

**INTERVENTIONS FOR REDUCING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT AMONG  
CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN MUKONO CENTRAL DIVISION, MUKONO  
DISTRICT**

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**UGANDA CHRISTIAN  
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**DECLARATION**

I NASSALI RITA declare that this research report is my original work and has not been submitted for any academic award in any institution of higher learning.

Sign: RA.....

Date: 5/5/2026.....

**APPROVAL**

This is to certify that this Dissertation titled “**Interventions for Reducing Child Abuse and Neglect among Children with Disabilities in Mukono Central Division Mukono District**” was written under my supervision.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Child abuse and neglect are among the problems affecting children all over the world. Children with disabilities have an elevated vulnerability to child abuse and neglect because of stigma in society, dependency, and lack of protection measures available for them. This project focuses on identifying ways through which the rate of child abuse and neglect can be lowered among children with disabilities living in Mukono Central Division, Uganda.

The research design was a mixed methods approach that involved both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Information is collected from the caregivers, parents, teachers, social workers, and disabled children through questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. This approach ensures an in-depth understanding of the statistical trends and real-life cases. The findings indicate that the children with disabilities in Mukono Central Division are subject to various forms of abuse including physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and in some cases sexual abuse. Some of the factors that contribute to this problem include poverty, ignorance by the caregivers, culture and social norms. In conclusion, the study highlights the importance of adopting an integrated and collaborative multi-sectoral approach that will ensure legal action is taken, children protected, communities empowered, and proper services offered.

Lastly, in response to the recommended areas of concern in relation to service delivery, coordination, and inclusion, the study suggests the need for adopting an integrated multi-sectoral approach that involves health, education, social protection, and legal services. It is important for the government to enhance the availability of inclusive education, healthcare services, rehabilitation services, and psychological counselling. On the other hand, the collaboration between NGOs and CBOs with government departments is vital for enhancing the effectiveness of the referral system and coordinating service delivery. Integration of activities including awareness creation and economic support is necessary to address the complex issues surrounding abuse and neglect. As rightly noted by the World Health Organization and the World Bank (2011), such an approach will result in sustainable child protection outcome.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.0 Introduction

This chapter includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, and the scope of the study. This research will examine the effectiveness of strategies used to reduce child abuse and neglect of children with disabilities in Mukono Central division.

The abuse and neglect of children are great concerns to the overall wellbeing of children globally. The abuse and neglect cases are highly prevalent among children with disabilities, considering that they pose an increased threat due to social stigmatization, communication barriers, dependence on caregivers, and the lack of relevant services. There have been studies conducted internationally showing how children with disabilities are highly subjected to abuse and neglect than children without any disabilities. In most cases, poor countries with inadequate protective child policies tend to report higher levels of abuse cases.

There are several protective measures in Uganda aimed at protecting children in the country. Such measures have been established through policies like the Children's Act (Amended 2016), the National Policy on Disability (2006), and the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy. However, there are still cases of high levels of child abuse and neglect among children with disabilities in the region. Some of the factors behind this phenomenon include poverty, myths about disabilities, unawareness of children rights, and a lack of specialized services.

Mukono Central Division, being among the divisions of Mukono Municipality in Mukono District, is a fast-growing city which has a very diverse population. There are slums, trading areas, schools, churches, and various medical facilities located within this area. However, the community also encounters various problems such as unemployment, urban poverty, family issues, substance abuse, and overcrowding. In particular, families who have a child with a disability face more problems due to their economic difficulties and lack of care and special services for persons with disabilities.

Under such circumstances, a person with a disability becomes at a higher risk of experiencing physical or sexual abuse, maltreatment, neglect, discrimination, and exploitation. It is possible to state that instances of physical punishment, education denial, bullying, emotional problems, and neglect occur frequently yet are not reported. At the same time, there are child protection projects in place within the division; however, they may be generalized and cannot meet the specific needs of children with disabilities, namely communication assistance and counseling.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Child Abuse and neglect cases are still prominent child protective issues in the world and the rates are greater for disabled children compared to other children. Findings by global child rights bodies show that children with any type of physical, sensory, intellectual, or developmental disabilities are three to four times as likely to suffer from violence, psychological abuse, sexual exploitation, and neglect.

In the case of Uganda, issues pertaining to child protection are common, and the lack of awareness, cultural beliefs, and poor enforcement of child protection laws are factors, which exacerbate this issue. Although child protection laws and regulations, as stated by the Children Act and the directives by the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development, prioritize child and disability rights, there are still gaps in their implementation.

Mukono Central Division, which falls under Mukono Municipality and Mukono District, is an urban center with an increasingly diverse populace and mounting social pressures. This division is characterized by high levels of urban poverty, overcrowded families, unemployment, high rates of alcohol abuse, and lack of specialized health services for children with special needs. Most parents with special needs children are economically and emotionally challenged, leading to child neglect, social exclusion, or abusive behavior. There are also stigmatized cultural beliefs about persons with special needs.

Although there are various schools, health facilities, and religious organizations in Mukono Central Division, organized response mechanisms directed at the prevention of abuse and child neglect among disabled children are limited. The current child-protection mechanisms in place are very general and may fail to address any special requirements the children may have, as is the case with disabled children, which may require special forms of communication and child-protection skills.

Owing to the gaps mentioned, it becomes imperative to critically evaluate the prevailing situations in the Mukono Central Division and develop interventions for improving child safety, protection, and well-being, considering children with disabilities. It is important to note that understanding the prevailing dynamics within various settings, including homes, learning institutions, and institutional settings within Mukono Central Division, is critical in offering sustainable interventions.

Hence, this research aims to investigate the occurrence and magnitude of child abuse and neglect cases among children with disabilities within Mukono Central Division, the effectiveness of those mechanisms in place, and provide suitable remedies to address the issue of child abuse and neglect, as well as to make child protection inclusive.

### **1.2 Statement of the problem**

Cases of abuse and neglect of children with disabilities continue to pose serious challenges in the Ugandan society. Children with disabilities have been reported to be highly vulnerable to abuse such as physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, as well as neglect in their homes, school setting, and community environment. These cases of abuse and neglect are fueled by stigma and discrimination experienced by children with disabilities, who cannot access protective services within their communities.

Although there are national policies and international conventions protecting children with disabilities, implementation of intervention programs aimed at ensuring their safety remains poorly developed and inefficient. This is because caregivers are not aware of children's disability rights, whereas social welfare services fail to reach children due to poor infrastructure in some rural areas. Police and child protection units are not adequately trained to handle cases of abuse and neglect of children with disabilities. Consequently, most cases are never reported to the authorities.

The continued presence of such issues leads to the impairment of the developmental aspects of children with disabilities, resulting in further cycles of poverty, discrimination, and vulnerability. Without proper intervention measures, Mukono Central Division will definitely fail to ensure that the rights of the affected members of the society are protected. This calls for an immediate need to examine and assess interventions that are put in place to address child abuse and neglect of children with disabilities within Mukono Central Division.

### **1.3 The purpose of the study**

The aim of this study was to explore the interventions for reducing child abuse and neglect for children with disabilities in Mukono central division, Mukono district

### **1.4 Specific objectives of the study**

- i. To determine the extent to which children with disabilities experience abuse and neglect in Mukono central division, Mukono district
- ii. To evaluate the efficiency of efforts put forward by government institutions, NGOs, and other stakeholders to protect children with disabilities from abuse and neglect
- iii. To investigate the intervention measures put in place to prevent child abuse and neglect among children with disabilities in Mukono central division

### **1.5 Research questions**

1. What is the prevalence rate of cases of child abuse and neglect for children with disabilities in Mukono central division?
2. To what extent have these efforts been effective in preventing the occurrence of abuse and neglect amongst children with disabilities?
3. Are these systems easy for the disabled child to access?

