

## **Drivers of Violence Against Children in Central Uganda**



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## About The AfriChild Centre

The AfriChild Centre is a multi and interdisciplinary research Centre based at Makerere University in Kampala-Uganda. Since its inception, The Centre has positioned itself as a frontier of innovative child-focused research, with the aim of catalysing relevant policy and practices, to improve the well-being of children in Uganda and the region. For more information about The AfriChild Centre and partners, visit [www.africhild.or.ug](http://www.africhild.or.ug)

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## Abstract

Violence against children (VAC) is a worrying global problem facing many families and communities. In Uganda, the situation is not any better. In this study, we examine the findings of a study in which we explored the drivers of violence against 10-14 year olds in Kayunga District. The study utilized a child-focused qualitative research approach, collecting data from 434 primary school-going children from six primary schools in Kayunga district. Data was obtained using individual interviews, drawings, and focus group discussion methods. Qualitative data collected was coded, categorized and put into themes. The study's findings revealed, among others, that parents' separation, high household poverty levels and strictness over children's conduct are the primary drivers of VAC at the family level. In contrast, the primary drivers of VAC at the community level are the prevalence of many irresponsible parents, strict school teachers, and financially impoverished parents who cannot provide the basic needs for their children. Finally, factors like stress, health status, ignorance and unemployment are the key drivers of VAC at the community level. The factors that drive VAC in rural central Uganda are multipronged and intertwined, and in order to minimize the prevalence of VAC, policymakers and community leaders need to vigorously address the problem of household poverty, fully implement the government policies against corporal punishment and other related torture against children and increase the sensitization of the public against the dangers of VAC in society.

## Keywords

Violence against children, socio-ecological, drivers, sexual, emotional, and physical.

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
<b>CBO</b>	Community Based Organizations
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organizations
<b>CSV</b>	Children Sexual Violence
<b>DLG</b>	District Local Government
<b>GoU</b>	Government of Uganda
<b>GUREC</b>	Gulu University Research Ethics Committee
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communications Technology
<b>MoES</b>	Ministry of Education and Sports
<b>MoGLSD</b>	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
<b>NGO</b>	Non – Government Organization
<b>VAC</b>	Violence against children
<b>VACS</b>	Violence against children surveys
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNCST</b>	Uganda National Council for Science and Technology
<b>UPF</b>	Uganda Police Force
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization



## 1. Introduction and Background

Violence against children (VAC) is globally widespread (UNICEF, 2011). In sub-Saharan African countries like Kenya, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe, where VAC surveys have been conducted, on average, one in three girls and one in five boys suffer from some form of sexual violence before they attain the age of 18 years (UNICEF, 2011; CDCP & KNBOS, 2011; MoGLSD, 2017). According to these same authors, physical and emotional VAC levels are even higher, with nearly three-quarters of the children surveyed reporting suffering some form of physical and emotional violence. In the case of Uganda, in particular, the situation is even worse. According to the latest VAC survey in Uganda, the levels of physical and emotional violence are significantly higher, with 68% of boys and 59% of girls experiencing such violence. Additionally, 36% of boys and 34% of girls surveyed reported experiencing some form of physical and emotional violence. (MoGLSD, 2018). The VAC situation in Uganda was worsened by COVID-19-related lockdowns, such as the closure of schools. According to Sserwanja and Mwanje (2021), VAC cases grew in Uganda from 100 per day to over 1,369 reported cases at police stations during the lockdowns. Between 2020-2022, a total of 13,485 (2022), 8,681 (2021), and 9,225 (2020) child-related cases were recorded by Uganda Police (Uganda Police Force, 2020, 2021, 2022).

Faced with the growing global, regional, and national evidence on the incidence and prevalence of VAC, governments, and policymakers worldwide have been asking: What drives violence affecting children, and what can be done to address the vice? Answering this critical question calls for identifying and analyzing the determinants of VAC in order to be able to identify causal pathways to better inform national strategies and interventions for violence prevention; thus, the need for this investigation to establish the drivers of physical, emotional, and sexual violence at individual, family, and community levels.

### ACCORDING TO THE LATEST VAC SURVEY IN UGANDA



VAC CASES GREW IN UGANDA FROM 100 PER DAY TO OVER 1,369 REPORTED CASES AT POLICE STATIONS DURING THE LOCKDOWNS. BETWEEN 2020-2022, A TOTAL OF 13,485 (2022), 8,681 (2021), AND 9,225 (2020) CHILD-RELATED CASES WERE RECORDED BY UGANDA POLICE (UGANDA POLICE FORCE, 2020, 2021, 2022).

## 2. Literature Review

Over the years, several scholars have investigated the sources and drivers of VAC in different contexts. Some of these studies explored the drivers of VAC at individual, family, community, and society levels. Unfortunately, these studies did not yield the same findings or employ the same approaches. For example, a survey carried out by the Child Urban Institute (2013) to establish the nexus between the child and family revealed that a child's home does not only influence their development but also offers a safe place for play and nurturing, both of which are key for the child's social and emotional development. The same study also revealed that the home is where essential interactions occur between the child and the parents, caregivers, friends, siblings, and other community members. These findings, thus, place the child at the centre of different circles of influence, among which the child spends most of their time in interactions. Although earlier studies have established a strong linkage between the child and their family, little is known about the family-related factors that drive VAC. Therefore, this study is needed.

At the family level still, some other studies have shown that children observing parents abusing each other are a risk factor for subsequent violence in various interactions for both males and females (UNICEF, 2015). Furthermore, lack of supervision in a home is a risk factor for sexual violence due to economic pressures and rapid change. Furthermore, when parents are absent, they may be unable to exert control over a male child, which can contribute to domestic violence resulting from issues such as inequity and ineffective gender laws. Histories of political violence and an increase in extractive industries are all drivers of violence against children (Cerna-Turoff, 2019; Natukunda et al., 2019). Despite this, the drivers of violence in rural Uganda remain unknown, which justifies the need for this study.

Other studies, however, have looked at the factors that drive VAC at the community level. For instance, in a multi-stage study of the drivers

of violence affecting children, UNICEF (2015) established that VAC occurs in all societies. The surveys in sub-Saharan Africa revealed an average of one in three girls and one in five boys had suffered sexual violence before the age of 18 years. The same report also shows that physical and emotional violence levels are even higher, with nearly three-quarters of the children surveyed being beaten, kicked, or punched. In Pereda and Diaz-Faes' (2020) study on family VAC in the wake of COVID-19, it was discovered that the efforts deployed to contain the spread of the virus had instead caused a new danger as they exposed children and adolescents to an increased risk of family violence in every community. Besides, the social isolation measures taken to control the spread of COVID-19 were negatively impacting job security and threatening economic stability, thus, increasing stress in the most vulnerable families and communities. This report somehow bolstered UNICEF's findings of 2015 that reported the rising cases of VAC in most societies. In another study conducted in Filipino, community drivers discovered that weak enforcement of laws, social and political history, lack of local income-generating industry, advancement in technology, and access to it led to violence against children in other parts of the world. This predisposes children to violence in every community (UNICEF, 2015). This explains why the study seeks to understand the drivers of violence in rural Uganda. Nonetheless, some of these drivers of VAC do not seem to explain what takes place in the Ugandan community, especially in central Uganda; thus, the need to carry out this sort of investigation.

Furthermore, some earlier studies focused on analyzing the factors that affect VAC at the societal level. According to Cerna-Turoff (2019) and Natukunda et al. (2019), some sexual VAC, such as defilement, rape, and genital mutilations against the girl-child in some societies, is perpetrated by social beliefs that the female gender has no say in matters related to sexuality. Meanwhile, other scholars argued that most VAC cases are associated with humanitarian responses caused



by war and natural disasters like drought, floods, and the ongoing pandemic that has globally subjected untold suffering to different societies (Sserwanja, 2021; Mwanje, 2021, Dowd & Drury, 2017). Even though the Covid-19 pandemic is still affecting humanity, it is essential to understand the drivers of VAC in Kayunga District, which has experienced political stability for over 30 years and has generally not reported natural disasters in the recent past. Besides, we were interested in understanding the drivers of VAC in a country with a legal framework supporting children's rights and advocating against corporal punishment.

Risk and protective factors reflect the likelihood of violence occurring due to characteristics most often measured at the individual, interpersonal, and community levels. For example, a parent's behaviour is influenced by their financial security and level of education, the family's connections to formal and non-formal support systems in their community, and prevailing beliefs concerning the discipline and supervision of children within the family lives. The way these factors interact can be affected by more distant yet essential elements, such as living within an institutionalized caste system or a country where many adults or children migrate searching for work.

Identifying and mapping these factors within and between the levels of the socio-ecological framework can help policymakers and practitioners better support children and reduce their likelihood of becoming perpetrators or victims of violence, now and in the future. It is equally important to bolster protective factors to reinforce the resilience of children, families, and communities. A study conducted in Filipino

by UNICEF (2015) referred to it as "Necessary for control" and "Natural reaction". This means that children are violated under the guise of teaching discipline. Violence perpetrated in schools, mainly as a form of punishment, includes acts of emotional and physical violence against children (due to ineffective school policies and procedures). Children come to accept violence as a form of school discipline, possibly because their rights as outlined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) are not properly applied. Additionally, school authorities face challenges in implementing and teaching children's rights. A study conducted in Peru and Zimbabwe indicates that children and adults state that corporal punishment is closely linked with violent discipline.

Due to globalization, there is vivid evidence that children are abused. However, all stakeholders, e.g., government officials, policymakers, parents, teachers, and children, question the drivers of violence against children and what can be done to address it. Identifying and analyzing how structural determinants—the social, cultural, economic, legal, organizational, and policy responses—interact to affect everyday violence in children's homes and communities helps to identify causal pathways that informs national strategies and interventions for violence prevention. Learning more and unpacking the determinants of violence—focusing on girls and boys at different stages of the life course (but with a particular analytical focus on 'very young adolescents') contributes to national and comparative global conversations on how to focus the subsequent stages of the study, namely testing interventions to prevent violence (Maternowska, Catherine & Fry, 2015).



**At the family level still, some other studies have shown that children observing parents abusing each other are a risk factor for subsequent violence in various interactions for both males and females (UNICEF, 2015). Furthermore, lack of supervision in a home is a risk factor for sexual violence due to economic pressures and rapid change.**

### 3. Problem Statement, justification and conceptual framework

#### 3.1 Problem Statement



**1BN**

CHILDREN  
EXPERIENCE  
VIOLENCE GLOBALLY  
EVERY YEAR



**3,351 (2021)**  
**2,986 (2022)**

CASES OF  
DEFILEMENT IN  
CHILDREN 9-14  
YEARS IN UGANDA

Every year, over 1 billion children across the globe experience some form of violence (Boyden et al., 2018). In Uganda, 3,351 (2021) and 2,986 (2020) cases of defilement of children aged 9–14 years were recorded (UPF, 2021, 2022). Annually, over 100 children-related cases like sexual-related offenses were reported to police, probation officers, and Uganda Child helpline from Kayunga district (KLG, 2019; MGLSD, 2018; UPF, 2020, 2021). The unacceptably high prevalence of violence against children often undermines their health, education, and development and generally results in negative lifelong consequences (Ebenezer et al., 2016; Boyden et al., 2018; Maternowska et al., 2015). Drawing from a wide range of literature reviewed and synthesized, what becomes clear is that the different forms of violence against children are prevalent in every society and region worldwide (Maternowska et al., 2015). Despite our knowledge of the high prevalence of violence against children, there is hardly any documented evidence of what drives violence against children, especially in the developing world. In the case of Uganda and several other countries, data from the VACs studies provide an understanding of the prevalence and nature of violence against children across national settings. However, in Uganda, there is still a glaring lack of data on contextual drivers of violence against children at individual, family, community, institutional and structural levels. Yet, without a clear and coherent understanding of what drives violence against children, it remains a daunting task for Uganda’s policymakers and leaders to eliminate or reduce this vice in society. Therefore, to bridge this knowledge gap, the study explored the individual, family, and community drivers of violence against children in rural Uganda.

#### 3.2 Study Justification

As efforts to prevent violence gain momentum, it is crucial to have data that thoroughly examines the contextual factors driving violence across various levels, including the family, community, structural, and institutional levels, in a comprehensive manner. This is particularly important given the overlapping nature of the drivers of violence at different levels. Hence, exploring and unpacking the determinants of violence at various levels will contribute to national and comparative global conversations focusing on interventions to prevent violence against children.

