

OPENING REMARKS BY THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES, MR. NOAH M. O. SANGANYI, HSC DURING THE VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN ALL CARE SETTINGS EXPERT CONSULTATION HELD FROM 21ST TO 22ND JUNE 2017 AT JACARANDA HOTEL, NAIROBI KENYA

Salutations recognizing key personalities

Better Care Network

ACPF

Key speakers

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

KARIBUNI KENYA

I am delighted to be part of this important forum of experts to discuss violence against children in all care settings in Africa and come up with key regional recommendations targeted at various duty bearers including the African Union and governments.

I wish to thank the organizers for choosing Kenya to host this important activity and on the behalf of the Government I warmly welcome you to our country.

Generally, in traditional African society, parents, the extended family and communities played important roles in the care and protection of children. Due to varied reasons including urbanization and HIV/AIDS, this social safety net has weakened and in some instances completely broken down.

The family is the best environment for the full/ideal growth and development of the child. Evidence from studies shows that strong and stable families are the best form of support and protection for children. The UNCRC ,which all the African States represented here have ratified, in its preamble recognizes the special place of the family, “as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children”. Indeed in Kenya, the Constitution also adheres to this tenet by recognizing the family as “the natural and fundamental unit of society and the necessary basis of social order” and provides that it “shall enjoy the recognition and protection of the State”.

However, for families to provide quality care and also retain their children, they need to be empowered and supported. This ensures that family separation is prevented through social protection programmes, family economic empowerment, Free Primary Education, Bursaries, ARVs to keep HIV infected parents alive, capacity building of community workers to support families, among others.

Unfortunately, it is still within the family environment that some children experience violence. This is in the form of physical, sexual, emotional and neglect. Indeed a national survey undertaken by the Government of Kenya in conjunction with UNICEF and CDC in 2010 revealed that the main perpetrators of violence against children were parents, siblings, other family members/relatives and neighbours.

We also acknowledge that not all children live with their families. Due to issues such as death, migration for employment, divorce, and child abuse, many children are placed in alternative care. While they are placed in alternative care with the intention of protecting them, we know that such children can be exposed to Violence.

Further, children leaving alternative care require special attention. Depending on duration of stay in alternative care and how reintegration is undertaken, such children may face stigma, discrimination and violence.

Despite all these challenges in providing care to children, there is hope, hope that as duty bearers we can change the situation of the children in this continent. We can do this through providing parental skills, supporting families and strengthening efforts to monitor the quality of care through implementation of the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care for Children and the National Guidelines for Alternative Care.

Aftercare services should be enhanced through visitation by social workers, provision of Psycho Social Support, material assistance, support groups and networks.

It is my hope that this meeting will develop practical recommendations on how we can collectively deal with the issues of violence against children in all care settings.

I wish you all fruitful discussions.

With these remarks, I declare this forum officially opened.

THANK YOU.