

Same Spaces, Different Places

The Divergent Perspectives
of Children and Adults
regarding Violence
against Children in
Refugee Settlements of
Western Uganda

Elizabeth Cooper



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Same Spaces, Different Places: The Divergent Perspectives of Children and Adults regarding Violence against Children in Refugee Settlements of Western Uganda
By Elizabeth Cooper

Photographs (Acknowledgement, vii, 5, 7-11, 19, 24, 26, 29-32, 47, back cover): Emily Simon (emsimo@gmail.com) (front cover, vi, 3, 4, 12, 16, 22, 40): Heidi Jo Brady (hojos@earthlink.net)

Layout and Formatting: Samson Mwaka (mwakasw@yahoo.co.uk)

Note: Photographs used in this publication do not imply identity of participants in the study.

Raising Voices

Plot 16 Tufnell Drive, Kamwokya
Po Box 6770
Kampala, Uganda

Tel: +256 41 531186
Fax: +254 41 5311249

info@raisingvoices.org
www.raisingvoices.org

UNHCR

www.unhcr.org

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Acknowledgements

This report is a result of many people's commitment to listening to, and learning from, children and adults living in refugee settlements in Uganda. It also reflects many children's and adults' perseverance in trying to make their voices heard and their experiences understood. As such, in part the report is a reflection of global processes with resolutions scribed in Geneva translated into terms of reference for activities by organisations in Kampala. In other equally important ways, the report is evidence of the local actions of children and adults carving time out of their days and meaning out of their personal experiences to try to better understand what it means to be a girl or a boy living in Nakivale and Kyaka II refugee settlements. From these diverse places, a shared space was found in this effort to learn about violence against children.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Raising Voices partnered to learn more about violence against children in Nakivale and Kyaka II refugee settlements. Ron Pouwels of UNHCR in Geneva and Dipak Naker of Raising Voices in Uganda backed the idea that listening to children and adults would provide important knowledge and impetus for the prevention of violence against children. The project would not have existed without their sense of purpose for it.

The study methodology was modified from Raising Voices' past research about violence against children in Uganda.* The extensive efforts made on behalf of that earlier project to develop and test research methods and tools appropriate for children and adults made this project, with its tight timeline, feasible and significantly more relevant.

The research team was comprised of Barbrah Nanyunja, Basil Wanzira, Diane Nassolo, Olive Nabisubi, Ssali Gadafi and Wellington Ssekadde. With professional skill and personal talent, each of these individuals quickly earned the willingness of children and adults to participate in the study. The quality of the data is testament to their careful work. Emily Simon was the project's photographer and her interactions with children and adults in Nakivale and Kyaka produced many of the pictures in this report. Heidi Jo Brady's photographs from an earlier trip to Nakivale also grace these pages and we are very grateful for her generosity in donating them to Raising Voices.

Individuals working in Nakivale and Kyaka II refugee settlements were also crucial to the success of this study, in particular for recruiting participants and providing translation support. Particular thanks must go to Sara litat and the rest of the GTZ Community Services team in Nakivale for providing support to our efforts.

If the project was pushed out of offices in Geneva and Kampala by the people mentioned above, it was pulled into reality by the girls and boys and women and men who have sought asylum as refugees in western Uganda. In meeting our good faith with their own good faith, and specifically, our visits with welcome and our questions with answers, hundreds of children and adults in Nakivale and Kyaka II refugee settlements did their best to help us better understand what we believe we should understand better. So, the bulk of this acknowledgement is devoted to each individual child and adult for deciding to contribute their time and knowledge to our learning. These individual efforts to try to work with others to improve children's lives are decisive for any future successes.

Learning from children is not yet an exercise that is achieved without special efforts, or 'special projects'. It should humble all of us that it took all of these people and actions in the cities of Geneva and Kampala and the refugee settlements of Nakivale and Kyaka to achieve this small effort in listening and learning about violence against refugee children. If this report bears some witness to a shared interest in preventing violence against children among children themselves, the adults in their communities, and the more distant programme managers and policy makers, in its small size and scope it is perhaps also reflexive of the fragility of this shared purpose. The content of this report is an attempt at improving the chances that commitment to this purpose can be broadened and strengthened.

*Naker, D. 2005. *Violence against Children. The Voices of Ugandan Children and Adults*. Kampala: Raising Voices and Save the Children in Uganda.
www.raisingvoices.org/publications.php



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Executive Summary

This study sought the perspectives of 343 children and 226 adults living in two refugee settlements in western Uganda concerning violence against children. Through questionnaires, focus group discussions, role plays and key informant interviews, girls and boys and women and men told us about their own experiences of violence against children as well as what they think needs to be done to safeguard children from violence.

Although this was a small-scale study the findings were consistent enough across participants of different backgrounds and in response to different methods to give clear indication that violence is a pervasive condition of children's lives in Nakivale and Kyaka II refugee settlements. Girls and boys between 8 and 17 years of age reported experiencing physical, emotional and economic violence as regular features in their lives. 9 of every 10 children, in fact, reported having experienced some form of physical violence used against them by adults, the most common forms being caning and slapping. 8 of every 10 children in this study said they have been caned while 7 of every 10 children said they have been slapped by adults. 9 of every 10 children also reported having experienced some form of emotional violence against them by adults. For example, 7 of every 10 children reported having been insulted by adults. Economic violence was also widespread. 1 of every 3 children said they are kept from school so that they can work to earn money for their households. Girls described experiencing the constant threat, and common occurrence, of sexual violence against them by adults in both settlements. 1 of every 4 girls included in this study said she has been forced to have sex. Children told of violence commonly occurring in their schools, homes, and neighbourhoods as well as in the more distant places where they are sent to fetch water and firewood for their households.

Most adults in this study agreed that in their communities, children are deliberately beaten, shouted at, and denied food, although their accounts of how often they personally do such actions against children didn't match up with the high prevalence recorded in children's responses. More significant than these discrepancies between children's and adults' personal accounts of acts of violence against children, however, was the finding that the large majority of adults refused to label most of these acts as "violence". Instead, men and women described degrees of difference between what are acceptable and unacceptable uses of physical, emotional and economic pain against a child.

Indeed, in response to all of the study's key questions, children and adults gave very different kinds of responses. But, the divergences between children's and adults' accounts are not due to different experiences, but rather are the consequence of children and adults having very different perspectives of the same experiences. Children's and adults' perspectives about violence against children don't match because their beliefs and attitudes about what is fair for children are at odds with one another.

What do children say?

It was relatively straightforward to learn about violence against children from children in Nakivale and Kyaka. Girls and boys responded to questions about what violence means and how it occurs in their lives by drawing from multiple personal experiences that have resulted in them feeling bad. In addition to providing details concerning the prevalence of various forms of violence in their lives in several places and at the hands of different adults, children described their understandings of why violence occurs, how violence makes them feel and what choices they feel they have in responding to violence against them.

Children obviously give the question of why violence is used against them by adults careful thought. In addition to identifying specific factors that expose particular children to risks of violence, such as alcohol abuse by parents and discrimination among family members and between tribal groups, three root causes were consistently identified by children in this study, despite differences among children's gender, age, cultural background and family circumstances:

- Children judge that adults resort to violent attitudes and behaviours because adults are unwilling to listen to children and to empathise with children;
- Children believe that adults use violent forms of punishing children because they don't know any better; and
- Children recognise that adults' negative attitudes and behaviours toward children can be expressions of other frustrations in adults' lives, including poverty and displacement.

These three ideas seem to reflect children's strong desires to understand why violence is being used against them and to give adults the benefits of their doubts, rather than to accept that adults hurt children on purpose out of dislike or malice.

The vehemence of children's frustration, fear and anger as a result of the forms of violence they regularly experience in their lives was clearly expressed. Equally apparent was children's limited sense of security in Nakivale and Kyaka II refugee settlements: of the children in this study, only between 2 and 4 of every 10 children said that agency personnel, refugee community leaders, neighbours, teachers and police make them feel safe in the settlements. Moreover, there seems to be scant knowledge among children concerning the current options they have for accessing help in response to violence.

On the optimistic side of, the children in this study offered many ideas for actions that should be taken to prevent violence against children. As guiding principles, children recommended that efforts be practical, community-based and focused on cooperation among children and adults, while leaving room for the enforcement of laws against violation of children when necessary.

What do adults say?

It was much more complicated to learn about violence against children from adults in Nakivale and Kyaka because women and men tended to distance themselves from its existence. Instead, many adults insisted that while punishment is widely used by adults against children, this doesn't implicate violence or mistreatment of children. In fact, quite contrary to children's accounts, adults described punishments being judiciously used by adults against children.

Most adults in this study stated that children do not have the inalienable right not to be hurt or to feel bad about themselves. Instead, nearly half of all women and men agreed with the statement that the right of adults to punish children is more important than any rights that children may have.

Men and women in this study also contended that the majority of adults know the difference between punishing a child and mistreating a child. Moreover, men and women said that they believe that many adults, including all adult family members, teachers, headmasters, and other adult members of the child's community have the right to use physical and emotional forms of punishment against children. 1 of every 4 adults in this study stated that they believe any adult has the right to punish any child.

In judging how children feel as a consequence of adults' use of punishments against them, women and men provided extremely different interpretations than children. Adults didn't recognise that the most common feelings among children are fear and anger, but instead answered that they believe children feel respect and gratitude toward the adult punishing them.

It is the knitting together of these responses by adults that seems to point to a root cause for the prevalence of violence against children in Nakivale and Kyaka II refugee settlements: violence against children happens because it can. Many acts of violence against children by adults are condoned by adults. They happen on a regular basis under the guise of teaching and punishment, and their use is left to the discretion of individual adults. Perhaps most importantly, this research showed that many adults don't understand that children aren't experiencing violence as isolated acts, but rather as the essence of the relationships between some adults and some children.

Relevance beyond Nakivale and Kyaka

One finding that might be considered surprising is that although the settings of this investigation into violence in children's lives were two refugee settlements, this context did not emerge as a primary cause for the regular violence in children's lives. Certainly, both children and adults in this study recognised that there are structural disadvantages in their lives, such as poverty, alienation from other family members, competition for limited resources, and discriminative attitudes and practices among different groups living in the same areas, but for the most part, the explanations children and adults gave for acts of physical, emotional, economic and sexual violence in children's lives are not contingent on children's statuses as refugees. Rather, these acts of violence are contingent on children's statuses as children.

That to be a child is such an essential category to the experience of violence is a crucial point. In this research, despite differences in culture and place, the lower status of children to adults in social hierarchies materialised in this research as a fundamental commonality. It is this finding that makes this report and its final recommendations concerning participatory and comprehensive dialogue and action relevant beyond the confines of Nakivale and Kyaka II refugee settlements.

Introduction

What's new in this report?

This is not the first report about violence against children, about violence in refugee settlements, or even about violence against children in refugee settlements. Unfortunately, violence is so ubiquitous in children's lives that it would be difficult not to notice it when exploring the ways in which refugee children are growing up. This report is new and different, however, in several important ways: (1) it takes as its focus the most common and pervasive forms of violence in children's lives – violence against children in homes, schools and communities; (2) it uses children's testimonies to give meaning to violence against children; and (3) it directly compares children's and adults' different perspectives about violence against children. Taken together, these three elements provide useful starting points for advancing dialogue and shared understanding among children and adults about the current conditions of violence against children as well as what is required to prevent future violence.

Pervasive Violence

In reviewing the existing literature about violence against children generally it is interesting to note that the everyday, common forms of violence in children's lives are often less problematised and investigated than are the more exotic and extraordinary types of violence in children's lives. For instance, there is more published research about children as soldiers in wars in Uganda than there is about children as students in schools where corporal punishment is practiced. In the literature about violence in refugee children's lives, there is far more known about violence by strangers against children over resources, such as firewood and water, than there is known about violence against children by the people they know and love and rely on for their development, like parents, teachers and neighbours.

The purpose of learning about the violence which is most prevalent and pervasive in children's lives is to better understand the underlying causes and potential solutions for all violence against children. This purpose is derived from an understanding that even the most extreme cases of violation against children do not occur in a social or political vacuum. Rather, how violence against children is commonly understood and experienced within a society comprises the baseline measure of risk or security that children face in their lives.

As such, this research was conceived with the notion that everyday forms of violence, such as hitting and insulting and denying education, matter to children, both as individuals and as a distinctive social group. Girls' and boys' responses to the research confirmed that violence is prominent, pervasive and deeply influential in children's lives in Nakivale and Kyaka settlements.

Children's Knowledge

Strange as it may seem, violence against children is often not carefully defined or conceptualised, and even more rarely are children asked to give their understandings of what violence is, how it is experienced, and the impacts that violence renders. Unfortunately, however, many children know a lot about violence. Girls and boys can draw from personal experiences to explain what violence means. Moreover, as part of their daily work in making sense of their worlds, children give careful consideration to why violence is used against them.

This study began with the goal of learning about children's realities from children, rather than from secondary sources. The underlying question was 'What does violence mean in the lives of children here and today?' This approach to learning takes us into the complicated realm of lived meanings which is appropriate since violence is known experientially. Girls' and boys' lived definitions of violence bring clarity and precision to a topic that is often portrayed in abstract and totalising terms. In so doing, children's accounts provide direct points of entry into an issue that may at first appear beyond the capacity of individuals' engagement.

Children and Adults Compared

In seeking to understand children's lives, we recognise that just as children are key informants, so too are the adults who interact with children on a daily basis. Indeed, it is impossible to grasp the full reality of what it means to be a child unless we consider how adults interact with children. As much as we regard children as capable of having individual experiences, as well as unique and valid interpretations of these experiences, we simultaneously understand that children's experiences and interpretations are intimately correlated with adults' practices and ideas. Furthermore, we contend that a topic as inter-subjective as violence requires consideration of both subjectivities.

