Detailed report for the Community and online response to COVID-19 by NASWU in partnership with Child's i Foundation July –August 2020

Project Title: Strengthening Social Service Workforce to support Uganda Government and Ministry of Health (MoH) to holistically prevent and respond to COVID-19

Tororo Community and District leaders standing in solidarity to end violence against children after our community engagement with 102 district leaders and stakeholders.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms.

NASWU: National Association of Social Workers of Uganda.

MGLSD**:** Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development.

CIF: Child's i Foundation

COVID-19: Coronavirus disease of 2019.

MoH : Ministry of Health.

IFSW: International Federation of Social Work.

CRANE: Children at Risk Action Network.

ADRA: Adventist Development and Relief Agency.

SOS. Societas Socialis

KCCA: Kampala Capital City Authority.

PPE: personal protective equipment

PSS: Psychosocial Support Services.

1.1 Executive Summary

Project name: "Strengthening Social Service Workforce to support Uganda Government and Ministry of Health (MoH) to holistically prevent and respond to COVID-19."

Overall objective. Strengthening frontline Social Service Workforce and Community leaders to take lead and effectively respond to COVID-19.

Implementer: National Association of Social Workers of Uganda in partnership with Child's *i* foundation with recommendation from Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development-MGLSD.

Project scope: Implemented in the COVID-19 high-risk districts of Tororo (boarder district) Kampala district (Makindye division) and Mpigi districts (fishing community district) and empowering Social Service Workforce through webinars.

Project duration: Two months from July 1, 2020 – August 30, 2020.

Project total budget: 18,200,000. (Eighteen million two hundred thousand shillings only.)

Model of intervention. Community engagement based on social work principle of self-determination:

Project intervention levels: (1). Community engagements with district and key community stakeholders in the three-high risk COVID-19 districts. (2). Engagement with frontline social service workers through webinars. (3). Wide informational sharing nationally and internationally. (4). Supporting the ministry of health to offer psychosocial support to COVID-19 quarantine centers.

1.2 Project Background

National Association of Social Workers of Uganda (NASWU), with recommendation from her mother ministry – MGLSD, partnered with Child's i Foundation to complement the government of Uganda and Ministry of Health effort to respond to COVID-19 under a two months project titled. "Strengthening Social Service Workforce to support Uganda Government and Ministry of Health (MoH) to holistically prevent and respond to COVID-19." This was informed by professional analysis and assessment of intervention gap of low community engagement in the national efforts to effectively respond to COVID-19 in selected districts of Tororo (boarder district) Kampala district (Makindye division) and Mpigi districts (fishing communities) and by empowering frontline social service workers through webinars, wide information sharing nationally and internationally and supporting the ministry of health to offer psychosocial support to COVID-19 quarantine centers in Kampala and Wakiso districts.

1.3 Project Rationale

Communities must take lead in responding to COVID-19, own the response and sustain it. This is a change strategy founded on social work principle of self-determination, that views a community as a catalyst of change, agent of change, target of change, and an indispensable resource that the community itself will consume. So, this project intended to listen to community leaders and empowering them based on local knowledge and resources as the most effective way of responding to COVID-19, in particular protecting vulnerable children and families during this global health catastrophe and challenge of our time. Uganda had reached 1,025 confirmed cases as of July 12, 2020. Dispelling myth and fear, disseminate appropriate information to community members and COVID-19 district stakeholders through supporting the national COVID-19 response by Uganda government and MOH was among our major intervention for this project.

1.4 Objectives of our intervention

Main objective

Strengthening frontline Social Service Workforce and Community leaders to take lead and effectively respond to COVID-19.

Specific Objectives

- To build Capacity of local leaders, para social workers and government officials in selected districts local government to support vulnerable families and children during and after COVID-19 pandemic through webinars and engagement with local leaders.
- To create advocacy through different media platforms for easy dissemination of information to community leaders and frontline social service workers with a view of generating debate on the best ways of protecting children and vulnerable families during and after COVID-19.
- To listen to the local leaders and frontline social service workers on the creative local/ indigenous knowledge that can support national efforts to respond to COVID-19 based on social work principle of self-determination.
- To support and harmonies our intervention with Ministry of Gender COVID-19 strategy, MoH COVID-19 guidelines so as to empower frontline social service workers effectively respond to COVID-19.
- Offer psychosocial support in different quarantine centres in Kampala and Wakiso to Ugandans affected with COVID-19 for their sustainable mental and physical wellbeing.

