ChildFund
Kenya

Baseline Evaluation of the Tujukumike Child Protection Project

Improving the wellbeing of children through strengthening the formal and informal child protection systems in Tharaka Nithi County

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Abbreviation and Acronyms

BOM   Board of Management
CAC   Children Advisory Committee
CBCPM   Community Based Child Protection Mechanism
CPIMS   Child Protection Information Management System
DAC   Day of African Child
DEV   Deprived Excluded Vulnerable
FGD   Focus Group Discussion
FGM   Female Genital Mutilation
GBV   Gender Based Violence
IDI   In-depth Interviews
KDHS   Kenya Demographic Health Survey
KII   Key Informant Interview
NCCS   National Council of Children's Services
NGAO   National Government Administration Officers
NGO   Non-governmental organisations
OCSEA   Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
PTA   Parents Teachers Association
UN   United Nations
UNCRC   The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
WASH   Water Sanitation and Hygiene

Executive Summary

This report gives feedback of the baseline evaluation of the Tujukumike Child Protection Project: Improving the wellbeing of children through strengthening the formal and informal Child protection systems in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya. This is a 15-month project implemented in partnership with Childrise Development Programme with funding from ChildFund Korea. Specifically, the project was be implemented in Chiakariga and Igambang'ombe sub counties. The project targets two outcomes namely: Increased responsiveness of the formal and informal child protection systems and increased participation of children in their own protection.

Evaluation objectives

The evaluation sought to establish baseline information against the project logframe indicators at the community level which was be used as a threshold for this project to assess outcomes and impact. The specific objective was to establish children's level of understanding of their rights to protection and how they maintain and utilize formal and community-based child protection structures to address cases of abuse experienced by them, establish existing linkages between formal and informal community-based child protection systems and investigate the level of participation of children in their protection in the schools and communities.

Methodology

The evaluation employed a cross sectional evaluation design with pre-post, one group evaluation design that used mixed methods i.e. quantitative and qualitative data. The baseline evaluation used both probabilistic and non-probabilistic sampling techniques. For the quantitative aspects of the evaluation, the probability sampling applied stratified random sampling technique to choose children on whom semi-structured survey questionnaire was administered. For qualitative aspect of the evaluation, a non-probabilistic sampling approach utilised was the purposive sampling technique to choose respondents well informed of the issues being addressed by the project and who wasbe involved in project interventions directly or indirectly. The children survey adopted probability sampling to ensure the validity and representativeness of the population. The children were stratified by age, school grade and sex/gender in school. Thereafter, simple random sampling was used to select children to participate in the evaluation. The sample size for the survey was determined using the Yamane formula.

A total of 527 people participated in the final evaluation. The participants for the surveys included 440 children aged 10-17 years. In addition, 4 IDIs (Community Elder, Area Managers), 8 FGDs (32 Teachers and 32 BOM members) and 19 KIIs were conducted with a range of formal and non-formal child protection actors including Headteachers, Children Advisory Council members, County and Sub County Education officers, Deputy County Commissioner, Gender Officer and Civil Society Organisation officers. Focus Group Discussions were conducted with Teachers and School Board of Management members.

Findings

The evaluation has found out that child abuse is slightly more prevalent in Chiakariga Sub County with more than a third (33.5%) of sampled children reporting having witnessed a child being subjected to harsh treatment or abuse compared to 24.4% of children in Igambang'ombe sub county. Over half (52%) of the male children were aware of the mistreatment compared to 48% of

female children during the survey. Furthermore, children were asked about some of the problems they face at home or school to measure the prevalence of child abuse in their community. The major incidences were physical abuse including acts such as beating, physical punishment. This was followed by neglect (lack of provision of basic needs such food, clothing, shelter) and essential rights such as education. Others experienced emotional and verbal abuse through name calling, being chased away from home, demeaning and worthless, blaming and insults. In addition, children experienced child marriage, child labour, female genital mutilation, kidnapping, defilement and sexual harassment.

The evaluation found out that homes is the leading place where abuse of children happens with 88% of the children reporting this compared to 10% in school. Over three quarter (79%) of children are knowledgeable on the existing child abuse reporting mechanisms. They were likely to learn about where to report child abuse and the procedure from the teacher (63%), chief (16%) and the police (9%). The least sources of information were religious leaders, board of management members, child protection volunteers and NGO staff.

Almost half, 46% of the children had knowledge of children who may have ever been subjected to mistreatment in the school, home and community. There were no gender differentials, although more children in Chiakariga knew of other children who may have been abused in the community compared to Igambang'ombe. In addition, in terms of awareness of children who may have been mistreated and reported to the authorities, 69% said they did not report, 30% reported and 1% don't know/not sure. More girls reported the incidences compared to boys. The proportion of children who reported incidences of mistreatment was high in Chiakariga compared to Igambang'ombe sub county. In terms of age, children aged 13-15 years were more likely to report compared to the older cohort aged 16-17 years. Seventy three percent (73%) of the children reported knowledge of case resolution compared to 23% who reported that the cases were not resolved.

Three quarters of the children are aware of children in need of protection who have received necessary support from the school and community, 20% did not receive support, 5% don't know/not sure, 0.2% chose not to answer this question. The children in need of protection are unable to get help and necessary support in the community for various reasons. Some of the reasons included high poverty level at the household level, fear of stigmatisation from the community, lack of support from parents and neighbours and the system.

This evaluation sought to know if the children are being referred for these services and reasons for not being referred. Only 27% of respondents are aware of children who had been abused and referred to social services. Twenty three percent of respondents are aware of children who have not been referred to any services. Some of the reasons for them not being referred include lack of awareness on where to report, high poverty levels, lack of seriousness in handling child abuse cases by authorities, the process costs time and money, drugs, alcohol and substance abuse in the community, ignorance by parents and teachers, fear of consequences by the victims, misconceptions by community that child labour is helping parents to move out of poverty and child negligence. Children who are living in poor households are the mostly not referred group to access these services at 34%, boys (26%), girls (18%), children who are orphaned (10%), children experiencing all forms of violence (7%), children with special needs (4%) and 1% both boys and girls and children living with their grandmothers.

The evaluation also established that 50% of children respondents had sometimes witnessed a child being hit or humiliated by a teacher, other adult or other students in the last three months, 35% said never and 15% said this happens often in the school. Eighty-two (82) percent of children reported sexual abuse "never" occurs in their school, 12% said sometimes, 4% often and 2% were not sure/didn't know. Sixty four percent of children reported that they have never experienced verbal or emotional abuse in school, 31% sometimes and 5% often.

The evaluation established that most schools lack child-friendly reporting mechanisms allowing children, staff, parents and caregivers to report violence at school. Limited or non-existent reporting systems means the prevalence, frequency and intensity of violence in schools are not fully or systematically documented. There is a great need for schools to improve reporting in order to create safe and protective environments for children. According to the baseline finding 56% of children reported that children do not have access to independent reporting mechanism like speak out boxes. Of those who have the reporting mechanisms, 82% indicated that children have access to them while, 18% reported that children do not have access.

The level of awareness and knowledge about child protection champions was 37%. The presence of teachers as champions was 58%, both children and teachers, 29%, fellow children 10%, board of management members at 2% and 1% others.

The community mechanisms include traditional clan systems of addressing such issues where clan elders are custodians of law, Area managers, Assistant chief, Chief among others. When probed on the effectiveness of these structures, stakeholders had this to say.

*"At the community level, child protection systems are weak and such issues are not treated with the urgency that is required. In the region, the informal 'kangaroo' court systems of solving disputes at family level are the norm. However, this form of settling disputes is not suited for child protection because the wellbeing and needs of abused children are not prioritized. Rather, issues are swept under the rag to avoid drawing public attention to the family" – **KII, St Peters Lifeline, CSO***

The baseline evaluation established that the existing formal systems are weak and do not adequately address the child protection issues in Tharaka Nithi County. Furthermore, there is lack of coordination and interests in the welfare of the child.

*"Not really, there is poor reporting of cases and furthermore, the area of coverage is quite large for those responsible to be effective. Better coordination and manpower is required – **KII CAC.***

*"No. Some of the mentioned systems are not effective and there is need for more personnel. For instance, there is only one Children's officer (myself) covering the region of Igambang'ombe"- **KII Childrens Officer.***

Eighty-nine (89%) percent of respondents reported that they have children's leaders in their schools. These include school captain, President, Prefects, Bell ringers, Chairmen, Secretary, Speakers, Class representatives, head boys and head girls, scout leaders among others. Only over a third, 34% of respondents indicated that there have been children leaders' forums convened in their schools and community, 62% did not have a forum, 4% don't know/not sure.

Child participation forums provide these opportunities for children to have their issues listened to and addressed. 68% of children indicated that their schools have no structures for child participation in their own protection needs while 30% have such clubs. Some of the major functions are to discuss issues affecting children such as education, health and protection and creating awareness among children and adults about child rights and responsibilities. From the respondents who have child rights clubs, 20% participate in the entity activities, 79% do not participate in the club events, 1% don't know/not sure. For those who participate in the club activities, 76% do it weekly, 7% once a month, 7% daily, 6% twice a month, 3% once every three months, 1% don't know/not sure.

The evaluation reccomends the following

Use existing mechanisms to promote child protection in school: This can be done through trainings and workshops for teachers, sensitization meetings for children and parents on child protection. In particular, the parents could be sensitised by teachers and BOM members during Parents Teachers Association (PTA) on matters pertaining prevention and protection of children against violence. Teachers need to be trained by the administration on how to handle challenges resulting from the adolescent children.

Gender mainstreaming: The project team to consider tailor made interventions tareging boys to empower them on their rights and responsibilities so that they match the girl child. In addition, reach out to the affected children in the villages and encourage them to go back to school.

Strengthening guidance and counselling in schools: There is a great need of promoting sensitization and awareness creation in schools and guidance and counselling to empower children on child rights and child protection issues.

Life skills for children: School administration should systematically and strategically introduce childrens rights into the school mission statement and policies and incorporate into school curricula, timetable and teaching materials.

Build the Capacity of Child Protection Systems: The government should engage and build the capacity of more community social workers, community health promoters, teachers of guidance and counselling to check and ensure the children's welfare is safeguarded from various mistreatment.

Strengthen the child justice system: The NGAO structure and Nyumba Kumi (neighbourhood watch committee), community stakeholders such as chiefs to ensure community mechanisms are strengthened so that perpetrators go through the full justice system. They should reinforce laws against sale of illicit brews and drugs in the community.

Strengthen household economic activities: The government through the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries in conjunction with non-state actors should train the locals on food security because there is hunger risk at times in the area leading to exacerbated issues of child abuse.

1.Introduction

1.1.About ChildFund

ChildFund International works throughout Asia, Africa and the Americas to connect children with the people, resources and institutions they need to grow up healthy, educated, skilled and safe, wherever they are. Delivered through over 250 local implementing partner organizations, our programs address the underlying conditions that prevent any child or youth from achieving their full potential. We place a special emphasis on child protection throughout our approach because violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect can reverse developmental gains in an instant. Last year, we reached 13.6 million children and family members in 24 countries. About 200,000 Americans support our work by sponsoring individual children or investing in ChildFund programs[1].

1.2.About Childrise Development Program

In Tharaka Nithi County where the proposed project wasbe implemented, ChildFund is working with Childrise Development Programme, a local non-governmental organization. Childrise's main mandate is to promote growth and well-being of deprived, excluded, and vulnerable (DEV) children to realize their full potential and become responsible citizens who can bring positive change to their families and communities. Childrise's program priorities are designed based on ChildFund life stage theory of change that endeavors to achieve positive outcomes for children and focuses on children as agents of change and their experience of DEV, engage families and communities and build broad constituency of supporters dedicated to the wellbeing and rights of children.

Guided by ChildFund Kenya's country strategic plan, the thematic areas of focus of Childrise include Child Protection, Household Economic Strengthening, Early Childhood Development, Education, WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene), Emergency Response, Health and Nutrition. Its main area of operation within Tharaka Nithi and Embu Counties are the marginal areas of Mbeere North Sub County of Embu County to Igamba Ngombe and Tharaka south sub -county of Tharaka Nithi County. The Childrise programme area is generally a marginal area in terms of resource endowment both natural and man-made. Being funded largely by ChildFund, Childrise implements most of its programs largely in partnership with Government of Kenya's line departments at the County and sub counties level. Child Protection is the core business of ChildFund, Kenya and Childrise wasstrive to push the agenda by ensuring children and young adolescents are protected and engaged in strong and well-coordinated child protection systems and processes to address issues that affect their lives as well as improve on children's active participation in the achievement of their rights. ChildFund through Childrise wasalso advocate against all forms of child exploitation and abuse, including Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA) and retrogressive cultural practices. To achieve its goal, Childrise waswork closely with Government of Kenya's line departments at the County and sub counties level.