It is rare to find combined examinations of the different ways that children and adults experience the world they share. While the bulk of research about social phenomena foregrounds adults' ideas and experiences, child-focused research tends to background adults' perspectives in the desire to highlight child-specific data. This study was an attempt in collecting both children's and adults' participation in describing the current reality of violence against children.

What emerged however, were two significantly different accounts of the same reality. Recognising that there are no 'right' and 'wrong' answers to something as experiential as violence, the disparities in girls' and boys' and women's and men's accounts point to a hugely important fissure in the shared lives of children and adults.

To appropriately reflect the different data that was collected from children and adults, this report does not merge children's and adults' perspectives into a common perspective. Instead, children's and adults' accounts are presented side by side in comparison so as to indicate what knowledge is shared by adults and children as well as the extent to which mutual understanding is currently missing.



Where does this report take us?

The current gaps between children's and adults' understanding of the same issues is striking. It is startling that although children and adults live together, managing households and securing educations, and although children and adults have the same goals of achieving good futures for children, in many ways children and adults fundamentally don't understand one another.

This report is structured to show how children and adults currently co-exist in different realities when it comes to the problem of violence against children. The content is organised to present both sides of the relationship between adults and children. In doing so, we have identified the most significant gaps in understandings between children and adults. It is these gaps that need to be filled if we are going to bridge the current alienation between children and adults.

But we haven't limited this report to a list of what children and adults said. We have also tried to determine the underlying assumptions and linkages between beliefs, actions and feelings that contribute to such different perspectives between children and adults. With this analysis we hope to stimulate more thought and questioning among all participants, children and adults, regarding why current misunderstandings exist, how these misunderstandings affect lives and what we can do to overcome such fundamental disorder in the relationships between children and adults.

Our goal in juxtaposing children's and adults' understanding of the causes and effects of violence against children is to provide the starting points for a dialogue about what needs to be addressed if we are to live together in genuine harmony. The opening remarks to this dialogue have been made by 553 children and adults living in Nakivale and Kyaka II refugee settlements. The rest remains to be said and lived.



STUDY DESIGN

This section outlines the research process:

Background

Purpose

Context

Ethical considerations

Participants

Methods

Background

Violence against children occurs, yet there has been little systematic collection of empirical evidence of violence against children in refugee settlements.¹ Moreover, data collection concerning violence against children in refugee settlements is rarely done in child-centric ways that solicit children's own perspectives and experiences.² Child-centric research, including participatory research, with children in refugee settlements is advocated, however, both as a means for uncovering important insights concerning children's lived realities as well as for enhancing participant children's self esteem, skills and potentially even psychosocial therapy.³

"In conceptualising violence, the critical starting point and frame of reference must be the experience of children themselves. Therefore children and young people must be meaningfully involved in promoting and strategising action on violence against children."

Committee on the Rights of the Child. Recommendations Adopted Following the General Discussion Day on Violence within the Family and in Schools. Report on the 28th session, September/October 2001, CRC/C/111.

The conceptualisation and design of this project builds on recent research about violence against children in non-refugee communities in Uganda. Raising Voices' collection and analysis of the experiences and perspectives of 1,400 children and 1,100 adults in five different districts of Uganda demonstrated that children and adults often have markedly different understanding of the violence in children's lives.⁴ These differences indicate that focusing only on what adults' say and do, or only what children say and do, will not gain us a complete picture of what is actually going on and why. Rather, extremely useful insights, leading to more comprehensive understandings of a shared reality, can be learned from listening to, and comparing, children's and adults' ideas concerning the reasons for, impacts of, and ways to prevent and respond to violence against children.

Purpose

The purpose of this research in Nakivale and Kyaka II refugee settlements was to gain insights into what violence is occurring in children's lives, causes and effects of this violence, as well as existing challenges and potential solutions for preventing violence against children.

Having already learned that children and adults often have different accounts of the violence in children's lives, we sought with this research to gain as much knowledge about these accounts as possible within the constraints of the study's scope.

As the United Nations' refugee agency, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is mandated to provide international protection to refugees. UNHCR, together with states, thus shares the responsibility for ensuring that refugees are protected against violence. This study is part of the UNHCR strategy for Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming (AGDM) which has the overall aim to promote the equal rights of all refugees. It was commissioned as one tool for gathering information about a segment of refugee children's needs, concerns, protection risks, capacities and solutions, and it builds on other initiatives, including discussions with children and youth in refugee settlements in Uganda as part of the Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) participatory assessment in 2005, to specifically garner children's perspectives concerning programming priorities.

1 UNHCR, WCRWC and UN Secretary-General. Thematic Consultation on Violence Against Refugee and other Displaced Children. Geneva, 25 April 2006. www.violencestudy.org/IMG/doc/Report_thematic_consultation_refugee_children-2.doc

2 Exceptions include recent UNHCR studies in southern African countries, see: UNHCR. 2007. Refugee children speak about violence. A report on participatory assessments carried out with refugee and returnee children in Southern Africa. Pretoria: UNHCR. Also see: Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children. (2004). Youth Speak Out: New Voices on the Protection and Participation of Young People Affected by Armed Conflict. New York: Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children;

3 Boyden, J. Conducting Research with War-Affected and Displaced Children: Ethics & Methods, Cultural Survival Quarterly On-line, 24 (2): <http://www.culturalsurvival.org>

4 Naker, D. 2005 Violence against Children. The Voices of Ugandan Children and Adults. Kampala: Raising Voices and Save the Children in Uganda. www.raisingvoices.org/publications.php

Context

Nakivale refugee settlement (Nakivale) is located in western Uganda on 86 square kilometres of land, approximately 60 kilometres south of the town of Mbarara. Nakivale refugee settlement was created in 1960 in response to an influx of Rwandese Tutsi refugees fleeing the Hutu regime that had taken power in Rwanda. This area has hosted varying numbers of refugees since this time. Most of these refugees have been from Rwanda, however, there are people from a diversity of nationalities living in Nakivale. Today the population at Nakivale is approximately 26,000, including approximately 12,000 people from Rwanda, 6,000 from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), 3,000 from Somalia, 900 from Burundi, 200 from Sudan, 100 from Ethiopia and several smaller groups from other countries.

Kyaka II refugee settlement (Kyaka) is located in western Uganda on 81 square kilometres of land, approximately 70 kilometres by road from the town of Mubende. It was opened as a refugee settlement in the 1950s to accommodate thousands of Tutsi people fleeing Rwanda. Many of these people stayed at Kyaka until 1994 when it became safe to return to Rwanda. Since 1994, Kyaka has hosted primarily Congolese refugees and Rwandese refugees of Hutu origin. Today the population at Kyaka is

approximately 16,000 people, including approximately 14,000 people from the DRC, 2,300 from Rwanda, 140 from Burundi and smaller populations from several other countries.

Both Nakivale and Kyaka are long-term settlements with people who have lived there for up to fourteen years. Many inhabitants have been allocated plots of land for cultivation and there are community services including primary schools, medical centers and community centers. The settlements are under the jurisdiction of the Office of the Prime Minister of Uganda (OPM) with UNHCR providing refugee-specific protection and programming. GTZ is sub-contracted by UNHCR to provide community services and education in both settlements. Other non-governmental organisations active in the settlements are International Medical Corps (IMC) which does sexual and gender-based violence programming, Right to Play which focuses on children's opportunities for sport and recreation and Save the Children in Uganda which has occasional child-focused programmes.

There are approximately 28,960 children in both settlements which represents 56.5% of the total populations.



Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations guided every stage of the research process, from research design, through all interactions, to the final reporting of findings. Prior to asking for their consent to participate, children and adults were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study activity, as well as how the information gathered would be used.



Potential participants were advised that they were not selected because they had done anything wrong, nor that there were right and wrong answers to our questions, but rather that we were asking for their participation because we believed we could learn from their personal perspectives and experiences. Potential participants were also advised that their identities would not be disclosed in any final reporting or among other community members.⁵ Translators who assisted the research team agreed to honour these commitments to research participants.

Particular effort was devoted to ensure that the researchers' words and tone as well as body language could enhance children's understanding and feelings of security. Research locations were deliberately chosen to provide further security of participants' confidentiality. Child-friendly methods, as described on pages 8 and 10, were also used to help make children feel more comfortable and confident in sharing information.

Researchers were trained not to pressure any participant into revealing personal or traumatic information that the individual was not ready to share. Participants who did share painful personal experiences were offered, at the end of the process, further opportunity to talk about their concerns. Those who wanted, or seemed to need, further support were referred to the appropriate agencies working in Nakivale or Kyaka. When requested by participants, the research team also raised issues of concern with the appropriate agencies in the settlements.

⁵ The photographs in this report do not imply identity of any of the children or adults who participated in this study. The photographers often moved independently around the settlements. Any photographs of research activities were taken after explicit consent was granted by participants and efforts were taken to photograph in ways that don't reveal individual children's identities.

Participants

In Nakivale refugee settlement, 313 children and adults participated in this study. The research team spent five days collecting data in ten different communities within Nakivale through the administration of 125 questionnaires (to 67 children and 58 adults), facilitation of 19 focus group discussions (10 with children and 9 with adults) and conduct of 19 key informant interviews (11 with children and 8 with adults). The three languages of Swahili, Kinyarwanda and English were used in collecting data through these various methods.

In Kyaka II refugee settlement, 256 children and adults participated in this study. Data was collected over four days in three different communities, using the five languages of Swahili, Kinyarwanda, Runyankole, Gikiri, and English. 95 questionnaires were administered (to 58 children and 37 adults), 14 focus group discussions were facilitated (10 with children and 4 with adults), and 17 key informant interviews (10 with children and 8 with adults) were conducted. The lower numbers of adults who participated in this study in Kyaka was an unfortunate consequence of scheduling conflicts with other agencies' activities.

In total, 553 individuals were participants in this study. Approximately 60% of these participants were children (50% girls and 50% boys) while 40% were adults (53% women and 47% men).



Study design

Methods

Questionnaires

Following an introductory discussion, questionnaires were administered verbally in groups of 10 girls or boys, women or men, while each participant marked their own responses on individual written questionnaires. Each question had several possible answers attached to it as well as an 'other' option in which respondents could give a different response. Once the researcher and translator had ensured everyone in the group understood the question and each of the options, respondents were asked to select their responses by making a tick in the appropriate box. Some questions asked respondents to choose all responses applicable to their experiences while other questions asked for only one answer. The questionnaires were modified versions of questionnaires developed in consultation with children and adults in Uganda as well as pilot-tested and used in a 2005 study with children and adults in Uganda.⁶

Following the administration of the questionnaires with children, an additional drawing exercise that focuses on children's protective assets was done. This exercise is described on page 10.

Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions of ten participants were segregated into groups of girls and boys and women and men. The groups of girls and boys were further divided according to age. Groups of 'younger' girls or boys between the ages of 8 and 12 and 'older' girls or boys between the ages 13 and 17 met separately. Discussions were facilitated using a guide of open-ended questions and probes. This question guide was a slightly modified version of a guide developed in consultation with children and adults in Uganda as well as pilot-tested and used in a 2005 study with children and adults in Uganda.⁶ The discussions lasted approximately 1 ½ hours. Children's focus group discussions opened with a role-playing exercise described on page 8.

Key Informant Interviews

36 children and adults participated in one-on-one interviews with members of our research team regarding their experiences and perspectives of violence against children.⁷ These individuals were identified based on their unique or representative backgrounds or positions in the community and their willingness to share their experiences (e.g. unaccompanied minor, child heading a household, foster parent, religious leader, headmaster, security officer, etc.)

Table 1: Children and adults consulted through each method of data collection

	Questionnaires	Focus Groups	Key Informants	Total Participants
Children	125	197	21	343
Girls	63	96	13	172
Boys	62	101	8	171
Adults	95	116	15	226
Women	48	64	8	120
Men	47	52	7	106
Total Participants	220	313	36	553

⁶ Naker, D. 2005 Violence against Children. The Voices of Ugandan Children and Adults. Kampala: Raising Voices and Save the Children in Uganda. www.raisingvoices.org/publications.php

⁷ Some of the children and adults who participated as key informants were recruited after participating in the study as focus group discussants. This was the case with 16 participants. This duplication explains why the total number of participants is 553 rather than 569.



The Somalis in Nakivale: A Different Data Set

Data collected from members of the Somali population in Nakivale refugee settlement was significantly different than data collected from all other adults and children of different national and ethnic backgrounds. Of twenty boys who completed questionnaires, only two reported any forms of physical violence having been used against them. In separate focus group discussions, Somali men and women vociferously rejected the use of physical forms of violence as punishment against children. They insisted that Somali adults use instruction and persuasion, and sometimes threats, to guide their children, rather than punishment. Other, non-Somali, research participants, including agency personnel and teachers, also stated that they are not aware of Somali adults using physical forms of punishment against their children in Nakivale. Unfortunately, the planned focus group discussion with Somali girls was not held due to circumstances beyond our control. The issue of female genital cutting was raised by some Somali women, however, as violence against Somali girls in the settlement.

Given these exceptional but limited findings, as well as the fact that previous studies with different Somali communities have elicited similar kinds of responses about the rarity of physical punishments being used against Somali children by Somali adults,⁸ it would be useful for further research to focus on Somali adults' child raising ideas and practices. Due to the extreme differences between Somali children's and adults' responses and responses that were common across all other national and ethnic groups, the Somali responses are not counted in the statistical data presented in this report. This decision was made to specifically highlight important similarities in the treatment of children among the majority of the population in Nakivale and Kyaka, while not losing sight of a significant difference reported in Nakivale's minority Somali community.

