



AfriChild

Research. Policy. Impact.

The Centre for the study of the African Child

INTER-UNIVERSITY CHILD FOCUSED RESEARCH
DISSEMINATION CONFERENCE

Theme: Putting Ugandan Children at the Heart of Sustainable Development: What is the Evidence?

Date: 17th May 2019

Venue: Golf Course Hotel, Kampala

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Introduction

This report presents the proceedings and content of a one-day conference organized by Africhild held at Golf Course Hotel, Kampala on the 17th of May, 2019. The purpose of the conference was twofold; 1) to disseminate the findings of seven studies that were conducted as a result of the inter-university child focussed research training programme and 2) to pass out a cohort of 30 researchers equipped with skills to conduct child focussed research. The overarching aim of the conference was to provide a platform for researchers from the different universities that participated in the training programme to share scientific evidence in order to strengthen policy and programming for children in Uganda. The conference brought together researchers, practitioners and policy makers to engage in a discourse on strategies for strengthening child-focused research, identify common challenges in this field and explore approaches to overcome these challenges.

Background

In 2017, Africhild, with the support of Oak Foundation initiated an interuniversity training programme targeting a total of 30 mid- level researchers from seven universities in Uganda to equip them with skills in child focussed research methods, grant acquisition and publication. The seven universities that participated were:

- i. Makerere University, Kampala
- ii. Kyambogo University
- iii. Nsamizi Training Institute
- iv. Uganda Martyrs University, Nkozi
- v. Uganda Christian University, Mukono
- vi. Gulu University and
- vii. Muni University

The expected outcomes of this training were that trainees would ultimately utilize the skills acquired to undertake child-focused research and that they would also integrate the knowledge and skills acquired into their lectures and as they guide university students to write research projects and dissertations. Along with skills, Africhild provided research

grants to the trainees to enable them put in practice the skills they had attained. This formed the backdrop against which this conference was held to share findings from the resultant research studies as well as commission the cohort of 30 skilled researchers.

Opening Remarks from the Master of Ceremonies

In his opening remarks, the conference's Master of Ceremonies, also a facilitator in the interuniversity training program welcomed all participants at 10:20 am. The theme of the conference was introduced -

"Putting Ugandan Children at the Heart of Sustainable Development: What is the Evidence?"

Emphasis was placed on the fact that children make up more than half of the total population of Uganda therefore they are key stakeholders in the future of the country. It is thus imperative that planning for them puts into serious consideration their voices. This conference marked the end of the first phase of the inter-university mentorship programme that span over two years. Mid-level researchers who comprised of teaching staff of seven universities got training in child focussed research methods during the programme. As a facilitator, the Master of Ceremonies expressed satisfaction with what participants had undergone over the period of the programme. He also commended Africhild for creating the unique opportunity for learning amongst colleagues, sharing experiences as well as gaining new insights on how to conduct child focussed research. All researchers that participated in the training were urged to apply the unique skills and knowledge and attitudes about child focussed research to their respective universities.

Opening Remarks from the Executive Director, Africhild

The Africhild Executive Director welcomed all participants to the conference and gave an overview of the mentorship programme. In this session, participants were taken through the journey to the birth of Africhild. The Africhild Centre was birthed in 2012 when actors working on child related issues came together and realised the lack of scientific rigour in the way research was being done thereby affecting the credibility of the research that was being done at the time. There was no primary focus on the issues of children. The thinking behind

the creation of the centre was premised in the fact that sustainable development can only be achieved if efforts are made to improve the lives of children. This led to the formation of the Programme Learning Group (PLG), an information sharing platform that brought together donors, government, the academia, international and national NGOs as well as Community Based Organisations, to learn from each other's work and to jointly agree on priorities for the sector. This group worked in an adhoc way to map out issues that needed to be focussed on regarding children. Later the need for a more institutionalised approach to addressing the issue of child focussed research became apparent. In 2012 a consensus was reached to establish a centre of excellence on the study of the African child culminating into the birth of Africhild. Six of the agencies involved in these initial efforts took leadership of the centre. They were: TPO, Columbia University, Childfund International, UNICEF, Makerere University (College of Humanities and Social Sciences) and MOGLSD. Africhild was born out of the need to have a convergence of academia generating evidence through research that can be absorbed to inform policy therefore a need to have policy makers, and practitioners as well being informed by existing evidence. It was meant to ensure policy makers, practitioners and academia were on the same page.

One of the primary areas of focus for the centre was the area of capacity building for in country researchers. Africhild adopted a capacity building model that looks at developing a cadre of researchers from the country/region able to undertake rigorous scientific research to build onto research efforts in the country. The Executive Director applauded and congratulated the team involved in the process, mentors, trainers, university leadership as well as the team at Africhild. He appreciated them for accepting of be part of this process and concluded his remarks by noting that this is only the beginning of greater things to come.

