



REPUBLIC OF UGANDA



THE UGANDA CHILD HELPLINE SERVICE

ANNUAL REPORT

2016





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A WORD FROM THE PERMANENT SECRETARY



It is with great pleasure that I present to you the Annual Report of the Uganda Child Helpline (UCHL) for the year 2016.

As you read each page of this report, I hope you will find it both informative and motivating and that it will give you greater insight into the work undertaken by our organisation. More importantly, I hope that you will gain a clear understanding of the difficulties faced by our children, all of whom face some form of challenge in their lives, whether they be financial difficulties, homelessness or the difficulties associated with being a child in a third world country such as ours.

This year's report provides statistics, achievements, challenges and stories which demonstrate that indeed UCHL has been a voice for countless children across the country. Considering the total number of calls received this year, there is no doubt that many individuals have found the helpline a useful tool to report cases of Violence Against Children (VAC) without fear of retribution. Ultimately, all our work is directed towards changing lives, and helping children in this country achieve their full potential. Eventually this year, the child helpline registered 238,629 calls where 2,878 were serious cases of VAC that sometimes posed situations of life and death for the children involved. An additional 373 cases were received through the media and walk-in clients. As you reflect on these statistics, think of the child behind each call.

It is important to note that this report is a collaborative achievement and that we express here our indebtedness to all those who have contributed to its production. In particular, this report is only possible because of the hard work and dedication of our partners

including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) whose financial support has kept the Child Helpline secretariat running as well as to Plan International, Save the Children Uganda and World Vision Uganda, whose support at the district levels has enabled district action centres be responsive to cases reported to them through the UCHL system. Further gratitude goes to the partners on the ground; the para social workers, the Child Protection Committees (CPCs), Local Council (LC) 1 offices, the Child and Family Protection Unit/Officer (CFPU/O), the Community Development Officers (CDOs), the District Probation and Social Welfare Officers (DPSWOs) and various Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) whose quick action brought a sigh of relief to many previously abused children.

As the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), prioritised, dedicated resource allocation and investment for child protection are urgent imperatives. We will continue to work on sourcing for funding from agencies whether public or private, domestic or international for the child helpline. Furthermore, we will promote multi-stakeholder partnerships as key to ensuring quality case management which is an expensive venture that the ministry cannot handle single handedly.

Pius Bigirmana
Permanent Secretary

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANNPCAN	African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CFPU/O	Child and Family Protection Unit/Officer
CCFP	Commissioner for Child and Family Protection
CDO	Community Development Officer
CPC	Child Protection Committee
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC	District Action Centre
DPSWO	District Probation and Social Welfare Officer
LC	Local Council
MGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Child Development
OCSA	Online Child Sexual Abuse
PSWO	Probation and Social Welfare Officer
RSA	Resident State Attorney
UCC	Uganda Communications Commission
UCHL	Uganda Child Helpline
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAC	Violence Against Children



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Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development



INTRODUCTION

In 2014, the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) in partnership with UNICEF and other stakeholders established the Toll Free Number 116 as the Uganda Child Helpline (UCHL)/Sauti to encourage children and adults to report cases of child abuse and all forms of child rights violations. The UCHL service is one of the mechanisms to strengthen child protection in the country as a government of Uganda led service.

UCHL links children at risk, in need of care and support & protection to various services through case management reporting pathways. Our brand Sauti emphasises the importance of strengthening and safe guarding voices of children especially the most vulnerable and marginalised who are often unheard and denied protection and care.

The Uganda Child Helpline, also known by its brand name Sauti, offers a toll free telephone service on the short code 116 which is accessible on all telecommunication networks in the country. The telephone service operates 24/7 and is just one of the ways in which the Child Helpline aims to protect children. Other approaches employed by the Helpline to offer child protection include:

- Handling walk-in clients' cases;
- Responding to cases reported through the U-report platform;
- Follow up of child abuse cases reported through various Media (including social media);
- Handling cases that entail Online Child Sexual Abuse; and
- Community awareness raising campaigns in schools, communities and on radios & television, etc.

All the above services were offered this year and gave a voice (Sauti) to the would-be voiceless children in various parts of the country.

About 55% of Uganda's population are children (below age of 18) where 8% of those children are orphans . This entire population of children, whether orphans or not, need to be protected so that they can enjoy their rights and achieve their full potential, dreams

and aspirations. In order to so, the government through the MGLSD runs the UCHL, a child protection mechanism where cases of child abuse can be reported through the telephone.