### **1.6 Scope of the study**

This research aimed to investigate the phenomenon of abuse and neglect of disabled children in Mukono Central Division by analyzing various issues such as the nature of the problem, available measures, their effectiveness, as well as weaknesses and barriers to implementation of these initiatives. The subject matter will include the following themes: Nature and Forms of Abuse and Neglect of Disabled Children. The study will look into the various forms of abuse and neglect of children with disabilities, namely, Physical Abuse. Beating, slapping, or inflicting physical injury harsh punishment practices at home, school, or in any other facility

### **1.7. Geographical Scope**

The study was conducted out with community development office and the probation and social welfare Head offices located in Mukono district.

### **1.8. Time scope**

The study was conducted from 11 November 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2026 where it came in experiencing different issues concerning child neglect and abuse.

## **1.9 Justification of the study**

Children with disabilities are among the most at-risk groups within society, with greater risk of abuse and negligence owing to their physical, cognitive, and communication impairments. In Mukono Central Division, evidence and reports show cases of children with disabilities being subjected to various forms of abuse, as well as negligence, both within and without. The fact is, child-protection mechanisms and legal systems are in place in Uganda, and yet this issue still continues, and there is justification for this study on the following grounds.

Firstly, High Vulnerability of Children with Disabilities. Children with disabilities are often highly vulnerable to abuse and neglect, and this is as a result of their reliance on caregivers, limited mobility, limited capacity to communicate the abuse, and stigma. It is crucial to understand the vulnerabilities and how they are being met by current interventions.

Secondly, Interventions Which Should Be Assessed in Existing Institutions The interventions are carried out by various institutions, including government, NGOs, schools, health facilities, and community structures, as part of an attempt to safeguard children with disabilities. In reality, very little is known about the success and relevancy of the interventions toward meeting the objectives of children with disabilities within Mukono Central Division.

Thirdly, Identification of Gaps and Challenges in Child Protection. Despite the presence of child-protection systems, many families and communities are still less aware and less willing to report cases of child abuse. There are also institutional gaps in child-protection systems, including inadequate trained staff, lack of enforcement of child-protection laws, and collaboration between critical stakeholders. The research will identify this shortfall and recommend appropriate measures to fill it and improve child-protection systems.

Additionally. Support for Policy Implementation and Improvement. The Government of Uganda has policies on child rights and the inclusion of disabled children, but the level of implementation of this policy is still in question. The findings collected from this research will provide support to decision-makers and other stakeholders on improving the implementation of policies and ensuring interventions are within national and global standards on child rights.

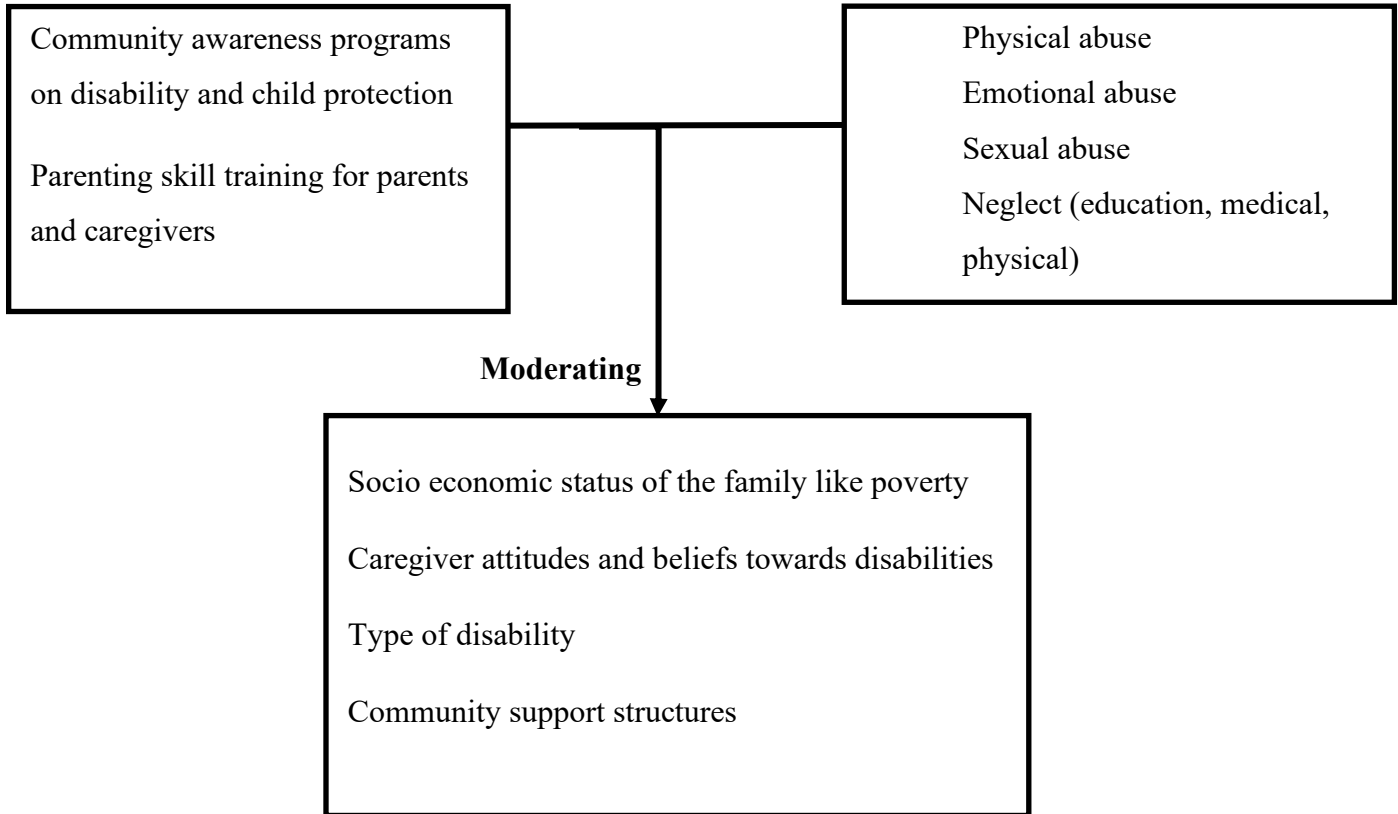
## 1. 10. Conceptual framework

### INDEPENDENT VARIABLE

Intervention aimed at reducing child abuse and neglect with disabilities

### DEPENDENT VARIABLE

Level of abuse among children



**Source:** Adapted and modified from the ecological child protection framework by World Health Organization and disability inclusion approaches by United Nations Children's Fund (WHO & World Bank, 2011; UNICEF, 2021).

### **1.11 Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study is highlighted by the increased susceptibility of disabled children to various forms of abuse and neglect in the Mukono Central division. This research identifies the deficiencies in the existing interventions and services meant to protect children from various forms of violence, thus providing useful information that can help the policy makers, social workers, teachers, health personnel, among other stakeholders, to formulate appropriate protective mechanisms for these children.

These results will help guide the formulation of more inclusive and disability-sensitive child protection policies by the local governments of Mukono District, as well as inform awareness campaigns and reporting of cases by children's rights advocacy groups and community leaders. This research provides information to organizations offering services on how they can improve their services through targeted capacity building.