1.5 Project scope

Implemented in the COVID-19 high risk districts of Tororo (boarder district) Kampala district (Makindye division) and Mpigi districts (fishing community district) and empowering frontline social service workers through webinars. Webinars were organized along key protection and interventional themes of, (1). The social workforce's response to COVID-19 in Uganda (2) Addressing online sexual exploitation and gender-based violence during and after COVID-19, (3) Prioritizing protection of street children and children under alternative care during and after COVID-19. The project information outcome was shared to both social workforce in Uganda and internationally.

1.6 Project Intervention Framework.

This project was hinged on key social work principles recognized by International Federation of Social Work (IFSW) and Global Social Workforce.

- **Respect** - A conviction that every person's human Rights, personal choices, safety and dignity matters as we serve them during and after COVID-19.
- **Reasonableness** – The decisions that we made during our community engagement was rational, fair, and practical and grounded on evidence and clear justification.
- **Minimizing Harm** – Our social work team strived to reduce the amount of physical, psychological, social and economic harm associated with this outbreak and ensuring that society recover to best ability.
- **Inclusiveness** – We gave community leaders a fair opportunity to be part of the decisions that affect them and offer their views on the challenges they face.
- **Accountability** - All social service workers under this project/community intervention pledged to remain transparent, understand why decisions are made and whom they benefit.
- **Proportionality**-The support we gave to community leaders and social service workers was proportional to the needs and abilities of people and communities affected.
- **Community.** Our goal was to build resilience of our targeted community members to come out of the outbreak together by supporting one another and strengthening our country to the best of their ability.

- The intervention also put the **values of social work at the centre** including ethical use of technology and social media. This was to inform the response strategy as social work professionals give psychosocial support to the affected individuals and communities.

NASWU, Child's i Foundation and Mpigi District officials after crossing the raging river of Buyiga for a community engagement Buyiga Island Mpigi district. August 28, 2020

1.7 Project outcome/ key take homes of this project.

.On Zoom webinars on creating awareness around the social issues arising as result of COVID- 19 pandemic in Uganda and the social service workforce contribution during C-19 Pandemic.

1.8 Webinar 1. Theme "The social workers' response to COVID-19."

Key webinar highlights.

- This webinar highlighted the unique role of social service Workforce, the success stories and challenges experienced by the social service workforce during COVID-19 in Uganda. This was organised on July 10, 2020 from 5:00pm-6:00pm Uganda time. Attended by 83 social work practitioners from both academia and social work agencies, this webinar also served as the first implementation meeting for the partnership between National association of Social Workers of Uganda-NASWU and Childs' i Foundation communicated by team leaders of both organisations.
- Key of the presenters included Chris Muwanguzi from Child's i Foundation, Michael Byamukama Ntanda Uganda Country representative REPPSI and President NASWU, and Professor Eddy Walakira from Makerere University and this webinar was

moderated by Aloysius Okiror the general sectary of NASWU as summarised in the webinar banner and programme here under:

Below is how the webinar poster and program layout looked.
Figure 1

Table 2

NAME	ORGANISATION	DISCUSSION	TIME
Aloysius Okiror	NASWU/Child's i Foundation	Intro/opening remarks	5 minutes
Chris Muwanguzi	Child's i Foundation	Child's i COVID19 response including NASWU partnership	20 minutes
Agnes Wasike	MGLSD/ NCPWG	Response to COVID19	20 Minutes
Eddy Walakira	Makerere University	SW's academia's role during COVID19	20 minutes
Michael Byamukama	NASWU/REPPSI	SSWF's response & role during COVID19	20 minutes
Aloysius	NASWU/Child's i Foundation	Q & A session /closing remarks	20 minutes

