Our Children, Our Future

Preventing Violence and Building Sustainable Social Foundations

Sciences for Prosperity

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Uganda National Academy of Sciences
(UNAS)

Our Future, Our Children: Preventing Violence and Building Sustainable Social Foundations

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"For our country to grow, our children must grow."
- Rt. Hon. Prime Minister Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda

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List of Acronyms

ACPF	African Child Protection Forum
CFPU	Child and Family Protection Unit
FGC	Female Genital Circumcision
GoU	Government of Uganda
IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Federation
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
JLOS	Justice, Law, and Order Sector
MGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MoIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MoJCA	Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs
NCA	National Children's Authority
NCPWG	National Child Protection Working Group
NPC	National Population Council
OAG	Office of the Auditor General
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PVAC	Prevention of Violence Against Children
SoT	Statement of Task
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
UDHS	Uganda Demographic and Health Survey
UNAS	Uganda National Academy of Sciences
UPE	Universal Primary Education
UPF	Uganda Police Force
USE	Universal Secondary Education
VAC	Violence Against Children
VACS	Violence Against Children Survey
WHO	World Health Organization

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Executive Summary

Uganda's children represent both an unprecedented opportunity and a sizable risk for the nation's long-term development. They represent this opportunity and risk because to be able to reap the benefits of this enormous population will require substantial investment over the coming decades. One of the greatest risks to returns on that investment is their experience of violence. According to the 2016 Violence Against Children Survey (VACS), an estimated 75% of Ugandan children experience one or more forms of physical, emotional, or sexual violence. This level of violence is symptomatic of a broader and more fundamental problem: rapid changes and erosion in the social fabric of Ugandan society. Despite the country's economic growth, the high level of violence suggests that greater gains in social and economic development are being lost due to the negative consequences of violence. A reorientation in thinking that encourages Ugandan citizens to more actively participate in the process of preventing violence against children (VAC) could provide key contributions to Uganda's sustainable development.

In response to this challenge, the Uganda National Academy of Sciences (UNAS) collaborated with other Prevention of Violence Against Children (PVAC) stakeholders[1] to develop this report to stimulate high-level discussions and actively interrogate perspectives that have not been fully examined in the discussion of VAC. The result is a report that seeks to stimulate discussions at a philosophical level, such that the programmatic thinking can investigate new and innovative means of managing social change and evolution.

The erosion of the social fabric of Ugandan society has been the result of a persistent conceptual confusion when discussing social development. Historically, economic and financial development took priority over that of social development because elimination of material

[1] See acknowledgements list.

poverty was considered to be the key precursor to freedom and democracy. However, this development approach neglected the complexities of the local context in shaping social change. Though appreciated in theory, it was not translated into practice. Ugandan citizens had limited input into development processes and instead were passive recipients, allowing for alterations in how communities and individuals related to one another in practice. With little domestic investment into matters of social development, international development partners have taken a greater role in social development, contributing to conflicts of interest and understanding. In such a context, preventing VAC is a pressing and potentially catalytic approach to unlocking the economic value of social development in our younger generation.

Child Centered Issues

Currently, children in Uganda are being raised in an environment that encourages the persistence of violence. Many children perceive their environments to be insecure, where violence occurs arbitrarily, indiscriminately, and without warning. Despite formal efforts to combat the prevalence of VAC, these children do not perceive these systems—at least when it comes to reporting violence—to be trustworthy or useful in providing the needed assistance. Instead, children regularly tap into more informal social networks for guidance and safety, namely close relatives, peers, and various local leaders, including traditional and religious leaders. However, these social networks appear to have limited impact in responding appropriately, while in other cases, they appear to share attitudes that permit or condone VAC. A preventative approach that encourages dialogue and reformulation of those attitudes in a participatory, dialogical, and communal way could potentially create the conditions necessary for reversing the trends of VAC and contribute in part to sustainable social development.

The above notwithstanding, children are increasingly active participants in shaping their own development and taking great risks in the process. Children participate in economic activities both in the household and outside of it, although the benefits of their economic

activity are sometimes appropriated by adults in their households. Children often do not understand these practices by their parents or guardians and find these actions to be exploitative. In many cases, these practices amount to intolerable forms of child labour with all of the associated negative impacts on their present and future productivity, health, and growth. While the participation of children in economic activities is a remarkable sign of their autonomy, there is a lack of common understanding of these actions between adults and children, which is increasing their vulnerability to exploitation. Similarly, sex is an area of increasing autonomy on the part of young adults with evidence suggesting that the nature of sexual relationships is becoming more entangled with transactional behaviour and separated from social protections. Consequently, there remains substantial sexual violence that is driven by exploitative norms and thinking resulting in disastrous consequences on the long-term growth of children. Investigating opportunities that support children's growth in independent decision-making while protecting them from the worst and most destructive impacts of sexual and labour related exploitation, could provide the environment necessary for innovative approaches to emerge.

It is imperative to have in place innovative approaches to confront how narratives regarding VAC at the global and national level have created conditions in which adults perceive themselves to be under threat. Adults perceive concepts such as violence to be inflammatory and misrepresenting of their efforts to discipline their children in an environment where discipline is seen as critical to the survival of their children and their families. Social roles that previously were taken for granted, such as the role of men as primary financiers of the family's development, have been subjected to increasing scrutiny and change. Yet, the changes in social organization have often not included the affected adults in shaping those directions meaningfully, despite the best efforts of programmes to be inclusive. While certain practices such as child sacrifice, defilement, and other such categories of VAC are indeed abhorrent and have no place in a peaceful society, rapid changes in understandings of VAC have disrupted long-standing power structures, limiting space for communal dialogue on how to manage that social change in a positive and constructive way. The results have contributed to an atmosphere where more incidental effects such as prevalence of

intimate partner violence (IPV) are contributing to inter-generational violence and VAC in particular. Changing how violence is perceived and understood by adults in a dialogical and constructive manner could provide the foundation upon which efforts to prevent VAC can take place.

To ensure those positive effects, programmes need to recognize how the pace and depth of social change affect adults and their willingness to adopt new and innovative approaches regarding their relationships with their children and to one another. The education that children are receiving is often inaccessible to adult generations that have had historically low literacy rates and thus makes parental participation in their children's growth a challenge. Children are entering into a digital age in which the incredible level of access to information and media is a challenge to manage for adults and children alike. Adults who were raised in communities that privileged adult authority over children are now confronted with challenges to their social, economic, and cultural expectations. An approach that sensitively gives the opportunities for entrenched adult interests to be reshaped to serve both adult and child interests could prevent the emergence of conditions that contribute to VAC.

Based on the foregoing observations, the UNAS Committee on Prevention of Violence Against Children thus concludes and recommends:

1. PVAC agenda could benefit from greater ownership by the society it hopes to influence. Therefore, PVAC programmes should provide meaningful opportunities for intended recipients of programme interventions to have greater control over the agenda-setting process.
2. The family/household units are core institutions of socialization and protection of children and therefore should be primarily targeted with key interventions that facilitate intra-familial dialogue on conceptions of violence and childhood.

3. There is limited understanding on the changing dynamics within the Ugandan family. Investment should be increased to research the changing conceptions of family, with a focus on how different family structures both contribute to and mitigate violence.
4. Information and Communication Technology literacy gaps between the younger generation and their parents/guardians are growing sources of tension in influencing and aligning perceptions of children and adults. Research should be expanded to examine the impact of technology, mass media, and online social networks on relationships within families and amongst social groups.
5. There are contradicting views on the contribution of children's economic activities to the family welfare versus the potential detrimental impacts to their education. Decision making and entitlements relating to this income is also a source of family contention. Dialogues should be conducted at the community level regarding appropriate means of balancing of children's economic contributions to their families and their participation in education.

Community Centered Issues

Communities are structures of social belonging and identity. They provide the framework by which diverse groups can inter-relate, learn, and change. Traditions are key elements that bind these diverse groups together by referring to a common narrative or story. However, some Ugandan cultural practices and traditions have historically complex and troubling legacies such as child marriage, female genital circumcision (FGC), child sacrifice and extreme forms of child labour. Given the growing incontrovertible evidence regarding their negative consequences on the lives of children and others affected, efforts have focused on their complete eradication without due consideration to the social and economic value that sustained their existence in the first place. The challenge then emerges to implementers and leaders on

how to engineer social change that recognizes the social and economic import hidden behind these destructive traditions by designing programmes that retain the perceived value to local communities while simultaneously disrupting or eliminating the destructive elements. Providing opportunities to the affected communities to engage in open dialogues and negotiation amongst adults and children on these traditions can potentially mitigate the resistance and subsequent conflict to changes in traditional practice. Such an approach could prevent new occurrences of violence and provide healthier social foundations upon which communities can grow and evolve.

Marriage in the Ugandan context has been historically intertwined with elements of economic and social value. Dowry was an exchange of goods or assets that was perceived to have social value because it indicated an investment on the part of the man's family towards the ownership of his wife. While the approach discounted a woman's autonomy and human rights, this material exchange was understood as concrete evidence of the man's obligation to his wife and where violence occurred, the woman could seek recourse through her family. While such thinking in today's era of human rights is abhorrent and derided for its gender-bias, the attempts to alter and eradicate the negative elements of such practices have not been able to effectively provide similar or replacement social protections due to lack of credibility and ownership. These changes in the social obligations that marriage is perceived to provide and the relative importance assigned to them highlights how communal values are sometimes grounds for confusion and inconsistency. With the community providing less than desirable foundations for social relations, the ability to build trust amongst the community increasingly relies upon individual relationships rather than reference to common values.

The case of female genital circumcision (FGC) is a unique example of a complex tradition with multiple conflicting perspectives on its existence. Female genital circumcision is a practice of aesthetic and functional alteration to the female genitalia primarily practiced in Eastern Uganda. This practice has been derided as barbaric and contributing to the sexual and reproductive dysfunction of women in these communities, especially within Western media outlets. However, scientific literature from both the Global North and South suggest a much more complex

and nuanced picture, where such claims misunderstand or misrepresent the empirical research and neglect closer examination of the social value that has sustained the existence of the practice. For example, a WHO publication on female genital mutilation (FGM) indicates that while there is a substantial increase in risk of certain complications, the base level occurrence of these complications is relative and cannot be solely attributed to FGM. While domestic research of comparable scale and quality has not been conducted in Uganda, the documented reduction in transparency of the practice may compromise the long-term compliance of those communities to the law in place and contribute to social disruption within their communities. Some sociological studies indicate that the practice of FGM has been critical to the sense of belonging of women in those communities and indeed their ability to participate in communal and individual action, an issue that is regularly neglected in the discussion. An approach that considers the power that social value has in sustaining FGM and the complex interaction of human rights in its practice is critical to safely altering its existing social foundations. Nonetheless, extreme forms of FGM such as infibulation (removal of portions of the clitoris and narrowing of the urethral cavity) that have been documented to pose substantial risks and more dire long-term impacts should not be condoned.

