

Child Protection 2023 Report



DEC 2023

**Bukulula Action for Children and Young People
(ACYP)**

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Child Protection Report 2023

What We Believe

Children can only become empowered agents of change to improve their lives and that of their families and communities if they are safeguarded from abuse, discrimination and harm of any kind, be it physical, sexual, emotional or neglect.

Our Child Protection Goal

Promote an environment where children and young people are protected from all forms of violence against them

1. Foreword from the Director/Chairperson

Dear Friends, Partners, and Fellow Advocates for Children,

As another year draws to a close at ACYP, we present this report for 2023, a testament to our unwavering dedication to protecting the most vulnerable members of our community: our children. This past year has been one of both significant strides and sobering reminders of the persistent threats that children face.

We have continued to strengthen our preventative efforts, reaching more schools and communities than ever before with vital information on child rights and safety. Our engagements with health facilities have grown, empowering healthcare workers to become crucial first responders in identifying and addressing potential abuse. The collaborative spirit fostered through our regular stakeholder meetings has deepened, leading to more coordinated and effective responses to cases of violence.

While we celebrate the increased awareness and reporting we have witnessed, leading to more children receiving the support they desperately need, we also acknowledge the deeply concerning reality that violence against children remains a pervasive issue. The cases that have come to our attention underscore the urgency of our mission and the need for continued vigilance and resourcefulness.

This report details the work we have undertaken in partnership with the police, district probation, and community development offices, highlighting the power of collaboration in seeking justice and providing care for child survivors. It also sheds light on the challenges we have encountered and the invaluable lessons we have learned along the way, informing our strategies for the future.

I want to express my profound appreciation for the tireless efforts of our dedicated staff and volunteers, whose passion and commitment are the driving force behind our impact. We are also deeply grateful for the trust and support of our donors, without whom our work would not be possible. To our partners in government and the community, your collaboration is essential in building a truly protective environment for our children.

Looking ahead to 2024, we remain resolute in our commitment to preventing all forms of violence against children. We will continue to innovate, to strengthen our partnerships, and to advocate tirelessly for the rights and well-being of every child in our community.

Thank you for standing with us in this vital mission. Together, we can create a future where all children are safe, nurtured, and free to reach their full potential.

Sincerely,

Micheal Mwebaza
Project Coordinator

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About ACYP Uganda

Our Vision



A world where underprivileged children and young people have the opportunities to fulfil their life ambitions.

Our Mission



To empower children and young people in Uganda by enabling access to quality education, healthcare, nutritious food, economic opportunities, and fostering environmental sustainability

Our Values



- a) Love and Care
- b) Dignity and Respect
- c) Inclusiveness
- d) Empowerment
- e) Research and Evidence
- f) Collaboration and Partnership

Programme Overview: Child Protection Initiatives

1. School Outreach Programme

Age-appropriate workshops on child rights, safety, and reporting abuse are held by ACYP when it visits schools. In two secondary schools and four primary schools, we set up and oversee child protection clubs. Children are empowered to be advocates and peer educators through these clubs. We train educators and school personnel on how to spot abuse indicators, how to report them, and how to create a safe atmosphere for kids. Additionally, ACYP plans school-wide activities that support the safety and wellbeing of children.

2. Health Facility Engagement

We educate parents and guardians who visit health facilities about the dangers of violence, positive parenting, and child development; we sometimes hand out child protection pamphlets and posters in waiting areas; and, finally, we educate and train healthcare professionals to identify the warning signs of abuse and neglect and to know how to refer patients.

3. Child Protection Stakeholder Meetings

In addition to strengthening local committees tasked with identifying and addressing child protection issues within their communities, our Community-Based Reporting Mechanisms have made it possible for children and community members to report concerns about child abuse in a safe and accessible manner. We also engage with communities to challenge harmful cultural practices and beliefs that contribute to violence against children and promote positive social norms that value and protect children. Finally, we have one safe space for children at Kalungi where children can play, learn, and access support in a safe and supervised environment. We hold multiple child protection meetings with stakeholders, highlighting the child protection legal framework.

4. Case Management and Support

ACYP has improved collaborations with government agencies (social welfare, probation, and police), other non-governmental organisations, faith-based groups, traditional authority, and community-based child protection organisations. To spread messages and reach a larger audience, the organisation collaborates with partners on awareness campaigns and events. Our information exchange and referral Systems has built defined referral paths and protocols with partner agencies to ensure children receive appropriate support services.

5. Empowering Children through Children and Youth Clubs

Through weekend clubs, child rights education is done. We provide children with information about their rights and how to seek help if their rights are violated. We provide life skills training while equipping children with essential life skills, such as communication, problem-solving,

critical thinking, and assertiveness, to help them protect themselves. We support the development of peer-to-peer support networks where children can look out for each other and share concerns. Lastly is creating opportunities for children to participate in decisions that affect their lives and to have their voices heard on child protection issues.