ACHIEVEMENTS

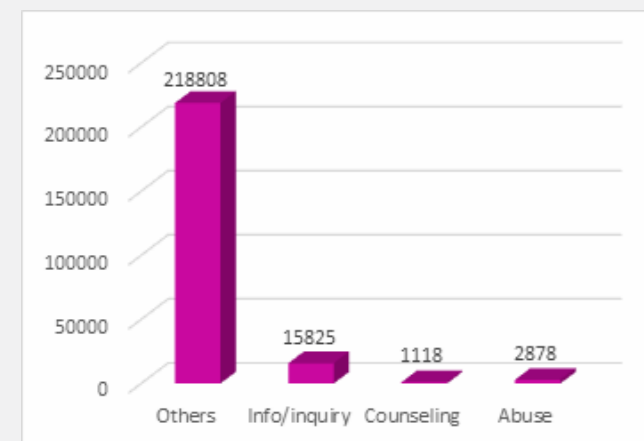
a. Contacts (116)

The telephone is the undoubtedly the most common and important device for communication today. At least 52.3 per cent of Ugandans, the majority of them male adults, have access to mobile phones . Accordingly, 73% of the callers to UCHL were male compared to 27% women. However from the total of 238,629 calls, 2,251 calls were made by children. In terms of abuse, men still reported more compared to women while children reported 294 out of 2,878 cases on their own behalf and on behalf of others. Children reported mostly child neglect cases, physical abuse and sexual abuse cases.

The dominance of male callers can partly be attributed to the fact that Uganda is a patriarchal society where men own most if not all the household resources and thus can easily afford to own phones, radios, buy newspapers from which they can get and also pass on information. Children on the other hand hardly own phones much as they willing to report. In all the 294 instances when children contacted 116, they had used a phone from neighbour, a relative, a stranger or even a perpetrator. This meant that sometimes calls were incomplete because children had to get off the phone prematurely or risk getting caught especially when they had used a perpetrator's phone. Thus the MGLSD/UCHL and its partners need to come up with other avenues beyond the phone through which children can reports cases of VAC.

b. Services offered

A total of 2878 cases of child abuse were reported, 1118 callers sought counseling services, 15, 825 callers made inquiries about various services while 218,808 other callers sought to greet the counselors, test the line, prank or were silent.



c. Violence against children

The main cases that were cited in the 2878 cases of child abuse reported included ignorance on what constitutes discipline & abuse, poverty as well as culture. Thus while UCHL offers mainly remedial services, the MGLSD must step up efforts to put in place preventive mechanisms beyond the awareness raising campaigns. Some interventions could include:

- Address poverty/vulnerability at family level through family/household livelihood empowerment programme;
- Engage cultural institutions to denounce the harmful cultural practices that put children at risk;
- Strengthen delivery of child abuse response services in a coordinated manner at regional, district and community levels;
- A multi-sectorial approach should be used because everyone is a stakeholder in regards to prevention of child abuse and;

- Ensure that justice is seen to prevail when cases are reported and that there is collaboration between the judiciary and the police in administering justice.

Statistics from the UCHL database indicate that girls constituted 57% of the victims of child abuse, boys constituted 41% however 2% of the victims' gender was unknown because the issues were concerning an entire community and could not be tied to one gender. Child neglect was the most reported form of abuse constituting 48% of all cases reported, followed by sexual abuse (25%) and physical abuse (18%). Girls were affected more than boys by nearly all forms of abuse but boys were more affected by physical abuse and child neglect. Girls are especially vulnerable because many parents see them as a source of income and marry them off or negotiate with perpetrators when they have been defiled to make some money. Unless attitudes towards the girl child change, cases of child marriage, exploitation and defilement are bound to continue unabated. Boys too need to be protected because often times when they are neglected, they turn to drug abuse and crime as a way of survival.

Table 1: categories of abuse cases handled by gender

CATEGORIES	CLIENT GENDER			Total
	Female	Male	Unknown	
Child exploitation				
Child labour-commercial	4	5	4	13
Child labour-domestic	23	7	2	32
Commercial Sex Exploitation	2	0	0	2
Child labour	20	24	4	48
Sub total	49	36	10	95
Child neglect				
Child abandonment	71	109	7	187
Child maintenance	326	422	17	765
Child malnutrition	10	10	0	20
Denial of education	163	211	11	385
General	10	6	0	16
Sub total	580	758	35	1373
Child trafficking				
Lost child	17	21	0	38
Abduction	35	17	3	55
Internal trafficking	10	3	0	13
Cross border trafficking	2	1	0	3