A substantial part of the evolution of traditions will depend on how local leadership is engaged in the process of social change and advocacy for the needs of children. Leaders, including those of a religious or traditional background, are key pillars of social change as Ugandan adults primarily engage with them for socio-cultural reference. At the same time, many of these leaders have historically been intertwined with a role of social insurer, providing goods and services to their constituents in times of scarcity or conflict. As the Government of Uganda has sought to formalize many of these functions, the active engagement and participation of these leaders in the social development process has been altered. A closer examination of how these leaders can support social development and engage in the process of preventing VAC could potentially open up new avenues for broad societal change and mindset shifts.

Based on the foregoing observations, the UNAS Committee on Prevention of Violence Against Children thus concludes and recommends:

6. There is limited understanding of the socio-cultural values communities attach to traditional practices perceived to promote violence against children, and this is negatively impacting the design of alternatives that are aimed to combat these practices. Therefore, further research on issues like female genital circumcision and gender-based perspectives(male and female) should be supported to examine what aspects give FGC social value and experiment on alternative practices that reduce the negative impacts of the practice while minimizing its impact on social matters.
7. Local leaders (religious, cultural and traditional) are key points of community reference for societal transformation but are often conflicted and ill equipped to drive the PVAC agenda. Therefore, more research should be focused on the role of traditional, cultural, and religious leadership in the socialization of children and adults in order to examine how their behaviours, including attitude on violence, are influenced and reshaped by them.
8. Power dynamics in intimate partner relationships and the usage of formal tools such as dowry in formalising marriage are affecting familial relationships and children in ways that are not yet fully appreciated. Further research in this area should be supported.

Policy and Legislation Centered Issues

Uganda has a detailed legal framework for PVAC with comprehensive laws and policies in place. The Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) under the Youth and Children Affairs department is the lead government entity on PVAC. However, the systems and institutions dedicated to child protection and PVAC are ill-equipped

to effectively shape social change and development. Limited domestic financing for social development programmes contributes to perceived and real conflicts of interest that limit the ability of local leadership to creatively advocate, design, and implement new programmes without potentially compromising their ability to fundraise. With different components of the legal and response-based systems of child protection perennially underfunded, maximum provision of services with the least amount of cost becomes an operational priority, rather than preventative efforts which take longer to execute, and require more confidence- building efforts to effectively implement. An approach that embraces social development and trust-building as key to institutional effectiveness can unlock more potential opportunities for home-grown development that prevents VAC.

Critical to building trust in the legal system is building off of the perceptions of the Ugandan legal system by the Ugandan public. The process of law and policy development appears to have limited credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of the Ugandan public, creating conditions in which the citizens do not use the services provided or in ways unintended by the policymakers. For example, studies suggest that children in particular often do not use the formal legal system for restitution or reconciliation when dealing with cases of VAC. Similarly, an adults decision to use or not use the legal system depends on their financial situation, creating conditions in which one's financial circumstances are perceived to dictate outcomes. Actively tackling misperceptions or concerns from the Ugandan public and building competence in responding to those concerns can potentially give the formal system more opportunities to engage and support PVAC.

While no domestic studies on the costs of VAC have been conducted in Uganda, there is ample continental and international evidence that highlights its enormous costs to economic development, lending PVAC a positive benefit to cost ratio. One element that can leverage limited financial investment in social development is the effort to centrally coordinate work on PVAC. While there is legal architecture for the creation of a National Children's Authority (NCA) as an independent authority to oversee and coordinate child protection efforts in Uganda, its implementation was delayed due to the freeze on creation of authorities. Efforts by other entities such as the National Child

Protection Working Group (NCPWG) could potentially fill the gap, although it has limited domestic investment creating an environment that encourages competition rather than collaboration. Explicit efforts to allow coordination mechanisms to be implemented in a manner that encourages institutional trust and growth while maintaining objectivity, could create the conditions in which preventative efforts could be both domestically funded and developed.

Based on the foregoing observations, the UNAS Committee on Prevention of Violence Against Children thus concludes and recommends:

9. The cost of PVAC to national development is not fully appreciated due to lack of updated local economic data, and this limits the negotiating powers for appropriate domestic investment in the agenda. A comprehensive domestic cost benefit analysis of investment in children and the costs of violence against children should be conducted in order to promote greater investment in the agenda.

10. The lead government entities on PVAC are perennially underfunded in the national, sectoral and district budgets which limits their ability to effectively implement their mandates; thus leaving the sector heavily reliant on development partner funding and direction. The MGLSD and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs should be strengthened with capacity to lobby for greater domestic financing allocation in order to enable them to effectively execute on their mandate of driving the national PVAC agenda.

11. There are many PVAC coordination structures in place without clear reporting and inter-relational structures, the result of which is fractured implementation and often duplication of work. Organisation of coordination structures should be supported to engage in a long-term process of harmonization through ongoing negotiation with partners and collective ownership.

12. The Ugandan private sector is not fully exploited as a potential partner in PVAC. The Government of Uganda should incentivize private sector actors to address child and family related issues as part of long-term investment in human capital development and Corporate Social Responsibility. Implementation of this effort could be in the form of a consolidated investment fund.

13. The role of child protection and development is fragmented across different departments within the MGLSD, making it difficult to consolidate funds and efforts towards the child -focused agenda. The creation of a comprehensive child focused department should be fast-tracked under the MGLSD with a dedicated consolidated financial package for its operation.

14. PVAC is a multi-dimensional subject and much data and information on PVAC has been generated by a wide variety of stakeholders, however it is not adequately shared with all relevant parties. A single well-respected knowledge platform that operates activities such as the Annual National Symposium on Children, should be supported to be able to share programmatic evaluations and learning across stakeholders in order to support ongoing dialogues between stakeholders on implementation of programmes.

15. Confidence-building in formal government PVAC entities among the general public is an expensive, demanding and long-term endeavour that cannot be efficiently done by any single PVAC entity. Therefore, formal government institutions that provide services to children should consolidate their resources in order to create a multi-year strategy of sustained engagement and trust-building at schools and in households. Formal institutions may include but are not limited to the Justice Law and Order Sector (JLOS), MGLSD, and Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES).

16. Local governments through their designated district-centered offices including the Community Development Office and Child Welfare Office are at the frontline of PVAC implementation among communities and are best placed to engender trust and engage the public in a contextually relevant manner. However,

fundraising efforts and program designing is often done at the national level with rigid application settings and performance indicators that leave no room for contextual application at the community level. Going forward, local governments should be given greater leeway to participate in, advocate for, and implement programmes with an independent financial package.

1

Problem Statement

Uganda has one of the youngest populations of any country in the world, with approximately 51% of its population under the age of 18 (National Population Council 2019). Frequently dubbed the "youth dividend", this population will require substantial investment in order be able to fulfill its anticipated role in the future economic and social prosperity of the country.

One of the greatest risks and current negative impacts to the effectiveness of investments made into this population is violence. Violence, regardless of definition or type, is universally understood to have negative impacts on the health, social well-being, as well as present and future economic productivity of children (World Health Organization 2016, Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development and UNICEF 2015). National statistics estimate a prevalence of violence against children ranging between 65-90% of children under the age of 18 experiencing one form or multiple forms of violence (MGLSD 2015, Walakira et al. 2016, UBOS & ILO 2013). The majority of the children in Uganda experience violence to an extent that is altering the trajectory of investments in education, health, and social development.

While it has been well recognized that children necessitate investment in order to sustain developmental growth, programmes have historically focused on responding to VAC rather than preventative measures. This focus on response has been primarily a reflection of the investment trends, which were and continue to be largely driven by international development partners (MGLSD and UNICEF 2013). While that investment has been critical to providing necessary services to some of the most disadvantaged in Uganda, VAC has remained persistent in its prevalence (MGLSD and UNICEF 2015). With little to

show in terms of sustained change in VAC, literature from the Global South has emerged challenging some of the long-held assumptions guiding programmatic behaviour.

Assumptions regarding VAC have contributed to the present gaps in understanding between global and local concepts. For example, while there is consensus at the international level regarding negative impacts of violence against children, local level narratives and understandings of VAC have historically been problematized and viewed through a lens of correction (de Haan 2008, Bukuluki 2013). Locally defined definitions of violence differ between parents and children and are highly context-dependent, which is a substantial departure from Western definitions whose legal-criminal definitions of violence are both measured and socially understood in the same way (Evans 2012). This gap in definition reflects ongoing tensions between policymakers and international actors and the ways in which the targeted populations for social development think and perceive their world.

Similarly, the definition of childhood may have alignment in theory between local and global narratives, but practical definitions are sources of friction and confusion. For example, chronological age groups corresponded with particular capabilities and behaviours that prescribe appropriate activities and shape how a child should be raised (Evans 2012, Lansdown and Wernham 2012). In the Ugandan context, maturity was historically associated with the ability to conduct specific activities and an overall mindset that was defined by the adults and parents in one's community (Kelly 2012, Ndegemo et al. 2018). What defined a child and an adult alike was how you were perceived communally, rather than reference to chronological age (Evans 2012, Seruwagi 2017). This conceptual confusion between local and global narratives has results in programmes that have failed to initiate fundamental changes in thinking about VAC at local levels.

At the same time, Ugandan society has been undergoing and experiencing major upheaval in terms of its economic and social organization. Historically, children were dependent on the community and in exchange, adults provided the means for survival, protection, and growth (Ndegmo et al. 2018). This form of reciprocity or mutual obligations has been experiencing local scepticism and scrutiny as

children assert independent rights while older generations decry the lack of community spirit that they attribute to the proliferation of Western cultural values (Voltholter 2012). Children and young adults in the globalised generation have been raised with exposure to global discourses that challenge existing power structures which have long privileged adults. The speed of change in power dynamics between generations is contributing to a sense of antagonism that is amplified as the traditional foundations of Ugandan tribes and ethnicities deteriorate.

The traditional foundations of Ugandan tribes and ethnicities are experiencing a major crisis in their ability to adapt and innovate in response to these changes in power structures. The colonial approach which used traditions and tribes to support its extractive and economic goals is partially blamed for this. For example, traditional chiefs were co-opted to act as agents of the colonial government in terms of tax collection while becoming increasingly divorced from their traditional roles as social leaders and providers of social security (Mamdani 1976, Richens 2009). Similarly, the colonial government encouraged the active proselytization of local populations, who saw their mission as "civilizing" the locals by the removal or destruction of practices that they saw as barbaric or primitive (McKnight 1996). While these efforts in name disappeared with the advent of independent government, the ability of traditions to adapt to changes in economic and social organization in the modern era has been difficult. The introduction of new ideas such as human rights and national identity has had trouble reconciling itself with ethnic identities and certain notions of reciprocity. However, many traditional institutions continue to hold social influence and disrupting those lines of authority can meet substantial resistance. Without understanding the nuances of these political and social aspects, programmes can inadvertently make traditional structures more resistant to change.

