Sponsored: Creating environment suitable for child protection and child rights promotion

By: TIMES REPORTER

In advancing Child Rights and protection, the National Commission for Children (NCC), through its partners, is implementing the Integrated Child Rights Policy (ICRP) which comprises of seven thematic areas. These include Identity and Nationality, Family and Alternative care, Survival, Health and Standards of living, Education, Protection, Justice and Child Participation.
In addition to this, NCC is implementing the Child Care Reform through programs such as Tubarerere Mu Muryang (TMM), targeting orphaned and vulnerable children reintegrating them into families and organized homes, as well as supporting them with taking up income generating activities among many other activities. Hereunder are the major achievements registered in the recent past.

**Coordinating with other institutions**

The NCC promotes linkages between different actors (Districts, non-government (Local and International) and civil society organizations intervening in the child protection domain) and provides a coordinated interventions and responses through a statutory mechanism. It facilitates the harmonization and coordination of child protection efforts and services, as well as enhancing networking and collaboration among various stakeholders to strengthen the protective environment around each child and his/her family.

For better coordination, NCC initiated decentralized quarterly review meetings for all stakeholders intervening in the protection and promotion of children’s rights at District level. These meetings give them an opportunity to exchange best practices, to put in place mechanisms for addressing challenges encountered during the course of implementation, pooling resources for joint action and reporting on the progress of their activities.
The District meetings are also complemented with the central level meetings of members of the M&E Technical Working Group (TWG) on Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) and child rights which are organized on a quarterly basis for high level reviews and planning.

**Promotion of child rights in Rwanda**

The achievement that NCC has got to day is a fruit of mobilization of partners to join hands in handling issues affecting children, forging a clear vision of what is needed to have every Rwandan child enjoying fully his/her rights.

**Addressing persistent street children issues**

Children are moved from street and are placed in transit centers provisionary before their family reintegration. A family tracing and an assessment is done to know why the child has left the family and how to respond to problems. Once the analysis is done and the child and the family are reunited, social-economical support is provided to the family whenever deemed necessary to prevent the child from returning to the street. Mechanisms are also in place to prevent children from separating with their families that involve mobilization campaigns and training of local leaders.

Also a social workforce has been put in place at district level (Psychologists and Social workers), and establishment of community-based para-professionals called Inshutiz’Umuryango(Friends of the Family) in all villages (2 by village i.e. one woman and a man) to follow up the lives of children in the community most especially vulnerable ones.

**Other NCC achievements**

To present the achievements we will have to go by each and every thematic area:

**Identity and Nationality:**

All children born in Rwanda, of one or both Rwandan parents have the right to Rwandan nationality, Children who find themselves in Rwanda without parents and without known nationality of parents also have the right to Rwandan nationality and within each administrative sector, and there is a professional in charge of official records to facilitate child registration.

Various awareness campaigns to accelerate birth registration have been conducted and birth registration was decentralized from the district to sector level.(we find very important to omit the figures).

**Family and Alternative care**
The Strategy for National Child care reform was adopted in 2012 to transform current child care and protection system into a family-based, to allow children living in institutions to regain their rights to live a loving safe and supportive family environment; leading to the creation of Tubarerere Mu Muryango Program (TMM) in 2013 which resulted into reintegration of 2,909 children from institutional care into family-based care (from 2012 to July 2017);

Other initiatives are creation of social workforce of 68 psychologist and social workers at district level, support to the most vulnerable children families and establishment of 29,674 community-based para-professionals-Inshutiz'Umuryango (Friends of the Family).

**Health, Survival and Standards of living**

To reduce maternal mortality, child mortality and malnutrition, health facility-based and community-based interventions are implemented through; Maternal and Child Health good practices, safe motherhood initiative and facility-based delivery. According to the 2014-15 Rwanda Demographic and Health Survey (RDHS), this has resulted into: 87% of children age 0-5 months in Rwanda are being exclusively breastfed; 93% children age 12-23 months received basic vaccination from 75% in 2005 and infant mortality has declined from 86 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2005 to 32 in 2014-15 while during the same time period, under-5 mortality has sharply declined from 152 to 50 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Community Health Workers play a role in the elimination of malnutrition through the screening of all children under the age of 5 years.

“One Cup of Milk per Child”, One Cow per Family and disease prevention have all improved child health.

**Education**

Free inclusive and compulsory nine year and twelve-year basic education; implementation of One-laptop-per-child program; Special educational for children with special needs (affected by various disabilities) and establishment of Early Childhood Development Centres (community based nurseries) to ensure that children benefit from physical, cognitive, social and emotional development in early years in order to achieve their full potential. Services focus on providing children with a safe and stimulating environment, where mothers, fathers and community members play a key role in nurturing children in addition to training of parents on positive parenting;

**Justice**

Rwanda has made remarkable progress in promoting justice for children by establishing a system that combines fair, accessible and restorative justice measures to ensure that children in need of
legal support and victims of gender-based violence have access to appropriate legal assistance, the Government and its partners have established a child-friendly legal service at district level across the country, known as Maisond’Accès à la Justice (MAJ).

Each MAJ office employs three legal service providers, of which one is specialized in child protection and gender-based violence. Children in conflict with the law receive free of charge legal assistance through Kigali bar Association that avails pro bono lawyers to assist the children;

Since 2012 an annual legal aidone-week is organized to deal with outstanding caseload for children while in court houses, special chambers for children exist to ensure legal procedures are occurring in a child-friendly manner.

For grave offences by minors, the Nyagatare rehabilitation center allows children to have access to key services that are conducive to a child’s development. This includes access to equipped classrooms, vocational training workshops and playgrounds that are separated for boys and girls.

**Participation**

At the national level, the Annual Children’s Summits provide an opportunity for children to engage and discuss on issues affecting their lives while, annual, and children share knowledge on Rwandan history and there is a national Children forum at all administrative levels.

**Protection**

The initiatives to ensure child protection include; a GBV and child protection unit at all Police stations; Friends of Family and Child Protection Committees were established from the village level.

Others are an Observatory for the Rights of the Child, protection against child labor, reproductive health and establishment of various coordination frameworks among others.

In the last 10 years, a total of 11,175 children were rescued from child labour and reintegrated into formal education and Vocational training. Besides this 44Isange One Stop Center have been established in all districts to provide psychosocial, medical, police and legal services to adult and child survivors of gender based violence and child abuse occurring in the family and in the community at large.

**Addressing challenges**

Responsible parenting is getting due emphasis and awareness is being created on child protection through continued partnerships on issues affecting children.