Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms: The case of traditional institutions

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1. Introduction, Current situation and Response to VAC in Uganda

2. Community Based Child Protection and Traditional Child Protection Systems – The Role of Cultural Institutions – The Case of Tieng Adhola Kingdom, Uganda

3. Key Approach, Interventions & Value addition,

4. Key Achievements, challenges and recommendations
• In any caring community the importance of child welfare cannot be overemphasized because the future welfare of the entire community, its growth and development depend on the health, well-being and proper upbringing of its children”.

• I believe that is why you are participating in this meeting today.
1. Uganda ratified the UNCRC 1989, optional protocols I&II; ACRWC, ILO Convention 138 & 182 on child Labour. **OP3 not yet ratified.**

2. **Child protection is enshrined into national laws** eg: 1995 Constitution of Uganda; Local Govt Act; Local Council Regulations Act; Children's ACT, Penal Code Act; Domestic Violence Act & many others.

3. Despite all the above, level of VAC remains high among families, schools, child care institutions & communities in Uganda.
VAC in Uganda

- 2006 UN study on VAC Reported cruel and humiliating punishments against Children
- **Uganda participated in this study**
- Uganda was ranked 16th among the 25 countries with highest rate of child marriage. That 46% marry before 18 years (Uganda Population Council report 2015)
Current Response to VAC in Uganda

Responses implemented through three main interconnected approaches:

1. **Formal national child protection systems** *(relies on gov’t statutory instruments and Institutions for protection of children)*

2. **Community based child protection systems** *(relies on voluntarism of community structures to fill gaps in national child protection systems – its Informal)*

3. **Traditional Based child protection systems** *(based on oral traditions, cultural norms, beliefs & practices by members of particular society)*
National Child Protection Systems: Challenges

• Limitations in implementation of laws, policies and legislations (technical, financial & human)

• Reliance on assumption that “where there is law there is order, people will obey” is a fallacy if respect for the law is not promoted

• Impact of poverty & poor access to survival, development & protection services for children

• Weak coordination and low prioritization
Community Based Child protection Systems: challenges

• Community based child protection systems: over rely on voluntarism – not easy to sustain

• Lack of defined minimum standard to guide national and community based child protection systems, limiting effectiveness of prevention & response

• How to strengthen linkage between informal and formal national child protection system (eg CHL 116)

• Moving from informal to formal systems: When? How?
Traditional Based Child Protection Systems (TBCP)

• Based on oral tradition, cultural beliefs and practices of a given society carried from G2G.

• Not based on law but naturally respected, valued, strongly believed and accepted by the people of that society.

• **Some are in conflict with the law, deeply rooted in culture and very difficult to address eg. FGM, “Rape and Marry”, 3 Fingers & forced child Marriage**
Current TBCP Response in Uganda

• Uganda is a republic headed by the president governed by Art 5 of its 1995 Constitution.

• Art 246 Provides for the existence of traditional or cultural institutions and its leadership in Uganda.

• There are 15 Gazzetted Kingdoms in Uganda eg: Buganda, Tooro, Tieng Adhola, Teso, Busoga, Lango, Ker Kwaro, Acholi etc

• They work to promote and preserve their cultural values and traditions from G2G.
TBCP – The case of Tieng Adhola

• Founded in 1897, headed by His Royal Highness The Kwar Adhola, has a cabinet led by Rt Hon Prime Minister (myself); has approximately 950,000 subjects

• One of the main goal is: Promoting protection of children and women in the Kingdom.

• Uses pronouncements & bye-laws – respected.

• Works with all 15 gazetted traditional institutions Gov’t and selected NGOs.
Key Areas of Interventions

• Promoting protection of women and Children through fighting SGBV, neglect, torture, etc

• Fighting Harmful traditional practices like FGM, Child Marriage, Bride price and refund of bride price: All these demean women in society.

• Promoting children’s education, cultural identity, welfare, Family cohesion and general Dev’t of the Tieng Adhola community.
Key Achievements of Tieng Adhola

• In partnership with MIFUMI, TDLG, UNFPA, Plan International & WVI spear headed banning payment and refund of bride price in 2005. Upheld by Supreme court ruling banning refund of bride price in Uganda on August 6th, 2015

• Together with all other cultural institutions banned FGM. Now supported by an Act of parliament. (some still escape to Kenya)

• Promoted involvement of children in Governance at family and school level supported by Plan International.
Added Value of Traditional Institutions

- Traditional beliefs and practices are naturally respected, valued & accepted by people of that society.
- It’s easier, faster, cost effective and more sustainable in addressing negative cultural practices through oral traditional approach.
- Cultural institutions are unique, respected as alternative dispute resolution mechanism by courts in Uganda – (land conflict, domestic Violence, etc).
- More effective – in conflict resolution.
Key Challenges

• Break down in extended family, communal or traditional child protection systems due to civil conflicts, globalization, Population growth, technology (internet, telephone, Facebook etc) and impact of poverty.

• Education systems that ignore role of culture

• Blanket Fight against traditional culture creating resistance and limited support from traditional institutions. (need to promote goods ones as we fight the bad ones)
Recommendations

• Conduct more research and sero behavioral studies on the role of traditional child protection systems. little is documented about its effectiveness yet it is playing a very important role in society on child protection.

• Improve collaboration, partnership, training and capacity building for traditional institutions.

• Promote positive oral traditional child protection practices (folk songs, fire place story telling, cultural dances, games etc)
Some Reflections:

• The role & voices of traditional institutions appear to be missing in most studies and recommendations addressing VAC.

• VAC based on traditional beliefs and practices are more difficult to address without the support of traditional institutions.

• Are Traditional Institutions in your agenda for this meeting today?????