Implementing institutions have been challenged to adapt to parameters from their funding partners that may limit their ability to innovate and respond to these changing social dynamics. In the case of child protection, domestic investments in the sector have historically been persistently inadequate (MGLSD & UNICEF 2013). The lack of sufficient domestic investment has made it difficult to sustain social development activities, many of which require long-term approaches

in order to succeed. For example, one of the most rigorously researched programmes on prevention of intimate partner violence, the SASA! Programme, has shown that changes in perceptions and behaviour have taken place on the scale of 3-5 years (Kyegombe et al. 2014, Abramsky et al. 2016, Starmann et al. 2017). Without greater investment in the process of social change on the part of domestic actors, it leaves the agenda setting process to international development partners, whose interests and understandings of what makes a cohesive and peaceful society may be different from that of their intended beneficiaries.

It is within this context that the challenge of preventing violence against children becomes critical to the long-term development of the country. Uganda has one of the youngest populations in the world and indeed, any form of violence, no matter what definition is applied, will have a drastic effect on the country's future because of its young people's disproportionate size and thus contribution to its economic, social, and political growth. How then can a country like Uganda prevent violence against children so as to be able to provide the foundation necessary for it to own its development future? That is the challenge addressed in this consensus study report.

2

Consensus Study Process

To respond to these challenges in the prevention of violence against children (PVAC), the Uganda National Academy of Sciences (UNAS) followed a Consensus Development Panel (CDP) process. This process has been used widely by the U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM), and was adapted for use in the African context. The CDP process brings together an interdisciplinary team of subject matter experts and provides a formal structure to seek areas of agreement in relation to a specific Statement of Task (SoT). In the case of this consensus study, a stakeholder committee comprising government officials, private sector interests, civil society advocates, and international development partners was created. This committee met twice and provided their broad input into a set of questions that would be most relevant to their work.

Based on those discussions, the following SoT was presented to the Consensus Study Committee for this consensus study:

Examine prevention of violence against children strategies in Uganda. Provide a contextual overview of the current state of children in Uganda. In addition, answer specific queries regarding the following:

1. *What is the basis by which violence is understood by parents, communities, and what values inform both the expression and prevention of violence?*

2. *Where is and/or what is the role of the healthcare system in prevention of violence against children?*
3. *How do various actors who work with children perceive and understand their relationships with children and vice-versa? (Actors in this case refers to teachers, parents, law enforcement, village elders or leaders etc.)*
4. *What are the costs of violence against children, both financially and otherwise?*
5. *What is the current state of coordination and governance in the child protection sector?*
6. *Where are there gaps in knowledge on prevention of violence against children and what should be the approach to addressing them?*

To cultivate a multidisciplinary consensus position in response to this SoT, UNAS convened experts in child protection implementation, governance, child-focused research, human rights law, sociology, and anthropology. The Expert Committee was provided in-depth literature reviews drafted in response to the SoT that evolved in response to feedback and input from the Committee. Through a series of Expert Committee meetings, a theory of change was developed based on the reviewed evidence, and consensus-based conclusions and recommendations established. The conclusions, recommendations, and content of the study report were refined in an iterative series of remote committee feedback sessions. This study report therefore represents the considered consensus position of this interdisciplinary committee of experts.

3

Theory of Change

As the evidence on prevention of violence against children is widespread and uses various perspectives, it can often be difficult to create a coherent language that represents their diverse inputs. To provide a cohesive and coherent way of presenting this diverse range of information, a new framework can be helpful. In this case, a Theory of Change (ToC) acts as that independent framework by articulating an overarching goal and the particular levers for achievement of that goal. By reframing various perspectives as serving a ToC, readers can use the framework to adapt their own experiences and knowledge in practice.

The Committee on Prevention of Violence Against Children has developed this particular theory of change based on the evidence that is contained in this report. The Committee takes the key long-term goal to be the achievement of *a violence-free, sustainable, and innovative society in which children have opportunities to reach their full potential*. This long-term goal responds to major elements of the problem statement: (1) inconsistencies between national and international narratives on VAC and local perceptions of Ugandan children and adults (2) an approach to social development that has had difficulty managing divergences between tradition and modernity (3) the conflicting interests between funders and institutions that limit innovation and creative approaches to preventing VAC.

The Committee identified three levers in achieving that goal: (1) trust (2) the resilience of trust to shocks and change (3) adaptation in social relationships. The individual, community, and institutions can use these levers in different ways as is relevant to them.

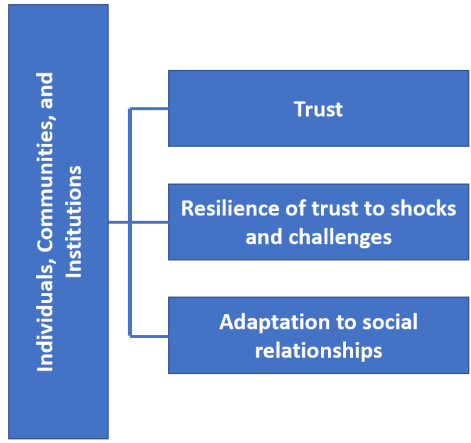

FIGURE 1 The PVAC Committee's theory of change, a model that provides the framework for sustainable social development and prevention of violence against children.

4

Mindset Shifts for Ownership of PVAC Agenda

At any level, the ability to empathize and recognize elements of one's own life in others is fundamental to building social trust. However, material poverty has become a critical component by which individuals judge not only themselves but one another (Chase & Bantebya-Kyomuhendo 2015). An individual's material poverty has become conflated with mental poverty, inculcating a dependency mentality that limits the possibilities of thinking and of social bonds (Chase & Bantebya-Kyomuhendo 2015, Sen 2001, UNAS 2014, Okereke and Agupusi 2016). This mentality reinforces stagnation and passivity, rather than creating the conditions for innovation and initiative. A society of individuals that sees material poverty in themselves and in others as a construct that can be changed and altered, can create the conditions necessary for new and violence-free approaches to emerge in Ugandan society.

An approach that privileges the value of social trust is reflected in a communal orientation that has been historically and traditionally upheld in Uganda. This community orientation, despite its erosion following the colonial era and the post-colonial era that sought to re-direct energies away from tribal identities toward national identities, has been enshrined in the philosophy of *Ubuntu*. *Ubuntu*, most frequently associated with the African Philosopher John Mbiti, means "I am because you are", and highlights the nature of one's existence as being tied to other's existence (Mbiti 1990). This traditional philosophy thus underpins the necessity of understanding the political dynamics of leadership within communities and how they themselves relate to one another and share identities (Bekker, Dodds, and Khosa 2001, Ssentongo 2017). Identities in this regard are not static, but rather in

a state of constant flux depending on situations and context. The effect of this communal orientation was to provide a key reference point that buffered the community from shocks to trust because it was a shared value that shaped change and consistency.

Key to ensuring that such an approach is able to sustain itself are the opportunities and mechanisms that permit change and innovation. In the Ugandan case, the mechanisms for change have never been fully investigated because many "traditional" institutions have had value of their existence questioned, frequently from the outside, with limited perceived ability to fully and equitably engage independent questioning. A vicious cycle in which traditional practices perceive themselves to be under attack, coalesce and consolidate power, and subsequently exclude others from participation reduces the opportunities for change and trusting relationships to emerge.

Recognizing the interplay of these levers, the Committee suggests that approaches that seek to opportunistically change perceptions that are already questioned by Ugandans themselves have greater potential to unlock longer and more sustainable change. At the same time, such an approach can provide the conditions for long-term trust-building that allows communities to equitably and readily participate in processes of social change. Instead of an implementation orientation that seeks to disrupt areas of communal strength, it seeks to constructively disrupt and rebuild areas of weakness while setting in motion the conditions for change to occur in more entrenched systems. This approach recognizes the inherent necessity of continuing to accumulate and gather more information to inform the ongoing dialogues that are necessary to change in a way that reflects local priorities and understandings.

When addressing prevention of violence against children, the practice of ensuring agenda setting power remains with key beneficiaries. This builds resilience by giving opportunities to local communities to recognize, address, and cultivate home-grown solutions to problems that they see and experience. A governmental system is constructed to reflect a political consensus on what interests are to be recognized and to provide a means to implement the realization or recognition of those interests. When citizens are removed from the process of change or do not perceive themselves to be valued by leaders, their obligation to take

responsibility for success or failure of national objectives is unwarranted (Watt et al. 1999, Wunsch et al. 2013). The ability to determine the process by which change occurs reinvigorates individuals to both welcome and adapt to change for the betterment of both themselves and their communities. The governmental system can then be recognized for its legitimate successes and given greater leeway to make mistakes in the interests of national development.

This theory is practically applied by giving the opportunities to communities to holistically address their challenges and their futures. An example of a community-owned programme is found in the case study of the Community Connector Project under FHI360 described in Box 1.

BOX 1
The Community Connector Project

An example of an effective distribution of power that has allowed for innovation on the ground was the Community Connector Project, conducted by FHI 360 in Uganda. Its primary goal was to enhance agricultural organization and nutrition within targeted counties by providing key tools to encourage participation and engagement from the community. These tools in particular were staff members who were trained specifically to help navigate conflicts between competing interests and to act as an effective secretariat to community-driven initiatives. At the same time, financial power was given to the community to both promote financial investment themselves (through a savings programme) but also to encourage the practice of sound financial management.

This process was guided by a governance framework termed *collaborating, learning, and adapting* (CLA). This process emphasized giving the community a space in which to define the agenda towards which it would invest funds, human resources, and time into achieving. Concurrently, members engaged in a collaborative process whereby monitoring and evaluation took place reflecting local realities and sought to give them the means of measuring progress. The extensive flexibility and independence afforded to the community members

engaged in the process ensured that they all had a stake in the programmes's success and changes.

The results of the community connector project were substantial dividends in terms of encouraging financial saving and investment in local agricultural efforts, confidence of community members to manage and effectively use financial funds and encourage accountability amongst members with minimal mismanagement of funds.

SOURCE: FHI 360 (2016).

As individuals, communities, and institutions alike are given an opportunity in line with their own perceptions to build more sustainable social relationships and experiment in a socially expedient manner, more fundamental changes in societal behaviour can begin to be explored. The practice of guiding communities to own their own futures through holistic interventions thus allows communities to escape the vicious construct of poverty and create changes and innovations for the betterment of their society and nation.

5

The Individual: Children & Adults

This section addresses the following questions from the Statement of Task:

- *What is the basis by which violence is understood by parents, communities, and what values inform both the expression and prevention of violence?*
- *How do various actors who work with children perceive and understand their relationships with children and vice-versa? (Actors in this case refers to teachers, parents, law enforcement, village elders or leaders etc.)*

Shaping a violence free society relies upon the actors involved in society having an awareness of the perceptions of one another. When children and adults are more aware of how their perceptions can be both correct and incorrect, there are more opportunities for change and reform. This section therefore focuses primarily on those perceptions and where there are contradictions in perceptions and understanding. With that information, policymakers can assess and design strategies to help perpetrators of VAC recognize contradictions in behaviour and actively provide solutions to violent behaviours that are already known and recognized by children or adults.

