Understanding Community and Service Providers Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices on Child Sexual Abuse in Malawi

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Background and Introduction

- Child Sexual Abuse in Malawi is high with limited services as it is entrenched in the cultural settings.
- Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO) is implementing a Learning Without Fear project that has a component addressing CSA.
- The research provided an opportunity to evaluate the LWF project which seeks to reduce violence against children in schools and communities.
Study Objective

To assess if there is a change in community and service providers’ knowledge, attitudes and practices around child sexual abuse after the implementation of the Learning without Fear project.
Methods

- **Study Area**
  - Zomba, Balaka and Mangochi districts in Malawi where YONECO operates

- **Study Design included qualitative and quantitative methods**

- **Field workers were trained using WHO guidelines for GBV research**
Methods - Qualitative

- 30 Key informant interviews with police, social services, community leaders (including church leaders and local chiefs)

- 12 FGDs with community members

- Data from the FDGs and KII were transcribed and analysed using the open code

- The results for the Qualitative Study do not form part of the presentation today
Methods: Quantitative

- A community household survey will be conducted at baseline and end-line of the LWF intervention
- A two stage cluster sampling was used to identify households.
- One adult per household
- A structured questionnaire was administered to 896 individuals (595 women and 271 men, aged 18 and older) at baseline
Awareness about CSA

- Awareness on existence of CSA is high with belief that only girls are CSA victims
  - Awareness about CSA was 84.8%.
  - Majority (91.6%) of the respondents believe that only girls are victims of CSA
Access to CSA information by children is low

- Just over half (57.3%) adults reported that children have access to CSA information.

- The most important CSA information source was family discussion.

- More than half (65%) parents discuss CSA with their children.
Perceptions of CSA

- The most recognized forms of CSA are sexual penetration (98%), insertion of an object in the genital (93.6%) and fondling a child (90.2%).

- Other forms of CSA were not recognized e.g. looking at a child’s genitalia (52.5%) and showing children one’s sex organs were least classified as CSA.

- While 38.5% don’t know that boys could be victims, 48.8% believe that sexually abused boys are usually homosexuals.
Reporting and responding to CSA in the community

- Significant respondents (36.3%) agree that CSA cases are never reported.

- Shame is one of the reasons cited as a reason for not reporting.

- 3.8% and 57.4% suggested that CSA should be reported to police and health facilities respectively. 71.1% believe that perpetrators are more likely to be arrested once they are reported.

- Poor treatment by the service providers also hinder the access to services and responses from service providers.
Recommendations (1)

- Increase access to information CSA for children
  - Need to diversify CSA information sources
  - Improving parent-child communication skills

- Demystifying that CSA is for girls only
  - Create awareness that boys are also affected by CSA
  - Provide education that CSA has nothing to do with morals
Recommendation 2

- Education required on Broad CSA issues.
  - *Education and awareness programmes should tackle other forms of CSA like bad touches, pornography etc for effective support to victims*

- More work required to deal with responses and reporting of CSA
  - *Enhance programmes that will change the attitudes of services providers on CSA*
  - *Community reporting Structures needs to be enhanced as well*
Conclusions and lessons learnt

• Empowering Process
  • The process provided for an opportunity for YONECO to develop skills and engage in other forms of research

• Emerging issues used in other programmes
  • Emerging issues have been used to develop further and improve programmes in child protection like child helpline services