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[1] **Learn more at www.ChildFund.org**

1.3.Overview of the project location

Tharaka Nithi County has a multidimensional poverty rate of 62.1 % according to a comprehensive poverty report by Kenya National Bureau of Statistics 2020. Multidimensional poverty refers to a situation in which people are exposed to multiple disadvantages. It encompasses the many deprivations that people can experience across different areas of their lives such as a lack of education or employment, inadequate housing, poor health and nutrition, low personal security and social isolation. According to a survey conducted by Childrise in January 2023, 68% of under five children are left alone or under the care of another child for more than one hour.

The increasing use of the internet and digital technologies has exposed children to new and complex online risks, such as cyberbullying, grooming, and exposure to inappropriate content. According to UNICEF[2], children are spending more time online than ever before. And they're getting there sooner. Around the world, a child goes online for the first time every half second. Growing up online offers limitless opportunities. Through computers, smartphones, gaming consoles, and televisions, children learn, imagine and develop their social networks. When used in the right way – and accessible to all – the internet has the potential to broaden horizons and ignite creativity the world over. But with these opportunities come serious risks. Cyberbullying and other forms of peer-to-peer violence can affect young people each time they log in to social media or instant messaging platforms. Children can also be put at risk when tech companies breach their privacy to collect data for marketing purposes. Child-targeted marketing through apps – and the excessive screen time it often results in – can compromise a child's healthy development.

More than a third of young people in 30 countries report being cyberbullied, with 1 in 5 skipping school because of it. Most alarming is the threat of online sexual exploitation and abuse. It has never been easier for child sex offenders to contact their potential victims, share imagery and encourage others to commit offences. Children may be victimized through the production, distribution and consumption of sexual abuse material, or they may be groomed for sexual exploitation, with abusers attempting to meet them in person or exhort them for explicit content.

According to communications authority of Kenya website (www.ca.go.ke/child-online-protection); 89% of sexual solicitations are made in social media chatrooms or instant Messaging (IM), 75% of youth who receive sexual solicitations are unlikely to tell a parent or guardian and statistics show that as many as 1 in 5 children aged 10-17 have been solicited sexually online.

Combating OCSEA and strengthening victim support requires comprehensive and sustained actions from everyone who is responsible to tackle this growing problem, including government duty-bearers, law enforcement agencies, justice and social support service professionals, internet providers, the tech industry, communities, teachers, and caregivers.

Gender based Violence affects most of the families in Kenya and this has negative impact to children. The major type of GBV reported are domestic violence, sexual abuse and harmful cultural practices such as child marriage. In Kenya, GBV disproportionately affects more women than men. According to statistics from the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS), "over 40 percent of women have experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetime. Moreover, the prevalence of child marriage and FGM is about 23 percent and 21 percent respectively in the country". GBV is a gross violation of fundamental human rights and it has grave

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[2] Produced by UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (ECARO)

consequences on the physical, psychological and emotional well-being of the victim. Child protection goals can be achieved through community-based child protection mechanism (CBCPM) which is well coordinated and works at grassroots level within the community to monitor, respond to, and prevent child protection issues.

1.4. About Tujukumike Child Protection Project

Goal: Improved protection for children through strengthening the formal and informal child protection systems in Tharaka Nithi County, Kenya

Outcomes

1.Increased responsiveness of the formal and informal child protection systems
2.Increased participation of children in their own protection

Outputs

1.1: School-based Child Protection Champions trained on Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, School Based Violence Prevention and Gender Based Violence Prevention
1.2. School Board of Management members trained on Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, School Based Violence Prevention and Gender Based Violence Prevention
1.3: Children sensitized and supported on Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, School Based Violence Prevention and Gender Based Violence Prevention
1.4. Community Based child Protection Resource Persons trained on Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Gender Based Violence Prevention
1.5. Community members sensitized on Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Gender Based Violence Prevention
1.6 Children Advisory Committee (CAC) members trained and supported on Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Gender Based Violence Prevention
1.7 Child protection actors trained on Case Management
1.8: Charitable Children institution members trained on Child Protection Management Information System (CPIMS)
1.9. Child-Friendly spaces established.
1.10. Police from Child Protection and Gender desk trained.
2.1. Children's leaders' forums convened.
2.2 Children events supported.

1.5. Objectives of the Baseline Evaluation

1.5.1. General objective
The objective of the baseline evaluation is to establish baseline information against the project monitoring and evaluation matrix indicators at the community level which wasbe used as a threshold for this project to assess outcomes and impact.

1.5.2. Specific Objectives

The objectives of the baseline evaluation are to:

1. To establish children's level of understanding of their rights to protection and how they maintain and utilize formal and community-based child protection structures to address cases of abuse experienced by them.
2. To establish existing linkages between formal and informal community-based child protection systems
3. To investigate the level of participation of children in their protection in schools and communities.

1.5.3. Evaluation Questions

1). Does the project lead to an increase in the proportion of children in need of protection accessing services?
2). Does the project increase the proportion of children participating in their protection?
3). Does the project strengthen the existing Child Protection linkages between formal and informal community-based systems?
4). Does the project enhance the capacity of informal and formal child protection actors?

2.Methodology and Approach

2.1. Evaluation Design

The evaluation adopted the cross-sectional research evaluation design, pre-post-test with one group approach. In this approach the evaluation simultaneously collected data from the target population to provide a snapshot of the current child protection situation rather than an evaluation that tracks changes over time. The baseline evaluation used both probabilistic and non-probabilistic sampling techniques. For the quantitative aspects of the evaluation, the probability sampling applied stratified random sampling technique to choose children on whom semi-structured survey questionnaire was administered. For qualitative aspect of the evaluation, a non-probabilistic sampling approach utilised was the purposive sampling technique to choose respondents well informed of the issues being addressed by the project and who wasbe involved in project interventions directly or indirectly. These included members of the Children Advisory Committee, Children Officers, Area Managers, Community leaders, Headteachers, Teachers, and other Child Protection Actors.

2.2. Sampling Design

The children survey adopted probability sampling to ensure the validity and representativeness of the population. The children were stratified by age, school grade and sex/gender in school. Thereafter, simple random sampling was used to select children to participate in the evaluation. The sample size for the survey was determined using the Taro Yamane (1970) formula as below;

N=the population size
K= Constant (1)
P= the population proportion (assumed to be 50 since this would provide the maximum sample size)
e=the degree of error expected
n=sample size

$$n = \frac{N}{K + N(e) *2}$$

$$\frac{10500}{1+10500(0.05) *2}$$

$$= 385 (+15\%) = 440$$

2.3. Evaluation Population

2.3.1. Evaluation Sites

Chiakariga and Igambangombe Sub-Counties in Tharaka Nithi County are the sites of the Tujukumike intervention, and the data collection as indicated in *Table 1* below.

Table 1: Evaluation sites

No	Sub County	Sites/Schools Covered
1	Chiakariga	Gaceraka, Kiigani, Muthitwa, Kibuka, Kianamuthi, Tunyai, Gakirwe
2	Igambangombe	Kamutiria, Ntagatani, Itugururu, Miraa Maraja, Kabururu, Kirimankari

2.3.2. Evaluation Population

A total of 527 people participated in the final evaluation. The participants for the surveys included 440 children aged 10-17 years. In addition, 4 IDIs (Community Elder, Area Managers), 8 FGDs (32 Teachers and 32 BOM members) and 19 KIIs were conducted with a range of formal and non-formal child protection actors including Headteachers, Children Advisory Council members, County and Sub County Education officers, Deputy County Commissioner, Gender Officer and Civil Society Organisation officers. Focus Group Discussions were conducted with Teachers and School Board of Management members (*See Table 2*).

Table 2: Focus Group Discussions, In-depth and Key informant interviews distribution

Category				
Data collection method/Location	Chiakariga Sub County	Igambang'ombe Sub-County	Headquarter	TOTAL
In-Depth Interviews				
Community Elder	0	1	0	1
Area Managers	2	1	0	3
Key Informant Interviews				
Headteacher	5	5	0	10

Children Advisory Council members	0	0	1	1
County/Sub County Education Officer	1	0	1	2
Deputy County Commissioner	0	0	1	1
Gender Officer	0	0	1	1
Civil Society Organisation	1	1	0	2
Focus Group Discussions				
Teachers	2	2	0	4
School Board of Management	2	2	0	4
GRAND TOTAL	**13**	**12**	**4**	**29**

2.4. Data collection techniques

2.4.1. Recruitment and training enumerators

Fifteen (15) enumerators were identified by the Childrise Development Program and were provided with a 2-day training which included: project overview; conduct of research process; review of questionnaire and translation: paperless data collection; mock interviews in-classroom and field piloting.

2.4.2. Pretesting and revision of data collection tools

The questionnaires were pre-tested in a peer-to-peer interview method and feedback from the test was used to further contextualize the questionnaire and improve quality. They included both quantitative and qualitative tools. The quantitative tools included a survey for children (10-17years). The survey questions focused on:

1. Child protection issues
2. Feelings of safety
3. Violence at home, school, and in the community
4. Child vulnerability
5. Knowledge about protective actions
6. Use of child protection mechanisms (formal and non-formal)

2.4.3. Primary data collection

Data collection took place between 11th and 15th January 2024 and was conducted by a team of 15 enumerators. The program and sponsorship officers provided on-site support, while the ChildFund staff engaged in the conduct of KIIs and field team monitoring and support. Data entry was performed by each enumerator using KOBOCollect[3], an android app designed for administrating surveys. Data saved in each tablet was uploaded to the server at the end of each data collection day. Quantitative data was obtained through child surveys while qualitative information was obtained through focus group discussions, key informant interviews and in-depth interviews. A summary of the primary data collection is given in the table below;

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[3] **KoboToolbox** is an intuitive, powerful, and reliable software used to collect, analyze, and manage data for surveys, monitoring, evaluation, and research.

Table 3: Primary data collection summary

Method	Description
Children Survey	A survey with children aged 10-17 lasting approximately 40-50 minutes. The survey asked about demographic information, information about child rights, types of child protection issues experienced, feelings of safety, experiences with violence, participation in activities to reduce child protection risks, connection to their caregiver, and well-being.
Focus Group Discussions	These were carried out with board of management members and teachers. Each group with 8-12 people to understand child protection risks which children are exposed to, establish the level of participation in their own protection needs and available child protection referral mechanisms for child protection. The specific target groups were spread out in the project area to ensure diversity of opinion.
In-Depth Interviews	In-depth interviews lasting approximately 30-45 minutes were conducted with area managers to understand child protection risks which children are exposed to and available community based referral mechanisms for child protection.
Key Informant Interviews	Open ended interviews that were approximately 30-45 minutes in length, were conducted with county government stakeholders, community leaders

2.5. Data management, analysis and processing

2.5.1. Quality Assurance

Several quality assurance methods were used during data collection. The use of mobile devices for the survey improved data quality by allowing data validation rules and consistency checks that were integrated in the KOBOCollect software program to be used. It also allowed the supervising team to check the timing and length of the surveys to ensure the enumerators were following protocol of doing systematic sampling, not rushing interviews, having adequate time to explain the informed consent process, and to do monitoring of data consistency, gaps and any problems. Data security was ensured for respondents as no names or personal identifiers were on the surveys and only the research team had access to the data. The two supervisors also monitored the data collectors in the field, and in conjunction with the Childrise team.

2.5.2. Data Analysis

Quantitative Data

The synchronized data were exported to MS Excel. Exploratory analyses were carried out to undertake descriptive statistics, with frequencies, percentages in the analysis. The descriptive statistics included 95% confidence intervals (CI). The results were presented in tables, graphs, and charts. The values for each outcome were generated by calculating the average of the values of all parameters that assess that outcome.

Qualitative Data

The qualitative data analysis was conducted using a grounded theory technique.[4] The raw data was plotted into Excel and key categories, themes, and patterns identified inductively, through holistic reading, and examined through processes of triangulation with different subgroups (e.g. BOM members, teachers and child protection actors). Since qualitative data frequently provides insight into processes of social change and the mechanisms through which changes occur, they were triangulated with the quantitative data, boosting analytic power through convergent findings whenever possible.