The Perceptions of Children

For children in the Ugandan context, violence is perceived as any action that causes harm to the child, whether sexual, emotional, or physical (Naker 2005). This definition is challenging to manage in part because intent and motive are perceived to be less important in evaluating the

action. This definition results in children who lose trust in caregivers, professionals, and adults in part because the act of violence is regularly perceived to be unjustified. In cases where children do understand the justifications, the examples that children see in their communities today are both confusing and contradictory because they condone violence (Walakira, Ddumba-Nyanzi, and Byamugisha2008). Without consistency in the process by which parents and children communicate social expectations and the appropriate punishments, there exist major risks to the sustainability of any interventions to reduce or prevent violence.

The scale of violence against children in Uganda, no matter which definition is used, is unusually high in comparison to the African continent and East Africa. The recent Survey of Violence Against Children (VACS) (MGLSD 2015) showed that 75% of the population of children has experienced at least one form of physical, emotional, or sexual violence (Figure 2, Figure 3 and Figure 4). Comparatively smaller surveys of violence against children have found similar prevalence rates (Walakira et al. 2016b, Wandera et al. 2017), although definitions of violence tend to differ based on their particular perspectives thus limiting comparability. Regardless of comparability in data sets, the prevalence levels show an environment where violence affects almost all children.

Most children respond to violence by seeking the assistance of close and trusted adults. Formal actors such as teachers, police, or the judicial system are options of the last resort for most children (Naker 2005, Kamya & Wlakira 2017). One key reason for this lack of participation in the formal system is a lack of independent accessibility for children (Walakira et al. 2016a). For example, the costs of being able to file complaints at a police station includes the costs of printing and transport (MGLSD & UNICEF 2015), which most children cannot independently afford. Children prefer to communicate their complaints and concerns to their close familial and social networks (MGLSD 2015). At the same time, there are substantial numbers of children who simply do not see the violence as a problem or see no possible solution to the violence, which contributes to mental health problems and a sense of losing control (Naker 2005, MGLSD 2015. Where children do not believe that the solution lies within the services provided, the cycle of violence is never fully interacted with by the formal systems of interventions.

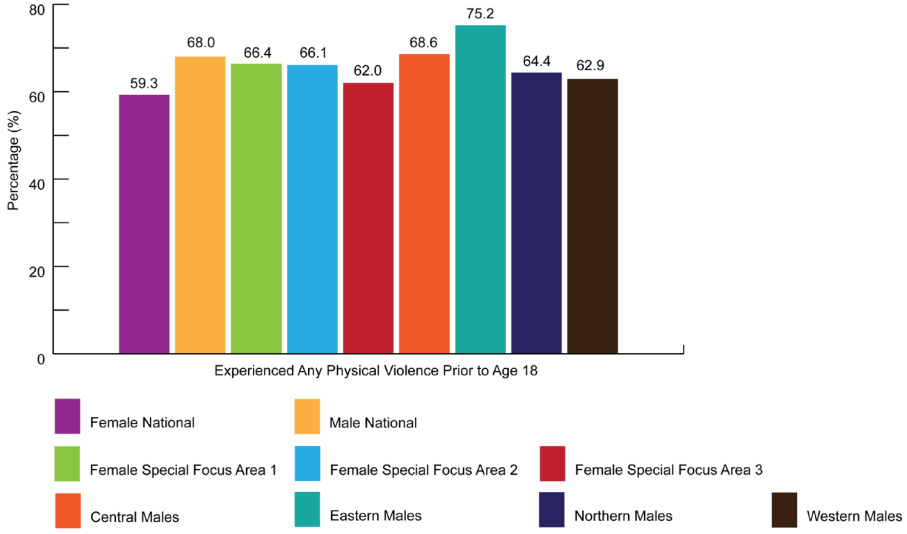

FIGURE 2 Prevalence of physical violence prior to age 18 among 18-24 year olds.

SOURCE: MGLSD 2015.

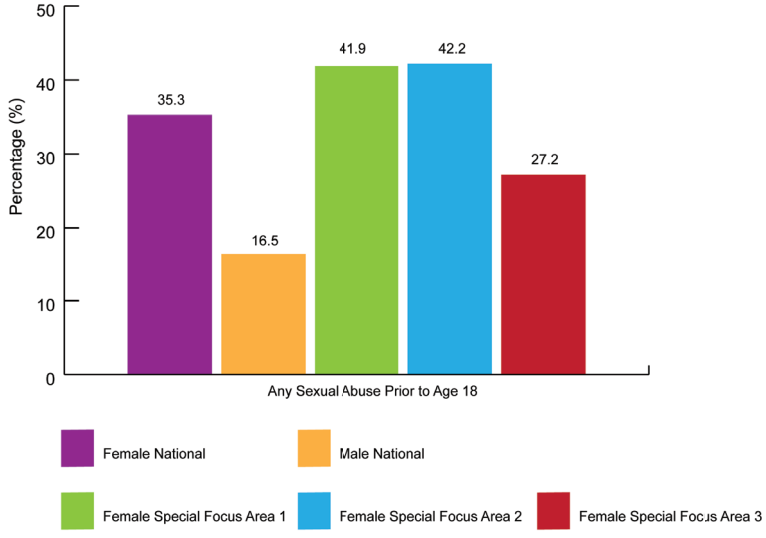

FIGURE 3 Prevalence of sexual abuse prior to age 18 among 18-24 year olds, nationally (females and males) and in the high prevalence HIV and AIDS special focus areas (Females).

SOURCE: MGLSD 2015.

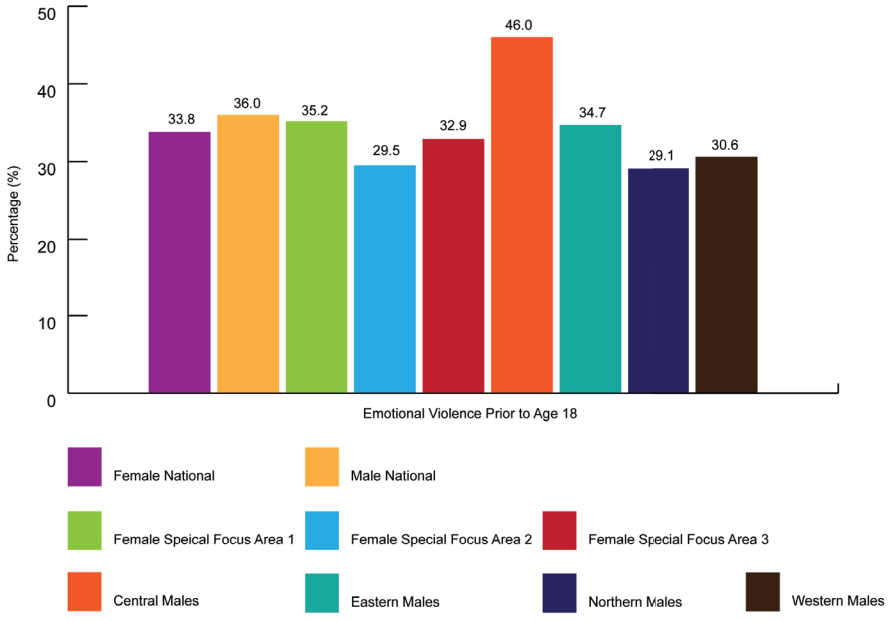

FIGURE 4 Prevalence of emotional violence by a parent, adult caregiver, or other adult relative prior to age 18 among 18-24 year olds.

SOURCE: MGLSD 2015.

One of the main arguments for children's rights is to be able to provide the framework for solutions to social problems which children cannot otherwise advocate for themselves politically. Indeed, children are citing human rights as the basis to demand parental obligations be provided in terms of access to education, housing, and food (Naker 2005). Yet, the realities for many children are stark in terms of material poverty: rates of child poverty are regularly higher than household levels of poverty, stunting remains a persistent challenge, and despite the best efforts of UPE and USE, educational institutions continue to see substantial dropout rates (Walakira et al. 2016b, Kikulwe et al. 2017). Instead of encouraging access to material goods necessary for their development, these narratives create social conflict between parents and children, who see that parents are failing in their obligations to them.

Such children innovate in response to these persistent vulnerabilities in different ways. They perceive education as one of their key exit strategies from poverty despite high rates of violence in schools and persistent concerns regarding quality (Pereznieto et al. 2011, Uwezo 2016). In most violence against children studies, it is noted that especially within school, children are beaten for being inattentive or sleeping (Naker 2005, VACS 2016, Walakira et al. 2016b). Many children attribute this inattentiveness to other confounding issues: lack of food, domestic work in addition to their other responsibilities, and the costs of participation in education. In effect, children are already acting independently to serve the needs of their families and themselves prior to their legal transition to adulthood at age 18. While their capabilities or capacities to effectively cater to all of these needs may be suspect, children are adapting to their circumstances and actively playing a role in trying to change their own life circumstances.

In other cases, children innovate in response to poverty by participating in economic activities of varying degrees of risk to their overall health. For example, in studies of vulnerable children, many state that they respond to their material poverty by working in service industry, sex work, or manual labour (Walakira et al. 2016b). Despite the suggestion that these choices made by children lack autonomy, the issue that appears to arise is how the financial benefits that children garner are distributed in their families and are subsequently managed by parents and guardians (Naker 2005). Children perceive the lack of consistency in adult behaviours in the work environment as discounting their ability to contribute and indeed reinforces the beliefs that they cannot participate or should not participate (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2013). Violence becomes a tool to teach children to not participate, while at the same time demanding that they do.

Children are responding to these circumstances in often creative, if socially unacceptable or disruptive ways. For example, children, and girls in particular, are using the opportunities for intimate relationships to exit impoverished conditions. Instead of their families being the main initiators of arranged marriages or otherwise, children are departing from social networks such as their families in order to exit out of poverty or improve their circumstances. Despite these efforts, the realities are that the children are exposed to substantial risks to their health in terms of

both violence and sexual and reproductive health (Bantebya et al. 2014). The structures of authority that would otherwise provide boundaries for children's behaviours are now being disrupted because children believe that parents do not have their best interests at heart. The deterioration in social relationships between children and parents condoned by the use of violence and the lack of common understanding thus contributes to high risk behaviour.