Overview of the Inter-university training child focussed training Programme

by Prof. Fred Wabwire

In December 2016 Africhild received a grant from OAK Foundation to train 30 child focussed researchers. The programme provided a collaboration platform that brought together 7 Ugandan universities. Africhild engaged rigorously with these universities to identify

mentors, trainees, facilitators. Using a consultative process AfriChild developed a plan to achieve the grant objectives through;

- i. Conducting a Training Needs Assessment (TNA) to identify knowledge, skills and competency gaps
- ii. Establishing inter-university collaboration for knowledge sharing
- iii. Linking trainees to mentors within their local universities
- iv. Rigorous training of university staff in child focused research methods, grant acquisition and scientific writing

The training needs assessment revealed knowledge gaps in the areas of publication, Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements, research ethics, data analysis, data management, child focussed surveys, Focus Group Discussions with children and sampling strategies. Throughout the programme, the working definition of child focussed research was *“research in which children are actively involved and recognised as important participants. It is research with children and not on children or by children”*

In terms of structure, in the first year, a training needs assessment was conducted, participants selected and a plan drafted. Trainees were taken through research methods and grants writing trainings. The second phase saw participants learn how to review and respond to calls for proposals. A mock exercise was carried out in which participants responded to a call for proposals from Africhild. It turned out that all the proposals were fundable leading to awarding of grants of up to UGX 20 million to all the applicants to carry out research. This was a clear indicator that participants had indeed acquired the skills to respond to funding opportunities. More training in subsequent workshop was conducted on grants writing and data management as well as publication, dissemination and data translation.

Teaching strategies applied included:

- i. Short and didactic lectures to fill knowledge gaps
- ii. Skills labs were used to translate the knowledge gained during the lectures to skills
- iii. Self-directed learning
- iv. Peer to peer learning

On the whole, the programme integrated knowledge, skills and practice to produce confident and high quality experts in child focussed research. Trainees learnt a number of things related to grants such as registration for grants, searching for grants and research ethics. They all completed an online course in human subjects' protection among other skills acquired.



Professor Wabwire presenting an overview of the inter-university programmes

Panel Discussion on Research, Policy and Practice

A panel comprising of representatives from policy makers, practitioners and academia respectively was formed to discuss child focussed research and its implications for their different sectors. Below are highlights from the discussions;



Panel comprising of Academia, Policy Makers and Practitioners Discusses Child Focussed Research

The role of the Academia in ensuring quality research

A representative of the Academia, in a brief presentation highlighted the role of the Uganda National Academy of Sciences (UNAS) – an institution that majorly talks about what could be, brings together the best thinkers in Uganda and gives them a platform to discuss the evidence that researchers produce and provide guidance on the research that needs to be undertaken. It is difficult to know what the research agenda is in Uganda; for instance research on child labour often produces statistics that are alarming. However on closer scrutiny, one may realise that those families are severely impoverished. This points to a need to try and find consensus on what can be deduced from the work of different experts i.e. the translation of research findings to deduce what the truth of the matter is about a particular phenomenon. Scientists too, need guidance.

In order to effectively link research to create policy impact there is need to accumulate all the evidence together and package it for policy impact. Further, regarding packaging information, it was noted that this is something that stakeholders are all learning along the way. It is also better informed by maintaining cordial relations with policy makers in order to better understand what kind of information they want. It was highlighted that certain policy makers usually prefer one or two page documents, therefore this calls for the ability to articulate thousands of pages of research into one or two pages for policy makers to utilize. Emphasis was placed on developing and maintaining close ties and close relationships with particular audiences because this ensures that they are more inclined to listen to what one is saying and ultimately make decisions based on that.

On the role of academia in child focussed research, it was noted that a lot is happening in Uganda regarding children and so many problems exist that require solutions. The onus lies on the academia to investigate and use the evidence generated to propose solutions to the problems children are facing. Research with children helps a great deal in addressing the gaps. Due to globalization, everything is happening very fast in the world today. Family has a big stake in raising up a generation, many parents are struggling in parenting, struggling to understand the children amidst many competing demands, and many people on the other hand are competing with parents in parenting children e.g. media and social media. There is so much that requires deep investigation regarding raising children. The number of children living on the streets is also increasing even though many of those children have parents. There is a mismatch between the ideal situation and the reality thus it is important to carry out inquiry to inform the main gaps such as child abuse, child neglect and child exploitation which are on the rise. This is important in the sense that research informs interventions so in order to carry out interventions that are informed, research must be prioritized.

Another example of a mismatch is the notion that Uganda is gifted by nature as a country vis-à-vis the poverty levels at household level. The gaps are enormous and the answer lies in research. Research is therefore a need, not just for academic purposes as it helps practitioners and policy makers understand what they are doing so that they do it better. Research provides the truth to understand the gaps.

On the critical challenges in doing research with children themselves, it was highlighted that many a time, adults want to impose their world on children yet children have their space.