The increasing demand for evidence-based national action plans on violence against children prevention and implementation calls for context-

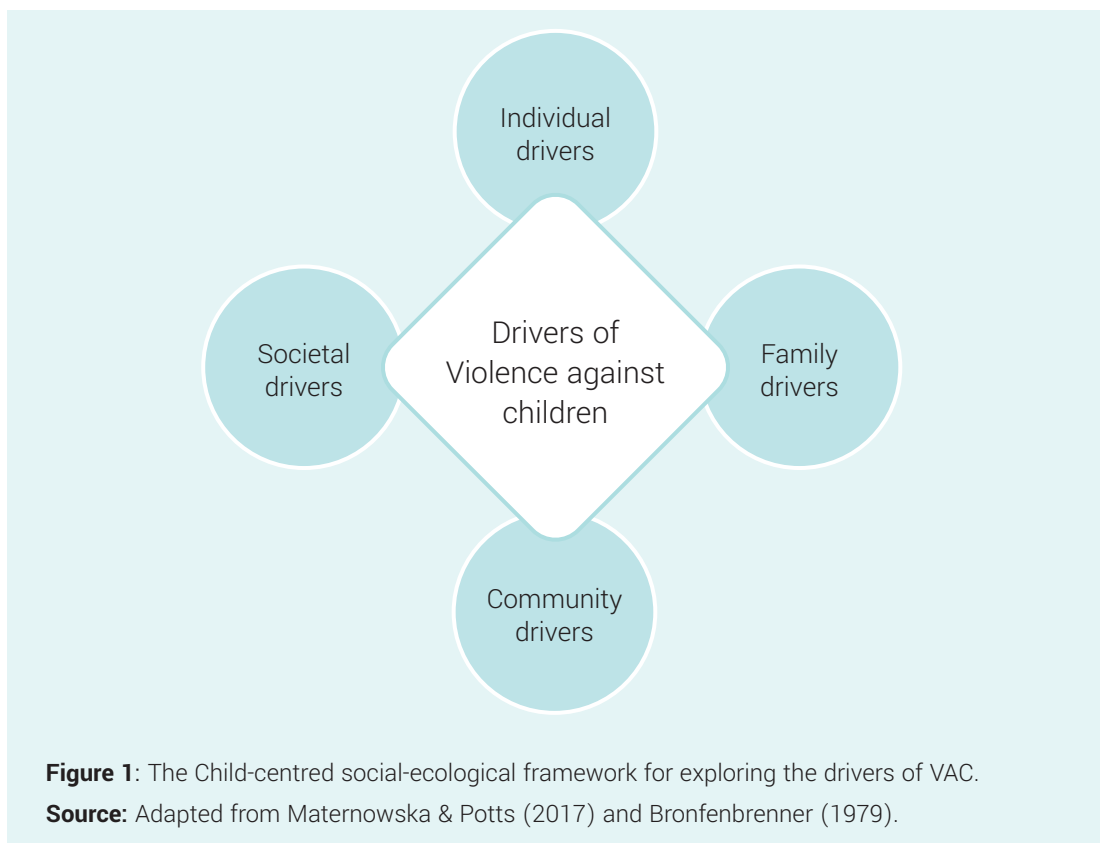
specific evidence on the drivers to guide policy and practice and improve responsiveness to violence against children. However, effective prevention and response to violence against children necessitate that policy makers and practitioners understand the multiple pathways to systematically address risk factors at all interrelated levels (individual, family, community, and society); hence, the justification of this study.

#### 3.3 Theoretical Framework

Despite the growing body of literature on violence against children (e.g., MoGLSD, 2018; Maternowska & Fry, 2018; UNICEF, 2011; Ebenezer et al., 2016; Boyden et al., 2018; Maternowska et al., 2015), there is no broadly accepted single theory or model to explain the nature, causes, and

outcomes of violence against children. However, some theoretical frameworks help structure the analysis of studies about violence against children. Due to the complexity of violence and the fact that no single factor can explain why some children experience violence and others do not, we have selected the socio-ecological model of Bronfenbrenner (1979) to guide and structure our study. The framework was first conceptualized to explain child development by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and later was used by other researchers to describe the complex issue of child abuse (Belsky, 1980), sexual coercion (Brown, 1995),

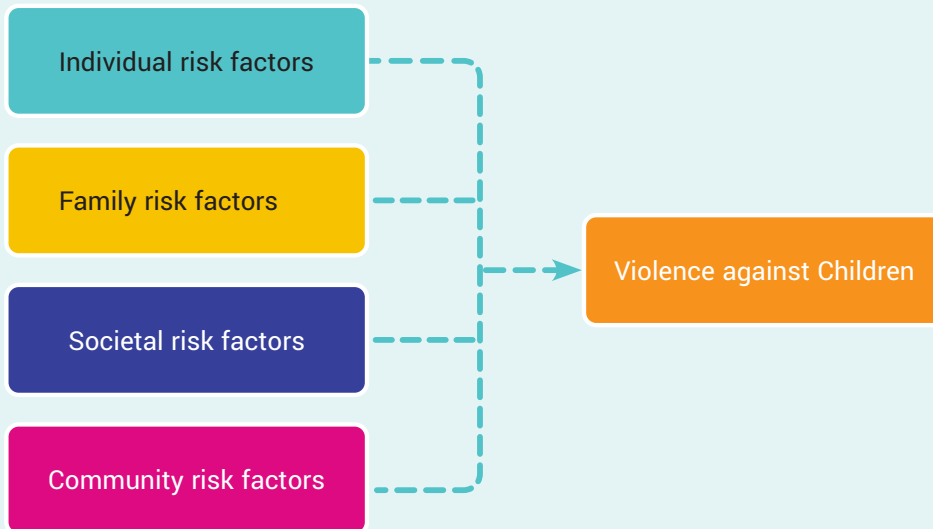
and domestic violence (Heise, 1998). According to Bronfenbrenner, child development is viewed as a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment, from immediate family and school settings to broad cultural values, laws, and customs. The theory assumes that in order to prevent violence against children, the dynamic interplay between the child and the social context, such as the family, community, society, and individual characteristics, must be clearly understood. The socio-ecological framework is presented in Figure 1.



The theory was considered suitable for this study because it explains how violence against children is shaped and influenced by a complex interplay of risk factors at different nested and interconnected levels. The theoretical framework also focuses on risk factors at four levels: individual, family, community, and society, with the primary goal of violence prevention (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Therefore, the framework is considered helpful in identifying the risk factors at each level that leads to a child's vulnerability to violence.

### 3.4 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in this study has been derived from the socio-ecological framework for VAC studies, illustrated in Figure 2.



**Figure 2:** Conceptual Framework on drivers of VAC at the four levels

According to Figure 2, this study has two critical variables: drivers or risk factors and violence against children. Based on the socio-ecological framework, VAC risk factors occur at four levels: individual, family, community, and society. Using this conceptual framework, we intend to explore and analyze the risk factors at each level that expose and result in physical, social and emotional violence against children in Central Uganda.





## 4. Goals and Objectives

### 4.1 General Objective

This study explores the drivers of physical, sexual, and emotional violence against children in Central Uganda at individual, family, community, and societal levels.

### 4.2 Specific Objectives

Specifically, this study was aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- i) To establish the drivers of sexual violence against children in Central Uganda.
- ii) To find out the drivers of physical violence against children in Central Uganda.
- iii) To explore the drivers of psycho-social (emotional) violence against children in Central Uganda.

### 4.3 Research Questions

#### 4.3.1 General Research Question

What are the drivers of physical, sexual, and emotional violence against children in Central Uganda at individual, society, community, and family levels?

#### 4.3.2 Specific Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

- i) What are the individual-level drivers or risk factors of sexual, physical, and emotional violence against children?
- ii) What are the family-level drivers of sexual, physical, and emotional violence against children?
- iii) What are community-level drivers of sexual, physical, and emotional violence against children?
- iv) What are societal drivers of sexual, physical, and emotional violence against children?



## 5. Methodology

### 14 yrs

AGE OF PREVALENT  
EARLY MARRIAGES  
AND DEFILEMENT  
OF THE TEENAGE  
GIRLS IN KAMULI  
DISTRICT.



### 90%

OF PRIMARY  
SCHOOL-GOING  
CHILDREN AGED  
BETWEEN 11 AND  
14 YEARS HAD  
EXPERIENCED  
PHYSICAL,  
EMOTIONAL, AND  
SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN  
LUWEERO DISTRICT.

### 5.1 Research Design

In this study, we used a qualitative trans-disciplinary participatory research design. According to Jahn (2008), this design involves solving complex societal and real-world problems involving those affected by the situation in the research process and the co-production of transformation knowledge. By applying a participatory and reflective transdisciplinary research design and strategy, we deliberate effort to integrate stakeholders' and beneficiaries' ability to understand drivers of VAC at the individual, family, society, and community levels (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; 2018; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; 2010). In addition, this study was also guided by the principles of child-focused research, such as participatory action inquiry (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). The participatory action inquiry is a system approach used to understand the socio-ecological levels of influence shaping children's lives (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). The method also recognizes children's competence and agency as social actors in their own right and as bearers of rights as fellow citizens (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; James & Prout, 1990).

### 5.2 Study Area Selection and Sampling

This study took place in Kayunga District, located in Central Uganda. Kayunga district consists of eight sub-counties and 314 polling areas (UBOS, 2014). We chose to study Kayunga District because it is one of the districts faced with high prevalence rates of violence against children in Uganda. Kayunga District is in the middle of Kamuli

and Luweero districts that have been reported to have adverse VAC. For instance, Namukose (2015) reports prevalent early marriages and defilement of the teenage girls as young as 14 years of age in the neighbouring district of Kamuli. In Luweero, another neighbouring district, more than 90 percent of primary school-going children aged between 11 and 14 years had experienced physical, emotional, and sexual violence (Davies et al., 2014; Wandera et al., 2017). Specifically, in Kayunga District, households have been headed by children below 18 years and elderly above 50 years hence affected with inadequate necessities of life (Kakooza & Kimuna, 2008 in Reisen, 2017). In addition, media reports, like radio stations have reported cases of defilement and incest that have never been resolved by the Uganda Police, due to allegations of corruption that lead arrested perpetrators of VAC being released on bond. In light of the prevailing VAC in Kayunga district as well as her neighbouring districts, and owing to the fact that Kayunga district is a rural district; it was considered a suitable representative of the rural settings of Central Uganda that generally experience more significant cases of VAC in Central Uganda (MoGLDSD, 2018). At the second level, a simple random sampling technique was used to select two (2) sub-counties and two parishes from each chosen sub-county. The selected parishes were sharing a government-aided primary school. Based on a sampling frame obtained from local leaders, six government-aided primary schools (two from UMEA, the Church of Uganda, and

Roman Catholic foundations) were randomly chosen from two sub-counties. All pupils aged 10 to 14 years from the selected government-aided primary schools were included in the study.

### 5.3 Data Collection

In order to understand children's experiences with VAC, participatory data collection tools were used. The essential participatory tools we used included the drawing - to capture experiences of VAC and reflections on why VAC happens. In addition, data collection was carried out using FGDs. Data were collected in two phases. The first phase consisted of a systematic review of published peer-reviewed academic papers and existing "grey literature." The second data collection phase consisted of photo voices and focus group discussions (FGDs) held with children between 10 to 14 years old. The children comprised both boys and girls. Due to the topic's sensitivity, FGDs were strictly for either only boys or girls. The purpose of conducting separate FGDs among the children was to enable boys or girls to express their views without fear from their counterparts and overcome unequal power relations that impact the nature of data obtained from the two separate groups. These tools facilitated communication and comprehension between the researchers and the participants. The participatory tools helped motivate participants to participate actively in data collection (Chambers, 1994).

### 5.4 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using content analysis guided by Miles and Huberman's (1994) approach of the concurrent flow of data reduction, display, generation of meaning, and drawing conclusions, right from the start and throughout the process of the research.

### 5.5 Ethical considerations

The study sought ethical approval from Gulu University Research Ethics Committee (GUREC). In addition, no data was collected from human participants without prior clearance from Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) and district-level authorities. Specifically, permission was sought from the District Education officer of Kayunga District. All researchers were

trained in research ethics. They were also trained on safely referring children requesting assistance to available local services and sources of support. Before participating in this study, researchers obtained informed assent from children (ages 10–14) and consent from their parents, guardians, teachers and school administrators. They were provided information on the purpose of the study and ethical principles of privacy, confidentiality, and voluntary participation in an age-appropriate manner, including ensuring that the children understood how their personal information was to be used before their consent was solicited.

