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**A STUDY OF COMMUNITY BASED  
CHILD PROTECTION MECHANISMS  
IN A FISHING COMMUNITY  
IN CENTRAL UGANDA**

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2015





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Cover photo: Children drying silver fish, *silver cyprinid* (local name: mukene) at Kiyindi landing site. Credits; Sharlotte Tusasiirwe



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## Acronyms

BMU	Beach Management Unit
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
CBCPMs	Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms
CDO	Community Development Officer
CFPU	Child and Family Protection Unit (of the Police)
DCDO	District Community Development Officer
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
INCAP	
KI	Key Informant
LC	Local Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PEP	Post Exposure ProphylaxisPRM
PSWO	Probation and Social Welfare Officer
PRM	Participatory Ranking Methodology



# Executive Summary

Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms have been recognized as an important way of mobilizing communities around child protection, and for preventing and responding to child abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence and are fast becoming an important programming response in Uganda. Components of CBCPMs include the people, groups, and networks that exist in communities, at the local level, to prevent and address child protection concerns and violations. Members of CBCPMs include families, community members, leaders, and groups, religious organizations, and locally based governmental and NGO actors. Besides the CBCPMs, there is also what is regarded as formal child protection mechanisms. In the diverse sense, child protection mechanisms are systems that protect children from exploitation, abuse, violence and neglect and promote children's wellbeing.

Whereas it is widely acknowledged that the protection rights of children in the fishing communities are at great risk, no attempts have been made to understand the vulnerabilities and abuse that these children suffer, nor the existing responses. The purpose of this study therefore was to identify the abuses/risks that children in fishing communities are confronted with, and document the existing community-based child protection processes and mechanisms in selected fishing communities of Uganda.

Adapting the methods and tools that were used in a similar study elsewhere (Columbia Group for Children in Adversity, 2011) this research used rapid ethnography to focus on child protection and to provide a rich, grounded overview of the local beliefs, values, and practices regarding children, the risks they experience, and the community mechanisms for their protection and well-being. Because the ethnographic approach involves depth and understanding, the research was conducted in one fishing community, (Kiyindi) selected from Buikwe district to allow an in depth study and understanding of child protection issues, as opposed to spreading out to several communities. The research team conducted community observation, focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and key informant interviews with children, men and women in Kiyindi fishing community.

## **Findings on child protection risks in the fishing community**

The most dominant child protection risks in Kiyindi are child neglect, child labour, school dropout, defilement, exposure of children to pornographic materials, circumcision, and child sacrifice. Although participants could not all agree on which children are more vulnerable to experiencing these risks, children who are out of school, those from economically poor families, living with a step parent and single mother were highlighted as being most affected by these risks. Both girls and boys experience risks and engage in unsafe activities that generally match their gender as constructed by the community. The girls are mostly involved in child labour within the hospitality industry, while the boys are engaged in the activities that are deemed as commercial within the context of the landing site.

Child neglect was also ranked as the most pressing risk and therefore important issue for action with an average rank of 1.1 where 1 indicates the most important issue for action. It was defined in terms of the failure of the parent to provide the very basic necessities of life like food, shelter, clothes, parental care. Also failure to pay school fees by the parents was highlighted as child neglect because this stops the children from achieving their future dreams. While it was highlighted that some parents just do not prioritize the needs of children, other parents unintentionally fail to take care of the children because of a range of factors cited with number one as poverty. Fathers were particularly accused of being absent and neglecting their parental duties towards the children they sire. The population structure at the landing site is such that there are more men than they are women. This has led to fluidity of marital relationships, and swapping of women.



Child Neglect has increased children's vulnerability to torture and abuse because participants explained that Children who have been caught stealing, some are beaten and tortured, sometimes until death. Also children have been exposed to emotional violence as a result of child neglect by the fathers. Child neglect has led to non-orphaned child headed families with children taking the lead in providing for their family's basic care sometimes amidst alive and well parents.

Children in this fishing community child labour as a coping strategy to fill the gap left by neglectful parents. In addition some children are sent to work by the parents. Child labor and school dropout are interrelated in that a child can drop out of school because of child labour, and school dropout also forces a child to look for work. The activities that participants highlighted as child labour included children working in eating places like restaurants, hotels, bars and lodges, film halls. Children involved in hawking and 'singing prices' for commodities in the market especially on every Friday. Children were also reportedly working in film halls where blue movies are watched and thus are being exposed to pornographic materials at a tender age. A great number of children are also involved in picking *mukene* (silver fish) and selling it. Children carry heavy loads from the cars especially on market day. They are also involved in fishing and also carrying people disembarking from the boats. Sometimes the children are cheated and exploited and they are preferred by employers because they are cheap compared to the adults. These activities were regarded as child labour because they interfere with the ability of a child to attend school which is vital for the holistic development of this child. The money that children make is used to buy food, go to film halls, buy women, alcohol and drugs. As a response, the police has tried to 'chase' away the children involved in such activities but these have been let down by parents who defend the children that they are looking for school fees. Apart from police, Beach Management Unit has also tried to chase the children but their efforts are also frustrated by the uncooperative parents and community members that want and encourage children to work.

School drop outs was frequently mentioned by the participants as a common risk that children experience in Kiyindi. Most children do not go to school and even those that go, their completion rate is very low. Children drop out as early as primary four-five and even below while others do not even step in school at all. This is because of a good number of reasons but most notably is the parents' and children's indifferent attitude towards education, poverty, and poor school environment. While some parents cannot afford to pay school fees and provide scholastics which causes children to drop out of school, other parents have an indifferent attitude that does not look at education as important, after all they did not go to school and they are still surviving. The belief is that the lake does not require any qualification so even if children do not go to school, they will survive. Interventions to address the high school dropout must take on a holistic approach that looks at the challenges that children encounter in the home and school environment, and the general community. The response so far has been by the police chasing after children who do not go to school but their efforts have also been frustrated by the indifferent attitude of the parents. Children not going to school have been vulnerable to child marriages and early pregnancies and child prostitution as well as child labour.

Children also experience defilement and the most vulnerable here are girl children. Participants defined defilement in two types: - '*real defilement*' and *defilement for money*. This categorization also determines the kind of reporting mechanisms and community response. What is believed to be real defilement that causes alarm in the community is where the child involved is around 6 years and below. These cases are reported to police and are regarded as intolerable. Girls above those years are not believed to be really defiled and when this happens, parents will sit down with the perpetrator to resolve this case out of court (out of formal means). While some participants blamed the cause of defilement on men who have lost morals and just want to lure small girls into sex, other participants diverged arguing that girls in Kiyindi voluntarily accept to be used by the men. The perpetrators of defilement in this community were noted to be mostly the rich business and fisher

men, and second are the boda boda (motorcycle) riders. The denominator here is having money. It was noted that fisher men in fact prefer young girls because they are still intact and have no diseases and can boost the libido of the old men. Children on the other hand accused the fisher men of exploiting their need situation and luring young girls into early sex by blinding them with fish and other items like money that they know the girls need in exchange for their virginity.

As a response, some of the children noted that when they experience such risks, they can report to their family members and most especially the girls prefer to report to their mothers while the boys prefer to report to their fathers. Girls prefer to report to mothers because they are women who were once girls and so they are taken to understand these experiences. One of the reasons why families also handle defilement cases is because they want the matter to remain private. If the police is involved, it will have to do investigations and the whole village will end up knowing that so and so's daughter was defiled which will affect the image of the child affecting her ability to get married in future.

The money exchange issue (corruption/bribes) has failed children and parents from utilizing the formal mechanisms of child protection. Communities see selective application of the law and access to justice by those that can afford to pay which is affecting the utilization of services of the formal systems. Communities will report cases where they are likely to partake of the outcomes.

Cases of concealment of defilement cases were commonly highlighted. It was agreed on that the biggest factor responsible for concealment is vulnerability, with this common in economically poor families, families with single mothers. The vulnerability is not only in terms of money but also lack of knowledge on the procedures and the law. It's not un common that even police opts out of the formal procedure and goes for money extortion from the perpetrator. The level of empowerment (in terms of knowledge of procedure and economically) will determine and dictate how the victim, family and community responds to some of these cases that they experience in the community. Empowerment (both financially and through knowledge and information giving) will increase the capability of children, families and communities to utilize both community based and formal child protection mechanisms.

### **Finding on the Existing Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms**

Regarding the existing community based child protection mechanisms, the family despite its challenges was identified as the first line of response. Parents and relatives are the first place that children usually report to when they are confronted with difficulties. Families have adopted diverse risk prevention strategies including establishing and enforcing strict rules to guide children's behavior, and punishments to errant children. Parents have gone ahead to dictate which routes the children should pass on their way to school, which places they should go to or where not to go. Other families do not send their girl children to shops because these are regarded as vulnerable. Parents also emphasize education and those who can afford, take their children to boarding schools. Other families have taken their children to stay with their families that are not Kiyindi.

Regarding the community as a protection mechanism, few community elders and neighbors could be identified to help children when they experience problems. Adults explained that majority of the children do not have where to run to in the communities because many people mind their businesses and families. Participants lamented that the community values and beliefs that were central in protecting children have been eroded. The multiplicity of people in Kiyindi with variant cultural beliefs and values about children has made it hard for communities to care for one another. Despite this those community elders that children run to for help if identified and trained more could be a great resource for the children but also could boost the community based child protection mechanisms.

Established in order to decentralize justice, enhance greater access to justice for all and also reduce on the costs of litigation, LCI's functionality in Kiyindi was a centre of debate during the discussions with the participants. While some acknowledged that they were working on child protection issues especially the office of the vice chairperson, others argued that they were not for the children. However, it was acknowledged that LC 1 has challenges but if it could be empowered and revamped, it is a community structure that can help handle child protection concerns in the community if the community members are allowed to vote the people they feel comfortable to be part of the committee. The LCs need to be reminded of their roles, taught to respect confidentiality and motivated.

Beach Management Unit is a community based structure that helps in bringing together different stakeholders involved in fisheries including the traders, fishermen, boat owners, boat crew, repairers. Important for child protection, BMU has rule that prohibits children from getting involved in fishing at the lake. Although the implementation of this rule has been challenging given the lack of cooperation from parents, BMU is well established community structure that would be vital in curbing down child labour and exploitation in this community, working in close linkage with the structures like LC, police and the community.

### **Formal child protection mechanisms and their linkage to CBCPMs**

This study was set out not only to describe the existing community based child protection mechanisms but also identify formal child protection systems and their linkage with the CBCPMs. Among the formal child protection mechanisms identified included the police and the community based services department comprised of structures of the community development officer at the sub county level, district probation and welfare officer and the head who is the district community development officer at the district level. There was no NGO identified that is involved in handling child protection issues. Of all the formal systems of child protection that communities seemed to be interfacing with, police was the most commonly approached. Although it is expected to be working closely with the local council 1, some explained the linkage between the two as unclear. In some cases police works with the LC, in others, it does not, in some cases when a community member goes to report to police, they are asked for the police letter while in other instances they are not. Thus, the procedure is not clear and or consistent. Clearly police's presence, if utilized, would do much to help in addressing child protection concerns as it has the potential of being respected and listened to by the majority in the community. Police needs to improvise a child friendly approach that will make children feel secure to seek help at this institution.

On the whole, a linkage between the formal and community based child protection mechanisms is still at infancy in Kiyindi fishing community. However, efforts need to be made to ensure this linkage, and to empower community based child protection mechanisms as these have the potential to reach the majority of the community members facing child protection concerns as well as spearheading efforts in the prevention of risks from happening.

### **Recommendations from the community**

Participants were always asked to make recommendations on what they think can be done better to address the child protection concerns and improve on the existing child protection mechanisms. Participants highlighted a need to set bylaws to guard against child labour, child neglect, child prostitution and the operation of entertainment places like film halls, disco halls. Participants highlighted the need to arrest and punish the employers of children because these know that children are not supposed to be working. They recommended increase in access and availability of services like education, health services, to ensure that every one is catered for in the community.

Specifically participants advocated for vocational education to be extended to Kiyindi to cater for those children that have dropped out of school. NGOs should also extend their services to cover the

gap left by the government. There should also be strengthening of the law enforcement agencies like police and probation and welfare offices because these are incapacitated without the financial and human resources to address the child protection concerns of the communities. Efforts to prevent and respond to child protection issues must embrace economic empowerment and address poverty because it is a vital cause of most of the risks that children experience

### **Key findings and recommendations**

- As regards the harms and risks experienced by children in fishing communities, child neglect was found out to be the number one risk and child protection violation affecting children in Kiyindi, predisposing them to many more risks like child labour, prostitution, defilement, drug abuse. There is a linkage between the economic background and child neglect with children from economically poor families being the most at risk of child neglect, child labour, school dropout, child prostitution, early pregnancy and early marriages. Economic empowerment was thus suggested if we are to respond to but also prevent child protection violations in fishing communities.
- Parents are key stakeholders in unraveling why children are experiencing the risks and harms. Therefore any intervention in addressing these child protection violations must target them for sustainable change
- As a response to these risks, in most cases, children deal with the problems themselves, where by some have become their own parents, and have also taken on the responsibility of looking after their parents. There have been reversed roles with non-orphaned but child headed families. Children are involved in child labour, child prostitution and even child marriages as sources of survival for both the child and the parents.
- Community based child protection mechanisms exist in structures but mostly are non-functional in protecting children against risks. There is need to revamp the agency of families and communities to protect and prevent risks from happening to their children. Child protection awareness creation and education should be implemented in the community, community members need to rethink about their definition of a child and what they should be entitled to during their child hood.
- Although the family is facing immense challenges, in some instances, it is still the first child protection unit that the children approach when they experience risks and therefore strengthening it would improve children's well being in the community.
- Lack of knowledge about the laws and procedures and poverty harbors concealment of cases and makes the administration of justice and utilization of services in formal systems minimal by the community. Empowerment of communities financially and with knowledge and information of procedure is vital for the protection of children and utilization of both formal and informal child protection mechanisms.
- A clear linkage between the community based child protection mechanisms and the formal systems is yet to be established in Kiyindi community. Yet empowering CBCPMs and ensuring a linkage with the formal systems seems to be the way out given the fact that most of the formal systems like the PWSO, DCDO are serving a vast population and are resource constrained. There is need to work with the already established structures on the ground for example BMUs, LCs, family, community , children, in order to boost the protection of children.

# Study Background

## 1.1 Introduction

This is a study of Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms (CBCPMs) in a fishing community in Central Uganda. CBCPMs have been recognized as an important way of mobilizing communities around child protection, to prevent and respond to child abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence (Wessells, 2009; Yiga, 2010). In Uganda, CBCPMs are fast becoming an important programming response in child protection (ANPPCAN, 2013). In the recent past, there has been a recognition that effective responses to child protection need a systems perspective (Stark et al, 2012). Identifying and mapping CBCPMs is a way of identifying local resources and systems that can be strengthened to promote sustainable child protection in different localities.

CBCPMs are front line efforts to protect children from exploitation, abuse, violence, and neglect and to promote children's well-being (Wessells, 2009). They include all groups or networks at grassroots level, such as families, community groups, peer support, as well as government and nongovernmental mechanisms which respond to and prevent child protection risks within a given locality. CBCPMs involve a range of strategies, focused on altering the social norms that predispose children to abuse, strengthening parent-child relationships, creating supportive communities with shared belief in personal and collective responsibility for child protection, and expanding the range of services and instrumental supports directly available to parents.

Countries are currently undertaking mapping of CBCPMs as a prerequisite in strengthening child protection systems. In Uganda CBCPM studies have been conducted among urban refugee children in Kampala (Horn et al, 2013), war affected children in Gulu district (War Child Holland, 2010) and the West Nile districts of Arua and Nebbi (Child Protection in Crisis, 2012).

Whereas it is widely acknowledged that the protection rights of children in fishing communities are at great risk, no attempts have been made to understand their vulnerabilities, the abuse experienced in these localities, and the existing responses. A fishing community is a socioeconomic group of persons living together in a locality and deriving their livelihood from fishing activities. Fishing communities are comprised of men and women who fish (boat crew), boat owners, fish processors, boat makers, local fishing gear makers or repairers, fishing equipment dealers and managers, as well as fishmongers and traders (Opio et al., 2009). Uganda has a vibrant fishing community that is scattered across the diverse water sources. Eighteen percent of Uganda's surface area is covered with water. The main water bodies are Lakes Victoria, Albert, George, Kyoga and Edward; there are an additional 160 minor lakes and rivers, floodplains and swamps, which provide livelihood opportunities in the fisheries sector (Geheb et al., 2008). The sector significantly contributes to food security, foreign exchange, employment and local government revenue. Fisheries in Uganda provide employment and income for over one million people, approximately 3 percent of the national population (KMCC Uganda, 2014). The fishing industry hires unskilled workers who reside in landing sites, temporary fishing camps and more permanent fishing villages on the lakeshores. Fish landing sites are dynamic centres of activity attracting different types of people including fishermen, male and female traders and fish processors, as well as service sector workers, in lodges, bars and restaurants and commercial sex workers. Fishing communities are often remote and peripheral, lacking basic infrastructure and marginalised from mainstream governmental development initiatives (Allison, 2003). Essential social services such as water and sanitation, housing, health and education facilities are often poor or entirely absent in the fishing communities (Grellier et al., 2004; Keizire, 2006). Fishing communities are characterised by a transient population as well as permanent residents.

Research interest in the fishing communities of Uganda has mainly been in relation to HIV/AIDS (Allison, 2003; Opiyo et al, 2003; Bishop-Sambrook and Tanzarn, 2004; Grellier et al., 2004; Kissling et al, 2005; Kyomuhendo, 2015) and risky sexual behaviour (Pickering et al, 1997), focusing mainly on the adult population. The fish landing sites in Uganda have always been focused on as places of adult activity and studies in these locations have largely excluded children (Westaway, 2003). There are however many children who live and work in the fishing communities. The limited research that focuses on the population sub group of children has been in the area of education (Westaway 2009). However, anecdotal evidence suggests that children in fishing communities in Uganda are marginalised and their rights are violated. Children in the fishing communities do not have equal access to essential formal services as those elsewhere, due to the isolation of their settlements. The nature, functionality and responsiveness of informal and formal child protection mechanisms in the fishing communities, remains unknown. It is plausible that these children depend on community-based child protection systems. However systems for protection and upholding the rights of children in the context of the fishing communities have not been explored and documented. The study sought to explore and document the existing Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms (CBCPM) in a fishing community of Uganda.

## **1.2 Research Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of this study was to identify the abuses/risks that children in fishing communities are confronted with, and document the existing community-based child protection processes and mechanisms in selected fishing communities of Uganda. Specifically, the research set out to identify what the fishing communities and children within these communities see as the main harms or risks to children, what CBCPMs exist, linkages between these mechanisms and formal child protection systems. An outline of the objectives is presented below:

1. To identify the main risks and harms to children in the fishing communities of Uganda
2. To identify and describe in detail the existing CBCPM in fishing communities in Uganda
3. To identify linkages between the CBCPMs and formal child protection systems.

Overall the study was conducted to unravel the child protection infrastructure and mechanisms amongst the marginal fishing communities of Uganda. By doing so, the research provides information that will be relevant and useful for strengthening child protection systems for children in the fishing communities of Uganda.

## 2.1 Design

Adapting the methods that were used in a similar study elsewhere (Columbia Group for Children in Adversity, 2011), this research used rapid ethnography to focus on child protection and to provide a rich, grounded overview of the local beliefs, values, and practices regarding children, the risks they experience, and the community mechanisms for their protection and wellbeing.