⁸ Scruggs, Natoschia. 2004. Somalia. In *International Perspectives on Family Violence and Abuse: A Cognitive Ecological Approach*. Kathleen Malley-Morrison (Ed). Mahwah, New Jersey: Routledge. 223-244.

Study design

Child-friendly Methods - Statues

Doing research with children about violence in their lives requires sensitivity and flexibility. It is a difficult subject to talk about freely, especially with strangers.

To build initial rapport among the group and to give children opportunities to express what they know and feel about violence in their lives, we opened focus group discussion sessions by asking small groups of children to make 'statues' of experiences of violence and experiences of receiving help after violence. This kind of role playing activity provided opportunities for children who are less verbally articulate to express themselves and for all children to feel less inhibited in communicating about, and being critical of, experiences of violence.



*"What is happening here?"
"One is begging for pardon from the other."
"One is a child, the other is the father."
"Do children ask for pardon from their parents?"
"Not a big number of children can afford to ask for pardon. But some children must beg because the parents are tough on them."
(Boys, aged 13-17)*

This highly participatory exercise stimulated easy transition into a more free-flowing and direct discussion about violence in children's lives. It gave the researchers insights into the kinds of issues that children identify as of concern or interest to them as well as the terms and language children use to describe these issues.

*"What might be happening here?"
"She is telling her sister what happened to her."
"What might have happened?"
"This girl was coming from school and someone tried to strangle her along the way. The sister is saying be patient such that they will go to report to the chairman."
"Does this kind of thing happen here?"
"Yes. When we are walking some men want to have sex with us so they may try to choke us."
"In such cases, do sisters advise girls to report to the chairmen?"
"Maybe."
(Girls, aged 13-17)*





"What do you think is happening here?"

"One of them is frightened."

"Why might she be frightened?"

"Because this one is the mother and she is pointing at her. This one is the daughter and she wants to run away."

"The mother is going to run after her to cane her."

"Why?"

"She is annoyed because she asked her daughter to collect firewood but the girl came back with none."

"Does this happen here?"

(Chorus): "Yes"

(Girls, aged 13-17)

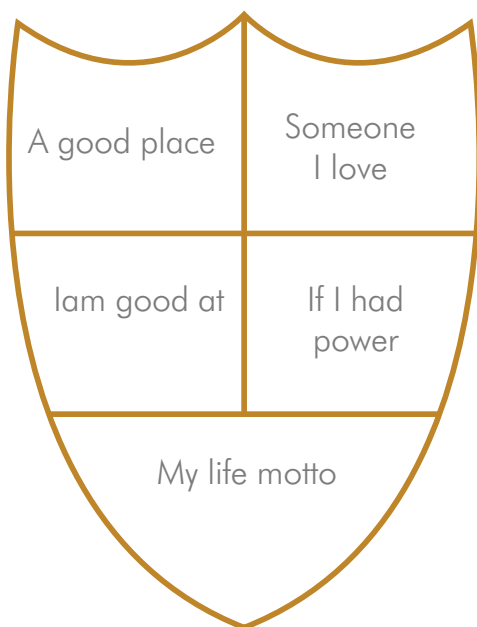
Study design

Child-friendly Methods - Shields

At the end of filling in questionnaires, we asked children to create 'shields' with pictures or words that describe a good place, someone they love, something they are good at, something they would do if they had power and their life motto (i.e. words they try to live by).⁹

We included this exercise for two reasons:

- 1) to focus on the positive aspects of children's lives as a way of counterbalancing the potential negative thoughts and feelings stimulated by the research questions; and
- 2) to learn something about children's support structures.



Children enjoyed doing this exercise. It allowed for an intellectual, physical and emotional shift after concentrating on the questionnaire. It gave an opportunity for girls and boys to be expressive in a different way. With their permission, we took photographs of children's shields, but the children kept their original shields to take home with them. We saw many girls and boys brandishing their shields proudly as they walked away from the research process.



⁹ This method is described in Save the Children. 2004. *Resource Handbook: How to Research the Physical and Emotional Punishment of Children*. Bangkok: Save the Children Southeast, East Asia and Pacific Region. www.seapa.net





FINDINGS

This section reports what children and adults said to help us answer the following questions:

What is violence against children?

What physical violence do children experience?

What emotional violence do children experience?

What economic violence do children experience?

What sexual violence do children experience?

Where is there violence against children? And who is doing it?

What's happening in schools?

Why is there violence against children?

How do experiences of violence impact children?

What are current responses to violence against children?

What should be done to stop violence against children?



What is violence against children?

What do children say?

It was simple to learn about violence against children from children. When children were asked “What do you understand is ‘violence against children’?” boys and girls quickly identified multiple personal experiences that resulted in them feeling bad. Girls and boys created revealing statues and told detailed personal stories.

The scope of boys’ and girls’ definitions of violence was broad and multi-faceted. While children’s lists of acts that they consider as violence are long – commonly including insults, threats, physical strikes, denial of food, education and medical attention, as well as chasing from home - children don’t limit their definitions of violence to specific incidents. Rather, children’s definitions, even when brief, implicate both the feelings these acts provoke as well as the ways in which these acts perpetuate the conditions of children’s relationships with adults. Some of the key themes that emerged in children’s definitions of violence were neglect, menace and injustice. Cross-cutting these themes was their habitual, or everyday, quality in children’s lives.



Neglect is Violence

“When a parent doesn’t care. When a parent doesn’t even care where his child sleeps.”

(Boy, aged 13-17, Kyaka)

“When a child has no clothes and has jiggers and no one helps him.”

(Boy, aged 8-12, Kyaka)

“When you get big your mother says ‘I won’t allow two women in this house. Go away.’ and you have to go away.”

(Girl, aged 13-17, Kyaka)

Menace is Violence

Q: “What do you think is violence against children?”

“At times a man watches you and you feel that he wants to have sex with you.”

Q: “Is that violence?”

(chorus): “Yes.”

“Violence is spoiling children’s lives.”

Q: “Spoiling how?”

“In cases of raping, men can give girls HIV/AIDS.”

(Girls, aged 13-17, Nakivale)

“Parents come and say ‘I know you have money’ and they want this money for drinking. When I refuse, my father tells me to go and live somewhere else.”

(Boy, aged 13-17, Kyaka)

Injustice is Violence

“At school some pupils make noise and the teacher then beats everyone. He beats us with two sticks.”

(Girl, aged 8-12, Nakivale)

“My parents stopped me from going to school and whenever I tried to go they would not give me food.”

(Girl, aged 13-17, Nakivale)

“It’s violence when the parent obliges a child to do what is impossible for him to do.”

(Boy, aged 8-12, Nakivale)

“For me, it is when I am not received when giving my idea because I am a child.”

(Boy, aged 13-17, Nakivale)



What do adults say?

It was complicated to discuss violence against children with adults. Unlike children, adults don't have ready answers about what constitutes violence against children. Instead, adults are very cautious in laying judgments about what is acceptable and what is not acceptable behaviour toward children. Indeed, even when asked "What do you consider is mistreatment or abuse of children?" women and men would often hesitate before providing only a few examples.

Men and women are reluctant to draw their responses from personal experiences and instead tend to provide more impersonal and extraordinary definitions of violence against children. The distance that adults put between themselves and experiences of violence against children is instructive: violence against children isn't recognised as an everyday, common occurrence in the lives of adults.

According to most adults' definitions, violence against children is not necessarily the infliction of physical, emotional and economic pain upon children. Rather, the use of physical, emotional and economic pain against children by adults is defined as either legitimate forms of punishment or illegitimate forms of abuse. Indeed, as elaborated on page 33, many adults said they consider punishment necessary for effective parenting and teaching. The difference between adults' designations of punishment and abuse is calculated by degree - both the degree of pain inflicted and the degree of a child's transgression of an adult's will. For many adults, abuse is "over punishing" children, as in "over beating" or "over working".

Violence is Exceptional

"If punishment becomes torture then it is unacceptable. It becomes a crime. A woman once found her child stealing meat so she tied his hands and burnt him. That was so bad."

(Man, Nakivale)

"On the subject of mistreatment, although it's not common here, there is defilement of young girls by old men."

(Agency personnel, Kyaka)

Violence is Extreme

"Using knives and pangas [machetes] against children is unacceptable."

(Woman, Nakivale)

"Breaking a child's arm is unacceptable punishment."

(Woman, Nakivale)

"To punish a child by tying his or her hands and legs is unacceptable because you can break him or her with the sticks you are beating with. Telling the child 'let me kill you, you are not like others, you will die' as you are beating him or her is abuse."

(Man, Nakivale)

In addition to these exceptional transgressions, some adults also classify certain common practices as violence against children, including forced early marriages, refusal of education, and female genital cutting.

Same question, different answers: This first comparison demonstrates a fundamental difference in children's and adults' experiences of violence against children. Whereas children defined violence in personal and specific terms of everyday relations, adults much more vaguely conceived of violence as particular moments of punishment taken to extremes. It is important to note how these opposing definitions are not only differentiated by scale or proportion – it's not that children said one stroke by a cane is violence while adults said ten strokes of a cane is violence. No; children's definitions are not restricted to measuring immediate experiences of pain. Rather, children regard violence as the actual stuff and substance of the relationships between some adults and some children. As such, violence is recognised as a persistent and pervasive aspect of some relationships – an aspect that encompasses children's ideas of security and justice.

To reach beyond these different places, let's talk about ... whether the social legitimacy of using some forms violence against children, even in the name of punishment, contributes to perpetuating cultures of violence and insecurity of children. Might accepting some degrees of violence against children grease the slippery slope for the pervasive, and sometimes, excessive use of violence against children?



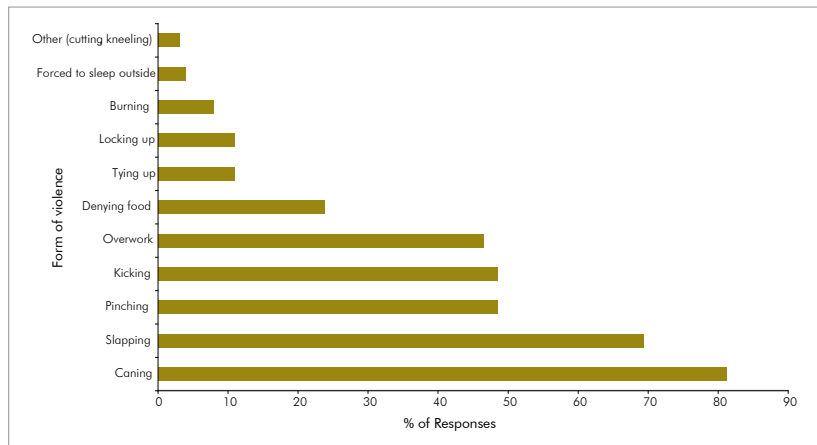
What physical violence do children experience?

What do children say?

In the questionnaires children were asked to check boxes next to any physical acts that they have experienced as a result of adults' actions. In the focus group discussions, after the statues exercise, and once a general discussion of how children define violence were completed, children were asked who among them had experienced violence and they were invited to describe what violence they had experienced. Consistently, and most usually without hesitation, nearly all children stated that yes, they have experienced physical violence by adults.

In Nakivale and Kyaka II refugee settlements,
9 of every 10 children say they have experienced physical violence;
8 of every 10 children say they have been caned;
7 of every 10 children say they have been slapped;
5 of every 10 children say they have been kicked, pinched and/or overworked;
1 of every 4 children says he or she has been denied food;
Children also report being tied up, locked up, burnt, forced to sleep outside and/or cut by adults.

Fig 1. Children's experiences of physical violence



The research also revealed that for many children these forms of violence are not rare occurrences in their lives:

"I am beaten daily but if you have good parents then you can spend a year without being beaten."

(Girl, aged 8-12, Nakivale)

"Beating is every day."

(Boy, aged 8-12, Nakivale)

"Sometimes when I do something wrong, I am beaten twice in a day: in the morning and in the evening."

(Girl, aged 8-12, Nakivale)



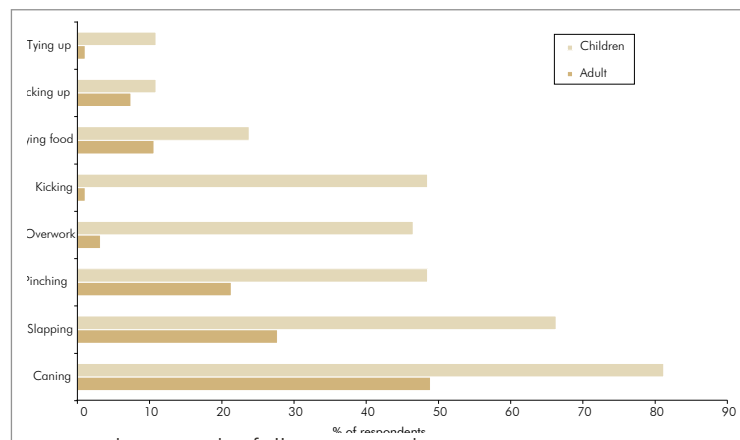


What do adults say?

As described on page 50 most adults in this study did not recognise the use of physical pain against children as violence, but rather as punishment. The implications for this distinction is that our questions were worded to investigate how physical acts are used as punishments, including the types of acts used, by whom, against whom, with what frequency, for what justifications and with what outcomes. This does not reflect tacit acceptance of physical acts of violence against children. By exploring adults' own distinctions of what they consider acceptable and unacceptable uses of physical acts against children, we have been able to more clearly ascertain the positions men and women currently hold concerning how adults should treat children. This position is a starting point for further work in addressing violence against children.