In order to ensure the privacy of data and the confidentiality of the participants, the results have been kept strictly confidential. They are not shareable with anyone other than members of our research team. The use of codes to identify participants' identities has been protected. Information obtained is only accessible to the research team. Soft copies of the data are protected by password, and hard copy files are kept under lock and key. In addition, anonymity has been carefully observed in reporting the research findings by not disclosing the participants' names and/or identities. Lastly, care has been taken to ensure fair and lawful collection and processing of data collected from the participants.

Researchers were mindful that the highly sensitive nature of the study was likely to evoke emotional responses from the participants. To address situations of this nature, the team enlisted the services of Dr. Ojiambo Deborah, one of the mentors and a specialist children's counsellor, to provide support to the potentially affected participants. In addition, Ms. Namugenyi Masitula and three research assistants, who are mental psychologists, complemented the mentor in managing emotional outbursts. Lastly, data were collected during school time. However, in order to prevent participants from losing time, we requested school administrators to provide double lessons and engage all learners, including those who were not part of the participating sample. As a result, all participants were able to receive instruction, and no child missed any classes.

## 6. Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

### 6.1 Introduction

Data have been presented based on research objectives and accompanying research questions.

### 6.2 Drivers of Sexual Violence Against Children

Findings on this objective are presented based on the four levels of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) socio-ecological model: individual, family, community, and society.

#### 6.2.1 Individual Drivers of Sexual Violence Against Children

The following drivers of Sexual VAC were identified from the children's drawings and voices in the interviews conducted:

##### Stress

The study found that stress significantly contributes to child sexual abuse. Various factors, such as an inferiority complex, disease, challenging living circumstances, a large family, limited income, and other contributing factors, may add stress to children's lives, which in turn may contribute to their vulnerability to sexual abuse. In a focus group discussion, one of the participants had this to say:

*Jawe disappeared for a single night one day. When asked where she had been, Jawe responded that a man had been using her. She could not walk, so they transported her to the hospital. Fortunately, a motorcycle rider saw Jawe near Kangulumira and carried her home. She was obliged to tell the truth after being discovered with another man for a short period; she said that she had gone to Kangulumira of her own free will because she had been under so much stress. Her parents then questioned her about why she had lied to them. Her father decided to stop caring for her. To pay for her school tuition, he advised her to go to his partner.*

##### Poor health problems

The study also discovered that children who have mental health issues, learning disabilities, or physical disabilities are more likely to report child sexual abuse. One of the research participants shared a tale of a girl with physical disabilities who a man in their village violated.

*About 42 years old, he was. Twelve was her age. This man took advantage of the fact that the child was physically disabled, and her parents had left her at home alone. He seized her and carried her to the back of the house and violated the poor girl from there. This girl became pregnant after being defiled. The individual was detained and sent to jail. After giving birth, the girl stopped attending school.*

##### Children's ignorance

The key to a child's future is education. And without it, everyone will experience immense difficulty. Since they are outside the protective sphere of school and social services, uneducated children are more susceptible to abuse and grow more vulnerable. In one of the interviews, a girl who had been assaulted said that she had once been mistreated because she was uninformed. She described an incident in which one of the youngsters grabbed her private parts and accused her of taking their bangle, but their colleague had concealed it!



## Drug abuse

The study's findings show that drug abuse and peer pressure were the primary drivers of sexual violence against children at the individual level. In a drawing from one of the pupils who participated in the study, the pupil depicted children misbehaving. They consumed marijuana and did all sorts of reckless behaviour, to the point that under-age girls ended up pregnant. Since this exposes them to sex with multiple partners, sometimes they cannot establish the person responsible for the pregnancy, burdening the poor girl.

### 6.2.2 Family drivers of Sexual Violence Against Children

At the family level, acquaintances, broken families, homelessness, and age of parents among others were reported to be the drivers of sexual VAC as explained below:

#### Acquaintances

Children trust the person they know, and despite their discomfort, they find it difficult to oppose that person's behaviour. For instance, one of the young people who was interviewed told a story of a girl who was left at home with her uncle and was then sexually assaulted by him. She told her parents about the rape after it happened, but her uncle fled, and they are now unsure of his whereabouts. Another respondent had this to say:

*There was one man who came to our house, and while he appeared youthful, they told us to call him grandfather (Jjaja). He abused a young girl in our house even though we addressed him as grandpa. At the time, he was about 20 years old, and the girl was four years old. He wanted to fight openly when they tried to blame him, so he was driven from the house. Luckily enough, the girl received care and recovered.*

#### Broken families

According to the data collected, girls who are growing up in broken families had experienced sexual abuse. Some of them experienced sexual abuse when they were still relatively young. In these homes, children grow up facing relational cruelty, including domestic violence, sexual abuse, and other forms. One of the incidents this study revealed included a man and woman who had divorced; when the mother left, the father informed his daughter that she was his new wife and that they might have children; when she refused, he beat her. Another violent incident included a victim who was raped and became pregnant by her stepfather. When the girl's mother left, the stepfather took advantage of the situation by threatening to stab the child if she spoke up.

#### Age of parents

When parenting their children, parents' ages play a significant role. Children are in significant danger if their parents are too old to provide sufficient protection. They do not effectively meet the needs of their children because they are unsure of how to respond in certain situations. As a result, it can potentially lead to sexual abuse. One example is when a man met one of the girls on her way to the shop to buy groceries. The older man offered to give her sweets, but she refused to accept them. At that point, he decided to molest her. All this happened because the man knew the grandparents were unable to physically fight back.

## Socioeconomic status

Child sexual abuse has major socioeconomic causes. Most sexual assault victims originate from low-income homes where it is popular to sell children to pay for their basic requirements. Parents frequently believe they have the right to enslave their children because they brought them into the world. Not all occurrences of child sexual abuse involve only impoverished households; some also include middle-class and affluent families. Children who are poor and in need are abused by adults who claim to be there for them while taking advantage of them. The study's findings showed that one of the girls entered an early marriage because she was not taken care of and given the necessities. According to reports, she began pursuing men in order to raise money for her basic requirements.

## Family setting

The family setting presents several scenarios responsible for promoting sexual violence among children. These include peer influence among the boys, living in an extended family, lack of self-respect among the family members, lack of necessities at home, starvation from sex among the adults, poor upbringing or being raised in broken families, child neglect, and growing up with step-parents. One example of peer influence, as recounted by one of the pupils who participated in the study, involved a 13-year-old girl who lived near the participant's farm. She was defiled by a gang of five men, and her abuse went unnoticed until she developed severe health issues. Yet, she did not reveal the perpetrator's identity, even when asked, until she was taken to the hospital for a checkup and treatment. Besides the specific case cited above, cases of sexual abuse of children ranged from the stepfather who raped his stepdaughter to the one who had sex with his biological daughter every night to the point that she got pregnant. They had to carry out an abortion. One of the pupil's drawings depicted two children, aged two and five years, who 'molested' one another, and when asked to describe the drawing, they wrote:

*"These were two children molesting each other. When I called them to play, they did not come. To help them not get caught, I just scared them, and they ran towards their clothes. They were [aged] 2 and 5 years old; they were naked!"*

### 6.2.3 Community drivers of Sexual Violence Against Children

A significant contributor to child sexual abuse at the community level is unemployment. An individual may resort to any form of abuse, including sexual abuse, to deal with the stress of unemployment. Unemployment affects children more severely than adults. And if there is a rise in even one unit of unemployment, all abuse will inevitably rise. In this study, an instance of a 13-year-old girl being sexually assaulted by an unemployed man was described. It was eventually discovered that the girl had given birth at the time of data collection.

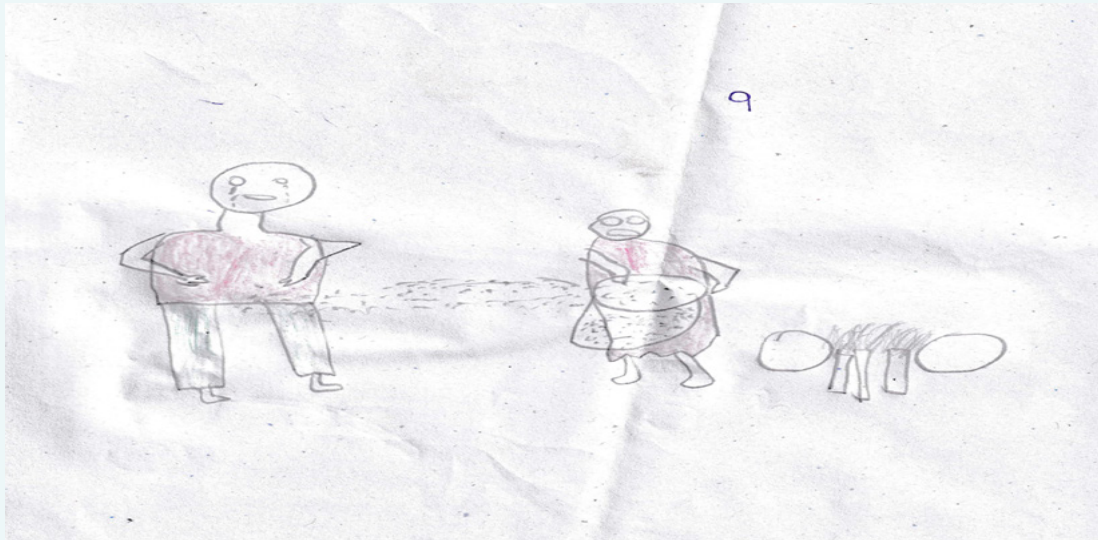
## 6.3 Drivers of Physical Violence Against Children

Findings on this objective are presented based on the levels of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) socio-ecological model: individual, family, community, and society.

### 6.3.1 Individual drivers of Physical Violence Against Children

Participants revealed several reasons driving the occurrence of physical violence they experience. These are:

## Failure to listen to instructions from parents/ guardians.



**Source:** primary data

Some children reported that they were kicked, beaten, and poured on hot substances by their parents or guardians due to their misbehavior. Children argued that whenever they are sent to complete some chores and refuse, they experience consequences in the form of punishments ranging from canes, kicks, hanging up on trees or being poured on hot liquids. For instance, a look at the following extracts from the FGD transcripts reveals how the stubborn character of the children aged 10 to 14 contributes to their physical harassment and torture.

*.....N.R 13: ... one day, dad kicked my sibling till he started bleeding. It was after my sibling was told to dig, and he refused.*

*.....N.R 26: A man beat up a child because of failure to fetch water*

*.....BOY B; A woman was pouring hot water on her daughter.*

***BOY B;** A woman poured hot water on her daughter because she had made a mistake. She had been sent, but she refused to go. She stopped along the way and returned home. The mother went and bought things by herself. The parent returned home, boiled water and poured it onto her.*

*.....Child: I had refused to do chores, so my mum got angry and poured hot water on me.*

*.....Child: Dad tied me with a rope on the tree because I had refused to wash the dishes.*

The interview extracts above confirm that children face physical harassment as a result of personal reasons such as their failure to follow instructions from their parents or guardians or being perceived as disrespectful toward orders. As a result, they suffer physical harassment that can potentially leave them dead or with long-term impairments and ordeals like scars on their bodies, for example, from hot water or hanging on the tree.

## Work overload and failure to finish assigned tasks

While participants attribute physical violence against children (VAC) to their stubbornness and disrespectful attitude towards parents or guardians, the underlying causes of such behavior sometimes result from fatigue and work overload. Children reported that parents and care givers give them multiple

demands and too much work to be accomplished in a single day that is realistically impossible. For example;

**1.....N.R 13:** *Now, this is about me, I was caned by my mother, who had told me to collect firewood, and I had brought little.*

**2. INTERVIEWER;** *Tell me about this drawing. What are you trying to communicate?*

*BOY 6; A woman is burning her child.*

**INTERVIEWER;** *Did you witness this?*

**BOY 6;** *Yes, I saw her. She was our neighbour. She was his biological mother.*

**INTERVIEWER;** *Why did she do that?*

**BOY 6;** *She told them to fetch water on many occasions and still wanted them to go to the garden in the evening, and the boy failed to.*

**3.....Child:** *I have my friend who was told by her father to dig, but she didn't want so she cut her dad's fingers.*

**Assistant:** *Was it the dad or the child who cut?*

**Child:** *No, the child cut the dad's fingers*

**Assistant:** *What happened before*

**Child:** *the child was tired*

**Assistant:** *so, what happened next*

**Child:** *the mother caned the child for cutting the dad*

In the first place, one logically wonders how much firewood a 10- to 14-year-old child would fetch to be sufficient for a household. Thence, we see a mother who expected too much from the child, and when the latter failed to meet the former's expectations, was rewarded with canes. In the second and third extracts, we see children who are genuinely fatigued by the chores assigned, such as fetching water and digging significant portions of land to completion. As a result, these children refuse, are considered big-headed, and are subjected to negative reinforcement through canes and beatings.