Professor Eddy Walakira - Makerere University

- In his presentation , he shared what the Social Work Department was doing to respond to COVID-19 including developing guidance notes some of which had been published by the media in relation to COVID 19, developed Community engagement strategy for sustainable response to COVID-19, developed a guidance note on addressing social stigma, working with vulnerable groups guidance note, developed a compendium of referral resources for COVID-19 and engaging early career professionals including students and recent graduates in developing impactful products to improve the visibility of social work.
- He also shared other response work that was being finalised to further strengthen effective response to COVID-19 in Uganda including Social work media tour, documentation of social work field experiences, developing a variety of education materials using short videos, animations and pictorials with cross cutting themes linked to the skills sets social workers deploy to address mental health issues, domestic violence during COVID-19. Makerere had developed successful research proposals and moving on to data collection phases, made social work voice heard in proposing that the government makes social workers an essential service during COVID -19.
- He ended by encouraging participants of what social workers especially within academia can do more during the COVID-19 including show their leadership in building linkages and curving out opportunities for involvement of social workers in addressing contemporary issues including COVID -19, social work academia have to join the broader movement championing the rights of the most vulnerable, do more research to generate evidence and use it as a basis for advocacy, and social workers must always show case what they can do in the midst of crises.

Mr. Byamukama Michael Ntanda - Uganda Country representative REPPSI and President NASWU

- In his webinar presentation, Michael Byamukama underscored the need to prioritise psychosocial support and care to individuals, families, and communities to enable them cope, develop resilience, but also discern between truth and misleading information, address extreme states of anxiety, stresses, social stigma and discrimination associated with COVID-19. He warned that if not offered, the effects

of COVID-19 will stay long even after we defeat the virus, hence the need to engage communities and community structures in the response and beyond prevention.

- He shared key interventions that were spearheaded by Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (REPPSI) to help people cope with COVID-19 adversity. Key among these included advising and supporting people to take creative activities like indoor games, reading, drawings, ability to leverage technology, songs, drama, web based fora to address stigma, fear, GBV, promoting strategies that promote love, care and protection - give clients a sense of security, mobilising and engaging professional social workers, counsellors, psychologists and lawyers through their councils, societies and associations to support medical teams with psycho social support including health care workers based on the wheel model and pyramid model.
- He further emphasised that Psychosocial care and support is a cross cutting issue which requires collaborative and collective actions at all levels to adequately respond to needs of various groups for effective and a sustained approach, it is important that PSS interventions are diffused both down and across all activities and procedures at different levels and sectors.

Mr.Chris Muwanguzi – Executive Director Child's i Foundation

- He briefly talked on the partnership between Child's i foundation and NASWU that was approved and supported by the Ministry of gender as being timely to address the professional gaps and challenges of COVID-19 adversity. He also pointed at the long term good working relationship between NASWU and Child's i Foundation.
- Chris summarized key intervention measures his organization was doing to support vulnerable children, families and communities in Mpigi, Kampala and Tororo which also happened to be the scope focus of the project. He reported that they have supported 858 Children from 262 families to get basic essentials during COVID-19 in a period of three months such as food, medical care, and rent; supported 564 children from 165 families to received support in the form of counselling and their parents also received financial management training; supported 425 of their community volunteers to give health information and personal protective equipment to reach out to children and families in their communities; 3779 additional children

were helped by child's networks community networks, ensuring their safety in the face of the pandemic.

- Child's i Foundation also had supported 15 of their trained community volunteers with bicycles, phones, and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) materials to help them monitor and support more children and families in their communities during this pandemic and lockdown in Makidye while the organizational technical team monitoring over 1000 children and families, as well as coordinating and responding to ongoing child protection issues with and through our network of trained community volunteers in partnership with local government partners in Mpigi district, Tororo district and Makindye division.

1.9 Webinar 2.

Theme "Addressing online sexual exploitation and gender-based violence during and after COVID-19".

