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## Parents' construction of emotional abuse and neglect of children aged birth to six years in a rural district in Uganda

Edreda Tuwangye  
*Edith Cowan University*

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Abuse And Neglect Of Children Aged  
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Uganda

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**PARENTS' CONSTRUCTION OF  
EMOTIONAL ABUSE AND NEGLECT OF  
CHILDREN AGED BIRTH TO SIX YEARS  
IN A RURAL DISTRICT IN UGANDA**

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**B Ed (Makerere), M Ed (Birmingham)**

**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the award of Doctor of  
Philosophy**

**Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Science**

**Edith Cowan University**

**Western Australia**

**February 2000**

## USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

## **ABSTRACT**

Child abuse and neglect are endemic not only in Western countries but also in developing countries such as Uganda. An investigation was conducted to establish how parents living in rural Uganda construe child abuse and neglect. The study is of theoretical interest on two counts. First, there is evidence to suggest that Western accounts of child abuse and neglect may not apply to developing countries, a matter of importance given the dominance of Western research in the thinking of policy and intervention studies. Second, most of the research assumes that abuse and neglect are self-evident constructs and there is seldom effort to see whether the perpetrators or the victims of the 'abuse' and 'neglect' construe the relevant actions in these terms. This study is notable for its attempt to examine child abuse and neglect through the eyes of parents and children.

The fieldwork for the study was carried out in a rural district of Uganda over a 12 month period during 1995-1996. To establish parents' understandings of what constitutes abuse or neglect of children of age birth to six years, several data gathering methods were used. To provide the cultural context, an intensive case study was carried out of a rural family. Next, focus groups were used to explore the meaning of child abuse and neglect and to identify what participants thought were the contributory factors. This phase was followed up with interviews and further case studies of parents. During the study the views of adults and children were compared and contrasted. The multiple sources of data provided a means of triangulating the

emerging findings. Finally, the preliminary findings were examined by a cross-section of Ugandan citizens in two workshops as a way of testing their authenticity.

The findings are predictably complex. Some forms of parenting that would be regarded as abusive or neglectful by urban Ugandan or Western experts are regarded as part of every day life in rural Uganda. These child rearing practices are deeply rooted in the traditional culture. However, it is also true that many parents are aware that they are being neglectful towards their children but feel powerless to change their behaviour: poverty is one of the root causes. The combination of culture and poverty is a powerful obstacle for governments and non-government agencies to overcome.

While there is no obvious solution, several principles emerge from this study. First, intervention programs must be attuned to the cultural basis of child abuse and neglect if they are to succeed. They must address the specific socio-cultural milieu of families and communities where children are born and reared. Second, the findings suggest the need for holistic policies and strategies which directly acknowledge parents' construction of emotional abuse and neglect. Intervention models, where they exhibit a tendency to address one cause, or use one intervention for all families, may not create the needed change. Third, programs must recognise the economic basis that underpins the actions of poor rural families. Finally, the findings suggest that the most hopeful strategies will be those that bring to bear on the problem the combined efforts of central government agencies with their resources and policy making capacities and local community bodies with their grass roots' understandings of family life in rural Uganda.

## DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

1. incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
2. contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
3. contain any defamatory material.

Signature

22/2/2000

Date



## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANPPCAN	African Network for the Prevention and Protection of Child Abuse and Neglect
BC	Before Christ
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
FEE	Female educated elderly
FEGf	Female educated grandfather
FEGm	Female educated grandmother
FEM	Female educated middle age
FEY	Female educated young
FRE	Female rural elderly
FRGf	Female rural grandfather
FRGm	Female rural grandmother
FRM	Female rural middle age
FRY	Female rural young
IDCFS	Department of children and Family Services.
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
MEDf	Male educated grandfather
MEE	Male educated elderly
MEGm	Male educated grandmother
MEM	Male educated middle elderly
MEY	Male educated young
MRE	Male rural elderly
MRGf	Male rural grandfather
MRGm	Male rural grandmother
MRM	Male rural middle age
MRY	Male rural young
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
UN	United Nations
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNIPAC	Uganda National Plan of Action for children



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

#### **Introduction**

The Children's Rights Movement can be traced back to the Fifth Century BC. The early measures to protect children were sustained over the centuries with international efforts culminating in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, even with these international laws in place, large numbers of children continue to be maltreated.

The available literature suggests emotional abuse and neglect are at the core of all types of child maltreatment. These two forms of abuse are both complex and difficult to recognise and prove. It is therefore problematic for the authorities with the responsibility to protect children to intervene in effective ways. Even in countries where child abuse studies have been widely undertaken, the area of emotional abuse has been neglected (Maher, 1987).

Societal groups have traditionally applied their own criteria to judge and identify behaviours which violate children's rights. What is deemed to be emotional abuse and neglect is socially and culturally determined and should, therefore, be interpreted in the context of the period in history and the country being studied. Thus, what might

be considered as emotional abuse and neglect in the West might not be regarded so by parents and officials in developing countries.

The significant issue at stake here is that despite these differences, developing countries, including Uganda, have tended to use intervention models designed to suit situations in the West. These models would not have taken into serious consideration the cultural, socio-economic and political contexts of developing countries. The models have quite often made little impact on the families and children in developing countries where they have been used. Dependence on Western models can be attributed to the absence of alternative models informed by research findings from studies which take into account the context of developing countries.

In conducting this study, it was considered that an understanding of parents' perspectives on emotional abuse and neglect would provide useful baseline data to guide identification, management and prevention of emotional abuse and neglect of young children in the Jatti district of Uganda. At this point in time there are no studies that have investigated these two forms of child maltreatment in Uganda.