Sub total	64	42	3	109
Emotional abuse				
Witness to violence	4	3	0	7
Verbal attack	8	10	0	18
Bullying	0	2	0	2
General	5	2	0	7
Sub total	17	17	0	34
Murder				
Abortion	1	0	1	2
Child death due to abuse	5	9	0	14
Child sacrifice	1	1	0	2
Poisoning	0	1	0	1
Mysterious death	2	6	0	8
Attempted murder	1	3	0	4
Sub total	10	20	1	31
Online Child Sexual Abuse				
Online extortion and blackmail	1	0	0	1
Victim of online sexual exploitation	0	1	0	1
Victim of Online child pornography	2	1	0	3
Sub total	3	2	0	5
Physical abuse				
Beating	173	233	5	411
Burning	15	17	2	34
Corporal punishment	20	40	4	64
Cutting	0	1	0	1
Torture	1	0	0	1
General	1	6	0	7
Sub total	210	297	11	518
Sexual abuse				
Defilement	392	1	0	393
Child marriage	207	2	0	209
Sodomy	0	2	0	2

Teenage pregnancy	102	1	0	103
Exposure to pornography	0	1	0	1
Attempted defilement	4	1	0	5
Sub total	705	8	0	713
Grand total	1638	1180	60	2878

d. Perpetrators of child abuse

Data from the UCHL database shows that 75% of the main perpetrators of violence against children were men, 21% were women but that the callers were not sure of the gender of 4% of the perpetrators. Men were particularly cited in child neglect and sexual abuse cases while women featured mostly in cases involving physical violence. Overall, fathers continued to be the main culprits especially in the child neglect cases while mothers & stepmothers were the majority culprits in cases involving physical abuse. Unrelated adult males were mostly cited in defilement offences

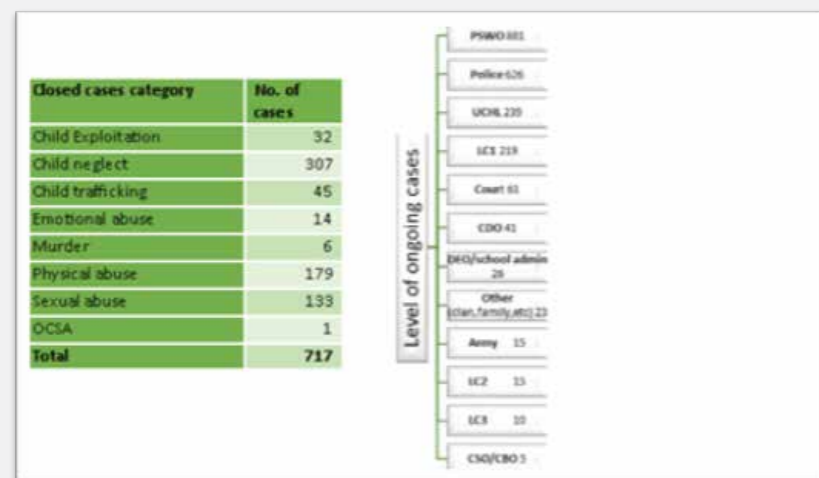
Table 2: perpetrators of abuse against children

Perpetrator	Cases	Perpetrator	Cases
Aunt	68	Other family member-male	22
Boy cousin	5	Other not related adult-female	40
Brother	17	Other not related adult-male	455
Boyfriend	2	Peer-not friend- female	1
Brother in law	2	Peer-not friend-male	15
Employer	11	Sister	9
Father	1348	Step brother	2
Foster mother	4	Step sister	2
Friend of child-male	21	Step father	17
Grandfather	26	Step mother	116
Grandmother	49	Sister-in-law	1
Girl cousin	3	Teacher-female	9
Mother	252	Teacher-male	69
Nanny	7	Uncle	70
Neighbor	76	Unknown	137
Other family member-female	12	Worker-in-care facility	10

e. Partnership and collaboration

Partnership has been and still remains crucial for UCHL. During 2016 the UCHL, therefore, engaged partners at community level in both formal and informal structures to respond to the reported cases of child abuse and child rights violation. The community based structures as well as various government and non-government organisations were involved in case management and were also part of the case management pathway. All reported cases were responded to and followed up. The outcome of working in collaboration with various partners at all levels, 25% of the reported cases were closed some of which are shared in the case stories section. However, 75% are open and being followed up by different partners to ensure justice.

Figure 1: Closed cases and level of ongoing cases at various levels



Cases of VAC were received from 115 districts across the country but no case was reported from Lamwo district. The majority of the cases and general calls were received from the central region, followed by the Eastern and Western regions. The MGLSD should, therefore, work to establish action centres in more districts because they seem to increase the visibility and usefulness of the Child Helpline service. It is also important to note that Northern Uganda, West Nile and the Karamoja sub-region continued to report the least number of calls. This calls for more community based awareness raising and UCHL popularisation campaigns in these regions using diverse platforms.

f. Counseling and guidance

Beyond responding the cases of VAC, UCHL takes the emotional wellbeing of children seriously. Thus, UCHL offers counseling services which are a key part of our work for both children and their caregivers. Throughout the course of the year, 1118 clients called in to receive counseling for varied reasons/issues. There were slightly more male than female clients in this category. Child custody was a dominant issue. It has been observed overtime that when not addressed the custody cases often lead to child neglect as parents fail to agree on who should play what role in the children’s lives. Thus many of the custody cases were referred to the PSWOs for further guidance and counseling. The family issues sub-category also recorded quite a number of cases and although it may not seem directly child related, these issues if left unresolved often affect the children leading to separation of parents and domestic violence amongst other issues, which eventually affect the children adversely. Hence, the UCHL was able to link the callers to appropriate service providers for further support.