2.6. Ethical considerations

- The evaluation recognized and sought to address the ethical complexities and dilemmas associated with research on children. It was conducted in a manner designed to ensure that the benefits to participants outweighed any costs or unintended harm, and that the process embodied the ethical principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, beneficence, non-maleficence, and the best interests of the child.
- All the data collectors were bound by ChildFund's Child Protection Policy, which defined key principles, harmful actions that must be avoided, and processes for reporting violations and responding to them in an appropriate manner.
- Ethical considerations also included how to talk in a respectful and empathic manner when querying people about sensitive topics.
- Informed consent was obtained through careful procedures that did not involve coercion. Children's assent was also obtained together with the consent of their parents/caregivers. The participants were free to end their involvement in an activity at any time.To protect confidentiality, the records contain no names or personal identifiers. Throughout, care was taken not to raise expectations that the participants or their family or community would receive material benefits such as money because of their participation.

2.7. Limitations

- Self-reported behaviours may not always be aligned with the individual's actual practices, and social desirability bias results when respondents provide the answer, they think data collectors want to hear, rather than the most accurate response. To diminish this bias, triangulation occurred between quantitative and qualitative results.
- The household set up was chosen because at the time of the evaluation, it was not feasible to conduct the evaluation in school set up due to the government's decision not to allow parents and community into the schools so as not to interfere with learning. Trained enumerators randomly administered the baseline survey questionnaire to sampled children in primary and secondary school as at household level during the weekend.

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[4] Bhattaacherjee, 2012

3. Evaluation Findings

3.1. Demographic and socio-economic background of households

A total of 440 children were reached during the survey. Over half, 52% (n=228) of the respondents were girls and 48% (n=212) boys. In terms of age, 58% (n=254) between 13-15vyrs while the least were 5% (n=20) aged 16-17 years. All the respondents were in school with majority at junior secondary level (53%). The children were sampled equally from the sub counties where the project wasbe implemented. *Table 4* below gives complete demographic information of children reached during this evaluation.

Table 4: Children demographics

Demographic	Description	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Boys	212	48.2
	Girls	228	51.8
Age	10-12 years	166	37.7
	13-15 years	254	57.7
	16-17 years	20	4.6
Education level	Junior Secondary	233	53.0
	Upper Primary	204	46.0
	Pre-Primary	3	1.0
Sub-county	Chiakariga	220	50.0
	IgambaNg'ombe	220	50.0
Special Needs	Yes	22	5.0
	No	418	95.0
Type of Special Need	Seeing	14	3.0
	Hearing	1	0.0.
	Speaking	1	0.0
	Fine Motor	1	0.0
	Walking	2	0.0
	Other specify	5	1.0

3.2. Child Protection Systems

Child protection is a multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary affair that encompasses involvement of all. The establishment of child protection in Kenya can be traced to 2002. Key milestones include the UN sanctioned evaluation on violence against children in 2006, which consequently triggered Kenyan Government national evaluation in 2007. The result was revisiting and development of National Child Protection System and pilot of National mapping and assessment of child protective environment tool kit[5]. The clarion call for framework for Kenya national child protection system is "*promotion of linkages between different actors and provision of coordinated interventions and responses through a statutory mechanism*". The ultimate mission of the national level framework

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[5] National Council for Children Services (NCCS) (2011, NOV), The Framework for The National Child Protection System for Kenya

is to facilitate the harmonization and coordination of preventive child protection efforts, as well as service delivery to children. The operational definition of child protection in the context of the evaluation has been adopted from Save the Children International (2011), "*As measures and structures that prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence affecting children*"[6]. On the other hand, the Child Protection System definition has been derived from UNICEF (2010), "*A set of laws, policies, regulations and services, capacities, monitoring, and oversight needed across all social sectors, especially, social welfare, education, health, security, and justice to prevent and respond to protection related risks*"[7].

3.2.1. Prevalence of child abuse

The evaluation has found out that child abuse is slightly more prevalent in Chiakariga Sub County with more than a third, 33.5% (n=147) of sampled children reporting having witnessed a child being subjected to harsh treatment or abuse compared to 24.4%(n=107) of children in Igambang'ombe sub county. Over half, 52%(n=131) of the male children were aware of the mistreatment compared to 48% (n=123) of female children during the survey. *See Figure 1 below.*

Figure 1: Awareness of incidences of mistreatment by children
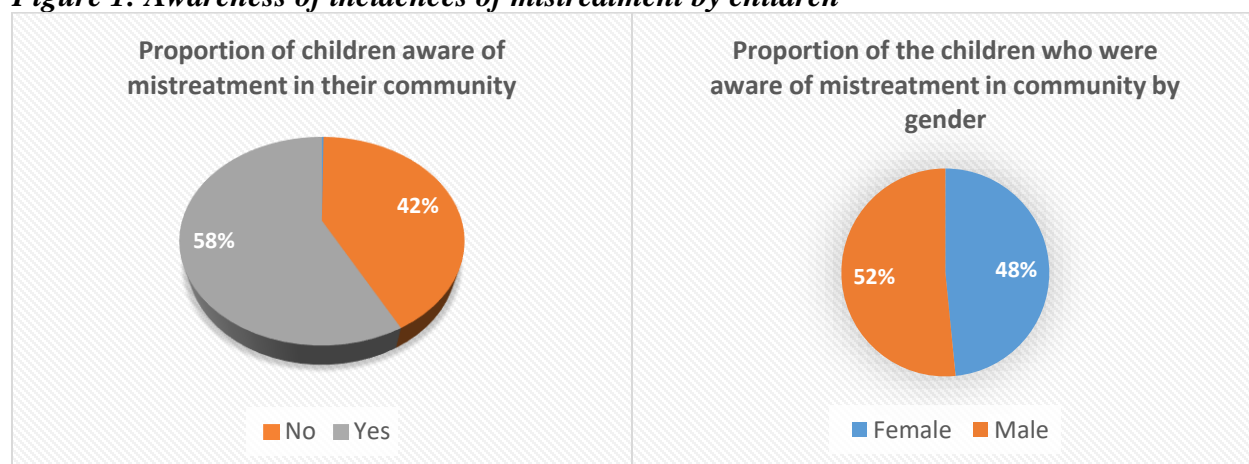
3.2.2. Types of abuse

Children were asked about some of the problems they face at home or school to measure the prevalence of child abuse in their community. The major incidences were physical abuse including acts such as beating, physical punishment. This was followed by neglect (lack of provision of basic needs such food, clothing, shelter) and essential rights such as education. Others experienced psychological emotional and verbal abuse through name calling, being chased away from home, demeaning and worthless, blaming and insults. In addition, children experienced child marriage, child labour, female genital mutilation, kidnapping, defilement and sexual harassment.

In Chiakariga sub county, the most prevalent form of abuse reported among boys is neglect and physical abuse while the least is sexual and verbal abuse. Among girls, the most reported form of abuse is physical abuse while the least is emotional abuse. Overall girls are more likely to experience multiple forms of abuse compared to boys.

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[6] **Save the Children Child Protection Initiative (2011):** Keys to Protect David from Violence: The Role of National Child Protection Systems. Save the Children.

[7] **UNICEF (2010):** Child Protection Systems: Mapping and Assessment Toolkit – User's Guide, UNICEF.

Figure 2: Prevalence of child abuse in Chiakariga sub county

Prevalence of child abuse in Chiakariga Sub County

Verbal abuse — Girls 6, Boys 3
Emotional abuse — Girls 3, Boys 6
Sexual abuse — Girls 2, Boys 1
Psychological abuse — Girls 13, Boys 6
Neglect — Girls 19, Boys 22
Child marriage — Girls 9, Boys 8
Child labour — Girls 17, Boys 10
Physical abuse — Girls 40, Boys 46
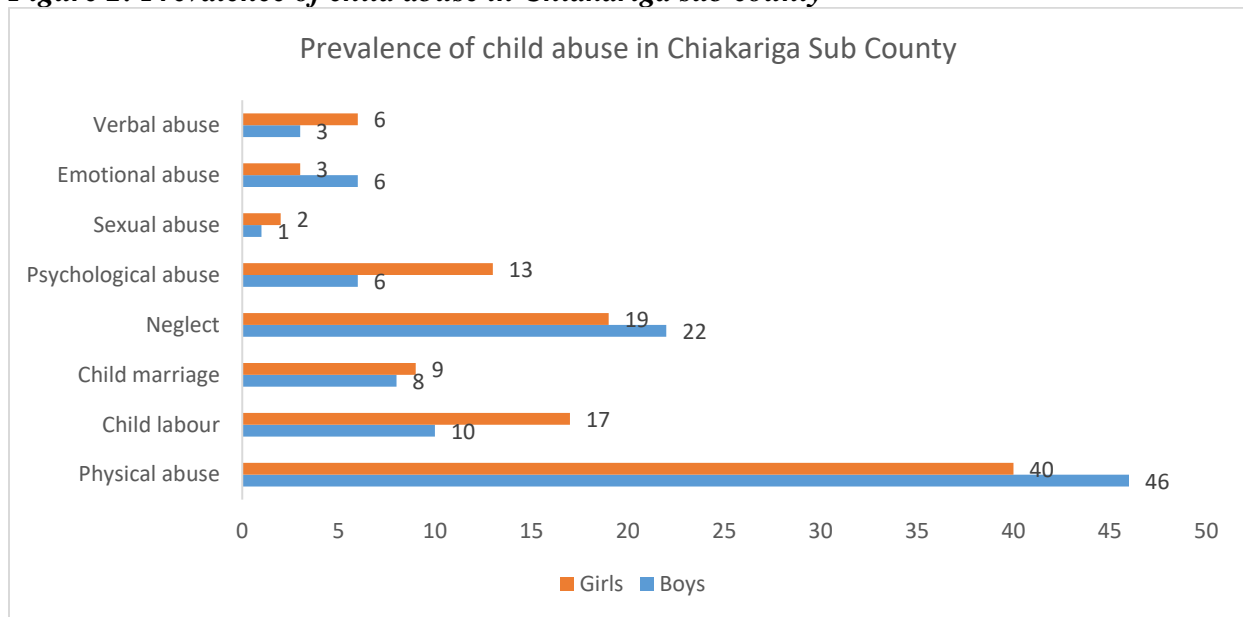
In Igambang'ombe sub county, the most prevalent form of abuse reported among boys is child labour and neglect while the least is psychological and verbal abuse. Among girls, the most reported form of abuse is physical abuse, neglect and child labour while the least is psychological abuse. Overall girls are more likely to experience multiple forms of abuse compared to boys.

Figure 3: Prevalence of child abuse in Igambangombe sub county

Prevalence of abuse in Igambang'ombe Sub County

Verbal abuse — Girls 5, Boys 2
Sexual abuse — Girls 10, Boys 10
Psychological abuse — Girls 4, Boys 2
Physical abuse — Girls 13, Boys 12
Neglect — Girls 15, Boys 22
Child marriage — Girls 6, Boys 3
Child labour — Girls 15, Boys 21
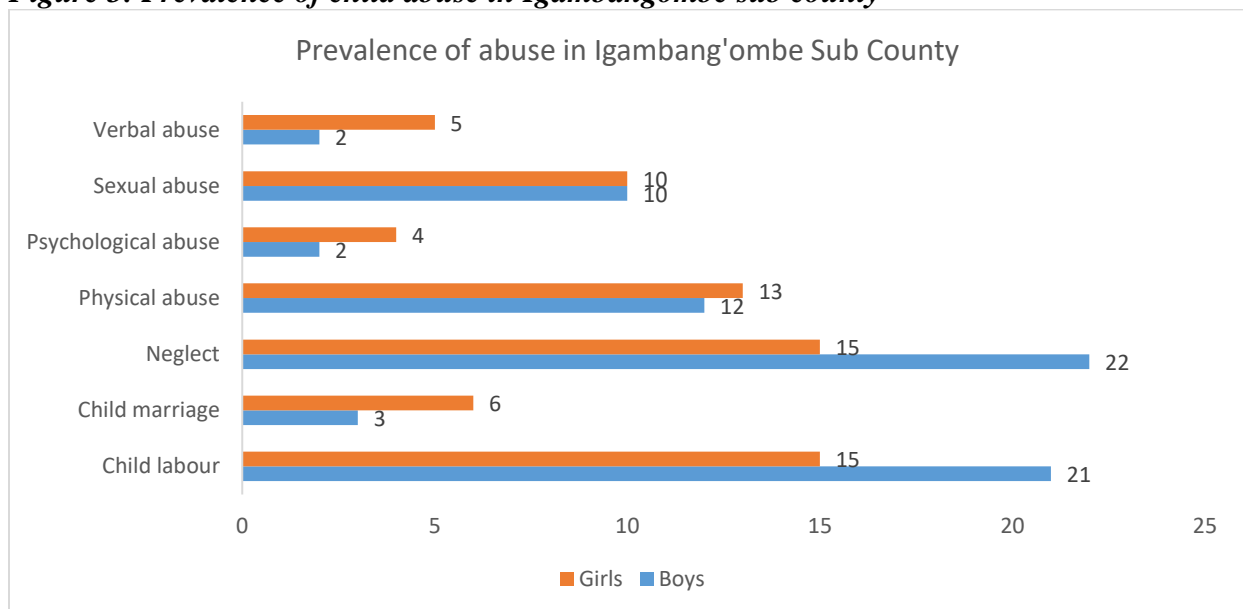
3.2.3. Unsafe places

The evaluation found out that homes is the leading place where abuse of children happens with 88%(n=224) of the children reporting this compared to 10% (n=25) in school (*See Table 5 below*).

