



## MINISTRY OF GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Simbamanyo House, Plot 2, George Street. P.O. Box 7136, Kampala Tel: 0414 347854/ 0414 343572

Facebook: @Mglsd Twitter: @Mglsd\_UG

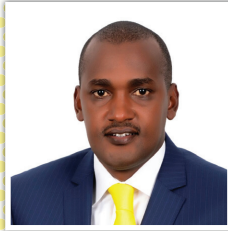
World Vision

## Statement on the Occasion to Commemorate the Day of the African Child

**THEME:** "Access to Comprehensive Child Friendly Services during COVID-19 Pandemic"



**H.E. YOWERI MUSEVENI**  
President of the Republic of Uganda



**HON. FRANK TUMWEBAZE**  
Minister of Gender, Labour and  
Social Development



**HON. NAKIWALA KIYINGI**  
Minister of State for Youth  
and Children Affairs



**MR. JAMES EBITU**  
PS, Ministry of Gender, Labour  
and Social Development

Every year on 16<sup>th</sup> of June, Uganda joins the rest of the world to commemorate the Day of the African Child.

This year, the National celebration and a series of commemorative activities have been scientifically held through virtual means due to restrictions on public gatherings.

In 1991, the Organisation of the African Unity (OAU), now the African Union (AU), instituted the Day of the African Child in memory of thousands of black school children who marched on June 16th, 1976 in Soweto, to protest against the poor quality of education and demanded to be taught in their own languages.

They spoke out against the harsh apartheid policies of the then South African government. Regrettably, during the march, hundreds of young boys and girls were massacred and thousands left with unspeakable injuries.

Therefore, the Day of the African Child honours and recognises the brave actions these children took in defence of their rights.

This year's commemoration calls for serious introspection and commitment towards addressing the numerous challenges facing children across the African continent. As for now, such challenges include among others the COVID-19 pandemic.

Consequently, the theme for this year's observance is: **"Access to Comprehensive Child Friendly Services during COVID-19 Pandemic"**

We reflect on the impact of COVID-19 to Children in respect to their access to comprehensive and

essential services. The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on children and their families in Uganda and will have lasting consequences for their health, nutrition, safety and learning opportunities.

Though the pandemic is yet to cause loss of lives in Uganda, it has caused loss of livelihoods. The disruptions to society has had a huge effect on children ranging from discontinuing of learning, to increased exposure to violence, exploitation, abuse and inadequate nutrition, all of which ultimately affect their safety, wellbeing and future.

The Ministry would like to make a passionate call that comprehensive child-friendly services during this period should and must continue to be available and accessible by all children regardless of age, gender and location among other factors following the COVID-19 Guidelines issued by Ministry of Health.

The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development is currently implementing the Sector Prevention and Response Plan for COVID-19 after identifying a number of emerging issues namely: Violence Against Children and Gender Based Violence, unemployment and under employment, decline in direct service delivery, drug and substance abuse and stigmatization of COVID-19 patients and their relatives among others.

Through this plan, the Ministry has;

1. Ensured uninterrupted child and women protection services through the Uganda Child/ Gender Based Violence Helpline/ SAUT-116 and all Probation and Social Welfare Officers and Community

Development Officers in the country. The helpline has so far registered 1,118 cases with 704 of them being abuse cases while 180 were counselling cases.

2. Ensured its frontline staff at the District and Lower Local Government Officers (Community Development Officers) were categorized as essential staff to continue serving the most vulnerable categories including children, women, the elderly and the disabled with services. Between 31<sup>st</sup> March and 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2020 a total of 1,430 Protection cases were handled and these ranged from child neglect, defilement, child marriage, physical abuse, Child desertion, un-accompanied minors/missing children, child labour, separation of children, children in conflict /contact with the law and children that need resettlement/reintegration.
3. Ensured the distribution of food and non-food items to 92 Childcare Institutions and Remand Homes under COVID-19 response in Kampala, Wakiso and Mukono. The Ministry further developed Standard Operating Procedures which are currently being implemented in the 140 licensed children institutions.
4. Mobilised and appropriately equipped the community-based workforce with COVID-19 prevention and response messages, associated risks and referral pathways.
5. In partnership with KCCA and Uganda Police, 1,500 children were withdrawn from the streets, screened, rehabilitated and re-settled.
6. In partnership with Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, 471 children

with minor offences were released from the remand homes.

7. The Ministry has prioritised the finalisation of the National Child Policy whose objective is to coordinate all the different sectors and partners to deliver a comprehensive package of services to children. As a key milestone, the National Child Policy was presented to cabinet yesterday June 15, 2020.
8. Rolled out the Social Protection cash transfer program (SAGE) in all the districts in Uganda. As such, 358,420 beneficiaries are set to receive their benefits and payments have started in some districts.
9. The Uganda Police force apprehended 5,328 parents of neglected and deserted children from March 31-May 30, 2020.
10. The Ministry of Education and Sports has been instrumental in minimizing the adverse effects COVID-19 on learners, teachers and the education system at large and promotion of coordination among education stakeholders and other agencies for a more effective response.
11. The Ministry has developed hard copies of learning materials for 7,359,874 learners in primary and 5,248,706 learners in secondary schools. The materials have been distributed to all districts in Uganda.
12. Ministry of Health developed guidelines for 'Continuity of Care to access health services'. These services include immunization, nutrition, malaria prevention, HIV counselling and testing and standard operating procedures for infection control among others.