The world today is different from the world back then, social support systems have completely changed, children understand their world best and we need to listen to them to help us understand their world so that we come up with appropriate solutions. There is need to interact with a digital generation to come up with the right guidance. It is therefore important to do research with children because they understand their situation better.

Research and Policy Formulation

Regarding application of research, a representative from MOGLSD shared his experience in utilizing research for policy making. Referring to his experience in public service, the former Assistant Commissioner for children and youth averred that previously the ministry did not even have a written down policy. Instructions on what to do were verbally passed on. However this practice has evolved over the years. Programmes would end without any visible results because there was limited understanding of the issues and results could not be measured to reflect progress or the lack thereof. It became apparent that there was a need to develop informed policies, policies informed by knowledge of the issues that are being addressed. The knowledge helps to guide response and to ultimately measure results. Policies now are developed through a bottom up approach. Consultation is crucial. Policy makers now endeavour to find out from the stakeholders what their perspectives are on the problem, what the pertinent issues are, how big the problem is. Families and politicians are also consulted. This is why rigorous research is needed. Research removes bias against political affiliation, brings out all the issues, outlines what needs to be addressed leading to a policy that will give direction on what has to be done. Some of the policies in place now are policies that are able to give guidance on issues.

Regarding data, policy makers have for long looked for accurate data in vain especially data on children. Different organisations and different individuals came up with research that was not rigorous and would give their own interpretations. This created a need to research that informs policies. A clear example is the current efforts to draft the national child policy being informed by results of the National Violence against Children Survey which was conducted by Africhild with the support of UNICEF, CDC and other partners. For government to come up with solutions, they have got to utilise research from academic institutions because they follow rigorous methods and follow methodologies that produce

quality results and they are representative. It provides information that is generalizable for the whole country. It is therefore important that the policies that are made by government and followed by different practitioners are informed by rigorous research. Regarding the low uptake of research findings by some policy makers and how this can be addressed, the consensus was on generating interesting, by providing relevant and well packaged information that can be utilized meaningfully to inform policy.

Reiterating the goal of the interuniversity training programme, the panel discussants noted that it was important to build the capacity of the people working in government to be able to appreciate research. It is also vital that officers at all levels of government have some research skills in order to effectively integrate research into their day to day activities. These skills are currently limited amongst both policy makers and practitioners. The implication of this is that if programmes are not informed then they do not get good results and the problems still remain. This therefore further justifies the training programme that builds the capacity of researchers in child focussed research and enables them to interpret research and utilise it in the various programmes they are running.

Translating Research into Practice

A CSO representative on the panel gave insights on how CSOs or other practitioners are utilising research to inform their programming and advocacy work. He noted that much of the research that is done is utilised largely by the international NGOs because they have been built up to understand that they need to research in order to get accurate information. When it comes to national NGOs and Community Based Organizations, there are people (staff) who are not necessarily multidisciplinary so their appreciation of research needs to be built. The only time they refer to research is when they are writing proposals. Yet, there are other benefits of research especially for the organisations that are trying to directly impact communities. Very little research is done in certain fields and this has caused a standstill in the CSO utilising research and in programming. For a long time, there has been reference to a research that put the number of street children in Uganda at 10,000 yet a 2018 research in only 4 Districts put the number at 15,000. When there is no information it becomes very hard for civil society to put in place interventions that are relevant at grassroots level. With the little research that is always available, NGOs are able to utilize it

by formulating relevant interventions and in effect highlight what works and what does not work. CSO interaction with research findings can lead to concrete proof of what should be translated from practice to policy and also scaled up or replicated for bigger impact.

It was also emphasised that the language in which the research results are published ought to be understandable by both policy makers and practitioners for it to make sense. These categories may not necessarily have people that can understand the technical research jargon so utilisation is affected by the way the research findings are communicated. This calls for simplicity in presenting research finding such that even a local Community Based Organization at the grassroots can utilize the findings.

One of the challenges that policy makers face in their appreciation of research has to do with the fact that sometimes policies are determined by politics and not necessarily evidence. This in part explains why many policy makers do not consume and utilise research. The only way to convince them is with facts – do research and present the facts. The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development has been struggling for a long time to get resources for children in child protection, Ministry of Finance needed the numbers on how investing in children affects the economy. It is only credible research that can prove that if we do not invest in children now, when they grow up, the problems will overwhelm and swallow up the economy.