Key take homes from this webinar presentations

- This webinar meeting underscored the practical central role of social service Workforce in Uganda in addressing online sexual exploitation and gender-based violence during and after COVID-19. It took place on Friday July 24, 2020 from 5pm-6pm Ugandan time.
- Key presenters included Tabitha Mpamira the Founder and Manager of EDJA, GBV programme, Charles Dra-e-chabo, National Project Coordinator-UNESCO Uganda, Damon Wamara, Country Director Dwelling Places Uganda, Catharine Namatovu monitoring and evaluation officer UYDL and Board member NASWU. This webinar was moderated by Gerald Okiria a Board member at NASWU and serving as Donor services associate at Compassion International.
- It attracted up to 69 participants from different social work agencies, academic institutions, government departments and International Federation of Social Work members as showed in Figure 2 and Table 2.

Table 2

NAME	ORGANISATION & DESIGNATION	DISCUSSION	TIME
Mr. Gerald Okiria	Compassion International	Intro/opening remarks(moderator)	5 minutes
Mr. Damon Wamala.	Country coordinator Dwelling Places Uganda	Dwelling Places response to sexual and gender-based violence among street Children in Uganda.	15 minutes
Ms. Tabitha Mpamira	Founder of EDJA (SGBV Program) nyaka	Success stories of EDJA (SGBV Program) in western Uganda.	15 Minutes
Mr. Charles Dra-echabo	National Project Coordinator, UNESCO Uganda Project Office, Kampala	Addressing online sexual exploitation during and after COVID-19.the central role of social workers.	15 minutes
Mrs. Catharine Namatovu	Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, UYDL	Social workers response to sexual and gender-based violence during COVID -19 lessons from UYDL.	15 minutes

Mr. Charles dra-ecabo - National Project Coordinator, UNESCO

He shared what social workers were doing/should continue doing to end online sexual violence including education and awareness on risks and prevention techniques, creating positive peer groups to counter negative information sharing, fighting cyber misinformation, offering psychosocial support to the affected individuals and families, advising younger people to minimize the use of the internet and cyber communication, creating alternative and more productive time use; online debates, competitions, academic discourse, advocacy to ensure the right policies are in place and enforced.

Ms.Tabitha Mpamira - Founder and Manager of EDJA, GBV programme.

Her presentation underscored the central role of social work in addressing gender-based violence especially in times of adversity like COVID-19 through advocacy and community engagements of stakeholders.

Giving her experience as a survivor of gender-based violence during her childhood in Western part of Uganda, Tabitha reported key interventions/success stories of her organisation EDJA, under GBV programme had registered during COVID-19 including offering legal support to victims of GBV, supporting professional social workers to offer psychosocial support along the referral pathway, giving final support to mothers affected by GBV, advocacy using community systems including local radios and engaging the justice and legal systems.

Damon Wamala - Country Director Dwelling Places Uganda.

- In his presentation, he shared the vison of dwelling places which is to ensure that every child gets a shoulder to put his head on. He submitted that the situation of street children and their exploitation has just been worsened and complicated by COVID-19. He warned that the situation would become worse if special attention is not payed to the children connected with the street. He shared shocking statistics of how these children were being sexually exploited with some perpetrators recording sex videos and selling them. He cited a case in Mbale district involving children in sex tourism and trafficking which is on the increase.
- He reported that 3000 cases of violence against children, had been reported to the Ministry of Gender by July 24, 2020, while 300 case of internal child trafficking had been reported but many cases still go unreported. Damon attributed this level of exploitation to biting poverty in slum areas of Kampala, vulnerability of children and children looking for a quick bite.
- He summarised by sharing success stories registered by dwelling places to confront challenges of children connected with the streets including, partnering with KCCA, Uganda Child Rights NGO Network (UCRNN) to remove over 200 child from streets, isolate and test them of COVID-19, and offering psychosocial support to the affected families, give basic needs like shelter, food, to the affected children and reintegrating children back to their communities especially in Karamoja region based on their organisational model of rescuing, rehabilitation, reconciliation and resettlement of children connected to street.

Catharine Namatovu - Monitoring and Evaluation Officer UYDL, Board member NASWU.