The Day of the African Child therefore is aimed at strengthening the commitment of Government and Stakeholders in ensuring the fulfillment of Children Rights during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Everybody is called on to ensure the following:

1. Protection to be prioritized and remain central during response to COVID-19. Protection risks must be assessed and monitored and measures to address Violence Against Children and Gender Based Violence be included in all COVID-19 response plans.
2. More data on the scale and nature of impact of COVID-19 among children in Uganda—including specifically girls, families and communities to enable better planning and intervention.
3. Prioritization of the continuity of child-centred services, with a particular focus on equity of access.
4. Provision of practical support to parents and caregivers to provide nurturing care support to children during and after the pandemic.
5. Ensuring that digital literacy is affordable, equitable and safe for all learners.

Special appreciation to our Development Partners and other stakeholders for their continued support and commitment to ensuring the fulfilment of all children rights. The Ministry reminds you to commemorate this day at your homes or workplaces following the COVID-19 Guidelines as issued by Ministry of Health including handwashing, physical distancing and wearing masks wherever you are out of your home.

**FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY**

## COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE AFRICAN CHILD

A message from Mr. Jason Evans the National Director, World Vision Uganda on the commemoration of the Day of the African Child.



**Mr. Jason Evans**  
National Director,  
World Vision Uganda

As Uganda celebrates the International Day of the African Child, themed this year as "Access to Comprehensive Child-Friendly Services during COVID-19 Pandemic", we are challenged more than ever to secure the fundamental rights of children during this pandemic or risk losing gains made

through the child rights discourse over the years.

Any responses to this multifaceted pandemic must remain cognizant of the pre-existing underlying structural barriers and emerging challenges created by this crisis which are likely to worsen the situation of children in Uganda. Measures instituted to curb the spread of the virus have severely impacted the socio-economic fabric of society with short and long term impacts on children. For instance the 30% rate of school dropout (Ministry of Education & Sports) is likely to increase the longer children stay at home.

A latest analysis from UNICEF and Save the Children indicates a potential increase in the number of children living in monetary poverty by up to 86 million (15%) globally by end of this year.

The child protection risks presented by the pandemic are numerous. A global World Vision COVID-19 Aftershocks Report indicates that 13 million extra child marriages predicted by UNFPA will occur in the years immediately following the crisis, with at least 4 million more girls married in the next two years. Ugandan media reports and the experience of World Vision teams in the field already depict increased cases of child rights violations such as rape, defilement and transactional sex.

Committed to eliminate the common enemy, World Vision Uganda swiftly adopted plans to respond to this pandemic and has significantly contributed to the response, improving hygiene practices, strengthening capacities of community health workers, distributing PPEs and learners' materials, advocating for child protection, and conducting risk communication among others.

The Government of Uganda has acted swiftly and decisively in responding to this pandemic. The strength of the government's response is undoubtedly why Uganda has experienced no COVID-19 deaths to date. However, risks remain for vulnerable children, including:

- a) Increased reports of violence in homes affecting the safety and health of children.
- b) Home study programs that have excluded most vulnerable children in refugee camps, slums, rural areas, and children living with disability due to lack of tools, resources and capacity to adopt to this new way of learning.
- c) Food shortages among vulnerable communities caused by the lockdown measures which have left many families without income.
- d) Disruption in health care services such as immunization and antenatal care with reduction rates of 20% and 7% respectively (Ministry of Health).
- e) Extend financial and technical support to families and child-headed households to cushion children, families and communities from the economic impact of the crisis.
- f) Ensure child protection facilities such as the Police Child & Family Protection Units, gender-based violence shelters, Child Helpline 116, and courts remain functional throughout the crisis and are accessible to children in need of support.
- g) Invest in massive and consistent awareness raising interventions on preventing violence in homes, schools and communities and ensure that perpetrators of such acts are held accountable. **Remember it takes a world to end violence against children.**

The commemoration of the DAC also reminds us of voices of children silenced during this pandemic. Children are experts in their own right and must exercise their right to participation as stipulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of Children.

As we work to secure the rights of children during this period and post-COVID-19 crisis, I urge the government and other duty bearers to:

- a) Safely engage children in the process of response to COVID-19 at all levels, especially in terms of their views on the re-opening of schools (including strategies that can be instituted to ensure their safety while at school).
- b) Ensure schools are safe and well equipped to manage the crisis before they are re-opened. They should have piped water and sufficient hygiene facilities, friendly for all children including those living with disability.

COVID-19 is indeed a renewed call to all duty bearers to fulfil their commitments to children. As World Vision we re-affirm our continued support and commitment towards the protection of children at all times. However none of us can do this alone...

Together, we can create a better world for our children!