Conclusions:

1. Children are increasingly contributing to their families' welfare through income-generating activities. However, some of these activities exist outside of the legal framework of Uganda and have high risks of negative impacts to their overall health and productivity.
2. Educational outcomes are poorer due to violence against children. Violence against children in schools contributes to increased absenteeism, poor conflict resolution skills, and increased frequency of conflict with authority figures.
3. Children oftentimes perceive adults to be applying violence indiscriminately and without justification. In cases where there is a common understanding of violence and its application, inconsistency in adult behaviours compromises the trust that children have in adult reasoning.

The Perceptions of Adults

Ugandan adults generally do not refer to violent actions as "violent", but rather as "discipline" and "punishment" (Naker 2005). Behaviours such as corporal punishment or abusive language were regularly described as being necessary for children to change their behaviours (Naker 2005). Despite these behaviours, parents do not perceive those behaviours to be incompatible with their values or beliefs regarding good parents (Boothby et al. 2017). What exists in place of an opportunity for dialogue are the conditions for further disagreement and othering of programmes intended to support more harmonious relations in families and reduction of violence.

Parents describe their acts of violence in terms of the necessity of discipline and duty in shaping children who will fit into society. Parents argue that behaviours of children that demonstrate an incompatibility with family power dynamics instead encourages further instability in the family (Namy et al. 2017a, Seruwagi 2017, Koenig et al. 2003, Thumann et al. 2016). While adults themselves recognize that corporal punishment and emotional violence are not effective methodologies for changing child behaviours, the persistence of VAC highlights the lack of perceived credible alternatives that are acceptable to them (Naker et al. 2005). Adults perceive themselves to be in a position of limited control and see alternatives as efforts to restrict their power and authority in family dynamics.

These perceptions are reinforced by historical narratives regarding authority within families that are increasingly at odds with global discourses of child rights. The normative structure of most child-related interventions emphasizes the need for children's rights to be upheld and maintained (Karamagi et al. 2006, Mootz et al. 2017, Seruwagi 2017). While child rights are extensions of a global consensus on the types of obligations individuals have to one another, for most Ugandans on the ground, it is perceived to be an imposition from a foreign "other". For example, parents perceive rhetoric around "human rights" to be one that encourages "big-headedness" and indiscipline among children (Lundgren and Adams 2014, Mootz et al. 2017, Bulukuli et al. 2017b). As global discourses and education expand the understanding of the world for children, it in part appears to shrink the authoritative power of parents to effectively mould their children in response. Efforts to change adult behaviours and in particular their powers over children are seen as even more threatening when they perceive themselves to already be losing what little power they have left.

The education that children are receiving today is largely inaccessible to their parents such that there is little opportunity for parents and children to support one another in meaningful ways. Schools can be perceived by parents and children to not add value to the lives of their children (Turyatoranwa 2017). Parents act on this perception by using their children to participate in the economic activities of the household in place of attendance at school (Walakira et al. 2016b, Pereznieto et al. 2011). Literacy rates in both adults and children

alike remain low (UBOS 2017a), creating conditions in which parents cannot support the educational growth of their children, thus reducing the potential perceived returns on investment that are made towards a child's education. Despite widespread success in increasing enrolment of students, educational attainment has enjoyed only limited success in part due to a wide array of factors including teacher quality, facilities, poor remuneration, and large class sizes (Uwezo 2016, Kayiwa et al. 2017). Students and teachers alike often face major challenges in ensuring all students are effectively taught and are given the appropriate incentives to study (Kikulwe et al. 2017). The power of parents to actively participate and indeed engage with the changing power dynamics that come with educational outcomes can thus reduce violent outbursts that are predicated on lack of knowledge or threats to perceived power.

The increasing distance in terms of both intellectual and material goods between parents and children is reducing opportunities for open dialogue and participation of children in their families' productive futures. For example, where parents considered a child's behavior inappropriate, attempts to encourage parents to open dialogues with children to justify their behaviour often failed (Boothby et al. 2017, Ashburn et al. 2017). The lack of examination by parents of children's thoughts and behaviours makes it difficult for families to both correct and create safe environments for learning. Other studies note that Ugandan children sometimes seek to support their families but are not given opportunities to voice those desires (Knight et al. 2017, Namy et al. 2017b). Ugandan adults operated in a context in which the subjugation of personal and individual desires was necessary to preserve the fundamental social organization of adults and children.

One key aspect of that historical social organization was how familial roles were distributed disproportionately on men in terms of financial acquisition. These perceptions continue to exist insofar as women and men alike expect men to cater for the provision of school fees and financing of various activities and items including food and clothing (Clarke et al. 2016, Lundgren and Adams 2014, Hentonen et al. 2008). Women on the other hand are expected to undertake agricultural activities, domestic care work, and the supervision or parenting of children (Kisuule et al. 2013, Guloba 2018). These expectations are often now out of sync with the current realities of Uganda's economy. Women

are taking on increasingly prominent economic roles in their families and are exercising greater autonomy over their own affairs (OXFAM 2018). At the same time, family decision-making power remains largely within the hands of men, who are sometimes shamed for their laziness, lack of productivity, and poverty (Chase & Bantebya-Kyomuhendo 2015). This conflict between the historical expectations of men and women are creating the conditions for increasing social instability and frustrations amongst adults themselves (Namy et al. 2017). The stability that was previously afforded by clear social roles that were collectively agreed upon is now a source of increasing tension, whereby competition is fostered in the place of social cohesion.

These gender perceptions are informed by particular interpretations of the programmatic interventions that adopt a gender-specific lens. A study in Eastern Uganda noted that men often saw gender sensitive strategies as an extension of Western models that would prompt women to be disobedient or problematic (Karamagi et al. 2006). While men perceived these programmatic interventions to be an imposition, only a minority of women used these interventions as evidence of their ability to demand better treatment and equity (Karamagi et al. 2006, Mootz et al. 2017). It was unclear to men why women were receiving support when they themselves were still being expected to fulfill their historical roles despite not receiving similar support to do so. The perceptions of increasingly "big-headed" women being given more autonomy and independence were seen more as a threat than as an opportunity for greater financial prosperity in the family unit.

Within this context of limited economic opportunities for advancement, efforts by children to participate economically and independently become perceived as efforts to disrupt the process of maturation. While children are cherished, they are expected to reciprocate their appreciation through a willingness to acknowledge and accept authority (Boothby et al. 2017). Children often do not understand these expectations or the parameters of what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour (Hentonen et al. 2014). For example, while certain types of physical labour at certain ages is associated with negative growth indicators, it is the judgment of the parent that dictates what is appropriate (ILO 2008, UBOS & ILO 2013). Children are often asked to acquire fundamental needs for survival, such as

water, or to act as scarecrows in agricultural settings, even if it does not correspond to international standards of due care and long-term development (Mugymya et al. 2017). In other cases, children who make efforts to be economic participants fear that the fruits of their labours are appropriated by parents, guardians, or other adults, creating conditions for frustration between children and adults (Naker 2005). The needs of the family's survival remain the purview of parents, rather than external expectations of what is healthy, safe, or equitable for children.

The material deprivations that accompanied the era of HIV/AIDS in the 1980s also created new family dynamics where traditional structures of adoption experienced substantial stress. For example, in cases where both parents had died, children were to be traditionally adopted by the father's side of the family (Oleke et al. 2006). The addition of children to already strained families would contribute to emotional violence and unequal treatment between adopted children and the family's children (Bukuluki et al. 2017a, Bukuluki et al. 2017b). Ugandan families now regularly have children from multiple families, parents, and backgrounds, and where social networks would provide social security, the impacts of an explicit move towards a cash economy have marketized those networks with poor results.

Conclusions:

4. Adults perceive narratives regarding violence to be inflammatory and ignorant of their intentions in the application of violent behaviours.
5. Kinship structures, while often the preferred option in the event of abandonment or loss of parents, do not receive increased socio-financial support when adopting such children. Given changes in the practical aspects of kinship in response to extensive orphaning and loss of life during the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 1980s, the lack of support contributes to increased economic hardship.
6. Rapidly changing dynamics in the way families relate to one another have contributed to changes in expectations and values as well as the means of communicating values and norms that have impacted and altered modes of caregiving.

7. The pace of societal change (in education, social expectations, and domestic roles) in Uganda has created substantial instability in families. Men, in particular, are increasingly no longer able to fulfill their perceived ideals of masculinity (power relations, roles and responsibilities, entitlements).

Recommendations:

1. The family/household units are core institutions of socialization and protection of children and therefore should be targeted with key interventions that facilitate intra-familial dialogue on conceptions of violence and childhood.
2. PVAC programmes should provide meaningful opportunities for intended recipients of programme interventions to have control over the agenda setting process.
3. Investment should be increased to research the changing conceptions of family, with a focus on how different family structures both contribute to and mitigate violence.
4. Research should be expanded to examine the impact of technology, mass media, and phones on relationships within families and amongst social groups.
5. Dialogues should be conducted at the community level regarding appropriate means of balancing of children's economic contributions to their families and their participation in education.

6

The Community

This section addresses the following questions from the Statement of Task:

- *What is the basis by which violence is understood by parents, communities, and what values inform both the expression and prevention of violence?*
- *What are the costs of violence against children, both financially and otherwise?*
- *Where are there gaps in knowledge on prevention of violence against children and what should be the approach to addressing them?*

Communities are social organisms, shaped by how individuals conceptualize their belonging in society. Traditions have historically been key means by which belonging is created because they gave individuals access to a common narrative and myth contextualizing their group's existence (Chabal 2009). Key to the persistence of those common narratives have always been socio-cultural leaders—those who maintained and adapted those narratives as their communities grew and changed. Efforts by Western missionaries in the colonial era to reach out to the Ugandan populations and political efforts to incorporate traditional leadership into the extractive colonial regime contributed to the alterations in how they are perceived today (Mamdani 1976, Richens 2009). At the same time, traditions and traditional leadership continue to persist despite some of their elements of social cohesion and identity being at odds with universalist thinking (Bukuluki 2013). To be able to examine closely how these traditions can be part of a violence-free

future, this section focuses on the traditions of marriage, female genital circumcision (FGC), and social leadership in communities. In doing so, this section aims to highlight how traditions defy dichotomies of static/dynamic traits and are finding ways to exist and modernize without sacrificing key elements of what their practitioners and adherents believe give them power.

Marriage

Marriage, while traditionally thought of as the binding social and legal contract between a man and woman, has in the 21st century been undergoing increasing conceptual turbulence. The diversity of religious, secular, and traditional practices that bound women and men together into families have faced internal and external scrutiny in response to the changing demands and social expectations of Ugandan society. Marriage, which historically incorporated various elements of economic, social, and communal meaning (Ndegemo et al. 2018), is being modified to remove economic elements from its existence primarily due to arguments against the biases it encourages that disproportionately favour men and adults. The conceptual flux and diversity in the social bonds that marriage represents is contributing to the increasing social antagonism between adults and children, men and women, and widespread violence against children and women.