Lastly, the information provided here will be useful to parents and caregivers as they raise their children in ways that promote non-violent parenting.

Academically, the study contributes to the limited body of literature on disability-specific child protection interventions in Ugandan urban settings. It provides a foundation for future research aimed at promoting the rights, safety, and well-being of children with disabilities.

Ultimately, the study's significance lies in its potential to influence holistic, practical, and sustainable interventions that ensure children with disabilities in Mukono Central Division grow up in safe, nurturing, and protective environments.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **2.0 Introduction**

In this chapter, there is an outline of a literature review concerning academic achievement among children with disabilities. Chapter two Background

The term child abuse and neglect encompasses physical violence and child neglect that have devastating consequences on the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of the child (Pinheiro 2006; Norman et al. 2012; Walakira and Ddumba-Nyanzi 2012). The consequences of child abuse and neglect can extend to adulthood. The United Nations convention on the rights of the child abuse and neglect came into force in 1990 after its ratification by almost all the nations across the world including Uganda (United Nations 1993). However, it remains a challenging area of practice for the researcher, practitioner, and policymakers to make tangible strides in this area. The research problem will be examined within the scope of expanding the literature base on the issue of child abuse and neglect through exploring the persistence of some selected forms of child abuse and neglect despite significant advances in child protection since Uganda ratified the United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 (United Nations 1993),

There is evidence of considerable advancement in the well-being of children in Uganda in regards to the major sectors that have an influence on their welfare, including education, health and nutrition, child participation, particular actions in regard to the girl child, and a spiraling legal policy framework for child protection (please refer to Walakira et al. 2015). All these sectors have great possibilities to enhance child protection. Nonetheless, the issue of child protection requires more consideration since it is challenging to ascertain the effect of any remarkable achievement in other sectors of child welfare on protecting children from abuse and neglect. In order to reflect on the important sectors, one needs to look at the improved access to education.

In Uganda, great strides have been made since the late 1990s. The access to education of the most vulnerable children has increased fourfold (Republic of Uganda and UNICEF 2015). However, because of the few child protection programs within the educational sector that cater for the unique needs of the most vulnerable children, less than one-third of the children finish

their schooling cycle due to dropout. Dropout will result in higher chances of the children being engaged in child labor, forced marriage for most of the girls, trafficking, and sexual abuse and exploitation.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 19) obliges its members to ensure protection of children from all kinds of violence, abuse, and exploitation. Furthermore, the UNCRC Article 19 urges its member states to take necessary steps to prevent child abuse and neglect, and, at the same time, to ensure protection for child victims of violence, abuse, and exploitation. Since the UNCRC was adopted in 1989, the determination of states parties to implement all necessary actions to protect their children from any form of harm has remained unflinching. The increasing body of research showing the prevalence of violence and abuse against children in the past twenty years has contributed to this trend.

Children facing different types of abuse and neglect in Uganda have been relatively ignored when it comes to financing and supporting their protection from harm. This has been the case even though there are quite clear issues concerning the welfare of such children both in the policy and legal frameworks. The major issue that explains why such children are marginalized in terms of protection is the loss of an evidence base that would help prove how beneficial it is to invest in such programs and the need to build a case regarding the forms of child abuse and neglect that are prevalent today. In other words, the above scenario helps bring into focus the importance of building an evidence base as a way of improving investment in child protection programs.

### **2.1 Assessing the prevalence of child abuse and neglect experienced by children with disabilities in Mukono central division**

According to prevalence statistics on child abuse and neglect (CAN), about 36% of the world's population of children have experienced emotional abuse, while 22%, 16%, and 18% respectively experienced physical abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse, particularly the female child (World Health Organization [WHO], 2014). While global statistics are beneficial, the rate of child abuse and neglect should also be looked at on a national level than on a global level. This is due to the fact that, in accordance with the ecological/transactional model of community violence and CAN, there exist variations in terms of the prevalence and presentation of CAN in different societies. Some factors which may affect the CAN statistics include the levels of violence in society, gender inequality, gender roles, negative attitudes toward women, and violent discipline.

However, for example, the rates of global CAN as per CAN rates in post-conflict Uganda do not seem to capture the gravity of the issue. In one study carried out in the Mukono district involving 3706 primary school children (ages ranging from 7 years to 18 years; mean age – 13 years), 93 percent of boys and 94 percent of girls reported having been subjected to physical violence by school staff members. Other individuals were also involved in perpetrating acts of violence. Lifetime physical violence by other people apart from school staff was higher among girls (54.8% as compared to 43.7% of boys). Similarly, lifetime sexual violence victimization was higher among girls (11.8%) compared to boys (2.5%).

The results of an extensive research survey on violence among children in Uganda were released by UNICEF in 2018. The research focused on collecting information from 5,804 CYPs concerning sexual abuse, physical abuse, and emotional abuse, examining these issues in terms of the prevalence between gender and age groups. The younger participants (13-17 years) provided information on abuse experienced within the past year, while the older respondents (18-24 years) gave details of abuse suffered before the age of 18. Adolescents reported that 35% of girls compared to boys (11% compared to 2%) were raped before the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2018).

In terms of sexual violence, 25% of girls and 11% of boys reported having suffered sexual violence within the past year, with females being almost four times more likely (20%) than males to be forced into their first sexual encounter. Physical violence was common among all populations and, consistent with Devries et al.'s (2014) findings, it was most commonly experienced outside the home by school staff through means of corporal punishment. Yet, physical violence was more common among adolescent males (68%) than females (59%) and also among boys (59%) than girls (44%). Lastly, concerning emotional violence, a third of adolescents and a fifth of children reported experiencing such violence, mostly occurring at home on the part of their caregivers. It is important to note that the overwhelming majority of those children who reported emotional abuse had experienced repeated events of emotional violence within the year.

## **2.2 Analyzing the effectiveness of interventions implemented by government, NGOs, and community-based organizations in protecting children with disabilities from abuse and neglect**

Disability can be viewed as an umbrella term including impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions. According to the Preamble of the UNCRPD, “disability is an evolving concept, and that discrimination against persons with disabilities continues to be a serious and persistent violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms.” However, disability occurs through the interaction of people with impairments with societal, political, economic, environmental, or cultural barriers preventing their complete participation in society on the same footing as everybody else.

In the current world, over one billion individuals suffer from one type of disability or another. According to WHO (2011], it translates to roughly 15% of the world's total population. It has been discovered that the majority of individuals who have disabilities (80%) live in low-income and middle-income countries, and it is considered that disability affects the least advantaged segment of the population (Banks et al., 2017]. Individuals with disabilities often experience different forms of exclusion including exclusion from work, lack of access to education, health, and social opportunities (WHO, 2011]. As a result, they are more likely to be poor since having a disability means being poor but also vice versa – poor people are more prone to becoming disabled (WHO, 2011]. The influence of disability on poverty is also felt globally (Banks et al., 2017). According to the World Bank estimate done in 2004, the total annual loss due to disability was estimated at the global GDP amount of \$1.71-\$2.23 trillion; between 12%-20% of populations of developing countries were considered non-productive due to disabilities (Metts & Mondiale, 2004; Mondiale, 2007).