Table 3: Counseling case categories and client gender

Category	Male	Female	Unknown	Hermaphrodite	Total
Addiction to drugs	1	0	1	0	2
Addiction to smoking	1	0	0	0	1
Addiction to pornography	2	2	0	0	4
Boy/girl relationship	10	14	0	0	24
Career guidance	17	7	0	0	24
Child custody	148	139	15	0	302
Child to child sex	3	13	0	0	16
Conflict with law	22	8	0	0	30
Differently abled persons	15	5	3	0	23
Family issues	48	35	30	0	113
HIV counseling	4	3	0	0	7
Juvenile delinquency	21	8	1	0	30
Legal issues	21	9	1	0	31
Loss and grief	1	0	0	0	1

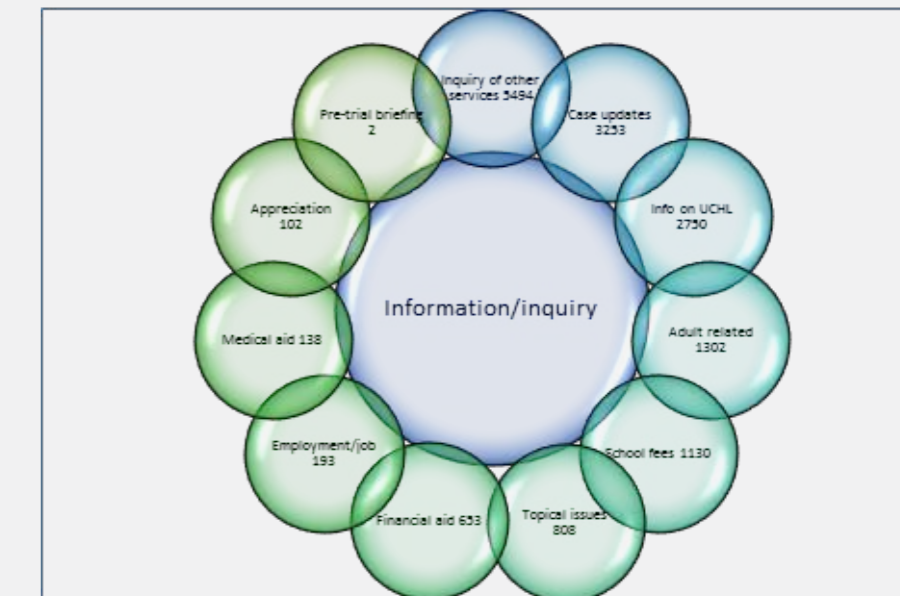
Missing children	19	31	1	0	51
Marital issues	21	21	15	0	57
Medical care	9	9	0	0	18
Orphans	26	19	2	0	47
Parent/child relation	64	33	1	0	98
Parental guidance	35	14	3	0	52
Peer influence	3	2	0	0	5
Property rights	38	20	13	0	71
Reproductive health	13	29	0	1	43
Runaway child	18	26	0	0	44
Street child	3	1	0	0	4
Self esteem	1	2	0	0	3
Stress/depression	4	2	0	0	6
Student/teacher relations	7	4	0	0	11
Total	575	456	86	1	1118

g. Information, inquiries and feedback

Some callers contacted UCHL to make inquiry of other services in addition to those offered by the helpline. Inquiries majorly constituted queries regarding several services some of which may not necessarily be provided by UCHL. The counselors however made appropriate referrals in instances where cases were not about UCHL. In terms of UCHL related services, case updates recorded a high number and these updates were useful in helping the team decide on what further steps to take with regards to a particular case. It is also from the case updates that the team was able to know how the previously reported cases were progressing and whether or not they were to be closed or re-opened. The case updates further helped the UCHL get feedback on how effective the referral points were in regards to the cases reported.

In addition to making inquiries, UCHL was contacted by appreciative callers for whom the Helpline had been a source of hope and had caused change (for better) in their situation, while others wanted to know more about UCHL and most of these later called in to report cases of VAC.