In the questionnaires and focus group discussions, women and men were asked "How do you punish children?" The adults' questionnaires included the same types of physical acts (e.g. caning, slapping, pinching, kicking, etc) that were listed as options in the children's questionnaire for replies to their question "Have adults done any of the following to you?" The aim was to learn if children's and adults' accounts of the forms of physical violence used against children were similar or different. The comparison of children's and adults' accounts is

Fig 2. Comparison of children's and adults' experiences of physical violence against children



shown in the following graph.

The above comparisons clearly shows that many more children than adults recognise the use of physical violence by adults against children. This disparity is even more pronounced when we compare children's and adults' statements.

"These days there are few cases of beating at home and schools due to the sensitisation going on around and by government."

(Agency personnel, Kyaka)

"How often we punish depends on how often the child makes mistakes."

(Woman, Kyaka)

"As fathers we know that there are no parents who over punish their children here."

(Man, Kyaka)

Same question, different answers: There are significant differences between children's and adults' accounts of what physical violence is occurring in children's lives in Nakivale and Kyaka. Some might assert that children are exaggerating. However, the level of detail that girls and boys consistently provided about their experiences convinced us that their reports are reliable. Another possible explanation is that adults underestimated their use of physical violence against children. This is plausible since three quarters of all women and men admitted to physically punishing children. There may also be deliberate understatement concerning the use of physical violence by adults due to adults feeling threatened by the existing discourse of children's rights.

To reach beyond these different places, let's talk about ...how to support children and adults in understanding each others' perspectives about the prevalence of physical violence in children's lives. And, let's consider together whether discipline can be achieved without resort to inflicting physical, emotional and economic pain on children.



What emotional violence do children experience?

What do children say?

As revealed in children's initial definitions, girls and boys count psychological abuse or neglect as violence.

In Nakivale and Kyaka II refugee settlements, 9 of every 10 children said they have experienced emotional violence
7 of every 10 children said they have been insulted by adults;
5 of every 10 children said they have been shouted at;
4 of every 10 children reported being glared at (looked at with 'bad eyes'), threatened, embarrassed or ignored by adults;
1 of every 4 children said he or she has been denied love and affection.

What exactly is emotional violence to children? Children provided detailed examples:

"My mother tells me that I will die suffering. I will die in a bad way."

(Girl, aged 8-12, Kyaka)

"I don't go to school like other girls because I have to dig for my family. My father always tells me that I am good for nothing and he makes me work and he does not value my work. Like I would make a mat and sell it and he takes my money. He keeps on telling me that I am a fool by nature."

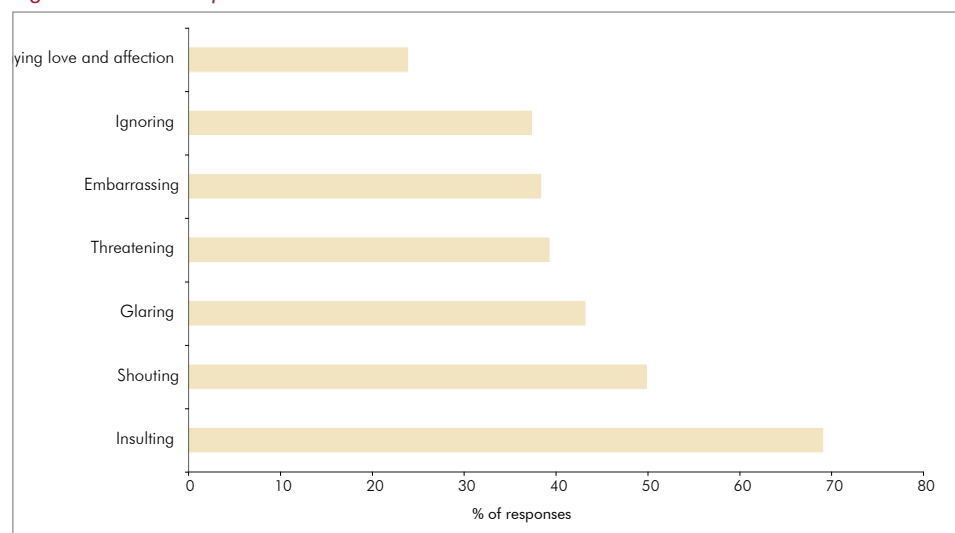
(Girl, aged 13-17, Nakivale)

Boys and girls don't necessarily consider emotional violence as less hurtful than physical violence. Insults, threats, shouting, glaring and the denial of love and affection can pain children in deep and lasting ways:

"At home, they insult you a lot so you get fed up. You wish that you were beaten once and you get over that."

(Boy, aged 13-17, Nakivale)

Fig 3. Children's experiences of emotional violence





What do adults say?

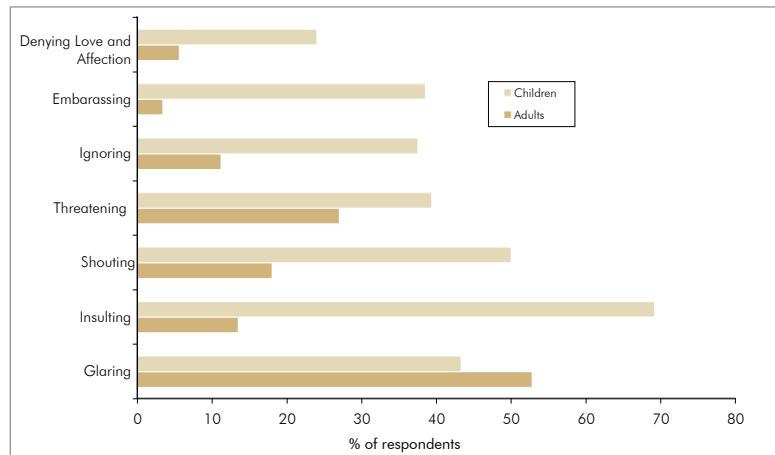
Adults in this study seemed to grossly underestimate how children perceive the prevalence of emotional violence in their lives. As the graph across highlights, women and men particularly denied using insults, shouting, ignoring, embarrassing, and denying love and affection to children, while children claimed that these forms are used against them.

Those adults that did admit to using emotional forms of violence against children as punishment explained that they don't do this lightly. They can understand the pain that words can inflict, especially with older children:

"If a child gets used to caning he may become more stubborn. If you use physical punishment he will develop physical defence mechanisms, but if you use words, he remains with the words the rest of his life."

(Man, Kyaka)

Fig 4. Comparison of children's and adults' experiences of emotional violence against children



Same question, different answers: Girls and boys claimed that emotional violence is highly prevalent in their lives while adults denied that they use such tactics such as insulting, embarrassing and denying love and affection with children. Perhaps hurtful words and actions are occurring without adults noticing and without realising the ways in which children are being hurt. Certainly, the words and the feelings they leave behind scar children's memories.

To reach beyond these different places, let's talk about ... the different ways in which positive and negative words and actions affect children. What are the most effective ways of motivating children, and what demoralises children?



What economic violence do children experience?

What do children say?

When asked what they would classify as violence against children, many girls and boys referred to economic forms of violence, including not being allowed to go to school for lack of fees or so that they could do paid work for the household income, being denied money for healthcare, and having their food rations taken by adults. (See page 14 for children's exact words).

In Nakivale and Kyaka II refugee settlements, almost 1 of every 3 children said that they are kept from school so that they can work to earn money for their households; approximately 1 of every 4 children said that they are not provided with money for their healthcare; 1 of every 5 children reported that adults sell their food rations.

Girls and boys described various consequences to their experiences of economic deprivation, including boys leaving parents' homes to try to earn independent livelihoods and girls choosing to marry or to engage in sexual liaisons with men who can provide better conditions for them. Several older girls and boys stated that parents make them feel like they are burdens on their households and that they should provide for themselves:

"I separated from my parents at the age of ten because they used to give me heavy work but could not buy me anything like clothes or other items that I needed ... They told me to cater for myself. I had to look for something to sustain myself. It was a very difficult beginning. I would go and work for people, get some little money and buy food. I started alone. I was so unhappy. I wanted to be with my parents but they were not good to me. I asked myself, why did they produce me? They don't want me."

(Boy, aged 13-17, Nakivale)

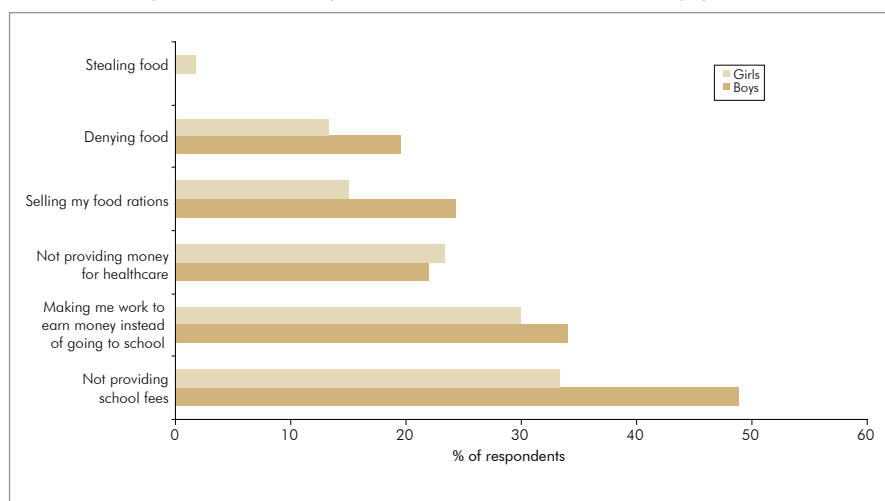
"Most of the parents let their children go to work for money and when you come back they take the money. But we are girls - we also need that money for things. And when you ask the parent to give you money to buy pads, since these you need, they refuse to give us money – and this is money we worked for."

(Girl, aged 13-17, Nakivale)

"Sometimes a teacher comes and offers money or promises to buy you clothes and because you don't have these things and you need them, you find that some girls give in to sex. ... It happens but not everybody is doing it."

(Girls, aged 13-17, Nakivale)

Fig 5. Children's experiences of economic violence, by gender





What do adults say?

Adults in Nakivale and Kyaka II refugee settlements also readily raised concerns about the ways in which children are poorly treated due to poor economic conditions in households, schools and communities. When asked in the questionnaires if and how children are mistreated in their communities, nearly a third of women and men said that there are children being denied food and that there are children who are made to work instead of going to school. These responses were consistent with concerns brought up in focus group discussions. However, other forms of economic sanction that children said adults use against them, such as not providing money for medical care and selling children's food rations, were not recognised by any adults in this study.

Many adults argued that poverty, rather than malice, is a key factor in the mistreatment of children. Many linked their poverty to their refugee status as well as losses incurred during flight from conflicts in their home countries:

"We have a lot of orphan children here. We are needy and just can't take care of them. The situation often forces the children to end up digging in people's gardens to earn a living. ... We would like to provide for them but we don't have the ability to do so."

(Woman, Kyaka)

Some adults were critical of how other adults in their communities use economic violence against children. They discussed how fathers especially will exploit their position of strength in the household to claim more than an equal portion of the household's income or food:

"A neighbour of mine will buy meat, take it home and tell his wife 'This meat is mine. You prepare beans or cassava leaves for yourself and the children.' It happens here a lot and you can see it in the trading centres where you have fathers with full stomachs while their wives and their children are sickly."

(Man, Kyaka)

"We have a parent here who has been selling his family's food and his children and wife are crying of hunger."

(Man, Kyaka)

"I do not show my husband the money we get after harvesting. I keep the money to pay for my children's school fees. My husband is a drunkard and would just use that money for alcohol."

(Woman, Nakivale)

Adults, like children, link economic factors with sexual exploitation of girls in the settlements. Adults' forcing girls to marry at young ages was an issue raised by men and women, boys and girls, during discussions of both sexual and economic violence against children. In addition to forced early marriages, a few men, women, girls and boys, raised the concern that girls may turn to prostitution in the settlements because they are being denied basic needs by parents:

"Girls can run to prostitution due to the lack of means of their parents. The parents don't give them what they need so this influences them to do prostitution."

(Man, Nakivale)

Same question, similar answers: Many of the children and adults included in this study acknowledged that children's rights to education is often compromised because children's guardians want children to contribute to the household income. They also recognised that such choices can pose other risks to children, including sexual exploitation.

To reach beyond these different places, let's talk about ... how household poverty is affecting children's life chances. What specific support is required to ensure that children in poor households have the same opportunities as all other children to be safe, healthy and educated?



What sexual violence do children experience?

What do children say?

In the questionnaires girls and boys were asked if adults had done any of the following acts to them: forced sex, touching you in your private parts, forcing you to touch them in their private parts, kissing on the mouth, saying sexual words to you, exposing themselves (naked) to you, exposing pornographic materials to you (magazines, films, posters, etc), none, other (please explain). The next questions asked how frequently and where children have experienced these acts. As expected, girls reported significantly more acts of sexual violence than boys.

In Nakivale and Kyaka II refugee settlements, 1 of every 4 girls reported to having been forced to have sex with an adult, kissed on the mouth by an adult, forced to touch an adult's private parts and adults having touched their private parts; nearly 1 of every 3 girls reported adults saying sexual words to them. These acts of sexual violence were reported by girls between the ages of 8 and 17.