Dissemination of Research Findings

In the afternoon, the conference broke out into two parallel sessions covering parenting and rights respectively. In these sessions, researchers shared findings from the various researches that were undertaken and received feedback on methodological issues, sampling and other research aspects from the audience. The section below highlights the salient issues from the presentations:

Study 1: Impact of Parenting Styles on Adolescent Development in Amuru District, Northern Uganda

This study was conducted by researchers from Gulu University. It was based on the understanding of a family as a central unit in adolescent development and premised in SDG Goal 4 targets 4.1 and 4.2 which emphasise adolescent development. The researchers noted that adolescent development is marred with challenges in physical cognitive and emotional transition. Adolescents in Amuru continue experiencing aftershock effects from continuously migrating from their homes due to the war that affected the northern part of Uganda for years. Amuru was purposively selected because it hosted the biggest Internally Displaced People (IDP) camp during the war. A mixed methods approach was used, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods utilizing participatory methods e.g. self-assessments, storytelling, drawing and role plays as well as interviews with parents and teachers. Five variables for adolescent development were examined i.e. Conscientiousness, Benevolence, Extraversion, Emotional stability and Imagination while four parenting styles were studied. These were authoritarian, authoritative, permissive and neglectful or uninvolved styles of parenting. Key findings were as follows:

1. Authoritative style was found to have a positive relationship with adolescent development ($r=0.307$; $p<0.01$) evidenced by positive results on conscientiousness; extraversion; emotional stability, imagination but negative with benevolence

2. Permissive style was found to have a positive relationship with adolescent development ($r=0.221$; $p<0.05$) showing positive results with conscientiousness, benevolence, extraversion, emotional stability and imagination
3. Authoritarian style showed a negative relationship with adolescent development ($r=-0.011$, $p>0.05$). Negative with conscientiousness, extraversion, emotional stability, Imagination but was found to have positive results in terms of benevolence
4. Neglectful style showed a negative relationship with adolescent development ($r=-0.041$, $p>0.05$) Negative with extraversion, emotional stability, imagination but positive with conscientiousness and benevolence.

The study concluded that there are variations in adolescent outcomes for the children living in post conflict environment as much as there are variations in parenting styles for the children living in post conflict environment. Parenting and adolescent development variations exist among individuals. Adolescent development is a unique period dominated by psychological social physical and emotional transitions therefore the study situates parenting styles as a key contributor to adolescent outcomes.

Issues arising from the audience were about sampling, concept clarification and validation of results. It was clarified that the parents interviewed were parents of selected children. The choice of gender was not deliberate when it came to parents or caregivers. On variables, it was clarified that the study had 5 themes under which there were questions relating to the personality of children e.g. under extraversion i.e. how a child opens up, questions related to shyness, optimism and expressive of the child – measuring personality. Items of measurement were adopted from previous researches which had a connotation on reliability.

The sample was purposively selected just as the study site was purposively selected because it hosted the largest IDP camp. The researchers selected rural schools and only children in school were interviewed. The need for future researches to also consider out of school adolescents was highlighted. With regard to triangulation of findings, the teams clarified that both parents and teachers gave information to support what the children revealed.

The team worked with education officers to identify the schools in Amuru sub-county and sampled 30% of the schools; from the schools, they selected the maximum number of respondents in a FGD which was 12. The team then identified the parents of the 12 children

which formed the basis of sampling for parents. It was also noted that comparison between urban and rural is important as well as out of school and in school should also be looked into. A school environment is presents other factors that may affect development.

Study 2: Views of Children on Parental Role in Promoting Primary School Retention in Busoga Region Uganda

This study was conducted by researchers from Kyambogo University. It was premised on Sustainable Development Goal 4 that talks about leaving no child behind in terms of education. School retention is also a national issue because of Universal Primary Education and Universal Secondary Education programmes in Uganda as well as a global concern. Busoga region was selected because it has consistently shown low retention rates according to data from previous studies. Little is known about the perspectives of children on what parents should do to ensure they stay in school. From children's voices three factors were identified i.e. Mentorship, provision and partnership roles. Data was collected data from 9 schools in Namayingo, Iganga and Buyende Districts. It was an exploratory study of children both in and out of school. Children were asked to tell their story about how their parents help them to keep at school. Methods used were; individual interviews and focus group discussions with children. Data was analyzed data through thematic content analysis. For in school children, the sampling technique used was stratified sampling while snowball sampling was used for out of school children. Key findings included:

- There was high parental encouragement (92%), were able to check child book (89%) and help with homework (62%).
- These activities were only done during termly school visitation when parents interface with teachers and children.
- Children identified what parents should do to motivate them to stay at school as: buying new cloth, scholastic materials, care, paying tuition, visiting at school, pocket money and feeding them.
- More girls than boys expressed the need for parents to provide the services above as a motivator.

- When needs of girls are not met, they can be abused, misdirected and have higher chances of drop out
- Nature and strategy of punishment impact on school retention
- Poverty and illiteracy of parents has influence on the nature of mentorship and provisions for children

In conclusion, the study found that children recognize what their parents are providing but most times do not understand the reason for being in school. The study also raises concerns on the nature of parent-teacher partnership. Children were able to identify what motivates them and that should be used to encourage parents. The study recommends stronger collaboration between parents, teachers and children- there should be role models for the children as they build their character and wider sensitization on policies relating to children education.