For persons with disabilities to participate in contributing to generating opportunities, benefit from development, and participate in decision-making processes, there might need to adopt the “twin-track approach” (DFID, 2000). The purpose of “Twin-Track Approach” is to end the vicious circle where disability leads to poverty and exclusion by empowering individuals or families through removing obstacles that prevent their social integration. Many international organizations advocate for the “twin-track approach,” including the World Bank, DFID, German Cooperation, the European Community (EC), the Finnish Cooperation, and NGOs. The concept of “twin-track approach” entails integration of measures aimed at addressing issues related to

disability in all developmental plans, programs and policies which is referred to as “mainstreaming disability,” as well as taking “targeted measures.”

WHO guidelines on Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) are an example of this theory in practice. This model is a multistakeholder, grassroots initiative that can guarantee that the United Nations' convention for the rights of people with disabilities (ILO/UNESCO/WHO, 2004) will have an impact in the community. Although the UNCRPD offers the philosophical and policy underpinning, CBR is a practical approach towards implementing disability-inclusive development (Helander, 1989). The activities involved in CBR are meant to address the basic needs of individuals with disabilities, alleviate poverty, and provide access to health care, education, employment, and social life, among other things.

### **2.3 Examining the existing interventions and support systems aimed at reducing child abuse and neglect among children with disabilities in Mukono central division**

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is the specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) that seeks to meet the long-term interests of children and safeguard their human rights as per the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The UNICEF mandate covers all children globally, including those from disadvantaged communities and this mandate also calls for protection from discrimination on grounds of disability (CRC Article 2). Incorporation of the point of view of CwDs is an integral part of UNICEF's activities and this trend has seen a significant increase over the last few years, in a global environment where there has been growing awareness of disability rights. Apart from the human rights framework for children under the CRC, a fairly recent international law instrument, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), was formulated in 2006. The CRPD sets forth the universal standard for the human rights of all PwDs around the world.

Furthermore, Article 7 of the CRPD provides specific requirements aimed at ensuring that the rights of CwDs are safeguarded and acknowledges their full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on equal footing with other children. The CRPD has prompted UNICEF to undertake different initiatives, including organizing the activities of the Global Partnership on Children with Disabilities (GPCwds). The GPCwd is a worldwide movement committed to advancing the human rights of children with disabilities. In 2013, UNICEF produced its flagship report, State of the World's Children, dedicated to disability. This process revealed the absence

of accurate statistics concerning these "invisible children". In terms of policy environment in Uganda, it is progressive in that it is future-oriented and human-rights focused. In addition to having signed and ratified both UN Conventions (CRC having been in Uganda since 1990 and CRPD and its Optional Protocol in 2008, without any reservation), the human rights of PwDs are provided for in the Constitution of Uganda, 1995 and the Ugandan government has taken steps towards passing progressive disability legislations (PwDs Act 2006). The other step forward has been the selection of a Ugandan candidate to represent on the CRPD Committee itself, which in itself is an effort in the right direction in terms of addressing the issue of PwDs in Uganda. The Ugandan office of UNICEF has received extremely positive feedback when it comes to engagement with the national stakeholders. The Members of the Parliament of Uganda and the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development (MoGLSD), the lead Ministry for PwDs in Uganda, have

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### **3.0 Introduction**

Methodology of the study was discussed in this chapter. Research design, study site, population, sampling procedures, sample size, sample composition, methods of data collection, methods of data processing, methods of data analysis, data quality assurance, reliability, and ethical considerations were some of the components of the chapter.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

A research design is a consensus on how the criteria for collection and analysis of data in ways that will seek to ensure the relevance of research purposes. The current research design is a mixed-method research design. Mixed methods entail both quantitative and qualitative research designs and the latter was used in the current study. Case study research design was adopted in the study because, in the process of conducting the research, the researcher employed qualitative approaches. That is because the community development office where the study was being carried out is a case study. Quantitative research design was utilized to achieve statistical inference with regard to the study findings. Interviews were conducted to the key informants who have relevant information on the issue being researched. Focus group discussions with parents of neglected children would also be employed in the study in order to acquire extensive information on the subject matter.

#### **3.2 Area of the study**

This research was conducted in Mukono Central Division of Mukono district. Mukono district is bordered by Kayunga District to the north, Buikwe District to the east, Kalangala District to the south-west, Kira Municipality and Wakiso District to the west, and Luweero District to the north-west. The community development office in Mukono district is favored since this particular office operates in the areas it serves people with disabilities.

### **3.3 Sample size and selection**

A determination of the sample size shall be done via the Morgan and Krejcie, 1970 methodology. In this case, the unit of analysis shall be MCD, while the unit of inquiry will include all the management and technical staff working in different departments of the organization. The unit of analysis can be geographical, such as a state, district, village, and others, a school, or an individual (Namubiru, 2020). The decision of the sample size will hinge on the number of respondents and other individuals included in the sample.

### **3.4 Sampling Techniques.**

Simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques will be used in selecting victims of child abuse and neglect. Purposive sampling technique allows the researcher to utilize only those cases that have information regarding the objectives of the research (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Simple random sampling is applied to choose LC1 chairmen, committee leaders, parents, and organizational workers who have experience on children with disabilities within Mukono Central Division of Mukono district. This sampling method provides the researcher with correct results, thus helping to identify victims of child abuse and neglect in homes which are selected through purposive sampling technique. Victims shall be from families where parents have divorced and where most of them are undergoing rehabilitation.

### **3.5 Data collection methods and instruments.**

The study used questionnaires and interviews as data collection instruments.

### **3.6. Questionnaire**

Kothari (2004) further explains that a questionnaire is a set of questions concerning other items intended to collect relevant information for the study. All groups mentioned in terms of population and sampling will be given questions printed in papers and asked to give answers based on their best understanding of the questions posed. The questions in the questionnaire are organized based on the research topic in order to capture the most relevant information.

### **3.7. Interviews**

The researcher is using unstructured interviews as a data collection method for additional use alongside the questionnaire because questionnaires have short responses and have the nature of Locket scale. Interviews give the researcher flexibility to conduct interviews because he wants to obtain good information at the end. The interviewing process is going to be conducted to section

heads on procurement planning and representatives of communities such as NGO etc. This will help to provide strong evidence to answer research problems.

### **3.8 Observation.**

Observation is the fundamental process of becoming part of an occurrence. The technique of observing takes on a scientific dimension when there is a systematic approach applied during observation coupled with a scientific attitude. This means observing events occurring in nature precisely, especially in relation to their cause-effect relationships. During observation, the researcher will visit the place where the occurrence takes place and document the findings. Observation simply refers to the ability to observe something without making changes to it or the variables associated with it.

### **3.9. Data Sources and Types.**

The study employed both Primary and Secondary Data.

### **3.10. Primary data**

Primary data was collected from the field using personal interviews and self-administered questionnaires. This is because of the opinion of the respondents chosen in the study.

### **3.11. Secondary data.**

Secondary data was gathered by reviewing different forms of documents such as books, journals, magazines, and other forms of published materials.

### **3.12. Data presentation and analysis.**

The data collection process was done for completeness, classified, coded, and analyzed in a computer, and this data would be presented in frequency distribution tables with the help of SPSS.

### **3.13 Quality /Error control**

Validity and Reliability were the main considerations that guided this research, and they are explained below.

### **3.14 Instrument Validity and Reliability**

### **3.15 Reliability of the instruments**

Instrument Reliability The instrument reliability will be determined on the basis of the consistency of measurement of the intended concept in question. On the other hand, the validity of research depends on the degree to which the asked questions are related to the intended

concept (Bryman, 2012). Validity in quantitative data will be accomplished through sampling, use of appropriate research instruments and analysis of statistical data. In this case, the structured questionnaire will be used as an appropriate data gathering tool.

