

Child Protection Report 2024



DEC 2024

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

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Child Protection Report 2024

What We Believe for Child Protection

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

Foreword from the Director/Chairperson

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we reflect on the past year at ACYP, we do so with a profound sense of both accomplishment and continued urgency in our mission to protect the precious children of our community from all forms of violence. This annual report for 2024 offers a glimpse into the dedicated efforts, impactful initiatives, and collaborative spirit that have defined our work.

Despite the persistent challenges that threaten the safety and well-being of children, our team, alongside our invaluable partners, has remained steadfast in our commitment to prevention, intervention, and support. We have expanded our reach into schools and health facilities, fostering environments where children feel safer and more empowered to speak out. Our regular child protection stakeholder meetings have strengthened the vital network of individuals and agencies working together to safeguard our young ones.

We are particularly proud of the tangible impact we have witnessed – from increased awareness within communities to the growing number of cases reported and the crucial support provided to child survivors. These achievements, detailed within this report, are a testament to the unwavering dedication of our staff, volunteers, and the trust placed in us by the community.

However, we also recognize that the fight against violence against children is far from over. This report also highlights the persistent challenges we face, reminding us of the continued need for vigilance, innovation, and collective action. The lessons we have learned this past year will be invaluable as we refine our strategies and strive for even greater impact in the year ahead.

On behalf of the entire team at ACYP, I extend my deepest gratitude to our donors, partners in the police, district probation, and community development offices, dedicated volunteers, and the community members who champion the cause of child protection. Your unwavering support is the bedrock upon which our work is built.

As you read through this report, I hope you will be inspired by the progress we have made and join us in our renewed commitment to creating a safer and more nurturing environment where every child in our community can thrive, free from the shadow of violence.

With sincere gratitude and hope,

Dr. Micheal Mwebaza

Project Coordinator-ACYP

31st December 2024

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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 Program

ACYP visits schools and conducts age-appropriate sessions for students on child rights, safety, and how to report abuse. We established and monitor child protection clubs within 4 primary schools and two secondary schools. These clubs are used to empower children to be peer educators and advocates. We engage with teachers and school staff on identifying signs of abuse, reporting procedures, and creating a child-safe environment. ACYP also organizes school-wide events promoting child safety and well-being.

2. Health Facility Engagement

We provide information to parents and guardians visiting health facilities on positive parenting, child development, and the dangers of violence. Sometimes, we distribute leaflets and posters on child protection in waiting areas. Lastly, we communicate and train healthcare workers to recognize signs of abuse and neglect and understand referral pathways.

3. Child Protection Stakeholder Meetings

We hold several child protection meetings with stakeholders emphasizing the child protection legal framework. ACYP Established community Child Protection Committees (CPCs). Currently, 11 parishes have these CPCs active. We also strengthen local committees responsible for identifying and addressing child protection issues within their communities. These form part of our Community-Based Reporting Mechanisms which have enabled safe and accessible ways for children and community members to report concerns about child abuse. We also promote positive social norms: engaging 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. Lastly, is our one safe spaces for children at Kalungi where children can play, learn, and access support in a safe and supervised environment.

4. Collaboration and Networking:

ACYP has strengthened partnerships with government agencies (police, probation, social welfare), other NGOs, faith-based organizations, traditional authorities, and community-based organizations working on child protection. The organization works with partners in joint awareness campaigns and activities to amplify messages and reach a wider audience. Our information sharing and referral Systems has created clear referral pathways and protocols with partner organizations 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.

6. Economic Empowerment Initiatives:

Implementing programs that aim to reduce poverty and financial stress within families, as economic hardship can be a contributing factor to violence and neglect. This could include vocational training, micro-loan schemes, or support for income-generating activities.

Key Achievements and Impact in 2024

Program and Activities for Child Protection	No. Conducted	No. Impacted
SCHOOL OUTREACH PROGRAM		
Conducting age-appropriate sessions for students	4	1,960
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.	0	0
Developing and implementing school policies on child protection.	0	0
Organizing school-wide events promoting child safety and well-being.	1	740
HEALTH FACILITY ENGAGEMENT		
Providing information to parents and caregivers visiting health facilities	2	87
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.	0	0
Parenting skills training	0	0
Home visits and support:	192	772
CHILD PROTECTION STAKEHOLDERS MEETINGS		
Establishing child protection committees	0	0
Monitoring existing child protection committees	11	41

Community stakeholders meeting held	0	0
Safe spaces created	0	0
Safe spaces strengthened	2	26
COLLABORATION AND NETWORKING		
Contacting of other partners contacted	9	9
Referring of clients	4	4
Joint campaigns with other partners	0	
EMPOWERING CHILDREN THROUGH CLUBS		
Establishing clubs	0	0
Monitoring and strengthening clubs	2	26
Conducting child rights sessions at clubs	4	26
ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT		
Vocational training/apprentice	18	18
Micro-loan schemes	8	240
Support for income-generating activities	12	60
CASE MANAGEMENT		
Identified cases of Violence against children	2	2
Handling of cases	3	3