The issues raised by the audience revolved around the discussion on rights and responsibilities of children, controlling for bias and views of the parents. It was clarified that one of the questions in the research was on what the children did when they were not in school. (What do you do when you are not at school?) Control for bias was done through ensuring that they selected schools that are both in rural and urban areas. Two rural schools and one urban school were selected in each District. Secondly, the team ensured that when handling the children, no parents or teachers were present and this allowed the children to express themselves freely. Both boys and girls were represented in the study. On the voices of parents, the study was centred on children's voices of parents were not interviewed.

Study 3: Understanding Parenting: Perspectives of Parents and Children in Uganda

Findings from a study on parenting practices conducted by Africhild were presented. It was noted that Uganda is indeed a very young population yet the rate of violence is very high according to the recent Violence against Children Survey report. Science shows that critical child development milestones happen in a home. Parental care and societal interactions thus have an impact on how a child attains key development milestones. The study was undertaken in three districts of Uganda; Kampala, Lira and Ibanda. 180 adult caregivers and

180 were interviewed. Children interviewed were aged 8 to 13 years. Findings from the study revealed the following categories of parenting behaviours:

- i. Caring (including nutrition)
- ii. Being enterprising
- iii. Community relations
- iv. Investing in children's future
- v. Protection
- vi. Rearing children and
- vii. Intimate partner relations

Positive parenting behaviours cited by respondents in the study included; investing in children's future, caring for children, being enterprising, being a good neighbour, having good relations with their partner and raising children well. On the flip side, negative parenting behaviours identified included: lack of care, not being a good neighbour, raising children poorly, not protecting children and having a bad relationship with their partner. Planning for child's future was the highest ranked behavior associated with positive parenting and it emphasized the link between education and a child's future. Investing in a child's future involved paying school fees, buying scholastic material, getting involved in helping a child with homework and ensuring children know how to take good care of themselves and their environment. There was consensus among children and caregivers on harmful parenting, but differing views on good parenting. Whereas to children, good parenting was seen in caring, for adults it was investing in children's future. Overall, positive parenting was seen to involve making sacrifices. The study identified simple replicable child safety actions such as walking child to school, repairing children's clothes. The study recommended that in order to effectively scale up the child protection system in Uganda, efforts ought to begin with the household and in the community.

Issues arising revolved around the study participants, cultural aspects of parenting and variations in perspectives among parents and children. The research team provided clarity on participants saying that both parents and children's voices were heard in the study. Respondents were not self-reporting but asked to describe a good or bad parent they know of, without giving names to avoid bias and to allow them to speak freely. On whether there were significant differences in perspectives between children and adults, it was noted that

no major differences were noticed across the three sites. Participants noted that the culture aspect of parenting did not come out yet the culture plays a big role; the way of life has something to do with how children are raised and how they later become successful or not, even as we put connotations on parenting, the culture aspect becomes important.

A query was raised on how these findings have been disseminated with relevant stakeholders to which the team responded that regional dissemination activities were carried out, findings were also shared with Children at Risk Network (CRANE) church leaders' conference and at a conference on family held at Uganda Christian University. The research was also followed by a project intended to translate the research findings into action. This resulted into a parenting project being implemented in northern Uganda.

Study 4: Rights Based Approach to HIV/AIDS Prevention and Utilization of Services by Adolescents in Iganga District

This study was conducted by researchers at Nsamizi Training institute. A rights based approach is associated with improved service access and population health and places focus on processes by which wellbeing is attained such as empowerment, participation, inclusiveness, decision making, access to opportunities, equity & equality, accountability for sustainability. This study was premised in the notion that Adolescents in Busoga region are at high risk of HIV despite presence of several service providers and that adolescents are poor users of HIV services. The researchers therefore sought to establish how a Rights Based Approach was understood and actualized for adolescents' HIV/AIDS prevention services. In terms of methodology, the study employed a mixed methods approach combining both qualitative and quantitative methods. The study sites selected were Nakawala and Nakadama Sub counties of Iganga District. They targeted adolescents aged 10 to 19 years of age both in and out of school as well as their parents. Through simple random sampling, a total of 90 adolescents were identified and 30 parents. Key informants were selected purposively. Methods used were survey, semi-structured interviews and key informant interviews.

Key findings from the study revealed that unlike other studies which tend to blame young people for not using services this study shows that adolescents are failing because duty

bearers are not doing what they supposed to do to support them. There are both strengths and weaknesses at level of adolescents, parents and other stakeholders. This calls for more empowerment for articulating their roles and responsibilities through dialogues and policy guidelines. There was a gross misunderstanding of the RBA: “voluntarism” and free reign which makes them passive actors. Social exclusion and discrimination particularly against out of school adolescents also emerged as an issue affecting sustainability of use of HIV services.

The study recommended that government operationalize the RBA framework indicating responsibilities and duties of duty bearers. Engage parents and adolescents in the design of strategies enabling effective use of HIV prevention services. For future research the study recommended more inquiry into the contribution of the RBA to service access, use and health status of people.

