Using Family Partnerships to Reduce Child Abuse and Neglect in Uganda

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ABSTRACT

Every passing day, as cases of child abuse and neglect increase in number and forms meted on children in Uganda, family and community safety nets that used to act as a buffer for child protection also keep fading. The abuse is in part blamed on parents who are entering family life ill prepared to raise children while maintaining an exclusive life oblivious of a supportive community around them. Use of law enforcement to bring some of the abuse perpetrators to justice also seem not be working to meet the expectations of the public. This article explores how family and community partnerships can be used to mentor parents to become their children's role models and minimize incidences of child abuse.

Key Words: Child abuse, Neglect, Family, Partnerships early childhood.

INTRODUCTION

A new study done by African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) Uganda in the districts of Kampala, Mukono and Wakiso in 2015 has revealed that prevalence of child abuse in study areas is at 74.7%. Physical abuse has remained as the most prevalent child abuse exerted on children at 97.7% trailed by emotional abuse that stood at 84.5%. This was blamed on the general misconception that acts like beating children were disciplinary measures that were used in the past and therefore still considered effective (Agaba, 2015). It was noted that boy children are more vulnerable (81.2%) to the vice than their girl (68.3%) counterparts except for sexual abuse that is generally under reported (ANPPCAN, 2013). Earlier on, ANPPCAN (2011) had reported various forms of child abuse that were still being meted on children in Uganda. The study reported that that corporal punishment was still at large in schools, with 81% of school children still beaten despite a directive from the government banning the practice (ANPPCAN, 2011). Besides corporal punishment, cases of child defilement is still very high,

with over 9,598 cases of defilement reported in 2013 presenting a 30.4% increase from the 7,360 cases reported in 2009 (Uganda Police, 2011; 2013). Also, according to UNICEF'S statistics on the State of the World's Children 2011, more than one in three children of 5 to 14 years old (36%), are involved in child labour, while 301 children got kidnapped, 46 murdered, and 9 sacrificed in 2010 (Opobo, 2011).

A close analysis of the trends of child abuse and perpetrators reveal that the main perpetuators of child abuse remain biological parents at 41%, followed by neighbors 19%; siblings at 14%; step parents at 11% and teachers at 9.3% confirming the belief that most child abuse cases are committed at home (ANPPCAN, 2013). In some homes, adults who are expected to protect children are sometimes seen subjecting them to abuse, neglect, torture or simply unattended to (Hunter, 2012; Omara, 2012). There have been reports of children having strange relationships, including sexual ones with their parents (Nakalyango, 2012). It is also not uncommon for one to experience the sight of an enraged

parent repeatedly and mercilessly hitting, biting, shaking, throwing, flogging, slapping, stabbing, choking, kicking or pounding his/her child (ANPPCAN, 2011). Some of these acts are justified by cultural beliefs of strict discipline to enforce compliance and deterrents for future acts (Agaba, 2015). Besides such cruel acts, studies also show that in Ugandan homes, 34% of children are denied food, 82% are made to do difficult work and 18% reported being locked up in a room for extended periods of time as a form of punishment (ANPPCAN, 2011). Since most perpetuators are at home, it becomes difficult for children to get justice, as police is not helped to prosecute the offenders. For instance, out of the 7,564 defilement cases reported to the police in 2010, only 3,401 (45%) were taken to court, leaving a total of 4,163 (55%) cases either dropped or not followed up (Opobo, 2011). This poor state of children only serves to signify the fact that more parents are failing in their duty towards their children (Omara, 2012) and have a different understanding of appropriate child upbringing (Hunter, 2012).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The social capital theory used in this study provides a framework for understanding the strength of family partnerships in a given community. Social capital refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (Putnam, 1995). It is as a relational attribute of social collectives that can be used to help people commit to one another and contribute to the social fabric of communities (Field, 2003; Putnam, 1995). Social capital contribute to enhancing the ability of children in society through trust, networks, and norms of reciprocity within a child's family, school, peer group and larger community (Donkor, 2010).The underlying premise of this concept is that social networks have value in which social learning and social cohesion that are critical for societies seeking to prosper economically and for sustainable development are enhanced (World Bank, 1999). Goldin (2003) observed that there is a general belief in the symbiotic relationship between the wealth of a nation and its people, which is human capital. Thus, in the context of social capital, we can use the strength of family partnership to mentor other families with the view of instilling in them contextually appropriate child rearing practices that will promote holistic child development that is free from abuse and neglect.