- She shared key successes Uganda Youth Development Link in responding to COVID-19 in Uganda including conducting social research and documenting cases of violence together with Plan International, had supported government of Uganda in distributing food and personal protective equipment to residents of Kampala, had supported up to 1000, youth both in and out of school with skills development in business and offered them psychosocial support, and of these 950 were offered cash grants to start business.
- She also reported that UYDL was engaging younger people virtually to address the issue of online sexual violence, psychosocial support and had had two e-conferences to engage her members and stakeholders on protecting children during COVID-19 pandemic.

2.0 Webinar 3.

Theme. "Prioritising the protection of street children and children in alternative care during and after COVID-19: A social work perspective."

*Key take homes from this webinar presentations***.**

- This webinar highlighted the unique role of social service Workforce in safeguarding children connected with street during COVID-19 in Uganda. This was organised on August 20, 2020 and was attended by over 72 social workers from local and international social work agencies, social work teaching institutions, and government officials at a time when children connected with streets and those under alternative care in Uganda are facing multiple challenges created by COVID-19.
- Key presenters included George William Kiberu from ADRA-Uganda, Ms. Harriet Mudondo - Director Gender, Production and Community Services KCC, Mrs. Lillian Ssengooba Head of Programmes SOS Children Villages, Ms. Hellen Nayiga Muliira Safeguarding Manager CRAN Children network and Dr. Laban Musinguzi from Makerere University as the moderator.

Figure 3

Table 3

NAME	ORGANISATION	DISCUSSION	TIME
Dr. Laban Musinguzi	Makerere University	Intro/Moderator	5 minutes
Faith Mbabazi	Children at Risk Action Network (CRANE)	Addressing the unique challenges of street children during and after COVID-19. Lessons from CRANE.	15 minutes
Mr. George William Kiberu	George William Kiberu, Programme Manager Social and Behavioural Change for Northern Karamoja-ADRA Uganda	From streets back home and communities a success story of ADRA Uganda in protecting street children from northern Karamoja before and during COVID-19.	15 Minutes
Ms. Harriet Mudondo	Director Gender Community Services and Production KCCA.	The key measures put in place by KCCA to protect Street, Refugee and Children in residential care during and after COVID19	15 minutes
Ms. Lillian Ssengooba	Head of Programs SOS- Children's Villages Uganda	Protection of Children in Residential Care during and after COVID-19.lessons from SOS.	15 minutes
Dr. Laban Musinguzi.	Participants from social work agency.	Q & A ses sion.	15 minutes

George William Kiberu - Programme Manager Action for Social Change (ASC) program-ADRA shared unique interventions led by ADRA to protect street and refugee children including carrying out research in order to compile evidence to back up issues raised by children in order to engage parents, local leaders, and local government offices, parliamentarians from Karamoja region and ministry officials to respond to unique challenges of Karamoja children. He also heighted the information sharing and empowering younger social workers through the national association of social workers of Uganda –NASWU to ensure effective protection of children.

Harriet Mudondo - Director Gender, Production and Community Services KCCA shared key interventions spearheaded by Kampala capital city authority to protect refugee and street children in the context of COVID-19 pandemic. By July 14, 2020 KCCA was providing essential services and prioritizing vulnerable children that include street connected children, refugee children and those in residential care.

KCCA in partnership with UNICEF through the Girls empowering girls project was providing an opportunity to benefit the refugee girls, reused and quarantined 170 children and tested them COVID-19, partnered with fulltime social workers to offer psychosocial support to effected children, put 109 to approved homes in Kampala metropolitan area, placed 61 street children for vocational skills in accredited institutions, repatriated 38 street children back to Karamoja through Kobilin Youth Center supervised by the MGLSD.

Lillian M. Ssengooba the National Programme Development Advisor SOS Children home, shared how her organisation was adapting with the situation to protect children in alternative care homes including frontline awareness creation through meetings, radio talk, social media, virtual calls, distribution of government updates and guidelines. SOS was also making referrals, making risk analysis and developed organisational COVID-19 mitigation plan, adhering to government standard operating procedures and working closely and with guidance from the ministry of gender to safely protect the children in homes.