Study 5: Sustainable Menstrual Hygiene Management: The Girl Child’s Views in Selected Schools in Mukono

This study was conducted by researchers at Uganda Christian University and explored girls knowledge, attitudes and practices on Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM). The study was premised in the understanding that good MHM contributes to; realization of the girl child’s rights, school retention and promotes gender equity. It was largely qualitative except for some data that was quantitatively analyzed. Four schools where Hand in Hand Uganda (HIHU) operates were purposively selected. The sample included 96 girls from the total 428 and 24 boys from the total 377 from P5- P.7 were purposively selected. Key informants included, senior male and female teachers, the head teachers in each selected school, Executive Director HIHU and the Municipal Senior Inspector of schools and parents. Questionnaires, Focus group discussions, Drawings (pictures and body map), Key Informant Interviews were used to collect primary data.

Findings from the study revealed that girls had knowledge on MHM because of the different stakeholders. Unlike other studies (Juyal, et al. 2012, Thakre, et al. 2011, Mahon, et al. 2010) girls in this study knew what to do, how to do it because of HIHU and other players. There was an over flow of information without clear guidelines and without clarity on what is

right. It was also found that stigma is still a challenge in an environment where training only targets girls. Practice varies not because of knowledge gaps but other factors such as religion, culture, infrastructure and budget constraints. What came out clearly was the fact that knowledge must be consolidated; it has to move hand in hand with adequate facilities, infrastructure and psychosocial support.

The study concluded that knowledge is not enough; poor menstrual hygiene infrastructure and poor psychosocial support further discriminate girls and perpetuate stigma surrounding menstruation. Recommendations were made to government to design and distribute MHM guidelines, including menstrual hygiene indicators in the school inspection assessment tool, popularize understanding menstrual Hygiene Reader to schools and to improve school infrastructure menstrual hygiene management. The girl child's voice should take a greater prominence in menstrual hygiene management to increase their retention and performance. Other recommendations included strengthened supervision of cleaning and ensuring toilets and bathrooms are clean, providing incinerators for sanitary disposal, building more toilets and stances, including MHM in teacher training curriculum, offering MHM training to both boys and girls and constructing MHM infrastructure.

Study 6: The Effect of Child Labour on the Education and Health of Children Working in Stone Quarries in Kabale District, Uganda

This study was carried out by researchers at Uganda Martyrs University. Child labour was defined as work that is mentally, physically, socially and/or morally dangerous and harmful to children. In Africa, research shows that 1/5 of all children are engaged in child labour and 9% in hazardous work (Global Estimates of Child labour, 2017). In Uganda, 2 million children (16% of the child population) are engaged in child labour (UBOS, 2013)

Western Uganda has the highest incidence of child labour in the country accounting for 55% of working children (MGLSD, 2012, p. 1. This study set out to locate and explain where and why children are working in stone quarries, to establish the effect of child labour on children's education and health, to explore the lived experiences of children working in stone quarries. A mixed method, cross-sectional study design was employed targeting a

sample size of 72 children aged 5 – 17 years. Children’s voices were got through using child focused methods such as interviews with children and photo voice.

Study 7: Children’s Experiences and Perspectives on Parental and Community Involvement in their Schooling: Findings from Luuka District

This study that was conducted by researchers from Makerere University explored children’s’ practical experiences and perspectives as regards the involvement of their parents and other community members with regard to their schooling. It was a cross-sectional mixed methods study carried out between March and April 2019 with 162 children, in-depth interviews with 20 children, and 4 focus group discussions. Child-focused methodologies were used such as picture codes and photo voice. Factors for school dropout included limited commitment by parents and the misconception that school is free. Fathers’ absence emerged as an issue as well as fathers delaying to send money so that the mothers are able to meet the school dues. The issue of male engagement and absentee fathers based on the notion about the African man is that he is the sole provider of the family so he ends up being absent while working to provide. In the process children lack the guidance and involvement of a father. In rural schools it is the mothers who go and attend meetings, resolutions are held, yet the decision makers are not in the meeting. The study findings revealed the following:

- Parental provision of learning materials, school fees and emotional support at home was described as helpful, and associated with better school attendance, as frequently described in other studies (ref)
- Food for education is critical in encouraging school attendance (Acham et al. 2012) but in addition, we found that children in our study felt more encouraged at school when their parents personally got involved in the preparation of a food package to be carried to school
- Community engagements in voluntary activities and in the management of school affairs was valued, but in some schools activities carried out in the neighbourhoods distracted school programmes

This study concluded that children receive a wide range of material and emotional support from parents and community, but direct involvement of the parents in preparing them for school increased their motivation and readiness. The findings highlight the importance of community involvement in school, and suggest a need to pay attention to particular ways in which activities in the neighbouring communities negatively affect children's schooling experience

Two key recommendations were made by the study were:

- School management committees should consider conducting sensitization and dialogue meetings with communities whose activities are disruptive to children's schooling e.g. local mechanics, music shops etc.
- Schools and partners working in education sector should sustain their engagement with parents to promote particular kinds of support valued by children, such as preparing children's lunch packs and overseeing child's morning preparation for school