Table 5: Common places of child abuse

Where child abuse is most common	n	Percentage
Home	224	88.19
Both home and school	2	0.79
Roadside	3	1.18
School	25	9.84
Total	254	100.0

The most unsafe places in the community include farms and plantations, rivers, bushes and bus stages whereas in school, such places are the principal office, staffroom. The safe places include churches and mosques roadside and playground (*See figure 2 below*).

Figure 4: Perception of safety in school and community by children

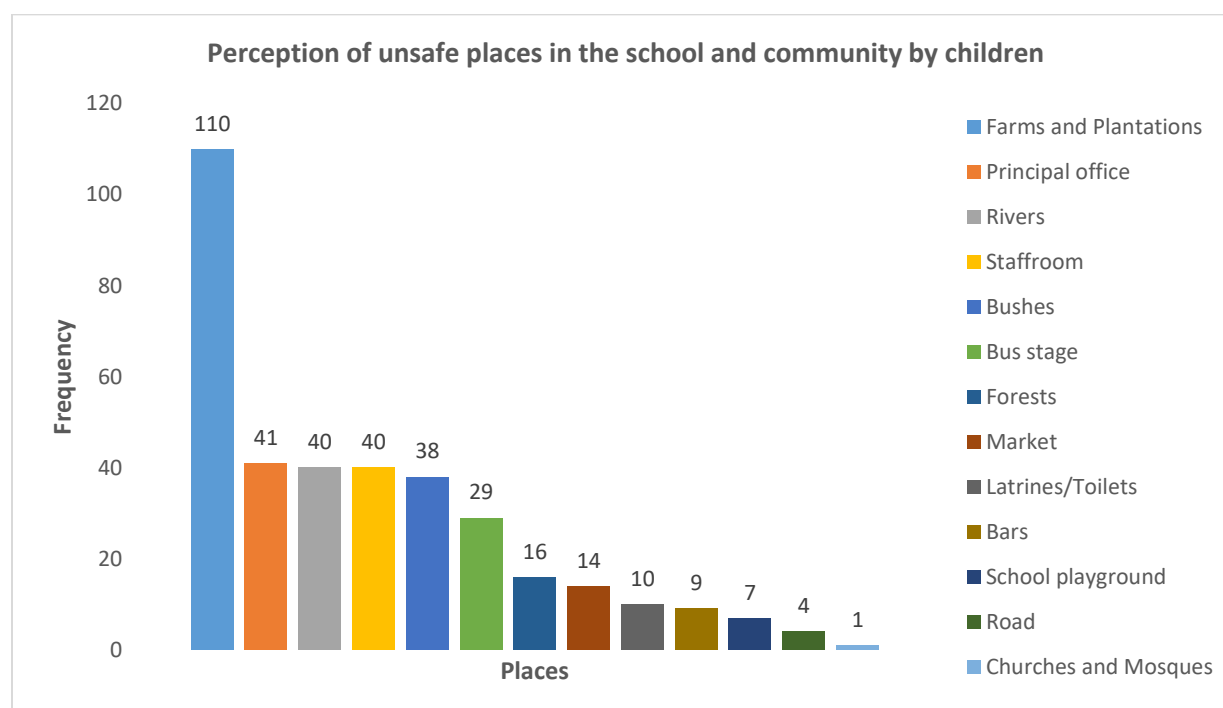### 3.3. Functional community-based child protection systems

Kenya has an effective and functional child protection system which is guided by a framework. The overall purpose of any child protection system is to promote the well-being of children through prevention of violence and exploitation, ensuring that in case it happens, prompt and coordinated action is taken to prevent further occurrence. The system includes a set of laws and policies that protect children from violence and exploitation; a central government coordination mechanism bringing together; government departments and civil society organizations, at all levels; a centralized management information system that ensures regular collection of information on both

prevalence and incidence of child protection issues; services and responses that are effectively regulated and coordinated.[8]

3.3.1. Child protection reporting mechanism.

Having knowledge of the types of child abuse is important and so is having awareness of reporting the same. Once child abuse is reported, it is important for the cases to be handled properly and perpetrators brought to book. Below is a description of various aspects of the child protection reporting mechanism at baseline in the area.

3.3.1.1.Awareness of reporting mechanisms

The knowledge on the child protection reporting procedures in the school and community was examined. Over three quarter, 79% (n=351) of the respondents are knowledgeable on the procedures for reporting abuse and 19% (n=82) are not. The evaluation further examined the sources knowledge on where report child abuse and the procedure. The teacher was found to be the first reference point at 63%(n=268), followed by the chief 16% (n=66) and 9% (n=37) the police. Only 1% of the children learnt directly from the religious leaders, board of management members, child protection volunteers and NGO staff. See figure 5 below.

Figure 5: Sources of knowledge on Child Abuse reporting procedures
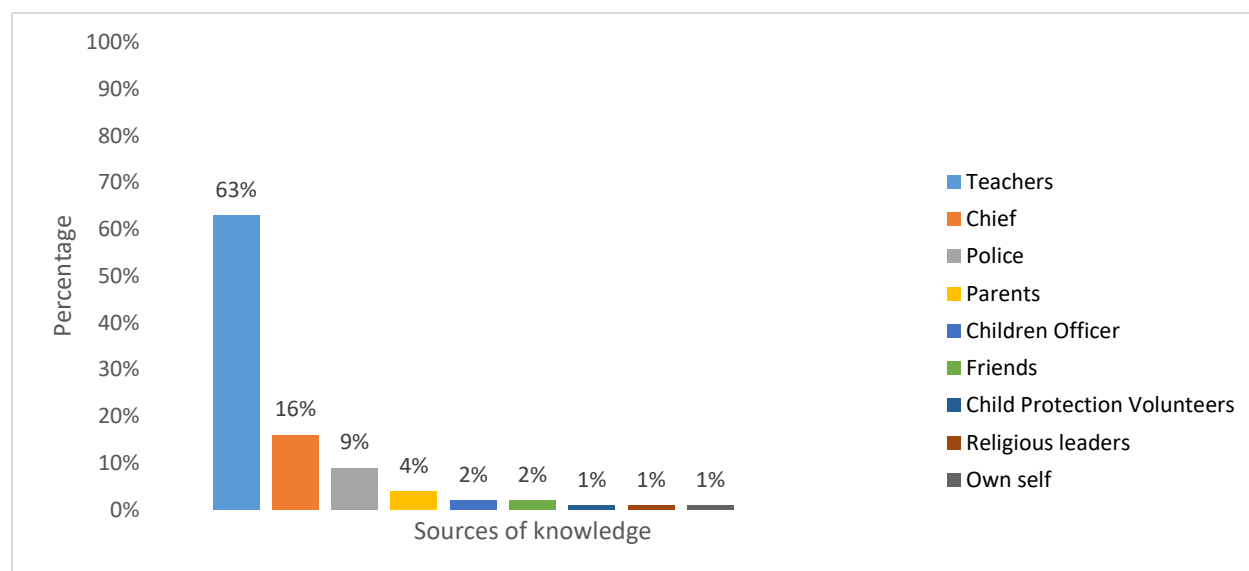
3.3.1.2.Where cases are reported

Children are most likely to report cases of child abuse to teachers as reported by 28% of them. Twenty five percent would report to the chief, 21% to parents. Others include friends, police, area manager, pastor, neighbours, siblings and children officer. Table 3 below gives a summary of the people that children report child abuse cases to.

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[8] National Council for Children Services (NCCS) (2011, NOV), The Framework for The National Child Protection System for Kenya

Table 6: Where Children report cases of Child Abuse

Response	Percentage
Teachers	27.50%
Chief	25.23%
Parents	20.45%
Other specify	10.00%
Community elder	8.41%
Other relatives	5.00%
School Principal/Headmaster	1.36%
Children Officer	0.91%
Missing values	0.68%
Siblings e.g. brother or sister	0.45%
Grand Total	**100.00%**

3.3.1.3. Knowledge of children subjected to mistreatment.

Almost half, 46% (n=204) of the children had knowledge of children who may have been subjected to mistreatment in the school, home and community while 53% (n=233). There were no gender differentials, although more children in Chiakariga knew of other children who may have been abused in the community compared to Igambang'ombe. See table 7 below.

Table 7: Knowledge of children who may have been mistreated.

Do you know about children in your home, school or community who may have ever been subjected to mistreatment or abuse?		
Response	**n**	**% age**
No	233	52.95%
Yes	204	46.36%
Don't Know/Not sure	2	0.45%
Choose not to answer	1	0.23%
Grand Total	**440**	**100.00%**

In terms of awareness of children who may have been mistreated and reported to the authorities. 69% (n=302) did not report, 30% (n=133) reported and 1% (n=5) don't know/not sure. There were more girls reported the incidences compared to boys. The proportion of children who reported incidences of mistreatment was higher in Chiakariga compared to Igambang'ombe sub county. In terms of age, children aged 13-15 years were more likely to report compared to the older cohort aged 16-17 years. In terms of resolution, 73% (n=97) of the children reported knowledge of case resolution compared to 23% (n=30) who reported that the cases were not resolved.

3.3.2. Access to referral services

Case referral is the process of directing or redirecting a child and the caregivers to an agency for appropriate services depending on the needs of the child. Tujukumike project aims at referring children in need of protection to services such as psychosocial support, medical care, access to justice, and peer counselling among others.

This evaluation sought to know who the most affected children are and if they are being/not referred for these services and reasons for not being referred. Majority, 72% (n=317) of the respondents are aware of children in the community referred in the past year by community members (family members or other community members) directly to social services[9] whereas only 27% (n=119) of respondents are aware of children who had been abused and referred to social services.

Twenty three percent (n=105) of respondents are aware of children who have been abused and not referred to any services. Some of the reasons for them not being referred include lack of awareness on where to report, high poverty levels, lack of seriousness in handling child abuse cases by authorities, the process costs time and money, drugs, alcohol and substance abuse in the community, ignorance by parents and teachers, fear of consequences by the victims, misconceptions by community that child labour is helping parents to move out of poverty and child negligence.

Children who are living in poor households are the mostly not referred group to access these services at 34%(n=35), 26%(n=27) were boys and 18%(n=19) were girls, 10% were children who are orphaned, 7% were children experiencing all forms of violence, 4% were children with special needs and 1% both boys and girls and children living with their grandmothers.

Table 8: Summary of access to referral services

Variable	Description	Percent
Are you aware of Children in the community referred in the past year by community members (family members or other community members) directly to social services	Yes	27.05
	No	72.05
	Not sure/Don't know	0.9
Are you aware of children who have been abused and not referred to access any services?	No	74.77
	Yes	23.86
	Not sure/Don't know	1.36
If Yes, who are mostly not referred to access any services?	Children living in poor families/households	34%
	Boys	26%
	Girls	18%
	Children who are orphaned	10%
	Children experiencing all forms of violence	7%
	Children with special needs	4%
	Boys and girls	1%
	Children living with grandmothers	1%

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[9] Services provided by government or non-governmental agencies to address the needs and problems of the most vulnerable. These can include police, residential care, income support, home visiting, social workers/social welfare, and health services such as rehabilitation, nutritional and health services.