Historically, the economic aspects of marriage were part of efforts to ensure the appropriate treatment of women in a marriage. Dowry was seen as an investment of assets that demonstrated both the capacity and the desire of the groom's family to care and be responsible for the growth of their family and the clan (CJSI 2018). The historical context in which dowries operated however was substantially different especially in terms of the economic system, which primarily was contained in assets such as cows, goats, or other livestock. Extensive efforts by the colonial administration and governments following independence sought to move Ugandans out of subsistence agriculture into cash economies, which were considered to be critical to the long-term national economic development of the country (Mamdani 1976, Richens 2009). The results of these efforts were that many Ugandans who were self-sufficient were increasingly reliant on government and

businesses for sustainability. Despite the best efforts of multiple actors and some positive progress in terms of poverty statistics, there remains a crisis of material poverty that contributes to poor health and economic outcomes in rural areas, especially for children.

The changes in the very dynamics of the economies in which families participated has contributed to this change in how marriages and children are used as economic assets. It is increasingly observed that families who are in highly impoverished situations leverage marriage to improve their overall financial circumstances (Namy et al. 2017b). These efforts to leverage marriage often ignore the desires or circumstances of the children—usually girls—and limits their voices in such decisions because the trade-offs are substantial and decision-making power is not vested in children (AU 2015). The economy of child marriage in its current form condones or permits violence and is removed from its function as social security. The shift in child marriage is increasingly biased towards parents and guardians who have social and legal authority over children.

The realities of these power structures have created the circumstances in which transactional sex, early sex, and the proliferation of teenage pregnancy and early marriage have stagnated in their prevalence and their perceptions and usage by children have radically changed. Transactional sex is increasingly used in youth populations in response to family dynamics that they find do not reflect their needs (Bantebya et al. 2014). This type of sexual activity primarily affects girls who may become intertwined with older wealthier males popularly known as "sugar daddies" who provide them material favors in exchange for risky sexual behaviours (Beyeza-Kayesha et al. 2010). The risks of these types of relationships are well-documented: early pregnancy, increased risk of contracting Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), increased risk of intimate partner violence, and single parenting (MGLSD 2015, Beyeza-Kayesha et al. 2010, Henttonen et al. 2008, Kisuule et al. 2013). At the same time, those who bear the greatest social risks are the girls and women in those relationships, as shame and social exclusion often rest upon the girls and women for pregnancy or extramarital sexual activities (Seruwagi 2014, Ninsiima et al. 2018). The outcomes thus are almost always negative because the social bonds that create the relationship in the first place are predicated

on temporary economic commitments that cannot make up for the lost social networks and support that otherwise allow for the child's growth and development.

Part of the importance of these practices lies in ideals regarding what is expected of female children and women. Marriage remains a key function in Ugandan society regarding the status of a female's progress in life (Saile et al. 2013, Kisuule et al. 2013, Karamagi et al. 2006). As women in Ugandan society demand greater freedom to independently determine their futures, their marriageability remains perceived as a fundamental element in a complete life, both economically and socially. Similarly, child marriage is often used as an economic tool for family prosperity, even if it is rooted in violence (Koenig et al. 2003, Wodon 2017, Schlecht et al. 2013). For example, several studies of child marriage note that occurrences of unplanned pregnancies, sometimes prompted by rape or sexual violence, are mediated by family heads to ensure that the economic costs of such violence are conferred to the victim's family (Male and Wodon 2017, Schlecht et al. 2013). Where men are unwilling to confer the financial dowry, they are shamed and seen as cowards with some families seeking formal judicial restitution (Parikh 2012). The tensions between the ideals applied to different genders and expected behaviours are shaped by unseen economic and social benefits.

The family structure in Uganda is multi-faceted and inclusive. Families are based both upon blood relationships and kin, but also social constructs such as clan and tribe (Cheney 2016). Clan and tribal affiliations are means of social organization and belonging that reinforce a child's sense of identity. These family ties also provide avenues for financial support and insurance, social support, and behavioural guidance (Cheney 2016, Oleke et al. 2006, Thumann et al. 2016). For example, increasing urban migration is often due to the financial opportunities present primarily for men, who subsequently remit their earnings to their families (Thumann et al. 2016). The needs of the extended family are often placed upon men, who are called upon to demonstrate their ability to provide a stable foundation for the family's growth.

Children that act outside of these prescribed rules of moral and community behaviour accept increasingly perilous risks despite their

limited ability to withstand shocks to their wellbeing. One study of child marriage in 3 districts showed that children are engaging in new-forms of relationships, many of which have limited protections due to their lack of social and legal recognition. For example, Bantebya, Muhanguzi, and Watson (2014) highlighted increases in so-called "marriage through the window", whereby children left their familial homes to join their partners without any formalization of marriage or approval by the respective families. Many participants noted that these relationships came with various complex challenges and concerns regarding protection, whereby men in particular could easily exit the relationship or engage in domestic abuse without consequence either legally or socially. Nonetheless, these relationships were employed by children in various ways to ensure their own perceived benefit. Some of the respondents suggested that children who had non-blood related parents used such practices to escape poor or violent living conditions in their own homes, a conclusion which other studies appear to support (Meinck et al. 2014). This complex usage of new and emerging relationship structures by children to be emancipated goes against adults' perceptions of what is right and what is perceived to be the appropriate course of action.

Female Genital Circumcision/Mutilation

One tradition that elicits a great deal of contention is that of female genital circumcision (FGC) or in other publications, female genital mutilation (FGM). The major contention regarding this practice has been its social value in comparison to the health impacts associated with the practice. However, literature on this contention has raised concerns that the health impacts may not in all cases be as drastic as it is often portrayed in Western media and that efforts to ban it outright may be driven more so by Western narratives on the perceived "rightness" or "wrongness" of African women's subscription to bodily modification. The contentiousness of the debates on FGM highlights how certain traditions have been viewed through a Western lens, limiting the active engagement of the target populations in shaping their own societies and worldviews.

Most recent estimates regarding the prevalence of FGM suggest a downtrend with public proclamations from the local leaders in

particular regions emphasizing the benefits of banning FGM (Ochen et al. 2017a, UBOS 2017b). Primarily practiced in Eastern Uganda and Karamoja regions, female genital circumcision has long been treated as the fundamental signal of the transition of a girl into a woman (Ochen et al. 2017a). Historically, and in part still today, women in these communities who do not undergo FGM are ostracized, unable to marry, and shamed publicly and privately. While the prevalence of FGM has decreased substantially since the introduction of the Female Genital Mutilation Act, researchers have observed that the practice has lost its public nature and that the prevalence rates may not accurately reflect what is happening due to cross-border movement and fear of participation in research (Ochen et al. 2017a). While public statistics are showing a downtrend, those statistics may not be representative of how those communities continue to practice and think about the FGM.

The case of FGC provides an apt example regarding the complex interplay of social and economic considerations in the persistence of the practice. FGC has been maintained in part because of the long-standing perceptions that have been well-established through mythology and social bonding (Ochen et al. 2017a). FGC ceremonies were opportunities for social gathering and interaction amongst community members, that emphasized celebrations and opportunities for further socialization into the community. At the same time, cutters were traditionally celebrated and recognized with extensive gifts in the form of goats, chickens, or other assets and were held in high social regard (Ochen et al. 2017a). The efforts to ban the practice have not eliminated the financial drivers of cutters to continue to engage in the practice, but rather made the practices less transparent, harder to track, and instead created a polarized atmosphere amongst practitioners against government entities who are tasked with catching criminals engaging in the practice.

Despite the social value associated with the practice, concerns are consistently raised that young female children are forced or coerced into engaging in the practice without their consent by their parents. In nearby communities in South Sudan which persist with the practice, the argument raised by parents is that the process of FGC is a combination of aesthetic and cultural arguments (Ahmadu 2009, The Public Policy Advisory Network on Female Genital Surgeries in Africa 2012). Women in these communities consider children as genderless constructs and it

is the process of circumcision that allows boys and girls alike to mature in their growth. Physical components such as the male foreskin or the female clitoral protrusion are interpreted as components belonging to the other sex (foreskin is feminine and clitoral protrusions as masculine) (The Public Policy Advisory Network on Female Genital Surgeries in Africa 2012). These communities argue that it is both a necessary and normal process, which is necessary for their child's maturation.

Other arguments that are raised are primarily regarding the health impacts of different types of FGM. A study by the WHO found that these health impacts showed a distinct correlation between FGM and a slight increase in risk of pregnancy related issues that are regularly found in non-circumcised populations (WHO Study Group on Female Genital Mutilation and Obstetric Outcome 2006). While it has been established that those issues have a significant correlation, the mortality rates of those women who underwent FGM compared to those who did not, did not suggest a substantial difference that could not be accounted for by other factors (Obermeyer 1999, Obermeyer 2003). For example, a study in Italy of Somali women who came in for pre-natal screening suggested that it may be a sample bias whereby women who have FGM receive either poorer services or perceive the healthcare system to be prejudiced against them (Catania et al. 2007). The evidence that these studies suggest is that the negative health impacts of FGM do indeed exist, although the outright banning of the practice may only serve to exacerbate both poorer health outcomes and lack of engagement between women who accept FGM with their healthcare providers.

The efforts at a local and community level to eradicate FGM show a complex dynamic by which the survival of a practice was sacrificed in part for the potential financial benefit it conferred to these communities. The social benefit is largely discounted and the possibilities regarding the adaptation and modification of FGM contributes to conflicting operational priorities between the proliferation of human rights as key features of social cohesion and harmony and individual autonomy. While the slow eradication of such practices reflects a victory in part for those programmes that have long sought to destroy the practice, it may be a contributor to a continuation of the lack of social cohesion that affects that region of Uganda.

Leadership and Social Norms

Political attitudes in Uganda towards leadership find traditional, cultural, and religious leaders more credible and connected to their issues and values in comparison to national politicians (Logan et al. 2003, Logan 2008). These leaders, who are often locally based or embedded in cultural traditions, are well-linked to their communities in terms of understanding social values and norms. They are at the forefront of social discussions primarily because their historical roles have revolved around their presence in social gatherings and the rites that communities have used to build a mythology of shared belonging (Lundgren and Adams 2014). The wide ranges in differences across Ugandan communities and tribes have different manifestations, but their social value in creating violence-free and cohesive communities cannot be understated. Over the past century, how these traditional leaders have changed in response to the incredible pace of development in the country, has created conditions in which the social bonds that would have otherwise provided resilience to social conflict have been eroded (Namuggala 2018). To effectively incorporate their potential role in PVAC, a thorough examination of their historical roles and how they have changed can provide insight into how different approaches to social development can create conditions for their active participation and innovation in shaping a violence free future for Uganda.

Historically, local leadership was tied to their role in shaping community solidarity and belonging. Chiefs occupied a unique position in pre-colonial societies: they both represented the political views of their constituents and provided social insurance to their constituents through their privileged position (Karlström 2004). Reciprocity in these communities was a necessary component of survival, such that those who were privileged with greater resources would provide goods to families in need and vice versa. Chiefs would regularly be present alongside other elders at celebration, funerals, or marriages, to impart stories of the origins of the clan and to provide continuity in thinking on social values and morals (Le Roux and Palm 2018).