### **3.16 Validity of the instruments.**

The validity of the study was achieved by conducting a pilot test on the research tool before data was collected. It is a statistic that measures the degree to which each item relates to other items as an assessment of one construct, where the scale is between 0 and 1, and those scores that range above 0.7 are seen as reliable (Tavakol & Dennis, 2011).

### **3.17 Data processing and analysis**

Analysis of data plays a crucial role in any research endeavor as it aids in providing an interpretation of the gathered data. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 23 will be employed in analyzing and processing the obtained data. It is anticipated that both qualitative and quantitative data will be generated from this study. The quantitative data was analyzed descriptively while the qualitative data was analyzed using themes. Quantitative data was presented in tabular form, while qualitative data was analyzed using prose form in relation to the research objectives.

### **3.18 Ethical Considerations**

Within the research process, ethics means how appropriate you conduct yourself towards the rights of those people who become subjects of your research or people affected by the results of your research (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). This implies that as the researcher, he or she is supposed to ensure that the research is conducted in a manner which is methodically acceptable as well as ethically right to everyone concerned. It also means that the researcher must ensure that people involved in the research process are not forced to be respondents and must be properly informed of everything concerning the research including the risks involved, thus consent is obtained from them.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, data on intervention measures used to reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect among children with disabilities in Mukono Central Division will be presented, analyzed, and interpreted. Data presentation will be according to the objectives and research questions of the study. Data analysis will be done through tabulation, frequencies, and thematic analyses.

#### 4.1 Response Rate

This section shows how many respondents participated. Out of 50 questionnaires distributed, 45 were successfully completed and returned, representing a response rate of 90%. This response rate was considered adequate for analysis.

#### 4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

##### 4.2.1 Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Men	18	40%
Female	27	60%
Total	45	100%

#### Interpretation:

This shows that the majority of respondents were (male/female), indicating that from the information given, most of the people who answered were women, making up 60% of the group, which is 27 people, while men made up 40%, which is 18 people.

In the context of interventions for reducing child abuse and neglect among children with disabilities in Mukono Central Division, this gender distribution indicates several key factors.

In Uganda, women usually take care of kids with disabilities. This is because, in the past, women were seen as the ones who should care for children. A study by Kansiime et al. in 2022 found that women, especially mothers and other female family members are often the ones who care

for kids with special needs. This means they know the most about what works and what does not when it comes to helping these kids in their communities.

The involvement of women in community-based rehabilitation and child protection services is apparent. The reason for this might be that women are most likely to be considered the initial point of connection for social workers and non-governmental organizations that wish to minimize cases of domestic neglect and abuse. For instance, according to UNICEF (2021), female caregivers usually play an active part in such interventions. Thus, child protection and family-oriented programs will become more successful if their creators pay attention to women's activities in this respect. In other words, the consideration of the role of women in family-oriented issues will facilitate the success of the initiatives designed to eliminate domestic neglect and abuse.

From the findings, it is clear that women play an essential role in helping children with disabilities. Various research studies, including the one conducted by Opio and Nambalirwa in 2020, prove that female adults are more active in supporting disabled children in rural areas such as Mukono. Women are generally the ones who observe daily challenges faced by disabled children and are more vocal in addressing these issues. For instance, they establish and manage support groups that highlight any instances of maltreatment and sexual abuse reported in their areas. Therefore, women are dedicated and passionate when protecting and advocating for children's welfare.

It is critical to highlight the importance of the study's demographic profile. The majority of respondents were female adults who were actively involved in protecting and caring for vulnerable individuals. They had firsthand experiences working within the area. Thus, their feedback was useful for understanding various approaches for assisting people with different needs, including counseling services, financial aid, and law enforcement in communities.

#### **4.2.2 Age Distribution**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
18–25	10	22%
26–35	15	33%
36–45	12	27%

**Interpretation:**

Most respondents are in the 26–35 age group making up 33.3% of the sample. The 36–45 age group comes second at 26.7%. This meant that over 60% of participants are in their years for taking care of children and family. For reducing child abuse and neglect among children with disabilities in Mukono Central Division this age distribution is important Lived. Early Intervention Many respondents are in the 26–35 age group likely to be parents or new caregivers. According to Plan International (2022), younger caregivers are often targeted for interventions as they form habits about discipline and protection. Most respondents fall within the age group of 26–35 age group making up 33.3% of the sample. The 36–45 age group comes second at 26.7%. This means that over 60% of participants are in their years for taking care of children and family. For reducing child abuse and neglect among children with disabilities in Mukono Central Division this age distribution is important Lived. Many respondents are in the 26–35 age group likely to be parents or new caregivers. According to Plan International 3 (2022), younger caregivers are often targeted for interventions as they form habits about discipline and protection. This age profile helps the study by capturing insights, from caregivers who can evaluate child protection policies.

**4.2.3 Education Level**

Level	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	8	18%
Secondary	20	44%
Tertiary	17	38%

**Interpretation:**

Based on the data provided for Mukono Central Division here is what it meant and what it implies for professionals. Most people (44%) who took part had finished Secondary school. A lot of people (38%) had finished Tertiary education. A small number (18%) had only finished Primary school. This shows that most people (82%) have least finished Secondary school. This means they can read and understand well. They are involved in a study on helping children who are abused or neglected. This Implies the education level of the people is very important. It affects how we design help for children who are abused or neglected. Here is what it means most people (82%) have finished Tertiary school. This is good for teaching evidence-based training

programs. Research says that people with education can understand complex ideas. They can learn about parenting.

### 4.3 Presentation of the findings

#### 4.3.1 Forms of Abuse Experienced

Type of Abuse	Frequency	Percentage
Physical Abuse	15	33%
Emotional Abuse	12	27%
Sexual Abuse	7	16%
Neglect	11	24%

#### **Interpretation:**

The results show that physical abuse is the most prevalent type of abuse that occurs in these children. Physical abuse affects 33 percent of these children. After that is abuse, affecting 27 percent of the sample. Neglect affects 24 percent of the children. These results tell us that disabled children face multiple types of violence. This is usually due to the caregivers' high level of stress and lack of support services. In addition, society is not always tolerant of disabled individuals.

It is a reality that there are cases where physical abuse happens so frequently that it causes concern for everyone on Earth. There are cases when certain studies, such as those conducted by Jones et al., show that there is a greater tendency to physically assault children with special needs four times more often than normal kids. Caregivers can become overwhelmed with frustration at the amount of assistance required from them. When this happens, they may vent their frustrations violently on the children.

We discovered that emotional abuse and neglect were common issues. Emotional abuse and neglect affected 51% of the children under our observation. According to the World Health Organization, children with language and cognitive disorders are at a greater risk of being neglected. It is because not everyone understands their needs. Our research proves that there should be more done to protect such children. It is essential to guarantee that these kids receive proper assistance.

#### 4.3.2 Table: Effectiveness of Interventions

Intervention	Very Effective	Effective	Not Effective
Awareness Campaigns	10	20	15
NGO Programs	15	18	12
Government Policies	8	15	22

#### Interpretation:

Based on the results, it is apparent that there are varying degrees of effectiveness associated with the different interventions used in mitigating the problem of child abuse and neglect among disabled children in Mukono Central Division. The highest ratings were reported for NGO programs, which were rated as “very effective” by 15 respondents and as “effective” by another 18 respondents. It appears that the contribution of non-governmental organizations towards child welfare is considerable and obvious, probably because of the flexibility and contextuality of their actions. NGOs have a better access to disadvantaged communities and are able to adapt to the situation and provide the necessary assistance. According to UNICEF, community-based initiatives and interventions are essential in child protection.