More information about sexual violence against girls was reported through focus group discussions:

"Every week we hear of girls being raped."
(Girl, aged 8-12, Nakivale)

*"Sometimes I meet a man and he wants to touch me."
"Yes, they want to touch our breasts."
Q: "Where does this happen?"
"Here in the village."
"Especially at school."
"Especially on the way going. When I am walking that is when I meet men and they touch my bottom."*
(Girls, aged 8-12, Nakivale)

"I was going to the garden to get Irish potatoes with my young sister. We met a man on the way who followed us to the garden. He told me he would give me money if I would have sex with him. I said it couldn't happen in Jesus' name, but he caught me and put me on the ground and raped me. I didn't shout because he had a panga [machete]. He threatened to cut off my neck. He did all he wanted and went away."
(Girl, aged 13-17, Nakivale)

Through the questionnaires, the most common place that girls said all forms of sexual violence, including rape, occur against them was school. The second most common place for all forms of sexual violence against girls was their neighbourhood. Girls' homes, water collection points and fire collection areas were evenly matched as the third most common place that girls said they most experience sexual violence. In focus group discussions girls mainly discussed sexual violence that occurred while collecting water and firewood or doing errands in their local neighbourhood. The differences between the questionnaire responses indicating schools and homes, and focus group discussion responses indicating public areas, may be attributable to the privacy and anonymity allowed through the questionnaires. It seems more publicly permissible to acknowledge that sexual violence occurs by strangers "in the bush" rather than people children know well in their schools and homes.





What do adults say?

Adults' responses certainly did not match children's responses in terms of how prevalent sexual violence is in their communities. Indeed, adults were split in opinion over whether sexual violence is occurring against children in Nakivale and Kyaka II refugee settlements. 4 of every 10 adults in the study said that there are no forms of sexual mistreatment against children in their communities while 1 of every 3 adults said forced sex does occur against children in their communities. Smaller numbers of men and women said that other forms of sexual violence, including touching children's private parts and saying sexual words to children, occur. Equal percentages of women and men answered these questions in similar ways.

In focus group discussions when asked about mistreatment of children, some men and women raised the issues of rape and attempted rape of girls by older men. Interviews with community leaders, in particular, highlighted that this risk currently exists. Several examples were provided of recent cases of forced sex by men of girls. All of the stories shared were of situations whereby girls had been caught by men "in the bush"; usually while moving to collect firewood, water or foodstuffs. No other forms of sexual violence against children were mentioned by adults in focus groups discussions when asked about if and how children are mistreated in their communities.

Also contrary to children's revelations, adults did not identify homes or schools as places where sexual violence against children occurs.

What seems to frustrate adults and children alike when they discuss sexual violence against children is the likelihood of perpetrators in Nakivale and Kyaka not being held accountable:

"On Monday this week a man in my neighbourhood raped a ten year old girl. The girl's parents came to report to me and later forwarded the case to the police but up to now the man has disappeared."

(Woman, Kyaka)

"There are children of a young age who are defiled. When the cases are taken to the police they are always just neglected because people don't have money to follow the case."

(Man, Kyaka)

Same question, different answers: Certainly, girls reported sexual violence as more prevalent in their lives than adults' recognised, in terms of the different forms sexual violence against girls takes, the frequency of sexual violence in their lives and the many places where it takes place in Nakivale and Kyaka. Girls described often feeling at risk of sexual violence as they move about their daily lives. It seems that their feelings of vulnerability may not be sufficiently acknowledged or addressed by the adults in their lives. In addition to girls' frustrations that sexual violence exists as a regular threat to them, there is the added frustration, apparently shared by children and adults alike, that cases of sexual abuse are not adequately followed up and punished when they occur to girls in Nakivale and Kyaka.

To reach beyond these different places, let's talk about ... the full scope of sexual violence in children's lives as well as ways to prevent all forms of sexual violence, in all places.



Where does violence occur? And who is doing it?

What do children say?

We asked girls and boys where most of the physical, emotional, economic and sexual violence against them occurs. They were also asked who commits these acts against them in each place. What we learned was that children experience most of the violence against them in their homes and schools.

Q: "Where do you feel safe from violence?"

(Chorus): "No where."

Q: "Where do you feel unsafe?"

"Especially at school."

Q: "Do you feel safe at home?"

"Yes. Although we are beaten at home we feel safe there, unlike at school."

(Girls aged 8-12, Nakivale)

There were some significant differences between where girls and boys most experience violence:

8 of every 10 boys said that the place where they most experience physical violence is at home; while 4 of every 10 girls said the same.

Half of all girls said school is the place where they experience the most physical violence; while 1 of every 10 boys said the same.

Other girls said that the places where they experience most of the physical violence against them are in their neighbourhoods and at water collection points.

8 of every 10 boys also said that the place where they most experience emotional violence is at home; while 4 of every 10 girls said the same.

4 of every 10 girls said that schools are the place where they most experience emotional violence against them, while 2 of every 10 boys identified schools.

Most children said that at home it is mainly parents (including biological, step and foster parents) that are violent to them. Other adult family members are the second category that children identify as committing most of the home-based violence against them, followed by brothers.

Children said that at school it is mainly teachers that are violent to them: more than half of all children said that teachers commit violence against them at school. After teachers, 1 of every 3 children identified that other older children commit most of the violence that occurs against them at school. 1 of every 5 children identified headmasters as using violence against them at school.

When identifying who uses violence against them in their neighbourhoods, boys and girls nearly equally identified local Ugandans, refugees from children's countries of origin, and refugees from other countries. This finding indicates that responses to violence against children in communities in Nakivale and Kyaka II refugee settlements should not solely attribute this to inter-group conflict, but rather investigate the different underlying causes and contingencies of violence against children.





What do adults say?

As the graph below shows, the majority of men and women included in this study in Nakivale and Kyaka II refugee settlements believe that many adults have the right to use physical and emotional forms of punishment against children. Only 1 of every 20 adults said that no adults have the right to use these forms of punishment against children.

- 3 of every 4 adults said that children's adult family members have the right to use physical or emotional forms of punishment against children;
- 2 of every 3 adults said that teachers and headmasters have the right to use physical or emotional forms of punishment against children;
- 1 of every 3 adults said that any adult of the child's specific community has the right to use physical or emotional forms of punishment against children;
- 1 of every 4 adults said that all adults have the right to use physical or emotional forms of punishment against children.

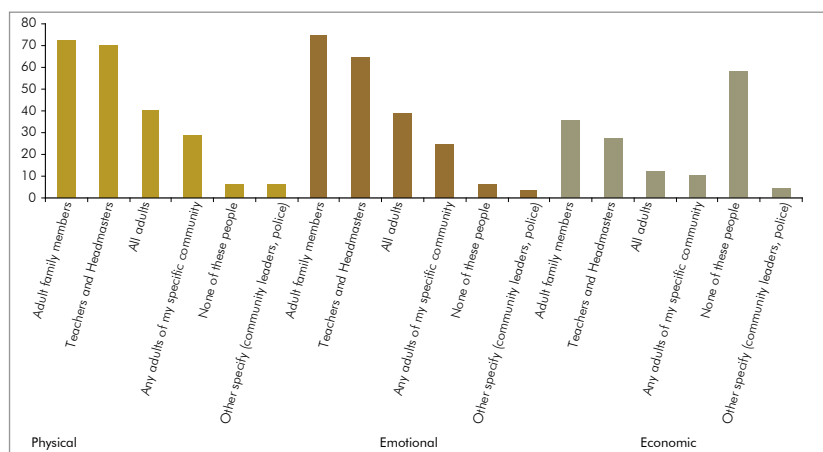
Adults made a clear distinction between the acceptability of physical and emotional forms of violence and the unacceptability of economic forms of violence against children. The majority of adults said that no adults have the right to use economic forms of violence against children.

Men and women in Nakivale and Kyaka agreed that women, and particularly mothers, more frequently punish children by inflicting physical and emotional pain. This is accorded to the fact that women tend to spend more time with children than adults, rather than due to different attitudes about how to treat children. However, many women and men recognised that men often use harsher punishments against children:

"Women are soft on the children – they give light punishments. However, men are tougher. That's why children even fear fathers more."

(Man, Kyaka)

Fig. 6 Adults' perspectives of who has the right to use physical, emotional or economic punishment against children



"A woman punishes using a small stick but a man kicks and beats a child without mercy."

(Woman, Kyaka)

While the majority of men and women stated that teachers and headmasters have the right to use physical and emotional forms of punishment against children, in the discussions many parents protested teachers' excessive economic and labour demands on children. There seems to be a fundamental distrust of what teachers are asking of their students, and why.

Same question, similar answers: Where and who is involved in children's experiences of physical and emotional violence seems to be one area of convergence in children's and adults' perspectives. Both children and adults reported that children are being hit and threatened in their homes, at their schools, and throughout the communities in Nakivale and Kyaka II refugee settlements. The fundamental divergence in perspectives however, is whether this is acceptable or not. As a result, there was little reflection on adults' parts about how children's daily encounters with these forms of violence affect children's overall sense of safety and belonging. More about how violence in certain places and from certain people affect children's attitudes and behaviour is described in the section 'How do experiences of violence impact children?' on page 34.

Let's talk about... how experiencing various forms of violence in homes, schools and communities may affect children's sense of belonging.



What's happening in schools?

What do students say?

"The way we are beaten at school is not the same as the way we are beaten at home. At home, we are beaten as a punishment, but at school we are beaten like snakes. At home we are punished when we have done something wrong, but at school we are just beaten without any mistakes."

(Boy, aged 8-12, Nakivale)

Many girls and boys highlighted how unsafe they feel at school. Girls cited schools as the most physically and sexually violent places for them. Nearly half of all girls in this study chose school as the place where most of the physical acts of violence against them happen. And 1 of every 5 girls identified school as the place where most of the sexual acts of violence against her occurs.

In addition to inter-personal violence, children in-school and out-of-school raised concerns of institutional violence, and specifically economic, ethnic and language discrimination – which often triggered physical and emotional violence against individual children. Specifically, there were charges made by children in Nakivale and Kyaka of school staff singling particular ethnic groups out for negative or positive treatment associated with labour assignments and feeding.

Many children and parents identified economic demands by teachers as the triggers for the use of violence against children, including caning, shouting, threatening and chasing from school.

"We are beaten at school."

Q: *"Who beats you at school?"*

"Teachers. They tell us to fetch water and firewood for them."

"The tell us to dig in their gardens."

"Sometimes we are told to bring teachers food, for example, beans, maize."

"We are asked to bring money to the teacher."

Q: *"What happens if you don't take it?"*

"We are beaten."

(Girls aged 8-12, Nakivale)

"Those children who are orphans can't get school fees and when they go to school they are beaten because they don't have the money."

(Girl, aged, 8-12, Nakivale)

"We are chased from school to get school uniforms and yet our parents don't have money for uniforms so we don't go to school."

(Girl, aged 13-17, Kyaka)

"It was a major problem for me. My teacher used to punish me in a bad way – beating me on the head and bum. That is why I stopped school."

(Girl, aged 13-17, Nakivale)





What do teachers say?

Honestly, if you completely abandon corporal punishment then you don't have a school."

(Headmaster, primary school, Kyaka)

Teachers in this study recognised the negative repercussions of using physical punishments on students however they described their struggles in maintaining order in their classrooms:

"Corporal punishment can increase hatred between teachers, pupils and parents ... but caning cannot stop – as long as you use a small stick and it is reduced."

(Teachers, primary school, Nakivale)

"We tried to ban caning here because parents were complaining about it but children became so wild ... The old system has now been reinstalled and children are now behaving. What should be encouraged is to reduce on the magnitude but surely, if you get rid of caning completely, you spoil the children."

(Headmaster, primary school, Kyaka)

Teachers and headmasters told that they face significant challenges in providing education. They described feeling overwhelmed by the high student to teacher ratio, and questioned how a school may be effectively managed when there are over 3,000 students and 32 teachers, for example. Teachers explained that there are too many children in each class for a teacher to be able to teach well. As one headmaster described, "The most important problem is that teachers are too busy and there are so many problems among the children."

Teachers in Nakivale and Kyaka refugee settlements described feeling undervalued and overburdened. And both of these feelings have contributed to diminished enthusiasm for their roles as teachers and members of the community. Indeed, most teachers said they feel alienated from the communities they serve, both physically and socially. Teachers often live far from the schools where they work and this decreases their on-the-ground presence. Also, teachers told how some parents are uncooperative and even hostile toward them.

Particularly troubling for teachers in Nakivale and Kyaka is their perception that parents don't value their children's education. Teachers described concern that most parents do not demonstrate interest in their children's performance – for example, the majority of parents don't attend school meetings and many parents take their children out of school during harvest time and market days. Such actions are not just practical challenges for teachers in covering their lesson plans, but are also interpreted by teachers as undermining children's commitment to education. In response, teachers' commitment to education also diminishes and this negative feedback loop is perpetuated.

Same question, different answers: *There are clearly still teachers who believe in, and use corporal punishment in primary schools in Nakivale and Kyaka refugee settlements. Teachers said they are using physical punishments to enforce order with unruly students. Students said that violence is too often being used indiscriminately. As a result, some students have come to resent and avoid teachers, either through keeping quiet or leaving school. Interestingly, teachers also claimed to feel alienated from their students because they perceive that education is generally not valued among children's families and broader communities.*

Such conditions obviously undermine the potential of schools to provide a safe and positive place for children, and from teachers to serve as safe and positive people in children's lives. Instead, only a very narrow definition of education is available in Nakivale and Kyaka, one of delivering lessons by force, rather than by inspiration and shared effort.