Figure 2: Information/inquiry categories



h. Other contacts

91.6% of contacts to UCHL were categorized as others meaning that callers contacted the helpline for reasons other than reporting cases, seeking counseling or information. Thus, some callers had dialed the wrong number, others called in to greet the counselors, to test if the line 116 was operational, to play pranks or were silent callers.

i. District action centres

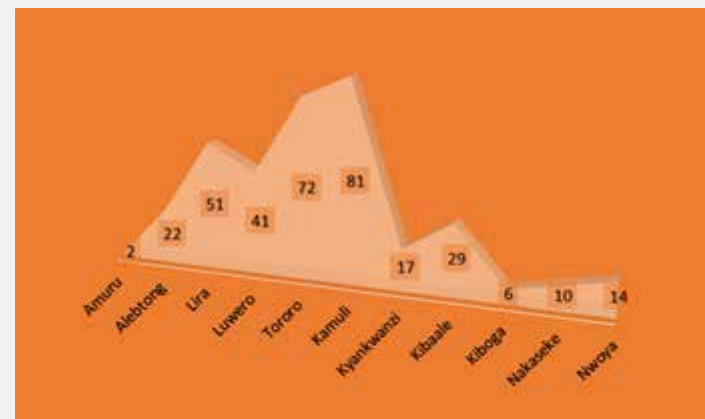
The UCHL is mandated to increase reporting of child rights violations, improved case management in Uganda which is dependent on the quality of the sub-national response where cases referred from the National Call Centre are handled. It is against this background that MGLSD has partnered with development partners such as Plan International, World Vision Uganda, Save the Children Uganda and UNICEF to strengthen case management at the district level by establishing and strengthening District Action Centres (DACs) to effectively coordinate child protection responses within the district.

UCHL is operating 27 district action centres in partnership with UNICEF, Plan International, World Vision, Save the Children. For the rest of the districts without action centres, the office of the PSWO coordinates case management response in the districts with support

from the caseworkers and focal persons identified by the CAOs.

DACs have played a crucial role in ensuring timely follow up for cases reported through 116 from the respective districts. There is also more accountability for each case when a district has got an action centre. This year for instance, 345 cases of VAC were escalated from the national call centre to 11 fully operational action centres of which 30 cases were successfully closed.

Chart 1: Number of cases escalated to action centres



j. Walk-in clients

UCHL offers a walk-in service to clients who are within accessibility of the national call centre and have child protection issues to report on. The clients and children feel they will be better understood when talking face-to face with a counselor. Thus some clients chose to physically visit UCHL offices and report their cases where a total 137 cases were handled through walk-ins. Out of 137 cases received, 31 were closed after follow-up and 106 ongoing cases followed up in collaboration with various stakeholders. Most of the walk-ins were by people from the nearby districts of Kampala and Wakiso. As with the cases received through the telephone, child neglect constituted the majority of walk-in cases handled, closely followed by sexual abuse.

While walking-in is a good alternative to contacting the helpline through telephone, it works best for nearby districts. It also cannot be relied on entirely especially up-country

where the distance from a given community to the DPSWO’s office can be over 20km. As a result some cases that require meetings between parties and the DPSWO’s intervention may go unresolved.



K. Media engagements

UCHL has a section at the secretariat under case management that directly handles media engagement through following up on cases that have been reported and highlighted in the media platforms/houses. The UCHL also realizes the need to strengthen the community case management structures in identifying reporting/referral and responding to cases of child rights violation. Therefore, working with media is a prerequisite for UCHL which seeks to be more visible. UCHL took part in 2 Television and 2 radio talk shows in addition to following up 236 cases of VAC reported through the various media sources. Newspapers and television highlighted the highest number of cases of VAC which made them more visible to the general public thereby bringing some of the cases to conclusion. For instance, the perpetrators whose faces had been shown on television were apprehended in other districts where they had escaped to after committing offences.

Figure 3: Media source for reported cases of VAC



Child trafficking, murder and defilement respectively made up the bulk cases reported through the media. The UCHL intervened by sometimes calling upon the relevant authorities to follow up on the cases but by most times looking out for the welfare of the child. This follow-up translated into 200 closed cases and 36 ongoing cases most of which are at police level of investigations.

Chart 3: media VAC case categories



Most media cases were from the central region namely Kampala and nearby districts. This means that the plight of many abused children remains concealed. Media houses need to strive for balanced coverage of the country while

reporting. However, compared to last year (2015), this year’s coverage, especially on television and in print media was more aware of the need to protect the children’s identity. The same standards were unfortunately not met by social media where children were left exposed and even more victimized by strangers and peers alike. Social media users need to be made aware of the dangers associated with exposing children whether they are victims of abuse or not. Predators (especially sexual predators) are always lurking on the internet looking for their next victim. Overall, UCHL needs to engage more with the media beyond case follow up, to increase visibility in order to reach out and give a voice to more voiceless children across the country.