## 2.2 Study Area

Uganda has diverse fishing communities surrounding the major lakes and on the islands on these lakes. The study area was a landing site along the shores of Lake Victoria in Buikwe district. Buikwe district has a 160 kilometre shoreline along Lake Victoria. Fishing is the main source of employment, with a total of 52 fishing communities in the district. The estimated number of individuals who directly depend on fishing is 70,000 with the highest populations in Kiyindi, Ssenyi, Kikondo and Nkombwe (Ssebisubi, 2013).

Because the ethnographic approach involves depth and understanding, the research was conducted in one fishing community. The final selection of this study site was done after consultation with local government officials and particularly the District Community Development Officer (DCDO) and the Probation and Welfare officer (directly involved in child protection), following the criteria of accessibility, security, population, and provision of government services. Kiyindi was purposively sampled under the guidance of these officials because it is regarded as one of the major landing site in the district and thus constituting one of the largest fishing communities along the Lake Victoria basin. Kiyindi provided the picture of a typical fishing community.

Kiyindi has both a permanent and transient population comprised of individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds and different parts of the country. Kiyindi has also migrants from Kenya and especially the Luos, as well as nationals from other neighbouring countries. During the day, a big population flocks the landing site to transact fishing and other related businesses. This majority of the population disperses from the landing site in the evening leaving the residents and those few that are engaged in the hospitality and entertainment business at the site.

There are 138 shops, 40 bars, 9 lodges, and 80 eating places in the Kiyindi landing site. The landing site is renown for its silver fish. People from all these places travel to Kiyindi for fish related businesses. A number of people connect to the various islands on Lake Victoria from this landing site. The landing site has a dock for a ferry that connects it to different islands. Kiyindi serves as a marketing hub for fish from the Islands; the fish are harvested and processed from the islands and then brought to Kiyindi for onward transport to other markets. Kiyindi is a collection centre of fish originating from diverse islands and sites including Namatale, Dolwe, Gunda, Namagombe, Nalubale, landing site, and Nyenda landing site. Fish exports from Kiyindi go to various destinations including Rwanda, Kisoro, Arua, Kibaale, Mbale, Koboko, Kampala, Wakiso, Jinja district

There are specific market days and the big and popular one is weekly, and held on Friday. Assorted items including clothing, food are sold in this market. The local population distinguishes itself into two socio-economic classes. The upper echelon is comprised of individuals who own stalls in the upper Kiyindi and these include the relatively wealthy fishermen and business people. The upper part also houses the Beach management Unit (BMU). The BMU is a registered and legal community fisheries management entity which manages fishery resources and the affairs of communities that are located in fishing communities. This upper part has heavier traffic with vehicles lined up to take

fish to external markets. On the other hand, the lower part includes those who are located near the docking place of the ferry. The people who work here are mostly involved in drying, salting, and selling silverfish.

The landing site has a diverse population. It is a refuge for criminals and fugitives who commit crimes elsewhere, and run off to Kiyindi seeking refuge from law enforcement. In terms of social services, there is minimal access to basic services such as health, education, housing, water and sanitation. There is poor waste disposal at the landing site and heaps of decomposing garbage lie in the open for long periods of time. The garbage heaps give off a foul smell and present a risk of diseases such as diarrhea. There is inadequate supply of clean drinking water on the landing site. This is coupled with insufficient toilet facilities, which forces the population to resort to utilization of the lake for toilet purposes. The area is also faced with the problem of insufficient supply of safe drinking water. The water in Lake Victoria is polluted by activities at the landing site and is not safe for drinking. While there are safer sources of drinking water, these tend to be located far away from the landing site, forcing the population to either purchase safe water from vendors at high prices, or to use the polluted water from the lake for consumption and other domestic purposes. This also presents risks of water related diseases.

The landing site does not have health facilities. Those who want good health services have to travel a distance of 34 kilometers to Kawolo Hospital in Lugazi. With specific reference to child protection violations that require medical attention, this presents difficulties, particularly if the family of the victim cannot afford the associated transport costs. In the event of child sexual abuse, abused children need to be taken to Kawolo hospital to access Post Exposure Prophylaxis. Even the private not for profit organizations that usually complement the government are not present at the landing sites. Some Private Not For Profit (PNFP) are visible in Kiyindi. For example, there is a sub branch of Uganda Red Cross, Mukono branch and INCAP-a school based NGO mostly sponsoring children studying from one school. There was no NGO focusing on child protection issues.

There is a phenomenon of unaccompanied children at the landing sites. These children are truant, who usually escape from their families and are not under any adult responsibility. They are responsible for their own wellbeing, survival and protection. Child labour in the fisheries work is high in Kiyindi. Most of the children are engaged in activities pertaining to preparing the silver fish for the market. The older children venture out on fishing escapes with the fishermen at night. The landing site has one police post. The post does not have the office of the child and family protection unit, which is charged with the responsibility of ensuring the protection of children.

### **2.3 Study population**

The study population comprised of different sub population groups in the fishing communities including community leaders, women, men, and children. Collecting information from different subgroups such as young women, young men, adult women, and adult men, made it possible for the research to simultaneously obtain the views of each group, and triangulate the information collected. The nature of the research does not call for representative sampling, but rather the inclusion of key population groups in order to obtain an in depth understanding of their experiences and perspectives. Accordingly purposive sampling was utilised to select and include in the study sample, those individuals that are at the margins of the fishing communities. Community actors that are identified in the community as key agents of child protection mechanisms and beneficiaries of protection mechanisms were included in the sample.

### **2.4 Data Collection**

Data was collected through a range of methods including focus group discussions, in depth interviews, observation and key informant interviews.



### 2.4.1 Group Discussions

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were held with diverse population categories including women, men and children and young people. The composition of each of the groups was homogenous. Study participants were placed in focus groups according to their age groups and gender. Overall, 18 FGDs were conducted. These included five (5) FGDs with participants in the 11-17 years age group, three (3) with those in the 18-24 age group, seven (7) with participants in the 25-45 age group and three (3) with those who were aged 45 years and above.

Participatory Learning Approaches (PLA) were adapted in the FGDs to enlist meaningful participation. The discussions with the children in the 11-17 age range focused on identifying the pressing risks that they experience and the typical response. These discussions explored where and to whom children go for help when protection risks actualize. The FGDs with adults focused more on ranking the pressing risks and harms to children as well as mapping the community responses to these risks. The FGDs that involved ranking took an average of 2 hours. Participatory Ranking Methodology (PRM) was used to identify the risks that affect children in the community, things that make them feel unsafe or insecure. Once the risks would be listed, participants were led to unanimously agree on the most pressing risk affecting children. Pair wise ranking was used to obtain the most pressing risk affecting children. Participants would then be asked to discuss the most typical response to the three first ranked problem/risks. Each FGD had a moderator who was responsible for asking questions, leading the group and ensuring that each individual present participates. There was also a note taker whose task was to record the proceedings of the group and provide support to the moderator.

**Table 1: Categories and Number of Focus Group Discussions**

	Focus group discussion sub type							
	Children(11-17)		Youth(18-24)		Adult (25+)		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>No. of FGDs</b>	2	3	2	1	5	5	9	9
<b>No. of people</b>	14	24	17	4	36	37	67	65

An equal number of group discussions was held for both the male and female participants. In total, one hundred thirty two(132) people were consulted through a total of 18 FGDs.

### 2.4.2. In-depth interviews

Individual in-depth interviews were conducted with out-of-school boys. The initial plan was to conduct FGDs with out-of-school children. However this category of children was difficult to mobilise. It was reported that the children were wary of meeting with strangers because of their truant situation. These children were scared that they would be arrested for not being in school. Their fear could have been reinforced by the fact that the research team worked with a former member of the Beach Management Unit, who is seen as a figure of law enforcement in the landing site. The research team tried to mobilise these children in the evening with no success. The limited time that was spent in the field meant that it was not possible to establish a rapport with these children and gain their confidence to meet as a group. Therefore the research team resorted to having individual interviews with those who accepted to do so. Four interviews were conducted and these also focused on identifying which risks and harms affect children as well as where the children run to for help when they experience these problems.

### 2.4.3 Key Informant Interviews

Individual in depth interviews were conducted with key informants such as government officials, Local Council officials, community development officers, religious leaders, and member of Child Protection Committee to establish their views of child protection threats in the community, the various child protection mechanisms, and the linkages of community mechanisms with the national child protection system. In total, sixteen key informant interviews were conducted. Below is a list of the key informants that the research team interviewed.

**Table 2: Category and Number of Key Informants**

Category	Subtype	Number
<b>Government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District community development officer</li> <li>• Senior Probation and welfare officer</li> <li>• Community development officer</li> <li>• Police</li> <li>• Head teacher</li> <li>• LCV chairperson</li> <li>• Child protection committee</li> </ul>	7
<b>Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chairperson LC1</li> <li>• Vice chairperson LC1</li> <li>• Community elder</li> <li>• Crime preventer</li> <li>• Representative of BMU</li> <li>• Two Religious leaders</li> </ul>	7
<b>NGOs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• INCAP</li> <li>• Red cross society</li> </ul>	2
<b>Total</b>		16

Key informant interviews availed the team an opportunity to explore in depth issues observed or emerging from the focus group discussions with the communities. Some of the key informants had good knowledge of the community. Most of the key informants had lived in the area for more than 20 years.

### 2.4.4. Community observation

In order to familiarize ourselves with the community, the research team spent the first day observing community activity including spaces the children play, where they learn, which activities they were involved in. The team then engaged the residents (men, women, and children) to draw a map of their community highlighting areas where children travel, play, learn, work, reside as well as the resources and potential risks in the community. Key land marks in Kiyindi were drawn on these maps like schools, religious centres, disco halls, bars and lodges, and other entertainment places. Three maps were drawn from where the research team came up with a master map and conducted transect walks following lines drawn on the map. The observations from the walk were discussed by the team at the end of the day. Community observation was ongoing throughout the time that the team was in the community. During the evening, part of the research team visited the areas which were identified earlier and or were mentioned during discussions with the community members to validate what was shared in the FGDs.

## 2.5 Data capture and analysis

The data collection tools used for the study were originally authored by Mike Wessels, Dora King, David Lamin, Kathleen Kostelny, Sarah Lilley, and Lindsay Stark. These tools were modified and adapted to suit the fishing community and were translated in Luganda for easier communication in the communities.

Data was captured using digital recorders and participants would be informed and asked for permission to use these recorders. They all consented to be recorded. Field notes were also written down during the interviews and group discussions by the note takers. Every evening, the research team congregated to discuss the key highlights of the day, and the preliminary findings that were emerging from the field. Planning for the next day took into consideration the discussion and reflections of what was emerging from the field.

From the field notes and these recordings, transcripts were developed. Thematic analysis was undertaken, and triangulation of information done to draw out converging perspectives. Reporting is done in an integrative manner.

## 2.6. Research ethics

The research proactively integrated the necessary steps and strategies to promote key ethical principles and norms of social research in the study. Research assistants were trained and issues of ethics were emphasized.

### 2.6.1 Informed Consent

As a matter of procedure, the AfriChild Centre of Excellence wrote formally to the local government in Buikwe to seek for permission to conduct the study. Details about the objectives, scope, significance and research design of the study were clearly indicated to enable the administration to take an informed decision. The office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and DCDO endorsed the study to be carried out in Kiyindi. Informed consent was also sought from the individuals who were engaged to provide information to the study, prior to their involvement in any study activities. This process would be preceded by a detailed explanation of the purpose objectives of the study. For the cases of children between 11-17 years that the research team interfaced with, permission was sought from the school administration. The researchers explained the purpose of the study to the participants gathered for the focus group discussions and informed consent was obtained before the discussions could commence.

### 2.6.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity

The research made an effort to maximize confidentiality and anonymity of study participants. The report does not contain names of the participants; less revealing details like age category and gender are used to describe participants. The computer files with information about respondents is saved and locked with passwords to minimize illegitimate access to them.

## 2.7. Research team

The research team was trained prior to the commencement of the study. The training focused on the objectives of the research, the data collection methods, as well as application of the research tools in a practical setting. The research team was comprised of a lead researcher and also a field supervisor who ensured close monitoring and support to the team during field work. The team had six (6) research assistants who were selected based on their experience in data collection and child protection. The team also worked with one of the local government staff who had experience in

conducting research and was familiar with the community where the study was conducted. Upon reaching the community, one community member with knowledge of the community was also co-opted. The research team worked closely with the probation and welfare officer and the members of the BMU. The lead researcher worked closely with the AfriChild Centre to ensure that the logistics required for the data collection were mobilised and made available on time.

## 2.8. Limitations of the study

The perspectives and experiences of the younger children below the age of eleven were not captured in this study. The limited time available for data collection could not allow the team to engage with the younger age groups, as methods of data collection with these children are highly interactive and require time.

The fishing community in Uganda is diverse comprised of mainland and island fishing sites. The dynamics and situation for children in these sites may vary. This study was conducted in only one site on the shores of Lake Victoria. The study findings therefore provide insights into one fishing community and do not necessarily capture the realities in others. The available financial resources did not allow the study to have a broader geographical scope. The cost of transport to the islands was prohibitive and could not be met within the available budget. While the study captured as much information as possible from the mainland, it is important that other studies are done in different fishing communities to assess the protection risks to children and existing CBCPMs.

Regarding the execution of the study, the research team experienced difficulties with the mobilization of girls and women due to their work schedules. The female study participants are engaged in all day demanding activities like working in hotels, bars, and drying silver fish (*Mukene*). Out of school boys were also elusive, because they suspected that the researchers were law enforcers who may apprehend for not being at school. As a remedy for this, we made a decision to have individual interviews for this category of respondents as opposed to the earlier planned FGDs. This provides lessons for subsequent researchers who may wish to carry out studies in fishing communities.

## 3.1 Introduction

This section presents the findings on CBCPMs of Kiyindi fishing community, in Buikwe district. The findings will be presented in line with the three specific objectives of the study which include: to identify the main risks and harms to children in the fishing communities; to identify and describe the existing CBCPMs in fishing communities in Uganda; and to identify the linkages between the CBCPMs and formal child protection systems.

## 3.2 Risks and Harms to Children in the Kiyindi Fishing Community

### 3.2.1 Perspectives of the Adult Population

During the focus group discussions with the adults, participants listed all the risks they thought affect children and make them insecure in their community. Later these risks were ranked to establish the most dominant child protection risks in the Kiyindi Community. In all the FGDs, the most important risk was taken to be the most pressing risk which affects majority of children and has short and long term negative consequences. Participants would then be asked to discuss the response to the three highly ranked risks. However, participants highlighted that there was no clear response to most of the highly ranked risks and as such no clear response pathway was mapped for the ranked risks.

Frequency of mention refers to the number of groups where that risk was mentioned out of the total number of groups where PRM was conducted. If an issue/concern was mentioned in every focus group, that was a strong indication that it was a high priority concern.

Regarding the average rank, a concern could have been listed frequently but, as indicated by the ranking exercise, was not seen by participants as the biggest concern. The average rank that each issue received is regarded as the best measure of importance for action. An issue may be reported or mentioned many times in the groups but may not be seen by the participants as their biggest concern. The average rank shows the number of times a FGD agreed that a particular issue was the most important risk to children in the community. It was calculated by adding up the ranking number of the issues from each group and dividing by the number of groups. Below are results from the nine FGDs where the risks were ranked.

**Table 3: Risks Mentioned and Ranked in FGDs by Adults (Over 18 years)**

RISK	FREQUENCY	AVERAGE RANK
Child neglect	9/9	1.1
Child labour	5/9	1.4
Child prostitution	5/9	2.2
Defilement	3/9	1.9
School drop out	8/9	3.0
Pornography (karaoke, films, sex shows, disco halls)	4/9	1.3
Drug abuse	5/9	2.3
Early pregnancy	6/9	3.5
Child sacrifice	5/9	3.4
Physical violence against children	5/9	3.7
Drowning	3/9	2.4

Child neglect was mentioned most frequently in all the adult FGDs (9/9). The second most frequently mentioned as a risk affecting children in the community was high school dropout which featured in eight out of nine groups. Communities lamented that many children are not going to school and those that enroll dropout early before completing the primary school cycle. Early pregnancy was the third frequently mentioned risk, and featured in six out of the nine groups.

Regarding the ranking, child neglect was the most pressing risk and therefore important issue for action with an average rank of 1.1. Overall 8 out of the 9 groups ranked neglect as the number one protection issue affecting children. The group that did not rank neglect as the most pressing issue also considered it as a key risk and ranked it as the second most pressing risk after children’s exposure to pornography. Although children’s exposure to pornography was mentioned in only four groups, it had an average rank of 1.3 making it the second most important issue that needs action. Child labour was ranked as the third most important with a rank of 1.4. Although defilement was not among the three most important issues, it is also considered as a pressing risk and scored an average rank of 1.9.

Dropping out of school early was frequently mentioned (8 out of the 9 groups), but it was not ranked among the most important risks for action. It had an average rank of 3.0, corroborating the widely shared view in the group discussions that parents do not value education as an investment for their children.

**3.2.1.1 Gendered Perspectives on Risks Affecting Children in Kiyindi among Adults**

In the analysis, comparison is made between women and men’s perspectives on child protection risks, to obtain the gendered view. The analysis shows that there are variations among men and women regarding what risks are considered as most important. While the women ranked child neglect as the most prominent risk, the men considered child sexual abuse in the form of exposure to pornographic content, to be the most pressing risk. These results are shown in the table below:

**Table 4: Risks Mentioned and Ranked in FGD With Adults by Gender Segregation**

Risk	Frequency		Average rank	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
Child neglect	4/4	5/5	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.2</b>
Child labour	¼ (5th rank)	4/5	-	<b>1.6</b>
Child prostitution	¼(2th rank)	4/5	-	3.6
Defilement	¼(6th rank)	2/5	-	2.2
School drop out	4/4	4/5	3.5	2.6
Pornography (karaoke, films, sex shows, disco halls)	2/4	2/5	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.0</b>
Drug abuse	¾	2/5	3	<b>1.8</b>
Early pregnancy	4/4	2/5	5	2.4
Child sacrifice	¼(6th rank)	3/5	-	3.2
Physical violence against children(beating, burning)	2/4	2/5	4.25	3.8
Drowning	Not mentioned	3/5	-	4.4

Child neglect was mentioned as a risk affecting children in all the group discussions with men and women. However the gender analysis identifies the differences between the men and the women. Among the women, child neglect was the leading concern with an average rank of 1.0, while among

the men, neglect was the second most pressing issue with a rank of 1.2. Despite the differences in the perceptions of men and women, the results show that neglect is a high child protection concern in Kiyindi fishing community.

The men considered pornography to be the leading issue with a rank of 1.0. This risk is also considered to be dominant by the women. It was ranked second after neglect at 1.8. Children's exposure to pornographic content is a form of child sexual abuse that is rampant in Kiyindi.

There were also differences in the perceptions of men and women regarding child labour as a child protection concern. The male participants considered child labour to be the third most prominent protection concern with a score of 1.6. Overall, child labour was mentioned four out of five groups of men. Only one out of the four groups of women mentioned it as a problem. These differences could be attributable to the role that women play as socialization agents. Traditionally women take the lead in teaching children how to work, in preparation for their responsibilities as adults. It is therefore plausible, that acts of child labour are perceived as a normal part of training and socialization of children among the women.

Early pregnancy and school drop outs were also most frequently mentioned by women, although they were not ranked as important for action with ranks of 5 and 3.5 respectively.

### 3.2.2 Children's Perspectives

The children who participated in the study highlighted a range of risks they experience in this fishing community. Kiyindi fishing community is a high risk area for children regarding protection. Abusive practices have become normalized and are not seen as a form of violence.

