Normalization of Violence against Children in Uganda: Parallels with HIV & AIDS?

David Kaawa-Mafigiri

Center for Social Science Research on AIDS

Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland

Makerere University Kampala, Uganda

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Eddy Walakira, PhD; Nyanzi I. Ddumba, Msc.PH

Center for the African Child, Makerere University, Uganda

Violence against Children in Uganda
A Decade of Research and Practice, 2002—2012

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Presentation Outline

- **Background and methods of evidence**

- **Scale & manifestations of VaC (and briefly HIV)**

- **Reflect on response to the problem in Uganda**

- **Way forward: suggestions to improve response**

BACKGROUND AND METHODS

About the Desk review

- Commissioned by MGSLD in collaboration with UNICEF

- Covers the last decade of research and practice relating to VAC

- **Main objective**
  - To document the extent, forms, and manifestations of VAC in Uganda including the main drivers of violence based on existent data

- **Scope**
  - limited three forms of violence: sexual, emotional, and physical forms
  - Multiple realms/ settings in which VAC occurs: home and family setting, schools and educational settings, care and justice institutions.

- **Analytical framework**: ecological model and risk and protective framework

Methods

1. Document/literature review
   - National and international reports (white papers, policy briefs, research and survey reports, etc); peer reviewed studies
   - Administrative data (Gov't dept. police; evaluation reports from NGOs, government)

2. 15 In-depth interviews/KIIs
   - From different organizations related with responses to VaC

3. Three (3) Technical working group meetings
   - representatives from Government, CSO and UN agencies

Definition of violence

- "The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation." (WHO, 1996)

EVIDENCE ON SCALE AND MANIFESTATIONS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

In Uganda VaC occurs mainly in:

- Home & Family setting

- Schools

- Care and Justice Institutions

- Other settings:
  - Children in street situations
  - In places of work (Child labour)
  - Harmful traditional practices

VaC in the Home & Family setting

- Family is context in which Uganda children report most violence against them

Pysical violence
- 38.8 % of the children reported experiencing physical violence mainly at home, while 31.8 %reported experiencing it both at home as well as at school (Naker, 2005) --
- 43% of girls suffered beating by their parents (ACPF, 2006)
- 35% of the children on the streets reported violence, mainly physical violence, as the main reason why they were on the streets (Walakira, 2012)

Sexual Violence
- 32.2 percent of children experience sexual violence mainly at home (Naker, 2005)
- Average number of defilement cases reported to police annually is 9461 (Police report, 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011)
- 16 percent of females in Uganda are married by the age of 15 (UBOS, 2006)

Emotional violence
- 42.6 percent of the children said they experienced emotional violence mainly at home, while 35.5 percent reported experiencing psychological violence both at home and at school (Naker, 2005)

VaC in the Home & Family setting

- Most physical violence in context of disciplining the child
  - Perpetrators: Mothers (step mothers), siblings, fathers

- Emotional violence: May be product of uncontrolled frustration, or may have similar purpose to corporal punishment: obedience

- Sexual violence: early marriage, defilement
  - Perpetrators: fathers/step fathers, siblings, friends, uncle, work in the house

VaC in Schools

Physical Violence is widespread

- 61% of children experience physical violence in schools (Naker, 2005)
- mainly perpetrated by teachers and older school children
- corporal punishment common in schools, despite ban
- Children are mainly punished for disruptive classroom behavior, coming late to school, not doing their homework, missing school without permission (who processes permission?)

