

Every Child is My Child - Betty Wuzu

Social Service Workforce Week

In commemoration of the Social Service Workforce Week which will be celebrated from September 24th – 28th 2018, the National Association of Social Workers of Uganda (NASWU) an independent professional body under Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) working for the advancement of Social Work in Uganda is profiling social workers to highlight the important role they play. A recent report by MGLSD indicates that 3 in 4 children experience some form of violence and 1 in 2 experience at least two kinds of violence: sexual, physical or emotional.

Today, we take a sneak peek into Betty Wuzu, a Case Worker and Counsellor, Uganda Child Helpline, SAUTI 116 who receives calls on cases of violence against children and provides them with guidance.

Why did you choose to become a social worker?

I wanted to be a social worker when I was in Primary Five. I watched a lot of news growing up. I used to see so many children crying and I felt I needed to help. So this one time I met a gentleman at St. Francis Chapel-Makerere University who asked me what I wanted to become in future and I instantly replied social worker. He asked me why? I responded "I think I want to help children because I see so many of them suffering and going through a lot."

How is your typical day at work like?

By 7:00 am, I am supposed to be here saying, Hello, this is Uganda Child Helpline, how may I help you? This goes on until 7pm. The first thing I do when I arrive is check my email because there is a lot of communication from either individuals or organizations, for instance partners who refer cases through email, so if you don't check your email, you might miss out. And two, I have to plan for the day to know which cases and files to work. Finally, from time to time, I go to the field to make follow up visits and monitor children who may be exposed to any kind of violence.



Betty Wuzu, Case Worker, Uganda Child Help emphasizing a point

What kind of support do you provide to children and families when they call in at the centre and what have been the results of this support?

At Uganda Child Helpline or SAUTI 116, all kinds of cases are reported. Be it sexual abuse, child neglect, physical and emotion abuse. All forms of child abuse cases are reported and depending on the type of case, that is how we give the support. There are cases that we can handle at the Child Helpline SAUTI 116 and it ends there. We give counselling to the person who has reported or called our helpline through guidance. We don't advice, we have to plan together with the person who has called to help this particular child that they are reporting about or if it is a child we are able to go into the smallest issues that they have missed out. You probe more, ask more so that they are able to say out all they can speak. Not every child can be able to talk to any person, it depends on how you speak to them so that is very important to us in counselling. Helping them to understand who they are, helping them to understand that we are there to help them and give them the moral support they may need so that they can have confidence and esteem to be able to speak out about the issues they are facing.

We have some funds from UNICEF that can help us to go out in the field to assess situations of children and understand the kind of help they might need from Uganda Child Helpline. We have a police officer who takes on the legal bit of the work.

Results

Quite a number of results but one particular one I can refer to is a child who was being beaten by a teacher in Ndejje. Working with the police, we were able to help the girl regain back her esteem and pride because the teacher beat her so badly. Her bum was swollen and had blisters. We worked with the police to ensure that she got justice. She was compensated and transferred to another school. The money that was compensated helped her to get another school in Kampala where she is right now in senior four. I feel happy that someone is able to say I am happy because you intervened as a social worker.

What aspects of your job do you love most?

I love talking to children about life to help them understand who they are and be able to open up to you. I love to make them understand their roles and responsibilities vis-a-vis their rights. If a child is able to differentiate between their rights and responsibilities and work upon that, it is a good feeling for me because many times we may fight for rights yet we are not telling children how they are supposed to guard these rights.

I also love playing with children. Not every child has the opportunity to play. "Working with children is interesting if you have the energy and zeal and know what it takes to take in a child." My Motto is; "Every Child is My Child" that helps me to understand who another child is other than my own.



Betty at the Uganda Child Helpline SAUTI 116 responding to a call.

What special skill does one need to succeed in this job?

You need to have an open mind because as a social worker, you interface with so many things and people out there. There is so much you will learn if you have an open mind. You need to get down into reality and understand the world. The world is changing, we need to keep upgrading and interacting with other people. A social worker at this place needs to be passionate about the profession and patient too.

How has NASWU helped you?

As a member of the association I occasionally interact with fellow social workers and we share our experiences and challenges. The sharing helps to build on my knowledge and strengthens critical networks for collaboration. Our profession looks at a challenge from a holistic view, therefore networking is important.

Become a member of National Association of Social Workers of Uganda (NASWU) by filling a membership form at www.naswu.net

