



Dr Eric Awich Ochen, Esther Nanfuka Kalule, Florence Turyomurugyendo

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None in Three Research Centre Uganda Makerere University



Project Report: School Based Social Work Pilot

Dr Eric Awich Ochen, Esther Nanfuka Kalule, Florence Turyomurugyendo

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MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

Project contributors:

Social Workers

- Shadiah Namukwaya
- Persis Tikabulamu
- Faiby Mutoni
- Lydia Akwero
- George Arau
- Anisha Namanya
- Sylvia Nabuuma
- Derick Kamanzi
- Christine Namubiru
- Vanessa Martha Karungi
- Sharif Seruyange
- Bazil Tumwine
- Haggai Atukunda
- Jonathan Sendagi
- Pauline Angom
- Moses Musaasizi
- Patricia Akot

Supervisors

- James Thomas Ssenfuuma
- Dr. Eric Awich Ochen
- Esther Nanfuka Kalule
- Florence Turyomurugyendo

Table of contents

1.0	Introduction		
1.1	Background	...	6
1.2	Project Area	...	6
2.0	Achievements Registered Under the Project		
2.1	Cases managed	...	7
2.2	Feedback	...	7
2.3	Handling and follow up of referral cases	...	7
3.0	Feedback from the parents, teachers and students		
3.1	Teachers and parents	...	8
3.2	Students	...	9
4.0	Challenges	...	9
5.0	Conclusion and Recommendations		
5.1	Conclusion	...	10
5.2	Recommendations	...	10
	Image gallery	...	12

1.0 Introduction

This report presents a brief overview of a pilot school based social work project, conducted by None in Three Research Centre Uganda (Ni3 Uganda) between June and November 2019, as a spin-off activity from its core work, thanks to Ni3 project funding from the Global Challenges Research Fund through UK Research and Innovation. It highlights achievements, challenges and recommendations from the pilot period.

1.1 Background

In 2018, Ni3 Uganda, based at Makerere University, Kampala, conducted a quantitative study involving more than 11,000 young people in various schools in central and northern Uganda as part of the core Ni3 project research. The study sought to investigate the prevalence of child abuse and neglect, its associated psychological effects and young people's attitudes towards child marriage. In the process of administering the survey, we found that several children showed signs of trauma in response to the questions because they were reminded of past and present experiences of abuse. Our observations were shared with members of the Ni3 central management team at the University of Huddersfield, UK (lead institution on the GCRF Ni3 project), who encouraged us to devise a possible intervention to address the needs of these children. In response, the Ni3 Uganda team designed and implemented the 'school based social work' pilot project with support from the global Ni3 Research Centre.

The aim of the project was to contribute towards restoring psychosocial functioning among school children, by providing counselling and linking clients to existing social services. The project deployed 17 second and third year undergraduate social work students at Makerere University to provide counselling in schools. The students visited the schools once a week, and were provided with a small budget for lunch, transport and communication. The project was implemented using Ugandan national case management guidelines and tools with some of the tools being modified slightly in order to better accommodate the specific needs of the project. The project was implemented in collaboration with existing child protection structures at school, community and national levels, such as senior teachers (women and men), civil society organisations, police and the child helpline housed in the Uganda Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. The project was executed for a period of six months from June to November, 2019.

1.2 Project Area

The project was piloted in four schools: Kitante Primary School; Nsangi Secondary School; Makerere University Primary School; and Police Primary School. The schools were located in Kampala and Wakiso districts and were selected purposively on the basis of the number of cases of children in need of support, identified during the process of administering the Ni3 psychosocial survey.

2.0 Achievements Registered Under the Project

2.1 Cases managed

251 cases were managed during the pilot. Some clients (children) were referred to the social workers by teachers, others were identified by the social workers, while others sought help voluntarily.

The main problems presented included:

- ▶ Economic challenges: lack of basic needs such as school fees, pocket money, scholastic materials/books, sanitary towels etc.
- ▶ Poor academic performance/grades
- ▶ Bullying
- ▶ Love and relationships: falling in love, failure to fall in love, maintaining relationships, falling out of love
- ▶ Parental neglect
- ▶ Physical violence: punching, kicking, whipping, beating, strangling
- ▶ Child labour
- ▶ Sexual abuse such as defilement and sexual harassment

2.2 Feedback

Feedback from children and teachers showed evidence of improved relationships following the support provided by the project, both between teachers and learners and between learners and their parents/guardians. Both teachers and learners reported improvement in relations between them and better academic performance was demonstrated among children as the following quotes illustrate:

Am seeing some change in the students, some students come and report to us. This kind of intervention is needed. It should be implemented if possible. As an individual, I think it is needed because there is some change in the children's life most especially behaviour. (A teacher at Kitante Primary School)

Am happy with my new performance, I improved from 18% in mathematics to 57%, I think I will improve more, my handwriting has also improved, the teacher no longer calls me 'Angel Lucifer' and I no longer carry the 20 litre jerry cans as my auntie changed, I only carry smaller ones that I can manage. (Learner at Kitante Primary School)

2.3 Handling and follow up of referral cases

During our engagement with the schools, we managed to refer four cases to Government authorities for follow up and further investigation. One was a 12-year-old girl who was raped by a neighbour found to be HIV positive, although she was not infected. Other cases included: a girl with a hearing impairment who was being sexually abused by an uncle she was staying with; a boy who was regularly battered by the uncle he lived with; and a girl and her mother who had been physically abused by their father and husband respectively. All the children were rescued with the help of Government authorities in partnership with NGOs.

3.0 Feedback from the parents, teachers and students

3.1 Teachers and parents

While the project had not initially considered involving parents, it was found to be impossible to help children without parents' involvement, because several of the cases identified pointed to abuse at home and mainly perpetrated by parents/guardians. For example, some parents engaged children in child labour and several of them appeared to have limited understanding of the negative impact of such work on the education and well-being of the children. Interactions with parents and teachers showed that they appreciated the project.

We really appreciate the work you are doing because we have realised that there are issues you handle and the areas you tackle which most of the times we cannot handle because the pupils are many and we only have time for teaching. So you have really done good work and you should continue with the work; thanks a lot. (Teacher, Police Children's School)

I thank the social workers for the great job they are doing because our children face a number of problems and sometimes they don't want to tell us. I believe when we have such people at school, they can help to provide counselling to them. In addition, I pray that they make follow ups in families to talk to parents as well because we also need the service. (Parent, Makerere University Primary School).

You are really doing a very good job. You know these students are very many and so it is very hard for us teachers to notice these cases because we are always very busy. (Teacher, Nsangi Secondary School)

Why are you working on only children? Even us the teachers have our own problems. We need that counselling. (Teacher, Kitante Primary School)

Wow thank you very much, you people are doing a very good job with our children. (Senior Teacher, Kitante Primary School)

Will the social work intervention be taken to private schools because we have our children in such schools and we feel that they equally need this service? (Parent, Makerere University P/S).

I feared to mention this in public but I have a child, she used to study from here however because of money, I was unable to pay her fees but I decided to enrol her for vocational studies. However, it seems that she has problems but whenever I try to engage her to share with me she does not. How can I be helped as a parent to ensure that I can talk to my child and get to know what is affecting her? In addition, I am requesting that you need to take this service to schools in rural communities because they have a number of problems. For example, there is a school in a

remote area within Kyenjojo district, I do believe they can benefit from this intervention because their children face a number of gender-based violence problems. (Parent, Makerere University Primary School)

I have liked your programme and I am requesting that you need to visit a Primary School located in Bwaise because children in that school have real problems. Have you ever seen students who come with alcohol at school? Have you ever seen students who smoke weed? Have you ever seen students who are engaged in commercial sex and others whose parents are prostitutes? They come from the slum areas like Kimumbasa. You need to go there and talk to them. Some students come to school and leave a bit early to go and collect scrap. They really need your help. (School Management Committee Member, Makerere University Primary School).

There was concern that the intervention was only being piloted in the Kampala and Wakiso districts, when it was felt that this support was also greatly needed in schools in rural areas.

3.2 Students

Many students who were involved in the school based social work programme were happy about the initiative. Some of their views regarding the intervention are presented, in their own voices, in the feedback extracts that follow.

I am happy with my performance in pre-mock most especially in English.

I have improved and no-longer talk in the classroom while the teacher is teaching. I also changed my sitting position and left the window seat which used to distract me. I concentrate more these days and now own a revision book. I hope to have a better performance in my mocks. (Primary Seven Learner, Kitante Primary School).

Counsellor thanks very much for the help you rendered to me. Since you talked to my father he started dropping me at school and sometimes helps me with the housework. So thank you a lot and I think this will enable me improve on my performance; since I no longer reach school late. (Primary Seven Learner, Kitante Primary School).

Now that I told Faiby and then you my problems, I feel better and relieved. I wish you had come earlier. (Primary Five Learner, Kitante Primary School).

