

Annex – Children’s Voices on Various Forms of Exploitation

Child 1

I just want to share with other children and stakeholders that children both boys and girls are exposed to various forms of exploitation and abuse which affect their development and realization of actual potential for a better future. Some of these exploitations include sexual abuse, child labour, discrimination based on gender and negative cultural biasness. For these abuses to be addressed fully I propose that government needs to support children to air their voices on what they feel affects their lives and propose what needs to be done so that our cries and fears can be heard because without children there will be no future leaders and entrepreneurs. The government needs to reinforce laws that protect children for a better future. Unfortunately, as children, we are never taught about laws that protect children and therefore I propose that there should be a move to create awareness on children rights through the media, newspapers, magazines and journals about the laws protecting children so that children can also be agents of change in protecting other children against abuse and other forms of exploitation. Most of us children are used as commercial sex workers or in drug trafficking. From the information I have and shared by most children, girls are lured into commercial sexual activities at the age of ten years while boys are influenced into drugs and drug trafficking at the age of eleven and twelve years. This makes them vulnerable to sexual exploitation and other forms of abuse. As children, we have a right to know laws that protect us.

I have heard the opportunity to interact with government officers during the Day of the African Child which was held at Township Primary school on 19th June 2019. The children used the day to address problems affecting children in the presence of senior magistrate, Assistant County Commissioner, Sub County Children officer and the Chief Education Officer. As the child chief guest I used the chance to air problems affecting children on behalf of other children which included sexual exploitation resulting to teenage pregnancies and school dropout. The government officers explained the laws protecting children and advised children to report all cases of abuse to relevant authority.

Unfortunately it was clear that most children including myself did not know how to contact government in case of abuse or emergency. I therefore propose that the government needs to communicate so that the children get help when abused at an appropriate time. They should indicate the child helpline or other government service to the members of the public.

Child 2

I have heard young girls of my age from my school telling other children about their guardians who are involved in sex to make money for family members. The guardians bring many uncles to the house during the day and night and that interferes with their studies and performance. What is most annoying is when the uncles brought by our aunty starts touching them on private parts after giving them gifts. We had a case where one of us in our class shared with us of having been defiled by one of the uncles well known to her but she did not report because she feared being beaten or chased away from the house. The government does not encourage children to report cases of abuse in children making it difficult for children to report. We have only learnt about laws protecting children when visited by KAACR who told

us what to do and where to report cases of defilement and rape. In school we are not taught about children protection during classes. I ask our dear government to train teachers and parents on child rights and children protection to help children know their rights and protect themselves and others from sexual exploitation which is common in the community. I also propose formation of child right clubs in schools to give children the chance to air their opinions when exploited. I also recommend for more awareness on children rights and establishment of rescues centers to cater for abused children.

Child 3

Children are being subjected to sexual activities as early as 10 years old when some of us do not even know the importance of sexual intercourse with girls. I remember a case of one elderly boy in high school who tried to introduce me to drugs when I was in class 5. He convinced me that after taking bang, I will perform well in class and also attract girls in both primary and secondary school. I got involved in teenage sexual activities among my peers especially during discos locally referred as Disco Matanga - celebrations before and after the burials done in some Kenyan communities. During this period I realized the boy who introduced me to all these activities was also operating as an agent and was actively involved in identifying young girls from primary and secondary schools for commercial sexual activities among motorcycle taxi operators and matatu touts along Chavakali Kapsabet route. I remember 2 girls who got pregnant and dropped out of school and are currently in Nairobi working as house helps. After realizing that this situation was getting worse, I approached one of our teacher and shared with him and pleaded for help from him to stop the activity. I am happy that he got concerned and organized counseling and mentorship for all the children in the area and invited KAACR to talk to girls and boys, this made a big difference in our lives and directed our energies to active class work. The chief was involved and issues of Discos were abolished to allow children be in school. I appeal for support from government to create forums for children and duty bearers to help children discuss problems affecting them.

Child 4

I wish to comment on ever increasing cases of sexual exploitation of boys and girls with a special bias on people living with disability. As a member of child right club I have had the opportunity to interact with people with disability both girls and boys who have shared terrifying stories of sexual exploitation noting that the society only addresses issues of sexual exploitation among people without disability because the ones involving people with disability are never reported. I had a case of girl living with disability who was defiled by a care giver making her pregnant twice and helping her to procure crude abortion to conceal evidence. We reported the matter to the local provincial administration that was not very supportive and the case was lost. We appeal for support from government and key stakeholders to support advocacy and appreciation of children with disability and support their rights to access their rights. We have had reported cases of sodomy and other exploitative forms of sexual activities on boys living with disability. During one of the exchanges with children with disability 2 boys reported having been sodomised by adults known to them and other cases of sodomy amongst themselves. It's honest to confirm that most children do not know how to contact government officers to report cases of abuse, the hotline is either too busy or not working or 98% do not know the number. As club members we are trying our level best

within our means to create awareness on children rights and linking cases affecting children to relevant stakeholders.

Child 5

As children we are ever living in fear year in year out, our schools are situated along the Banks of River Nzoia whose banks breaks during rainy seasons exposing schools, villages and children to risks of death and becoming homeless. The area has also suffered from political unrests perpetrated by politicians for their own selfish interest. During all these, we have heard women and children killed, raped and defiled by armed militia and disruption of learning process making children to lose crucial time meant for learning. When tensions occur, the governments deploys armed personnel to help bring calm, unfortunately they do get involved in massive rape and torture of innocent civilian. During all these, as children we are asking where is our safety? Are we not entitled to protection as a right, we appeal to government to work with all government department and other service providers to protect children from problems created by adults and politicians. The level of children rights awareness in our county is low and therefore the rate of child abuse and other exploitation is high. The disaster related to the over flooding of River Nzoia needs to be addressed by both County and national government for all the children's safety and consistent children's attendance in school. The government has never listened to the views of children regarding all problems affecting children. I appeal for more a consultative forum to get children's opinion on their safety and how government should protect children's right.