### Conflicting loyalties

Besides, the work overload and fatigue experienced by children often lead to them receiving canes from parents or guardians. The latter often find themselves at the center of conflicting loyalties, which makes it difficult for them to make the best choices at times. For example:

**N.R 13:** *Here, my father had told me to fetch water, yet I was late for school, then my brother told me he would do everything, which annoyed my father. When he punished me, I was forced to fetch water before school.*

This particular child had to choose between receiving punishment from either the school administrators/teachers for arriving late at school or her parents for failing to fetch water very early in the morning. Either way, the parent punished the child for failing to bring water, yet she was actually late for school.

### Common children mistakes

Other children attributed the drivers of physical violence against children (VAC) to common mistakes arising from their recklessness, which led to lasting damage and the breaking of household items and property that were dear to their parents and guardians. Some examples in support are:



**1...N.R 22:** *This was me when I was hit by a motor pestle on the thigh by my mother because I had broken a flask.*

**2.....Child:** *Mum beat me up after breaking a cup. I got hurt, but I did not blame her because she liked it so much*

**3.** *Mother sent me to buy salt, but I lost the money. As a punishment, my mother tied up my hands and legs and beat me terribly until I almost lost consciousness. But luckily, my uncle happened to pass by, and that's when she stopped beating me (Whitney, C/U school).*

Due to children's recklessness and destruction of household items, they may receive severe punishments to the extent of losing consciousness. Unfortunately, parents and guardians may not consider the nature of the objects they use to discipline their children, even if those objects have the potential to cause death or permanent physical disabilities, such as motor pestles.

### Food shortages at home

Some physiological factors like eating a lot of food by children were also advanced as one of the critical drivers of physical VAC. However food is a basic necessity for everyone, but families are most likely suffering from food shortages. That is to say;

**N.R 33:** *The woman made her child starve after discovering that the child overeats. However, it's a child's right to eat*

**Interviewer:** *Do you know of any reason why this child was always denied food*

**N.R 33:** *This child was dodging chores and was overeating.*

This child suffered under the care of her mother because he was deemed to be eating a lot of food and consequently was subjected to starvation. Whereas families suffer from food shortages and famine, denying children the right to enjoy their basic needs and rights is improper as continued exposure to starvation has long-term effects like malnourishment and declined class performance.

### 6.3.2 Family drivers of Physical Violence Against Children

Besides individual drivers of physical VAC, participants revealed that family and school-related factors are responsible for their continued physical torture and harassment. In the presentation of the drivers of physical VAC, the family level of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) socio-ecological model has been split into two: family-related drivers and school-related drivers, as illustrated below:

#### 6.3.2.1 Family-related drivers of Physical Violence Against Children

Children aged 10-14 years reported a lot of family-related drivers of physical VAC, as explained below:

### Late departures from school

One of the school-related factors pointed out by participants as a cause of the physical torture and harassment is a late departure from school. For example:

**Number 2:** *we have our neighbour, every time he comes back, he has to beat the child in his home; even when the child delays washing the stockings, he beats him, yet sometimes the child leaves school late when it reaches the night, and he delays washing utensils, he beats him and also some times, both the father and the mother all beat him.*

Late departures from school inevitably affect the timetable of home-related chores assigned to the children. Due to late arrivals at home from school, children find it hard to multitask and accomplish

all assigned responsibilities like washing dishes. This is further worsened by a shortage of supplies, like adequate uniforms and socks that force children to wash them daily after they return from school. Hence, inadequate supplies and failure to wash dishes after school have led participants to be punished by their parents.

## Broken families

One of the major drivers of physical VAC at the family level is the separation of children's parents and the consequential breakdown of the family system. Reports from children that participated in the study indicate that the vice of parents separating has resulted into untold suffering among the children of the divorcees or those that have separated. For example:

- 1. BOY AN;** I used to stay with my father and mother. He did not love her; he would beat our mother. She left him, and then my father shifted to Kayunga with us. He got another woman though he wasn't staying with us. My mother one day sneaked me out and took me to where she was staying. She had taken the others; I was the only one left behind. But when she took me, dad came and brought me back. My mother did not try to retake me. Afterwards, he started battering me, saying, "Why don't you leave my home? I will cut you into pieces!" The neighbours asked me to run away from home. I also ran away from home. I walked till I got to this side where I'm now staying with my grandmother. She is not related to me by blood. She just picked me off the road when I was wandering! She asked me where I was from, and I told her the story. She took me to the local chairperson and reported the issue, the following day, she reported it to the police. I narrated the story; they called my father and asked me to take them to him. I took them. He was advised to treat me well. When we got home, he punished me for getting him to the police station and reporting the abuse! ...After some time, He would deny me food, and the neighbours would give me food. He started beating me again. The neighbours told me to return to the police; on my return, I just returned to this grandmother I'm staying with. So, she gave me money and told the boda guy to take me to the police. I went to the police, and they brought my father to the station. They asked him why he mistreated me. He denied it. But I never returned home to him.
- 2.** My parents separated, and my father brought in another woman. We were two children from our mother, so this woman pretended to love us whenever dad was around, but whenever he was away, it would be hell at home. One day, step mom boiled water in a kettle held my hand and poured hot water. Fortunately, I managed to struggle, freed myself, and ran to the neighbours, who took me to the hospital, where dad found me. When I returned home after the hospital discharge, this woman was sent away, and life became normal again (Female Participant, C/U school).
- 3. Child:** The woman dumped her kid, so when the kid was taken to the father, he had another woman, so each time the child would cry, she would put clothes in the baby's mouth.

The above data suggests that when parents separate, men remain with the children in most cases. Unfortunately, when mothers are absent, children may be subjected to unbearable physical torture, leading some to run away from home and be adopted by good Samaritans, even without formal adoption processes being done. Some other children are burned by their stepmothers in case their fathers remarry, or their mouths are stuffed with external objects like clothes, and others are overworked and subjected to child labour. Mothers of children in broken families need to take responsibility for their welfare, either by leaving with their children during separation from their husbands, or by actively caring for their well-being.

## Not staying with biological parents



**Source:** Primary data

Besides children becoming victims due to parents separating, the situation is worse even when the parents stay together but handover their obligations to relatives and friends. In the hands of the caretakers, children report a lot of physical atrocities subjected to them as they are growing. For example;

1. **Number 12:** When my sibling had nowhere to stay, our paternal uncle took him to his home. Unfortunately, my uncle's wife started mistreating my sibling. He was the one who used to carry everything encompassing hoes and sacks of charcoal. This lady reached an extent where she could punish my sibling with a wire lock, even when he had made a mere mistake.
2. **C2:** I saw a woman mistreating a child, making her go to dig in the garden, yet she denies her food.  
**INTERVIEWER;** Why do you think this woman did such a bad thing? Is she the biological mother?  
**C2;** She was evil at heart. No, she wasn't her biological mother. She was her grandmother.

There were reports of evil deeds perpetrated by certain members of the extended families, including grandmothers, towards the children. They subject young adolescents and pre-teens to child labour, deny them food and are left to do all chores. Hence, parents must raise their children if they are to be protected and shielded from untold mistreatment from extended family members and relatives.

## Overstrictness on children

Children's reports indicate that they fall victim to physical harassment due to the over-strictness of their parents and care givers. For example;

- 1 .....**N.R 15:** There is an old lady near us who usually punishes a child whenever the child goes out to play.

**Interviewer:** Why does the old lady beat the child?

**N.R 15:** She doesn't want the child to leave home

2. ....Child: I was coming from grandmother's place; dad asked me where I was coming from, I told him, so he abused me, and I got angry
3. ....Child: He wouldn't want the girl to go anywhere, so he would punish her each time she moved or played with other kids.

Parents and caretakers are extremely strict on their children's movements to the extent that they restrict their movements to visit grandparents and participate in childhood games with their peers.

### Conflicts among siblings

Besides playful games that result in bodily injuries to children, our participants were also victims of physical VAC because of their involvement in management and solving conflicts among siblings. For example;

*Child: The picture is about my brother fighting when he beat our young brother and told him about it and me. He beat me, so I got a stone. As we were fighting, our father returned and told us that fighting doesn't solve everything.*

The child above fought with a brother simply because they were avenging the mistreatment their sibling experienced from this particular brother. The worst part of the scenario is the potential for permanent injuries and bodily harm, such as loss of an eye, due to the use of stones as weapons by the children.

#### 6.3.2.2 School-related drivers of Physical Violence Against Children.

Children aged 10-14 years reported coming late to school, unprofessional conduct of teachers, and poverty as leading causes of school-related drivers of physical VAC, as explained below:

#### Coming late to school

School-going children face double jeopardy. Late arrival at either home or school attracts parents' and teachers' punishments, respectively. As earlier noted, children are punished at home when they delay at school. Likewise, when children arrive late at school are equally caned by some teachers. For example:

*...N.R 23: Now here, I had arrived late at school, and the teacher punished me*

*... N. R 23: Teacher XX, he joined two canes to beat me, it was so hurting that I even got some wounds.*

Despite a legal ban on caning and other related corporal punishments in Uganda, some teachers continue to rudely cane children at school under the guise of nurturing time management skills.

#### Unprofessional conduct of teachers

While children are at school, they often feel unsafe and sad due to the physical harassment to which their teachers subject them when they are unable to answer questions posed during lessons. For example:





**1. ....N.R 18:** *This is about our literacy teacher at some school in Masaka while I was in primary 3. When the teacher joined the school, he gave out an exercise about completing the sentences. One of the sentences was "crops are grown for ..... (Complete the sentence)" when one of us put "for sale" as an answer, the teacher punished us all in the class.*

**2. INTERVIEWER;** *How about here at school? Are there children who get exposed to extreme physical violence?*

**SIX;** *At times in class, you may fail to answer, and the teacher comes with a duster and hits your head!*

**3. SEVEN;** *A teacher who doesn't like you. Each time this teacher comes to class picks on you and hurls insults at you.*

**INTERVIEWER;** *Why is it so? Why does the teacher hate a particular student?*

**SEVEN;** *It is because you do not do the things they are interested in, what she wants from you.*

**INTERVIEWER;** *Why would you not do what she wants?*

**SEVEN;** *At times, you may write a wrong answer*

**4. Interviewer:** *Now, who is this you have drawn here*

**N.R 21:** *This is our math teacher*

*Interviewer: What did the teacher do to you?*

**N.R 21:** *I can tell you about him, but I don't want anyone else to find out that I am talking about him.*

**Interviewer:** *Okay, you can tell me; feel free. We are only the two of us here*

**N.R 21:** *He is called teacher ....., he does not want to mark my book*

*Interviewer: Why is it so?*

**N.R 21:** *He is adamant; he shouts at us, and we all maintain silence when he enters the class. The other thing is that he will never mark your book when you delay finishing his exercise.*

Children with limited cognitive abilities are at high risk of exposure to physical VAC while at school. Equally, children feel that their teachers are biased against some students and only favour the fast learners in the class. Teachers seem impatient to listen to wrong answering response to their questions. Consequently, the entire class or a few children who fail to provide the desired responses are punished in various ways like being hit by dusters or hurled insults at, children's assignments are not marked due to delays in finishing the assigned tasks.

## **Poverty:**

Due to poverty at household level, some children attend school without adequate instructional materials like notebooks and pens. Consequently, some teachers end up physically harassing these children. In light of poverty that leads to lack of instructional materials expected to be used in class, some participants said that:

**1.....***He asks you why you did not tell your parents in time yet I could be not aware of my book getting used because of the too much work written down.*

**2. INTERVIEWER;** *Are there people in the class who do not do their homework? Why is that so?*

**SEVEN;** *Some don't, because their parents sometimes don't buy books for them. So, the teacher beats them.*

Teachers beat these children due to using up books and failing to copy notes or do homework. While it is the child's responsibility to inform their parents that books will soon be needed, schools and parents

should have measures in place to ensure that each child has enough books at the beginning of each term. But it seems this is not the case; hence, children become the victims.