STATUS OF THE FAMILY IN THE FACE OF INCREASE CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

A strong family is the most important structure that any community can rely on if they have to eliminate child abuse and neglect. Today, family structures that previously acted as a buffer to wade off child abuse has greatly changed as poor, struggling parents focus on day-to-day survival (Plan Uganda, 2011).The socio-economic factors in both rural and urban settings demand that most parents leave home as early as possible before the children wake up in the morning to farm or work and return late when children are a sleep. In rural areas, a number of parents operate small business in trading centres or around beer drinking spots going up to late hours of the night. For the case of children whose parents can afford, boarding nursery schools are an option and for those who commute from home to school, their 'busy' parents, drop them at school before daybreak and pick them late in the night (UCRNN, 2007). Other children, on leaving school, go with their parents to pubs and are either left in cars or kept at table till late in the night (UCRNN, 2007).

The immediate rescue for these children could be at the neighbors' home. However, out in the neighborhood, a dangerous trend is emerging. In urban neighborhoods, most homes have very high fences that do not allow interaction between neighbors. Even if children wanted to interact, such homes usually have guard dogs that scare off any intruder to the home, as such, individual families take very little interest in knowing the next-door neighbor (Omara, 2012). At the school level, there still few quality early childhood programmes that can protect and nurture children. Officially in Uganda, there are no public pre-schools, despite the fact that more countries are advocating for compulsory pre-primary education programs for children before their entrance into formal primary education (Lee and Hayden, 2009). Currently, the proportion of children in pre-school in Uganda expressed as a percentage of the population aged three to five is 9% which translates into a gap of 91% (Lal, 2012). Numerous private early childhood centres operate in very unhygienic conditions, poor classroom environments, manned by ill trained and poorly paid caregivers. The conditions in the centres are also a source of child abuse as corporal punishment, overly academic content with no play facilities is a common sight. Thus, if the situation in homes, neighborhood and schools keep getting increasingly challenging for children, the only alternative for them is the community. For the sake of little children, time has come for us to acknowledge that the average Ugandan family will need some help raising children (Omara, 2012).

The complexity of current social issues especially those related to ECD programe development and sustainability requires partnerships across sectors to collaborate and contribute various resources to the problems which cannot to be resolved with simplistic solutions (Kapucu, 2006). Family partnerships promote wider investment in young children leading to broader fulfillment of their rights UNICEF, 2012a). Families manned by child parents therefore need to be strengthened (in order to make it

easier to help them recognize and report cases of child abuse and neglect (Omara, 2012).

WHY CURRENT CRUSADES AGAINST CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT IS NOT WORKING AS EXPECTED

Different strategies have been employed by the government of Uganda to reduce child abuse. Some of these include: passing different laws and regulations like Uganda Employment Regulations (2012) in Article 5 prohibits the use, procurement, or offering of any child for prostitution (Government of Uganda, 2012). Uganda also passed the Anti-Pornography Act, 2014. Section 14 of the Act prohibits child pornography (Government of Uganda, 2014). The government has also ratified international conventions like the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. This convention prohibits armed groups from recruiting children or allowing them to participate in conflict in any manner (African Union, 2012). With the laws in place, the government introduced the Child and Family Protection Unit (CFPU) in the police force. This unit has about 500 officers throughout the country who handle child abuse, including child labor, and related complaints. The CFPU however, lacks sufficient resources to fully carry out its mandate, making it even difficult for it to know the exact number of child labor complaints or investigations made in a given reporting period (US Department of Labour, 2012). Most cases remain pending, for example in 2013, from a total 9,598 defilement cases that were reported, only 359 secured conviction, while 4,288 were still pending and 248 dismissed (Uganda Police, 2013).