Hellen Nayiga Mulira - Safeguarding Manager at Children at Risk Action Network (CRANE) shared key intervention that were implemented by CRANE together with partners including rescuing and hosting children living on the streets at Nakivubo Blue Primary School, a total of 202 children were registered at the school, 34 of these children escaped from the site, assessing 168 children, and 16 Social workers and 16 uncles were briefed on CRANE's code of conduct and they all signed CRANE's Child Protection Policy.

2.1 Achievements of our community engagements in Kampala, Mpigi and Tororo districts

- Up to 300 community leaders, social service workers and district stakeholders were given special capacity on: facts about Covid-19 prevention and response, and protection of vulnerable families and children in Makindye, Tororo and Mpigi intervention areas.
- 150 community bystanders were identified and formed village/community child protection committees in Makindye, Tororo and Buyiga landing site in Mpigi district to

ensure continuous monitoring of violence against children and a sustainable mechanism for child protection in these key intervention districts.

- In working closely with community leaders, clear referral pathways were identified and brought to their attention to ensure easy reporting and support by other supporting agencies and government system as a multi-sectoral approach to protecting children during and after COVID-19. Key to this referral was the 166-child helpline, the police system, the district community development officers and the probation and welfare officers in addition to the community bystanders and the local council systems.
- Key information on COVID-19, causes, spread, prevention was shared to over 300 community leaders. These community engagements also dispelled myth and fear among community members and stakeholders as a professional mechanism to reduce, anxiety stigma and misinformation amidst adversity.
- Local knowledge and approaches to effectively address violence against children and address COVID-19 challenge was identified and integrated as an appropriate interventional measure at community and local government levels. Key of this knowledge and approaches include, creation of village child protection committees, enamours watch to report violence against children, deepening cultural practice that make a child a community asset, ordinances among others.
- Effectively harmonised local government interventions on child protection and COVID-19 response with that of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and MoH guidelines for effective and sustainable response to the pandemic and protection of children in Makindye, Tororo and Mpigi districts.
- Strengthened the good working relationship and partnership between Tororo, Mpigi and Makindye local governments, Child's i Foundation and NASWU.
- We got an opportunity to be joined by international audience in our webinars and shared best practices in regard to child protection in the context of COVID-19. A case in point was Mr Joachim Mumba the vice president IFSW Africa region who greatly encouraged all members to keep the fire burning and pledged support of the international federation of social workers to NASWU.

Figure 4

Participants during our community engagement in Makindye-Kampala District on July 17, 2020.

2.2 Media success during project implementation

Our community engagement highly informed the practical media coverage and interview based on the practical activities and engagements with social service workers and community leaders. The six media organisations turned to cover our engagements in Makindye, Mpigi and Tororo (NBS TV, NTV, Bukedde Newspaper, Bukedde TV, Bukedde FM, UBC TV, and BBS TV). All the stories were published by the media organisations that covered the event. There was no challenge whatsoever in the coverage and publishing of the stories neither was there any delay in the publication of the stories because they were viewed by thousands of Ugandans as stories run in the prime hours.

According to Geopoll 2019-2020 viewership habits of Ugandan TV in the peak hours (primetime), when majority of Ugandans are glued to their TVs, NTV had 886,000 viewers as of 2018, Bukedde TV1 had 580,000 viewers as of 2018 against and NBS TV had 466,000 viewers as of January 2018. TV stations categorised as others increased their viewership by 197%. These

are BBS Terefayina, ABS TV, Delta, Magic TV, Star TV, Kwese Free Sports and Salt TV. These had a combined viewership of 928,000 in 2018 against 312,000 viewers in the same period.
The presentations from all the webinars ware shared to over 5000 social workers and social workforce in Uganda and beyond through NASWU database to individual email, social media platform like NASWU and Child's i Foundation, National Child Protection Working Group under the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development which was further shared on the Basecamp, a social media platform bringing together more than 100 social work agencies mostly focused on child protection in Uganda.

