

Child Protection in Crisis Uganda: March 2012 Learning Retreat

**A Ugandan Childhood: Through the
Eyes of Children and Parents**

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Child Protection in Crisis

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Outline

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Introduction

- In 2011, 320 children from across Uganda participated in a consultation on the nature of childhood in the country.
- Drawn from urban and rural areas in four regions, children shared their hopes as they described what they saw ‘doing well’ as a child to mean.
- Over 150 parents, from the same communities, indicated their own aspirations for their children as they too described what they saw as marking those children who were “doing well”.

- The findings suggest some key characteristics defining children's well-being in contemporary Uganda, which should shape national approaches to child protection.
- The consultation also revealed important differences in the perspectives of children and parents, and in expectations of boys and girls, that inform work in promoting children's well-being across the nation.

Objective

- To understand key characteristics defining children's well-being in contemporary Uganda, to inform national approaches to child protection.
- The study addressed the question: *How can we measure the impact of community-based psychosocial programs on the sustained well-being of children and families?*

Methodology

- Four research sites were selected for the study: Kampala, Lira, Masaka, and Katakwi,
- Research teams were provided by ChildFund Uganda, International Rescue Committee, World Vision, and Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO) respectively.
- For each site, a rural and an urban location were selected.
- Interviews were conducted in schools at that location and in the surrounding communities.
- Surveys were developed in English, and translated into Luganda, Langi and Ateso.

- At each research site 40 children aged between 8 and 12, and 40 older children between 13 and 18, were interviewed.
- Using a variant of the Brief Ethnographic Interviews participants were asked to think of examples of children they knew who they considered to be 'doing well', and to describe the characteristics that led them to make that judgment.

- They were also asked other questions about children facing difficulties, and potential strategies to assist them, which are not the focus of this report.
- Responses were transcribed onto cards and sorted by raters into 31 thematic groups.
- 18% of cards were randomly selected for entry into an Excel spreadsheet for statistical analysis.
- In addition to the current document, this work has been used to inform the report, *“Defining Success: Developing Locally Meaningful Indicators for Child-Centered Psychosocial Programming in Uganda”*.

Key Findings

- 80% of the characteristics of a child 'doing well' suggested by participants could be grouped into one of eleven categories. These were:
 1. Schooling (being in school, progressing well, able to pay fees etc.);
 2. Not in poverty (being able to afford things, having possessions, etc.);
 3. Basic needs (having adequate food, clothing, bedding etc.);
 4. Community relationships (having friends outside the home, getting along within the community etc.);

5. Respect (having good manners, showing respect for others etc.);
6. Emotions (being happy, content, etc.);
7. Grooming (being well presented, clean etc.);
8. Relationship with parents (communicating well, showing love and concern, etc.);
9. Achievement (being successful, especially in school);
10. Motivation (trying hard, setting goals, etc.)
11. Health (being fit and well, etc.).

- Of a total of 1,121 characteristics mentioned, nearly 30% of all items fell in the first three categories.
- Overall, schooling emerges as the top priority marking positive children's well-being.
- Material conditions, however, were also generally acknowledged to be of significance in shaping the experience of childhood.
- Characteristics signalling that a child was *not in poverty* and had *basic needs* met were also high up in the overall ranking.

Children's Expectations of Boys and Girls

- The responses of young children suggest that they see 'doing well' to look very different for a boy or a girl (the different pattern of responding regarding young boys and young girls being significantly different).
- Young children expect boys to show respect and to have good community relations (including with friends and neighbours).
- For young girls the importance of schooling and basic needs, such as food and clothing, being met are more emphasized.

Expectations of Older Children

- However, with judgments of older children, such differences are less marked.
- As with younger children, adolescents see successful girls to be ***avoiding poverty*** and ***having basic needs met***.
- But ***relationships with the community*** and ***showing respect*** are seen as equally important by adolescent boys and girls.
- Adolescent boys and girls have a similar vision for their success and well-being.

Children and Parents Don't Value the Same Things

- The characteristics of young children 'doing well' that are highlighted by parents are significantly different from those identified by children.
- There are major areas of overlap in areas such as schooling, meeting basic needs and relationships within the community.
- Parents highlight the importance of a child having a good relationship with parents and being in good health.
- However, adolescents and their parents share very similar views on what represents doing well in one's adolescence.

- There are no significant differences in their ratings, ***with good relationships with parents, showing respect, and demonstrating positive emotions*** emerging as important for both.
- Finally, the consultation suggested that there were significant differences in what was seen as 'doing well' by boys and male parents, and also by girls and female parents.
- Male parents put more emphasis on not being in poverty and having a good relationship with parents compared to boys themselves.
- Female parents put less emphasis on poverty and more on relationships with parents and health than girls themselves.

How to Address the Problems of Children?

- Although the emphasis here is on the account given by those consulted about positive well-being in childhood, it is appropriate to note the views addressing the needs of children that were not enjoying positive well-being.
- Unsurprisingly, given their prominence in accounts of positive well-being, ***addressing basic needs, promoting access to schooling and developing effective community support*** were the three categories of response most frequently proposed across all participants.

- *Securing government support, building respect and obedience (utilizing the cultures, traditions and value of communities), strengthening family relationships, and getting out of poverty* were the other channels of response that represented more than 5% of all suggestions made.

The Implications for Practice

- Access to schooling is crucial for the well-being of Children.
- Meeting basic needs and not being in poverty remain central concerns for Children.
- Good community relationships and respect are also key to childhood in Uganda.
- Young boys and girls value different things in childhood, but such differences diminish in adolescence.
- Parents highlight the importance of a Child having a good relationship with parents and being in good health.
- Schooling, meeting basic needs and building upon community relationships are key to addressing the problems of childhood.

THANK YOU