I. Online Child Sexual Abuse

UCHL is part of the National Working Group to Prevent and Respond to Online Child Sexual Abuse (OCSA) and Exploitation in Uganda and two staff are placed at the secretariat to specifically handle cases reported as online child sexual abuse. UCHL participated in scaling up the prevention, response/ management strategy through linking services to the needs of affected/ consumers of the pornographic materials, awareness and dissemination of information on prevention of OCSA.

Therefore, child victims need to be identified and perpetrators brought to justice. Additionally, people need to know the threats their children face and how to counter them and also the need to remove images and videos of child sexual abuse from the internet. As members in the National Working Group to Prevent and Respond to Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, the UCHL OCSA counselors worked together to put in place concrete steps to address OCSA through a series of activities which included awareness raising in schools and internet cafés as well as handling cases reported through 116.

Thus 31 schools (both local and International) and 29 internet cafés were visited throughout the year.

The school visits led to 5 cases getting reported through 116 as shown in the table (1) on VAC cases. These cases are all ongoing as the team works in collaboration with the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA) and the police to track down the perpetrators. Fortunately one perpetrator was arrested and is awaiting a court hearing. All the children are still undergoing counseling due to the emotional distress caused by some of their experiences.

Children are keen users of the internet and have, therefore, become recipients of inappropriate information, contacts and behaviors including pornographic images and harmful, violent or abusive sexual content which exposes them to risks of self-harm, abusive sexual acts, sexual bullying, commercial sex, child pornography or internet addiction.

m. U-report

U-Report is a social messaging tool that allows anyone from any district in the country to respond to polls and reports issues including VAC. UCHL in partnership with UNICEF, established a U-report dashboard through which cases are received. At UCHL, 2 u-report dashboards are used including one for OCSA and the other for Sauti. A combined total of 35,611 U-Report messages were received on both dashboards during the course of the year.

The OCSA U-Report dashboard received 7810 messages in regard to the extent to which internet is being used in the different communities across all districts of Uganda. The messages were replies to the polls run by U-Report although no cases of OCSA were reported through the platform.

The Sauti dashboard on the other hand handled 35,611

messages. Messages were replied to while some of them were archived. 255 messages with possible child abuse cases were responded to where the abuse categories ranged from defilement, child marriage, and physical abuse to child exploitation and requests for counseling. Later, over 139 U-Reporters contacted the child Helpline to report cases of VAC which are shared in this report.

MAKING THE CALL COUNT

CASE 1

UCHL received a case about a 28 year old HIV positive mother who had abandoned her 3 months old baby at a rubbish pit. The reporter further noted that the perpetrator who is also an alcoholic was found dumping the baby at the rubbish pit and they were concerned about the safety of the child, especially since the mother was on ARV medication.

The UCHL team went to the scene and found the perpetrator was living in a very sorry state and could hardly support the baby and her eight year old sibling. The team counseled the perpetrator but also got in touch with a Jinja district based partner- Abide Family Centre to seek assistance for the child and her mother. Social workers from Abide Family Centre travelled to Kampala, assessed the perpetrator and found that she needed assistance in terms of shelter and economic empowerment.

The lady and her children were taken by the UCHL team to Abide Family Centre where she will be given psycho social support and trained in business skills, among others for the next 3 months. The home gave both her and the children accommodation and meets the other basic needs (food, clothing) too. The case is open as the team monitors the progress of the mother and makes permanent plans for her future when she leaves the home.



Above: the poor state of the perpetrator's house



Above left: The Social worker from Abide Family Centre assessing the client and (right) the baby with UCHL staff after she was picked from the rubbish pit



CASE 2

UCHL received a walk-in case from a journalist regarding a 13 year old girl who was subjected to child labour as a house maid. The reporter stated that one of his friends had found the victim at the roadside and she begged for help. The victim had been beaten by her employer and was found to have numerous wounds on her body. The area LC1 was informed and he offered temporary shelter to the victim who had refused to return to her employer's house. The reporter informed UCHL that the victim had been beaten for not watching over one of the employer's children who fell while playing. It is after the intense beating from the employer that the victim run away from her employer's house. The LC1's wife picked up the case and ensured that the child received medical attention.

A team from UCHL worked hand in hand with the reporter and the LC1 and opened a case up at a local police station. The child was left to temporarily stay with the LC1 under the care and supervision his wife, who was closely following the matter. The case was further pushed to the area Grade one court, where the magistrate heard the case. The perpetrator was found guilty and fined four hundred thousand shillings, given the fact that she had minors at home and could not be incarcerated. Court also ordered the perpetrator to refund the money that had been used by the LC1's wife to treat the child. The perpetrator was further ordered to meet the transport costs of the both the child and an adult to accompany her back to her home district in Kasese. The child was taken back to her mother by a relative who informed UCHL that the child had been given to the lady who was employing her on agreement that the child would be helping her with some housework while attending school but this had not been the case.