In an attempt to help support police work, many child rights NGOs have come up to do advocacy work in the area of child abuse. These NGOs focus on different areas that are not limited to Policy and legislation, Protection, Prevention, Rehabilitation and Support Services and Coordination and Monitoring of all matters relating to child abuse. With these in place, child abuse continues to be on the rise and attempts to bring offenders to justice often frustrated. According to the Uganda Police (2013), the main challenge in handling defilement cases is lack of cooperation from parents of abused children. These parents prefer bribes given by offenders, in return to alter age of children, avoid attending court or tampering with evidence (Uganda Police, 2013). Besides the lack of cooperation from parents, there are also challenges with the laws meant to protect children from abuse. For example, Section 131 of the Penal Code only criminalizes those who procure or attempt to procure a girl for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation (US Department of Labour, 2012). The Penal Code does not protect boys from being procured for the same purpose and does not protect children who are procured or offered for prostitution from being treated as offenders rather than victims (Government of Uganda, 1950).

The current strategies that are being employed to reduce cases of child abuse and neglect seem not to be working efficiently as expected. Different reasons are being advanced for this failure. One major drawback to these strategies is that most of the officials being used to champion the fight against child abuse and neglect are teenagers who do not have any children of their own or even have any experience in child care to share with the parents. These officials instead come with academic guidelines that make little sense to parents they are trying to educate. This lack of clarity in some cases make parents who have been polite enough to come just listen for the sake of courtesy because the advocates do not have the credentials those parents look for in persons who can advise them on how to care for their children. African communities believe by seeing from the person teaching them. If the person coming as a teacher to a particular community represents another cultural ideology, parents will see him/her as a bad influence who cannot be listened to. Young parents who live in town areas that have a mix of different cultures,need to identify one that is close to what they believe in and learn from them as opposed to the current state of affairs where they take very little interest in knowing the next-door neighbor (Omara, 2012).

In rural areas where young parents live or work in the same community, elders, grandparents, uncles and aunties who are respected in the community should be included as facilitators to discourage child abuse and neglect. Short of that, parents will simply come to your meetings to benefit from allowances if being offered and go back home to continue doing the same things as before. Another factor that makes the fight against child abuse and neglect a challenge in many African communities is the belief in corporal punishment as the single most appropriate means of disciplining children. Parents will always say, 'I was taught in that way, which is why I am successful now' and continue to rebuke or beat children rather than counseling them (Opobo and Wandega, 2011). The mantra 'spare the rod and spoil the child' is very alive in many communities. Even the key officials who go from one place to another discouraging child abuse and neglect practice corporal punishment in their own homes. There are even cases of persons who are supposed to uphold the law being entangled in the law they are to keep. For example, there are continuous reports of teachers defiling children they teach. For example, in 2008 alone, a total of 4% of upper primary school pupils in Uganda were defiled by their teachers (Kawulo, 2008). There are many cases of parents burning or sacrificing their own children, or policemen demanding sex from detainees under their custody (Ddungu, 2012).

It is also common to find that there are some parents in many communities who are ignorant about some forms of child abuse and neglect. For example, many parents would be surprised if you told them that ignoring a child who wants to talk to you or leaving a child to sleep in a room alone while you go to the farm or market is considered child neglect. In terms of sexual abuse, some parents still believe that allowing a young girl to be married off at a tender age is a channel for starting a family early so that the daughters do not get spoilt when they grow and lack a man to marry them (Opobo and Wandega, 2011). Therefore, unless a specific example that is practiced in a given community is mentioned and discouraged during sensitization sessions, different child abuse and neglect will continue unabated. Another challenge is the failure of courts of law to convict many persons arrested for child abuse. For example, in 2013, from a total of 9598 defilement cases that were reported, only 359 secured conviction (Uganda Police, 2013). This lack of conviction is viewed as failure of the law to interpret the crime effectively. Currently, law enforcement officers tend to view child abuse and neglect not as a social problem, but rather in the context of criminal law. So, instead of working hard to reduce it, the officers just focus their energy on preservation and collection of evidence for criminal prosecution (Pence and Wilson, 1992) which in many cases is not successful. Community members therefore feel frustrated and in some cases resort to mob justice for persons implicated in child abuse. Therefore, unless the law is strengthened so that families and communities start to see that justice is being done, the fight against abuse will be lost due to lack of allies.