To reach beyond these different places, let's talk about ... *the ways teachers, students, parents and the broader community can interact with one another to achieve good schools.*



Why does violence against children occur?

What do children say?

Remarkably, in discussing physical acts of violence, most children did not limit their definition of violence to 'being beaten'. Rather, over and over and over again, girls and boys elaborated their definition of violence to 'being beaten *for nothing*'. This signifies a crucial boundary in children's judgments about adults' morality: although what violence adults commit against children is important, this may not be as important as *why* adults commit violence against children. For children, what gives meaning to the term violence is not just the pain suffered, but the underlying reason – or lack of reason – for that pain and suffering.

Such qualifications to the meaning of violence against children, rather than outright rejection of its existence, may be considered dangerous in that they represent children's partial conditioning to accepting acts of violence in their lives as an unavoidable norm. Unfortunately, with many children, a growing, if reluctant, cynicism about the subordination of the weak in society is apparent. To see the opportunity in children's qualifications of violence, we should focus on their concern with questions of why violence occurs. This is where we might find clues as to what can be done to prevent the further normalisation of violence in children's lives.

When asked why they think adults use the physical, emotional or economic violence that children said they regularly experience, some children concluded that it is a result of a climate of impunity for adults:

"There are bad parents who think it is normal for children to suffer."

(Boy, aged 13-17, Kyaka)

"Violence is mostly against women and children because they are weak. Men can just hit children if they are in the way."

(Boy, aged 13-17, Nakivale)

"The community does not care which punishment a parent gives a child. All punishments are acceptable. The majority don't care about an adult mistreating a child."

(Girl, aged 8-12, Nakivale)

"They don't value our lives."

(Girl, aged 13-17, Nakivale)

Few children gave simple answers to this question. Instead, we learned that children give this question much thought in their daily lives as they puzzle through their conflicting emotions of love, respect, fear and aversion toward the adults in their lives. Girls and boys could certainly identify specific factors that expose particular children to risks of violence, including alcohol abuse by parents and discrimination among family members and between tribal groups. On a broader level, however, children also consistently tried to provide more general reasons that underpin the pervasive use of violence by adults against them.

Three root causes were consistently identified by children in this study, despite differences among children's gender, age, cultural background and family circumstances:

- Children judged that adults resort to violent attitudes and behaviours because adults are unwilling to listen to children and to empathise with children;
- Children reasoned that adults use violent forms of punishing children because they don't know any better; and
- Children recognised that adults' negative attitudes and behaviour toward children can be expressions of other frustrations in adults' lives, including poverty and displacement.

In these ways, children in this study often explained violence against them as a by-product of adults' own problems, rather than adults' deliberate choices for being cruel to children. These ideas seem to reflect children's strong desires to understand the violence against them and to give adults the benefits of their doubts rather than to believe that adults hurt them on purpose out of dislike or malice.





Why is there violence against children?

What do children say?

Adults don't Listen

Many children described situations in which they find themselves caught 'between a rock and a hard place', meaning that they face risks of violence whether they do something or don't do it. Children are constantly forced to weigh one risk against another and to make choices between two bad options. Facing such conflicts, children recognised the potential for avoiding the use of violence if communication between children and adults is made an option.

"I went to the well and found so many people there and decided if I waited I would go back in the dark which is unsafe for girls. So I decided to go back without the water. But my mother wouldn't believe me and she beat me."

(Girl, aged 13-17, Kyaka)

"At school teachers ask us for money and when our parents don't give it to us, the teachers beat us. But when we ask our parents for this money they get angry and abuse us."

(Girl, aged 8-12, Nakivale)

"Children cannot refuse anything to an adult."

(Girl, aged 8-12, Nakivale)

"Children are violated because their parents do not listen to them."

(Boy, aged 13-17, Nakivale)

"Parents beat us when we make mistakes. Like when I delay at the borehole. But I delay because I may find so many people at the borehole and even some of them will try to beat me to take water first. I just have to line up and it delays me. But when I return home late I am just beaten. My mother doesn't ask me why I have delayed."

(Girl, aged 13-17, Kyaka)





"Even when my parents punish me it doesn't mean they don't like me. I must forgive and forget. Even when they beat me I know they are trying to give me a good future."

(Girl, aged 13-17, Nakivale)

Ignorance

Significantly, most children gave adults the benefits of their doubts: girls and boys stated that if adults knew better, they would not use violence against children. This belief was repeatedly expressed when children were asked what should be done to prevent violence against children.

"They beat because they are uneducated. If they knew better they would act differently."

(Boy, aged 13-17, Nakivale)

"Punishments are severe because parents are ignorant. They don't know children's rights ... And no one disapproves of how others badly treat their children because they're at the same level of understanding. And if you complain, people tell you that you are ignorant."

(Girl, aged 8-12, Nakivale)

Violence against children is symptomatic of other problems

Children certainly haven't accepted adults' use of violence as natural or even legitimate. To the contrary, most children judged the use of physical, emotional and economic violence against them as one of the ways in which adults' other problems, such as poverty, alcohol abuse, depression and frustration, manifest:

"My father is HIV positive. Every time he gives me a hard time I think it is because of his condition. He is fed up. He is hurting himself and he weighs it on me."

(Girl, aged 13-17, Nakivale)

"The child wants to go to school but the family has nothing to eat. So the parent must force the child to leave school to cultivate."

(Boy, aged 13-17, Nakivale)

"We are not given money to go to hospital if we are sick. Parents say we are old so we should get money ourselves for our treatment ... They mean that they are sending you to become a prostitute to get the money for yourself."

(Girl, aged 13-17, Kyaka)

"When a girl turns 15 years old she is told to go and get married because the parents want the money."

(Girl, aged 8-12, Nakivale)

Structural violence

Children attribute some forms of violence against them in Nakivale and Kyaka II refugee settlements to the unique characteristics of these settings. These are often more institutionalised or structural forms of violence, including discrimination based on their refugee status, tribe or language. These are most often associated by children with institutional settings, such as the schooling system and distribution of materials by governmental and non-governmental organisations:



Why is there violence against children?

What do adults say?

While children are puzzling over the many complicated possible meanings for why violence is used against them, adults' responses clarified a root cause: violence against children happens because it can. Many acts of violence against children by adults are condoned by adults in Nakivale and Kyaka II refugee settlements. They happen on a regular basis under the guise of teaching and punishment, and their use is left to the discretion of individual adults.

"Every parent knows how to punish his or her child when that child does something wrong."

(Woman, Nakivale)

"An effective way of punishing a child is to beat that child using a stick while the child is lying down."

(Woman, Kyaka)

"Young children cannot learn when you don't use a stick."

(Woman, Nakivale)

"After beating a child, we show him the reason why because we are not punishing, but teaching, children."

(Man, Nakivale)

"They will feel pain. There is no punishment that is sweet."

(Man, Kyaka)

So, adults also didn't simply define violence as 'being beaten'. But their reasoning differs significantly: while children primarily opposed the injustice of violent acts, adults regarded these same acts as the application of justice. What justifies the use of violence in many women's and men's view is their superiority over children and their assumed right to dominate children:

"I think parents have a right to beat their children because they're the ones who produced them."

(Woman, Nakivale)

"The child belongs to the community so any person in the community has the role to punish."

(Man, Kyaka)

Indeed, many adults expressed a concern that children would be wild without the use of violence as a means of control by adults over children:

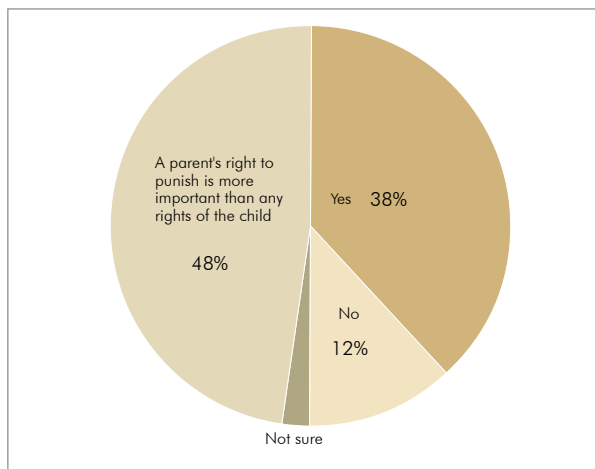
"As the saying goes, 'spare the rod, spoil the child'.

Parents are worried to cane their children because children may run away but I see that this results in moral degradation."

(Agency personnel, Kyaka)



Fig 7. Adults' perspectives of whether children have a right not to be punished in a way that hurts them physically or makes them feel bad about themselves



As the above breakdown of adults' responses in Nakivale and Kyaka shows, the majority of adults don't agree that children have an inalienable right not to be punished in a way that physically hurts them or makes them feel bad about themselves. More than 7 of every 10 adults said that by punishing children they believe they are acting as good parents and teachers.

This permissibility of violence against children is due to children's low status in the social hierarchy of power. While adults cite children's "mistakes" as the reasons they use physical, emotional and economic pain against them, it is important to recognise that adults don't use the same types of punishments against adults who make the same mistakes. This point is made clearer by many adults' explanations that as children get bigger and older – that is, as children (and especially males) become adults – it becomes increasingly unacceptable to use physical forms of violence as punishment against them:

"Children of different ages have different rights. Young children don't have a right not to be punished. Older children have some rights."

(Man, Nakivale)

"Punishment depends on the age of the child. For those below 15 years, beating with a stick is okay, but for those above, you may get a friend to talk to him."

(Man, Kyaka)

The argument that using physical and emotional pain against children achieves a desired effect and that adults have the right to punish children, makes it more difficult for adults to explain why mistreatment of children occurs. Most men and women explained mistreatment as anomalies to standardised behaviour, i.e. punishment that goes too far. But, they didn't deny that it happens. To the contrary, high numbers of men and women in Nakivale and Kyaka refugee settlements acknowledged that there is mistreatment of children in their communities.

2 of every 3 men and 4 of every 5 women say there is mistreatment of children in their communities

The most common forms of mistreatment that men and women identified are (in order of frequency cited): excessive beating, over working, forcing sex and denying food. While adults explained mistreatment as "over beating" and "over working" and being "too tough", they made excuses for some adults' exceptional behaviour, including alcohol abuse and the frustrations of poverty. What adults didn't do was connect "beating" children to "over beating" children. There was no acknowledgement that one might allow and lead to the other.

Same question, different answers: While a good number of adults consulted in this study advocated talking to children as a form of teaching and disciplining, not one adult encouraged listening to children as a means of solving problems between adults and children. Similarly, no adults in this study recognised that children might have valid reasons for making the 'mistakes' which adults consider deserved punishment. Adults' lack of appreciation of children's perspectives on this point seems to further validate the idea that violence against children is accepted by adults because children occupy a significantly inferior status in the social hierarchy – a place apparently receiving little respect and regard in adults' calculations. These omissions are striking since they contrast so drastically with children's emphasis that they are punished because adults don't listen to, or empathise with children.

To reach beyond these different places, let's talk about ... what it will take for listening to be prioritised and practiced in adults' relationships with children and what benefits might be enjoyed.



How do experiences of violence impact children?

What do children say?

"I fear him and I don't want to be near him."

(Boy, aged 13-17, Nakivale)

"I feel annoyed because this is an adult and he can touch me anywhere he likes and I can't do anything."

(Girl, aged 8-12, Nakivale)

Boys and girls expressed intense and troubling emotions as a result of experiences of violence against them by adults. These emotions influence how children choose to respond to acts of violence. Girls and boys responded through questionnaires and focus group discussions that they respond in many different ways, including running away, crying and hiding, going to someone for help and doing nothing.

"You feel scared. If my father beats me, I feel there is nothing I can do. If I report him, where will I sleep?"

(Boy, aged 13-17, Kyaka)

"I can do nothing but show the teacher I am feeling nothing but I feel angry in my heart."

(Boy, aged 8-12, Nakivale)

"I just keep quiet so I don't remind that teacher."

(Girl, aged 8-12, Kyaka)

"I feel like running away."

(Boy, aged 8-12, Nakivale)

"I feel that I want to move to another place and live with another family."

(Boy, aged 13-17, Nakivale)

"We had neighbours with a girl whom they would make dig for the whole day. If the father had a bad day he would come back home and abuse the girl. The girl felt so bad about the situation that she decided to run away ... She was our friend but she didn't tell us because she feared that we would report her. She's never been found. We don't know where she is."

(Girl, aged 13-17, Kyaka)

"When adults tell us that we are too old to go to school then we lose morale for going to school. Children don't have anyone to encourage them, even when they drop out of school."

(Girl, aged 13-17, Kyaka)

"I feel angry at the person and the anger can make me run away from home for about two days, and if they feel bad they can come looking for me to apologize. If I did something wrong I can ask for forgiveness too."

(Girl, aged 13-17, Kyaka)

"I wish I was also strong. I would hit back."

(Boy, aged 13-17, Nakivale)

"If I was a big person, I would fight back."

(Girl, aged 8-12, Kyaka)

"My whole life changed [after being raped]. Other girls humiliate me. It embarrasses me a lot what happened. I feel bad. I can't continue with school. At times I feel like committing suicide."

(Girl, aged 13-17, Nakivale)

"Sometimes I lose my mind and feel like committing suicide."

(Boy, aged 13-17, Kyaka)

"It is possible to forgive but if it happens again and again you become bitter and you can't forgive and forget."

(Boy, aged 13-17, Kyaka)



What do adults say?

Q: "How do you think children feel when you punish them?"
"It makes them feel good because it corrects their mistakes."
"They will definitely realise the benefit when they have grown up."