CASE 3

A case was reported concerning a 14 year old boy that was employed as a domestic house help. The reporter added that the child was engaged doing in heavy manual work and was not allowed to attend school; he was taking care of the two adult patients in addition to doing all household chores. The patients included; the child's aunt that had given birth by C-section, lost the baby and was too weak to take care of herself and an uncle that had been critically injured in a road accident. The child had no time to go to school or even to play.

The child's uncle had brought him from the village where he was studying and requested him to take care of the wife, with the promise that when she recovers, he would take him to a Kampala school.

The UCHL team together with the CFPO of the nearby police station went to the scene

and found the child at work. The team held a meeting with the child's relatives and had the child withdrawn from his uncle's home and placed at Naguru Reception Centre temporarily. The perpetrator was also arrested but later released on bond.

The team then held another meeting with the family and it was agreed in writing that the caregiver finds a school for the child to start school by July and he should also get an adult to provide care for his patients. And if he fails to find a school, the child would be returned to his parents with immediate effect. The child is currently in school while the family got a housemaid to take care of the domestic chores.



Above left: the child at the Uncle's home and right the uncle and his wife talking to the CFPO of Kira police station

CASE 4

A case came through 116, concerning a grandmother who was mistreating her grandson of 13 years by locking him up in a pig sty the entire day. The reporter further added that the child feeds on pigs' food. She further informed UCHL that the child's mother lives in another district and sends upkeep for him regularly to the grandmother. The reporter added that the child is physically disabled. She availed UCHL with the contact of the child's mother. When asked whether the area LC was in the know, she replied in the negative and provided his contact as well as that of the child's mother.

The UCHL team contacted the CFPO of the nearby Police Station and reported the case. UCHL availed the CFPO with the contact of the reporter and that of the LC1 for effective follow up. CFPO on the very day the case was reported, went to the home of the victim and found the perpetrator had bathed and dressed the victim; a clear sign that the

perpetrator had been alerted by one of the community members. The mother was also contacted and ordered to report to police to pick up her son. When asked why she had left her son with his grandmother, she stated that her job could not allow her enough time to look after her child given that he is disabled. She further alleged that she thought the child was well taken care of especially since she was sending money to help with the welfare of the child. The perpetrator was arrested while the child was handed over to his mother.

The child received medical attention and is currently living with his mother who managed to get a caretaker for the child.

CASE 5

A case was reported in which over 30 children had been locked up in their rooms by unknown gun-wielding men. The children had been living at the church premises which unfortunately was on land that had wrangles. As a result, the children had been locked indoors and denied the chance to attend school and access to the dining area for two days.

A team from UCHL worked with the police at the nearby police station and visited the scene where the children were found locked inside the premises. At the scene, it was found that there was a court injunction on the land in question and the case was already at the Regional police. The team visited the regional police offices and presented the need to rescue the children which was granted.

Twelve children, some of whom were from within the immediate community, were rescued. However, UCHL worked hand in hand with the area LC1 chairperson and church administrators to relocate the children to Naguru Reception Centre for temporal shelter. Nine girls aged 9 to 17 years and three boys aged 14 to 16 years were taken to the reception centre while the team worked to find their parents.

The land case is in court and is ongoing but the person who was managing the church was remanded to Luzira prison on nine counts of forgery.

A few days later, all 12 children were from Naguru Reception Centre by their parents who had been located and provided proof that they were indeed the children's parents.



Left: locked church premises and UCHL counselors talking to the children on arrival at Naguru Reception centre

CASE 6

A child who had just returned home from school found his friend with a fresh wound because he had been beaten by his mother and was still bleeding a day after the beating. According to him, he could not go to the police because he feared the offices. But since at school they were told about the Child Helpline, he decided to call for assistance. At the time of call, there was no adult and, therefore, the children were asked if they knew the LC1's home and also asked if they were comfortable going there to which they agreed. They were then asked to call 116 again when they were with the LC1 so that the UCHL staff could talk to him about the case.

Once there, the children called back. UCHL engaged the LC1 who immediately agreed to go with the injured child to Kotido Police Station because the wound looked bad. The OC at the station was not yet in office but UCHL requested him to pick Form 3 and take the child to the hospital, which he did.

After a few days, a follow up call was made to the child who stated that he had seen the LC1 and another lady visit his friend's home and that the friend got treatment and was at home with his mother. UCHL further engaged the LC1 whose information matched that of the caller. He stated that he and the CFPO had visited the home and established that the mother of the wounded child had beaten him in anger because he and one of his elder brothers who is about 14 years old, had sold some of the household items while she was away. The LC1 stated that they had cautioned her and proceeded to open a case against her at police. He had counselled the children too. Their father who had separated with the mother and was living in another village was also to be engaged and asked to play a role in these children's lives. The LC1 pledged to keep visiting this home and was appreciated for his quick response while the child who called the helpline was especially appreciated for calling and taking action immediately.