### 6.3.3 Community drivers of Physical Violence Against Children

Besides individual, family and school drivers of physical violence against children, there are community-level factors that contribute to physical VAC in rural Uganda, as explained below;

#### Stinking in Public

Some children take a long time without bathing and end up smelling wherever they go. For example:

*.... SIX; Some are undressed because it is said they stink! They undressed him and bathed him in public! They used sand to scrub him and some local weed from the well called "KAMYU", which can cause itching to the body; they used steel-wire as well.*

Those who go without bathing for a long time and end up smelling are undressed and bathed in public, likely to serve as an example to others. Although the goal is to clean these children, the method used is inappropriate, and the materials used to scrub the body, such as 'kamyu' and steel wire, can be dangerous to the skin, potentially causing wounds that may result in scars.

#### Negative peer influence

Some parents view other children as a bad influence to their children and therefore try to protect them from such "bad influence." For example;

**N.R 33:** *This is about a man who was beating up his neighbour's child*

**Interviewer:** *Why was he beating the child*

**N.R 33:** *The man was accusing the child of spoiling his children*

**Interviewer:** *How was he spoiling them?*

**N.R 33:** *The boy was not exactly the one who was spoiling this man's children but was among the influential group of children*

In the bid for responsible parents to protect their children from the bad influence of their colleagues, some end up using measures that physically violate the children, such as methods like beating that might not be the most appropriate in such situations.

#### Ritualistic practices

The other community-related factor identified by participants as a cause of the physical violence is related to ritualistic practices. For example;

**Interviewer:** *Talk about what you have drawn*

**N.R 25:** *Children sacrifice*

**Interviewer:** *Have you heard about it?*

**N.R 25:** *Yes*

**Interviewer:** *What exactly have you heard about it?*

**N.R 25:** *A man was imprisoned for sacrificing a child*

**Interviewer:** *How did he sacrifice the child?*

**N.R 25:** *He cut off the child's head, including all the private parts.*

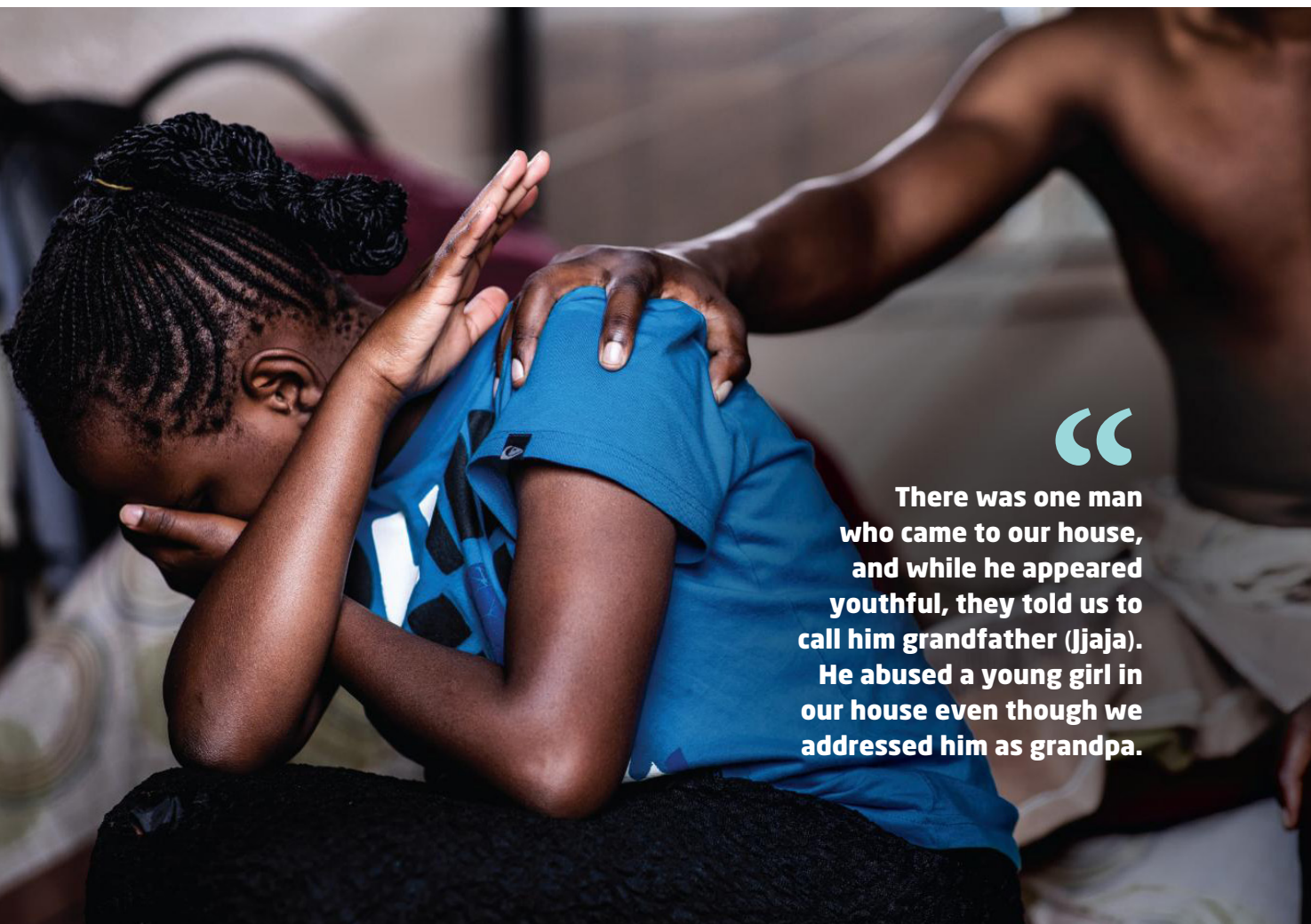
Although the participant was not the victim of child sacrifice, it is evident that the habit exists as a ritual practice in Kayunga district. Child sacrifice is one of the cruelest and most harmful forms of physical violence that children suffer, given their vulnerability. Children are easily lured (by strangers /relatives) or unable to defend themselves from such acts. It is believed that communities drive the demand for children's body parts because they think riches come from child sacrifice. Hence, many children have lost their lives due to such cruel ritualistic practices.

### Water scarcity

Water scarcity is a pressing issue in rural Uganda, where communities often face shortages and have limited water sources such as boreholes. As a result, long queues form at these boreholes, causing delays for children returning home. Unfortunately, regardless of the reasons for the delays, children often face punishments such as caning from parents. For example:

*Child: I found many people at the borehole, so I delayed returning home. Dad came and caned me from there, and when I reached home, mum also caned and abused me.*

The participant reports being beaten by both parents because she delayed at the borehole. The parents did not bother to find out why she had delayed at the borehole.



“

**There was one man who came to our house, and while he appeared youthful, they told us to call him grandfather (Jjaja). He abused a young girl in our house even though we addressed him as grandpa.**



#### 6.4 Drivers of Psycho-social (emotional) violence against Children in rural Uganda

Psycho-social (emotional) VAC is attributable to multiple causalities. Among these are the psychological drivers of violence against children. The emotional drivers are equally quite a number. For example, the following drivers were discovered from the children's narratives from the schools sampled in Kayunga District:

From children's narratives, one of the psycho-social-emotional factors driving violence against children in Kayunga District was related to parents' nature, behaviour and conduct as spelt out in the conversations with children. For example, a female interviewee, pointed out that her parents, with two children, had separated, and her father brought in another woman. She contends that her father's new wife "pretended to love them when their father was around, but whenever their dad was away, it would be hell at home." Another female participant reported that she has siblings who were studying in a different school. They were given all the scholastic materials required at school, but for her case, she was not cared for as she said, "Even when they sent me for school fees, my parents did not bother. This was psychologically taunting." She added while shedding tears. Another child retaliated by saying, "Our mother stopped our dad from paying school fees for us."

Similarly, there was a male participant who stated that he was coming from his grandmother's place one day. On reaching home, his dad asked him where he was coming from. He replied, from grandmother's place. The father instead retaliated by abusing him, and he got angry. There was also the case of a female participant, who alleged that her mother went and started bewitching her father, she said; "...our mother used to put local herbs in our father's food and drinks every day while uttering some words." Another respondent stated that he was psychologically hurt by the dad's beating and slapping his mother.

While the psychosocial/emotional drivers of violence against children in Kayunga District were primarily attributed to parents due to the nature of their behaviour and conduct, children's conduct(s) also emerged as a psycho-

emotional driver of violence against them. In an interview with children in the selected schools, the adolescence stage appeared as one of the factors driving psycho-emotional violence against children. One of the female participants (Shamim not real names), pointed out that they had a close friend who had a habit of overstaying at the borehole whenever she went to fetch water. Asked why she did it, Shamim stated that she was always with boys, and one day, she planned and went to sleep at a man's place whose wife had gone to see her parents. Her parents got wind of it. So, when she came back in the morning, they locked her up in the house and beat her. While the act of sleeping outside with a man was evil, the beating was not the most viable option; but rather, perhaps she needed counselling. Shamim gave another example of a friend who could not listen to their advice. She was 15 years old, so she started attending disco dances. Her parents were bitter with her, beating her terribly and sending her home. She left home, and up to now, they do not know where she is. It never emerged from the discussion, however, whether there were attempts to guide and counsel these children or caning was taken as the primary option.

There was also evidence from the respondents that violence begets violence. It emerged during the FGD with children that some children are also violent against their parents and peers. For example, during the discussions, one child pointed out that her friend poured boiled water on her mother in retaliation for abusing her. So, when her father came and wanted to cane her, she hid (Transcription RC1). Some children also refuse to perform household chores hence inciting violence against them. As one respondent put it: "I refused to wash dishes, mop the house and go to grannies without my mother's consent" (RC1).

Psycho-social factors were also attributed to family members, relatives, friends, guardians, and acquaintances who demonstrated abuses and accusations. It was pointed out that family members are also one of the psychological drivers of violence against children. Yet they have not proved them to be guilty; for example, participant X narrated, "...whenever money was lost, my aunt

accused me of stealing the money, yet there were other children in that home who could have taken the money.”

Another named Precious (not her real name) pointed out the issue of discrimination and overworking when she said, “I do all the work at home. From the garden, I come home and prepare lunch, look for pigs’ feeds, and carry food to my father at the shop... but my step mum doesn’t see all that.” While that was attributed to the non-biological members of the family, even those staying with their biological parents pointed out the issue of abuse and torture. Esther (not real name), a primary three pupil in CU1 stated that when she was taken to stay with her grandmother, all went well initially. However, after a short while, the grandmother started abusing her verbally, which psychologically affected her. I asked why the grandmother behaved that way, and she replied that it was because my father had married a woman she had never liked.

Samuel (not his real name) pointed out that verbal utterances ranging from mere abuses to wishing children dead were directed at him. He said, ‘I used to stay with my maternal uncle’s wife, but she used to say, I wish you would die and I could get rid of you...’ Similarly, Umar (not real name) said, “When your father does not love you, he says such words that “I will cut you into pieces.” While these and many more examples can be cited, the driving force(s) in such utterances, abuses, and discriminations against children were rooted in alcoholism, poverty, and personality.. As one respondent, Sharon (not her real name), pointed out, ‘I grew up in a family where my father would drink alcohol and beat his wife. After beating the wife, he would verbally abuse us (the children).’ This case illustrates the danger of alcohol and, more importantly, the failure to manage it, as not all individuals who consume alcohol engage in such abusive behavior towards their children or family members.

Besides alcoholism, poverty was cited as a key psychological driver of violence against children in Kayunga District. Cases such as selling young ones into marriage and sending them into child labour as housemaids were cited. For example, Shibah (not real name) narrated that she has a friend who went to work as a house girl at the age of 15. The man of the house wanted to treat her like a child at home, but the wife thought the husband was going to fall in love with the house girl, so she started abusing, insulting and mistreating her and beating her for no apparent reason. According to the Children’s Act (2006), Shibah’s friend was a minor and thus not meant to be working at that age, but because of poverty, she was compelled to become a housemaid, where she encountered the wrath of her female boss.