Although they did not agree on the category of children that is most vulnerable to particular risks, there was consensus that children who are out of school, those from economically poor families, living with a step parent and single mother were most susceptible to most the risks in this community. Both girls and boys experience risks and engage in unsafe activities that generally match their gender as constructed by the community. For example while both are affected by the concern of child labour, the nature of work done by boys and girls varies. Young girls tend to work in the hospitality industry in hotels, restaurants, bars, lodges, while boys pick silver fish (*Mukene*) engage in fishing, hawking, carrying loads, and working in film halls. In cases of absent parents, boys have taken on the responsibility to care for their siblings. Traditionally the men are expected to fend for their families, and this role seems to be well understood by boys in Kiyindi. Boys venture away from their households to look for *mukene* for sale and food, leaving the girls at home alone, with limited protection where they are vulnerable to risks like sexual abuse. Girls experience defilement and some end up getting pregnant with more risks of abortion, HIV/AIDS and STIs. Boys are more vulnerable to experiencing drug abuse, while girls are more likely to engage in child prostitution. The perpetrators who cause harm to the children include relatives, parents, stepparents, strangers (kidnappers), teachers, richer men in the community, fishermen, drug users, and witches. Both boys and girls mentioned these as the perpetrators, with slight differences.

From the explanations and the observations, these child protection risks mostly occur in the homes, schools, at places of work, as well as in the community. The family and school are ideally considered safe havens where children are protected. However, these places do not provide full protection to children. Within the community, the children mentioned that they experience risks on their way to school, fetch water and collect firewood, near hills/highlands, the lake, in bars and lodges, in sex trade centers like *Kimwanyi*, in disco halls and film halls, around junctions, by the road. The children who have to fend for themselves through work were also susceptible to abuse while at the workplace.

Despite the unsafe surroundings in the community, there is deliberate effort by parents to protect the younger children. Parents seem to be aware of the environmental risks and circumstances that affect children at the landing site. In the discussions with children, it was observed that the younger children, particularly those below six years are guarded jealously by parents. This could also be influenced by the perception of childhood in this locality. The discussions reveal that the perception and definition of childhood in this community deviates from the national and internationally recognized definition. The community defines children as those young individuals who deserve extra attention; a child is seen as person below six years. Children above six years are seen as having survived the highly risk under 5 age group and are perceived as survivors who can overcome challenges. Such a child is deemed to have capacities similar to those of adults. In Kiyindi, a child who can work and contribute to family income is generally considered to be an independent person who does not need much protection. In the case of girls, once a young girl reaches puberty and begins to grow breasts, she ceases to be a child and becomes a woman.

The children identified diverse social and economic factors that accentuate the child protection risks. These include poverty, dysfunctional families, and low academic achievement of children. Poverty was identified as a factor driving abuse. The children indicated that the poverty was rampant and was the reason some parents hurt their children. This related to situations where the parents are frustrated and displace their anger to their children. It is also due to poverty that children resort to work at an early age in high risk occupations, as a strategy for meeting their basic needs and those of their families. Further, children in households that are headed by the elderly, particularly those who were living with their grandparents were also identified as being at high risk. These households tended to be poor, with weak and unproductive labour, heightening the vulnerability of the children.

In addition to poverty, disintegration of the family unit was also identified as a key factor in exposing children to child protection risks. Marriages within the landing site tend to be unstable. The marriage institution is fluid in nature and most of the people living together as couples are not formally married. Couples tend to cohabit, and breakup easily, leaving in their wake, children who grow up in the absence of one or both parents. In addition to this, it was also observed that there was lack of family planning and couples tended to produce more children than they can afford to take care of.

On the issue of low academic performance of children, it was observed that this was responsible for high school dropout rates. Parents are not motivated to keep children in school when performance is low. Children who are out of school are idle and easily sucked into unhealthy lifestyles that are characterized by violation of their protection rights.

In addition to the above, it was reported that some children have behavioral difficulties. The children in their descriptions conceded that some of their peers were unruly. In the fishing community, there is lack of rehabilitation services for such children. Physical punishment is the traditional approach for instilling discipline in children who are hyperactive and considered disruptive. Such children tend to be on the receiving end of their parents wrath, and are often victims of corporal punishment.

### **3.3 Specific Child Protection Risks Affecting Children in Kiyindi**

The prominent risks identified in the study are child neglect; child labour; early school dropout; child sexual abuse in the form of defilement, child pornography and prostitution; child sacrifice and ritual circumcision of children. This section provides a detailed description of the child protection concerns that were identified by children and adults in Kiyindi. Each risk is discussed together with what perpetuates it as well as the typical community response.



### 3.3.1 Child Neglect

Child neglect was identified as the most prominent child protection concern affecting children in Kiyindi fishing community. Participants often highlighted child neglect to be the “*mother and father*” (meaning that it was the leading cause of other risks) of most risks that children experience in the Kiyindi community. The discussions showed that it is because of child neglect that some children have been exposed to other risks such as dropping out of school, engaging in child labour, child prostitution, drug abuse, and most of the activities and situations that are construed as risky and detrimental to their wellbeing and development.

Neglect was defined as the failure of parents to provide their children with the basic needs of life like food, clothes, and educational materials. Children explained the parents’ failure to provide is a hindrance to developing their potential capabilities and allowing them to achieve their dreams.

Child neglect was highlighted in cases of failure to provide for education needs of children. Children reported that while many of their peers are eager to attend school, parents were not supportive of this. Parents did not pay school fees for the children nor provide guidance for them while in school. Although education in Uganda and especially in UPE schools is provided by the government, parents are expected to provide scholastic materials and other top up fees. Some parents do not provide this, meaning that their children do not access education.

Study participants in all the group discussions concurred that this was a pressing risk for children in the community. To illustrate this risk, participants often cited cases of a high number of ‘street’ children they usually see who are dirty, hungry and some dressed in torn clothes. Kiyindi is a rural landing site, with virtually no streets. Those who are classified as street children are the homeless or out-of-school children who spend most of their time roaming the landing site in search of work and food. These children are a present phenomenon and are visibly seen roaming the during day time. At night after the big day population leaves for the day to their various destinations, these children were seen sleeping under the kiosks or on verandas of shops/buildings on the streets.

Adolescent girls were also highlighted as more affected by parental neglect. During adolescence, the girls have unique demands which require money. They have needs like sanitary towels, but also want to look good. Parents do not take into consideration the unique needs of their adolescent daughters. The girls feel neglected, and some of them are forced to look towards inappropriate alternatives.

*For me I want to talk about girl children. They have a lot of demands which their parents can’t provide for them. So they run to us boys who can provide for them clothes and vaseline. So they go to films and clubs so they get early pregnancies and HIV and AIDS. The boys also get syphilis. Here kids start at a very early age to go for prostitution but all is due to poverty and neglect from their parents. So they come running to us all this is as a result of parental neglect. (FGD males 18-24 years)*

A girl will not stay without Vaseline and therefore she runs to someone who can provide where she ends up into prostitution, early marriage and even getting pregnant at an early age all as a result of parents’ failure to meet her necessities. On the whole, poverty exacerbates children’s vulnerability to neglect and also paves away for other more risks that children experience in this community.

Study participants identified and discussed a range of causes of child neglect. These included large family sizes, poverty, dysfunctional families, government policies, absentee parents, unruly children.

Child neglect was attributed to large family sizes, which made it difficult for the family heads to provide optimally for the needs of the members. Children in particular, blamed parents for not embracing family planning. The discussions pointed to a view that parents did not willfully fail to provide for their children. The parents instead fail to plan to have children that they can ably provide for. Parents give birth to more children than they have the capacity to provide for. In many of the ethnic cultures represented in Kiyindi, children are cherished and are seen as a symbol of wealth and posterity. Moreover, modern family planning methods are not fully embraced all over the country. In Kiyindi, where service provision is low, family planning services may not be easily accessible to those who are unable to travel to Kawolo hospital.

*Some parents give birth to so many children that they can't afford to look after by providing even the basic needs like food. Parents don't want to use family planning they over produce children which they can't ably care for. They lack enough food, clothes and health care. (FGD, boys, 11-17 years).*

Poverty was also identified as a leading cause of child neglect in Kiyindi. In the children's discussions, child neglect was attributed to poverty which is rampant among many families. Children argued that poverty effectively curtails the parents' ability to meet the basic needs of their families.

The discussions showed that there was rampant abuse of alcohol in Kiyindi community. It was reported that some parents choose to spend most of their time and resources on alcohol, and in the process, neglect to take care of their families and children. The participants in children's discussions explained that some parents spend their money on buying alcohol and they forget to take care of their children which brings another angle of parents that neglect their children by choice since the children's needs come second to alcohol

*Alcoholism, the parents end up spending all the money in the bars and when they come back home they can't provide well for their children. (FGD, girls, 11-17 years)*

The community in Kiyindi appears to be devoid of social sanctions and regulation of drinking hours. The cause of rampant alcoholism was beyond the scope of this study.

The study findings show that there were many unstable relationships in Kiyindi community. There is a lack of alternative provisions for children who are born in unstable relationships, leading to child neglect. Participants explained that men just impregnate the women and then they do not take responsibilities thereafter. Some men escape to the nearby islands (Buvuma) and they abandon the women and children. Single motherhood was also an issue that was highlighted as increasing children's vulnerability to neglect. In discussions with the men, they noted that most women in the community are single mothers. It was reported that women regularly change sexual partners, and some do not even know the real fathers of their children. Men take advantage of the knowledge that they are not the only partners, to deny paternity.

Discussions revealed that there was a phenomenon of wife swapping in Kiyindi. It is a common practice for one man to go with another man's wife. The scramble for the few women in Kiyindi has left children vulnerable to neglect as it has sometimes resulted into divorce and separation, domestic violence and withdraw of care. When men separate, they often remarry, and sometimes forget about the children sired in previous relationships. In situations where the men have custody of the children, the latter are subjected to abuse and neglect by their stepmothers. In children's discussions, step mothers and fathers were often identified as the perpetrators of the risks children experience.

*Stepmothers are jealous and tend to mistreat their step children. You will find a child who is very much willing to study but the parent doesn't want to pay school fees. I do have a friend in the village she is now 12 years but has not schooled even to P1 level.*

*Her name is xxxx. I asked her, “xxxx do you want to study?” And she said “yes”. She stays with her stepmother and the stepmother was not treating her well. She would tell her don’t go to school. I was at home and she came to help with chores at home I told her to help me and babysit my little brother and as soon she did so, her mother came took her inside the house and started caning her (FGD, girls, 11-17 years)*

*The orphans tend to live with step moms who mistreat them they are over beaten and overworked with little food. So children may run away from homes, drop out of school then later to discos and clubs and other related problems from there (FGD boys 11-17 years)*

During discussions, it was highlighted that cases that involve step mothers mistreating children are among the sensitive cases in the community. They are complex and entirely depend on the ability of a child to report or seek help. These cases are usually concealed from the public. It was noted sometimes children report to their fathers. This has consequences for the children. The child may not be believed. If the report of abuse is believed and the offending stepmother is confronted, the outcome is more mistreatment for the child. Since the fathers are always absent and the child spends more time with the step mother, the children opt to keep quiet about the mistreatment or they run away. Living with a step mother was identified as being particularly risky in this community. Step mothers were reported to mete out cruel punishment to their step children, which violates their protection rights.

The search for money contributes to the absenteeism of fathers from their families, a common phenomenon in Kiyindi. The fishery livelihood means that the men in Kiyindi migrate seasonally in search of fish. Traditionally men are the bread winners for their families. It was reported that some fathers leave their homes to go to the islands without making enough provision for food and other basic necessities for their families. Kiyindi is a patriarchal community, where the absence of the rule of the father has proved to be detrimental as things have fallen apart in some of the households with only a present mother. Participants explained that traditionally, children especially the boy children tend to respect listen to fathers more than the mothers. It is thus not uncommon that children abuse and belittle their mothers when they try to advise or discipline them. Children from families where fathers are frequently absent have thus become unruly; some have dropped out of school, are engaged in work, and are likely to end up in child marriages.

*Parents care more about money than their children; so the kids control themselves. The dads aren’t there at all. And yet it is fathers who have a voice. Mothers are easy which kids don’t respect (FGD males 18-24 years)*

*There is child neglect here as men go to fish they leave the children back and also go to the islands and then leave the children to fend for themselves. Most parents bring their children with them here so after lunch the kids are all over the lake. They interact with peers who easily influence them into poor mannerisms (Key Informant, male community elder)*

Another participant explains children that are neglected by their parents that work in towns and leave their children with guardians that are invalid and incapable of caring for them.

*Also parents go away to work and leave the children under the care of poor and invalid guardians like grandparents who aren’t able to take care of them. The 3 kinds of kids are those orphaned, those from fishermen and others are from working parents from towns so they leave them with the grannies. And they don’t give support to grannies so the kids fend for themselves they go stealing petty things, early pregnancies, school*

*drop outs, baby fathers so the viscous cycle comes back with the children born have no proper care and parents to nurture them.(KI 3, LC, government)*

This last quotation explains the three categories of children that experience neglect in this community; the orphaned, children of fishermen and also children of working parents in towns. It is not uncommon for parents to leave their children with the grandparents who are too frail to guide and bring up these children. The result is school dropouts, early pregnancies with these children giving birth to more children who will also give birth to children at an early age and the vicious cycle continues. There is need for intervention to break this cycle.

In the discussion with adults, government was blamed for disempowering parents and for taking away their power over their children. The adult discussions pointed to a notion that government has in the recent past made moves aimed at making parents powerless over their children. This leads to disillusionment with some parents giving up and letting the children be without parental authority. *“Children are now for the government, you can’t advise them, you can’t touch them, this is the era of children’s rights and children cannot be disciplined as they threaten the parents that they will report them to the authorities”*, most participants reckoned during the discussions. Some children have thus been neglected as a result.

*There is also child neglect and a problem of children rights you can’t correct any child today they will tell you they have their rights to do what they want. The government has continued to spoil our children. In the past, our parents would correct us as children. Today when you do it the police will arrest you. Today they don’t want to go to schools and we parents can’t intervene because they will take you to prison. .... So this has deterred us men to discipline our children, like we fishermen we have several women and once the kid reports you to the mother they can misinterpret it that you wanted to defile your girls(FGD men 45 years)*

The discussions with parents point to a deliberate move to abdicate their responsibilities towards children under the guide of child rights. It was not clear in the discussions what messages the parents had heard pertaining to child rights. The parents however explained their lackadaisical hands off parenting approach as being motivated by children’s rights. These findings point to the need to package issues of rights in a way that emphasizes the responsibilities of both children and parents. Children’s rights are meant to protect them and enhance their survival, development and participation in community affairs, not to disempower parents.

In relation to the above, it was also reported that some children in the fishing community were deviant and difficult to manage. The children were reported to be unruly and to routinely exhibit behavior that is unmanageable. In such situations, parents have opted to give up on these children. This is made worse by the lack of counseling and correctional services in the community. These children are neglected and left to fend for themselves.

*Some children are unruly they don’t listen to their parents so the parent may get annoyed with them like beat and chase them from home (FGD boys 11-17 years)*

Child Neglect has increased children’s vulnerability to torture and abuse in Kiyindi. Participants explained that children are forced to adapt inappropriate coping strategies. Neglected children turn to a life of petty crime. Children caught stealing, are beaten and tortured. The discussions indicated that there have been fatalities involving children who were caught in criminal activities. During a key informant interview with a government official, an account of an incident where twin children were caught in the act of theft was shared with the research team. Unfortunately the twins were set on

fire in an act of mob justice, and burned alive as an example to other children on the consequences of theft.

*We had 2 children who were twins and they are now dead. They were thieves and everyone was crying because of these kids. The parents gave up on them. They would steal everything they would come across. They caught them around Jinja and they were killed. They used to live with their granny as their so called father denied them. The granny came to me and said we got a problem when they brought these kids to me I think it was diverted blood. They had started living in bushes and everyone was aware of them (KI 3, government).*

The account of mob justice was validated by other study participants in the focus group discussions:

*In this community once they get children stealing they may burn them. R5: You can be helped once the police come fast but if they delay (FGD males 11-17 years).*

*Here we have a lot of mob justice cases are there a person may steal something small and may just be a suspect and may end up burnt (FGD, males, 18-24 years).*

Participants highlighted that they opt for mob justice as both a punishment for the crime committed, but also as a preventive measure to deter other children from engaging in similar behavior. The team probed further why the communities may not feel sympathy for such children, and participants explained that when they are burning or torturing such children, they are burning the thief, and not a child.

Child neglect also results into early pregnancies and sometimes single motherhood. The children born in such circumstances are susceptible to emotional violence. The discussions revealed that children are victims of abuse with their parents hurling abusive insults when the children ask for the basic necessities. The girls explained:

*Some parents do not love their children. They are children themselves when they become pregnant and are neglected and abandoned. When she delivers she hates the child (FGD, Girls, 11-17 years).*

Children are called names and emotionally abused. If the child asks for anything like food at home, some of the single mothers shout at them with insulting phrases like 'your father did not leave any plot of land/plantation to get the food from'; 'go and ask your father for food', you look like your run away father'. These abuses were noted to sometimes also force children to run away from home explaining the high prevalence of 'street children' in Kiyindi. Many of the children born at the landing site are as a result of unwanted pregnancies. The lack of family planning services and the way of life of the inhabitants the landing sites means that there are many young women who conceive in the process of engaging in survival sex. These do not access crisis pregnancy services and end up having children towards whom they have a lot of resentment.

There is a phenomenon of child headed families in Kiyindi. Before the HIV/AIDS epidemic, such a situation had never been heard of. Children were always left under the care of a member of the extended family. Child headed families phenomenon was first attributed to the AIDS mortality which weakened the capacity of the extended families to take care of the orphans left behind. In Kiyindi child headed families are not associated with orphanhood. As noted earlier, in the search for money, participants highlighted that most of parents leave their homes very early in the morning to do fishing and related activities leaving the children without any adult authority and supervision. Some of the parents do not leave enough of the basics like food. Thus most children are forced to fend for themselves by engaging in risky activities like fishing, and prostitution. Girls sometimes engage in prostitution in order to raise money to take care of themselves, their parents and their siblings as

explained. Participants reported cases of reversed roles whereby children are taking care of their parents, instead of the other way round. Further, some parents send their children to go into prostitution so that they can bring food at home. The following quotations highlight what was in the discussions:

*Some parents force their children to go for early marriages and also to do prostitution around Kimwanyi. Women wear short skirts and young girls. The boys go to buy them from there around ages of 14 – 15 years above (FGD girls 11-17 years).*

*In most cases, the parents are the ones who have spoiled the children. Due to the scarcity at home, the parents tell the child to go and work and when a child goes and earns some money he completely forgets about going to school (KI 6, community).*

*..... We have seen families where kids are bread winners, the moms tell the daughters like “Namukasa today, won’t we eat bread?” She is expecting her to get bread from her boyfriends and even bring fish from her good friends. Currently we are faced with excessive poverty it is striking more among children than adults. Here when food is little it is left for dad and mom and the young ones take tea. We have seen dad and mom take fish and kids are left to have whatever little is there like greens. That has caused our children to drop out of schools we commonly call them early leavers sorry it is an abusive word (KI 3 male , government).*

According to the discussions, when the proceeds that the girls bring home after exchanging their bodies with fishermen are not sufficient, the former may be denied the right to partake of the family meal. Generally, those quotations point to the coping strategies that children are taking in response to the risk of child neglect but which have long term impacts on the children as they are exposed to early pregnancies for the girls, contraction of diseases like HIV/AIDS, STIs.