Three quarters 75%(n=329) of the children are aware of children in need of protection who have received necessary support from the school and community, 20% (n=88) did not receive support, 5%(n=22) don't know/not sure, 0.2% (n=1) chose not to answer this question. Some of the reasons for lack of support included high poverty level at the household level, fear of stigmatisation from the community, lack of support from parents and neighbours and the system.

Figure 6: Support for children in need of protection
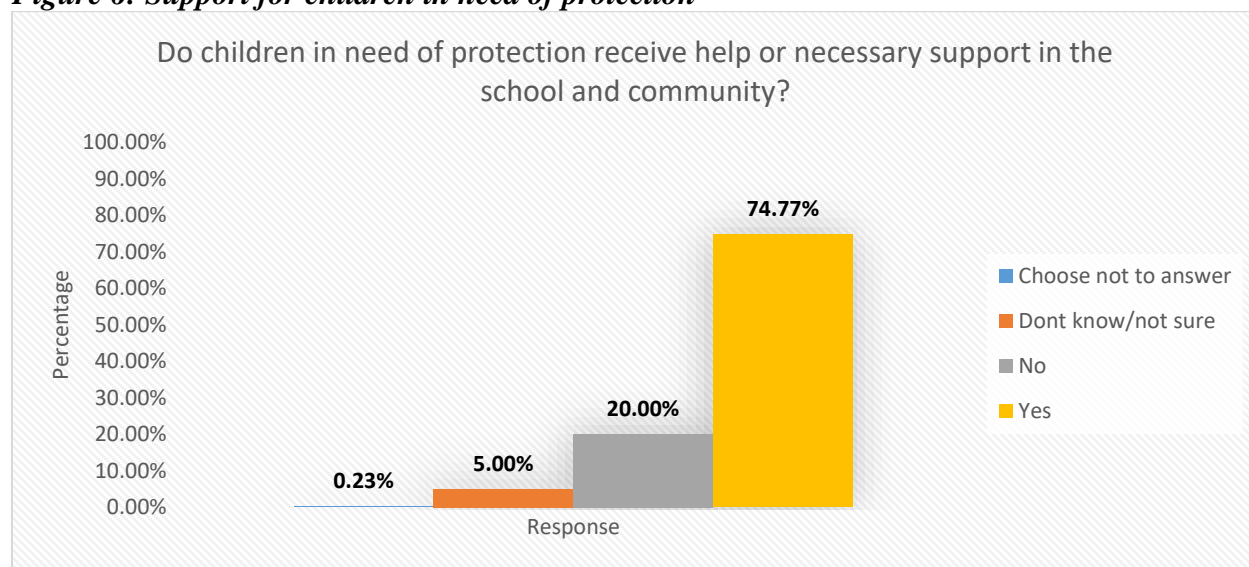
Over half, 52% (n=205) receive psychological support, 20% (n=79) referred to justice systems, 17% (n=67) access to medical care, 4% (n=15) taken to rescue services/centres and 7% (n=27) other services such as payment of school fees, provision of basic needs such as food and clothing.

Figure 7: Support services for children in need of protection
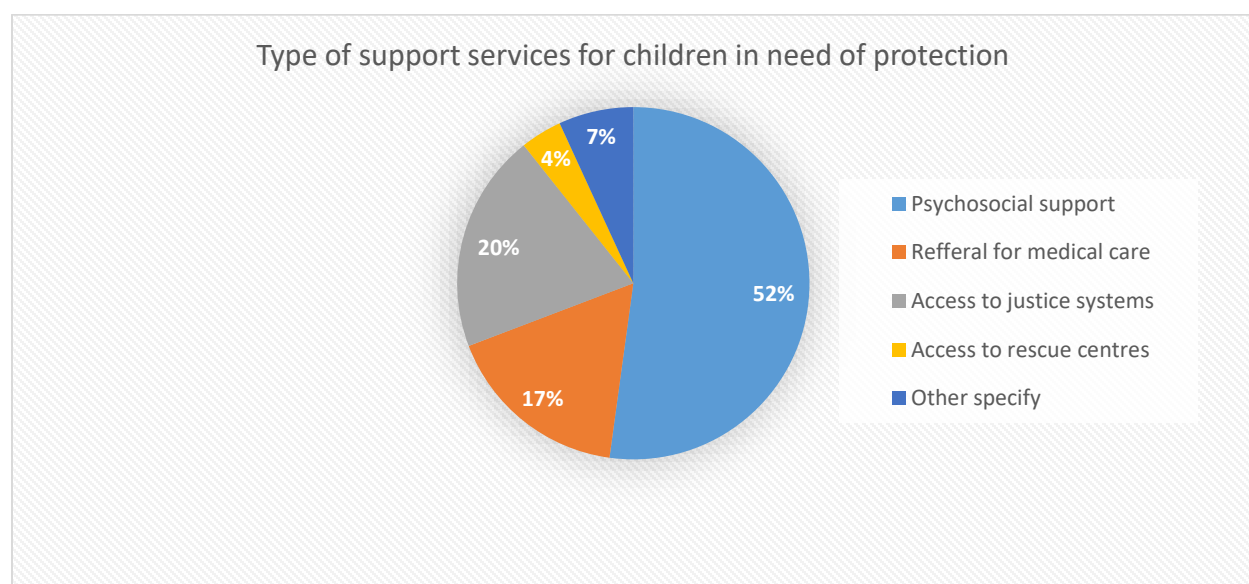
3.4. School Based Child Protection

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, declared that *"everyone has a right to education."* Education is a social, economic, cultural, civil and political right. Kenyan government spends a big percentage of resources on education. In a 2015 evaluation on child abuse in Kenya commissioned by the Kenya Catholic Secretariat, it emerged that the worst forms of violence against children in schools are physical violence followed by verbal and sexual violence respectively mostly perpetrated by peers[10]. The project seeks to facilitate linkage between the school, community and the formal child protection system in order to establish a seamless protection loop through organizing for regular thematic mentorship sessions where community resource persons, government officials and local celebrities washave an opportunity to listen to children and also impart values in the lives. Special places within the compounds of target schools wasbe identified and made as child friendly as possible where the engagement with adult mentors wasbe done and where children washave an opportunity for recreation and to discuss issues affecting them both among themselves and with the guidance of trained teachers.

3.4.1 Prevalence of Child Abuse in school

3.4.1.1. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is defined as physical injury inflicted on a child by other than accidental means. The statutes define physical injury as anything from severe or frequent bruising to more serious injuries[11]. The evaluation also established that 50% (n=222) of respondents had sometimes witnessed a child being hit or humiliated by a teacher, other adult or other students in the last three months, 35% (n=153) never and 15% (n=65) happens often in the school. Many children who have been subjected to hitting, paddling or other harsh disciplinary practices have reported subsequent problems with depression, fear and anger. These students frequently withdraw from school activities and disengage academically[12]. The Society for Adolescent Medicine has found that victims of corporal punishment often develop "deteriorating peer relationships, difficulty with concentration, lowered school achievement, antisocial behavior, intense dislike of authority, somatic complaints, a tendency for school avoidance and school drop-out, and other evidence of negative high-risk adolescent behavior[13].

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[10] Kenya Catholic Secretariat,2015

[11] Definition of Physical abuse via https://media.wcwpds.wisc.edu/mandatedreporter/transcripts/Definition-of-Physical-Abuse.pdf

[12] https://www.hrw.org/news/2010/04/15/corporal-punishment-schools-and-its-effect-academic-success-joint-hrw/aclu#:~:text=The%20Impact%20of%20Corporal%20Punishment%20On%20Students'%20Academic%20Performance&text=Many%20children%20who%20have%20been,with%20depression%2C%20fear%20and%20anger.

[13] Society for Adolescent Medicine, *Position Paper: Corporal Punishment in Schools*, 32:5 J. Adolescent Health 385, 388 (2003).

Figure 8: Prevalence of Physical Abuse in Schools

How frequent have you seen students at your school being physically abused by another student or school staff (for example, hit, kicked, pushed, pinched, etc.)

15%

50%

35%

■ Sometimes ■ Never ■ Often
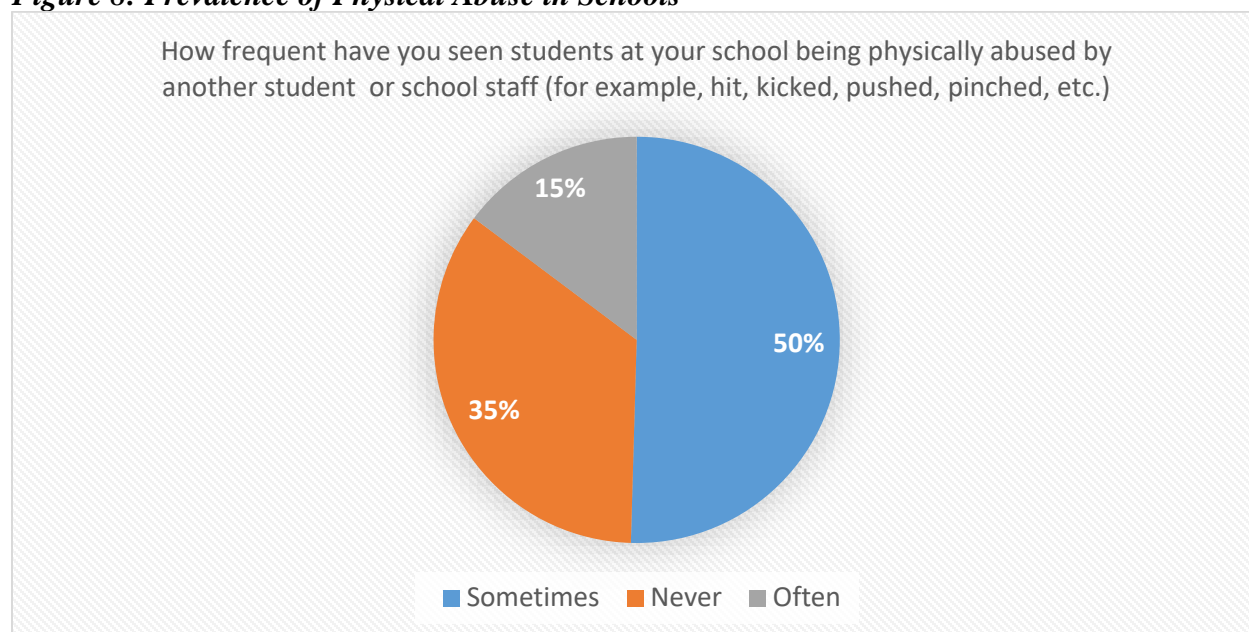
3.4.1.2. Sexual Abuse

Sexual Abuse can be defined as any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim This encompasses a range of offenses, including completed or attempted non-consensual sexual intercourse (i.e. defilement and coerced intercourse using non-physical threats or pressure), other completed or attempted non-consensual sex acts, abusive sexual contact (i.e. unwanted touching or fondling), and non-contact sexual abuse (e.g. threatened sexual violence, exhibitionism, verbal sexual harassment)[14]. In the KDHS Survey 2022, at least 13% of women aged 15-49 years have ever experienced sexual violence by any perpetrator. From the survey 82%(n=360) of children reported that Sexual Abuse "never" occurs in their school, 13% (n=55) sometimes, 4% (n=17) often and 2% (n=8) were not sure/didn't know.

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[14] Child Sexual Abuse in Kenya: Occurrence, Context, Risk Factors and Consequences via
https://childlinekenya.co.ke/assets/files/Child%20Sexual%20Abuse%20Research%20Report-CLK-2011.pdf

Figure 9: Prevalence of Sexual Abuse in Schools

How frequent have you seen students at your school being sexually harrased by another student or school staff?