VaC in Schools…

- ## Sexual Violence is also a reality
  - 24-59% (both boys and girls) experienced sexual violence mainly at school in 3 separate studies
  - Perpetrators: older students (particularly boys) and teachers
  - Plan International report (2008): 8 % of 16 and 17 year-olds (n=1041) had sex with their teachers, and 12% with ancillary staff
  - Boys too fall victim to sexual harassment and abuse

- ## Emotional Violence
  - Emotional violence against children is far more common
  - Bullying is widespread, although there is limited quantitative data on the practice

VaC in Care Institutions

- 40,000 Children in Institutional Care in Uganda
  - Data are scarce on nature and extent of VaC in care institutions
  - anecdotal evidence, newspaper reports of children experience shocking and sometimes deadly level of abuse, neglect
  - Perpetrators: staff and caregivers, other children housed within these institutions

VaC in Justice Institutions

- Children in the Justice System
  - *Physical violence*: beatings, handcuffing, kicking, mob justice etc during arrest; brutal interrogations and torture to elicit confessions; cruel punishments such as hard labour during detention

  - *Sexual violence*, including rape for children in police custody, or in detention facilities.
    - *Fx. 7.4 % of children who had been detained in a 2012 study reported having been sexually assault, with some mentioning being forced to provide sex in exchange for release from police custody* (Walakira, 2012)

  - *Emotional violence*: forced admission of guilt, intimidation, threats, isolation and denial of affection
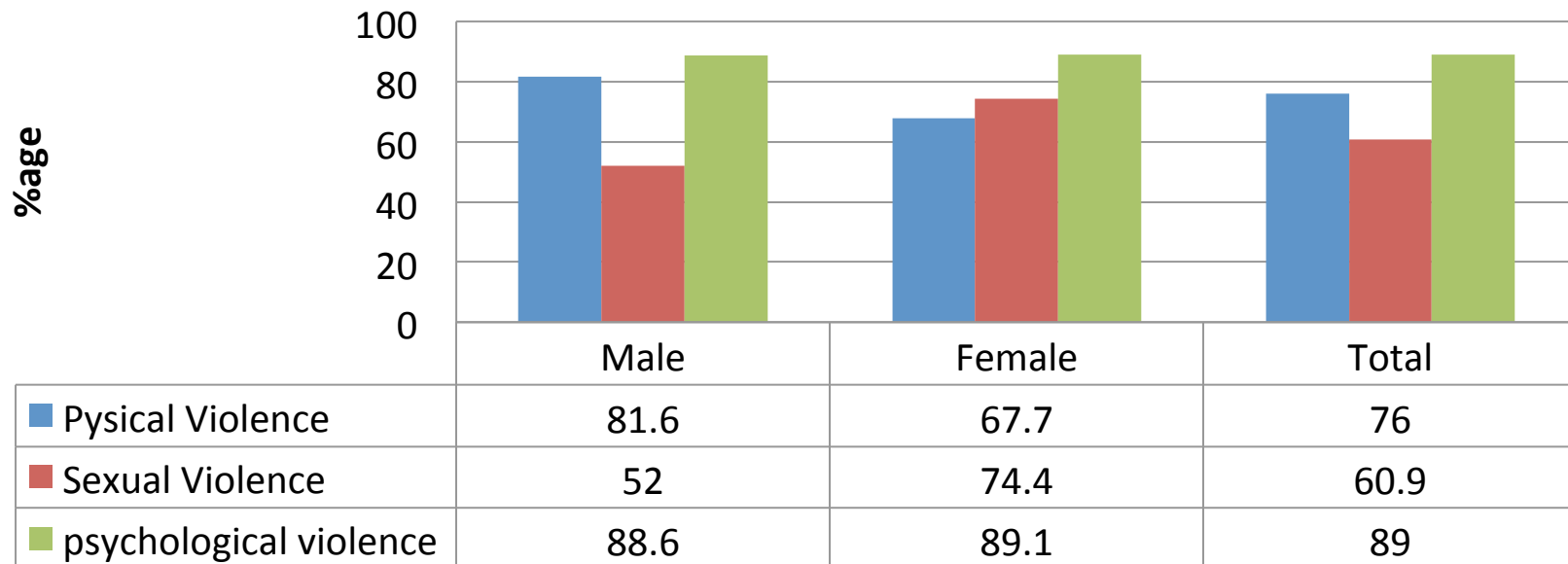
VaC in Places of Work