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.
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 support and guidance to vulnerable families to strengthen their capacity to care for and protect their children
Distributing leaflets and posters on child protection in waiting areas.	
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	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
Monitoring existing Child Protection Committees	
Community Stakeholders meeting held	
Safe Spaces created	

Safe Spaces strengthened	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.
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Collaboration and Networking

Contacting of other partners contacted	Four schools with child protection clubs have continued to partner with is advocating for child protection activities, articles are written by pupils and students and made available for entire school. This also has enabled peer support and reporting of cases. Two police post have worked with us in handling the few child protection cases referred to them and 2 CBOs have worked with us in the referral system. The local government offices especially the office of the probation, community development officers (CDO's) and District Community Development Officers (DCDO) have collectively worked with us including training in schools and community. We work with 6 health facilities who provide medical support to survivors and who also conduct examination during sexual and physical abuse.
Referring of clients	
Joint campaigns with other partners	

Empowering Children through clubs

Establishing clubs	Already an active club is in operation at Kalungi site Mwota cell where 20 young people meet every weekend. Volunteers are always available to implement the ACYP life skills curriculum. The young people are taken through activities like communication, decision making, reporting, assertiveness, critical thinking, problem solving, craft, bakery, jewel making, painting and computer training.
Monitoring and strengthening clubs	
Conducting Child Rights Sessions at clubs	

Economic Empowerment

Vocational training/Apprentice	This activity is undertaken because research has shown that families experiencing poverty or financial constraints also have limited control over child abuse. Gender-based violence increases in such households, which consequently results in a higher risk of violence against children. Therefore, the empowerment of these family members is being prioritized. One adolescent is enrolled in carpentry, and two young people are in tailoring. Additionally, all 20 club members are trained in practical skills such as crafts, jewelry making, and bakery. The eight established Village Saving and Loan Scheme Associations (VSLAs) have continued to save. These associations have continued to receive training from ACYP volunteers and are strengthened through monthly monitoring and supervision. Each VSLA comprises 30 parents of the children we work with, totaling 240 parents in these groups, thereby benefiting
Micro-loan schemes	
Support for income-generating activities	

	approximately 900 vulnerable children. Volunteers are mobilized for the provision of animals, birds, and booster items, including business supplies like groceries for village stalls. Fighting poverty has proven to be an effective way of reducing violence against children within families
Case Management	
Identified cases of Violence against children	Through the child protection committees, we are able to identify children under violence. These are referred to our offices and case management process starts. Sometimes, our mobile numbers are reached by survivors and the volunteers quickly follow-up the case. We don't handle the case in isolation. We have partner lawyers who provide legal services for free, the police are supportive in handling these cases, the health workers who usually examine the sexually abused and physically abused children are also contacted and all these provide reliable and specialized service in the case management process.
Handling of cases	

Challenges Faced in Implementing Child Protection Program in 2024:

1. Contextual and Systemic Challenges:

- **Limited Resources:** Inadequate funding, staffing shortages (qualified social workers, psychologists, etc.), 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.
- **Conflict and Instability:** Humanitarian crises and conflict situations exacerbate child protection risks and make programme implementation extremely difficult.
- **Lack of Inter-Agency Coordination:** Poor communication and collaboration between government agencies (social welfare, education, health, justice), NGOs, and community-based organizations.

2. Program Design and Implementation Challenges:

- **Inadequate Needs Assessment:** Failure to accurately identify the specific needs and vulnerabilities of children in the target population.
- **Lack of Community Engagement:** Insufficient involvement of children, families, and communities in the design and implementation process, leading to a lack of ownership and sustainability.

- Difficulties in Identifying and Reaching Vulnerable Children: Hidden or hard-to-reach children like those involved in child labour and children with disabilities).
- Volunteer Capacity and Training: Lack of adequately trained and supported staff with the necessary skills and knowledge in child protection.
- Monitoring and Evaluation Challenges: Difficulty in establishing robust monitoring and evaluation systems to track progress, measure impact, and identify areas for improvement.
- Resistance to Change: Opposition from individuals or groups who benefit from the existing system or hold traditional views.

3. Ethical and Child-Centered Challenges:

- Child Participation: Ensuring meaningful and safe participation of children in program design and decision-making.
- Referral Pathways: Establishing clear and effective referral pathways to specialized services.
- 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.
- Data-Driven Decision Making is Vital: Robust monitoring and evaluation systems are essential for tracking progress, identifying challenges, and adapting strategies. ¹Using data to inform program design and resource allocation leads to better outcomes.
- Prevention is Better Than Cure: Investing in primary prevention program that address the root causes of child abuse and exploitation is more effective in the long run.
- Child-Centre Approaches are Non-Negotiable: The best interests of the child must always be paramount in all decisions and actions. Program 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:

- Developing more context-specific and culturally sensitive program.
- 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 partners, volunteers, community members, and stakeholders.

Appendices

Appendix 1



Young People at Kalungi Youth Club Mwota Cell