Issues arising from the audience revolved around sample size, social norms and community involvement. It was noted that while the sample is small, the results are quite interesting and convincing. The team did not interview parents so the views were entirely from children. Respondents were purely children but they brought up some social norms nuances. Community involvement was noted through encouragement, inspiration where children referred to some teachers or other members that encourage them in school. It was clear that the children knew their environment quite well e.g. issues of abduction scared them from being comfortable at school. Children also talked about a bishop in the area who comes and talks to them showing that religious leaders are actively involved in supporting them. Head teachers were also seen to be encouraging them, checking who has not paid fees; the community is involved in encouraging them to stay in school. 32% of the children lived with their grandparents and other guardians meaning that the relatives are involved in their schooling. It was noted that it would be good to replicate the study to other areas to see how different it is from Luuka.

In conclusion, it emerged from discussions that community concern is a cultural issue in Africa. It should be noted that some aspects of culture are inherently good and ought to be highlighted in research in relation to parenting.

Remarks from Africhild Board Chairperson

In his remarks, the representative of the Africhild Board chairperson congratulated the centre and researchers upon achieving what they had set out to achieve. He noted that the research produced was of a very high quality. He expressed confidence that the kind of research that is going to come forth in future will be of very good quality; research that can effectively inform policy and practice with evidence. He once again welcomed the various university leaders present adding that this kind of collaboration gives Africhild the strength to work harder. He applauded the collaboration from various line ministries and officially opened the afternoon session of the conference.

The Board Chair's remarks were followed by a summary of the interuniversity child focussed research training programme for the benefit of those that had missed the presentation in the morning session. The summary covered the objectives of the programme, the methods, participants and a brief on the structure.

Remarks from the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Kyambogo University

The Deputy Vice Chancellor Kyambogo University, in his remarks thanked Africhild for the opportunity it gave to universities to participate in the research training. He also thanked the research teams for taking up the challenge, responding to the call and going through the whole cycle of research and training and being equipped with research skills to enable them respond to questions and issues that affect children. Children under 18 in Uganda are more than those above 18. Going by the school cycle in the country all children are expected to be in school but the reality is that only a small percentage is in school hence questions on where they are, what they are doing, what they are thinking and what kind of future they are preparing themselves for. He expressed appreciation to Africhild for providing research grants and spearheading the process of training researchers to put together evidence and to share the findings in terms of what policy and practice implications there are to ensure good programmes for the future of Ugandan children. He also thanked the trainees for participating and learning and doing all the work to come up with credible results.

It was noted that this training certainly contributed to their journey to become researchers adding that there is a real need for people to learn how to be good researchers. An appeal

was made to universities to support researchers to continue writing research grants at different levels because without research it will be hard to describe the kind of future that Uganda should prepare for. An appeal was made for colleagues from the Ministry of Education and Sports to note that research is an important aspect of education, it is expensive, requires money, and therefore government ought to consider a competitive framework for researchers to go out and ask questions and get results to inform policy. Currently the ministry spends about 33 trillion but not much of this is being spent on research or supporting research institutions. Government ought to allocate some funds to enable universities to function as research institutions; this will enable universities and the country as a whole to tackle the problems with evidence.

Research with children ensures that researchers are mindful that the environment within which a child grows affects the opportunities which the child will have. For instance if a gifted child grows up in a harsh environment, that child takes longer to achieve the potential that lies in it and may not even achieve that potential at all which is both a loss for the country and the human race as a whole. Characteristics of a harsh environment include; food insecurity, absence of love and comfort, absence of meaningful play and physical exercise, absence of parenting and role models, absence of mentoring. These factors affect the growth and development. He noted that the research teams have been equipped to come back with answers to these questions; to explain how children are affected by the environment within which they grow. It is important to also note that children have a say and can make their thoughts known. If we know what they are thinking then we are in a better position to guide their thinking and to prepare them for the world ahead of them.

Using education as an example, the speaker noted that a framework which ignores thoughts and experiences of children creates reasons for children not to stay in school longer as they will find excuses to leave school. Therefore the country ought to pay attention to voices of children in order to avert drop out. Even when children go to school, children do not appreciate why they are in school. No visitations, no conversation between children, teachers and parents about what the children are finding in school. There is need for meaningful conversations about this, encouragement and planning for improvement not just threats while ignoring thoughts and experiences of what the children would like to see

done in school. Conversation with children is a critical factor in determining their destiny and their survival in school.