- Never 82%
- Sometimes 12%
- Often 4%
- Not sure/Dont know 2%

■ Never ■ Sometimes ■ Often ■ Not sure/Dont know
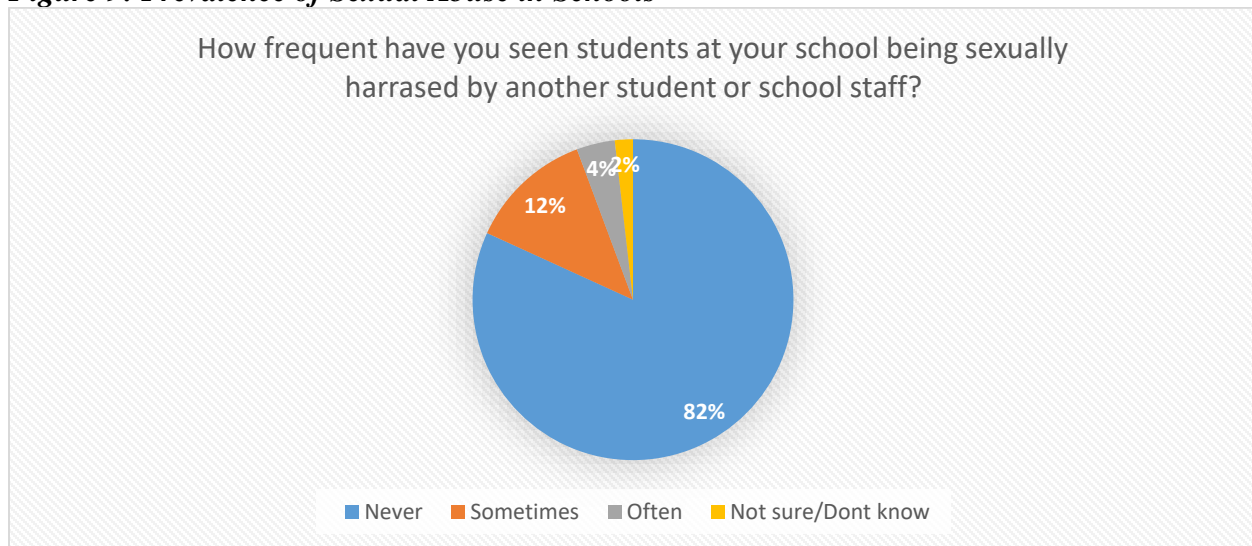
3.4.1.3. Psychological Emotional and Verbal Abuse

Psychological abuse, also known as emotional abuse, comes in subtle forms of insults, humiliation, belittling, threats against your life and many more, that often go unnoticed by the victim or that are not socially considered as abuse[15]. Emotional abuse happens when a child is repeatedly made to feel worthless, unloved, alone or scared. Also known as psychological or verbal abuse, it is the most common form of child abuse. It can include constant rejection, hostility, teasing, bullying, yelling, criticism and exposure to family violence[16]. From the survey, 64%(n=283) of children reported that they have never experienced verbal or emotional abuse in school, 31% (n=134) sometimes and 5% (n=22) often.

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[15] https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/evewoman/wellness/article/2001396139/emotional-abuse-the-most-common-form-of-abuse-against-women

[16] https://kidshelpline.com.au/parents/issues/understanding-child-emotional-abuse

Figure 10: Prevalence of Verbal Abuse in Schools

How frequent have you seen students at your school being verbally or emotionally abused by another student or school staff?

5%

31%

64%

■ Never ■ Sometimes ■ Often
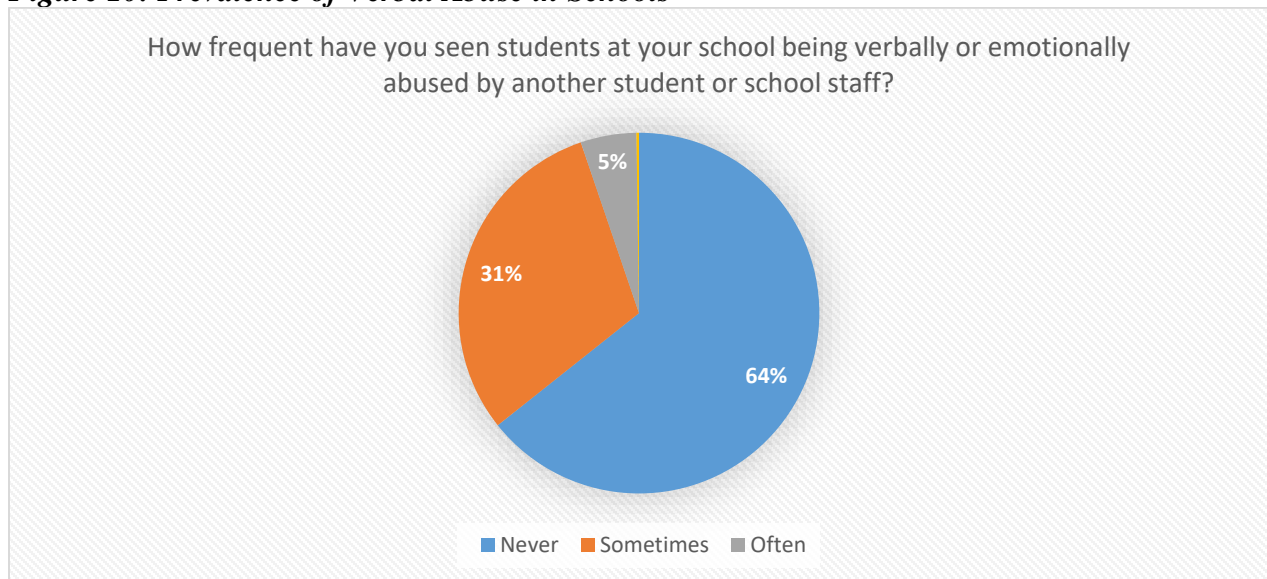
3.4.2 Existence of Independent Reporting Mechanism in Schools

The evaluation established that most schools lack child-friendly reporting mechanisms allowing children, staff, parents and caregivers to report violence at school. Limited or non-existent reporting systems means the prevalence, frequency and intensity of violence in schools are not fully or systematically documented. There is a great need for schools to improve reporting in order to create safe and protective environments for children. According to the baseline finding 56% of children reported that children do not have access to independent reporting mechanism like speak out boxes as indicated in Figure 11. Of those who have the reporting mechanisms, 82% indicated that children have access to them while, 18% reported that children do not have access.

In terms of reporting mechanisms for abuse that happens at school, children refer abuse cases to parents (42%), teachers (26%), chief (10%), headteacher and deputies (6%), police (5%), Friends (3%) other mechanisms include community elders, children's officers, grandparents, aunts. The least were NGOs and religious leaders. Some of the actions taken include arresting the perpetrators, reporting to the police, punishing the undisciplined children, offering psychological support.

Figure 11: Awareness of reporting mechanism in school

Do you know if there exist independent and confidential reporting mechanism
such as the talking/speak out boxes for child abuse cases in your school?

1%
43%
56%

■ Dont Know/Not sure ■ No ■ Yes
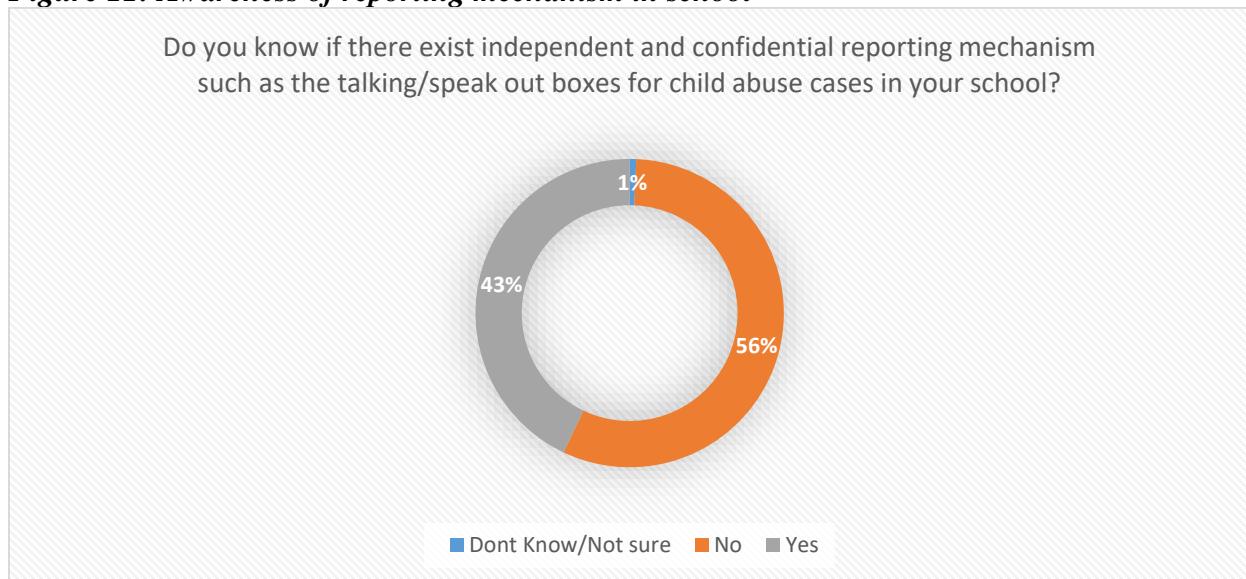
3.4.3. School Child Protection Champions

Table 9 below presents the findings on child protection champions within schools. Over a third, 37% (n=164) of the respondents are aware of the existence of child protection champions in schools, while 59% (n=261) were not aware of the champions. Most child protection champions are 58% (n=95) teachers, 29%(n=48) both children and teachers, 10% (n=16) fellow children, 2%(n=4) are board of management members and 1% others.

Table 9: Child Protection Champions in schools

Are there child protection champions in your school?		
Response	**N**	**Percentage (%)**
No	261	59.32%
Yes	164	37.27%
Don't know/Not sure	14	3.18%
Choose not to answer	1	0.23%
Grand Total	**440**	**100.00%**
If yes who are these child protection champions in your school?		
Response	**n**	**Percentage (%)**
Teachers	95	58%
Both children and teachers	48	29%
Fellow Children	16	10%
School BOM members	4	2%
Other specify	1	1%
Grand Total	**164**	100%

3.4.4. Community based child protection structures

The Framework for the National Child Protection System for Kenya[17] recognises the community-based child protection structure as including parents, teachers, neighbours, relatives and the public. Their role in child protection revolves around mobilizing local resources to protect children, reporting violence and exploitation against children and discouraging retrogressive cultural practices to protect children. Similarly, the *Tujukumike* project seeks the children's understanding of those involved in protecting them from abuse.

The figure 12 below mentions people whom the children mostly go to when they face mistreatment, abuse bad or difficult experiences or problems. These included, 27.5% (n=121) teachers, 25%(n=111) chief, 21%(n=90) parents, 10%(n=44) include friends, police, area managers, pastors and neighbours, 8% (n=37) community elder, 5% (n=22) other relatives, 1%(n=6) school principal or headmaster, children's officers and siblings such as brothers and sisters.

Figure 12: Sources of knowledge on reporting mechanism in schools

The community mechanisms include traditional clan systems of addressing such issues where clan elders are custodians of law, Area managers, Assistant chief, Chief among others. When probed on the effectiveness of these structures, stakeholders had this to say.

"At the community level, child protection systems are weak and such issues are not treated with the urgency that is required. In the region, the informal 'kangaroo' court systems of solving disputes at family level are the norm. However, this form of settling disputes is not suited for child protection because the wellbeing and needs of abused children are not prioritized. Rather, issues are swept under the rag to avoid drawing public attention to the family" – KII, St Peters Lifeline, CSO

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[17] The Framework for the National Child Protection System for Kenya, 2011

"Weaknesses of the kangaroo system include compromise of children's matters in favor of personal gains. Justice mechanisms are poor in this system of handling child issues. Some of the strengths of the Kangaroo system is that they act as arbitrators in settling of family disputes – **KII, Childrens Officer, Tharaka Nithi County**

"Kangaroo court systems do not look out for the best interests of the child. Rather, they prefer to bury such issues so that they may not expose the family to a lot of scrutiny and shame. Furthermore, it is very easy to corrupt the village local elders which compromises the quality of their adjudication in such sensitive matters" – **KII, CAC, Igambangombe**

"A major weakness of traditional systems currently is the lack of cohesion amongst community members as it once used to be in former days. The child used to belong to the community back in the day and this ensured their protection" – **KII, Education Officer.**

"The main weakness of traditional community systems especially in Igambang'ombe is that child protection is not given the attention it requires. In fact, it is highly likely for community members to cover up child protection incidences" – **KII Gender Officer.**

3.4.5. Formal child protection coordination mechanisms

A child protection coordination mechanism is important in ensuring that government departments and key stakeholders work together to benefit the child. The Childrens Act 2022 Articles 54 and 55 describe the composition and roles of the County and Sub County Childrens Advisory Committee. The structure's work is to ensure support and monitoring of service delivery, development of referral networks that increase access to essential services by children, establishment of child help desks, and mobilizing local resources for the benefit of children among other services. Other formal structures include the Department of Childrens Services, Deputy County Commissioner, Police, Gender and Social Services Officer, Children Officer etc. They are coordinated through the National Government Administration Officers (NGAO)[18]. One of the project outcomes is to ensure responsiveness of the formal and informal child protection mechanisms. The baseline evaluation established that the existing formal systems are weak and do not adequately address the child protection issues in Tharaka Nithi County. Furthermore, there is lack of coordination and interests in the welfare of the child.