INTRODUCING FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

A family partnership in this context refers to a network of persons who pool together physical energy, financial, and materials resources toward a need that both parties agree they cannot fulfill well on their own (Kapucu, 2006; Waddock, 1991). Since no single person in a family or community can live in isolation or claim to have all the resources that others have, entering a partnership ushers in the opportunity for critical strategic interdependence with those who have the resources and capabilities they cannot have (Kapucu, 2006). If family partnerships are developed, they will always support the principle of subsidiarity, in which the responsibility for meeting children's needs falls within the "units of social life" closest to them with larger units only stepping in when the capacity of the smaller units cannot meet those needs (Brinkerhoff, 2002). Thus, as families begin to work together, they also realize that while the home environment is critical to children's survival and development, care and education programmes are also important if children are to flourish holistically (UNICEF, 2012b).

Family or community partnerships help families to collectively bring up children as they mentor each other. For example, in the case of Rwanda, a neighborhood partnership has been able to develop the *Amahoro* playgroup for children that have yielded many tangible improvements in the community's early child development (Dandu, 2012). Also, service groups, such as the local Rotary, Kiwanis or Lions Clubs are also using community partnerships to provide support to children's libraries, early childhood programs or recreation programs (Dean et al., 2008). There are also partnerships with families, in which workers join with consumers of human services to identify child and family needs and strengths, to determine goals and objectives, and to accomplish a plan for improved well-being (Musikar, 1992). Thus, if we are to tackle adequately the problem of child abuse, neglect and other forms of injustice meted to children by their parents, more effort needs to put on family and community partnership as a safety net and mentoring process for young parents.

PARTNERSHIPS THAT CAN BE DEVELOPED

Inter family partnership is one of the partnerships that can be developed. It is a partnership where family members work together and form alliances with kinship networks overlapping, and adults and children often moving between households (Qu and Weston, 2013). Family members can form a partnership that can be used to solve different family challenges. For example, the father can form a partnership with the mother or father with children or children with children. In the partnership, each family member can be assigned a responsibility that will ensure the welfare of other family members. Thus, if one member abused another, it is easy for other members to notice and come together as a partnership to solve the problem. This situation is not the case in many families today most of them getting more individualistic in the modern world (Darwish and Huber, 2010). Currently, you may find in many communities family members who live as strangers. No family member bothers to know about the other. A couple may share a room but each person has no idea of what the other is doing or feeling.

The children live off the basics independently that they come across in the house without relating with their parents. Similarly, parents have no idea about their children, including the classes they study, yet they pay fees every term. So, in case of any abuse, no one will get to know until the situation goes out of hand. It is time for such backwardness to stop in families. Parents have to develop stronger bonds by being there for their family members. No job out there is more important than your family if you claim you are working hard for your family.

The measure of success in African communities is not by how much money you make, but in how successful your children have been in the community. Another form of partnership is family to wider family partnership. In this partnership, the wider family that belongs to the same family tree can agree to form a partnership. The partnership may revolve around economic and social activities. For example it is common to find different families converging in one home to cultivate farms of one family for one or two days before moving on to the next family.

The extended family network also provides lifelong learning opportunities for all family members (Lohoar et al., 2014). Similar, different families can pool their resources for joint celebrations during end of year festivities. In the celebrations, families that are part of the partnership take turns to host other families till all families have done their part. Thus, if there are 10 families in the partnership, there will be 10 days of celebrations hosted by 10 different families in a rotation basis. The same partnership works when one family faces challenges, for example in time of sickness, marriage, death or other forms of crisis. The members of the partnership come together as one family, camp in that home till the challenge is solved. This partnership has also been found to be one of the central characteristic of Aboriginal culture in which the kinship system is a shared value system that helps people to bond with each other (Fejo-King, 2013). Thus in cases of child abuse in a particular family, if members of the inner family fail to resolve it, then, others who form part of the wider family will come to guide the process till the challenge is settled. Also, once in a while, children from this family are taken to stay with other relatives for a given period of time so that they can learn life outside their own home. Thus, the exchange visit and living outside home gives others the opportunity to observe and guide children while ensuring that they grow holistic and free from abuse. Neighborhood family partnership is another form of partnership that can be developed like the one being promoted by Literacy and Adult Basic Education (LABE) in North and West Nile regions of Uganda are a good example (LABE, 2014).