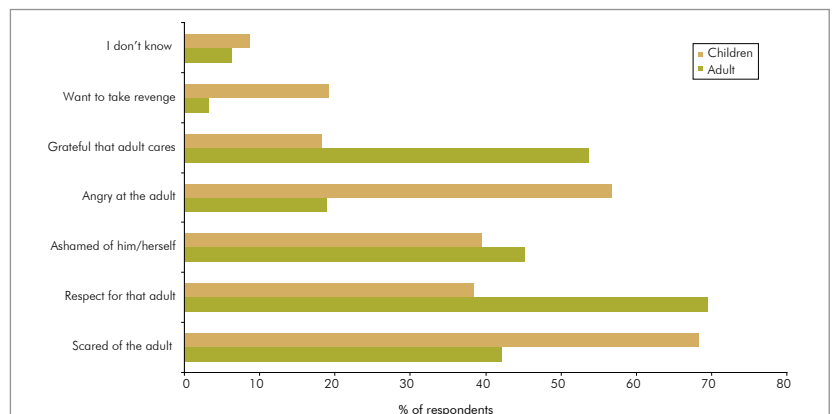
Q: "How do you feel when you punish a child?"
"I feel angry because I am forced to do it. I don't want a child to bring shame to me."
 (Men, Nakivale)

"They hate you in the short run but when it comes to that point when they realise their mistake, they like you."
 (Teacher, Nakivale)

"Although I am punishing them, I think I am showing them love in a way."
 (Woman, Nakivale)

"After you punish them by beating them with a stick, they fear to make that mistake again."
"Yes, the child fears so much so that she cannot repeat that mistake."
"Children feel bad and ashamed after you have punished them."
 (Women, Kyaka)

Fig 8. Comparison of children's and adults' understandings of how children feel about being punished



The contradictory statements made by children and adults on these two pages and the graph above of questionnaire responses indicate that there is a fundamental misunderstanding between adults and children about how children feel when adults punish them. Many adults are mistaken in believing that children mainly feel respect and grateful when adults punish them. This may be what adults want children to feel, but it is not the reality of what children feel. Instead, children described feeling a mix of strong and often conflicting and confusing emotions about the adults who use violence against them.

Same question, different answers: Adults seem to dangerously underestimate how strongly children feel fear and anger toward the person doing these acts to them as well as how generally helpless children feel in responding. And even when adults do recognise that punishment makes children afraid, it is not clear from what children said that this fear translates into respect and good behaviour. It is worth asking ourselves: Is fear the best teacher? Also: What may be long-term implications of children's feelings and actions in response to violence?

To reach beyond these different places, let's talk about ... the kinds of feelings we want children to have about themselves and about the adults in their lives and how we might nurture these feelings in children.



What are current responses to violence?

What do children say?

"If I had somewhere to report, I would go there and report."

(Girl, aged 13-17, Nakivale)

Two significant problems currently exist in Nakivale and Kyaka II refugee settlements for children's responses to violence against them:

- children don't feel there are enough safe people or places for them; and
- children don't know where to turn to after experiences of violence.

When asked "Who makes you feel safe?" and provided with 12 choices, including parent, foster parent, brother, sister, friend, neighbour, teacher, police, refugee leader, agency staff, religious leader, or no-one, plus an opportunity to list any other people, children answered as shown in the graph below:

When asked who or where they turn to in response to experiences of violence against them, children indicated that there are not many options available to them:

Q: "Who do you turn to for help in cases of sexual assault?"

"Report to those working with violence and after go to the police."

Q: "Which place is this that you go to after violence?"

"I don't know the name of the place."

"We heard people talk about the place, but we don't know the place."

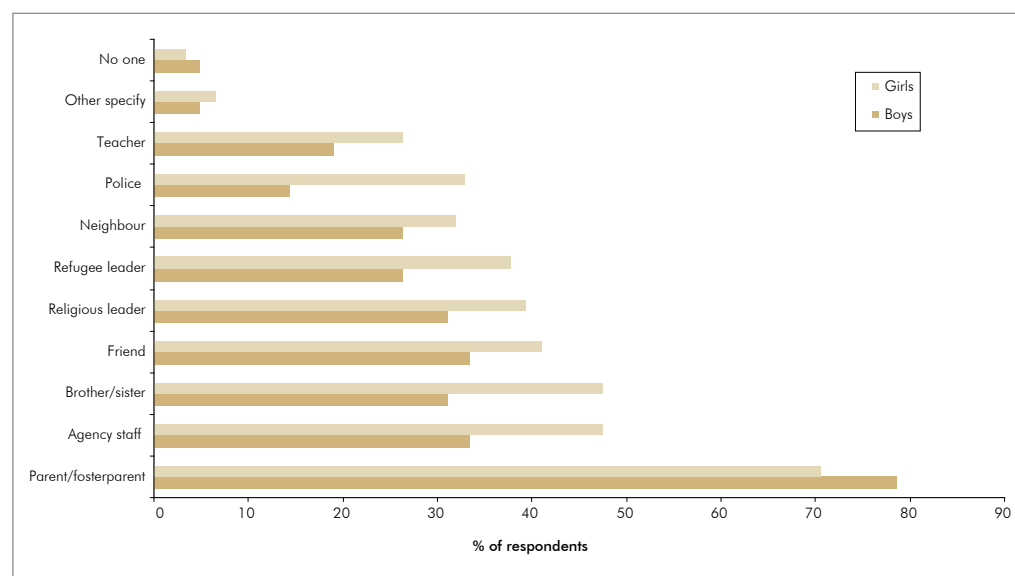
(Girls, aged 8-12, Nakivale)

Troublingly, some children who shared experiences of trying to seek help after experiencing violence told of being let down by adults:

"I told another teacher about it [sexual harassment by a teacher] but things became worse for me. I told the Community Workers about it and they only asked me what I want them to do to the teacher. I told them that I only wanted them to talk to the teacher but they have not done anything yet."

(Girl, aged 13-17, Nakivale)

Fig. 9 Childrens' perspectives of who makes them feel safe



"The Chairman asks for money first before he listens to your problems and as children we don't have money to bribe the Chairman."

(Boy, aged 13-17, Kyaka)

"When the father beats the mother and child it can be reported to the police but when he comes out of prison, it's worse."

(Boy, aged 8-12, Kyaka)



What do adults say?

Men and women were asked “If a child came to you because this child felt an adult had mistreated them, what would you do?” and asked to choose all the applicable responses. The majority of men and women said that they would talk to the adult who the child accuses if a child came to them. 10% of women and approximately 20% of men responded that they wouldn’t take any action.

Men clearly feel more able and/or willing than women in Nakivale and Kyaka to use more official channels, including community leaders, agency personnel and police, in responding to violence against children. Women report being more willing to talk to accused adults in their communities rather than people who hold official positions in the settlements.

Q: “What should be done if an adult mistreats a child?”

“Go to the family and talk to the family members.”

“Report to the local leaders, like the chairman.”

“Consult our religious leaders.”

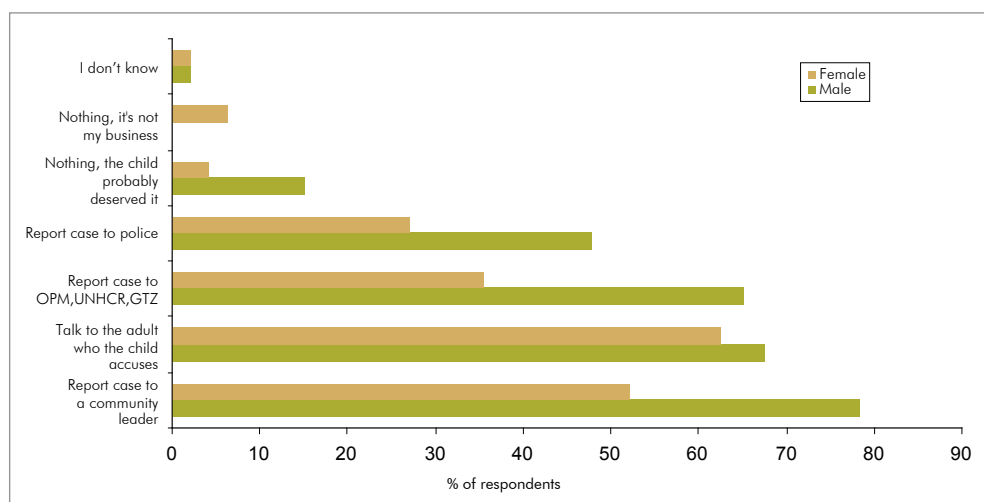
“The community should come together to help the child and the family.”

(Men, Kyaka)

“I would take that child to her mother and ask why this happened and if it’s true that the child did something wrong, then I would punish that child even more.”

(Woman, Kyaka)

Fig 10. Adults' choices of action in response to reported child mistreatment, by gender



Same question, different answers: Children in Nakivale and Kyaka aren’t currently aware of many options for them to turn to if they need help. Who women and men are able and willing to include in responses to cases of child mistreatment has important implications for the options currently available to children if they are seeking help from these adults. At present, however, it seems that children and adults don’t share confidence in their responses to violence against children.

To reach beyond these different places, let’s talk about ... how children who are being mistreated can access help. What can individual community members – adults and children alike, community leaders, agency personnel and the police do to respond to violence against children? What support do these people need to use these options for stopping or responding to violence?



What should be done to stop violence?

What do children say?

Q: "What do you think should be done to help children who experience violence?"

"Bring an organisation that defends the rights of children."

"The organisation may come and parents refuse that they don't take orders from it. My view is that children should be taken from bad homes as special cases."

"Put in place a law that protects children's rights. It should be practical."

"Teach parents about the danger of violating their children's rights."

"Some teachers teach without explanation. They just beat yet sometimes it's all their fault. How can they be encouraged to stop?"

(Boys, aged 13-17, Kyaka)

As the above excerpt from just one of this study's focus group discussions shows, children had many ideas about what could be done to prevent and respond to violence against children. The key principle that many children's recommendations reflected is the need for practical and comprehensive actions. Their suggestions focused on clarifying roles, rights and responsibilities among all community members. Specific areas that children recommended need attention include reconciliation among parents, teachers and children, commitments to fair and non-violent discipline, as well as straightforward mechanisms for reporting and punishing violence against children.

Focus on community-based action

Children recommended tangible, practical, on-the-ground action to protect them from violence. Without such presence and vigilance, children felt they will continue to be exposed to risks:

"If a child fails to get protection from the home, she will never feel safe."

(Girl, aged 8-12, Nakivale)

"There is nothing I can do because nobody can hear me shouting."

(Girl, aged 13-17, Nakivale)

Reconcile children and adults

Children said they see themselves as part of the solution to the current problems in their relationships with adults. They did not say they are without fault or that they don't accept the role of discipline or adults' authority, but they stated that discipline needs to be fair – fairly explained and fairly administered – for the adult and the discipline to be received with respect by the child:

"What should be done is to train parents about how to treat us and teach us how to behave well with our parents."

(Girl, aged 13-17, Kyaka)

"Parents should allocate to children only work that they can handle like cooking, washing plates and clothes and fetching water."

(Girls, aged 13-17, Kyaka)

"We should have a place where we can sit and talk about our rights and problems."

"We need a meeting so we can get our ideas out."

Q: Can children have their own meeting?

"Maybe like us here today we can come and hold a meeting with some adults."

(Boys, aged 13-17, Nakivale)

"Adults and children should go to church and pray so that they can relate well with each other."

(Girl, aged 8-12, Kyaka)

Enable responses to violence against children

Children's responses were surprisingly restrained when it came to punitive action. However, while the majority of their recommendations for actions focused on prevention, some girls and boys stated that there needs to be some way of enforcing children's protection from violence.

"Maybe there is a way of punishing those who commit violence."

(Boy, aged 13-17, Nakivale)

"Children should know those who are in charge so that we can take our cases to them."

(Boy, aged 13-17, Nakivale)

"Men should be warned not to defile girls and if they refuse they should be taken to the police."

(Girl, aged 8-12, Nakivale)



What do adults say?

Adults in this study also preferred community-based solutions for the prevention and response to violence against children. In cases of mistreatment of children, men and women agreed that community-based counselling is their preferred response, followed closely by counselling from agencies working in the settlements. This preference builds on current practices that men and women said they would choose to use if a child came to them with claims of mistreatment. Specifically, local chairmen and chairwomen as well as religious leaders were identified by men and women as having local confidence and credibility.

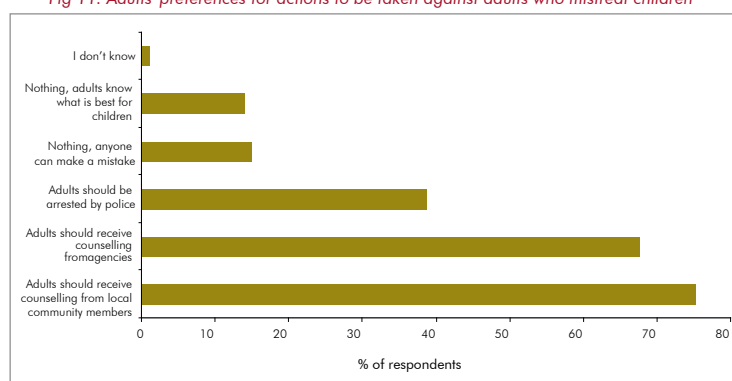
"There is a need to teach parents the importance of not mistreating children. The community members should do this together."

(Man, Nakivale)

"We need to gather children and adults together and instruct them about good behaviour and bad behaviour. This should show things which parents should not do and should do for their children. Also show good examples of what children should do or not do for their parents. This kind of seminar can help both children and adults or parents come to a good way of living together with a good climate of understanding each other."