*It is boys they indulge in child labor to cater for the siblings once parents are not there. They steal, fish, potters, others dig for others and also go for betting. Children also become street children. They become fisher men. Some can hang themselves and die. They can resort to stealing (FGD boys 11-17 years).*

This quotation ushers us to the next risk that children experience in this community which is child labour. Child labour is largely attributed to child neglect. Child neglect is an issue that deserves urgent attention although not much seems to be done to address the issue. The problem has been normalized and since it is happening to many children, the victims cannot seek help because their peers are going through the same.

### **3.3.2. Child Labour**

Children in this fishing community are engaged in different economic activities that increased their vulnerability to other multiple risks. Activities that deprived children of the opportunity to go to school were qualified as child labour. Study participants seemed to agree with the idea that education was vital for the holistic development of the child, and provided individuals with the chance to actualize their potential. The discussions and observations show that children are engaged in different forms of hazardous work including trade, sex trade, fishing, farming, stone quarrying, hospitality and domestic service. Although not entirely exclusive, child labour activities have a gender dimension, with boys and girls specializing in particular activities.

In Kiyindi, Friday is market day and children are actively involved in selling of products. Children are employed by the traders to assist in the hawking some of the items sold in the market. In addition,

the children serve as human microphones and are hired to shout out and publicise goods on sale and the associated prices. It is children who are employed to call customers as they 'sing' the price of the goods being sold to attract customers. Some children are employed to carry the loads of the businessmen. There is a preference for the children's labour because it's cheaper than the adults, children are fast, flexible, and can be exploited. Children are able to accept lower wages compared to adults, and can also allow compensation in kind, usually in the form of food. In some cases, children's motivation to engage in child labour is the desire to access basic needs like food. This makes them vulnerable to exploitation by their employers.

While some children voluntarily and proactively seek for employment from the market, others have no choice as they are required to support their parents on the market day. The parents are not willing to employ and pay for extra labour, when their children can perform the same tasks. Parents therefore encourage and instruct their children to work for them during the Friday market. Those working for their parents are not paid.

*Child labor, is rampant on Fridays because it is market day. Parents tell their kids to carry their stuff to the market to help them around. We are trying to weed out this problem. We are working with police, and the education department but the problem is still high. Children do all sorts of jobs. They work as waiters, wash plates, and work on the boats. Within a short time, they drop out of school and start their own businesses (KI 1, male officer, government).*

The males FGD of 18-24 years also explained that the parents, because of poverty opt for their children to hawk some of the goods to make some money as the parents get busy in other activities.

*It is true because of poverty they make children carry baskets of maize and bananas selling around as for her she is in the garden or doing other things (FGD, males, 18-24 years)*

*For the Taxi park children are there during weekends selling food stuffs like cassava and what you need to know, mostly parents here own food kiosks and the she will send the child to go and vend food stuffs as she attends to other chores at home (IDI boy, 11-17 years)*

The cause for concern is the implications for school attendance. All group discussions indicated that classrooms are empty every Friday. There is no learning in the schools within the landing sites as both children and teachers go for the market day. It was reported that some parents are strict and make effort to ensure that their children go to school instead of the market. The allure of the market is more attractive for the children who find ways of dodging school. They pack extra clothing, and escape from school later in the day. The school uniform is replaced with the extra clothing, and the children are able to disguise themselves and blend in with the rest of the population.

Participants also explained that children get involved in fishing itself. Children however do the auxiliary tasks in the fisheries sector. They clean the fish when it is bought to remove the scales and the entrails. During night time, children are deployed to temporarily hoist lamps for the fishermen to provide lighting for ongoing fishing activities. In the aftermath of fishing expeditions, the children are involved in a range of activities including cleaning the fishing boats, washing the engines, buying and refilling fuel. Within the fisheries sector, children engage in tasks that are perceived to be particularly difficult and unsuitable for their ages. One of the key informants showed concern as he explained:

*When you look at the age of the child, you get worried. You find a child of 7 years in the boats helping out the fishermen on the lake. When you ask the fisherman why he*

*has allowed the young child to get on the boat, he will tell you that it's the parent who gave the child to him. And when you ask the parent why, he just tells you, "leave my child he is looking for school fees." Yet when the child starts working and making some little money, you cannot tell him about school any more (KI 6 community).*

Children also provide transport to passengers who disembark from the boats. The children carry the passengers on their backs, wading through the waters to the safety of the dry shores. This happens in situations where passengers who do not want the inconvenience of getting wet as they alight from the boats. Discussions with children revealed that they are paid approximately Uganda shillings five hundred (500) for this service.

One of the first things that the research team observed upon arrival at Kiyindi landing site was children moving around with polythene packaging bags commonly referred to as *buveras*. These children scavenge the rubble at drying places to pick up remnants of silver fish, which they sell and get money. The polythene bags are used for collection of the fish. In addition to collection of fish, children in Kiyindi can negotiate and access the fishing boats. The money earned from fishing is perceived as more beneficial to children than attending school. Child labour provides instant benefits and gratification to the children. This is in contrast to education, whose benefits are long term and cannot be guaranteed. This was illustrated by the girls as shown below:

*When you work you are able to make some money for survival. Children who are out of school are the ones who convince their peers to join them in money making schemes. On a good day, it is possible to make twenty thousand shillings (20,000) out of a fishing expedition. For a child who is in school, this is a lot of money. Many children prefer the short term gains of fishing to long term promises of education. This is why many children are dropping out of school (FGD girls, 11-17 years).*

Children also fetch water for some of the restaurants and eating places that are in Kiyindi. Although some were mentioned to fetch water for their homes in the lake because their homes are too poor to afford tapped water, others who want to save what they would have paid for the twenty liters container opt for the lake water. The lake is not a safe place to fetch water and the research team heard that children sometimes drown as they draw water.

For those that are involved in farming, children also go to the rice gardens to chase away birds instead of going to school. Some families in Kiyindi have adopted the growing of upland rice. The rice plant is prone to birds as pests. To control the pests, children are employed as scarecrows to shoo away the birds. Children in this kind of employment spend the whole day at work in the rice fields.

In addition to this, children are also involved in stone quarrying. The landing site has a stone quarry and trucks from different destinations come to buy stones that are used in construction. Rudimentary methods are used to crack the stones. Children work in the quarry, under direct sunlight where they hammer stones. This activity is labour intensive and has harsh working conditions. There is no protection from weather conditions.

The girls are mostly employed in the hospitality and entertainment sector. Specifically, the girls work in bars, restaurants and lodges. Young girls work as strip dancers during 'karaoke' nights in some of the bars and halls. It was noted that girls serving in hotels and lodges easily engage in prostitution since the customers are at their disposal.

Child labour has forced most of the children to drop out of school since they also want to make some quick money. Boys and girl children engage in sexual activity at an early age, because when these young boys make money, they buy alcohol and also women. Participants said that the prostitute



does not mind if this is a child buying her, as long as the child has money. Below are some of the participants and how they explained what they named as child labour.

*Some of the children who don't go to school are the ones who work in video halls, they watch films and share the money collected to the boss and remain with the money that is what he uses to buy food. Children who don't go to school, They go to markets especially on Fridays and sing like this cloth is for 1000, 500 and they are paid at the end of the day. Boys are the one who offload goods from the vehicle and place it down and others clean shoes they dry them on sunshine and at times they are given shoes and they are not paid, when they give them shoes, they don't give them money (FGD girls, 11-17 years).*

Children who are engaged in child labour are exploited by their employers. They are given a lot of work and earn fewer wages than they deserve. .

*Children indulge in child labor due to the need of money. The perpetrators underpay them. Even if they give them 500/= they will accept to work even food alone is good. I don't know how we can help. When you intervene they warn you over your children, so this weakens the system. A tin of mukene ( silver fish) goes for shillings 20,000 but kids can give it to you at shillings 8,000 (Male, community elder).*

When participants were about responses to child labour, most of them highlighted that not much is being done to help these children. Child labour has been accepted as a normal part of childhood and socialization. Child labour was identified as one of the risks that have been normalized in the community. Almost every child is engaged in some form of child work. The distinction between child labour and child work is blurred. It was also highlighted that the issue of child labour is complex since some of the perpetrators are the parents. Parents send their children to go and work and bring money home. As a response by the police and the office of community development at the sub-county level, they have been involved in ensuring that the law is enforced and children go to school. However, they noted that they have been let down by the parents and community members that is interested in cheap labour. The local government officials are also bogged down by multiple responsibilities, which make enforcement weak.

*So it's mostly their parents who encourage children to work. This is made worse by the business community which is interested in cutting costs, and hence the attraction of cheap labour from children. As enforcers we also have a weakness. We only do our enforcement work on Fridays. So we are also partly to blame for this (KI 1 male, government).*

The Beach management Unit enacted a bylaw prohibiting children from fishing and being at or near the lake. Although this bylaw provides an opportunity to protect children from child labour and other risks, it has not been enforced. It was reported that enforcement of the bylaw is hampered by lack of cooperation from the parents. Instead of working with the BMU to enforce the laws, the parents support the work of their children, Parents express displeasure at the interference of the BMU in matters concerning children. This was highlighted by one of the key informants:

*The children come and fish and do other work to cater for their parents. When you chase the kids the parents curse you. So we have also run out of options and right now we just let the children be. Today if you punish a child you find in the lake some parents come and abuse you. So we leave them and sometimes they drown. When these accidents happen, the same parents who complain that we ban their children from the lake turn around and blame us. Recently we paid money to the police to secure the release of a BMU member. The BMU member chased a kid from Mukene (silver fish)*

*picking. The parent reported and the police arrested the member. We had to pay to get him released. WE have always tried to help as BMU members but we are frustrated. So right now, we do not pay any attention to incidents that involve children (KII 2, community).*

The group discussion with elderly males corroborated the idea that enforcement of bylaws was difficult in Kiyindi. They recognized that there were gaps in law enforcement, where the authorities did not have the capacity to effectively implement laws. The problems in enforcement of bylaws points to the need for harmonization and linkage of between the community and the law enforcement agents as they work together for the good of the community.

*There are committees here that protect children from risks and harms. We even have bylaws that help to provide some protection for children, but we are not able to enforce these. The culprits go free as the parents choose not to report cases (FGD men 45 years +)*

### **3.3.3 Early School Dropout**

School drop outs was frequently mentioned by the participants as a common risk that children experience in Kiyindi. Most children do not go to school and even those that go, do not complete the school cycle. It was reported that school completion rates in Kiyindi were very low. Children drop out in middle school around primary level four and five. In some cases, some children do not enroll for school at all. This is because of several reasons but most notably is the parents' and children's indifference towards education, poverty, and poor school environment. These factors are explained further.

Most children and parents do not appreciate the value and contribution of education. Most of the parents did not go to school and have a negative attitude towards education. In such cases, the parents do not appreciate the relevance of education to their children. Others argue that fishing in the lake does not require any educational qualifications and therefore as long as the lake is there, children will be able to survive even in the absence of formal education. Children aspire to be fishermen. The fishermen in the community are the affluent members. Children do not have alternative role models. The fishermen are uneducated and have never been to school, yet they have money. Children look for seemingly sure way of improving their fortunes through fishing to the long term uncertainty of education. Working in the community offers instant benefits and is preferable to the long term benefits that are not guaranteed by investing for years in education. Also most children lack role models since most of their peers have dropped out of school. Participants explained below.

*Because we are not educated we end up not minding about our children's' education. Most people in this community are not educated but they are okay. A person can survive even without education. That could be the reason we have a lot of school dropouts in this area (FGD, men, 45+ years)*

*We have many problems in the landing site but one of the most prominent ones is the high numbers of school age children who are out of school. Most people here pay attention to their businesses. They are not particularly concerned about taking their children to school (KI, 8, government)*

*The most pressing risk affecting children here is failing to go to school. This has led children into undesirable situations where they experience other forms of abuse such as child labor and child prostitution. If children were in school, they would be protected. They would not be available for exploitation. Children look at their*

*employers and parents who are uneducated, so they aren't encouraged to go to school. They prefer to go and work for survival (KI 3, government)*

You do not need any qualification to fish in the lake and so as long as the lake is still there, the community widely believes that children will survive even if they do not go to school. A community elder who has been in Kiyindi for more than 40 years explains that fishing does not require any qualifications so education is not valued.

*Children grew up knowing that their parents are not educated. They go to the lake for fishing and earn a living there. Most people would take their children to other schools away from here because we didn't even have schools here. In holidays they would take them to the islands. They would not stay here. This place is very tough and it is difficult to raise a child here. People behave badly around here..... We push children to school because you are told but not like you are obliged to take him or her to school.....We don't need qualifications to go fishing so going to school isn't key here (Male community elder).*

Parents are not looking beyond the lake and the unpredictable future when fish supplies are dwindling in the lake due to various factors. In the future, fishing may not be the lucrative business it is today. Moreover, the government started selling parts of the lake to some private individuals which implies that in future, access and fishing will be restricted to only those who are authorized to use the lake.

Besides the indifferent attitude of parents towards education, other children also drop out of school because their parents cannot afford the fees charged by the schools. Participants noted that education in public schools under the Universal Primary Education (UPE) program is not absolutely free. There are a series of fees that parents are expected to pay in order to support the stay of children in school. These include examinations fees, building fund, meals. Additionally, some parents can't even afford scholastic materials like books, pens, and even uniforms. All these needs sometimes force the children to provide labour so that they can earn some money to enable them pay. However, it was noted that the moment the child starts working and earning some little money, they lose the motivation to stay in school. Earning money provides greater value than staying in school.

*Schools are there but majority are expensive and others are very far and even government schools, we pay money, we pay 65000 shillings. The money we pay is for school fees (FGD, girls, 11-17 years).*

When a child is given five hundred shillings to buy something to eat, children regard this as little money for break, lunch until evening, thus some have dropped out of school because parents cannot give them enough money to buy food at school. It is acknowledged that enough feeding is very important if children are to stay in school.

The schools and the general school environment also force some of the children to drop out prematurely. Children are exposed to risks of sexual, physical and emotional abuse which forces them to drop out prematurely. Children blamed teachers for perpetration of abuse. It was reported that some teachers sexually abuse and impregnate the girls they are supposed to protect. Children explained that the teachers also abuse substances like alcohol and so they come to the classrooms while intoxicated and may not teach the required hours.

The schools are not safe for children. Schools are characterized by hardships that children have to endure, making the schooling experience unfriendly. The children have to walk long distances to get to the schools. They are given homework which conflicts with the domestic chores allocated by

parents as soon as the children get home. Corporal punishment is part of the school routine and is used by teachers to enforce discipline. The school managers and the parents believe in good grades and so if children do not get better positions in class, their parents harass them, dismissing them as failures. This discourages children and compels some of them to drop out of school. In addition, some of the schools do not even have the equipment and facilities like laboratories and libraries. Others lack enough teachers and so children spend time at school without learning which discourages them.

*School is not a good place really. We have a number of problems there. We do not have enough teachers and also we don't have laboratories. Some teachers come when drunk and teach few hours. They beat us for nothing. It is also common for some teacher to befriend girls which results in early pregnancy and school dropout (FGD boys 11-17 years).*

The common response to the high school dropout has been from the police by way of trying to enforce the law to ensure that all children go to school. The officer explained that they move around the landing site during the day and school time, and they 'chase' away the children who are seen loitering or are at work places with their parents. The biggest challenge they highlighted was that the parents curtail their efforts because they defend the children. The parents justify that the children need to work in order to raise money to pay for school fees and other needs.

*You know here at the landing site because as police we normally go and search for children who are picking Mukene and are not at school. We chase them from the site, but their parents normally defend them that they are looking for school fees (K1, 8, female, government).*

*The attitude of our communities.....mostly the attitude. They prioritize getting money. Like for education most of them do not believe in education, they believe in getting quick money and with fishing, you get quick money. They just go for fishing at night, by morning they have money. So they see the process of going to school which takes like 16 years to complete as rather too long. Fishing is a viable and quick alternative for them (K1 1 government)*

The indifferent attitude of parents and children towards education was seen as an impediment to children's access to education. Parents prioritize their businesses that bring quick money to education whose benefits come after a longtime. Parents do not care or inspire and encourage their children to go to school. If a child shows any signs and intentions of leaving school, it sounds like a relief to some of the parents.

Children miss out on the inspiration and encouragement and support that would help them persevere in the demanding school environment. In other homes, the parents are not even available. Separation and domestic violence was also highlighted as forcing the children to drop out of school. A good home environment is equally as important as a school environment to encourage children to stay in school. Interventions to address the high school dropout must take on a holistic approach that looks at the challenges that children encounter in the home and school environment, and the general community. Children and parents need to appreciate the value of education, the school environment must be favourable with inspiring teachers, the general community and fishermen must also show cause and embrace education. Since fishermen are admired by the children, those that embrace education can be called up on to go around the schools encouraging children to value education. Children can also have mentors who are fishermen but who embrace education to encourage the children. Children listen to parents more, so on the whole, intervention must address parents'

attitude towards education and education of their children because they are key in motivating these children to complete their education. Parents need to be engaged further for them to appreciate the importance of education. It is after this that they can work together with the police and other institutions to make sure that their children go to school.

### 3.3.4 Defilement

Child sexual abuse in the form of defilement was also identified as one of the risks that affect children in Kiyindi, particularly the girl child. Although the legal definition of defilement is performing a sexual act with a person below 18 years, the community in Kiyindi has its own definition and categorization. Participants defined defilement in two distinct types namely: real defilement and defilement for money. This categorization also determines the kind of reporting mechanisms and community response. What is believed to be real defilement that causes alarm in the community is where the child involved is around 6 years and below. These cases are regarded as intolerable and reported to police. Girls above those years are not believed to be really defiled and when this happens, parents will sit down with the perpetrator to resolve this case out of the formal court and judicial processes. What the community regards as aggravated defilement is the 'real defilement' but they lower the years to 6 years, leaving girls above 6 and 14 years neglected. Sex with a girl who has breasts irrespective of if they are below 18 years is regarded as simple defilement. This is what they regard as defilement for money because usually when the parents report anywhere, the communities claim that their intention is to get financial or material gain from the perpetrator.

*It is the government that is enforcing the law but for them it is not a case. Also the defilements have levels. Those who are 10 years and older aren't considered to victims of defilement (KI 3 government)*

There also other cases of 'aggravated' defilement where the fathers defile their children. The issue of having step parents was said to worsen the vulnerability of girl children staying in the families. The step fathers defile the step daughters. What happens to such cases is that the family wants to resolve the issue quietly to protect the image of the man and the family. As a result, usually no formal help is sought.

While some participants blamed the cause of defilement on men who have lost morals and just want to lure small girls into sex, other participants differed arguing that girls in Kiyindi voluntarily accept to be used by the men. The perpetrators of defilement in this community were noted to be mostly the rich business and fishermen, and second are the boda-boda (motorcycle) riders. The denominator here is having money.

*Most growing up girls face a problem of immoral men. There are cultural and institutional barriers to reporting these cases. The girls give up and turn into child prostitutes (FGD, men, 45 + years)*

*Some children are defiled as they come to school and go to wells. Some children lack basic needs and scholastics so basing on wrong peers advice they may drop out of school (FGD boys 11-17 years in school)*

*The commonest risk here is defilement and the end result is early pregnancy. Anyway, around Kiyindi, they aren't forced, they like what they do. Girls around the age of 12-13 years tend to hang out with older men around bars. One time I was called by an old man to come and see what is going on in my area. I came disguised with a cap on and saw the young girl kissing a mature man and romancing him around. (KI 3, government).*

It was noted that fisher men prefer young girls because they are still “intact” and have no diseases and can boost the libido of the old men

*The adults tend to like young girls due to young breasts and bums. Some men lose libido and the young girls boost them up as they can't judge anything. Children don't complain and don't have demands. We had a rich guy who used to make them to keep their money that alone would lure them (KI 3, government).*

Children accused the fisher men of exploiting their needy situations and vulnerability and luring young girls into early sex by blinding them with fish and other items like money that they know the girls need, in exchange for their virginity.

