that it is tailored to addressing the ever changing needs of child protection in Uganda.
- Plan for resource mobilization (both human and financial) to facilitate the achievement of the objectives of the plan, since under resourcing was identified as a serious problem affecting government departments including police.

Closing remarks

Mr. Sekiwanuka James, the session chair thanked participants for meaningful contributions and recommendations and implored them to do something in their capacities to protect children from CSEC. He appreciated the work done by police through the CFPU and training departments to include domestic violence in their curricula. He highlighted the need for continuous engagement with police departments for information sharing and also to review the police curricula to include issues related to CSEC in addition to domestic violence. Quoting the words of a renown speaker he said: *It is not the knowledge we lack, it is the courage to understand what we know and make meaningful conclusions*”

Participants

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