Besides poverty, loss of dear ones and divorced/ separated parents are driving forces of VAC in Kayunga district. For example; Mary (not real name), a P4 child in one of the FGDs stated that when one of her friend’s mothers passed away, her father brought in another woman who mistreated and overworked her. She was denied food on several accounts, and the father did not mind. Her stepmother would beat her for no apparent reason. Eventually, the girl could no longer contain it and decided to commit suicide. In this case, it is clear that while the stepmothers were the violators, the father’s silence motivated her to taunt the child psychologically. Similarly, during an FGD, Jemimah (not real name) narrated that she has a friend who used to stay with a stepmother. The stepmother would overwork her and mistreat her. She would beat her whenever she found that she had not completed the tasks given to her. The girl got tired of living like that and decided to escape from home. Up to now, they do not know where she is. Thus, the death of dear ones and cases of divorce give leeway to abusers of children.



**...whenever money was lost, my aunt accused me of stealing the money, yet there were other children in that home who could have taken the money.**



## 7. Discussions, Conclusions, Recommendations

### 7.1 Discussion of Findings

#### 7.1.1 Drivers of Sexual Violence Against Children

Our findings revealed that there are child sexual abuse incidents in Kayunga District. This was in line with Wamimbi's (2018) findings that over 82% of children in rural Uganda are victims of ICT-related sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse, according to Miller, Cardona, and Hardin (2007), is the exploitation of minors through the abuse of power and authority paired with force or coercion. They contend that adults or children who are sufficiently older than the victim have more strength and power to satisfy their sexual cravings under these circumstances. Our investigation has shown Miller and colleagues' concept applicable in a Ugandan scenario. According to the study, coercion, abuse of power, and child sexual exploitation occur on many levels, including individual, family, community, and society. The study also verified several types of sexual gratification, ranging from inappropriate covert acts to direct touch with the child. The data also supports the idea that the incidence levels and the causes of child sexual abuse are related. As a result, our findings will be discussed in sections corresponding to the various levels of child sexual violence, including individual-related, family characteristics, community, and society-related factors.

#### Individual-related Factors and Sexual Violence Against Children

The study noted the impact of stress, a child's health issues, ignorance level, and drug misuse, among other individual-related aspects. To be more precise, the study discovered that stress plays a substantial role in child sexual abuse. Despite children's efforts to live a peaceful existence, they sometimes encounter stressful events that lead to sexual abuse. These experiences include having an inferiority mentality, being sick, living in poor conditions, having a big family, and having a low income. These results aligned with those of the WHO (2020) study, which identified several risk factors for child sexual abuse, including sex, age,

low levels of education, low income, a disability or mental health issues, self-identification as a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender person, harmful alcohol and drug use, and a history of exposure to violence.

#### Family Characteristics and Sexual Violence Against Children

Whereas past studies found a significant relationship between the child and their family, this study adds to those findings by examining the drivers of child sexual abuse that are ignited by family-related characteristics. Our results support the idea that the child's most crucial interactions with his or her parents, caregivers, friends, siblings, and other community members occur at home. Because of the dependable routines that their parents or other primary caregivers have developed, children in healthy families feel safe and secure. However, as previously mentioned, the study's findings showed that various family situations can encourage sexual violence against children. These include the pressure among boys, living in an extended family, the lack of necessities at home, sexual deprivation among adults, the poor upbringing or being raised in broken homes, the maltreatment of children, and growing up with stepparents. Sadly, when sexual abuse occurs in a family environment, the victim's parents or other primary caregivers fail to offer the child even the most basic types of protection, leading to an unstable and risky situation for the child. In line with Welfare's (2008) findings, our study revealed that siblings could also sexually abuse one another, as opposed to the earlier assumption that family violence involves a child as the victim, and a parent or caretaker as the offender. Extant researchers have documented that sibling abuse is more likely to be disclosed than other types of family violence (Carlson, Maciol, & Schneider, 2006).

#### Community Drivers of Sexual Violence Against Children

According to our research, Kayunga District has incidences of child sexual abuse caused by

the local community. These acts were linked to various things, including sociocultural behaviours that put children in danger, underdeveloped communities, a lack of sensitivity to laws against child abuse, community indifference, and recurrent conflict that uproots individuals and weakens the protective family unit. This is in line with the findings of Abeid et al. (2014). They found that participants attributed victim blaming, lenient perpetrator punishments, family honor, tolerance of child abuse, and socioeconomic-related factors to child sexual assault. It should be noted that our findings identified a connection between child sexual violence (CSV) and unemployment. The study revealed that individuals facing the stress of unemployment may be more likely to engage in maltreatment, including sexual abuse. Children are more badly impacted by unemployment than adults. Additionally, if unemployment increases by even one unit, there will surely be an increase in all forms of abuse.

### **Society drivers of Sexual Violence Against Children**

This study also concentrated on examining the social factors that influence the sexual abuse of children. Our findings were in line with Cerna-Turoff (2019) and Natukunda et al. (2019), which reported that social beliefs that forbid girls from engaging in sexual activity contribute to sexual violence against girls, including defilement, rape, and genital mutilations. Our findings were also consistent with other researchers, who discovered that several instances of child sexual abuse are connected to the humanitarian efforts made in the wake of war and natural disasters like drought, floods, and pandemics. Our research showed that most minors were exposed to sexual violence during the COVID-19 pandemic (Mwanje, 2021; Serwanja, 2021; UPF, 2020). This was mostly owing to the pandemic's unfavourable effects, which included the nationwide shutdown of all educational institutions.

#### **7.1.2 Drivers of Physical Violence Against Children**

The study investigated the drivers of physical violence against children in Central Uganda. The focus was on the individual, family and community

levels. At the individual level, several reasons were identified for the occurrence of physical violence experienced by the children. Some reasons specified include work overload, recklessness, overeating, conflicting loyalties, and indiscipline. These drivers attracted forms of physical violence such as canes or beatings, the most common form of physical violence. Parents were mentioned as one outstanding perpetrator of violence. These findings are consistent with a study done by Mutto et al., (2012) and UNICEF (2015). According to these study, physical violence levels were higher, with nearly three-quarters of the children surveyed being beaten, kicked, or punched.

In addition to individual drivers of physical violence, family and school-related factors are responsible for children continued physical torture and harassment. The findings from this study show that physical violence at school and home is brought about by reasons such as late coming from school, separation of parents and broken family systems, not living with biological parents, theft practices, conflicts among siblings, violent behaviours, and non-investigations by teachers. The violence that came with these drivers varied from beatings to being poured on hot substances; with such forms of violence, children ran away from homes or schools. Much as the beating is one way of instilling discipline in children, especially in schools or homes, it makes those environments unsafe for the children. Whereas these findings contradict earlier studies such as the one by the Child Urban Institute (2013) that suggests that a home or school is meant to be a safe place for nurturing children, they are in agreement with UNICEF (2015) findings that VAC has persisted in communities because it is considered as one form of disciplining the children.

### **7.2 Conclusions and Recommendations**

1. To a great extent, the major drivers of physical violence against children are family-related factors as opposed to individual and community ones. Hence, relevant line ministries, district and sub-county authorities should urgently address family-related factors like parents' separation and low-income levels of individual households where children are growing up in rural Uganda. In

addition, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)/ Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)/ Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) operating in the rural areas of central Uganda should go beyond advocacy for human rights to sustainable solutions that can improve household incomes to ensure the scalability and sustainability of interventions. Once household incomes are improved, family conflicts due to poverty will be reduced, few parents will separate, and children will be assured of receiving necessities for their successful studies at school and survival at home.

2. Both individual and family-related factors are greatly responsible for sexual VAC in rural Central Uganda. Hence, to mitigate the vice and keep the children safe, there is an urgent need to manage the stress and health problems they face, thus making them susceptible to rape and other sexual deviance experienced. Just like for physical violence, community development and probation officers, as well as civil society, need to strengthen the family structure to minimize parents' separation that makes children prone to sexual VAC from their biological parents as well as guardians and others who first come in as people of goodwill and sponsors. Once this is realized, there will be reduced teenage pregnancies and single motherhood incidents. In addition, children will stay longer in school, and others will be able to complete their studies, breaking the vicious cycle of poverty that characterizes most of rural Uganda's households and fueling early marriages as parents sell off their daughters to earn a living.
3. Most children are victims of psychosocial violence due to poor communication

practices among children with parents/ caretakers and their teachers at school. Hence, what would appear an adversary turns out to be verbal abuse to the child with long-lasting effects on the emotional well-being of the children. Hence, to mitigate the long-term effects of emotional abuse on the lives of children, there is an urgent need for parents, school administrators, and community leaders to strengthen parent-teacher-children relationships characterized by open communication among stakeholders. Once children have honest and open communication with their adult caregivers, they are most likely to open up to them about the psycho-social challenges they experience, and possible counselling and guidance are sought and offered to them before getting to points of thinking about suicide or involvement in juvenile delinquent behaviours.

4. At the community level, there is a need for political, religious and traditional leaders to revive village meetings and discuss appropriate parenting practices for young children while they are still in their infancy stage of development. This will go a long way in the management of negative peer influence as well as raising responsible adults in the communities. In addition, local leaders may have to use locally available communication channels like local radio announcements to further sensitize the citizens on the appropriate mechanism of nurturing children with proper discipline that does not necessarily call for corporal punishments that physically injure them and consequently affect them emotionally.



**Social beliefs that forbid girls from engaging in sexual activity contribute to sexual violence against girls, including defilement, rape, and genital mutilations.**



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## Appendices:

### Appendix 1: Informed Consent: Parents Recommendation for the Child

Before agreeing to provide consent for \_\_\_\_\_ (child's name) to participate in this pilot study, you must read and understand the following explanation of the purpose, benefits and risks of the research and how it will be conducted.

**Title of the Study:** Drivers of Violence against Children in Rural Uganda:

**Principal Investigator:** Dr Nayiga Resty, Lecturer at Makerere University Department of Development Studies.

**Co-investigators:** Dr Deborah Ojiambo, Dr David Onen, Dr Buluma Alfred, Dr Luwerekera Bernard, Dr Ssekito Zaidi, Ms Namugenyi Masitula, Ms Ajok Kerine and Mr Muwonge Vincent, all Lecturers at Makerere University.

**Purpose of the Study:** To explore the drivers of violence against children at individual, society, community, and family levels in Central Uganda.

**Study Procedures:** Primary school children, girls and boys of ages 10 to 12 (classes P.4 to P.7) who have consented will be randomly selected to participate in the study. Different groups of children will participate in other sessions. One group of about 24 pupils will participate in the qualitative information collection activities like Focus Group Discussions (FGDs); which will take one day of two hours split into about an hour per sub-session. The other group of about 380 pupils will participate in quantitative data collection activities that will involve filling out some brief questionnaires. All sessions will occur at their respective schools and during regular school days and hours determined by the school authorities. Sessions will be video recorded for supervision and follow-up purposes and to ensure value for every information provided. A snack and soft drink will be provided to the children participants during the sessions.

**Foreseeable Risks:** The potential risks involved in this baseline study are minimal. As with any information-gathering sessions, children may become nervous and more aware of emotional challenges. In such a case, the psychologists on the research team, Dr Deborah Ojiambo, Ms Namugenyi Masitula and Mr Muwonge Vincent, will be available with their familiar senior teachers during school hours to help the child work through any emotional difficulty.

**Benefits to the Participants and others:** This project aims to fill the information gap on the underlying causes of violence against children in Uganda. This is particularly important and timely given that VAC has been compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic and related restrictions on social gathering and mobility. In addition, lockdown measures have led to shrinking household incomes, which also heightens tension within families and increases incidents of VAC. Hence, the study will contribute to the debates about VAC risk factors during and before COVID in Uganda.

**Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records:** Participant children will be assigned a random code and pseudo names to be used in place of their names. Real names will be removed from all collected material, including assessments, videos, and notes, to ensure participant anonymity and confidentiality. All data and confidential information, including notes, records and videos, will be kept in a very secure filing cabinet located at the research site. Only the Principal and Coinvestigators will have access to data and participant information. Collected information will be kept/stored in the office area of the Principal Investigator at the Department of Development Studies for five years, following the conclusion and closure of this baseline survey. At that time, all records will be destroyed appropriately.

The confidentiality of each child's individual information will be maintained in any publications or presentations regarding this study.

**Questions about the Study:** In case of any questions about this study, you may contact Dr. Alfred Buluma (the Project Coordinator) at +256774147777 or [alfredbuluma@gmail.com](mailto:alfredbuluma@gmail.com) or Dr Resty Naiga (the Principal Investigator) on +256782384400 or [naigaresty19@gmail.com](mailto:naigaresty19@gmail.com)

**Review of the Protection of Participants:** This baseline study will be reviewed and approved by the Gulu University Research Ethics Committee (GUREC) and the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology and the School of Psychology. In case of any concerns about this the survey, contact the Chairperson, Gulu University Research Ethics Committee, Dr Gerald Obai Tel: No., 0772305621; email: [lekobai@yahoo.com](mailto:lekobai@yahoo.com)/[lekobai@gmail.com](mailto:lekobai@gmail.com); or the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology, on plot 6 Kimera Road, Ntinda, Kampala on Tel 0414705500.