*He will say that you come and I give free Nile Perch. And after that he will tell you big words, for example he will tell you that 'come and we sleep together.' He will tell you to go and tell your mother that he is the one who has given you this fish and after that when you meet again, he will tell you; do you think I gave you the fish for free? He will ask you 'by the way are you still a virgin? You didn't take my fish for free. This is the time to break your virginity.' (FGD, girls, 11-17 years).*

These girls are explained how the adult men take advantage of the young girls by giving them what they need. These are men with power of the money and fish which the young girls need but the community blames the girls without appreciating these unequal power relations. In cases where such girls get any problems, no one is interested in helping them since the communities claim that they took themselves there. Also, in the above quotation, it can be deduced that when the fishermen give fish to the girls to take it to their mothers, they expect feedback from these mothers of either approval or disapproval. If the mother accepts the fish, it implies that she has approved and the man can go ahead and demand for what he now perceives as rightfully belongs to him. But still for this case, poverty here and inability to provide for the family by the parents leaves them with no choice but to leave their girls as prey for these fishermen. It's unfortunate that when the girls get impregnated these men now do not want to take any more responsibility they instead look out for more virgin girls.

Defilement has exposed young girls to early pregnancies and early marriages since some are married off to their perpetrators. Some of these marriages however do not last long, the perpetrators perhaps accept to marry the girl to cool down the situation and then after the girl is mistreated and she is forced to leave and either go back to her home or get married elsewhere.

Some of the children noted that when they experience such risks, they can report to their family members and most especially the girls prefer to report to their mothers while the boys prefer to report to their fathers. On the other hand some children do not report the cases anywhere and some end up aborting in case the defilement resulted into a pregnancy.

*...Most of the times they deal with them alone. We see several aborting and put the fetus in a kaveera and throw on the garbage bin. ....Defilement cases because they (family) expect to get money out of it, they only come to us once contract isn't honored. Once the girls are around 10 years above they settle with the culprits however they are tough when it happens around ages 6 years and below. Sometimes we put their cases at the police and they ask for complainants who have already with drawn the cases once they are given money (KI 3, government).*

What was clear in the three types of defilement mentioned was that they have different responses. If 'real' defilement happens, the case is reported to police for help. If the child is believed to have grown (indicators are a girl who has grown breasts), this defilement case is handled at the family

level. The parents of the girl will meet with the perpetrator and sometimes his parents if he is still a young boy. Different resolutions can be agreed upon. This may include a decision that the girl be married off to the offender; in other cases the perpetrator is made to pay some money instead of being taken to prison or police. It was however noted that in case the perpetrator does not respect/fulfill what he had promised, that is when the parents of the girl will now seek help from the formal systems of child protection like the police. In some cases, the offended party may seek the intervention of the district local council chairperson, who hails from Kiyindi. Participants however explained that they are not always satisfied with the outcomes of this approach as explained for instance:

*They don't get satisfied with the whole process. Those who agree can get 1-2 million especially if you the reporter you are strong. But as well the poor can also get help once they resolve it out of court. They will tell you that you are also a parent, it will come to you also any time....The poor fear and would vote for settling out of court. The reporters if poor they may assume you are looking for money from the offenders. So they may advice you to go and do your work to get food for the day. No one is there to back you (Male community elder (KI 4)).*

This approach also benefits the rich who can bargain and can be backed up by the community. The economically poor are still more vulnerable because of their poor background that puts them in powerless and isolated positions. During these family meetings, it was also argued that it is the men that take the lead in deciding most of the issues. In case of a disagreement, the mother pulls out because she wants to protect the child and the marriage or evade domestic violence. However, the child will not be anywhere present in those meetings and thus they have no say, the outcomes are just communicated to her and she has to comply with any outcomes that are reached.

*Now the parents may disagree once the dad may want you to sit down and agree with the perpetrators and the mother may refuse. So he may tell the mom to go with her kid or separation with beatings. So the woman may withdraw from the case. Kids have no say in this it is the parents that decide. They may also not want the public to know others may like the defiler after enjoyment (KI 1, government).*

One of the reasons why families also handle defilement cases is because they want the matter to remain private. If the police is involved, it will have to do investigations and the whole village will end up knowing that so and so's daughter was defiled which will affect the image of the child affecting her ability to get married in future.

In the same vein, cases that involve defilement by a father are more complex and the woman prefers such cases to remain a secret and will not want to report such a case. It is worse off if the woman and her children are also dependent on that man who is the defiler like in this case:

*They (children) report cases in family concerning dad and mom. They tell other relatives and neighbors that dad defiles me at night, but the issue is how we can start it up. We have a case where a girl told a neighboring family that dad uses me at night. So we talked to the mother but she accepted that her man is like that so she fears where to start. She knows what the dad is doing but doesn't want the secret to be spilled off. They run to us here but we all fear the man he can chase them off and abandon them. So we are constrained because we can't help from there. Defilement is common but we are trying to fight it, the perpetrators are relatives in homes, around bars and schools. There is a lot of domestic violence as parents separate then leave children alone (KI 5, government).*

*Also we get several dropouts as the culprits give them money so they silence the cases; so children no longer report cases (FGD, men, 45 years +).*

The money exchange issue (corruption/bribes) has failed children and parents from utilizing the formal mechanisms of child protection. It was alleged that the police sometimes also extorts money from the defilers and afterwards sets them free. Thus communities argued that it does not help the poor person to report the case in police because anyway, the rich will pay their way out. Communities see selective application of the law and access to justice by those that can afford to pay. So some argued that the issue is about who takes the money that the defiler will be made to give (the victim herself, the parents/family, police?). Communities will report cases where they are likely to partake of the outcomes. Participants cited common cases of concealment that are failing the child protection agencies but all these have money exchange or material gains as the incentive. A key informant in a high position in government explained this scenario.

*...When the single mother is coming to police, what takes them there? It is justice. They come looking for justice but we have cases where justice is not given because of the drive to conceal, the drive to get materially or financially gain from such cases on the side of police or LC... There are good structures that are well known where communities can come in and report such cases for example the law enforcement agencies like police, LC, office of the CDO, probation and welfare office. Some of these are in the communities where by if people report, these are supposed to respond accordingly, apprehend, arrest and prosecute the culprits involved in the vices. But there is a negative response which is known to be prevalent, that is concealment of the crime, which can be by the victim herself who is defiled, the parents and most especially the mothers. And this is because if you went to research deeper into these cases where the information is concealed, the mothers of these children who are defiled are usually from vulnerable families, vulnerable children and where the law enforcement agency or the person in authority suggests negotiations out of the known law procedures, you find that such an act can also be concealed by the victim, the families, and the communities with the help of the police and the LC unfortunately. Concealment remains at the level of the community so that the case does not come through (KI 5, government).*

It was agreed that the biggest factor responsible for concealment is vulnerability. This is most common in the economically poor families, and those headed by single mothers. The vulnerability is not only in terms of money but also lack of knowledge on the procedures and the law. It is unfortunate that even when they come to institutions where they are supposed to obtain help like the police, the help is not given. Because of lack of knowledge of procedure, what these institutions propose is what the clients take. It is not uncommon that the police and LC propose settling out of court for such serious cases like defilement. Thus the level of empowerment will determine and dictate how the victim, family and community responds to some of these cases that they experience in the community.

### **3.3.5 Pornography**

Participants lamented about their children being denied their childhood by getting exposed to sexual content in the media that is believed to be beyond their age. When one sets his/her foot in Kiyindi landing site, what is glaring are the bars, lodges, film halls, disco halls, places which participants both adults and children unanimously agreed are unsafe for children. Participants highlighted that the Karaoke nights have proved to be an adequate threat to the children especially the girl children. In an interview with a community elder, he explained the grave things children are exposed to:-



*Full of Vulgarism, nakedness, among other things, we have a 10 year old who even entertains the audience. No one is concerned a part from the police to intervene to stop the kids. Also the police might not know who is inside or not. Once you punish some ones kid they will make you pay for correcting him or her, so we chose to look on (KI 4, a community elder).*

*There is a happening place called strong bar, it's more of a bar and stages karaoke and it also attracts children to go there, it happens three days in a week that is on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday and for Sunday most children don't go to school and gives them an opportunity to go there. When a child goes there and finds people miming, he starts admiring kale siinga ndi ngoyo ( I wish I was like that girl singing and dancing!) and this makes the child to get attracted to it and she will start escaping from home. There also abamansulo (Nude dancing) and these also attract children who end up getting spoilt(IDI, boy, 11-17 years, out of school).*

There is an influx of bars in Kiyindi and these have all sorts of shows including sex shows, nude dancing yet they are open to all including children. Children who go there want to go back again and some have ended up dropping out of school. Men and women with money are found in those places and these lure the girls into early sex as they practice what they have watched. Worse still, some girls are made to perform in those karaoke nights where they get customers after entertaining the audiences. A community elder laments that no one else is intervening apart from the police. The community members just get entertained by the children and no one gets bothered.

In a key informant with an official in government, he also explained the complexity of this issue as he asserts that some parents come with their children to film halls where blue movie (pornographic) films are projected.

*Also kids enter films and watch all kinds of films whether adult films or not, once you touch the kid or tell him or her to go out the parent will tell you leave my kid I will report you to the authorities..... We sit with them in the film halls the film hall owner wants money so we watch adult films with kids as young as 5years onwards. Until the mother will tell him or her to move away, you can praise yourself that you have better children but people tell you what about your kids. They did this and this.....The whole system is spoilt with peer groups. We have karaoke and clubs here but the parents and their kids come with them. We advised them to take kids back and they asked us are you the one who paid for them? So we could just leave them (A KI 2, male community elder).*

While some participants highlighted that some of the parents take their children to the film halls, others asserted that child neglect is the main cause of this because some parents leave their children under no guidance and as they are busy searching for money, the children are busy getting spoilt. Some parents leave while their children are still sleeping and they come back when they are already asleep and thus are not aware of what the children were involved in. A few other parents just leave the children with money as they go to work but they are not aware how this money is being spent as explained:-

*I was once part of committee member and I wanted to discipline the kids but they could tell you mom gave me the money. So the role of dads is missing in homes as moms are easy and flexible (FGD men 45 years+).*

*Children go for betting but still at night in the evening you find them in town just walking around and you will also find him in a disco yet he is a young child, in most cases, young children are fans of karaoke (FGD, women, 25-45 years).*

Participants noted that these film halls, bars open at the same time as school time so some children end up not going to school. Some are open as early as morning hours.

In an in-depth interview, a boy narrates what happens to the girls who come to strong bar

*Now for the girls here, we do have bars around for example city bar and strong pub. Girls here, you will find one she is primary school but she already has breasts so she will meet a boy from let say Kakunyu who will vibe her and if goes to Makonge school, she will remove her uniform and meet with the boy and other end up giving stopping schooling, those are the girls you will find vending food in the small hotels around (IDI, Boy, 11-17 years, out of school).*

On the other hand, much as the parents are to blame, the film hall owners were also to blame for allowing children in. In some halls, it's not rare to find a child working and manning the hall on behalf of an adult person. Participants lamented that in all, money is prioritized and so if a child comes and he/she has money, they are allowed a gate pass. Capitalism has overtaken Kiyindi and participants lamented that instead of putting up schools, businessmen are putting up as many lodges, bars, film halls as possible because these are the ones that bring business and money. It's about how much money and which business is profitable irrespective of the consequences. What is more worrying, however, is that the different actors like the police, community members, parents, seem to have given up.

An FGD with males 25-45 years explained more about karaoke nights, that Sundays are 'pickin' nights (bikini nights) where girls/women dance half and or completely naked while entertaining people that come for the night out. The description was similar to kimansulo (nude dancing) but what was the concern for the communities was that young girls are involved in these bimansulo's as strip dancers or as customers. In such karaoke nights is where child prostitutes are found and bought. Karaoke nights sometimes end with sex shows where live sex is performed on the stage as the audiences get entertained.

One of the key informants expressed her knowledge of kimansulo in Kiyindi:

*In Kiyindi, there is even 'Kimansulo' my friend! Eeh, eeh, those landing sites have everything in there, that is why when you came, I was like let's go to Kiyindi, its typical! (KI 7, government)*

Child prostitution has been highlighted as a risk that affects children in Kiyindi and this is said to happen in these disco halls, bars, lodges, film halls. These are meeting places and girls go with old men that have money while also young boys who have money also go with either the young girls or old women. The old women in these places also get the young boys to go with. The denominator is money and these places provide an avenue for meeting. It was noted that people at the landing site are ruled by the three Ws, namely: water, wine and women.

Communities however lamented the early pregnancies that result from such, which also sometimes culminate into early marriages. Girls engage in sex at a very early age and thus they get married early and produce while young and the cycle continues. Kimwanyi was one of the specific entertainment places that was always highlighted to harbor both the young and old girls and women engaged in prostitution. Strong pub, sauna, ani eyali manyi lodges were highlighted as risky places of concern.

Participants highlighted that the police has tried to chase away some of the children in these halls especially those that go there during the day. Some of the community elders have also joined the fight but they however decried uncooperative parents who assure these actors to mind about their own children. *It is worse if the child is getting money from there that is used to take care of the family*

*because then the parents are out rightly unbothered.* When a community member has had children who have gone through the same, and have ended up getting pregnant or dropping out of school, parents use this personal experience to silence the concerned elder. *They will remind you of your own children.* The parent whose child has experienced the same is perceived as lacking the moral authority to intervene or advise when they see a child going wayward. The common defense mechanism will be the throw the advising parent's experience back at them. Parents are also making the enforcement of community laws impossible because their attitude as explained below:

*We set by laws which parents didn't buy as you see they come with their kids in Karaoke. We had promised to arrest the film owners but it isn't easy (FGD men 45 + years).*

Enforcement of by-laws can only be possible in close collaboration with the parents, who are also the main stakeholders. Parents have to appreciate these laws. Their involvement in the process of setting the laws is also critical if they are to embrace the laws. Besides, what also perturbed the participants is that all these businesses have licenses to operate and no one follows up to see what is happening. This is an issue that was highlighted as also severe and therefore required urgent attention.

### 3.3.6. Child sacrifice

Child sacrifice was notably a risk that also affects children in this fishing community. The beliefs for sacrificing are vast but related to getting money and amassing wealth which could be through for instance a good fish catch. Children during FGDs substantiates where child sacrifice takes place:

*It takes place in the shrines and mostly very young children are the victims like 2 to five years. Someone will just grab a child of another person and takes him (FGD, Girls, 11-17 years).*

A community elder also substantiates that fisher men believe in witchcraft which increases the chances of sacrificing children. He explains one of the practices that also leave children vulnerable

*Here fishermen believe in witchcraft they put herbs in the boat and special kids for blessing; they make them sit in their boats to give blessings. Child sacrifice tempers us all we can kill the offenders very fast they can knock down their houses and chase the offenders off the community but the parents tell children to go and look for what to eat for the family. Apart from that which cause death or disappearing of the child but once the kid is alive there is no alarm(A male community elder).*

Compared to other risks like child prostitution, child neglect, the problem of child sacrifice seemed to have a clear response in the community. When a parent reports that his/her child is missing, everyone gets concerned and they start the search for a child by running into suspected places where witchdoctors operate from. The search goes on until the child is found and everyone is concerned and involved. Participants bragged that some of the shrines have been burnt by the community and some suspected witchdoctors have been forced to run away. A suspected case of child sacrifice is easily reported to police in the area. When the team asked participants why this issue is jointly responded to, it was asserted that the community has universally appreciated it as unacceptable thus the concerted efforts to fight it compared to other problems like child labour, neglect or even prostitution where the community views them differently.

*We have a man there who sacrificed a kid, people burnt his house and other property. The police took him, his wife after seeing blood on his bed and he said the rich man had asked for that girl to be sacrificed to the devil. The rich man was also arrested and the*

*man's kids were put in the boat by another relative and were taken to Busagazi. They checked his garden and it had several skulls(FGD girls 11-17 years)*

*The issue of child sacrifice and concerned people were arrested indeed it is a common thing and all the witches were arrested. R1: We reported all the business people concerning the witches and it has reduced even one kid called Waswa went missing here. So we had to fight to reduce it(FGD men 45 years +).*

*Child sacrifice even if it is at last funeral rites, all get up and they show him or her mob justice. That shows you the gravity of the risk. Why? Because families lose their dear ones; but issues of defilement are common for all and other parents get married at early ages as most parents are not educated(KI 1, government).*

Response is mob justice because the community is concerned. What concerns the community most is the loss of a life and also given the age of the victims of sacrifice (six years and below). Generally, this is the period that the community defines one as still a child under the responsibility of the parents. It was asserted these cases are easily reported to police but some times since the culprits are the rich business men they can buy their way out which explains why the community rushes for mob justice because they are not confident in the formal system and how it will handle their case.

### **3.3.7 Circumcision as an Initiation Rite**

Circumcision was mentioned by one group of males who highlighted that it is also proving to be a danger to children, making them unsafe and insecure. The group ranked it as issue number 3 affecting children in the community. Circumcision is carried out specifically by one tribe called the Bagisu who come from Eastern Uganda. It is a very important culture practice that symbolizes transition from child hood to manhood. Every Mugisu man to be regarded as a man must be circumcised. A season for circumcision is usually announced and the candidates for circumcision move around the community dancing (kadodi dance) as they also prepare them for the ceremony. The elders are tasked to do the circumcision and to also prepare the candidates. On one selected day, the boys are circumcised in the presence of community members and one is supposed to remain strong during circumcision to show that he is man enough. Important also, for one to heal, he is supposed to sleep with a girl that they will never marry or have any relationship with. This act is for cleansing. Community members especially the males of 25-45 years mentioned that this ceremony has increased stigma and lowered the self esteem and confidence of the boys since they are circumcised while everyone is watching including the girls of their age. Girls keep making fun of them that they have seen it all and they know the sizes of their penises. But also, the girls that the boys have to sleep with as they heal, have become more vulnerable to abuse, early pregnancies and the like as explained:-

*Kadodi dances for Bagisu also increase promiscuity in this area. The boys and girls follow on so the girls are more vulnerable during this season. They end up getting unwanted and unplanned pregnancies(A Male Community elder)*

*Yes we have the kadodi dancers from Bugisu children get spoilt a lot. Also those cut/circumcised they sleep with a young girl they are not going to marry for blessings(KI 6, community).*

This is an issue that the community is yet to appreciate and so no response has so far been taken by any of the actors to avert the negative effects that come with the tradition.

## Findings on existing community based child protection mechanisms

This section presents the findings on the existing CBCPMs that are found in the fishing community of Kiyindi. One of the objectives of the study was to identify and describe the existing CBCPMs in fishing communities. CBCPMs are important for mobilising communities towards preventing and responding to child abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence. They include people, groups, and networks that exist in communities at the local level. In this study, the existing CBCPMs include the family, community actors, local councils and the BMU. The formal mechanisms include the police and the probation and welfare office.