However, there are some respondents who rated the awareness campaigns as neither very effective nor effective (15). It means that even though the awareness campaign plays an important role in increasing awareness, the results will not be achieved unless there is sustained effort or enforcement. As explained in the research conducted by the World Health Organization, awareness alone will not be enough unless there is some form of structural intervention such as legal enforcement and social services.

The effectiveness of government policies was the lowest among all other types of interventions, with only eight ratings of very effective and fifteen ratings of effective (22 not effective). It indicates that there is a flaw in the implementation of the government policies for the welfare of children. Although government policies are available, they cannot yield any tangible effects on the ground. The studies conducted by Save the Children have shown that the implementation of policy frameworks fails due to resource constraints and ineffective implementation.

### 4.3.3 Table: Accessibility of Services

Service	Accessible	Not Accessible
Health Services	20	25
Counseling Services	15	30
Legal Services	12	33

#### **Interpretation:**

From the analysis of data in the above table, it can be concluded that a higher percentage of the respondents indicated lack of accessibility to various forms of support services necessary for children with disabilities. For example, more respondents lacked accessibility to health services (25 respondents) than the number of respondents accessing health services (20 respondents). More respondents found lack of accessibility to counseling services (30 respondents) than those accessing such services (15 respondents) and more found it hard to access legal services (33 respondents) than those accessing these services (12 respondents).

This shows that majority of the children with disabilities and their caregivers faced barriers in trying to access various support systems. The main reasons for the unavailability or lack of accessibility to different types of support systems include long distances to the centers where these services are provided, expensive transport and care fees, lack of qualified personnel like specialized counselors who offer counseling services, inadequate infrastructure and negative attitude towards people with disability and child abuse in general.

This is evident from various studies. According to WHO (2011), disabled children experience major hindrances in accessing health and social services because of physical inaccessibility, unavailability of staff members who can help them, and poor societal attitude towards their inclusion in the mainstream society. Likewise, according to UNICEF (2013), lack of availability of inclusive services and ineffective child protection systems in many developing countries limit their access to counseling and legal support.

In addition to this, according to UNDP (2019), legal services become less accessible for such children due to complicated procedures, ignorance about their basic rights, and lack of disability-friendly reporting systems. In many instances, parents do not know how they should go forward and complain about any kind of abuse that their children might be suffering.

For instance, in Uganda, the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development (2018) indicates that in the case of semi-urban areas like Mukono District, service provision within the area of child protection is limited due to inadequate financial resources, limited staffing, and poor coordination amongst various providers of such services.

This implies that the inaccessibility rates are as a result of service delivery failures, economic limitations, and continued stigma, which prevent successful intervention against child abuse and neglect among disabled children.

#### **4.4 Challenges Affecting Interventions**

##### **Common challenges identified**

The findings of research conducted on interventions aimed at addressing the problems of child abuse and neglect of disabled children in Mukono Central Division have brought to light various complexities involved. These complexities are interrelated in nature, forming a vicious circle that cannot be broken easily.

##### **Chronic Household Poverty**

Poverty continues to be a primary cause of abuse and neglect among children in Mukono Central. Studies reveal that about 55% of children in Uganda are living in multi-dimensional poverty. Poverty gets worsened when there is a disabled member in the family since there are associated expenses that come with taking care of a person with a disability. Parents from poor homes are compelled to seek work far away, hence leaving disabled children neglected, entrusting them to their younger siblings for supervision ("Care Gaps Among Children in Low-Income Communities"). The act of neglect is not done out of malice but arises from economic hardships where the parents do not have money to provide for childcare or special medical treatment.

### **Deeply Rooted Cultural Beliefs**

Cultural stories in East African societies, such as Mukono, revolve around disability as a result of “bad fortune” or “spirits.” These practices cause high levels of discrimination in the society, with the effects being that children suffering from disabilities end up being “hidden” by their families out of shame (PLOS One, 2017). This makes it extremely difficult for any community-based rehabilitation personnel to reach out and help the victim. Moreover, children with disabilities are always considered insignificant in terms of family priorities since they are not productive or functional.

### **Lack of Public and Legal Awareness**

One major problem is that there is low awareness among the public about the rights of children with disabilities and how their mistreatment falls under the Children Act of Uganda. The people taking care of these kids are unaware that denying them medication or employing excessive physical punishment are illegal. The findings of UNICEF reveal that even these children are unaware of how to report such instances, for example, using the SAUTI 116 toll-free hotline. They may be unaware of this information or may not have access to a phone to call them (UNICEF, 2024).

### **Inadequate Funding for Child Protection**

The interventions in Mukono suffer immensely because of the absence of funding for structures geared towards protecting children. For instance, the Mukono District Probation Office and other community-based organizations frequently face difficulties with the "fiscal space" needed for consistent monitoring, home visitations, and rescue operations (MGLSD Policy, 2023). As a consequence, there is a dire shortage of "safe houses" that can be relied upon to deal with cases involving complicated medical or psychological issues. The consequence is that children who are abused and taken out of their homes have nowhere to go back to.

## **Weak Institutional Coordination**

Fourthly, coordination issues among the involved government bodies, hospitals, and educational institutions also weaken any efforts toward intervention. According to the research on the situation analysis of children with disabilities in Uganda, even if legislation such as the Persons with Disabilities Act 2020 already exists, their execution is often compromised due to limited data and resource sharing between departments (MGLSD, 2023). This results in cases where a child receives treatment for his/her injuries in the hospital but fails to draw the attention of the social welfare department to investigate the root cause of those injuries.

### **Interpretation:**

The problems outlined above severely restrict the efficiency of efforts designed to safeguard disabled

## **4.5 Summary of Findings**

The results indicate that: The results show that there is a crisis in Mukono Central Division, where children with disabilities are more prone to being victimized because of the absence of protective structures. This paper gives the results in four paragraphs as discussed below.

### **High Prevalence of Abuse and Neglect**

The findings support the notion that child abuse and neglect are common occurrences among children with disabilities in Mukono Central. This finding is corroborated by other research across the nation carried out by UNICEF (2024). This research states that the prevalence rate of violence towards children with disabilities in Uganda is much higher than in cases of children who do not have disabilities. The prevalence of violence among children with disabilities in Mukono Central is disguised due to the tendency of keeping such children indoors, where the abuse goes unnoticed.

### **Limited Effectiveness of Existing Interventions**

Several interventions, such as Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) and child protection committees, have been implemented within the district. However, the findings indicate that they

are not fully efficient. The study conducted by the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development (MGLSD, 2023) indicates that interventions cannot be effective due to their "one size fits all" design, which does not consider specific communication or physical problems of disabled children. Within Mukono, even though there are several programs, they do not provide the necessary technical skills needed for dealing with children with cognitive and sensory impairments. Consequently, protection is rather symbolic and cannot prevent future neglects.

### **Inaccessibility of Support Systems**

There was a clear gap between the presence of a support network and its accessibility to the beneficiaries. As highlighted by PLOS One (2017), the physical distance from administrative centers and the unavailability of inclusive means of transport are key barriers to families in semi-urban settings such as Mukono. In cases where the caregiver is ready to disclose cases of abuse, the "justice chain" is not accessible due to geographical and financial reasons. In addition, the SAUTI 116 hotline for reporting child abuse is underutilized since deaf and mute children cannot access the telephone network service.