**Research Participants' Rights:** Your signature below indicates that you have read or have had read to you all of the above and that you confirm that you have the right to give consent for the child named below. Further, your signature confirms all of the following: Dr Resty Naiga or Dr. Alfred Buluma or their representative has explained the study to you and answered all of your questions. You have been told the possible benefits and the potential risks and discomforts of the study. You understand that you do not recommend the child to participate in this study. Your refusal to allow the child to participate or your decision to withdraw him/her from the study will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop the child's participation at any time to protect the child's welfare. You understand why the study is being conducted and how it will be performed. You have been told you will receive a copy of this form."

Name of Child \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Signature/thumbprint \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**For the Principal Investigator:** I certify that I have reviewed the contents of this form with the parent/guardian signing above. I have explained the possible benefits and potential risks, and discomforts of the study. It is my opinion that the parent/guardian understood the explanation \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Principal Investigator or Designee \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Witness \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix 2: Qualitative Research Participation Agreement (Assent Form) for Children (For Qualitative Research-FGD)

**Study Title:** Drivers of Violence against Children in Rural Uganda.

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Resty Naiga

**Co-investigators:** Dr Deborah Ojiambo, Dr David Onen, Naiga Resty, Dr Luwerekera Bernard, Dr Ssekito Zaidi, Ms Namugenyi Masitula, Ms Ajok Kerine and Mr Muwonge Vincent, all Lecturers at Makerere University.

**Purpose of the Study:** To explore the drivers of violence against children at individual, society, community, and family levels in Central Uganda.

**Study Procedures:** Your fellow primary school children, girls and boys of ages 10 to 12 (classes P.4 to P.7) who have consented will be randomly selected to participate in this study. Different groups of children will participate in other sessions. One group of about 24 pupils will participate in the qualitative information collection activities like Focus Group Discussions (FGDs); which will take one day of two hours split into about an hour per sub-session. The other group of about 384 pupils will participate in quantitative data collection activities that will involve filling out some brief questionnaires. All sessions will occur at their respective schools and during regular school days and hours determined by the school authorities. Sessions will be video recorded for supervision and follow-up purposes and to ensure value for every information provided. A snack and soft drink will be provided to the children participants during the sessions.

**Foreseeable Risks:** The potential risks involved in this baseline study are minimal. As with any information-gathering sessions, children may become nervous and more aware of emotional challenges. In such a case, the psychologists on the research team, Dr Deborah Ojiambo, Ms Namugenyi Masitula and Mr Muwonge Vincent, will be available with their familiar senior teachers during school hours to help the child work through any emotional difficulty.

**Benefits to the Participants and others:** This project aims to fill the information gap on the underlying causes of violence against children in Uganda. This is particularly important and timely given that VAC has been compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic and related restrictions on social gathering and mobility. In addition, lockdown measures have led to shrinking household incomes, which also heightens tension within families and increases incidents of VAC. Hence, the study will contribute to the debates about VAC risk factors during, before and COVID lockdowns in Uganda.

**Invitation to Participate:** You have been invited to participate in this study because you are a pupil in one of the government-aided primary schools in this District, which is the target area for this pilot study. The research team member will explain the study to you in more detail and ask if you want to participate in this study. Listening to the research team member, it is essential that you fully understand what this study is about, how it will proceed, and what can happen when you participate in this study. After that, you can think carefully and decide whether you will participate in this study. Also, after reading and listening to the following information, please discuss with your parents or guardians and your friends if necessary. If you have any questions at any time, you can ask a research team member. Please keep in mind that in order to participate in this study, you need your parents' or guardians' approval and your own.

### 1. What is the study about, and why is this study being conducted?

AfriChild is a multidisciplinary research Centre that contributes to the evidence base, knowledge building, skills development and influences policy and practice concerning the wellbeing of the African child.

This study aims to explore the causes of Violence against Children in Rural Uganda so as to inform the design of a more extensive study in this field. For this purpose, several research techniques such as Focus Group Discussion and survey, etc., will be used. This instruction is for Focus Group Discussion (FGD) included in qualitative research. FGD is a method where the group members who have the same or similar characteristics can discuss freely. We will use the FGD and children's drawings to understand their perspectives about the drivers of violence against children in rural Uganda.

## **2. How many people will participate?**

For the qualitative study, several research methods such as Focus Group Discussions, photovoice; etc. will be used. The study covers school children from 10 to 12 years (classes P.4 to P.7), gender (girls and boys), residence (participant child should have resided in the area of study for at least two years), and guardianship (participant child should be under guardianship of either parents or other adult relative but not NGOs or foster homes). The number of this research's (FGD) participants is totally 24 persons including at least 10 girls.

## **3. What happens if I participate in the study?**

In this research, you will discuss with children who have the same or similar characteristics and you can freely share your thoughts on a given topic or experiences you had from your daily life. The activities will be carried out in two rounds each expected to take about 1 hour, totaling to two hours in a day. A snack and soft drink will be provided to the participants during the sessions.

With the consent of the participants, the discussion will be recorded with a digital recorder. You can withdraw your consent and cease participation whenever you want, and if you do, the recorded materials will be discarded. The research results from those who complete only will be stored and taken with the research team. Following is the detailed process:

FGD (Focus Group Discussion): You will be given some details about the FGD from the investigator. You will be given some questions about your awareness and perspectives about drivers of Violence against Children in Rural Uganda. You can share freely your thoughts on a given topic or experiences you had in your daily life. It will take about an hour.

## **4. Can I stop participating?**

Yes, you can leave at any time without repercussions during your research participation. Please tell the investigator, the researcher, or the research coordinator if you wish to stop participating. In addition, all collected data will be discarded in case of withdrawal of consent.

## **5. Are there any side effects or risks from participating in the study?**

This research needs one-time participation, and participants will lose about two hours of time and effort of their day. In addition, as you are asked to share your idea about sensitive issues such as home environment, etc., you could be exposed to the minimal risk that you can experience in daily life. You can withdraw your consent and cease participation because of this risk. If you feel psychological inconvenience and anxiety due to this risk, our researcher team will do the best to minimize the risk and side-effect. In such a case, expert research team players like Dr Deborah Ojiambo and Ms Masitula Namugenyi will be available with their familiar senior teachers during school hours to help you with any emotional difficulty. If any side effect or risk appears, please don't hesitate to inform the investigator or research principal investigator immediately.

## 6. Do participants benefit from participating in the study?

There is no immediate benefit to your participation in this study. However, you could have the opportunity to think carefully about drivers of Violence against Children in Rural Uganda. We also expect the study to benefit the children by motivating them to keep at school, improve their performance and complete their education cycle. Feedback will be provided by the end of this baseline study and the information gained may also be helpful to parents, community, policy makers in education, donors and other stakeholders, who may use the results to determine the kind of interventions needed to improve the quality of education in Kayunga district and the country at large. The research result from the information you provide can be reflected in AfriChild projects or related policies to help promote a better schooling environment.

We may also have small gifts like pencils for you if you complete the research, though it is not direct benefit.

## 7. Are there any disadvantages if I do not participate in this study?

You are free not to participate in this study, and there is no disadvantage if you do not.

## 8. Is the information obtained from this study confidential?

The person in charge of managing personal information is Dr. Alfred Buluma of Makerere University (+256774147777 or [alfredbuluma@gmail.com](mailto:alfredbuluma@gmail.com)).

Following the regulations of the Gulu University Research Ethics Committee GUREC, we will do our best to ensure the confidentiality of all personal information obtained through this research, and all collected personal information will be coded and anonymized. Suppose the information collected in this study is disclosed to an academic journal. In that case, your personal information will not be used, but your personal information may be provided upon a legal request. In addition, so that monitors, inspectors, and Institutional Review Board can read the results of this study to verify the reliability of the procedures and data as long as they do not violate the confidentiality of research participants' personal information and related regulations defined.

By signing this consent form, you acknowledge that you have been made aware of this beforehand and will be deemed to have consented. Personal information and collected materials and consent forms will be kept for five years after the end of the study, and after will be permanently destroyed.

## 9. Will I be paid when I participate in this study?

You will only be given a small gift like a pencil if you participate fully in the study.

## 10. What should I do if I have a question about the research?

- 1) If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in the research, In case of any questions about this study, you may contact Dr. Alfred Buluma (the Co - Principal Investigator) at +256774147777 or [alfredbuluma@gmail.com](mailto:alfredbuluma@gmail.com)
- 2) If you have any questions about the ethical aspects of the study or about protecting the rights of the participants, you can contact the Gulu University Research Ethics Committee at +256772305621; email: [lekobai@yahoo.com](mailto:lekobai@yahoo.com)/[lekobai@gmail.com](mailto:lekobai@gmail.com); or the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology, on plot 6 Kimera road, Ntinda, Kampala on Tel 0414705500.

### Statement of voluntariness:

Participation in the research study is voluntary and you may join on your own free will. You have a right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. If you have any issues pertaining to your



rights and participation in the study, please contact the Chairperson, Gulu University Research Ethics Committee, Dr. Gerald Obai Tel: No., 0772305621; email: lekobai@yahoo.com/lekobai@gmail.com; or the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology, on plot 6 Kimera road, Ntinda, Kampala on Tel 0414705500.

**Statement of consent**

..... has described to me what is going to be done, the risks, the benefits involved and my rights as a participant in this study. I understand that my decision to participate in this study will not affect me in any way. In the use of this information, my identity will be concealed. I am aware that I may withdraw at any time. I understand that by signing this form, I do not waive any of my legal rights but merely indicate that I have been informed about the research study in which I am voluntarily agreeing to participate. A copy of this form will be provided to me.

Name\_\_\_\_\_Signature of participant\_\_\_\_\_Date\_\_\_\_\_

Name\_\_\_\_\_Signature of interviewer\_\_\_\_\_Date\_\_\_\_\_

Name\_\_\_\_\_Signature of Interpreter\_\_\_\_\_Date\_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix 4: Photo voices recording Participation Agreement (Assent Form) for Children

**Study Title:** Drivers of Violence against Children in Rural Uganda.

**Principal Investigator:** Dr Naiga Resty (Department of Foundations and Curriculum Studies, School of Education, Makerere University)

**Co-investigators:** Dr Deborah Ojiambo, Dr David Onen, Dr. Buluma Alfred, Dr Luwerekera Bernard, Dr Ssekito Zaidi, Ms Namugenyi Masitula, Ms Ajok Kerine and Mr Muwonge Vincent, all Lecturers at Makerere University.

**Purpose of the Study:** To explore the drivers of violence against children at individual, society, community, and family levels in Central Uganda.

**Study Procedures:** Your fellow primary school children, girls and boys of ages 10 to 12 (classes P.4 to P.7) who have consented will be randomly selected to participate in this study. Different groups of children will participate in other sessions. One group of about 24 pupils will participate in the qualitative information collection activities like photo voice recordings; which will take one day of two hours split into about an hour per sub-session. The other group of about 24 and 384 pupils will participate in FGD and SAQ data collection activities. All sessions will occur at your respective schools and during regular school days and hours determined by the school authorities. Sessions will be video recorded for supervision and follow-up purposes and to ensure value for every information provided. A snack and soft drink will be provided to the children participants during the sessions.

**Foreseeable Risks:** The potential risks involved in this baseline study are minimal. As with any information-gathering sessions, children may become nervous and more aware of emotional challenges. In such a case, the psychologists on the research team, Dr Deborah Ojiambo, Ms Namugenyi Masitula and Mr Muwonge Vincent, will be available with their familiar senior teachers during school hours to help the child work through any emotional difficulty.

**Benefits to the Participants and others:** This project aims to fill the information gap on the underlying causes of violence against children in Uganda. This is particularly important and timely given that VAC has been compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic and related restrictions on social gathering and mobility. In addition, lockdown measures have led to shrinking household incomes, which also heightens tension within families and increases incidents of VAC. Hence, the study will contribute to the debates about VAC risk factors during, before and COVID lockdowns in Uganda.