### 4.1 Family

While the findings as described above show that the family particularly parents are many times a source of the child protection risks, it is also a key resource that provides support to children in response to these risks. It was highlighted that children who are brought up in families where parents are present and caring are more likely to open up to them in case of child protection violations particularly the sensitive ones involving sexual exploitation, compared to those children without parental care. This is because such sensitive cases require an already established relationship and trust if the child is to disclose and confide in another party. Children mentioned relatives like aunts, grandparents as people they approach when they experience problems.

The findings show that family members particularly mothers are an important mechanism in responding to child protection concerns. The discussions with children revealed that mothers are accessible and approachable. Children find it easy to approach their mothers and confide in them the concerns and experiences that they have regarding the various aspects of child protection. Mothers tend to work near home, unlike fathers whose work tends to involve travel.

*Mothers are the ones who know our problems, fathers like mine is not always at home, he spends months and months when he is not at home and for mother, she is a woman and am also a girl hence she could be have faced the same challenges I encounter (FGD girls, 11-17 years)*

While the prominent role of mothers was reported, the findings show that other family members also provide support to children. It appears that children prefer to receive support from a family member of their gender.

*They do to get help, they can report to mom or aunt because they know these challenges. Also boys run to dads or uncles (FGD girls, 11-17 years).*

Children reported that girls report to their mothers while boys easily report to their fathers and uncles. Asked why the girls prefer to report to their mothers and not fathers, girls explained that since they are of the same gender, girls feel that their problems will be more understood because these are women who were once girls. Gender is thus critical in determining which mechanism to utilize incase children experience risks. This implies that child protection agencies should endeavor to have both genders represented so that the children can have a choice of whom they feel comfortable to approach. Besides, mothers are often times present as compared to the fathers that are busy fending for the family, and so they are be approached by some boys to if a relationship has been nurtured.

### **Prevention of risks at a family level**

When participants were asked what they were doing to prevent risks from happening to their children at the family level, they explained that as parents they have tried to put strict rules in their families to guide the behavior of young family members. Breach of these rules results in the administration of some kind of punishments which are determined by the family. This is meant to deter inappropriate behavior by children, which could expose them to a range of risks.

Some of the preventive acts by parents that were highlighted in this study include providing strict directions on routes that children should take on their way to and from school. Usually these are routes that keep children away from the landing site and other undesirable places within the community. This is aimed at ensuring that children do not navigate those parts of the landing site that could lead them into risky situations and abuse. Places that are identified as high risk are out of bounds for some children as directed by their parents. Other families do not send the girl children to shops as a mechanism for reducing their vulnerability. Girls have been defiled by persons who accost and intercept them while they are on different errands in the community. While this is a positive preventive approach, enforcement could be difficult as the children walk alone, without any adult supervision when they go to school or carry out other errands.

Some parents also emphasize children's education and they work hard to ensure that their children go to school. The discussions with the men emphasized that they have tried to be home early to ensure that they get to know what takes place and what activities and home chores children get involved in.

However, there are parents who have opted to take their children strictly to boarding schools and when it's time for holidays, they take them to a different community other than Kiyindi. These parents explain that Kiyindi is not an ideal community in which to raise a child. Most of the parents explained that they do not have their families staying with them at the site. The children are either staying with the mother who is in a different village, in a different community or they are with the extended family who can be the grandmother but also not staying in Kiyindi. Those who do not stay with their children or families choose days when they go to visit and check on them. However, this option was said to be afforded by the rich people who can manage to support two families.

*There are women who are powerful doing their powerful businesses, making millions of money at the landing site but you find they do not have their children there. She is there to make money and send back home where they are taking care of the children. and she periodically visits to see how her children are doing. So still it is the economically vulnerable, the poor, who are being exposed to risks (KI 5, local government official).*

While the coping mechanism of sending children to live away from the fish landing site may help to avoid the risks at the site, it deprives children of parental care. The assumption is that the children are protected while with the extended families, away from the fish landing site. The children are under the care of other individuals who are not their parents. This could be associated with other risks. It is a practice that is at odds with the principle of parental responsibilities that underlies the protection of children.

## **4.2 Community**

To answer the question of where else children seek help apart from their family members, children explained that they seek help from community members like neighbors for example the child explains below:

*We have a neighbor who leaves her crippled kid on the verandah and goes to the market to work. So the kid comes to our home and my mom gives him food. But he is good he knows how to wash dishes after food(FGD girls 11-17 years).*

Apart from the neighbors, children explained that community elders are still trustable people they approach when they experience risks because they listen to the children as explained:

*I think elders can be of help because they have grown and have good thoughts, he will ask you why have you been chased from home and you respond by saying that because I have refused to perform chores mum told me to do and he will ask you why didn't you do that and you will say that I was playing and he will advise you to go back home kneel down and beg your mother to forgive you and assure her that you will not do it again and you reach there and she beats you, you come back and he says we shall go there at home and we see her (FGD, girls, 11-17 years)*

The girls of the same age although in a different school also listed where they go to for help when bad things happen to them. During the discussions, children identified different mechanisms they utilize when they experience bad things. Although children explained that a good number of children run away to go and look for jobs and fend for themselves, from the discussions, some of the children talk about seeking help from the neighbors. Particularly mentioned above are some girls that run to neighbors for sanitary pads and also counseling. If such people are identified in this community, they would be a community resource as regards the community based child protection mechanisms.

Although a few community elders and neighbors could be identified to help children when they experience problems, adults explained that majority of the children do not have where to run to in the communities as many only mind their businesses and families.

Participants lamented that the community values and beliefs that were central in protecting children have been eroded which has exposed children to many risks including neglect, physical and sexual abuse. A child was believed to belong to a community, a child was brought up by the community, literally meaning that all community members were responsible for the upright upbringing of the child. If a community member found a child in the wrong, it was okay to discipline that child even if he/she was not the biological parent. This has since changed. Also, communities valued whole families, whereby issues of divorce and separation were minimal and were not encouraged and so the children would grow up with a mother and father working hard together to ensure that the child is well behaved with the additional assistance from the community. Participants regretted that all these have since changed as explained:-

*For us back in the days a man used to marry a woman of his own interest and at the time of birth they would get such a lovely kid of their own image and well loved. They used to raise their kids with good morals and would respect themselves and all elders in the community. It was a responsibility of the community members to discipline their children and even if they reported home, the parents would say that is good, I need my child disciplined. Today it is the other way round; children are parentless, single parents and the like so the kids are not surrounded with love. The issues of step moms are all over the communities and thus issues of neglect and child labor, stealing petty things to survive are all over. You end up finding them in films and karaoke to seek for care and look for friendship. Poor parenting is really key here there is a lot of child abuse due to absent parents. You may find kids hands burnt and other harsh punishments (FGD men 45 years +).*

Participants explained that even if one identifies such children who are experiencing risks or are engaged in activities they are not supposed to, the community members can't touch them lest you

risk being apprehended to the authorities like the LC and police. Respondents noted that what worsens the situation is also the nature and composition of the population that forms the community which is comprised of a multiplicity of tribes with different beliefs and values about children. The population is also more mobile and transient with different languages spoken by the different tribes which complicate network building among the community members. The commitment to the community life is only transient in nature and many of the people at the landing site are there for business purposes. They have allegiances to other communities elsewhere and Kiyindi is a place of work where they do not have any permanent attachments. The community is not cohesive and individuals largely do not look out for children that are not theirs.

### 4.3 Local Council 1

Although the Local Council Courts established under the LC Act of 2006, were announced as phased out and therefore their operations illegal, they continue to function and to be regarded as the most accessible dispensers of justice especially to the everyday person in the communities. In fact, they are regarded as more of the community structures than what is regarded as the formal systems. They were established to decentralize justice, enhance greater access to justice for all and also reduce on the costs of litigation. The LCs have the mandate to handle simple civil cases. It is a full committee of 9 members led by the chairperson and others occupying positions of general secretary, treasurer among others. Most important for this study is the office of the vice chairperson that is charged with the responsibility of handling children's issues. The LC1 has an office in Kiyindi open to serve everyone in the community, however the functionality of this office was a centre of debate in most of the discussions the research team had in the communities.

While some participants noted that when they get cases, they are reported to the LCs, others claimed that these LCs are just nonfunctional especially when it comes to cases that do not generate money like children related cases. LCs are nowadays attracted by cases that for instance involve selling of land/plots because then they will earn money from their stamp. Cases of child labour, prostitution are not given much attention.

Other issues also made the LC1 unpopular and therefore impeded the utilization of this structure in the community. Although their services are supposed to be for free, the LCs ask for some little money for the stationery like a book where the case can be recorded. However, such a fee is a deterrent to many especially the children and some parents that can't afford what is charged. The LC is not facilitated by the government and neither are they paid a salary, and so it was noted that some of these officials are as busy as everyone else in the search for money and survival. These LCs officials lack the motivation to work and have overstayed in the system. Some were noted that they do not know their roles and or the committee has since disintegrated with only the chairperson and secretary as active as explained:-

*No there isn't any, the LCs are not functional as they are expired. They have overstayed they seem retired they no longer know their roles they keep asking us, kozi nakolanga ani? They only fought for 10 percent over sales of plots and cases they handle. Now like in Kiyindi they get a lot of money the chairman there can't even be a chairman for the sub county (KI 3, government).*

*The LCs themselves don't know their roles. I don't think the vice knows their roles. Today the chair and the secretary are the only ones managing the system. Most people say it is no more a committee. People prefer reporting to police because they fear LCs to publicize their issues; also the police have capacity to arrest the culprits. As well you*



*would rather share with the police alone but not again with the police(FGD men 45 years +).*

Failure to respect confidentiality and to protect the secrets of the clients was also mentioned impeding community members from the utilization of the LC system. Respecting confidential information is key, if people are to utilize the structures available to help them. Some of the cases are very sensitive and clients do not want each and every one to get to know about them, the reason why some keep to themselves, or report to their trusted family members whom they are sure will not let the cut out of the bag. Confidentiality is a serious issue that child protection systems need to look into if they are to be regarded as relevant in the communities. The LC is also accused of sidelining the poor as explained:

*It is supposed to be the vice chairman but now they are weak, they don't want you once you are poor to say anything. You have to be rich to discuss and advise on different issues(A male community elder (KI4)*

*Every person is right in their own way, parents themselves fight the process, we used to punish the kids and parents would complain a lot so we sit back and relax. Kiyindi LC one is still trying Sam is functioning but the parents keep discouraging them(FGD men 45 years +).*

Other participants thought that the LC was functional but was being let down by the parents. Two individuals were always mentioned by the participants as very active in handling child related matters. In an interview with one of them, he explained that he has been involved in cases where the children are not in good terms with the parents. Two children reported to him with a case of their parents' failure to pay for their school fees. He engaged with the parents and advised them to start saving slowly and to also work with the school so that it can allow them to pay in installments which worked out. However, he blames the parents for failing the system for example he narrates:-

*Now when you advise the parents that the children should be protected when she comes along with her at the work place, to ensure that the child does not work, the parent fumes, she tells you that how we in authorities engage in issues which do not concern us, they tell us how we are stopping their children from looking for school fees. Actually we quarrel with the majority of these parents because then afterwards they come to complain that the child has refused to go back to school and we just tell them that we told you earlier and you did not take heed. If we can have a law where we are allowed to arrest both the parent and the child so that we can punish the parent or the police punishes the parent, this can be possible but now there is still a weakness. With this law, people can always accept whatever that we tell them (KI 6, community).*

What this implies is that the LC is working in isolation/delinked from the community members especially the parents. LC needs to engage more with the community so that they are at the same page with the community and they all speak the same language. Communities can be engaged in setting the bylaws that will govern them as well as the penalties for those that disrespect them. With community participation, enforcement will also be made easier. Community members also need to appreciate and recognize the roles of the LC which demands the LC to be consistent in the way they handle cases and to also show commitment and concern over issues that happen in the community including those that do not attract money.

*They can't help as they claim that they are also parents they only fight for payment of stamps. They would put bylaws to help children arrest them from films and bars but they aren't helpful (FGD males, 18-24 years).*

LC1 is one of the structures existing in the communities which if revived and empowered can help reach the local community members experiencing child protection concerns. But if they remain in the state they are in today, they are regarded as toothless dogs that are non functional and are not helping much in addressing child protection concerns. Besides the relationship between police and the LC needs to be harmonized so that they can feed into and complement each other in addressing community issues.

#### **4.4 Beach Management Unit (BMU)**

Kiyindi landing site has a beach management Unit that has its offices near the upper market. This unit is a community based structure that helps in bringing together every one that is involved in fisheries including the traders, fisher men, boat owners, boat crew, repairers. These must be registered with this BMU. This unit also has a committee that has representatives from all stakeholder groups. This unit has a set of laws governing it and the operations of its stakeholders. Important for this study was a rule that prohibits children from getting involved in fishing at the lake. During the discussions with the respondents, it was highlighted that the laws protecting children are there but their enforcement is the problem. One particular case involving a committee member of the BMU who was arrested by the police was always referred to in the discussions. In this particular case, one member of BMU found a child at the landing site, near the lake trying to pick silver fish. This man beat up the child and chased him away. The child went and reported him to his parents who also went and reported to police. The police arrested the man and detained him and the fellow community members and BMU members had to mobilize money to get him out of detention. With this case, BMU members explained how everyone now minds their own business and family. On top of reporting to police, parents demonize the members as they try to enforce the laws, they label them as selfish people that do not want other peoples' children to also work and get money like they have. BMU is now concentrating on fisheries issues than handling issues that affect children. However, this is a community structure that would be vital in curbing down child labour and exploitation in this community.

This unit would also work in connection with other structures on ground like police, LC to ensure that some of the issues affecting children are addressed. Therefore a linkage including this structure cannot be underestimated since also most people engaged in fishing are sometimes the perpetrators of harms children experience and if caught would face the wrath of this unit. The unit's involvement would help in the prevention of the risks as this would deter some of the perpetrators since this would have an impact on where they get and derive their livelihoods.

## Formal child protection mechanisms and their link to CBCPMs

This study was set out not only to describe the existing community based child protection mechanisms but also identify formal child protection systems and their linkage with the CBCPMs. Among the formal child protection mechanisms identified included the police and the community based services department comprised of structures of the community development officer at the sub county level, district probation and welfare officer and the head who is the district community development officer at the district level. There was no NGO identified that is involved in handling child protection issues. Only two NGOs had offices on ground in Kiyindi but these were in other areas like education, sensitization on water and sanitation.

### 5.1 Police

Of all the formal systems of child protection that communities seemed to be interfacing with, police was the most commonly approached. The reasons could be because it has an office at the community level compared to other structures that have their bases at the sub-county and district level. Unlike other police stations, the police station in Kiyindi does not have a separate child and family protection unit, but an assistant inspector of police handles issues that affect children and families. Communities highlighted that they report to police when children experience some of the risks. Cases of 'real' defilement are reported to police while cases of 'defilement for money' are reported to police when the parties have failed to reach an agreement or the perpetrator has failed to fulfill his promises. Child sacrifice cases are also reported to police. The police is however blamed for not having a centre/shelter for children and thus parents explained that even if they report their children to police it does not help them because it does not have space for children. Children who steal and perturb the community are reported to police but it does not have a shelter for them and so it ends up releasing them back to the community. This has resulted into cases of mob justice where some of the children have been burnt to death.

Police was also accused of corruption and not following the procedure for handling some of the cases. Police was said to work against the poor person because the poor are the ones that get arrested while those who have can buy themselves out.

*Here once parents are bribed they will drop the cases, I think the issue of illiteracy and poverty is key in that. I have stayed here for over 30 years in Kiyindi but have seen only one man who has followed a case about his child to the top. But others retire very fast.(FGD men 45+ years)*

This trend has increased children's vulnerability because the rich business and fishermen know that there is nowhere else to get help from since they can buy the police and even the parents off. *Police needs to get back to performing its roles other than just collecting bribes from the perpetrators.*

The police's approach of imprisonment was also mentioned to deter the children and parents from reporting because it is regarded as a drain on the family's resources but also the bread winner can be arrested leaving the family to suffer even more. Children do not report to police because they fear that their parents will be imprisoned yet they are the bread winners. But also because police allegedly extorts money from the people that report or are reported, it is no longer a preferred mechanism. *You have to bribe, pay money for fuel, waste time and privacy, and yet you might not be helped.*

*The parent has to pay the police as they lose money it is the family that becomes bankrupt. Also they may imprison him when he is a bread winner and you die of hunger (FGD 18-24 years males).*

Imprisonment is not what the community prefers, so one becomes isolated when they follow what the law says.

*In other cases the boy may be imprisoned but instead community members turn to you. How can you imprison some ones kid when yours isn't dead? Something simple like that; kids grow like that. Ha (oliba olaba olaba ki gwe?) (toyinza kola otyo mwana wamuno oba ngagwozise). You cannot treat some ones son like that! And to make matters worse those who defile are stronger financially than the victims of circumstances. At least they would have beaten him up than taking him to prison. They can say please chairman helps me I want my kid out, so that really weaken the system. (KI 3, government).*

Communities prefer simple but deterrent punishments that can still allow peaceful co-existence as community members. Imprisonment in this case deepens the enmity and rage between the two parties in conflict which sometimes it is not what the community desires. The challenge is to formal systems to engage with the communities so that, together, appropriate but deterrent punishments for the crimes committed can be drawn.

Communities do not report cases to police because of fear of the long processes in these formal institutions. Others are discouraged by the small costs that police charges which the poor family sometimes can't afford. Ignorance about the law and how cases are supposed to take course was also highlighted as an impediment to utilizing these formal mechanisms.

Most children fear the police so some choose to handle their problems alone. They fear to be arrested because when they see a police man in a uniform, that is the first thing. They do not see a person with responsibility to protect them. Besides in some cases, children explained that they can't report their parents because when they reach police the parents can defend themselves as compared to the children. The results can be detrimental because after getting home, the child can get more punishment or even be chased away. Police, thus, needs to improvise a child friendly approach that will make children feel secure to seek help at this institution. Police needs to have more community dialogues and interactions with the children so that communities and most especially children can appreciate their role in the community. Clearly its presence , if utilized would do much to help in addressing child protection concerns as it has the potential of being respected and listened to by the majority in the community.

## **5.2 Probation and Welfare Office & Community Development Office**

The probation and welfare office is the one directly responsible for ensuring that the children in the district are protected, their rights are respected and the children live meaningful lives. To achieve this, the office is implementing a number of interventions including community sensitization and most especially targeted are the most at risk populations for instance the prostitutes in Kimwanyi. The office has also trained child protection committees that are supposed to be operating at the local/community level. The office also handles cases of children who have been abandoned. Child fostering and adoption also lie under the responsibility of this officer. Although all these interventions were mentioned as on ground, communities rarely shared taking their cases to the Community Development Officer or even the probation and welfare officer, or even the child protection committees. Communities lacked knowledge of their existence of these important offices. In an interview with one of the child protection committee members, he highlighted that they have been trained but their work now is concentrated in the sensitization of children in some schools although they have not yet rolled their activities in Kiyindi. This communicates underutilization of these formal mechanisms by the communities and lack of knowledge of their existence and limited interactions with the communities could explain their under utilization.

Also important to note is that the probation and welfare office, CDO and child protection committee, exist at the district and sub county level implying that these are serving a much bigger area with Kiyindi inclusive for example:

*The committee that we trained, you know Najja sub-county is one of the biggest sub-counties in the district, sometimes due to funding constraints, we always go to the village and pick one or two community members whom we train with support from UNICEF, but you know some times the package is not enough and you cannot reach each and every one(KI 7, government).*

These services are therefore not accessible to the children, the economically poor as these will not have the transport to come to the places where these are placed. The officers lamented about their disability in terms of human and financial resources curtailing their capacity to reach such communities at Kiyindi. This dire situation communicates that utilization of the community based child protection mechanisms remains the practical solution to children and families seeking redress over child protection violations. So what happens when even the community based child protection mechanisms are non-existent and or non-functional?