### **Persistence of Socio-Economic and Cultural Barriers**

Last but not least, the results confirm that socioeconomic and cultural hurdles still constitute the major challenges to children's welfare. As per the National Policy on Persons with Disabilities (2020), long-held cultural beliefs that disability constitutes a curse still underlie discriminatory behaviors within the family unit. In tandem with extreme poverty at home, such perceptions contribute to the perception that the child with a disability constitutes an economic liability and not a right-bearer. As such, a preference order for care emerges, whereby the disabled child becomes the first casualty of malnutrition and the last beneficiary of educational and health care opportunities.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the study results, conclusions arrived at after conducting the study, and the recommendation section based on the results obtained. Additionally, the chapter shows gaps that need more attention in future studies.

#### 5.1 Summary of Findings

The study was carried out to determine the interventions that can be used to reduce child abuse and neglect among children with disabilities in Mukono Central Division.

##### 5.1.1 Prevalence and Forms of Child Abuse and Neglect

It was found out that child abuse and neglect is widespread among children with disabilities within the Mukono Central Division, which corroborates the global literature on the greater susceptibility of this category of children. The fact that children with disabilities rely heavily on their caregivers means that they are at risk of suffering from abuse in situations where there is insufficient knowledge about child rights. WHO (2012) and UNICEF (2021) assert that children with disabilities have a higher chance of being subjected to violence, abuse, and neglect than their counterparts without disabilities due to the stigma, discrimination, and marginalization they face.

Physical abuse, such as beating, whipping, and severe punishment, was also one of the major types of abuse that were found to be widespread. It is important to note that in a number of societies, corporal punishment continues to be socially acceptable as means of discipline, but its effects become even worse when used against disabled children who are unable to comprehend the motives behind it or act according to expectations. WHO (2012) mentions that it can inflict great physical and emotional damage on the victim. This form of discipline suggests a lack of awareness regarding better methods.

Moreover, emotional abuse is common and usually occurs through insults, discrimination, rejection, and use of stigma-laden language against children with disabilities. Cultural negative perceptions and prejudices against persons with disabilities are significant contributing factors to emotional abuse. As per UNICEF (2021), stigma and social exclusion affect children both emotionally and prevent them from participating in family and community activities. Emotional abuse may manifest as self-destructive behavior, poor self-image, depression, and social isolation, making these children more vulnerable to other kinds of abuse.

Another common form of child abuse was the denial of basic needs such as food, proper health care, schooling, and supervision. This is mostly associated with poverty and stress among the caregivers in resource-poor environments. The WHO and World Bank (2011) suggest that parents of children with disabilities suffer a heavier burden economically, resulting in neglect of such children either unintentionally or intentionally. Children are prevented from accessing educational institutions and health care facilities owing to economic reasons or lack of perception regarding the benefits of these services.

Despite sexual abuse occurring less often in the study, this type of abuse is still a major issue. According to several studies, sexual abuse of disabled children tends to be under-reported because of fear, stigma, communication problems, and the absence of proper ways to report the crime. In one of their studies, Jones et al. (2012) found that disabled children are three to four times more likely to be sexually abused compared to other children.

### **5.1.2 Effectiveness of Interventions**

From the study findings, it is clear that despite the presence of different interventions to curb child abuse and neglect cases among children with disabilities in Mukono Central Division, their efficiency is rather low. Policies and legislative measures such as child protection laws and disability rights acts offer a solid base to protect children at risk. Nonetheless, studies reveal that having policies alone cannot ensure the achievement of desired results without proper implementation and enough resources. As pointed out by WHO (2012) and UNICEF (2021), poor enforcement and institutional capacity contribute significantly to the failure of such systems to protect children with disabilities.

Furthermore, NGO projects and community projects have played an important role in closing gaps in services, offering psychosocial support, rehabilitation services, and community sensitization. Campaigns for raising awareness have also led to an improvement in identifying the issue of child abuse and children with disabilities. However, their efforts are undermined by a lack of resources, as the funding they receive does not always allow them to implement interventions on a wide scale. For example, according to the research published in PLOS ONE in 2020, under-resourced initiatives cannot have a long-term effect, especially in areas where the need for them is greater.

Additionally, the poor coordination between stakeholders decreases the effectiveness of such initiatives. Various agencies do not work together and sometimes duplicate their efforts in some sectors and pay little attention to others. As per the World Health Organization in 2012, such fragmentation hampers service delivery and lowers its efficiency as a whole. Thus, without cooperation, these initiatives cannot reach all of their goals.

However, the problem of human resources availability is a severe threat to the effectiveness of the intervention measures implemented. It is evident that many organizations do not possess specialists that can deal with disabilities, protect children from harm, and help individuals cope with stress and anxiety. As mentioned by the World Health Organization and World Bank (2011), the scarcity of competent workers hinders the provision of inclusive and efficient services to people. Thus, despite the presence of intervention activities, their outcomes are not as successful as expected.

### **5.1.3 Accessibility of Support Systems**

These findings are in agreement with other research studies indicating that there exist structural and social barriers which hinder children with disabilities from accessing various kinds of services. Support services such as medical services, rehabilitation, counseling, and protection services are centralized in cities in most developing countries, especially in Uganda, leaving other rural and peri-urban regions without any means of accessing these services. As noted by the World Health Organization and World Bank in 2011, children with disabilities have higher unmet health and social needs owing to existing disparities in service provision systems. This makes such children prone to maltreatment and exploitation.

Distance to service centers is another issue contributing to the problem because many people living in regions such as Mukono Central Division have to face difficulties associated with high costs of transport and underdeveloped transport infrastructure. As a result, many caregivers are unable to travel and seek specialized help related to physiotherapy, counseling, or legal issues. According to existing research, poor accessibility of transportation is one of the major barriers to using health care services by persons with disabilities (Peters et al., 2008). In such conditions, many children are left in an environment of constant abuse and negligence.

The inability to use health care services provided is also explained by the lack of facilities that will make it possible for persons with disabilities to receive appropriate assistance. It is impossible for them to attend many centers because most of them do not provide ramps or other kinds of help. The problem lies in the fact that many facilities cannot provide assistance to children having various kinds of disabilities. The report prepared by UNICEF notes that difficult-to-use environments make many people avoid seeking necessary assistance (UNICEF, 2021). Moreover, there is low awareness of available services that also discourages caregivers.

Poverty continues to be an essential underlying constraint that cuts across all other constraints. The parents of children with disabilities face greater economic hardships as a result of medical expenses, caregiving responsibilities, and inadequate employment opportunities. According to PLOS ONE (2020), financial constraints make it difficult for caregivers to access interventions, deliver sufficient care, and address protection needs. In addition, poverty makes it more difficult to engage with interventions available. It is important to ensure that interventions are easily accessible by addressing physical, information, and economic constraints simultaneously.

In conclusion, according to the study findings, child abuse and neglect of children with disabilities in Mukono Central Division is a serious issue.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

Child abuse and neglect among children with disabilities in Mukono Central Division still persists and is a challenge because of gaps between the policy statements and their implementation. Despite the establishment of policies like the Children (Amendment) Act of 2020 and the Persons with Disabilities Act of 2020, the persistence of abuse shows that they are

not implemented. This shows the need for more efforts to be put towards the enforcement of the policies.

Another factor that was found to cause the persistence of abuse and neglect was the inability of institutions involved in the protection of children to handle such issues. Institutions such as the police, probation officers, teachers, and health officers involved in dealing with abused children had inadequate capacity to deal with children with disabilities.