**Invitation to Participate:** You have been invited to participate in this study because you are a pupil in one of the government-aided primary schools in this District, which is the target area for this pilot study. The research team member will explain the study to you in more detail and ask if you want to participate in this study. Listening to the research team member, it is essential that you fully understand what this study is about, how it will proceed, and what can happen when you participate in this study. After that, you can think carefully and decide whether you will participate in this study. Also, after reading and listening to the following information, please discuss with your parents or guardians and your friends if necessary. If you have any questions at any time, you can ask a research team member. Please keep in mind that in order to participate in this study, you need your parents' or guardians' approval and your own.

### 1. What is the study about, and why is this study being conducted?

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study aims to explore the causes of Violence against Children in Rural Uganda so as to inform the design of a more extensive study in this field. For this purpose, several research techniques such as Focus Group Discussion and survey, etc., will be used. This instruction is for photo voice recording included in qualitative research. We will use your drawings to understand your perspectives about the drivers of violence against children in rural Uganda.

## **2. How many people will participate?**

For the qualitative study, several research methods such as Focus Group Discussions, photovoice; etc. will be used. The study covers school children from 10 to 12 years (classes P.4 to P.7), gender (girls and boys), residence (participant child should have resided in the area of study for at least two years), and guardianship (participant child should be under guardianship of either parents or other adult relative but not NGOs or foster homes). The number of this research's (FGD) participants is totally 24 persons including at least 10 girls.

## **3. What happens if I participate in the study?**

In this research, you will discuss with children who have the same or similar characteristics and you can freely share your thoughts on a given topic or experiences you had from your daily life. The activities will be carried out in two rounds each expected to take about 1 hour, totaling to two hours in a day. A snack and soft drink will be provided to the participants during the sessions.

With the consent of the participants, the discussion will be recorded with a digital recorder. You can withdraw your consent and cease participation whenever you want, and if you do, the recorded materials will be discarded. The research results from those who complete only will be stored and taken with the research team. Following is the detailed process: You will be given some details about the photo voice recordings from the investigator. You will be given some scenarios to draw or identify about your awareness and perspectives about drivers of Violence against Children in Rural Uganda. You can share freely your thoughts on a given topic or experiences you had in your daily life. It will take about an hour.

## **4. Can I stop participating?**

Yes, you can leave at any time without repercussions during your research participation. Please tell the investigator, the researcher, or the research coordinator if you wish to stop participating. In addition, all collected data will be discarded in case of withdrawal of consent.

## **5. Are there any side effects or risks from participating in the study?**

This research needs one-time participation, and participants will lose about two hours of time and effort of their day. In addition, as you are asked to share your idea about sensitive issues such as home environment, etc., you could be exposed to the minimal risk that you can experience in daily life. You can withdraw your consent and cease participation because of this risk. If you feel psychological inconvenience and anxiety due to this risk, our researcher team will do the best to minimize the risk and side-effect. In such a case, expert research team players like Dr Deborah Ojiambo and Ms Masitula Namugenyi will be available with their familiar senior teachers during school hours to help you with any emotional difficulty. If any side effect or risk appears, please don't hesitate to inform the investigator or research principal investigator immediately.

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Following the regulations of the Gulu University Research Ethics Committee GUREC, we will do our best to ensure the confidentiality of all personal information obtained through this research, and all collected personal information will be coded and anonymized. Suppose the information collected in this study is disclosed to an academic journal. In that case, your personal information will not be used, but your personal information may be provided upon a legal request. In addition, so that monitors, inspectors, and Institutional Review Board can read the results of this study to verify the reliability of the procedures and data as long as they do not violate the confidentiality of research participants' personal information and related regulations defined.

By signing this consent form, you acknowledge that you have been made aware of this beforehand and will be deemed to have consented. Personal information and collected materials and consent forms will be kept for five years after the end of the study, and after will be permanently destroyed.

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2) If you have any questions about the ethical aspects of the study or about protecting the rights of the participants, you can contact the Gulu University Research Ethics Committee at +256772305621; email: [lekobai@yahoo.com](mailto:lekobai@yahoo.com)/[lekobai@gmail.com](mailto:lekobai@gmail.com); or the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology, on plot 6 Kimera road, Ntinda, Kampala on Tel 0414705500.

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**Statement of consent**

..... has described to me what is going to be done, the risks, the benefits involved and my rights as a participant in this study. I understand that my decision to participate in this study will not affect me in any way. In the use of this information, my identity will be concealed. I am aware that I may withdraw at any time. I understand that by signing this form, I do not waive any of my legal rights but merely indicate that I have been informed about the research study in which I am voluntarily agreeing to participate. A copy of this form will be provided to me.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of interviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Interpreter \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## Focus 5: Group Discussion Guide: Drivers of Violence against Children in Rural Uganda

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

District: \_\_\_\_\_

Sub-county: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of interview: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant type: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of discussion: \_\_\_\_\_

Moderator: \_\_\_\_\_

Notetaker: \_\_\_\_\_

Recording system: \_\_\_\_\_

Time taken: \_\_\_\_\_

**Research idea:** Drivers of Violence against Children in Rural Uganda

### Demographic Information

Participant Number	Pseudo name	Age	sex	Class	Household head	Occupation of parent/ guardian	No of children at Home	Birth order of the child
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								

### Review Assent

I am learning about children and need your help. To help me remember what you will be telling I am requesting you to audio/video record our discussion.

**Two Focus groups will be conducted separately for boys and one for girls.**

**Ice breaker:** Ask each child the game they like and link up the similarities during the discussion.

## Procedure

1. We are going to do some activities as a group. After our group discussion, you can talk about what you discussed during the group, but it is not okay to talk about what another child mentioned.
2. Specifically, our discussion is about sexual, physical, emotional violence against children in our homes/families, schools and community we come from. What do you understand by violence?
3. Give children a sheet of paper (A4). Ask each child to draw or write down any forms of violence they have ever been subjected to.
4. Ask each child if they have a picture or photo showing their violent experience as drawn or written on the A4 sheet of paper.
5. Ask the children to post the paper/ photo (if available) on the manila paper.
6. Invite children to tell you more about what they have written/drawn.
7. Ask children to tell you about the person (perpetrator) who subjected them to the form of violence they have drawn or written.
8. Ask children to explain to you the circumstances under which that violence happened to him/them.
9. Ask children to tell what they think were the reasons why that violence was subjected to him or them.
10. Provide each child with another A4 sheet of paper. Request the children to write a letter to one of the perpetrator(s) of the forms of violence subjected to them:
  - a) Explaining how they felt as the perpetrator was inflicting to them the stated violence.
  - b) Describe whether the violence was unfair and why they think so.
  - c) The child might need to express how they feel about this perpetrator
  - d) The child might indicate the long-term effects of the violence on their wellbeing.
11. We will now take photos of the project you have worked on.

If any child is feeling quite sad or disturbed after sharing their story, reflect the child's feelings. If the need arises, refer the child to a supportive teacher/ competent member of staff or psychologist on the research team.

Thank you for sharing your stories with me.

Talk about the children's next lesson to transition back into the children's class. Take the children back to their class.

## Note:

(Materials: pencils, pens, masking tape, sticky notes, manila paper, paper (size A1 for each child), crayons/markers)

## Appendix 6: Photo Guide Drivers of Violence against Children in Rural Uganda

Forms of violence subjected to participants

**A. Sexual** [In the space below, draw your pictorial or paste a photo that represents/ reflects any form of sexual violence that has ever been subjected to you or a fellow child who shared his experiences with you]

**B. Psycho – social/ emotional** [In the space below, draw your pictorial or paste a photo that represents/ reflects any form of psycho – social/ emotional violence that has ever been subjected to you or a fellow child who shared his experiences with you]

**C. Physical Violence** [In the space below, draw your pictorial or paste a photo that represents/ reflects any form of physical violence that has ever been subjected to you or a fellow child who shared his experiences with you]





## Appendix 8: Short Biographies of Investigators

The team mentioned below undertook this child-focused pilot research project:

Resty Naiga (**Principal Investigator**) is a Lecturer at Makerere University, Department of Development Studies, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. She has a PhD in Social Economic Sciences with a research focus on water governance from University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU) Vienna, Austria; Masters in Development Studies from University College Dublin, Ireland and Bachelor of Social Sciences from Makerere University. She has conducted research and published widely in the areas of gender, water governance, conflict and peacebuilding. She serves in different capacities on a wide range of professional organizations such as Organisation of Women in Science in Developing World (OWSD); International Association of the Study of the Commons (IASC), Netherlands; Network of Young African Researchers in Agriculture (YARA); Development Studies Association; International Water Association (IWA); Uganda Water User Association (WUA).

Alfred Buluma (**Co - Principal Investigator**) is a teacher educator at the school of Education, Makerere University. He holds a PhD in Education with specialization in Pedagogy and nurturing of 21st century competences. He has published in areas of Pedagogy and development of 21st century competences. He has been working with children since 2004 as a secondary school teacher and teacher educator.

Sarah Keryne Ajok (**Statistician/Data Manager**) holds a Master's in Business Administration with a bias in Finance and Accounting, a post graduate Diploma in Business Education and is a Lecturer in the Department of Finance, Makerere University Business School.

Sarah has engaged in research and community interventions projects and she brings immense experience in research.

Masitula Namugenyi (**Co-Investigator**): is a Counselling /positive Psychologist, a teacher and a PhD candidate at Makerere University, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Psychology, Department of Mental Health and Community Psychology. She is conducting research about psychological wellbeing and self-esteem of adolescents in Kampala slums. She holds a Master's Degree in Counselling Psychology and a Bachelor of Arts with Education degree from Makerere University. She is an Assistant Lecturer of Counselling and Community Psychology of Makerere University. She is also a counselor and a teacher to children, adolescents and individuals of all categories in different communities e.g., schools, slum setting, religious centers, institutions, orphanages, homes and children's homes. Masitula is a researcher and a research supervisor to many students at different levels e.g., Master's, degree and diploma students.

Dr. Deborah Ojiambo (**Mentor/Project Coordinator/Finance Officer**): is a Counselling Psychologist, Educationist and Lecturer at Makerere's Department of Mental Health and Community Psychology. Deborah is a National Certified Counselor-NCC (USA) and a Certified Child Centered Play Therapy-Supervisor (USA). She holds a doctorate in Counseling with a specialty in working with children and families from the University of North Texas, and a BA with Education. Deborah has extensive clinical experience working with children, adolescents, teachers, and families in community settings, agencies and schools both in Uganda, and the USA. Her research work focuses on school counseling, teacher/parent-child relationships, group therapy, and therapeutic interventions with children.

Dr. David Onen (**Mentor**): Educationist, Research Associate at the AfriChild Centre and senior researcher in the education sector. He has expertise in quantitative research methods and presents a deeper understanding of the Uganda education system acquired through working in the education sector for over two decades. Dr. Onen has facilitated training in child focused research methodologies, published educational research and presented in several national and international conferences. Some of the

work done include; harmonization of East African Educational systems, state of child labor in northern Uganda, linkage between governance reforms and higher education leadership in East Africa. Dr. Onen also served as member of the governing council for national curriculum Development Centre (2007 to 2013). Dr. Onen holds PhD in educational management, Master's degree in educational management, PGD in education and Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics, Economics and Geography.

**Zaid Sekitto (Co-Investigator):** Zaid Sekitto is an Assistant Lecturer in the Department of History, Archaeology and Heritage Studies, Makerere University. He holds a PhD in Terrorism Studies (Terrorology) and teaches History of Human Rights in Sub-Saharan Africa since 1850, Themes of the History of the Middle East since 1900 and A History of Conflict Management and Resolution. Zaid's current research interests include: Child soldiering and violence against children in conflict situations, terrorism in East African region, Masculinities and sexual violence against men in conflict situations, Military interventions, post-conflict context – reconstruction and peace building.

**Vincent Muwonge (Field Coordinator)** is an Educational Psychologist and a PhD candidate at Makerere University's College of Humanities and Social Sciences with a bias in children (Cultivating Parents' Capacities to Enhance School Readiness for Toddlers in the Mobile age). He holds a Master's degree in Educational Psychology and a First-Class Bachelor of Arts with Education from Makerere University. He is an Assistant Lecturer of Educational Psychology in the Department of Educational, Social and Organizational Psychology of Makerere University. He is also the ODeL Coordinator (Open, Distance and eLearning) of the school. Vincent has commendable experience in child-focused research. He is the Program Administrator of the Early Childhood Care and Education Program of the School of Education. He has participated in collaborative research with several NGOs dedicated to working with children such as World Vision Uganda, AMREF Uganda, Good Neighbors Uganda, and the Children for Life.