This partnership incorporates a network of families from different origins who live in the same neighborhood. These families are working together with the support of LABE to promote home learning centres for their children (LABE, 2014). The families select one strategic home in the village where they all bring their pre-school children including those with special needs to play during the day under the care of one parent selected from among them (Clark and Ejuu, 2015). In the centre, children are protected from abuse, fed, assured of play and care in a safe environment. These families who belong to the same network may also work together to take care of their children, discipline their children, and protect children from abuse that may arise from outside their own network. Since parents in this network may have varied child rearing experiences, there is opportunity for parent mentoring and coaching (Clark and Ejuu, 2015). Family association partnership is another form of family partnership that can be developed. In this partnership, families that have similar interests or concerns can come together to share their experiences in relation to their common challenge as they work with another institution. For example, families of children with specific challenges, behaviors, or needs who are usually a target for abuse in the community may form an association.

A good example of this partnership in the US is the Nurse Family Partnership (Olds, 1997) and Healthy Families programme based in Hawaii (Galbraith, 2003). In this partnership parents of at risk children are coached in different ways of reducing child abuse and neglect (Randell et al., 2003). Such at risk families may be in the Ugandan case, families of albino children, children living with HIV/AIDS, or those with other forms of severe impairments. The Nurse Family Partnership randomly assigned half of a group of single, poor, first-time young mothers in Elmira, NY, to receive visits by carefully trained nurses who provide coaching in parenting skills and other advice and support (Randell, 2003). Rigorous research, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, shows that the children of mothers left out of the program had five times as many substantiated reports of abuse or neglect (Olds, 1997). In addition, fifteen years after the services ended, the mothers in the program had only one-third as many arrests as those left out of the program, and their children had only half as many arrests (Galbraith, 2003).

HOW PARTNERSHIPS CAN SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Family partnerships ensure that there is constant communication and interdependency between experienced parents and teenage parents. Through the interdependence, teenage parents learn different child care practices including protecting children from neglect and abuse from experienced parents. In most African communities, young parents easily listen to the advice of another parent who is influential in his/her life. For example, it is easy for such parents to listen to their own parents when they give advice about parenting than to social workers or health officers from hospital. In most of these cultures, when a couple gets married and are about to have their first child, they are usually filled with a lot of uncertainty about how they will handle the coming baby. As an inbuilt apprenticeship mechanism, many young parents prefer to stay with elderly aunties or mother to be around them during that time. Others make it a point for the young mother to go to her mother for the support in terms of child care skills acquisition or as a way of

managing experiences since many of them are still financially dependent on their parents. When a child is born, usually the old woman will take charge of bathing, cleaning, massaging and other necessary child care activities while the young parents watch to learn from her. The instructions that such an old lady will give them about child care will be followed to the letter for a long time to come. Also, if a mother visited a young couple who have children, they start by assessing the children to see if they are being well taken care of. If there are signs of abuse, the parents would be 'reprimanded' and made not to do it again. Thus, families that have been able to maintain strong family networks that involve frequent visit by grandparents ensure that children are well taken care of to avoid abuse and neglect among different tribes in Uganda. The children also know this that is why grandparents are loved by children in African communities. It is also common knowledge in most African communities that other people's opinion matter more that individual family opinions. Parents keep saying, "what will other people think of me if I do this or that". This fear becomes a strong point of intervention for reduction of child abuse and neglect. If we have strong family partnerships that all persons would like to remain part of it, then the members must abide by the rules stipulated in it. Failure to abide can result in rejection and isolation by the larger community. Thus if child abuse and neglect issues are made to become part of the partnership rules and regulations, then families would abide by it to the letter for fear of rejection by close family.

In this case, a parent who is found to have neglected or abused a child will face the wrath of the community, suffer humiliation, and isolation until he/she repents. If however, child abuse and neglect acts are not rejected by this wider community, then it will not be implemented. Through stronger family partnerships, young or first time parents who may have child rearing challenges can get opportunity to benefit from free supportive guidance and counseling in the cultural contexts (Musikar, 1992). Similarly, children who may be having challenges at home can get chance to be guided and also learn from other peers in the short time when families come together. Also, there will be constant follow up as different concerned parents come to visit the affected child to get update of the condition or nature of the relationship, depending on family dynamics that are present in such a family. Supportive family dynamics will positively influence the environment given with love to ensure that a family keeps together and is made stronger. Yet, if such cases, was to be referred to government authorities, the child would suffer a backlash from parents and other relatives for the rest of his/her life. Stronger family partnerships also make parent mentoring possible. In the mentoring process, stronger family bond is cultivated to make every family within the unit to be

better prepared for challenges.