- Child labour is a major child rights violation and a form of violence

- UNHS 2009/10: 51% of children aged 5-17 are working; 25% of working children are in child labour
  - Working children increased by 19% between 2005 and 2010
  - Child labour increased by 9% between 2005 and 2010

- Child labourers are exposed to all forms of violence: physical, sexual and emotional

- Growing number of children engaged in WFCL such as child domestic work (CDW), commercial sex work (CSW).
  - *Fx. The number of children engaged on CSW increased from 12,000 in 2004 to 18, 000 in 2010.*

- Trafficking and exploitation of children is also a serious problem

VaC in other settings

1. Children in street situations

- Children in street situations frequently experience violence at the hands of other children—child-to-child violence, from strangers, police and other law enforcement officials

Prevalence of violence against children living and/or working on the street (n=668)

%age	Male	Female	Total
Pysical Violence	81.6	67.7	76
Sexual Violence	52	74.4	60.9
psychological violence	88.6	89.1	89

VaC in other settings…

2. Harmful traditional practices

- **Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C)**
  - Common among the Pokot in Nakapiripirit and Sabiny in Kapchorwa.
  - Paucity of data on number of girls/women who have undergone FGM in Uganda
  - Government passed the FGM Act, 2010. However, effectiveness of legal prohibition is hampered by poor enforcement, low levels of awareness of this legislation

- **Child sacrifice/ritual murders**
  - 2008-2011, 69 cases of *child sacrifice* investigated by police. Figure could be higher.
  - Children targeted for sacrifice because easily lured, believed to be "pure" for ritualistic practices

Harmful traditional practices

CONSQUENCES OF HIV as VaC

- *Physical and health consequences:*
  - child's death, disability, or in severe physical pain.
  - feelings of rejection and abandonments, affects their self-esteem and undermines relationships of trust between children and adults; transitional thoughts of suicide and/or revenge
  - suicide ideation, aggression, bitterness, and feelings of shame, depression, and anxiety about normal situations
  - Reproductive and sexual health consequences: vulnerability to STIs

- Social-Economic costs
  - direct costs of medical care
  - Disability and loss of productivity

CONSQUENCES OF HIV as VaC

- *Consequences for children's Education*
  - Low educational outcomes
  - Dropping out of school

- *Further victimization*
  - Children may be forced onto the street exposing them to further violence
  - Early marriage, a form of sexual violence, may also expose a child to physical, emotional and other forms of sexual violence

- *Long-term consequences*
  - intergenerational cycle of abuse :children who are abused are likely to use violence against their spouses and their children in their adulthood.
  - Childhood experience of violence has also been linked to harmful behaviors like alcohol and drug abuse which in turn are associated with HIV risk

  Note: Children do not have to be direct targets of violence in order to experience negative consequences

REFLECTION ON RESPONSES

- **Building an effective child protection system**

  - Legal and policy response

  - Functionality of state and non state structures

- **Prevention and responsive services**

  - Reporting, investigation, case management

- **Constraints to prevention and response**

  - Supply constraints (service providers, government agencies)

  - Demand constraints (children, parents, community)

SYSTEMS COMPONENTS & FUNCTIONALITY

- **Legal and policy responses**
  - Ratification to several international and regional legal instruments protecting children against all forms of violence
  - Several laws have been enacted, and policies and national plans of action developed to ensure a protective environment for children
  - However gaps remain in effective implementation of laws and polices

- **Functionality of state and non state structures**
  - Statutory institutions: MGLSD, NCC, Courts of law DPSWO, Police, CDO/ ACDOs, SCA, local authorities etc.
    - Functionality of the above structures however is riddled with deficiencies
  - Government health facilities
    - Access to health services undermined by shortage of trained personnel, lack of necessary drugs and sundries, insufficient and weak referral system

PREVENTION AND RESPONSIVE SERVICES

- Mainly public information or prevention campaigns,
- Awareness and sensitization activities targeting children, child rights clubs for children in and out-of-school and other forms of children and youth organization
- Toll Free Child Helpline
- Justice and health services provided through government child protection (Law & Order) and basic social service (Health/Education) sub-systems
- NGOs: psychosocial assistance, shelter for abused children, legal aid.