LESSONS LEARNED

- Community based child protection structures must be strengthened through equipping them with basic child protection skills;
- Alternative but confidential means of reporting child abuse cases must be used because very few children have access to phones and yet many would like to have their voices and issues heard; and
- The Strategic plan is a very useful tool both for fundraising and offering strategic direction for UCHL interventions.

Challenges

- Limited understanding by majority of the population on what constitutes abuse and discipline. Thus many people abuse their children unknowingly sometimes, in the guise of disciplining them.
- Limited understanding by the general public and sometimes partners of Sauti's mode of operation which has occasionally led to claims that the child Helpline is non-operational. This, coupled with unresponsiveness of some referral partners in the OVC service provider's inventory makes clients lose trust in UCHL.
- Inadequate number of staff which keeps some clients in the queue and then leads to complaints about unresponsiveness of the Helpline. The limited number of staff also has an effect on the number of dropped calls.
- Need for staff that can speak more languages across the country. Currently only about 20 languages are spoken fluently by the counselors.
- Inadequate funding for the office of the DPSWO which leads to delays in follow-up of referred cases.

Recommendations

- Media: establish strategic alliance with the media houses/platforms to increase awareness of UCHL services and case management referral pathways at community level.
- Children: should be encouraged to report cases through schools but communities should also put in place mechanisms that would encourage children to report child abuse.
- Parents: should be encouraged to join parent support groups for peer support in case of child abuse but also generate ideas to improve family livelihood in a sustainable way
- Child protection structures: both informal and formal should be facilitated to respond

to reported cases effectively, support parents and witnesses to appear before courts whenever needed and to be protected.

- Cultural and religious institutions: the institutions should mainstream child protection into their work; sensitize masses on UCHL services and offer counseling services to the affected children and their families, on top of reporting cases to relevant authorities.
- UCHL secretariat: finalize the five year strategic plan.
- Government: Public servants such as health workers, police officers, and teachers etc., who commit criminal offences such as defilement need to be de-registered by the line ministries. Furthermore, Uganda could start a registered list of sexual offenders so that the public can be on the lookout.
- Schools, police posts and children's homes should be availed with copies of the Children's amendment Act 2016, the Constitution among other laws. Visits to several districts as well as interactions with these stakeholders showed a glaring knowledge gap with regards to the law.

Next steps (2017 highlights)

- Finalise the UCHL five year strategic plan
- Tracking and documenting successful stories handled over the past 2 years
- Hold abuse case 'clinics' in hard-to-reach areas (islands)
- More engagement with the media and private sector
- Give a 'voice' to more children across the country.
- Strengthen staff capacity and child protection through refresher trainings.

Conclusion

UCHL interventions in responding to and linking services to abused children remains A KEY mechanism in child protection that we must embrace. The experience this year (2016) shows that a simple call inquiring about the services of UCHL, turns out to be a life changing experience that turns one child's life around. The UCHL staff listened and responded to the many cases reported but one thing stood out; the excitement of a child at being believed, without judgment by a total stranger at the other end of the line. This should motivate every child protection actor in this country to join hands in both big and small ways, with UCHL in ensuring that every child's voice is heard. Because for every call, there is a story that must be heard and with every story that is heard, comes an opportunity to save a life.

FEEDBACK

"I want to thank Sauti especially counselor Queen for her help. I took her advice and the situation at home has improved. I just wanted to personally thank her." Father of a 6 year old child from Arua district.

"Thank you for talking to my father. He had refused to listen to anyone but when someone from child helpline called, he paid my school fees and I am back in school." 17 year old boy from Jinja district

"At first I was angry and thought I had wasted my time calling you people (child helpline). But when I saw police coming to arrest the grandmother and the mother even came and took her son. I was so happy-I knew you had done your job!" Concerned neighbor that reported a case of neglect of a child with disability – Wakiso district

"Could you please get a counselor who speaks Pokot." A concerned caller from Amudat district.

"Please visit us on the islands and sensitize my community; there is too much child abuse here." Concerned LC1 chairperson from Buvuma island/ district

"Sauti please tell my fellow boda boda riders that it is wrong to carry children in front of the motorcycle without jackets. They will get sick" A boda boda rider who walked into UCHL offices.

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS



Minister of state for Youth and children Affairs, MS. Florence Nakiwala Kiyingi handing over equipment donated by UNICEF to 16 district action centers.



Awareness raising on Sauti/ Online sexual abuse in schools and communities





Sauti at the Children's Gala of hope



Career guidance at Nabisunsa girls School and Gayaza High School