"Not really, there is poor reporting of cases and furthermore, the area of coverage is quite large for those responsible to be effective. Better coordination and manpower is required – **KII CAC.**

"No. Some of the mentioned systems are not effective and there is need for more personnel. For instance, there is only one Children's officer (myself) covering the region of Igambang'ombe"- **KII Childrens Officer.**

There is little coordination between child protection actors both in informal and formal capacities. Most child protection actors prefer to work alone- **KII St Peters Lifeline**

"No. There is a lack of commitment by both formal and informal systems to root out child protection issues" – **KII Education Officer**

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[18] A hierarchical system from community level to the county level consisting of area managers, assistant chief, chief, Area Advisory Council, and Deputy County Commissioner (DCC).

*"No. The referral mechanisms are very weak. Additionally, there is need for more involvement by other actors to fill in and support existing formal actors due to the wide scope of coverage. – **KII Gender Officer***

"On the other hand, formal systems are few and far between and not robust such that there is little support provided to back up informal child protection mechanisms. The criminal justice system also tends to complicate handling of child protection systems because of slow processing of such cases" – KII CAC.

3.5. Child Participation in own Protection Needs

In line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) Article 12 that recognizes the right of child participation in decision making, one of the project's outcomes is; increased participation of children in their own protection within Tharaka Nithi County. The project was support the convening of County Childrens Assembly[19] meetings and termly meetings for Child protection champions to address any gaps and challenges they experience in promoting the rights of children in their respective schools. Furthermore, the project was facilitate children's participation in the Day of the African Child (DAC) event. This event not only provides a platform for children to express themselves but also build their confidence and engage them with leaders across sectors. During DAC, the children wasinteract with government officials, civil society representatives, and youth advocates to share their experiences and insights on pertinent issues.

3.5.1. Children leaders and forums

3.5.1.1. Awareness of children leaders in schools
Majority, 89% (n=393) of the respondents reported that they have children's leaders in their schools whereas 10% (n=45) do not have leaders (See Figure 13). These include school captain, President, Prefects, Bell ringers, Chairmen, Secretary, Speakers, Class representatives, head boys and head girls, scout leaders among others.

3.5.1.2. Children leaders' forums in schools and community

Only over a third, 34% (n=149) of respondents indicated that there have been children leaders' forums convened in their schools and community, 62% (n=272) did not have a forum, 4% (n=19) don't know/not sure.

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[19] The County Children's assembly is a platform for children to participate in governance and decision-making at the county level. It is part of the Kenya Children's Assembly, which is a national initiative that aims to promote the rights and welfare of children in Kenya.

Figure 13: Presence of children leaders in schools

Do you have children leaders in your school?

10.23%   0.45%

89.32%

■ Yes   ■ No   ■ Dont know/Not sure
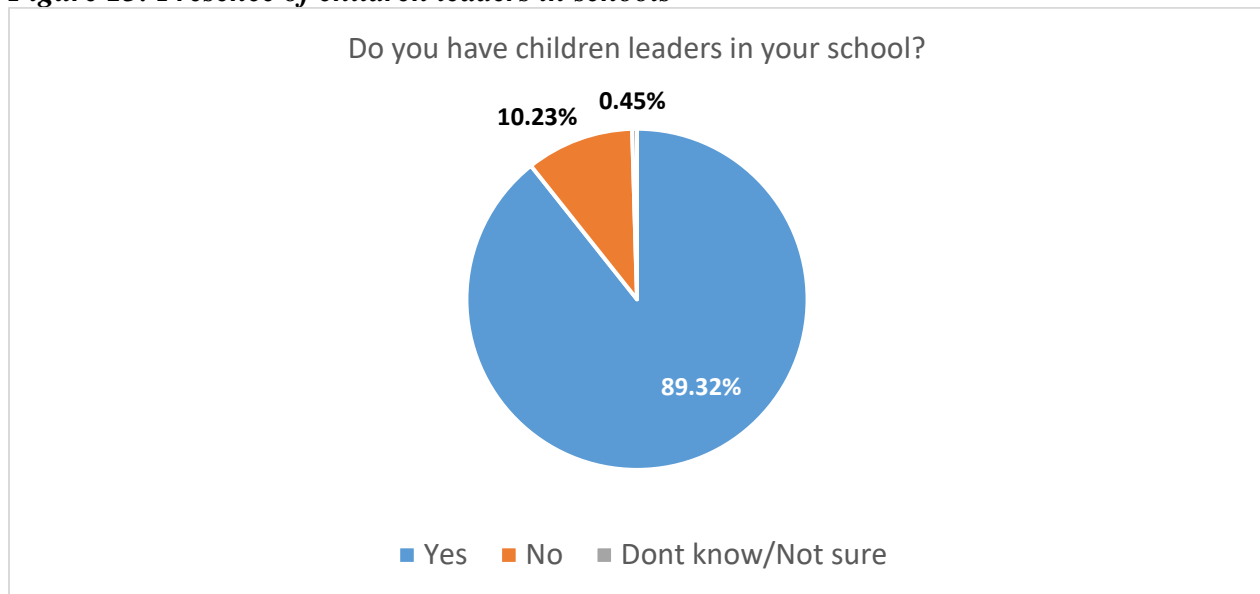
3.5.3. Child participation forums in school

3.5.3.1. Availability and functions of school child rights clubs

Children have the right to be listened to and taken seriously, in the classroom and beyond. With direct experience of their own situation, they often have ideas for solutions. Child participation forums provide these opportunities for children to have their issues listened to and addressed. From the survey, 68% (n=300) of children indicated that their schools have no structures for child participation in their own protection needs while 31% (n=134) have such clubs and 1% (n=6) don't know/not sure. Some of the major functions are to discuss issues affecting children such as education, health and protection and creating awareness among children and adults about child rights and responsibilities.

Figure 14: Functions of child rights clubs
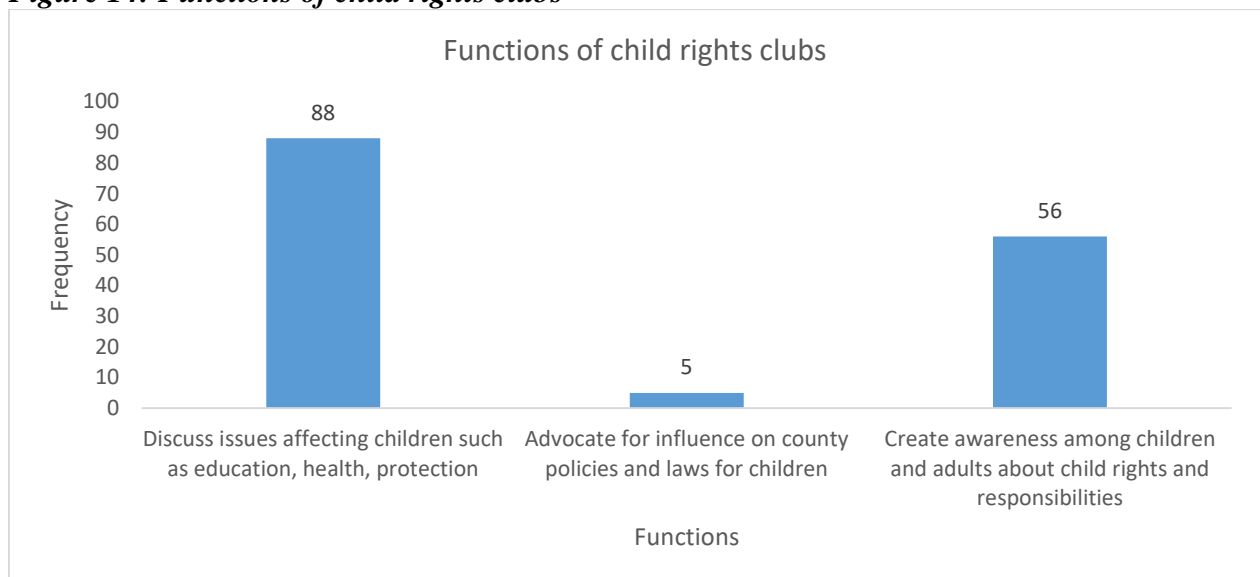
Functions of child rights clubs

88

5

56

Frequency

Discuss issues affecting children such as education, health, protection

Advocate for influence on county policies and laws for children

Create awareness among children and adults about child rights and responsibilities

Functions

From the respondents who have child rights clubs, 20% participate in the entity activities, 79% do not participate in the club events, 1% don't know/not sure. For those who participate in the club activities, 76% do it weekly, 7% once a month, 7% daily, 6% twice a month, 3% once every three months, 1% don't know/not sure.

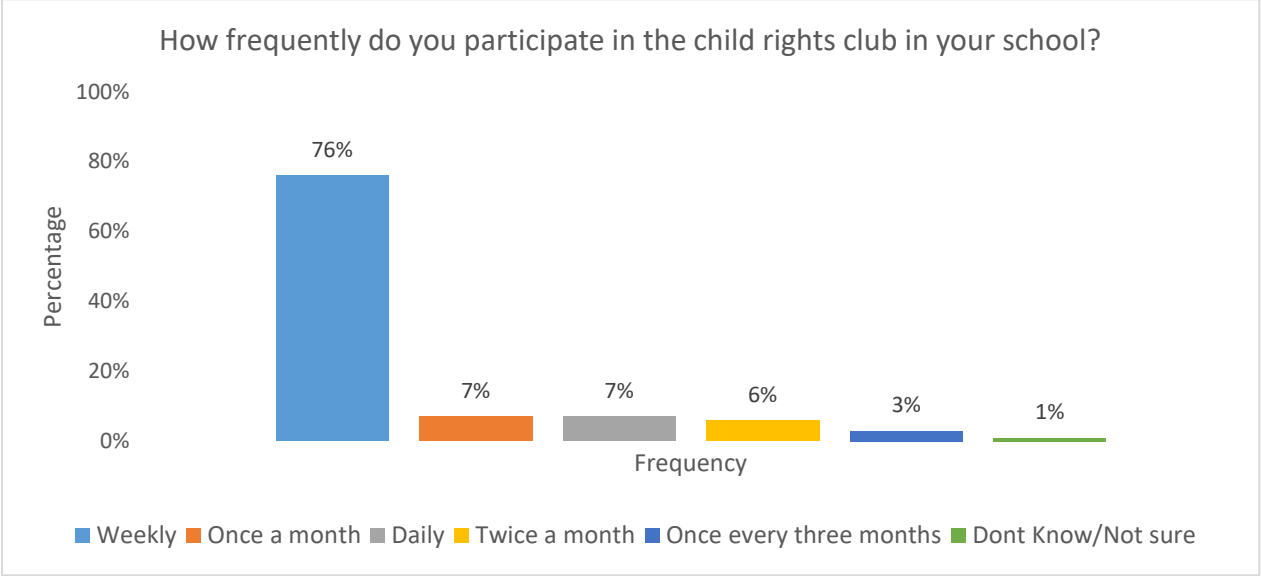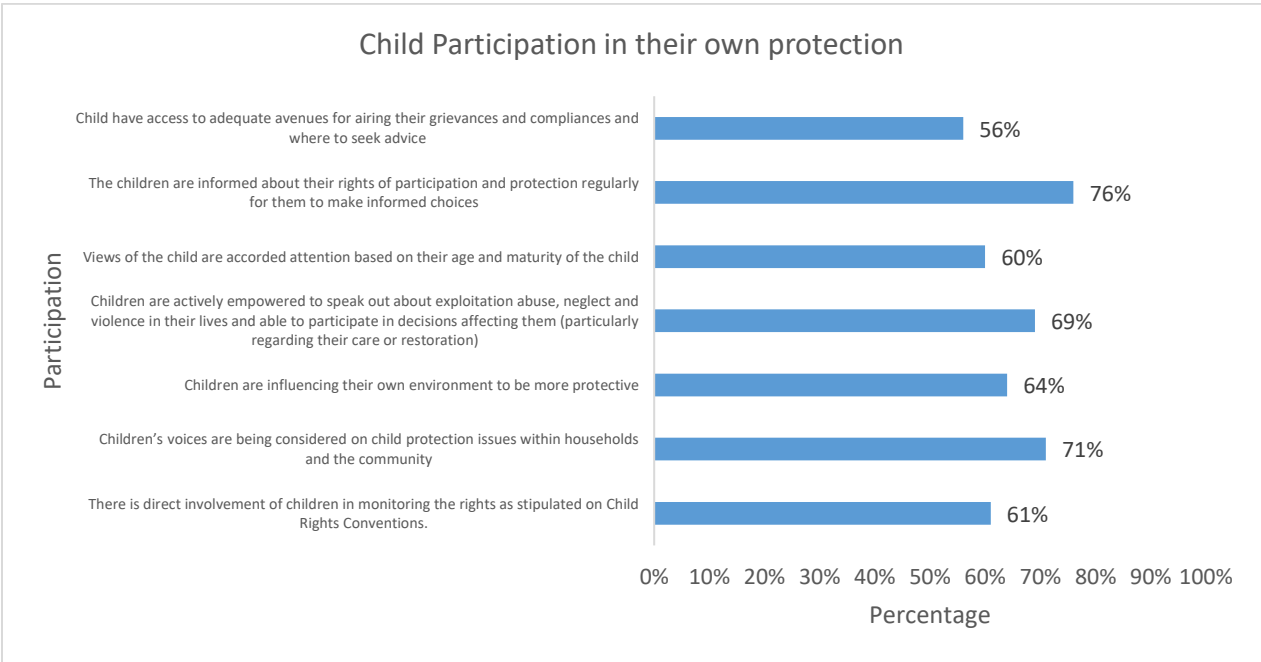*Figure 15: Frequency of Participation in the child rights clubs*