REPORTING, INVESTIGATION, CASE MANAGEMENT

- Reporting violations is a voluntary endeavor
- Mainly by children, parents or caregivers, community members
- Guidelines on investigation and handling cases of VaC exist - Children's Act.
  - Nonetheless barriers still hinder many children from accessing appropriate responses from the formal child protection mechanisms

CONSTRAINTS TO PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

- Supply constraints (service providers, government agencies)
  - Inadequate and poor quality health care and legal sectors
  - Fragmented, most times unfriendly nature of services
  - absence of certain core services e.g. temporary emergency shelter
  - Lack of or poor quality referral mechanisms

- Demand constraints (children, community members, parents)
  - lack of reporting cases of violations
  - Social and economic costs associated with accessing services

Like HIV/AIDS response, VaC efforts should:

- **Children participation in Prevention and response to violence**
  - Children participation in policy development e.g. National Plan of Action against Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children
  - Research on children's own views and experiences of violence e.g. Raising Voices and Save the Children study
  - Efforts to involve children violence prevention and response programmes e.g. child rights clubs for children in and out of school

- **Programming gaps**
  - lack of coherent referral systems and insufficient attention to early intervention, family support mechanisms
  - Lack coordination of child protection institutions and agencies, both vertically and horizontally
  - child-friendly medical services and psychosocial support services limited
  - Limited data on effectiveness of different VaC prevention and response approaches
  - Limited information on children placed in institutional care

SYSTEMS COMPONENTS & FUNCTIONALITY

Research and knowledge gaps

- Studies undertaken on VaC in Uganda, vary according to scope and methodologies used
- Methodological limitations:
  - Generalizability of some studies is limited
  - inconsistencies in the definition and lack of common measurements for different for the different forms of violence
  - Failure to make the important holistic connections to understand the inter-connection between violence in different settings
  - Administrative data from police and courts is incomprehensive and accuracy limited

SYSTEMS COMPONENTS & FUNCTIONALITY

Knowledge Management gaps

- Limited documentation, evaluation of agency programmes to inform future practices and influence policy
- No national database on VaC to facilitate evidence based advocacy and interventions
- Less focus on strengthening knowledge-sharing and learning processes among key child protection actors
- Insufficient efforts to develop cohesive, well-resourced national research agenda on VaC

SYSTEMS COMPONENTS & FUNCTIONALITY

Research agenda

- There is need for:
  - Large scale prevalence and more specific interventional impact data
  - Detailed research on the association between violence and a range of psychological outcomes, across difference settings and for different forms of violence.
  - Impact of violence against children on country economic growth.
  - Research on the association between the different forms of violence or the fact that children frequently experience multiple forms of violence in their lives.
  - Research to explore variations across cultures in the definition of acceptable disciplinary behaviours.
  - Intervention research to facilitate an understanding and learning of what works

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING RESPONSE

- Develop comprehensive strategies and government-led coordinating mechanisms for elimination of VaC
- Enhance functionality and effectiveness of institutional framework for protection of the rights of the child
- Improve data to develop, implement and monitor key interventions, as well as tracking changes in trends of VaC
- Develop a system for monitoring VaC as part of Uganda government and partners' approach to Monitoring and Results for System (MoRES)

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING RESPONSE

- Involve children in planning, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes to promote their rights and prevent violence
- Create/reinforce child-friendly and gender sensitive reporting and referral mechanisms accessible to children
- Prevention work needs to be developed around community approaches to addressing violence

Thank you for listening