#### **Linkage between police and the LC**

Participants noted that at least a linkage between community based child protection mechanisms and the formal mechanisms can be drawn between the police and the Local council one. They explained that some times when one goes to police, they are asked if they have visited the LC1 first and therefore one is asked to produce an LC letter. Some participants disputed that and said that police does not make those requirements for all the clients that approach the institution. Such a debate implies that the relationship and linkage between LC and the police still needs to be streamlined


*They don't work together because there is a lot of corruption, the LCs asks for money which the parents don't have. When you reach the police they will ask for the LC letter which you may not have and your case may not be solved. The police will also ask for money and in the end they don't work together. (FGD boys 11-17 years)*

In a key informant interview with a community elder, he explains how the different child protection mechanisms (the family, community, police, LC, children) interact in Kiyindi:-

*Once the kids get problems here, they can run away from home and no one tends to help them. The LCs is no longer helpful because of the issues of child rights now they are just left like that. Parents don't care so the parents can't help the children. Families don't relate well they just go to police they can advise you to settle out of court but things just end there. Here women don't report cases of their children but men try to report to get some money, so once they agree, cases end there. Also how many will you report? It occurs every now and then to all the kids (A male community elder).*

The statement above depicts that different child protection mechanisms like the family, the community, police are not working together to ensure that child protection concerns are addressed. Children in most cases have decided to handle the problems themselves by running away from their homes. Some of the families exist in structures but are un-functional families with absentee parents.

There is no established relationship between families in the communities and therefore these do not exist as a community that looks out for one another. Sometimes, also, the formal child protection mechanisms do not follow the procedure that is supposed to be done and they also advise settling



out of court which sometimes does not help the victim (child) and or the cases are not completed. This leads to their underutilization because they are not seen to be any different from the practices in the communities. The probation and social welfare office and community development office are seen at a much higher and farther level that the community feels does not reach. You need transport or energy to walk to the Buikwe district or Najja sub-county to access these offices and be helped. Even the structures like the child protection committees that the government is trying to initiate are still not yet interlinked with the communities. These committees for example should work closely with the community elders, the LCs, the BMUs, the police, to ensure that a strong child protection team is present in the communities. On the whole, a linkage between the formal and community based child protection mechanisms is still at infancy in Kiyindi. However, efforts need to be made to ensure this linkage, and to empower community based child protection mechanisms as these have the potential to reach the majority of the community members facing child protection concerns as well as spearheading efforts in the prevention of risks from happening.

## Recommendations by the Community

Study participants were asked to provide recommendations on the responses that could be realistically taken within their contexts to provide adequate protection to children. A diverse range of ideas were synthesized from the different groups and are presented below.

### **Arrest the employers of children**

Child labour was noted to be an issue of concern and the participants recommended that the people that employ these under age children should be arrested and punished because these are intentionally exploiting the children.

*Such people should be arrested, don't they see that such children are not supposed to be doing that. They should punish the parents who indulge kids in child labor(FGD males 18-24 years).*

*Here girls don't report, may be the organizations for children can help. Let authority go back to the parents and community members the issue of child right should be revised to correct our children. Also the parents should be penalized over their kids' caught experiencing child labor and indulged in child risky ventures. The kids will know that their parents are concerned, leaders and all community members (A male community elder)*

Besides punishing the employers, parents of the children who are in child labour should also be penalized and through this the parents can also fear and start taking care of their children.

### **Increase access to services**

Participants explained that there should be an increase on accessibility and availability of services by NGOs and government. Specifically, they highlighted child related services. No NGO was notably working in the area of child protection yet government is also incapacitated and is unable to reach everyone. Health care, education services should also be increased because children also experience risks as they walk the long distances to some of the schools. Increasing access to services will be important for the prevention of some of the child protection concerns in the area. The other services highlighted include family planning services so that parents can give birth to children they can afford to take care of. A child needs to go to Kawolo hospital in Lugazi to access PEP if they have been defiled.

### **Vocational education**

*Special schools for those who are not bright should be constructed because there are boys who can be mechanics when he is taken in such a school for free, he can learn how repair even a girls can learn and get hands on skills for survival but those schools are nowhere in around. That is why they engage in fishing. R3: In addition technical schools for girls because learning hair dressing, they have to part with like 300.000. FGD, girls, 11-17 years*

*R7: Welack technical schools for those kids who can't go to universities. FGD, boys, 11-17 years.*

There should also be strengthening of the law enforcement agencies like police and probation and welfare offices because these are incapacitated without the financial and human resources to address the child protection concerns of the communities. There is need to establish the CFPU unit to handle children and family matters since these are many in Kiyindi community. The police also has to put up child friendly approaches so that children can easily seek help in the institution.

*Also cases concerning children should be handled by the family police. Issues of family are well handled but for the children their cases are handled as criminal in another department which isn't friendly with the children. (KI 3, male, government)*

Family issues are a serious problem that requires urgent attention if we are to help the children in Kiyindi. Marital breakages, wife swapping, domestic violence have invaded the family institution and are leaving long term marks on the children. The CFPU together with the probation and welfare office, community development office and the LC must work together with the families to ensure that these issues are addressed.

### **Set bye laws for regulation of social activities**

Communities recommended that it is high time that by laws are set in Kiyindi regulating the operation of entertainment places like the bars, film halls, karaoke halls. These should not allow in children and they should start operating in the evening at 4:00 pm on wards when everyone has finished working. By laws should also come with penalties and involvement of community members in their setting and enforcement is key for easier implementation. By laws should also be set on how the landing site should operate, especially a law prohibiting children from working at the site.

*Let there be bylaws to protect children from entering bars, discos and clubs. Young kids here drink alcohol R8: Gambling and cards should be regulated here some of these should be stopped here by use of LCs, police and community leaders. Also betting should be regulated and also let parents come in and help their children. Talk to them advice and counsel them(FGD males 18-24 years).*

Bylaws should also prohibit children from abusing drugs and alcohol because at the landing site as long as one has money to buy alcohol and drugs, the business men just give them including children

### **Economic empowerment**

It was highlighted that although all children have some vulnerability, the economically poor are the ones with a higher vulnerability. Efforts to prevent and address child protection concerns should ensure that poverty is addressed. To some it is because of poverty that parents neglect their children, send them to work, or children drop out of school. It is because of poverty that defilement and other cases are concealed in the community because they want to earn money from the perpetrators. It is also because of poverty that law enforcement agencies and officers are taking bribes. This issue needs to be addressed through economic empowerment projects that can be run by government and non governmental organizations.

*Also the issues surrounding child prostitution should be stopped by controlling poverty in the area because it forces many to go into it to earn a living(FGD males, 18-24 years).*

*So the level of economic empowerment is low, and it is the economically vulnerable who are exposed to risks. So still poverty comes in. women who have run away from rotten families, the young and teenage mothers are at the landing site and some cannot make ends meet so we must ensure economic empowerment is emphasized through some IGAs to pull them out of the landing site, strengthen their businesses, so that they can now be at a level where they feel they can educate their children, that they cannot afford to see their children involved in prostitution because when you ask these women who have been in prostitution, they have made their fortunes out of prostitution but they do not want their children to suffer the same way in prostitution, they say it is torturous, they are not there because they want, they are there to make*



*some money and take care of their children, educate them, feed them(KI 5, government).*

### **Revamp and empower the LC 1 system**

The LC system was regarded as one of the best community structures that the community members can easily access. The LC officials are usually community members that can easily be approached, accessed by the community members in need compared to police that people fear. It was recommended that this should be revamped and empowered to handle some of the issues. Efforts should be made to see that it is working in close linkage with the police, so that some of the issues that it cannot handle can be referred to police. The LC must make efforts to ensure that it works with the parents and families. Leadership structures should work together with communities and parents to fight for children rights.

*We should revamp the LCs because the vice chairpersons are responsible for all the kids issues. We used to get a lot of information about kids but today it is the police handling which isn't sufficient. The LCs were very important in this game. Most concerned people are community members it would be easy for them to report to the LCs but police is hard. Transport to the police center and issues of give statements here people tend to fear them a lot. So we need to agitate for the LC systems in our communities to be resurrected. And let them be empowered (KI, 3 male government).*

### **Training /a course on proper parenting**

A course on proper parenting was recommended so that parents in Kiyindi can learn how to bring up children. This is because most of the parents there are young mothers, single mothers, who may not have also had better experiences during their child hood. There is a belief that children will grow without caring much on how they will grow and what they will grow into. Some parents do not give parental guidance to their children, nor do they show them love since some prioritize money to children's issues. Parents lack the agency to talk to their children, some have given up and they have put the blame on president Museveni's era of children's rights which they explained that it has led to a negative impact on the children by making them stubborn. That this era has also usurped the powers of the parents, children now are for the government. All these need to be addressed through the sensitization and training so that parents can take charge and embrace their responsibility of parenting. Child neglect by fathers was also mentioned to be an issue of concern that needs urgent attention. Men need to appreciate their role in parenting.

*The parents styles of parenting skills, they don't counsel and advice the children or put them on the right track. Most women here are second hands; the man has his kids and the woman so this ends up into wrangles. The dads are reported to police for not taking care so they end up just giving whatever little he has to the family like 3-5000K. Wife sharing here is common, switching from A-B doesn't take time. So poor parenting is very key (A male community elder).*

*We need to resume our responsibilities as parents so that these risks are prevented from our children as well giving room to our children to open up to us (FGD MEN 45+).*

*The children should not grow up in a bad environment with bad things like drugs and prostitution (FGD girls, 11-17 years).*

### **Community involvement, sensitization and trainings**

Sensitization about the laws and procedures for handling children related cases was highlighted as key for empowerment of communities to get actively involved in handling child protection issues. As for now, due to lack of knowledge, parents will go for anything/any option given to them even if that

particular case did not require that procedure. Communities need sensitization on the law on defilement and how cases of defilement are supposed to be handled.

*We need trainings about child protection issues for each leader and person to know their responsibilities right from the CDO. It is her role to educate people about these issues*

*They should also be sensitized about the reporting process and put up an organization to help them about their issues. Also responsible individuals should be encouraged to help the vulnerable children as the police tell us they can't handle kids' issues. Those knowledgeable will help even if calls for us to go to Lugazi (FGD MEN 45+).*

*The community leaders and other community members will have a relationship and so our area will become ok. The offenders will face us all (FGD females, 25-45 years).*

Communities need to be mobilized, organized and trained on child protection issues and the responsibility of each for the protection of children. If everyone is trained and appreciates that it is their role to protect children, the culprits will know that they are facing a combined effort against child violations. Now the community is divided, with each one minding their own business and the victims are left to tussle it alone which leaves the perpetrators powerful. What this suggests is also a linkage of all child protection agencies starting with the parents, communities and community leaders, formal systems.

## Summary of key findings and recommendations


As regards the harms and risks experienced by children in fishing communities, child neglect was found out to be the number one risk and child protection violation affecting children in Kiyindi, predisposing them to many more risks like child labour, prostitution, defilement, and drug abuse. Child neglect is the father and mother of all the other risks that children experience implying that any child protection intervention effort must focus on this issue. Particularly mentioned was child neglect by fathers. Although some parents fail to prioritize the children's needs, many of the parents did not intentionally fail to provide for their children's needs but rather cited the poor socio-economic background. In other words there is a linkage between the economic background and child neglect with children from economically poor families being the most at risk of child neglect, child labour, school dropout, child prostitution, early pregnancy and early marriages. Economic empowerment was thus suggested if we are to respond to but also prevent child protection violations in fishing communities.

Parents are key stakeholders in unraveling why children are experiencing the risks and therefore any intervention in addressing these child protection violations must target them for change. Some parents for example do not value the importance of education and therefore cannot encourage their children to persist in school. Some are even frustrating the efforts of the agencies that are enforcing the laws to ensure that children are in school. Their cooperation and active involvement is vital in addressing child protection concerns in Kiyindi, therefore stakeholders must engage them for sustainable interventions

As a response to these risks, children deal with the problems/risks themselves where by some have become their own parents, and have also taken on the responsibility of looking after their parents. Children are involved in child labour, child prostitution and even child marriages as sources of survival for themselves and their families

Community based child protection mechanisms exist in structures but mostly are non-functional in protecting children against risks for example children are born in families (with a father and mother)but who cannot take care of their needs but instead expect the children to take care of their needs. Children handle most of the risks on their own. The family is in crisis with all the issues of wife swapping, domestic violence, single motherhood, step parents that are all predisposing children to more risks and harms. The community is not as responsive as it used to be in helping children that experience problems. The child is no longer brought up by the community. Communities have lost the communalism/care for one another. There is need to revamp the agency of families and communities to protect and prevent risks from happening to their children. Child protection awareness creation and education should be implemented in the community, and community members need to rethink about their definition of a child and what they should be entitled to during their child hood. NGOs and government need to engage the communities to understand further (not to judge) the realities and constructions around children and child hood among the multiplicity of people that exist in Kiyindi. Harmonized definitions and strategies for protection of children can then be deliberated and agreed on.

Although the family is facing immense challenges, in some instances, it is still the first child protection unit that the children approach when they experience risks and therefore strengthening it would improve children's well being in the community. Some children mentioned that when they experience risks, they first go to the family members for help for example the mother, father, relatives, the aunties and grannies. When girls experience defilement they first tell their mothers because they believe that they will understand and will not immediately run to police to report.



Children still highlighted elders in the communities that they run to when they get problems with their parents and so identifying and training more of these community elders in the community can be a great resource to the children and can boost community based child protection mechanisms. The approach that these use is mediation between the parents and their children. The community members and children need to participate in identifying the elders they feel comfortable to report to. Lack of knowledge about the laws and procedures and poverty harbors concealment of cases and makes the administration of justice and utilization of services in formal systems minimal by the community. Communities have set their own laws of defining and responding to defilement for example which are different from the legal definitions and procedures. Communities therefore need to be engaged to come to a harmonization of such issues between the communities and the formal systems. Communities can then come up with by-laws that are jointly developed and are understood by the community. Communities prefer simple but deterrent punishments that allow community peaceful co-existence as opposed to imprisonment that is proposed by the formal systems. Some formal systems are also underutilized because they are perceived to be working against the poor as communities feel that there is selective access to justice to only those that can afford. Through more community engagement, these can be addressed and the clear procedures of case management discussed so that communities are empowered to pursue their own cases.

Empowerment of communities financially and with knowledge and information of procedure is vital for the protection of children and utilization of both formal and informal child protection mechanisms.

A clear linkage between the community based child protection mechanisms and the formal systems is yet to be established in Kiyindi community. Yet empowering CBCPMs and ensuring a linkage with the formal systems seems to be the way out given the fact that most of the formal systems like the PWSO, DCDO are serving a vast population and are resource constrained. There is need to work with the already established structures on the ground for instance the BMUs, LCs, family, children, community in order to boost the protection and well being of children.



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# Appendices

## Study of Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms Among Fishing Communities in Uganda: A case of The Lake Victoria Basin Fishing Communities

### TOOLS FOR DATA COLLECTION

#### *General introduction and seeking consent of the participants*

Good morning/good afternoon. My name is ..... We are a team of researchers here on behalf of the AfriChild Centre to conduct a study of the Community Based Child protection Mechanisms among fishing communities in Uganda. The purpose of the study is to explore and document what the fishing communities and children within these communities see as the main harms or risks to children, what CBCPMs exist, linkages between these mechanisms and formal child protection systems. The study will, thus, provide information that will be relevant and useful for strengthening child protection systems for children in the fishing communities. We therefore request to ask you a few questions. The information you give will be confidential and you will not be linked to the responses you give. You are free to decline to answer any questions at any time during the course of the interview.

Do you agree to participate in this study?

YES/NO

#### *FGD/Interview identifier (to be recorded for every interview/FGD)*

Researcher's name:	Date of interview:
Note takers name:	
District	Interviewee's gender and age:
Location:	Role:
Location of the interview:	
Background information to the interview:	

## TOOL 1: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

To be used for the following categories of informants

1. Development workers and managers from NGOs
2. District Probation and welfare officer
3. District and sub county community development officers
4. Police (child and family protection unit)
5. Local Council (LC) officials from LC II-IV
6. Resident State Attorneys and court officials

### Participant's organization/department/unit and role

Can you please tell me a little bit about the work of your organization/department/committee in this district? What areas /issues do you focus on?

What is role do you play in the organization?

*For the rest of the remaining questions, we will be focusing on risks to children and the way in which communities and organizations respond to them.*

#### A. MAIN RISKS AND HARM TO CHILDREN

1. What do you consider to be the most pressing risks/harm/child protection concerns that children currently face in this community?

**Probe:**

- Are these concerns the same for girls and boys?
- Do they vary by age category (Very young children vs. school age children vs. adolescents)?
- In which other ways do they vary (by location, livelihood, religion, clan etc)?

2. What are the reasons these risks/child protection concerns are occurring in this community?

**Probe:** Why are some children more affected than others by this?

3. Who are the likely perpetrators of these problems/risks?

**Probe:**

In what location/places do these risks occur the most? (School, home, places of worship, and other places in community)? Why?

#### B. RESPONSES: EXISTING CHILD PROTECTION MECHANISMS

4. When a child experiences harm/risk, whom do they usually go to for help?

5. Do children normally ask for help within their family? Why or why not? If they ask for help from within the family, which family members are they likely to ask for help?

6. What do families do to respond to the situations of risk that affect their children?

7. What does the community do in response to harm/risk children experience?

**Probe:** for specific organizations, or individuals, groups/committees in the community that get involved? What type of help is sought from the community members? What type of help do they get?

8. Do you have a community committee for child protection? Are members of your community part of any groups or committees for child protection (e.g. child protection committees, CBCPMs facilitated by NGOs)? What is their role in supporting children and how?

**Probe:** When children have experienced a threat, are these groups contacted? Do most individuals in the community know about them? Do children know about them? Why or why not? Would it be viewed as less/more safe? Less/more appropriate? Less/more effective? Please explain why.

- 9 (a). What are some of the cultural practices, beliefs and values in this community that are positive for the protection of children in this community



9 (b) What are some of the local cultural practices, beliefs and values in this community that are negative for the protection of children in this community

10 What role is played by people/services outside the community?

**Probe:** Are there particular services (offered by governmental or non-governmental institutions) that individuals access when a child is in need? Are there reasons why or situations in which certain services are sought or avoided? (Probe for the different actors in these formal child protection mechanisms)

11 Of all the times children experience risk and harmful things, how often do you think:

- Children deal with the problem alone
- Families resolve the problem themselves
- Resolving the problem within the community
- Asking someone outside the community for help? (Government or NGO)

**Probe:** Which kinds of cases are dealt with each way? Why? Who makes the decision?

12 What linkage is there between these formal and the informal mechanisms of child protection

**Probe:**

- What is the relationship/interface between them?
- Do they compliment or are against each other?
- What can be done to improve the interface?

13. Are there particular issues/cases that are regarded as complex or sensitive within the community? Why are they sensitive? How are these cases addressed?

**Probe:** How would this response be different from responses to other threats?

### **Outcome and satisfaction**

14. What are the likely outcomes of the responses to risks/harm you have identified (informal and formal mechanisms of child protection)

**Probes:** What is likely to happen to the child/perpetrator/family?

15. How satisfied with this outcome are various stakeholders (child, family, community, people outside the community) Why?

16. Are there particular social or economic barriers for some children to accessing community support or services outside of the community? What are those barriers? Are there particular groups that are excluded?