The presentations from the panellists were shared with the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) social media platform and received a lot of positive feedback from members. This social media platform (WhatsApp group) brings together all presidents of social work associations across the world, shared webinar information with the Global Social Workforce, and the International Federation of Schools of Social Work.

The Regional Police Commander ASP. Rose Aduo Margret giving a report on VAC on August 14,2020 at Tororo District Council Hall during our stakeholders' engagement in the district.

Participants during one of our community engagements on August 28, 2020 in Buyiga Island Mpigi district.

2.3 Challenges

- The long distance and poor connection in case of 13 slummy villages in Kabalagala, and connecting to Buyiga Island in Mpigi district where we had to cross a raging river to reach our target population in Buyiga. This made the interventions not only risky but also very expressive.
- In regard to our online community engagements through webinars, the major challenge was that many younger social workers and out of school youth failed to raise internet data needed to attend the webinars and sharing their community experience. This affected the total number of social service workers attending. However, we addressed this issue by sharing all the presentation to their individual mails, and to all our social media platforms to allow them access this information with ease.
- Resource constraints. This affected some of the planned activities like developing an online learning platform to ensure continuous engagement and capacity building of social workforce by the professional body.

Porous border line at Busia and corruption of migration officials was reported as one of the major factor for child trafficking and an open route to gross violation of children rights amidst COVID-19 pandemic.

2.4 Lessons leant during project implementation

- We learnt that community engagement and empowerment is the best way to sustain the COVID-19 efforts and allow clear information reach community members. This is to say a community is a catalyst of change, agent of change, target of change, and an indispensable resource that the community itself will consume.
- Combined efforts by stakeholders result in high impact of child protection more so in the context of COVID-19. NASWU working with Child's i Foundation, district local governments and different social work agencies during different community engagements and online webinars presented a unique high impact and response at different levels of social workers, social worker agencies and policy makers to the benefit of community members.
- The support of our mother Ministry, the MGLSD in child protect efforts and response to COVID-19 creates great confidence among different stakeholders to streamline policies, guidelines leading to consistency of information shared to different stakeholders.
- Local knowledge and approaches should be integrated with national approaches to ensure appropriate interventions and better outcome in child protection and COVID-19 response in Uganda.
- Amidst COVID-19 physical limitations, harnessing technology is the ultimate answer. This was evident during our online webinars that we organised which proved a great success.
- We learnt that no single organisation or social work agency can effectively address the challenges of child protection more so in this global health catastrophe of COVID-19, hence social work agencies should work towards complementing each other rather than competing among themselves.
- Social workers are a great essential service in responding to COVID-19, more so in responding to unique issues of child protection, protecting people with special needs, leading community engagements, offering psycho-social support to those affected, dispelling myth and fear and modifying behaviour of community members

2.5 Recommendations

- The government of Uganda through MGLSD and development partners should continue to be intentional in supporting efforts that promote community engagements, capacity building to effectively address challenges of violence against children in the context of COVID-19 more so working with the professional body of social workers.
- Social work agencies need to work together through joining efforts, resources and technical capabilities to sustainably and effectively respond to COVID-19 and address all forms of child abuse in Uganda.
- Integrating local knowledge and approaches in regard to child protection and response to COVID-19 should be appreciated for appropriate and effective better outcome.
- Stakeholders in efforts to protect children and respond to COVID-19, should appreciate the central role of a community as a catalyst of change, agent of change, target of change, and an indispensable resource that the community itself will consume.

2.6 Conclusion

This partnership and project implementation presented a great opportunity for social workers to showcase what they are doing to respond to COVID-19 pandemic, an opportunity for sharing best practices and working as a team to effectively respond to the global health catastrophe and challenge of our time. It also opened way for harnessing technology to continue offering the much needed services to the vulnerable children, families and communities to ensure resilience. This project was also a great testimony that working together with the mother ministry (MGLSD) creates more confidence among stakeholders and an opportunity for easy coordination. It also proved that NASWU is better positioned to coordinate social workforce to respond to adversities along the continuum of social protection.