(Man, Nakivale)

Fig 11. Adults' preferences for actions to be taken against adults who mistreat children



There is also agreement from some adults that reconciliation and cooperative efforts among adults and children are required in communities in Nakivale and Kyaka refugee settlements:

"We need to increase education for people on how to care for children."

(Man, Kyaka)

In addition to these communal approaches, some women raised the issue that fundamental power imbalances between men and women need to be addressed to prevent men's physical and economic domination over women and children:

*"Teach men so that they can stop violating women."
"Provide financial help to women for them to start businesses so that they can look after their children. Men take away their money and fail to pay school fees for their children."*

(Women, Kyaka)

"Community workers should organise women and their husbands together and teach them how to treat their children. They should especially talk to husbands who are normally drunk all the time."

(Woman, Nakivale)

Same question, similar answers: Children and adults in this study supported initiatives to improve relationships between children and adults in their communities. This is a very encouraging finding. Many children and adults told us that they don't believe that their divergent perspectives are insurmountable and stated they are willing to start working together to bridge the divides that currently alienate them. They told us that such bridging work needs to be holistic and to take into account the realities of daily lives in Nakivale and Kyaka II refugee settlements.

To reach a shared place, let's talk about ... what we can do next to improve the ways in which children and adults interact, without resort to the use of any forms of violence against children.

*"If I got books and a uniform so I can go to school, I would be happy.
And a good roof which doesn't leak when I come back home from school.
And food in the house to cook.
And the commandant to tell our parents to stop beating us."*

(Girl, aged 13-17, Nakivale)



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DIALOGUE AND ACTION

This section describes important steps to prevent violence against children:

Starting points for dialogue

Who needs to be involved

Facilitating participation

Using the network approach

Creating good schools

Making community services child-friendly

Empowering community workers

Empowering child representatives

Standardising reporting procedures

Investing in child counselling skills

Planning law enforcement

Recommendations

Starting Points for Dialogue

This research has identified important opportunities and challenges for action to be taken to prevent violence against children. And although this report's specific content comes from children and adults in two refugee settlements in western Uganda, it resonates with other research findings outside of these contexts. As such, many of these recommendations may be useful to all communities seeking to prevent violence against children.

While this research found children and adults currently holding very different perspectives, the steps to be taken to bridge their divide are not impossible. A few key points highlighted in this study make this evident:

First, it is important to recognise that children are not making unrealistic demands. In fact, many of the concerns girls and boys raised simply reflected their desire to grow up without being hurt and wanting to be treated fairly.

Further encouraging is the finding that children often see themselves as part of the solution to improving their relationships with adults. Girls and boys said they want to be actively involved in cooperative problem-solving with adults.

Many adults report conflicts between what they feel they should do and what they actually do. However, a significant number of adults are clearly concerned about children and feel responsible for securing children's current and future safety and wellbeing. In fact, men and women involved in this study, told us that as parents, teachers and community members they are doing what they believe they must do, within the constraints of their lives, to ensure children are properly guided.

While these are promising starting points for steps to be taken by communities to prevent violence against children, there are still major challenges to achieve the kinds of cooperation and changes that are needed for children to be safe from violence.

The first challenges are laid out in this report. By mapping the different perspectives of girls and boys and women and men this report identifies the key issues that need to be addressed in dialogue and action.

As a result of comparing children's and adults' different responses to our study questions, at the end of each Findings section, key reflections and questions are provided as starting points for this dialogue. Individuals and groups interested in moving forward with the work that needs to be done to prevent violence against children may find some of these prompts will help to facilitate constructive dialogue and action among children and adults.

Who needs to be involved in dialogue and action to prevent violence against children?

The most direct answer to this question is: everyone needs to be involved. If this research demonstrated one thing it is that violence isn't occurring as random incidents in children's lives. Rather, it is an omnipresent condition of the environment children are living in. As such, it is not just the adults who use violent acts against children who need to be involved in preventing such actions, but all those who tacitly condone the use of violence against children. To prevent violence, rather than to just respond to it after the fact, the most fundamental changes that are needed involve collective attitudes and beliefs about children and their place within the social hierarchy.

Beyond facilitating participatory dialogue among all children and adults in communities, at every level of their engagement, from family decision making to programme planning, there are specific actions that can be pursued now to improve the ways in which children and adults relate to one another in these settings.

Participatory Learning and Action

Children and adults in this study recommended initiatives to improve their awareness of the problems and solutions associated with violence against children. Wanting more knowledge about current conditions, impacts and potential alternatives to violence is a positive indication that people are ready to engage themselves in preventative efforts. Agencies working in refugee settlements have experience doing many 'sensitisation' or awareness- raising campaigns on multiple topics, and therefore may have the mechanisms in place to stimulate community campaigns for the prevention of violence against children. However, as one field officer questioned, "How deep are our sensitisations?"

'Training' or 'sensitising' does not change attitudes and behaviours when it just delivers scripted words or acts. To be effective, meaningful engagement has to occur, which means stimulating individuals and groups to wrestle with the underlying values and beliefs that give meaning to their actions. This may be approached in many different ways, but the key is that learning and action processes be truly participatory and embedded in a longer term process.

Achieving children's participation in learning and action takes deliberate methodological efforts. Children's meaningful engagement can only occur if the activities, language, places and people involved are child-friendly. Especially on an issue as potentially intimidating as violence, children need to know they are safe and supported, and they need to understand the purpose and potential outcomes of their participation so that they can make informed decisions to participate.

Network Approach

As children in this study told us, children experience violence in homes, schools, neighbourhoods, water and firewood collection points and everywhere in between; they experience emotional, physical, sexual and economic violence; and there are often too few places and people that make the majority of children feel safe.

As such, it is clear that preventing violence in children's lives will demand a multi-sectoral approach. This will require thinking and acting beyond individual agencies' and sectors' silos of responsibility. The coordination of efforts between personnel involved in community services, education, health, and protection, as well as issue-specific foci such as sexual and gender-based violence prevention, will require sitting down together to plan a comprehensive and concerted approach that builds on existing strengths and identifies areas that need more attention.

A first step in responding in Nakivale and Kyaka

Over the course of two days, twenty-six adults from Nakivale and Kyaka II refugee settlements met with the Raising Voices research team to review the findings of this study and to discuss the implications for programme planning in the two settlements. These workshop participants included representatives of UNHCR, Nakivale's and Kyaka's refugee populations' elected leadership, GTZ's community services, education and legal protection sectors, IMC, Save the Children Uganda, the Office of the Prime Minister and the headmasters of the 8 primary schools in Nakivale and Kyaka. Many lessons were learned from this sharing of knowledge and perspectives and commitments were made to continue this momentum with wider engagement in the settlements. As a result of this very constructive workshop inter-agency teams were voluntarily formed to take up the initiative of coordinating the development of action plans to prevent violence against children in Nakivale and Kyaka.



Recommendations

Good Schools

Teachers and students are often trying to achieve education in difficult conditions. The student to teacher ratio seems to be beyond what most teachers can manage in terms of supervision, much less the provision of quality and student-centred education. Too often the rod seems to be turned to as some teachers' only contact with a feeling of control. And when teachers turn to the rod many students turn away from the teacher; some even turn away from school.

There is a lot that can be done to make schools better places for students, teachers and communities.

In the first place, more and better communication is certainly needed among teachers, students and parents. Too often, children are put in the middle of negotiations between teachers and parents over resources and as such, children bear the brunt of either side's frustrations.

Teachers suggested that the development of standardised school policies would help to provide everyone with the same expectations of roles, responsibilities and rights. However, these school policies need to be negotiated by students, teachers and parents to ensure that agreement, rather than coercion, is reached.

There is certainly a role for organisations active in communities to play in encouraging community participation in education. These offices have existing strengths for doing community outreach which present opportunities for engaging adults and children in the planning of children's education.

Headmasters and teachers in this study also advocated for 'refresher courses' on codes of conduct to be held with teachers. As discussed above regarding 'training' approaches, such learning initiatives will be most effective if they focus on teachers' reckoning with the reasons for believing in and practicing this code of conduct, rather than simply memorising the code's content.

Child-friendly Community Services

As this study demonstrated, children often don't consider organisations' offices and personnel as embodying places or people that make them feel safe. Agency personnel in this study also admitted that too often their office time is dominated by adults' petitions, since some adults feel more confident than children in presenting themselves to the agencies and can do so in more articulate ways. Agency personnel may also be biased in believing that adults' concerns are more serious than children's or that adults sufficiently represent children's interests. This research has proven the latter is a dubious proposition.

To improve agencies' accountability and responsiveness to children, they could begin making regularly scheduled time and space – organised in a child-friendly way – for children to come to discuss their concerns. The personnel who would be available to meet children would need to be trained in child-friendly approaches; the space used would need to be safe and inviting for children; and deliberate efforts would need to be made to ensure children are aware of how and why they can access these services.

It seems agencies also need to make more deliberate attempts to incorporate women in preventing and responding to violence against children. The majority of women in this study reported that they wouldn't choose to take cases of child mistreatment to the agencies working in the settlements. Many different reasons may contribute to this unwillingness, including lack of access, knowledge or trust. Ensuring that services are available to women, in ways that women are willing and able to use, would provide more opportunities for children to be better protected.

Often in rural areas, like Nakivale and Kyaka, a major challenge is the large area to be serviced. Deliberate efforts need to be made to reach out to children and families in different areas of the settlement. This may require mobile services, and alternative hours, rather than fixing meeting spaces and times in ways that are more convenient for agency personnel.

Empowered Community Workers

In many communities, there are adult community members who serve as community workers, and specifically as appointed conduits between their communities and specific agencies. This type of community-based engagement is important. First, it ensures more accessibility of all people to some representative of the agencies. Similarly, these individuals are often the agencies “eyes and ears on the ground”. Second, community-based workers are often considered by other community members as more trustworthy, appropriately knowledgeable and committed to solving community concerns than agency staff from different backgrounds.

However, such intermediary roles can present serious challenges for individual community workers as they try to choose how to respond to conflicts in their communities, and particularly situations of violence against children by adults. The risks associated with reporting such cases present ethical and practical dilemmas for individual community workers. For instance, a community worker in one settlement who reported a case of defilement had his house burned down by other community members in retaliation.

It is necessary that community workers be empowered to protect children at risk. This does not only require investing in education and training for community workers, but for the entire communities they serve, since community workers require the confidence of their communities to do their jobs.

Empowered Child Representatives

Children need to be included in practical and activist ways in community initiatives to prevent violence against children. As demonstrated in this study, girls and boys have useful knowledge and are very capable at making judgments and taking actions relevant to the prevention of violence. Setting up – and continuing to support – children’s councils will ensure a forum is established that takes children seriously. The election of children’s representatives who have access to wider decision-making bodies could provide another route through which children can make their voices heard in their communities.

Standardised Reporting Procedures

As a part of empowering community workers, as well as other agency personnel and all community members, including children, facilitating clear understandings of how to refer and report cases of violence against children is critical. Not everyone should be expected to respond to such cases, but rather there should be clearly established roles and responsibilities concerning who investigates and how, who counsels and how, and who decides what further steps will be taken and how. Criteria for each of these steps in responding to violence against children must be developed to guide individuals’ actions. And to ensure accountability, written reports which detail which actions have been taken and according to which criteria must be made and securely kept.

These procedures should recognise that reporting children’s experiences of violence must happen, as much as possible, with the consent of children. Children often know better than adults the risks they face in reporting violence and hence children must be consulted closely in making decisions about what actions to take. Any follow up actions taken to investigate or otherwise intervene in reported cases of violence against children must be done in ways that do not put the child at further risk of harm in either the immediate or more distant future.

Child Counselling Skills

Counselling children and especially children who have experienced violence, requires special skills and training. Not everybody should be expected to be able to provide child counselling, but there should be individuals available with expertise to respond to children who require counselling support. In addition to having these people available, children should know of their opportunities to seek this assistance and be encouraged to do so. All community members, including teachers, police and agency personnel as well as community workers, will need to be made aware of how to refer children for counselling support.

Recommendations

Law Enforcement

Community members should carefully consider with local police how police might best enforce the laws against violence against children. Do police have a role in prevention or just in response to violence? Is it possible that policing might be done with an orientation toward community service or is policing to be limited to surveillance and arrest? Prevention of violence might be more effective if police are more involved in community life, however, this will require several critical steps before it can be achieved. First, police in many places often have relatively negative reputations. Many children and adults are afraid of the police and don't consider them as protectors, but rather as big men with guns. Indeed, some parents use the threat of police as a punishment against children. The reputation of police needs to be actively reformed if police seek to have an effective community-based role in preventing violence against children. Second, police will need to be available in communities so that they see and can be seen by children and adults in doing their law enforcement work. Training at least one police officer to listen to children's charges would provide improved service for children.

If police are not to have a role in on-the-ground protection of children, and specifically the prevention of violence against children, then they at least need to serve as effective law enforcers by ensuring that adults who violate children are brought to justice.

Agencies can serve children and communities better if they follow up cases referred to the police for arrest and legal system for prosecution and report back on what actions have been taken to prevent recurrences.

It will be up to everyone to make our communities violence-free for children.



CANDY 34

10/ Raising
Voices

Make a difference in your life and the lives of others

A violence-free community



Listens to children!
Do you?



Raising Voices
Plot 16 Tufnell Drive,
Kamwokya
Po Box 6770
Kampala, Uganda
Tel: +256 41 531186
Fax: +254 41 5311249
www.raisingvoices.org

 **UNHCR**
The UN Refugee Agency
www.unhcr.org