17. Do you know of ways that the community prevents risk from happening to children? Please describe how?

18. Are there systems for monitoring, documenting, or reporting child protection concerns (within healthcare, governmental or community level)? How do they collect data or information on these issues? Who do you share with?

### **E. Recommendations**

19. What recommendations would you make for protecting children from risk or improving their access to services and support in the community?

**Probes:** What might make it easier for children to seek or access help? How can help / services be improved? What could be done to minimize these risks?

20. Is there anything else concerning child protection in this community that we have not talked about?

## TOOL 2: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

To be used for interviews with:

- Cultural leaders
- Religious leaders
- Local Council 1

Researcher's name:	Date of interview:
Location:	Interviewee's gender and age:
Location of the interview:	Role:
Background information to the interview:	

### A. Main Risks and harm to children

1. What are the key challenges/risks facing children in your community (are they different for the boys and for the girls? Are they different for different age categories of children? Are they different for any other reason?)
2. What are the sources/reasons why these risks/ child protection concerns are occurring in this community?

### B. Community responses

3. As a leader of the community, what is your own role in addressing issues affecting children's wellbeing and protection?
  - What are the main types of children's problems that you are called to intervene in
  - Please provide a case example of a problem that you have recently dealt with (without any details about which members of the community were involved)
4. What guides you in making the decisions you make (personal experience, local customs, national laws etc)
5. Tell us more about the decision making process (do you consult others, do you make decisions together with the family, the child involved)
6. How do you find out about the problems that children in the community are facing?
7. Do children and young people come to you to discuss their own issues?
  - What are the channels for telling you
8. Do other people inform you if they have concerns about a child's well-being and protection? (If yes, how do they tell you? What are the different ways of informing you?)
9. Tell us about other community based child protection initiatives/actors for protecting children in your community (initiatives by families, communities, children themselves, etc)
10. What are some of the cultural practices, beliefs and values in this community that are positive for the protection of children in this community
  - What are some of the local cultural practices, beliefs and values in this community that are negative for the protection of children in this community
11. What lessons or insights from communities and community based organizations/initiatives can be generated to help improve the design, appropriateness and effectiveness of current initiatives for protecting children and families

### C. Link between formal and informal systems

12. When something bad happens to a child or someone comes to you for help, do you ever refer them to someone else for help or assistance? If yes, to whom do you refer them?
13. What kinds of cases do you refer children/families to seek outside help or services? Why?
14. For what kinds of cases do you resolve things yourself or with the community? Why?

15. For what kinds of cases do people not involve you at all, and things are resolved within the immediate family? Why?
16. When you think of formal services and systems that exist to help protect children, do you think they agree with or support traditional ways of protecting children? Explain.
17. How would you describe the relationship between traditional leaders and the formal child protection system? How could this be improved?
18. Does the government and NGOs consult with the traditional leaders about program services and assistance it plans to implement?

**D. Recommendations**

19. What do you think could be done differently to improve the protection and promotion of child well being
20. What should be done to strengthen the community based child protection mechanisms
21. Do you have any additional comments, suggestions, or recommendations for me?

**TOOL 3: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR CHILDREN IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL**

**Guide for young people in /out of school**

Researcher’s name:	Date of interview:
Note takers name:	
Location:	Interviewee’s gender and age:
Location of the interview:	Role:
Background information to the interview:	

Can you please tell me more about yourself; do you go to school? What do you like to do during your free time?

*Now, in the next questions, we are going to talk about children and the communities they live in. Please feel free to tell me any ideas you have about this while we’re talking.*

**A. Main risks and harm to children**

1. What bad things happen to children in this community? (things that harm, hurt or scare children) Do boys and girls have the same bad things that happen to them or are they different things? How does age of the child matter? Do these bad things that happen to children vary in any other way? (let the children describe these bad things and give examples if possible)
2. What do you think causes these bad things to happen? Are there types of people who do bad things to children or makes them happen in this community? Are there places where it is easier for bad things to happen or where they are more common? (school, home, other places in community)?

**B: Responses: existing community based child protection mechanisms**

3. What do the children do when bad things happen to them (whom do they ask for help from and why? Whom do the girls turn to? Whom do they boys turn to? And why?  
 Probe: Would a child ask for help with in their family? If so, whom and why? What would the family do when they learned about what had happened?
4. What does the community do to help these children whom bad things have happened to? Which people or groups in the community get involved?
  - a. Probe: What sort of organizations or individuals or groups of people in the community could help?
  - b. What sort of help do the communities ask for? What sort of help or support is provided by these individuals, groups, or organizations to the child?
5. In this community, what are some of the local customs, beliefs, values about children that are positive for their protection
6. What are some of the local customs, beliefs, values about children that are negative for the protection of children

**Formal child protection systems**

7. What do NGOs and government do when bad things are done to children?
  - a. Which NGOs are they?
  - b. Who from the government?
8. Do you think the government, NGOs, families and communities work together to protect children in this community? Let the children explain their answer
9. Of all the times children experience risk and bad things: how often do you think Children deal with the problem alone

Families resolve the problem themselves,  
Resolving the problem within the community  
Asking someone outside the community for help?  
**Probe:** Which kinds of cases are dealt with in each way? Why?

**C. Outcomes**

10. After someone asks for and receives help for the bad things that have happened, what happens next? What is the result of the reaction?

**Probes:** What happens to the child/perpetrator/family?

**D. Recommendations and prevention**

11. What recommendations would you make for protecting children from these bad things or making it easier for them to get help and support in the community?

**Probes:** What might make it easier for children to seek or access help? How can the help that children receive be improved? What could be done to decrease this risk?

12. What can the community do to prevent or to stop these bad things from happening to children?

13. Do you have anything else you want to say or anything you want to ask me?

## TOOL 4: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ADULT COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Researcher's name:	Date of interview:
Note takers name:	
District	Interviewee's gender and age:
Location:	Role:
Location of the interview:	
Background information to the interview:	

### *Respondent's role in the community*

**Before** we start, I would like to know a little more about you:-

1. How long have you lived here?
2. What do you do to meet your (and your family's) needs? (source of livelihood)
3. Are you a member of any groups or organizations in this community? What do the groups do?

*For the rest of the questions, we will be talking about the risks/harm to children in this community and the ways in which communities and organizations respond to them*

### **A. Main risks and harm to children**

1. What do you consider to be the most pressing risks/harm/child protection concerns that children currently face in this community? (Are these concerns the same for girls and boys? do they vary by age category (Very young children vs. school age children vs. adolescents)? In which other ways do they vary (location, livelihood, religion, clan etc)? Probe if there are certain children who experience risk more?
2. Who is likely to cause harm/or bad things you have mentioned? Where does this usually happen (school, home, other places in community)?
3. What are the things that make a child to be more vulnerable/likely affected by the risks you have mentioned

### **B: Responses: existing child protection mechanisms**

4. When a child in this community experiences risk, whom do they go to for help?
5. Will a child ask for help from his/her family? Which person will they ask? Why and or why not?
  - a. What will the family do when they hear about the situation?
6. What will the community do? Who are those particular individuals, groups, or organizations in the community that will be involved?
7. Are the members of your community part of any groups or do they work together for a common goal? (E.g. child protection committees, community based child protection mechanisms facilitated by NGOs) what do they do? What is their role in supporting children and how do they do it?
8. Who decides what will happen to the child next?
9. What role is played by people/services outside the community
 

**Probe:** what services are offered by government or NGOs that individuals access when the child is in need? Are there any reasons why or situations in which certain services are asked for or avoided?
10. Of all times children experience risk and harmful things in this community, how often do you think:-
  - Children deal with the problem alone vs.
  - Families resolving the problem themselves vs.
  - Resolving the problem within the community vs.
  - Asking someone else outside the community for help?

**Probe:** which kinds of cases are dealt with in each way? Why? Who makes the decisions?

11. What do you think about the linkage of governmental or NGOs services and the community based services/mechanisms for child protection? Are governmental or NGO services connected to people or networks within the community? Why or why not?
12. Are there particular cases that are rarely talked about, secret, or a taboo with in this community? Why are they regarded so? If harm came to a child because of this, what would happen? What would the child do? Whom would they tell?  
Probe: how would this response be different from responses to other threats?

**E. Outcomes and satisfaction**

13. What are the likely outcomes of the responses to the risk ( probe for what happens to the child, perpetrator, family)
14. How satisfied are various community members with the outcome (child, family, community, people outside the community etc)
15. Are there other options for children and families that are used? Why or why not?
16. What are some of the social or economic barriers that stop children from accessing support or services within or outside the community?

**F. Recommendation and prevention**

17. What are some of the ways that this community prevents risks from happening to children?
18. How can communities better respond to the risks you have mentioned?  
(Probe: what might make it easier for children to seek or to access help? How can the services that children receive be improved? What could be done to minimize risks?)
19. What are some of the other individuals, organizations or institutions that you feel should have been involved in responding to risks/harms that happen to children.
20. Do you have any additional comments, suggestions or recommendations?

## TOOL 5: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

### Focused group discussion guide for community members

Hello every one, my name is .....and my colleague here is ..... (Introduce the note taker). We are here as researchers on behalf of AfriChild Centre and the Department of Social Work Social Administration, Makerere University. We are very happy to see you all. Your attendance shows how much you care about your children.

The purpose of this discussion is that we want to identify the main protection risks to children in this community, the networks that support affected children, which people are there to help these children. Some of these issues may be difficult to discuss in public, but it is really important for us to hear your opinions and ideas about the way families and communities care for young people so that their services could be made better.

We would like to request your permission to talk to you, to ask you questions, and record your answers. Everything that we will say will remain confidential. If there is anyone here who would prefer to not take part in this discussion, you are free to say that you would not like to participate. And you are free to leave. Everything we discuss here will be kept confidential. We will be writing down your views and opinions, but we will not use your names. The information that you tell us here will not be attributed to individuals and no one but the researchers will know who said what. We will not write down your names. This also means that you should all agree not to share what you hear here within your community. We want people to feel free to share their thoughts and feelings without fear that people outside this group will learn about them. We will compile a report with your discussion and we will share this report with the key decision makers and we hope that this information you tell us will have a positive long term impact.

Everyone here is free to express themselves, and whatever anyone says is right. No one here is wrong, anything anyone says is right. That is the first thing. We should respect the views of everyone here because everyone is right, no one is wrong. As I said, it is a good thing for everyone to express themselves. But if we all talk at the same time, my colleague who is taking notes here will not be able to write everything down. He will miss some of what you say. I myself will not be able to listen to all of you, and I will miss what you say. So please, as we speak, let us speak through the chairperson. Let us ask the chairperson, who is me, and we will call on who wants to speak. That way, the discussion will go well, and everyone will have a chance to speak, and everyone will get a chance to hear what their neighbor is saying. Please, don't be shy, I want all of us to be comfortable, and for all of us to speak freely. Whatever we say here will remain here.

Does anyone want to stay and talk with us? You can also leave at any time if you decide you don't want to stay any more. Do you have any questions before we begin?  
Do you agree to participate in this discussion?

### **Introduction**

Ask participants to introduce themselves and assign each participant a number to facilitate documentation.

Explain that the discussion is organized into two activities and will take about 2 hours



**ACTIVITY 1**

**Listing and ranking of child protection risks**

Time: 45 minutes

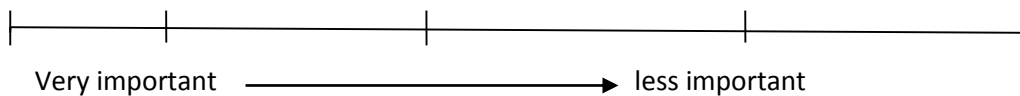
**Steps:**

1. To provide a framework for the discussion, provide this explanation about the first part of the discussion:

So let's begin. We want to talk about the things that hurt children; we want to talk about the things that hurt their development. We want to talk about the things that happen to children that make them unhappy, that they do not like to experience. We want to discuss the things that happen to children that make even you their mothers/fathers unhappy. We want to talk about the things that make you, as a community, come together to discuss what you want for your children. So, all of those things that are not good for your children, that make you unhappy, that make your children unhappy, these are the things we want to discuss today.

We don't want to talk about poverty, because poverty affects all of us. And we can talk about it today, or even for a month, and we can go on talking. So, let us put poverty aside for now. And the problems with health care and hospitals, we know that that is a problem everywhere. We, in fact, know that there aren't enough hospitals for all the areas that need them. So, please let us put that issue aside for now. Let us not discuss it, because those are things that are out of our control. Those are things that people who do not live in this village are responsible for. They have not done what they should do. But let us look at our children; at the things that we do and that we do not do that make them unhappy, that affects their development. Those are the things we want to discuss. Think about the things you have seen and experienced here, but please, feel free to share stories but do not tell us specifics like the child's name or family members, that is private. So, who wants to start? Who wants to be the first person to tell us about one of the problems?

2. Ask participants to identify factors/risks/issues that make children feel bad, unsafe, and insecure. (note taker should write these on index cards, at least 5-7 risks)
3. Ask participants: Are there additional problems that children experience: *-At home? -At school? -In the community, religious institutions, while working near home e.g. collecting water, firewood, fishing etc?*
4. Ask participants to rank all of the answers in order of importance via voting along a line that has been created with a tape on the ground. Participants can discuss, explain and debate among themselves, further explaining why different things are important.



5. Once the ranking has been finalized, ask the group to explain why this ranking was agreed up on and highlight areas of doubt or where disagreement could not be resolved
6. Announce the top ranked issue, the 2<sup>nd</sup> issue, 3<sup>rd</sup> issue, .....

*All issues should be ranked from very important/biggest to less important*

**Repeat the same steps but this time look at the assets that the community has in offering protection to their children or what they do well in handling protection threats/risks/harm to children**

***Break, refreshments***

## ACTIVITY 2 Networks mapping (45 minutes)

**Objective:** to elicit information /mapping of the known help or services/actions available for children and families, perceptions about them, along with the recommendations for improvement (for each of the three top-ranked child protection threats identified in Activity 1 above)

The focus will be on:

- ***which steps would be taken***
- ***the people who would be involved in making the decision***
- ***the likely outcomes of the response***
- ***the level of satisfaction of different stakeholders with those outcomes***
- ***which other alternatives might have been available and why they were not utilized***
- ***recommendations for improvement of supports for children exposed to the three top-ranked child protection threats that had been identified in Activity 1 above.***

### Steps:

**STEP 1:** Tell participants: I'd like to ask you what would happen if a child were affected by one of the three main risks/sources of harm you identified. Let's take your first ranked item, which was— **[NAME the top ranked item]**. Suppose this had happened to an 8-year-old girl in your village. (Or if the risk is specifically related to a boy, the example would be a boy). 2. Ask the group the following questions:

Q: To whom **can a child who has been affected by this issue go to for help?**

Who is told about the issue?

*Make a list of all the people and places that may be told about the issue or that may respond.*

**Ask which of these is MOST TYPICAL, and explore this one by asking the following questions.**

Q: **What are the key steps?**

Probes:

- Describe what would happen step by step.
- Who could the child go to for help?
- What does the family do/how does the family respond/what role does the family play?
- What does the community do/how does the community respond/what role does the community play?
- Who is involved?
- What supports is actually provided to the child and family?

Q: ***Who would be the key decision makers about what would happen?*** Who would be involved? What role would be played by people/services outside the community? Who takes the decision?

Q: ***What would be the likely outcomes of the responses to the problem?***

Probes:

- What would likely happen to the child?
- What would likely happen to the family?
- What would likely happen to the perpetrator?

Q: ***How satisfied with this outcome would various stakeholders (child, family, community, people outside the community) be with this outcome? Why?***

ON THE SAME PROBLEM/ISSUE, REPEAT FOR ONE OTHER PERSON OR PLACE IN ORDER TO TRACE OUT A SECOND PATHWAY, REPEATING THE QUESTIONS ABOVE.

Q: ***What other options did the child/family have?***

Probes:

- Describe what would happen step by step.
- Who could the child go to for help?
- What would the family do?
- What would the community do?
- Who would be involved?

- Who would be the key decision makers about what would happen?
- What role would be played by people/services outside the community?

**Q: Why wouldn't other named options be normally/commonly used?**

Probes:

- Would children, families, community leaders know about this option? Why or why not?
- Would it be viewed as less/more safe? Less/more appropriate? Less/more effective? Please explain why.

**Q: Is there a legal responsibility related to this problem?**

Probes:

- Who would it be reported to (police, probation and welfare officer, LC)?
- Who would report this problem?
- What would be the response of the agency/person it was reported to? If not reported, why not?

**Q: What recommendations would you make for better ensuring that the child is protected from harm and that the risks of the harm re-occurring are minimized?**

Probes:

- What might have made it easier for the child to seek or access help?
- How could the help/services that the child received have been made better?
- Who else should have been involved in the process? What could be changed so that they become involved in the future?
- Is the risk that the harm will re-occur still present? If so, what could be done to minimize this risk?

**STEP 2.** Repeat the process (from step 1), focusing on the second-ranked item.

**STEP 3.** Repeat the process (from step 1), focusing on the third-ranked item.

**STEP 4.** Conclude by thanking the participants for their time

## TOOL 6: COMMUNITY OBSERVATION

### Activity one:

#### COMMUNITY MAPPING (by men, women and children)

Purpose: To make an observation of the various contexts in which children interact with their peers, family, school, work, community life and religious practice

Objective:

Facilitate a dialogue with the community and collect baseline information by:-

- a) Drawing a map of the community
- b) Indicating important contexts where children travel, play, learn, work, reside in the community and potential risks or assets within the community

#### Procedure:

Step 1: the researcher should introduce themselves and the study, seek consent and emphasize confidentiality and explain what the information from this activity will be used for

Step 2: Drawing the map

- a) A group of 5-7 individuals in the community will contribute to drawing a community map highlighting where children travel, play, learn, work, reside in the community as well as potential risks or assets within the community. (This exercise should be done separately by men, women, and children)

The map can first be drawn on the ground and then be transferred to a poster paper (agree with the participants to select a suitable venue where they can draw their map on the ground)

Step 3: Once the map is completed, review the diagram with the group to ensure that all details of the map are understood

Step 4: Repeat this process with one group on men, women and children

NB: this exercise should be a very participatory process with the group members physically creating the map and discussing *locations, risks and assets*

### Activity 2: Transect walk

**Step 1:** From the multiple community maps drawn in activity one, a researcher should create one master map revealing multiple paths for transect walks. The map informs the researchers where there are *protection concerns or assets* within the community to spend more time observing the locations. Assign each researcher their paths for transect walks.

**Step 2:** Researchers should conduct their assigned transect walks while completing their community observations. Researchers should pay careful attention to the areas highlighted by participants in Activity One as areas of particular interest. During the transect walks researchers may also conduct informal interviews with local community members or individuals in the area to gain more insight into issues that were mentioned in Activity One. Researchers may deviate when useful or interesting, or even at casual, points to observe the surrounding area and to gather relevant and useful information.

**Step 3:** Researchers should then compile their notes and edited map into a daily report for submission.

## TOOL 7: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

### Main risks and harms to children

1. Draw the bad things that are done/happen to children in this place
2. Draw the people who help children whom bad things have happened to
3. Who can tell us more about these pictures? (Boys, Girls, consider age)
4. Which of these people do you like most and why?
5. Which of these people don't you like most? And why?
6. Have you ever seen a child being mistreated? Where? (at home, at school, community?) who was mistreating them?
7. What do you do if you see a fellow child being mistreated?
  - If you were mistreated where would you report to and why?
8. Can anyone of you share a story of a child who was mistreated and what happened?



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