The study further reveals the role of poverty and vulnerability in child neglect of children with disabilities. Lack of resources and financial stability among the caregiver makes it impossible for them to provide basic needs for the welfare of the child; hence, making them vulnerable to abuse.

Moreover, there is still discrimination, stigma, and negative cultural attitudes towards children with disabilities. These negative attitudes have been noted to worsen the situation as well as discouraging reporting of such acts, thereby worsening the vulnerability of the child.

It was further revealed that children with disabilities do not get adequate access to health care, education, rehabilitation, and other vital services. This lack of access denies these children the necessary developmental opportunities and makes them totally dependent on the caregiver, which might make them vulnerable to neglect and other forms of abuse.

There is also the issue of poor reporting mechanisms among the community at large. Fear of stigmatization and lack of awareness has led many cases to remain unreported.

Moreover, the research highlighted that although non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations are working towards dealing with the issue of child protection, their interventions are often poorly coordinated with the government system. Consequently, interventions meant to protect children with disabilities from abuse and neglect are not effective and sustainable enough.

It was further observed that interventions do not have a wide enough scope to cover all kinds of disabilities children suffer from. Thus, interventions meant to protect children are not inclusive enough to meet the needs of all children with different kinds of disabilities.

Furthermore, the study found that solving the issue of child abuse and neglect entails handling several interrelated components, such as poverty, social attitudes, and institutional weaknesses. Therefore, an intervention plan should incorporate a multi-sectoral approach to ensure successful results.

To summarize, it can be concluded that solving the problem of child abuse and neglect in Mukono Central Division will require the implementation of a multi-sectoral approach that is both coordinated and inclusive. Moreover, the intervention must include measures to enforce laws, provide social protection, increase social awareness, and deliver services to children with disabilities.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

As part of the strategy to address these gaps, the government should focus on enhancing the enforcement of existing policy and legal frameworks for the protection of children and disability inclusiveness. This can be done by developing operational policies for the Children (Amendment) Act, 2020 and the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2020 and ensuring adequate budget allocation for monitoring and evaluation. Enhancement of institutional commitment will guarantee that the child protection system is functional and available to children with disabilities. According to UNICEF (2021), enforcement of legal frameworks greatly reduces child vulnerabilities. In addition, WHO (2012) identifies governance framework as an important element in preventing child abuse.

Considering the inadequacy of institutional capacity that was uncovered during the research, there is a need for sustainable and ongoing efforts to build capacity among all actors involved in child protection. It is important to train police officers, probation officers, teachers, and health care workers on how to handle abuse cases involving children with disabilities in order to enable them to recognize, report, and manage such cases effectively. Building capacity involves the formulation of standardized procedures, oversight systems, and incorporation of disability in professional education programs. Human resources will be better equipped with knowledge and skills to detect abuse cases at an early stage and ensure proper management, thus preventing the occurrence of abuse.

As per the above results on the importance of poverty and economic vulnerability as key risk factors of neglect, it is necessary for the government and other development actors to increase social safety nets and empower economically poor people. Increasing the scope of initiatives like SAGE and other livelihood opportunities for caregivers will go a long way in relieving the financial burden of caregivers of children with disabilities and improving their standard of care. In addition, it will be helpful if special health, education, and rehabilitation aid is provided to economically vulnerable households. According to research from the World Bank and WHO (2011), increasing household economic capabilities leads to a significant reduction in child neglect cases, and PLOS ONE (2020) findings prove the link between poverty and child abuse.

Given the targeted deep-rooted cultural perceptions, stigma, and discrimination noted in the conclusions, the key actors in both governments and nongovernmental sectors should step up their community sensitization and behavior change programs. Such activities should be undertaken through the participation of community leaders, religious organizations, educational institutions, and media houses in promoting good perception of disability and reinforcing children's rights. The work of NGOs and community-based organizations should complement such measures by undertaking capacity building on good parental care, creation of support groups, and provision of secure, confidential, and accessible channels for reporting cases of violence against children.

In terms of filling these gaps in service provision, coordination, and inclusion, there is a need for the adoption of an all-inclusive approach that incorporates sectors such as health, education, social security, and the law. The government needs to improve access to inclusive education, health, and rehabilitative care as well as psychological support for children with various disabilities. In this regard, collaboration between NGOs and community-based organizations and government agencies is critical to enhance referral networks and coordinated service provision. Integrated strategies that incorporate awareness raising, service provision, and economic empowerment are vital in addressing abuse and neglect among children. As mentioned earlier by the WHO and the World Bank (2011), multi-sectoral and inclusive strategies are the most effective way of achieving sustainable child protection.

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## APPENDICES

### Research questionnaire

#### INTERVENTIONS FOR REDUCING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT AMONG CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN MUKONO CENTRAL DIVISION MUKONO DISTRICT

Dear respondent,

I am Nassali Rita, a student at Uganda Christian University, Mukono, studying a Bachelor of Social Work. I am researching on ways of mitigating the incidence of child abuse and neglect cases among children with disabilities in Mukono central division.

It is kind of you to assist in this research by responding to the following questions. Your answers will remain anonymous for purely academic purposes.

**Instructions: Please tick (✓) the most appropriate response.**

#### Section A: Background Information

1. Gender

Male  Female

2. Age group

18–25  26–35  36–45  46 and above

3. Marital status

Single  Married  Divorced  Widowed

4. Level of education

No formal education  Primary  Secondary  Tertiary

5. Occupation

Parent/Guardian  Teacher  Social Worker  Health Worker  Other (specify)

6. How are you related to children with disabilities?

Parent  Caregiver  Teacher  Community member  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Section B: Awareness of Child Abuse and Neglect

7. Are you aware of cases of child abuse and neglect among children with disabilities in your community?

Yes  No

8. What forms of abuse are most common? (Tick all that apply)

Physical abuse

Emotional abuse

Sexual abuse

Neglect (e.g., lack of food, care, education)

9. In your opinion, what are the main causes of abuse and neglect of children with disabilities?

10. Do you think children with disabilities are more vulnerable to abuse than other children?

Yes  No

Explain your answer: \_\_\_\_\_

Section C: Existing Interventions

11. Are there any interventions/programs in place to reduce child abuse and neglect in your area?

Yes  No

12. If yes, which of the following interventions exist? (Tick all that apply)

Community awareness programs

Counseling services

Legal support/services

School-based programs

Rehabilitation services

Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

13. Who mainly provides these interventions?

Government

NGOs

Community leaders

Religious institutions

Other \_\_\_\_\_

14. How effective do you think these interventions are?

Very effective  Effective  Not effective

15. What challenges affect the implementation of these interventions?

Section D: Attitudes and Perceptions

16. How does the community perceive children with disabilities?

Positively  Negatively  Neutral

17. Do cultural beliefs contribute to abuse and neglect?

Yes  No

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

18. Are families willing to report cases of abuse?

Yes  No

Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_



# UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

12<sup>th</sup> March, 2026

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: INTRODUCTORY LETTER FOR RESEARCH

This is to introduce to you **NASSALI Rita** Registration number **M23B15/023**, a student of Uganda Christian University, pursuing Bachelor's degree in Social Work and Administration. She is expected to carry out research in the final year under the guidance of a university supervisor in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the above-mentioned award.

Topic: "The interventions for reducing child abuse and neglect among children with disabilities in Mukono Central Division, Mukono District"

The purpose of this communication is to request your office to allow her collect data from your organization. Any assistance rendered to her will be highly appreciated.



Yours faithfully

Doreen Kukugiza

Coordinator, Research & Fieldwork Programmes

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Email: dkukugiza@ucu.ac.ug

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