Participants were invited to consider an area of learning where conversations with children are critical and crucial. Citing the example of mathematics in schools, he noted that for many years this subject has been ignored yet it is a discipline that contributes to development of people hence the need to pay attention to the teaching of this component in school. He referred to the fact that by primary three, children are scared of a teacher entering class to teach maths and that 40% are not getting the required score. Calling for efforts to investigate the curriculum, he noted that children could be overloaded with work not giving opportunity for their young minds to begin to locate the knowledge base of these concepts. There is need to make learning enjoyable and lovable. The teaching of the subject has carried along with it unnecessary tools of learning, asking for methods when methods were supposed to help them acquire the skill of thinking quickly. It has turned out to be a strange subject taught to them in a very uninspiring, intimidating, and uninteresting manner. With this, he made an appeal to researchers to research this important aspect of schooling and to the Ministry of Education to set aside a research fund – a competitive research fund for researchers to investigate the issues around learning methods to avert school drop outs. This will ultimately enable the country to adequately prepare for the demands of the 21st century.

In his closing remarks, the speaker further congratulated the trainees and urged them to work together as institutions. He reiterated his appeal to government to fund research meaningfully and applauded Africhild for this research agenda that promotes collaboration among universities for the future.

Closing remarks from the Chief Guest

Assistant commissioner for Higher Education in Ministry of Education and Sports

In his remarks, the Chief Guest noted that the launch of the studies is timely as Uganda is in the process of developing the national child policy to replace the OVC policy. Research findings are critical in informing key interventions that will improve Ugandan children's lives. Children have a special place in our society because of their vulnerability and special need

for protection. However many times they fall into unpleasant conditions such as children living on the streets, about 1.5 million children drop out of primary school every year in Uganda, 16 young people every night are homeless. We have a responsibility towards these children in order to take action that will lead them into the best possible life.

Despite the considerable progress towards improving lives of children, Uganda is faced with a shortage of child focused researchers meaning that the studies that have been conducted remain incomplete without voices of children. Children are not merely objects of research but should be seen to be actively participating in research activities. Critical consideration of children in the field of research is needed where they actively participate in the process, researchers ought to assess the power relations and understand issues that hinder children from being active participants of the research. In order to put children at the heart of the national development agenda, the critical role of academia must be recognized and supported. He applauded Africhild for continuously positioning itself as a multi-disciplinary research organisation that conducts research on child related issues and engages in policy as well as practice discourse. On behalf of government, he pledged support towards this and similar research initiatives. He appreciated the interest and intent of the trainees to become better researchers and urged all stakeholders to continue putting children at the heart of the country's sustainable development plan. He closed by reassuring participants that he had taken note of the appeal to government to consider putting in place a competitive research fund and promised to relay the message to the authorities for action.

These remarks were followed by the official launch of the 6 reports resultant from the interuniversity training as witnessed in the pictures in the following picture gallery.

PHOTO GALLERY



The Chief Guest launching the report of the research done by Gulu University researchers



Some of the guests at the conference



The Official launch of the reports



Participants during the conference





Launch of the report by Nsamizi Training Institute





Some of the researchers receiving certificates

ANNEXES

Annex 1: CONFERENCE PROGRAM

TIME	ITEM	RESPONSIBLE		
8:00-9:00 am	Arrivals and Registration	AfriChild		
	OPENING CEREMONY (Dr. Onen David)			
9:00-9:10 am	Prayer and Anthem	MC/Time keeper		
9:10- 9:20 am	Welcome Remarks	AfriChild ED		
9:20-9:40am	Overview of inter-university Child focused Research Training	Prof. Fred		
9:40-9:50am	Inter-university Program in pictures	Racheal		
9:50- 10:30 am	Opening Address: Child focused research- Generating evidence for policy and practice	MOGLSD-Minister		
10:30-11:00am	Panel discussion: Policy Makers and practitioners (Health, Education, Gender, Parliament)			
11:00-11:30am	BREAK TEA	BREAK TEA		
	BREAKAWAY SESSION A (Mr. Mulindwa Ismail)	BREAKAWAY SESSION B (Dr. Jessica Nsungwa)		
	STUDY	PRESENTER	STUDY	PRESENTER
11:30-11:55am	Study 1		Study 2	
11:55 – 12:20pm	Study 3		Study 4	
12:20-12:45 pm	Study 5		Study 6	
12:45- 1:10 pm	AfriChild Parenting Study	<i>Dr. Sheba</i>	AfriChild Juvenile Justice study	<i>Theodora</i>
1:10-2:00pm	LUNCH			
	PLENARY SESSION 2: CLOSING CEREMONY (Mr. Mondo Kyatekka)			
2:00-2:15pm	Welcome Remarks from AfriChild Board			AfriChild Board Chair
2:15-2:30pm	Summary of inter-university Child focused Research Training			Prof. Fred Wabwire Mangen
2:30-2:40pm	Documentary			Racheal
2:40- 3:05pm	Study 7			

3:05-3:20pm	Remarks on behalf of Vice Chancellors of participating universities	UCU VC
3:20- 3:30pm	Launch of child focused research reports	All VCs
3:30–3:40pm	Remarks from representatives of development partners	UNICEF
3:40-4:20pm	Closing Remarks from Chief Guest and Award of Certificates	Minister of Education
4:20-4:30pm	Vote of Thanks	Prof. Peter Ubomba-Jaswa
	BREAK TEA & DEPARTURE	