During the advent of the colonial era however, these roles were exploited by the colonial administration to provide an easy access point for tax collection. These chiefs, who were already privileged

and respected in their communities, would act as tax collectors for the colonial administration and in many ways impart the desired behaviours of the colonial administration in exchange for the many benefits of colonial education and wealth (Mamdani 1976, McKnight 1996). Chiefs benefited extensively through this relationship, although it diluted the understandings of what chiefs were and how they were expected to operate.

Because of the processes of conflating social and traditional leadership roles with administrative or financial roles, these positions became increasingly politicized as the desire for independence increased in the early 1900s. Religious affiliations were welcomed in part because of their affiliation with colonial benefits, and created conditions in which new and foreign understandings of moral values and norms would interact and comingle (Mamdani 1976, Karlström 2004). For example, economic development efforts were often conflated with the "civilizing mission" that missionaries from the West frequently were encouraged to undertake with informal backing from the colonial administration (Mutibwa 1992, McKnight 1996). Female genital circumcision, early marriage, and monarchical leadership were seen as obsolete or barbaric from the colonial view and incompatible with the future that the colonial administrators sought to create.

Despite initial desires primarily within Buganda Kingdom that welcomed colonial interventions, concerns regarding moral and social values did arise early in the 1920s. Practices in Buganda Kingdom, such as the *kwabya lumbe*, a type of traditional funeral rite, began to become an area of contention due to certain aspects of the practice considered to be encouraging gerontocracy and youth being inculcated into a value system that served to reinforce their subservience (Karlström 2004). Yet, amongst those very communities, the argument was not to preserve the practices for their traditional import, but rather to continue to provide the key opportunities for clans to network, socialize, and develop the key personal relationships that would ensure their survival in response to conflicts and poverty. Similarly, paternal aunts (locally referred to as *ssengas*) in the Buganda and Bunyoro Kingdoms traditionally filled the roles of sexual educators for children prior to marriage (Ndegemo et al. 2018). However, following the advent of more modern attempts at sexual and reproductive health education, *ssengas* became less relevant despite

their continued presence and participation in marriage activities. It was the social value of traditions, not necessarily the traditions themselves, which were considered most important even if it had components that would be incompatible today with understandings of sexual health and of child rights.

Following independence, traditional leadership particularly in the Buganda Kingdom faced increasing scrutiny due to its comparative size and political weight. The resultant expulsion of the *Kabaka* in 1966 as then President Milton Obote consolidated power was the beginning of an era in which cultural leadership was excised from political engagement (Mutibwa 2008). Despite the excision of cultural leadership from the political arena, it was during this period that religious leadership and local leadership would fill the void in providing solidarity amidst national turmoil. Within this historical context, the roles of religious and traditional leaders have been understood by adults to be of paramount importance both to providing social guidance and a sense of social belonging that they perceive to be eroding today.

Leaders in religious and cultural institutions perceive long-standing efforts at economic development and social development by foreign actors as having contributed to moral decay in younger generations (Vorhölter 2012). Evidence on early sexual debut, multiple sexual partners outside of wedlock, and increasingly frayed relations within families as demonstrated by VAC and IPV are some of the elements of evidence they use to inform their perceptions of changing behaviours (Robinson and Hanmer 2014, Le Roux and Palm 2018). These challenges are exacerbated by limited research on religious institutions, who play a large role in the everyday lives of Ugandan children and adults. Given the increasingly powerful role of religion in both political and non-political life, the limited efforts to integrate them into meaningful decision-making processes can hamper the desired social changes in family structures and behaviours.

Attempts to divorce the traditional leadership from political affairs in the post-1986 Bush War era resulted in the creation of local councils, which were intended in part to provide a platform upon which local presence could benefit from some of the same powers that traditional leadership had: local presence and social recognition. Indeed,

evidence suggests that these efforts have been largely successful, though they did not displace traditional leaders but instead occupied a similar space (Golooba-Mutebi 2004, Logan 2008). Local councils, which are tasked with a wide range of social and judicial responsibilities, have seen varying levels of success in their effectiveness and ability to contribute to social solidarity (Goist and Kern 2018). From the view of children, local councils are potential avenues for resolution of personal disputes such as VAC if the leaders of local councils are indeed supportive of children. In effect, local councils are one of many different types of leaders at the local level that children tap into for guidance insofar as it is perceived to be effective.

It is within this context that the questions of marriage and the associated transition of children into adults are considered. Traditional and social leaders have noted sudden and marked departures from traditional gender roles that now emphasize the autonomy and independence of the girl child (Vorhölter 2012). These perceptions align well with evidence: economic benefits are well-associated with female children's length of education, later age of marriage, and increases in their personal incomes. The commensurate decrease in early marriage is highly correlated with decreases in risky sexual behaviours, and thus the possibilities of premature death due to pregnancy related complications or sexually transmitted infections (Bantebya et al. 2014, AU 2015). However, it should be noted that there is still a strong patriarchal structure in place that has strong economic benefits for traditionally defined clans, which remain resilient structures that confer belonging.

Conclusions:

8. Attempts to eradicate or modify traditions in efforts to prevent violence against children often discount the prior social value of practices and neglect to provide social value in the introduction of new ones that have credibility amongst target populations. Practices such as child marriage and female genital circumcision have cultural and economic significance for communities. Outright banning of such practices encourages these practices to become less transparent and more dangerous to children and intimate partners alike.

9. Traditions are changing in response to the proliferation of a market-economy and material poverty that is introducing perverse incentives to utilize these traditions for economic gain to the detriment of social bonding and reciprocity. Children in particular are applying neo-liberal principles to socio-cultural practices with greater vigour and intensity than their elders.
10. Mechanisms of transmitting socio-cultural values to children have been substantially altered due to social, economic and political factors including historical violence in Uganda, thus encouraging and normalizing violence.

Recommendations:

6. Deeper research on female genital circumcision and gender-perspectives (male and female) should be supported with a view towards harm reduction rather than illegality, which promotes illicit, dangerous, and more opaque efforts to maintain the tradition.
7. Specific research focused on the role of traditional, cultural, and religious leadership in the socialization of children and adults should be undertaken in order to examine how their behaviours are influenced and re-shaped by them.
8. Research focusing on power dynamics in intimate partner relationships and changing dynamics of intra-familial behaviour affecting and children should be supported.

7

Systems & Institutional Collaboration

This section addresses the following questions from the Statement of Task:

- *Where is and/or what is the role of the healthcare system in prevention of violence against children?*
- *What are the costs of violence against children, both financially and otherwise?*
- *What is the current state of coordination and governance in the child protection sector?*
- *Where are the gaps in knowledge on prevention of violence against children and what should be the approach to addressing them?*

The decision-making and policy making apparatus of a government and its partners are shaped by its structures and inputs. Institutions provide the structures by which individuals can collectively implement their agendas and particular roles. In order to implement effectively, they are constrained by two elements: power and money. These elements manifest themselves in the problems cited in the literature as the "implementation gap", or the persistence of theoretical or legally mandated powers versus the practical ability to be able to execute and implement those powers. These conflicts between theory and practice create the conditions by which social expenditures towards the protection of children are either expanded or fundamentally constrained. To be able to effectively build a system of preventing violence against children that allows them to contribute in line with their own capabilities, requires both a progressive mindset that recognizes the opportunities for

incremental change, while at the same time providing the conditions by which a system can effectively change itself in radical and innovative ways.

The Legal System

The implementation and enforcement of law is a system driven by legitimacy and consensual relinquishment of freedoms. As with most countries, the Ugandan legal system continues to experience tensions between the traditional or historic freedoms that an individual and a family enjoyed, and the rules implemented and agreed upon through its democratically elected representatives. A major point of tension lies in the limited trust Ugandans have in their democracy and their elected officials (Kibirige 2018, Mbazira 2016). This perceived lack of authority undermines the ability of government systems and the legal system in particular to effectively execute its mandate. Despite efforts to provide protections for marginalized populations, specifically for children and women, implementation will inevitably face resistance in various ways. By recognizing and engaging communities in the process of understanding and changing the laws to reflect popular concerns, legal systems can unlock a wider range of possibilities for ownership and usage of formal systems for justice.

Although the laws of Uganda may have limited perceived popular backing, Uganda's legal framework regarding the protection of children and families is relatively comprehensive and strong at national and international levels. Most evidence on the Ugandan legal framework for children generally suggest that the legal framework has a wide variety of tools with which violent behaviours can be prosecuted and children's needs recognized (Walakira et al. 2017b, Walakira et al. 2016b, Ochen et al. 2017b). However, the effectiveness of the legal framework on reducing VAC, or indeed providing restitution for children, has received limited attention and research. In part, due to the ever-changing state of the legal framework and the limited time that has passed since the most recent amendments of the Children's Act in 2016 (UCC, UCPF, and PSFU 2016), it is difficult for researchers to conclusively attribute changes in reporting to changes in policy. Similarly, the lack of perceived legitimacy on the part of implementers and citizens alike provides

multiple potential explanations for variations in implementation outcomes. Research that more extensively evaluates the changes in both perceptions and implementation may provide a more conclusive picture of how policy changes can contribute to PVAC.

The difficulty in triangulating the impacts of policy relates to the wide range of institutions involved recognizing and responding to cases of VAC. The response and support system is spread amongst institutions in health; justice, law, and order sector (JLOS); and social work institutions (AfriChild 2015b). Cases can be reported and shared through the Uganda Police Force (UPF), local government officers (including probation and social welfare officers), healthcare officials, and a national children's hotline (MGLSD & UNICEF 2013). With little to no public empirical research beyond self-reported data from organizations themselves on their case response rates, it is difficult to independently evaluate how effective these structures are comparatively and what opportunities there are for improvement at a systems level.

The self-reported data from organizations can unintentionally misrepresent or give a false impression of how effectively the systems are working because of broader issues in how children report cases of VAC. Despite widespread efforts to provide these services without cost, many of these response systems continue to have informal costs that are not mandated by policy (National Child Protection Working Group (NCPWG) 2017b, 2017c). For example, administrative costs such as forms, fuel, and airtime are often borne by the reporters of VAC despite national policies that have sought to address those needs (UNICEF 2013, Namanya 2008, NCPWG 2017a). The sensitivity of victims to these informal costs contributes to perceptions that systems are ineffective and corrupt, despite the best efforts of implementers to overcome circumstances that limit their implementing powers.

