Responding to abuse: Children’s experiences of child protection in a central district, Uganda

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Responses to violence

Comprehensive response

Non-Governmental Organizations

Child Welfare

London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

i-same
But how well do these responses work?

No data....
Overview of the Good Schools Study

• Aim: to evaluate the impact of the Good Schools Toolkit Intervention by Raising Voices

• Primary and secondary outcomes
  – Children’s experience of physical violence from school staff
  – Children’s mental health
  – Children’s educational performance

Good Schools Toolkit

School Staff → Violence Against Students → Poor Mental Health → Poor educational test scores
Setting and design

- Design: Cluster-randomised controlled trial
- 42 primary schools, representing 1 district
- 3700 students and 500 staff interviewed in June 2012
- Follow-up in June 2014
- Interviewer-administered questionnaire using mobile phones
- Instruments: ICAST, Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, Educational tests
- Asked about violence from any person
- Referral plan for children
Referral plan

- Decided in consultation with local services and study partners

- Forced sex
- Obvious untreated physical injuries
- Contact sexual abuse
- Severe physical violence

- Community Development Officers
- District Probation Officer
- Local NGO child protection officer

- Health services
- Police
- Other services

- Different time frames for response agreed depending on type of violence
- Note that all children offered counselling, regardless of what they disclosed
Tracking referred children

- 14.5% of the total baseline sample (n=529) children referred

- More girls referred
  - more sexual violence
Who had children previously disclosed to?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Persons disclosed to prior to baseline interview</th>
<th>% (n=529)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents/caregivers</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings or friends</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another adult</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No one</strong></td>
<td><strong>53%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Formal responses

• Formal community response by designated lead agency:
  • 3.8% of cases

• NGO response as agreed:
  • 48% of cases

• We hired our counsellor to come back and take care of the rest.
Children’s experiences

- Mixed experiences
  - “they [other people] never heard, they were chased away...she [partner NGO CP officer] was speaking at a low tone only for me to hear...we were under that mahogany tree”
  - “they asked permission from teachers to take us...we were three children...and we did not know where they were taking us”
  - “there is nothing better than what she did because she took her time...and came....and saw me”

- Children generally happy with response, even when standards of care not met
Conclusions

• Formal responses are inadequate
• Children report satisfaction with responses, even when responses violate standards of care
• Further research is needed to understand why, and how to improve
  – First-line response poor
  – Low competencies during responses that happened, but sometimes good principles of care applied
• Ugandan children who have experienced violence need better formal sector support
Thank you!

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Researching gender-based violence: Methods and meaning

February 17-21st, 2014, London
Co-Organised by Prof Charlotte Watts, Dr Karen Devries, Dr Cathy Zimmerman
http://www.lshtm.ac.uk/study/cpd/gender_violence.html