4.0 Challenges

The implementation of the pilot involved a number of challenges including:

- ▶ **High demand for the project to be extended during the holiday period.** Some schools were requesting the social workers to keep engaging with the student clients who were at school during the holiday period. However, due to resource constraints, the project was unable to intervene during the holidays.
- ▶ **Work overload.** Schools have many students who face a number

of problems, yet the number of social workers available to provide support was limited. Hence many children with problems could not be given the support they needed. For example, at one of the larger schools, only two classes (primary six and seven) could be included in the pilot, due to limited social workers.

- ▶ **Insufficient time spent in the field.** Limited resources during the pilot meant social workers only spent one day per week in the field, which was not enough to handle all the cases presented in a timely manner.
- ▶ **Lack of financial resources to enable follow up on some cases.** Some cases required social workers to go to the children's homes. This was limited by insufficient funds to facilitate additional travel (especially where the children came from further afield).
- ▶ **Resistance due to lack of a clear understanding of the purpose of social work during the initial stages of the pilot.** Some teachers and head teachers took time to understand the role of the social work volunteers in the first weeks; some thought it was a research activity. However, as time went on, it appeared they started appreciating the importance of school based social work (as evidenced by their comments quoted above).

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

From the pilot, it is clear that the children we encountered face multiple child protection issues which teachers do

not have the time or capacity to attend effectively. At times these protection issues emanate from within the children's own homes, from their local community or sometimes from within the school environment. However, due to fear of being judged or punished, we found some children would 'shy away' from disclosing their problems to teachers, relatives or friends. Assisting children to stay in school brings many benefits for parents and children as well as for the Government and society as a whole.

Hence, we call upon Government and development partners, to prioritise such an intervention in their development plans, as we believe this will greatly contribute to not only the well-being of children in the country, but also better human capacity development outcomes.

5.2 Recommendations

- ▶ *There is need to secure funding to roll out and test the model piloted in more schools.*
- ▶ *Social workers delivering such support need more time in the field (at least two days a week) so as to ensure enough time for them to manage cases and support children who face abuse and other harmful situations.*
- ▶ *There is need for more funds to be allocated to activities targeting schools, to facilitate follow up.*
- ▶ *Counselling and/or social work support should be extended to teachers as well as children. This stems from the feedback raised during pre-visits to the schools. Some head teachers requested that their*

staff be considered for counselling as well as children. Teachers themselves sometimes also face problems both at school and at home, which can have an impact on the way they relate with children.

- ▶ In future intervention, child safeguarding training should also be delivered for teachers within the target schools.
- ▶ The implementation team recommends a Randomised Control

Trial (RCT) approach to the school based social work intervention with support given over three years and indicators (agreed earlier at baselines) assessed periodically and results compared with schools that are not participating in the programme (control). This should provide a strong basis for recommendations to the Ministry of Education in Uganda and policy development regarding school based social work.

Appendix I:

Table Showing the social work volunteers and schools where they were deployed

Sn	Name	Position	Social worker's code
<i>Makerere University Primary School</i>			
1	Namanya, Anisha		001
2	Nabuuma, Sylvia		002
3	Kamanzi, Derick	Team leader	003
<i>Police Children School-Ntinda</i>			
4	Angom, Pauline		004
5	Musaasizi, Moses		005
6	Akot, Patricia	Team leader	006
<i>Kitante Primary School</i>			
7	Akwero, Lydia		007
8	Umutoni, Phibby		008
9	Arau, George		009
10	Namukwaya, Shadia		010
11	Tikabulamu, Persis	Team leader	011
<i>Nsangi Secondary School</i>			
12	Namubiru, Christine		012
13	Karungi, Vanessa Martha		013
14	Seruyange, Sharif		014
15	Tumwine, Bazil	Team leader	015
16	Atukunda, Haggai		016
17	Sendagi, Jonathan		017

Image gallery



Team of social work volunteers and None in Three Uganda project staff

Parent Teacher Association Meeting



Ssenfuuma James Thomas (School Based Social Work Project Co-ordinator) addressing parents at one of the participating schools in a Parent Teacher Association meeting about the relevance of school based social work in schools, 4th August 2019

Social work volunteers training



Group work



Group presentation



A participant giving an energizer to the trainees



 www.noneinthree.org/uganda

*None in Three Research Centre Uganda, Department of Social Work
and Social Administration, School of Social Sciences, College of
Humanities and Social Science, P.O.Box 7062, Kampala, Uganda*