One of those responses that children and other victims of violence use in reaction to the limitations of both formal and informal judicial systems is to selectively use either depending on the individual circumstances (Baker 2005, Goonesekere 2006). While in theory the formal justice system should be able to account for financial differences between victims and perpetrators, perceptions continue to be fuelled that courts are primarily the purview of the rich and connected

(Transparency International 2015, Pimentel 2010). In addition, courts that are specifically created to deal with family and child matters are often inaccessible without transport, incurring costs that children cannot pay for (Walakira et al. 2016b). An example of how the legal system is sometimes used by citizens in ways unanticipated by legislators is found in text box 2, whereby the formal legal system is used punitively against individuals who are perceived to be of a lower class (Parikh 2012). These contentions and contradictions between how laws are applied and used by citizens compared to the perceived outcomes on the part of legislators show how context shapes implementation of the law.

BOX 2
The Case of Yahaya and Lydia in Busoga Region

An ethnographic study of legal cases in Iganga district and the impact of the Defilement Law of 2006 showed how implementation of the law was adapted and applied locally through the lens of class, gender, and age. The example case of Yahaya and Lydia provides an insight into how parents, children, and sexual relations are interpreted, responded to, and use the legal system to enforce desired interests that privilege those who are economically and socially privileged.

"At the time of his arrest, Yahaya was twenty years old and Lydia (his alleged victim) was sixteen, a relatively insignificant age difference in Iganga. Their relationship had lasted thirteen months before Lydia started showing signs of pregnancy, enraging her protective father. A week before Lydia's father filed charges against him, Yahaya had given Lydia's mother 65,000 shillings (about $35) to help with Lydia's medical expenses. The pregnancy combined with the meager financial assistance insulted Lydia's father, sending him into rage and to the police department to file charges. During the police interrogation, Yahaya admitted to impregnating Lydia and explained that he was willing to provide additional child support once he secured a higher paying job. His admission of fathering the child provided adequate evidence to charge him with defilement. Yahaya's meager child support offer granted Lydia's father sympathy from the police for it was assumed that he, and not Yahaya, would be responsible for supporting both the child and Lydia. The case sped easily through the justice system and Yahaya was sent to state prison." (Parikh 2011).

In the case of the defilement law which was intended to address concerns of consent on the part of the girl child, the application of this defilement was primarily in response to the need for consent on the part of the parents of the girl child. As Parikh argues, while the legislation focused on the question of chronological age as the key component of autonomy and consent, it neglected the fundamental issues of how parents interpret and think about sexual behaviours of their children and whether their consent has been acquired.

SOURCE: Parikh (2011).

Coordination, Governance, and the Costs of VAC

Multi-sectoral coordination and governance is founded on the alignment of interests and consensus on the processes by which organizations interact. These partnerships build strength through repeated exposure and experience with one another's behaviour ensuring that partners can trust their peers to act in both spirit and in action towards common goals. One major challenge in Uganda has been the limited independent ability of the Government of Uganda to shape and lead a PVAC agenda due to insufficient domestic investment. The child protection sector in Uganda has and continues to be primarily funded by international development partners, creating both perceived and real tensions between government, civil society organizations, and the international development community (MGLSD & UNICEF 2013). With lines of accountability that draw implementers in multiple directions, the implementers of a PVAC agenda have limited ability to shape implementation philosophy without risking potential loss of funds. The institutional framework that is able to foster collaboration in place of competition for funding may then be able to expand the positive impacts of existing coordination mechanisms.

Formally, the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development (MGLSD) is the lead ministry with regard to child protection. Due to the nature of violence against children, the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, and the Ministry of Local Government all play supporting roles in the child

protection mandate (AfriChild 2015a). Their authority is derived from the Constitution of Uganda as legally constructed entities.

Since the 1990s, the Government of Uganda has pursued a strong decentralization approach, making local governments responsible for increasingly larger mandates with regard to service delivery. While decentralization has been supported extensively by entities such as the World Bank, fiscal decentralization has been limited in its rollout (Wunsch 2013). This lack of fiscal independence has been in part a response to allegations of corruption and mismanagement of funds at the local level (Chase & Bantebya 2015). The theory supporting decentralization is that when service delivery occurs closer to its intended recipients, its managers can be more easily held to account in event of mismanagement. Such lines of accountability are not nearly as clear in an environment where taxation is limited at the local level and funds are instead transferred through conditional grants from central government entities to local governments.

As part of the decentralization efforts, different levels of local government have constituted a wide array of issue-driven committees that have enjoyed differing levels of support and functionality. In particular, a 2015 Child Protection Mapping Report noted that there were District Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) committees, Child Labour Committees, and Trafficking in Children Committees as well as at further decentralized levels including sub-county (MGLSD & UNICEF 2015). Many of these committees are legacies of older programming that focused on particular issues of a child related nature that often are no longer suited towards the changing and dynamic realities of communities. The lack of transparent reporting on these committees in part due to poor remuneration, lack of ownership, and limited political buy-in, makes these committees often difficult to evaluate for their overall effectiveness.

In an effort to consolidate the work of stakeholders, the National Council for Children (NCC) was established in the early 2000s as an independent entity mandated to focus on coordination of all activities nationwide with regard to children. Despite its programmatic independence, it was financially dependent on the MGLSD contributing to its ineffectiveness (Ochen et al. 2017b). To address its ineffectiveness,

the amended Children's Act of 2016 sought to reformulate the NCC into a National Children's Authority (NCA), a structure that would have financial independence. Due to a freeze in 2017 on the creation of new authorities by the President's Office, the NCA remains non-operational with no clear idea as to its future.

Other entities have stepped up to fill this void. The National Child Protection Working Group (NCPWG), previously a working group to focus on Northern Ugandan affairs during the prolonged war with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), is a semi-governmental entity with a broad mandate to coordinate the efforts of child protection actors, identify and respond to key national child protection issues, and act as a platform for information sharing across sectors and entities (Ochen et al. 2017b). The NCPWG has not been independently evaluated, limiting objective assessment regarding how capable it has been in practice in executing on its mandate.

The child protection agenda has historically been funded almost exclusively by the international development community with limited domestic support. While previously the central government was the primary recipient of financial support, massive corruption scandals in the early 2010s limited available funds for social expenditures by the Government of Uganda (EPRC 2017, UNICEF and ECORYS 2018). At the same time, an explicit approach by the Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development (MoFPED) and larger planning documents, such as Vision 2040 and the National Development Plan II, focused on investments towards productivity and infrastructure. These investments, coupled with a diminishing domestic resource envelope, have limited social investments that could potentially unlock entry of more productive individuals in the 5 to 15-year range (AfriChild 2015a, UNICEF and ECORYS 2018). Without a shift in investment approach, the limited ability of institutions focusing on PVAC to shape institutional thinking may continue to persist.

An Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC) analysis report on how central government funds in the 2016/17 child protection budget were allocated showed that 65% went to social development, 25% to the Justice, Law and Order Sector, and only 3.5% went towards local governments (EPRC 2016). An analysis done by the Office of

the Attorney General of funding to the District Probation and Social Welfare Office showed that districts spent only 0.02% of their 2011/12 budgets on all the activities performed by the District Community Services Department (OAG 2017). With the distribution of funds that are intended to address child protection and PVAC largely left within the central government, it creates complex challenges at the implementation level for local governments.

While the costs of VAC have not been domestically evaluated, the estimates for potential costs in comparable African countries and other forms of violence are enormous. A domestic study on the costs of IPV alone (whose prevalence rate was approximately 25%) suggested loss of productivity amounting to anywhere between 70-90 billion UGX per year (Kasirye 2010). A study by the Overseas Development Institute on the economic costs of VAC suggested that the combined global costs of physical, emotional, and sexual violence ranges from lower estimates of 2-5%, or higher estimates of 3-8% of global GDP or approximately 9 trillion USD (Pereznieto et al. 2014, Pereznieto et al. 2010). A comparable percentage loss for Uganda even in the most conservative of estimates would result in approximately 2.8 trillion UGX lost per year in productivity losses. Given Uganda's current prevalence rates of VAC, a clearer approach to gathering data and ensuring data systems are effective could provide the key basis for an appropriate estimate of the domestic costs of VAC to Uganda. The understanding of the cost of VAC helps the advocates to justify the lesser investment costs in addressing this issue but especially helps to guide a shift in focus from primarily being response-based to prevention-based.

Conclusions:

11. Uganda has a fairly rigorous and comprehensive legal framework at the national and international levels addressing violence against children.
12. There is a tension between the legal framework and the values, norms, and material circumstances of the majority of rural Ugandans. This tension contributes to poor implementation of the provisions of the legal framework.

13. Uganda has a wide array of referral systems that experience substantial tensions due to perceived overlapping of mandates and limited awareness or clarity of roles.

    The relationship between the formal legal system and the informal justice mechanisms does not always have a clear delineation of responsibilities. The lack of clarity contributes to inconsistencies in application and outcomes. The informal systems seldom recognize or consider the voices in children in cases of child abuse or neglect.

14. While there are coordination systems regarding VAC in place, their effectiveness is not independently evaluated and sometimes non-existent with some evidence suggesting that these structures duplicate services.

15. Financing of prevention of violence against children is primarily driven by foreign actors. While the resource package is often substantial, different funded PVAC implementation programmes employ different approaches, limiting their comparability and validity in application across the country.

16. The relationship between central government and civil society is hampered by mistrust. Both the government and civil society have distinct strengths that are currently not being sufficiently leveraged to greater effect. Studies suggest that these interactions are largely limited to information sharing.

Recommendations:

9. The Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development and particularly the Department of Children and Youth Affairs should be strengthened with sufficient domestic finances in order to promote country ownership of the agenda on child related issues.

10. Efficient alignment of coordination structures should be supported to engage in a long-term process of harmonization through ongoing negotiation with partners and fostering collective ownership.

11. The Government of Uganda should incentivize private sector actors to address child and family related issues as part of long-term investment in human capital development and Corporate Social

Responsibility. Implementation of this effort could be in the form of a consolidated investment fund.

12. A domestic cost benefit analysis of investment in children and the costs of violence against children should be conducted in order to promote greater ownership of child related agenda issues by the Government of Uganda.
13. The creation of an operational child focused department should be fast-tracked under the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development with a sufficient and independent financial package for its operation.
14. An independent and highly regarded knowledge platform should be established to be able to share programmatic evaluations and learning across stakeholders in order to support ongoing dialogues between stakeholders on implementation of programmes.
15. Local governments should be given greater leeway to participate in, advocate for, and implement programmes with a flexible or better yet an independent financial package.
16. Formal institutions that provide services to children should consolidate their resources in order to create a multi-year strategy of sustained engagement and trust-building at schools and in households. Formal institutions may include but are not limited to the Justice Law and Order Sector, MGLSD, and Ministry of Education and Sports.

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This report represents the extensive work of a core group of experts who reviewed the evidence and came to consensus on the conclusions and recommendations. The Academy applauds their consistency and dedication to the consensus study model and undertaking the critical work of analysis and discussion. It should be noted that the views contained in this report are their collective independent opinion and should not be construed to represent the views of their places of work.

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