Key Achievements and Impact in 2023

Program and Activities for Child Protection 2023	No. Conducted	No. Impacted
School Outreach Program		
Conducting age-appropriate sessions for students	3	1,410
Establishing and supporting child protection clubs within schools	4	120
Training teachers and school staff on identifying signs of abuse, reporting procedures, and creating a child-safe environment.	1	15
Developing and implementing school policies on child protection.	0	0
Organizing school-wide events promoting child safety and well-being.	0	0
Health Facility Engagement		
Providing information to parents and caregivers visiting health facilities	2	32
Distributing leaflets and posters on child protection in waiting areas.	0	0
Training healthcare workers to recognize signs of abuse and neglect and understand referral pathways.	1	6
Parenting skills training	0	0
Home visits and support:	136	554
Child Protection Stakeholders Meetings		
Establishing child protection committees	0	0
Monitoring existing child protection committees	11	41
Community stakeholders meeting held	1	25
Safe spaces created	0	0
Safe spaces strengthened	2	20
Collaboration and Networking		
Contacting of other partners contacted	4	4
Referring of clients	2	2
Joint campaigns with other partners	0	0
Empowering Children Through Clubs		
Establishing clubs	0	0
Monitoring and strengthening clubs	2	20
Conducting child rights sessions at clubs	3	20

Economic empowerment		
Vocational training/apprentice	18	18
Micro-loan schemes	8	240
Support for income-generating activities	6	24
Case Management		
Identified cases of Violence against children	2	2
Handling of cases	2	2

Programme Activities in Detail

Activities	Explanations
School Outreach Program	
Conducting age-appropriate sessions for students	ACYP makes appointments with head teachers and find the appropriate time for the school child protection assembly. This is mainly in school where child protection clubs have not been established. Topics for this year included 1) Child rights, safety, and how to report abuse. We reached three school with a total number of 1,380 children and 30 teachers who attended our child protection assemblies. Four child protection are already in existed and were monitored and strengthened. These have 30 members with leaders. One training was done in one school and the same child assembly day to sensitize teachers about identifying child abuse cases. No policies was developed but the available national guidelines were mentioned
Establishing and supporting child protection clubs within schools	
Training teachers and school staff on identifying signs of abuse, reporting procedures, and creating a child-safe environment.	
Developing and implementing school policies on child protection.	
Organizing school-wide events promoting child safety and well-being.	
Health Facility Engagement	
Providing information to parents and caregivers visiting health facilities	ACYP utilizes the paediatric and youth days to talk to parents about positive parenting, child development, and the dangers of violence. equip parents and caregivers with positive parenting techniques, communication skills, conflict resolution strategies, and understanding child development needs. Providing targeted

Distributing leaflets and posters on child protection in waiting areas.	<p>support and guidance to vulnerable families to strengthen their capacity to care for and protect their children</p> <p>We reached 3 health facilities. One in Lukaya Town council, one in Bukulula S/C and lastly in Kalungu Town council. We</p>
Training healthcare workers to recognize signs of abuse and neglect and understand referral pathways.	
Parenting Skills Training	
Home Visits and Support:	

Child Protection Stakeholders Meetings

Establishing Child Protection Committees	<p>Child protection committees are established at parish levels. This comprise of 4 people with 3 females and one male. Then at each village level, we have a link person who reports directly to ACYO or through the parish committee. The village local councils are aware of the operations of the parish committees and the village link personnel. This person reports all cases within their areas of work. Usually, the local council committee has the vice chairperson responsible for children's affairs. This year saw a few cases reported to ACYP as been the case. However, the committees are aware of the national reporting system of free hotline 116 (Sauti) through the ministry of Gender, labor and social development. ACYP runs two safe place one locate at Mukoko and another located at Mwota Lukaya town council. The Mukoko office attract very few children and young people since its smaller and lees interaction. This year, it only attracted 10 young people on a sitting while Kalungi safe place has attracted close to 20 young people between 9-17 each weekend. We go into schools, work with the police, CBO in strengthening.</p>
Monitoring existing Child Protection Committees	
Community Stakeholders meeting held	
Safe Spaces created	
Safe Spaces strengthened	

Collaboration and Networking

Contacting of other partners contacted	<p>We handled a case where a survivor of sexual violence was referred to another CBO to secure foster care following the conviction of the perpetrator. The survivor's family never provided support, which complicated their ability to leave the harmful family situation.</p> <p>In order to promote child protection initiatives, four schools have maintained partnerships with child protection clubs. Students write articles that are shared with the entire school. Peer help and case reporting have also been made possible by this. Two CBOs have</p>
Referring of clients	
Joint campaigns with other partners	

	collaborated with us on the referral system, and two police posts have assisted us in managing the few child protection cases that have been reported to them. Together, the local government offices—particularly the probation office, community development officers (CDOs), and district community development officers (DCDOs)—have collaborated with us on many projects, including community and school training. We collaborate with six healthcare facilities that offer survivors medical help and do examinations during instances of physical and sexual assault.
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Empowering Children through clubs

