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Assessing Community Response to Child Abuse and its Effect on Development.

According to the African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN- 2003), child abuse is a deliberate action that causes physical, psychological, or sexual harm to a child. Ahimbisibwe (2010) writing in Saturday Monitor newspaper quotes a police report which mentioned that there were 185 victims of combined cases of child abduction, kidnap, disappearance, trafficking, and sacrifice alone during the period between January and September 2006. It is against this background that the researcher set out to weigh up community's response to this vice and its effects on development. The specific objectives of this study were to assess the forms of child abuse; to assess the causes and consequences of child abuse; and to evaluate its effects on development. The concentration of the study was in Kamwokya parish, a Kampala district suburb located in Kawempe division and housing most of the major child rights organizations in the country. These include, Save the Children - Uganda, ANPPCAN, Uganda Child Rights NGO Network (UCRNN), and Action for Children, Straight Talk and Mulago Hospital a national referral hospital. The literature gleaned to guide this study included the works of Goldman et al (2003), Sedlak (1996), Sumba (2003), the information gathered from the National Research Council NRC (2003). The research design employed in this study is a case study design and was preferred by the researcher because of its deep investigative nature of the phenomena. Questionnaire, interviews and focus group discussions were the instruments used to collect data from the field. The study confirmed that child abuse exists in different forms such as physical, sexual, neglect and emotional abuse. It is caused by one or a combination of several factors including among them individual, family, parental and environmental factors. The study further revealed that the vice has adverse effects for both the victim and the society; the child's emotional, physical and social development is negatively affected while the society pays heavily both directly and indirectly to prevent it from occurring, controlling it or in reversing the effects. 82

The researcher recommends that government through its agencies and ministries tailor tougher laws against the culprits and or implement the already existing ones to heavily punish offenders. The NGO's working against child rights need to do more sensitisation using various avenues to reach all concerned parents, guardians, or caretakers. Both government and development partners need to work together with the community to improve the lives of the people living in these slums as one of the ways to reduce the vice of child abuse.

Key Words: Community Response, Child Abuse, Development.