In the bonding, family challenges are easily identified and respective families given timely supportive advice by respected role models in the wider family. Every challenge that comes to one family becomes a concern for all families. In this situation, everybody comes to offer a practical solution to the problem. Family group decision making therefore becomes a safe and secure way to maintain family harmony, minimize conflict and decrease the recurrence of child abuse and neglect by keeping children connected to their roots and culture, which provides stability and helps them reach their full potential (Aubrun and Grady, 2002).

WAY FORWARD

Together, partners have greater capacity to provide a comprehensive and flexible mix of services that can be tailored to fit the strengths and needs of individual children and families (Musikar, 1992). What all early childhood partnerships have in common is a commitment to dedicate both public and private funds toward the enhancement of early childhood systems (Dean et al., 2008). These systems, which start from the family, must be helped to understand its role in proper child rearing that is free from abuse and neglect. The goal of childrearing is to raise a successful and self-reliant child (Aubrun and Grady, 2002). The challenge that we must face is the family-centric view that make it less natural to understand the role of the larger community in the child's life, and the role of the child in the larger community (Aubrun and Grady, 2002). This is because African culture demands that families raise their children to serve the community and not itself. Thus, it is the role of the community and not the family to ensure that all children are protected and well brought up. While a few families are still aware of this fact, and respond to it accordingly, there are some who need more guidance. The following suggestions are given as a way forward.

INDIVIDUAL FAMILIES

First, every parent or couple out there that intends to start, have, and maintain a stable family must start finding out from different sources what entails child abuse so as to ensure that the children are protected from all forms of abuse by anybody. You have a lot to learn from other families. The more you feel you are independent, the more your children may be isolated depending on the community. Remember, human beings are social animals that need to interact with other human beings and not TV or video games. As many families, especially in African communities start to face realities of social isolation, such isolation places high demands on them as they struggle

with day-to-day family life (Darwish and Huber, 2010). There is need for such families to start going out to seek family networks so that they can benefit from the "one community, many eyes" culture that emphasizes the inseparable domains of family life and community life (Lohoar et al., 2014). If the issue about those relatives is straining on your budget, remember that when you also go visiting in the rural area, those people also feel the strain of hosting you, but they do it happily because you are part of their own family network.

The question we have to consider is why do we in urban areas who generally have more access to financial resources feel the strain of taking care of our own small family of 4 people, yet people in rural areas who barely have what to survive on are happy with families of 12 persons? Why do we have to keep spending sleepless nights thinking about saving money to worship, yet people in the rural areas keep merry all year round on meager resources? The simple answer is that in rural areas, families share everything unlimitedly including their own problems, child rearing, and wealth thus making everything lighter. When time comes for you to visit, go visiting with your children and allow relatives or other children play freely or talk to your children about different life related issues. This approach is however, in deep contrast with many non-Indigenous African or Australian families that are usually characterized by a more individualistic approach to community life (Lohoar et al., 2014). If you feel offended by what other children or adults talk about your child, try as much as possible to consider positively their opinion.

This is because those people's opinion is the way the community looks at your child, and denying a child this life opportunity and independence is considered a breach of parental responsibility under traditional Aboriginal culture and Law (Yeo, 2003). If you succeed in getting confidence of a few families, the next step of strengthening family partnerships is by encouraging regular family days that bring together all members of the wider family network. In this gathering, members can pool resources and bring all their children to one point as a get together for a communal feast or fun days. These family gatherings are often opportunities for family friendships to be renewed in an atmosphere of celebration and goodwill (Schluter, 1987). At these gatherings, there is opportunity for members to assess the needs of various family members and discuss what can be done to best meet those needs effectively before they reach crisis proportions (Schluter, 1987).

If you gain success in having family days with a few families, you can move the next step of encouraging family reunions.

The idea of family reunions still seem to new in many rural settings, but are being introduced by families whose members live abroad or in other distant cities. Such families rarely find time to come back home except during the family reunion day. In rural areas, families see each other more often, but during end of year holidays, they usually meet in one home to enjoy the festive seasons. In this family reunion families that share one origin can decide on a day in a year where there is family reunion. The advantage of a bigger family reunion is that all families including those that you have failed to connect will come because they connect with another that will participate in the reunion. Your task is to ensure that you take advantage of their being in the reunion to mend fences and make others feel comfortable about connecting with you. You should also take advantage of the fact that during this reunion, all children of your relatives including their grandchildren are brought together to know each other, share experiences and plan for the coming year together as a big family. From the reunions, families benefit greatly from having a support network of people they can share information with and work through challenges together (Musikar, 1992). Thus, when families feel understood and supported by those around them they experience better health and wellbeing (Schluter, 1987). After developing family networks with family members, you should also develop partnership within the neighborhoods.