Establishing clubs	Twenty young people gather every weekend at the Kalungi site Mwota cell, where an active club is already in place. The ACYP living skills program can be implemented by volunteers at any time. Communication, decision-making, reporting, assertiveness, critical thinking, problem-solving, craft, baking, jewel-making, painting, and computer training are among the activities that are taught to the youth.
Monitoring and strengthening clubs	
Conducting Child Rights Sessions at clubs	

Economic Empowerment

Vocational training/Apprentice	Research has demonstrated that families facing financial hardship or poverty also have little control over child maltreatment, which is why this activity is being carried out. Such households are more likely to experience gender-based violence, which in turn raises the risk of violence against children. As a result, these family members' empowerment is being given priority. Two young people are engaged in tailoring, while one adolescent is enrolled in carpentry. All 20 club members also receive training in useful skills like baking, jewellery-making, and crafts. The eight Village Saving and Loan Scheme Associations (VSLAs) that were founded have kept saving money. ACYP volunteers have continued to train these associations, and monthly supervision and monitoring have reinforced them. More than 800 vulnerable children are benefited by the 240 parents in these groups, which are made up of 30 parents of the kids we deal with in each VSLA. In order to provide animals, birds, and other necessities, such as groceries for village stalls, volunteers are called upon. Combating poverty has been shown to be a successful strategy for lowering family violence against children.
Micro-loan schemes	
Support for income-generating activities	

Case Management

Identified cases of Violence against children	We are able to identify children who are victims of violence thanks to the child protection committees. The case management procedure begins after they are referred to our offices. Survivors occasionally contact our mobile numbers, and the volunteers promptly follow up on the matter. The matter is not handled in a
Handling of cases	

hoover by us. The police assist in handling these cases, our partner solicitors offer free legal services, and the medical professionals who typically assess victims of sexual and physical abused children are also contacted and all these provide reliable and specialized service in the case management process. 2 cases were identified by volunteers and these were referred to the police. One survivor of sexual abuse was handed over to health facility for examination. A partner organization was conducted who helped in foster process since the victim was not safe in their previous home.

Challenges Faced in 2023:

1. Contextual and Systemic Challenges:

- **Limited Resources:** lack of infrastructure (safe spaces, transportation), and insufficient materials.
- **Cultural and Social Norms:** Deep-rooted cultural practices that condone or ignore violence against children, gender inequality, and stigma associated with reporting abuse.
- **Poverty and Inequality:** Socioeconomic disparities that increase vulnerability to exploitation and abuse, and limit access to support services.
- **Geographical Barriers:** Reaching remote or underserved populations can be logistically challenging and expensive.

2. Program Design and Implementation Challenges:

- **Difficulties in Identifying and Reaching Vulnerable Children:** Hidden or hard-to-reach children (e.g., those involved in child labour, children with disabilities).
- **Volunteer Capacity and Training:** Lack of adequately trained and supported staff with the necessary skills and knowledge in child protection.
- **Data Collection and Management:** Challenges in collecting accurate and reliable data on child protection issues and managing it ethically and securely.
- **Sustainability:** This program is not funded like any other.
- **Resistance to Change:** Opposition from individuals or groups who benefit from the existing system or hold traditional views.

3. Ethical and Child-Centered Challenges:

- **Burnout and Secondary Trauma:** Supporting staff who are exposed to distressing situations.

Lessons Learned and How They Will Inform Future Work:

Reflecting on these challenges often leads to valuable lessons that can significantly improve future child protection efforts. Some common lessons learned include:

- Strong partnerships and collaboration are essential: Effective child protection requires coordinated efforts across all relevant sectors and stakeholders. Building strong relationships and establishing clear roles and responsibilities is vital.
- Investing in Capacity Building is Key: Continuous training and support for staff and community members are necessary to ensure the quality and effectiveness of interventions.
- Prevention is Better Than Cure: Investing in primary prevention programs that address the root causes of child abuse and exploitation is more effective in the long run.
- Child-Centered Approaches are Non-Negotiable: The best interests of the child must always be paramount in all decisions and actions. Programs should be child-friendly, accessible, and empowering.
- Long-Term Commitment is Required: Sustainable change in child protection takes time and requires a long-term vision and commitment from all stakeholders.

How these lessons will inform future work:

By reflecting on the challenges faced and the lessons learned, future child protection work can be improved by:

- Prioritizing genuine community participation and ownership.
- Strengthening inter-agency collaboration and coordination mechanisms.
- Investing in comprehensive and ongoing training for all involved personnel.
- Focusing on primary prevention strategies alongside response mechanisms.
- Ensuring child participation in all stages of the program cycle.
- Fostering long-term partnerships and sustainable solutions.

Acknowledgements

- Thank you to partners, volunteers, community members, and stakeholders.

Appendices

Appendix 1



Kalungi Youth Club



Adolescent attending a child protection talk at health facility