Figure 16 below shows the aspects of child participation in protection with the least being 56% of children having access to adequate venues for airing their grievances and complains and where to seek advice.

Figure 16: Child participation in their protection

4.   Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1. Conclusions

The evaluation found that child abuse is prevalent in Tharaka Nithi County, with Chiakariga Sub County being the most affected. More boys than girls are likely to be mistreated in the community. The major issues facing children include physical abuse including acts such as beating, physical punishment, neglect (lack of provision of basic needs such food, clothing, shelter) and essential rights such as education, emotional and verbal abuse through name calling, being chased away from home, demeaning and worthless, blaming and insults, child marriage, child labour, female genital mutilation, kidnapping, defilement and sexual harassment. The home is most unsafe environment where children are abused.

Majority of the children are aware of the child protection reporting procedures in the school and community. They were likely to learn about where to report child abuse and the procedure from their teachers, the chief and the police. Consequently, they would report the cases of child abuse to the same sources of information. Less than half of the children reported knowledge of children who may have ever been subjected to mistreatment in the school, home and community. In addition, only a third of children who may have been mistreated reported to the authorities. More girls were likely to report the incidences compared to boys. When incidences were reported, most of the children reported knowledge that the cases were resolved.

Some of the reasons for children in need of protection unable to get help and necessary support in the community include high poverty level at the household level, fear of stigmatisation from the community, lack of support from parents and neighbours and the system.

The evaluation established that most schools lack child-friendly reporting mechanisms allowing children, staff, parents and caregivers to report violence at school. Limited or non-existent reporting systems means the prevalence, frequency and intensity of violence in schools are not fully or systematically documented. There is a great need for schools to improve reporting in order to create safe and protective environments for children.

There are weak formal and informal child protection systems in the county. This is because child protection is not given the attention it requires. In fact, it is highly likely for community members to cover up child protection incidences. On the other hand, formal systems are few and far between and not robust such that there is little support provided to back up informal child protection mechanisms. The criminal justice system also tends to complicate handling of child protection systems because of slow processing of such cases. Dragging out of such these court processes hampers the effectiveness of case management process.

There are minimal opportunities for children's leaders to participate in the schools and community. In addition, most schools have no structures such as clubs for child participation in their own protection needs. From the respondents who have child rights clubs,only few children participate in the entity's weekly activities.

4.2. Recommendations

- **Use existing mechanisms to promote child protection in school:** This can be done through trainings and workshops for teachers, sensitization meetings for children and parents on child protection. In particular, the parents could be sensitised by teachers and BOM members during Parents Teachers Association (PTA) on matters pertaining prevention and protection of children against violence. Teachers need to be trained by the administration on how to handle challenges resulting from the adolescent children.
- **Gender mainstreaming**: The project team to consider tailor made interventions targeting boys to empower them on their rights and responsibilities so that they match the girl child. In addition, reach out to the affected children in the villages and encourage them to go back to school.
- **Strengthening guidance and counselling in schools:** There is a great need of promoting sensitization and awareness creation in schools and guidance and counselling to empower children on child rights and child protection issues.
- **School based Protection Mechanisms:** The school administration to come up with a special program for school where they target boys and girls in adolescent stage and create awareness on child protection and support them where necessary because in most cases, they are vulnerable to so many risks.
- **Life skills for children:** School administration should systematically and strategically introduce childrens rights into the school mission statement and policies and incorporate into school curricula, timetable and teaching materials.
- **School feeding programs:** The County Government should scale up school feeding programs to enable smooth learning of students.
- **Build the Capacity of Child Protection Systems:** The government should engage and build the capacity of more community social workers, community health promoters, teachers of guidance and counselling to check and ensure the children's welfare is safeguarded from various mistreatment.
- **Strengthen the child justice system:** The NGAO structure and Nyumba Kumi (neighbourhood watch committee), community stakeholders such as chiefs to ensure community mechanisms are strengthened so that perpetrators go through the full justice system. They should reinforce laws against sale of illicit brews and drugs in the community.
- **Strengthen household economic activities:** The government through the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries in conjunction with non-state actors should train the locals on food security because there is hunger risk at times in the area leading to exacerbated issues of child abuse.
- **Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development** should publish more books on child abuse and child protection and allocate more time for life skill lessons through the radio lessons.
- The Community leaders such as Council of Elders, Area Managers, Chiefs to be trained on children rights and protection and importance of proper parental childcare.
- Formation of groups on children rights in the community and children protection champions be trained in the community.

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6. Monitoring and Evaluation Matrix

Outcome	Indicator	Indicator definition	Baseline	Target	Source of Data	Method of Gathering Data	Frequency of Gathering Data	Data Gatherer
1.Increased responsiveness of the formal and informal child protection mechanisms	% increase of children in need of protection accessing services by 2024.	A Child in need of protection will refer to those in need of care and protection or are victims of any form of child abuse that are reported to the Child protection champions for response and or prevention	74.%		Baseline and Endline Evaluation Report	Childrens survey	Beginning and End of Project	MEL Team/ External Consultant
2. Increased participation of children in their own protection within Tharaka Nithi County.	%Increase in children's participation in their own protection.	This refers to involvement of children in various aspects, such as being involved in decision-making processes, expressing their opinions, and having their voices heard in matters that affect them.	65.0%		Baseline and Endline Evaluation Report	Childrens survey	Beginning and End of Project	MEL Team/ External Consultant

Outputs	Expected Time for Results	Indicator	Indicator definition	Baseline	Target	Source of Data	Method of Gathering Data	Frequency of Gathering Data	Data Gatherer
Output 1.1. School-based Child Protection Champions trained on OCSEA, SBVP and GBVP	Q2/2024	No. of teachers trained as child protection.	Teachers trained to increase their responsiveness in prevention and response to children's protection needs, and to enable them support children in	0	105		Teachers	Activity Reports Participants Lists Photos	Quarterly	Program Officer M&E Officer

Output	Timeframe	Indicator	Description	Baseline	Target	Target group	Means of Verification	Frequency	Responsible
			championing for their own protection.						
		No. of children trained as child protection champions.	Children trained to increase their responsiveness in prevention and response to children's protection needs, and to enable them support children in championing for their own protection.	0	210	Children	Activity Reports Participants Lists Photos	Quarterly	Program Officer M&E Officer
Output 1.2. School Board of Management members trained on OCSEA, SBVP and GBVP	Q3/2024	No. of Board of Management members trained	School Board of management trained to increase their responsiveness in prevention and response to children's protection needs, and to enable them support children in championing for their own protection.	0	105	BOM members	Activity Reports Participants Lists Photos	Quarterly	Program Officer M&E Officer
Output 1.3: Children sensitized and supported on OCSEA, SBVP and GBVP	Q4/2024	No of children reached	Children will be trained on OCSEA, GBVP SBVP and supported with psychological counselling	0	10,500	Children	Activity Reports Participants Lists Photos	Quarterly	Program Officer M&E Officer
Output 1.4. Community Based child Protection Resource Persons trained on OCSEA and GBVP	Q4/2023	No. of Community child protection resource persons trained on OCSEA and Gender Based Violence	Capacities of community resource persons will be strengthened on OCSEA and GBVP to enable them to engage the communities on their role in protecting their children.	0	90	Community Based Child Protection Resource Persons	Activity Reports Participant List Photos	Quarterly	Program Officer M&E Officer
Output 1.5. Community members	Q4/2024	No. of community members reached	Awareness meetings conducted to community members on GBVP and OCSEA.	0	3000	Community members	Project reports	Quarterly	Program Officer M&E Officer

sensitized on GBVP and OCSEA							List of participant Photos		
Output 1.6 Children Advisory Committee (CAC) members trained and supported on GBVP and OCSEA	Q4/2023	No. of CAC members trained	This refers to Children Advisory committee training conducted on GBVP for three days for active and effective work with the community-based child protection systems.	0	45	CAC Members	Training reports List of participant Photos	Quarterly	Program Officer M&E Officer
Output 1.7 Children's protection actors trained.	Q4/2023	No. of child protection actors trained.	This refers to actors from government and CSOs trained Case management training will equip child protection actors with the knowledge and skills to identify, assess, and respond effectively to cases of child abuse, neglect, exploitation, and other forms of violence including OCSEA and GBV.	0	36	Child Protection Actors	Training reports List of participants Photos	Quarterly	Program Officer M&E Officer
Output 1.8: Charitable Children institution members trained on Child Protection Management Information System (CPIMS)	Q1/2024	No of charitable children institution members trained	The members of charitable children institutions will be trained on Child Protection Management Information System (CPIMS) training for charitable children's institutions and NGOs/CBO/FBO in Tharaka Nithi County will significantly enhance their ability to manage and monitor child protection cases	0	30	CCI Members	Training reports List of participants Photos	Quarterly	Program Officer M&E Officer
Output 1.9. Child-Friendly spaces established	Q3/2024	No of child friendly spaces established	The project will support 5 police stations with child protection desks in Tharaka Nithi county	0	6	Project team Construction supervisor	Procurement records	Annually	Program Officer M&E Officer

				and ensure they are functional and manned. These help desks will be fully fitted with furniture. This will involve desks, chairs, Printers, files, cabinets, desktops. Etc.					
Output 1.10. Police from Child Protection and Gender desk trained	Q3/2024		No. of police officers trained	These are police officers manning the CP and gender help desks on sexual and gender-based violence cases, to protect the dignity of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence by ensuring confidentiality, respect, and safety during reporting of cases, as well as collect data on local SGBV trends and use these for effective interventions to advocate for the reduction in the number of SGBV cases.	0	5	Police Officers	Training Reports	Quarterly	Program Officer M&E Officer
Output 2.1 Children's leaders' forums convened	Q3/2024		No of forums convened.	The forums refer to the County Children's Assembly and Termly meetings by child protection champions. The forums provide opportunity to discuss issues affecting them and their communities, such as education, health, environment, security, and culture.	0	2	Children leaders	Training reports List of participants Photos	Quarterly	Program Officer M&E Officer
			No of children leaders supported	The children leaders are members of the Children Assembly.	0	30	Children leaders	Training reports List of participants Photos	Quarterly	Program Officer M&E Officer

Output 2.2 Children events supported	Q3/2024	No of children events	The Day of the African Child event provides a platform for children to express themselves and build their confidence and engage them with leaders across sectors. During DAC, the children will interact with government officials, civil society representatives, and youth advocates to share their experiences and insights on pertinent issues.	0	1	Children	Training reports List of participants Photos	Quarterly	Program Officer M&E Officer
	Q3/2024	No of children supported	These are children who have been supported with logistics to attend the Day of the African Child event.	0	400	Children	Training reports List of participants Photos	Quarterly	Program Officer M&E Officer