These family networks developed within their neighborhood are effective in identification of children's challenges and responding rapidly to the general welfare of individual families and children. They however, present a socialization problem as modern socialization meets the traditional practices. Also, many parents living in modern societies are overprotective when it comes to the safety of their children (Howard, 2011) by over-exaggerating the risks to their children, which may result in reduced child's resilience, independent mobility and autonomy in decision-making, while increasing a child's anxiety, obesity and sense of entitlement (Rudner, 2012). If however, these parents agreed to work together as network, they can develop day care centres, children's play areas and work together to take care their children in turns as other go out to do other commercial activities. Persons taking care of the children can be identified from the community and paid to do the job. In this case, services of trusted elderly, retired persons or other resourceful persons can be identified and made use of by the parents in the community. If this is not possible, parents can take turn to look after the children in these centres while others are busy somewhere else as the case in LABE supported home learning centres in Northern Uganda (Clark and Ejuu, 2015). If you have developed good family networks in the neighborhood, you can also move a step further by going out to network with families in the wider environment. This can be done through joining networks of families that have similar interests or concerns out there. For example, announcements can be made for parents who have an interest or concern in particular activities that involve

parents and their children to meet in a particular place. The concern may be families that have children with specific challenges, behaviours, or needs.

It could also be families that feel they want their children to learn from certain experiences. For example parents can take their children out for nature adventures in zoos, parks, or listen to stories told by elderly persons. Stories from elders are particularly useful to children in that elderly persons provide practical "hands-on" care for children that translate into a range of benefits for children as they negotiate their pathways to adulthood (Diamond, 2012).

GOVERNMENT

It is the role of government to ensure that its people adopt appropriate child rearing practices that enhance children's holistic development. Parents must be made to understand that it is in their best interest if they become more proactive in ensuring their children's welfare. Their role however, cannot be done single handed. Different stakeholders must be involved in the process. If different stakeholders are to work together in a partnership, someone must start the process. This is where government comes in. The first step is for government to develop an integrated and comprehensive ECD policy that identifies different partnerships that can be used to promote children's welfare since it cannot provide it alone.

The policy should also give basic guidance on partnerships to ensure strong families are formed because it is the foundation for sustainable ECD programmes.

There should also be guidelines for other stakeholders and other agencies that may want to partner with either government or private organizations to support and promote ECD provisions in the country.

The policy must also include incentives for partnerships like allocation of financial aid to support partnerships, tax exemption or deduction incentives to businesses supporting family partnerships. Recognition of partnerships helps individuals to feel that their contributions will be valued and acknowledged as an input for communal and national development.

PRIVATE PERSONS/PHILANTHROPISTS

In most cases, children are powerless in eyes of powerful abusers. Children will keep on being abused repeatedly without them revealing it to any other person for fear of backlash from the abuser. Unless another person notices it and confronts the abuser, the child will continue suffering till irreversible damage is done. In this new age of fighting well entrenched abuse, children must be taught to engage new allies who will fight for them.

Private persons or philanthropists become handy in driving children's agenda to different heights. This notion is well elaborated in the mantra that powerless children need powerful friends; that is who policymakers listen to (Brinkerhoff, 2002). The same powerful allies can be used to develop a comprehensive range of neighborhood-based resources, including basic supports and parenting programmes that can be used to support families to practice better parenting skills and attract more support of fathers in child care and parenting activities.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, managing child abuse is still a major challenge in many communities. This is particularly hampered by the tripartite complexity of the issues that revolves around poverty, cultural practices and inefficient law enforcement. Much emphasis needs to be placed on clear understanding of forms of child abuse and their context so as to be able to address its diverse causes. Family partnerships offers both parent counseling in a supportive environment and child protection within a caring community that can be easily sustained within the context of a community that accommodates each other. Law enforcement is still deficient in this context because only comes at the end of the problem without addressing the root causes.

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