DATA COLLECTION /PROCESSING, CULTURAL PREJUDICES, AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING INTO CRIME PREVENTION AMONG CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN AFRICA

PRESENTED BY

MUNANURA ANDREW KAROKORA
LEGAL & RESEARCH CONSULTANT - UNAFRI

Ph.D. (fellow Makerere University), MBA (Mak), L.L.M (UCL London)
L.L.B (Dar), Dip L.P (LDC) Advocate of the Courts of Judicature Uganda

DATA COLLECTION/PROCESSING, CULTURAL PREJUDICES, AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING INTO CRIME PREVENTION AMONG CHILDREN AND THE YOUTH IN AFRICA

- Your Excellencies, Dear Colleagues, and Participants

- We bring you salutations from UNAFRI

- Permit me from the onset to make this general observation that without the regular and timely availability of rich, valid, and reliable information/ data on the problems affecting children and youth in Africa, there cannot be a realistic intervention to inform legislative reforms, comprehensive policy formulation, meaningful policy implementation, a sustained evaluation, and a robust process of decision making in law enforcement, empowerment, and protection of children and the youth in crime prevention.

We choose in this presentation to refer to the concept of gender as a phenomenon that refers to the social construction of the differences between women and men as ideas of "femininity" and "Masculinity" and the excess baggage associated with biological **sex.** The presentation suggests that further development and understanding of a gender perspective will contribute to the resilience and effectiveness of crime prevention legislation and policies.

<u>Problem</u>

1. The continent lacks credible crime statistics specifically about children and the youth. There is a lack of documentation of information on the magnitude, incidence, nature/seriousness, patterns, and trends of crime among children and the youth in the African region; in addition, there is perceivable prejudice in opinion, thought, and deed by a variety of stakeholders which adds to the vulnerability of women, children, and the youth. The severity of such practices makes the significance of gender sensitivity and mainstreaming a profound policy intervention.

2. There is insufficient documentation of information on existing (legal, traditional, and extra-legal) prevention strategies, adjudication, and correctional systems/policies/programs/practices on crime prevention in the African region

1. Because of the issues highlighted in 1 & 2, Gender mainstreaming remains haphazard, isolated, and fragmented. A good example is Uganda's National Child Policy 2020, therein is a list of Acts of Parliament and National Policy guidelines affecting children and the youth. There are fifty-two (52) Laws and Policy Guidelines related to and affecting children's/youth issues (twenty-six Acts of Parliament and twenty-six policy guidelines**)**

- I will take the example of Uganda again, to illustrate the above situation. The Uganda Police Annual Crime Report of 2020, paragraph 5.12 provides for the child and family protection department of the Uganda Police. There is a very short summary of the mandate of the department and some statistics that, when put together don't make a full-page save for a photograph placed somewhere in the middle. That department is responsible for the creation of an environment in which children's and women's rights are recognized, promoted, and respected. It is also mandated to ensure enforcement of laws about domestic violence and child protection; carry out elementary counselling and guidance to both offenders and victims; handle juvenile offenders and initiate and promote strategies of child care and family protection programs in the communities. The report has some statistical data of cases reported to the department and it is broken down as hereunder:-

- Government of Uganda, Uganda Police, Annual Crime Report, 2020 at p.157

-	Domestic violence	29,073
-	Child neglect	8,319
-	Child desertion	2,849
-	Missing child	2,393
-	Child labour	614
-	Child stealing	358
-	TOTAL	43,606

- As an enforcement agency, these statistics and their breakdown show a lack of capacity by the department to reflect the magnitude of the issues affecting children and the youth. The report should have informed her readers on how these cases were or were not resolved, those pending in court and those still under investigation, the different age groups of the children and youth involved, the different genders involved in specific crimes, the perpetrators, etc.

- Domestic violence is so broad a term that lumping it together doesn't give a true picture of the whole story.

- The paragraph on the department is the shortest in the entire report highlighting the little emphasis paid to issues of children and the youth.

Protection of the Rights of the Children in Crime Prevention.

- Enactment of relevant legislation that mainstreams gender issues.

- Enforcement of the law in its current form with all its shortcomings.

- Invoke a hybrid of the various social values and practices which African traditional societies employed in the prevention control and correction of crime among children and the youth.

- Push for a policy focus on the social values and practices in contemporary African societies because of their cultural relativity compared to those of the developed countries.

- African societies have rich and relevant values which if practiced effectively within the context of current levels of development might serve as important preventive and corrective measures to crime.

Strategies for prevention and correction of crime among the youth

- We recommend an assessment of existing prevention strategies and practices in Africa to evaluate what has worked and what is still work in progress.

- We recommend an evaluation of the community participation programmes in the prevention of crime in Africa.

- Legislation that mainstreams a gender perspective in crime prevention in most African countries is fragmented and outmoded. There is a need, therefore to adopt a comprehensive review of legislation involving children and the youth in every country and advocate for the incorporation of relevant African values and international standards.

- Gender biases are deeply entrenched in customs. For example, court cases involving the prosecution of domestic cases collapse due to the attitudes of victims and not so much due to the failure of the criminal justice system. Our effort as UNAFRI has been on advocacy and support in the fight against such practices.

- Ibid at p.11, Remarks of the then Deputy Chief Justice of Uganda, Justice Leticia Kikonyogo.

Addressing the needs of the Youth

- The youth are of the view that they are not understood. Most African countries view their young people as chaotic crowds who prefer riots and demonstrations.

- Many countries in Africa levy taxes on internet data and this affects the ability of young people (children and youth) to communicate and social network. Those expenses affect their right to the internet as a mode of communication.

- Some countries in Africa have banned Facebook and other social media sites which are particularly endeared to the youth. Most do it during elections and thereafter pretend to have forgotten about it. Burundi, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Togo, Benin, Malawi, Mali, Uganda, etc. The youth in Uganda have requested that the Facebook ban should be lifted since it is one of the tools they use to market their merchandise and other services.

- Many African countries lack mentorship programs to mentor and guide the youth.

- On a brighter note, many African countries have come up with economic models to try and engage the youth through skilling, re-skilling, and re-tooling. Uganda for example has many economic models that it is trying out, the "parish model", "the Emyooga model" "Emyooga" means special skills possessed by artisans. The government injects money into these models to enable the youth find employment and engage in meaningful production.

Challenges and Proposals/ Solution

- We propose to partner with different stakeholders involved in issues of children in member state countries to harmonize the different and fragmented Laws and Policies.

- Engage African member states to release information continuously, on crime trends and statistics of their countries to enable the compilation of a reliable database for the continent. We shall appreciate any collaboration with fellow PNI Institutes or funding to assist UNAFRI generate data and build a reliable database for the continent.

- Upgrading of the knowledge and skills of critical personnel at UNAFRI for the development of a structure/system for the regular collection/collation and publication of valid and reliable information of crime trends, and gender mainstreaming in crime prevention strategies.

- Development of integrated, flexible/adaptable strategies, policies, and programs for the prevention, control, and correction of crime amongst children and the youth in Africa, taking into account varieties of relevant and adaptable traditional African social values.

- The need to add more columns in the criminal statistics tables providing information on the gender, age, the family status of the victim. For example, in sexual offenses, most criminal justice system data in Africa is silent on men as victims of sexual violence.

- UNAFRI intends to promote among member states a better understanding and integration of gender issues in the political and educational system and have incorporated crime prevention in their regular training

- **-----END----**