## **The Ugandan context**

### **The geography and economy of Uganda**

Uganda is one of the three countries that form East Africa. Situated along the equator, Uganda has a total area of 197,096 square kilometres and a population of 17 million, 90 per cent of whom live in rural areas. Although the country is endowed with a tropical climate and fertile volcanic soils, nearly a fifth is swamp and open water. The

south is characterised by thickly forested hills while the north is mainly rolling grassland. Uganda has an extensive mineral base which remains largely untapped. Agriculture is therefore the mainstay of the economy. Coffee is the main export crop and accounts for over 80 per cent of the export earnings. The favourable climate and soils provide the country with all year round production of food crops except in the dry north and some eastern areas. Manufacturing and tourism show potential for improvement.

Uganda is a country which until recently was synonymous with armed conflict and violation of human rights. Many people died during the war that ended in 1985 and since then the national economy has been severely weakened with inflation rate rising to 207 percent in 1989. The overall economic decline led to a major breakdown of essential social services.

Uganda's current political and administrative structure is headed by a president who works through elected ministers and central government representation in the 39 districts. The current political formation is through local councils, elected bodies that run from village level to parliament. There is now steady progress towards recovery.

However, Uganda still has many challenges. For example, constraints of poverty form a vicious circle: poor households cannot participate fully in development of the economy, national revenue may not be able to provide adequate social services. Without proper services there is an inter-generational cycle of illiterate, under educated and weakened children and adults not able to promote national development. A country with a high illiteracy rate takes a long time to make improvements in

improvements in maternal and child health. Poverty coupled with illiteracy and inadequate social services puts children at risk of being abused, neglected and exploited.

Nonetheless, a cross-section of people, government departments and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) believe Uganda has reached a reasonable level of awareness about child abuse. The international concern and support to improve the welfare of children has provided an opportunity to analyse the causes and to formulate strategies for social change in the best interest of the child (Nyonyintono, 1997).

#### **The district where the study was conducted**

The study was conducted in one of the 39 districts in Uganda. For confidentiality purposes, throughout the study this district is referred to as Jatti. Approximately 717,800 people live in the Jatti district on 5,396 square kilometres of land. The climate is largely influenced by the East African plateau, a good number of parts recording on the average 25 degrees centigrade. The district experiences two rainy and two dry seasons, a climate which enables families to benefit from two harvests of most of the crops during the year.

The majority of the people live and farm on their traditional lands using traditional methods resulting in low yields. Land fragmentation is increasingly becoming a problem as the population continues to grow, to the extent that some strips of land are not economically viable. Most of the produce is consumed for subsistence. The surplus is sold to the local urban areas and the main towns in the neighbouring districts and Kampala, the country's capital city which is about 250 kilometres away.

Asian countries. Processing industries are mainly related to agriculture and include coffee, black tea and curing tobacco. Handloom weaving and knitting form a cottage industry. Some mining of gold, limestone and beryl takes place in some counties.

Although the education service does not adequately meet the needs of the people, Jatti is one of the districts in the country with many educational institutions. It has 429 primary schools, 40 secondary schools, 5 Technical Institutions and 3 Primary School Teachers' Colleges. In addition the district is served by two hospitals, 22 health centres and some private clinics.

The district is linked to Kampala, the capital city of Uganda, and to most district townships by a trunk tarmac road. Within the district people are served by a network of feeder roads. Most people use public transport in the form of buses and trucks. Men and boys use bicycles for village errands. Unlike in the north and eastern Uganda, women and girls in Jatti district are not expected to ride bicycles.

Electricity, telephone and piped water mainly benefit people who live in and around the urban centres. There is a radio-call provision at a central place in each of the counties which helps in the communication of urgent messages. Rural families depend on wood for cooking and paraffin for lighting and draw water from wells. Information about family and community life of the people of the Jatti district forms chapter six of this thesis. The description is given by Niima, a typical village woman who participated in this study.

## **Commitment in Uganda to improve the quality of life of children**

### **Early childhood care and education programs in Uganda**

Early childhood care and education programs in Uganda focus on children aged from birth to eight years. Parents at home take care of almost all the children below two years, while only a few three to five year old children attend day care centres, kindergartens and nursery schools. In 1994, just over 500 pre-primary schools were registered with the Ministry of Education. About 60 per cent of children aged six to twelve years are enrolled in primary schools, and of these 45 per cent are females. From 1997, the government started providing free primary education to four children per family. This was one of the major steps taken towards providing primary education for all, a goal to be achieved by the year 2003.

### **Uganda National Action Programme for Children (UNPAC)**

Acknowledging that the status of children in Uganda needed substantial improvement, the Government responded positively to the 1990 international call to reverse the declining care and quality of life of children in most countries, especially of those in the developing world. The President of Uganda attended the Head of States, World Summit for Children, held in New York, in 1990. He joined 70 Heads of State in signing and ratifying the United Nations (UN) Children's Rights Declaration. The priority of the World Summit was to place children high on the agenda for the 1990s giving them priority or "first call on the world's resources in good, bad, war or peace times" (Grant, 1990). The summit called on governments and all levels of society including schools, churches, professional associations, cultural and charitable

youth and adult organisations, to make children a priority. The media and the commercial sector were lobbied to support efforts to protect the lives and growth of children world wide.

In response to the call, in September 1992, the Uganda National Program of Action for Children (UNPAC) was adopted by the Cabinet and launched on 16 June, 1993. Its central role was to create support and to monitor intervention strategies to facilitate good health and nutrition for all children. The program was committed to providing basic education for all children eligible for primary school education and to begin to ensure that every child had legal protection from abuse, neglect and exploitation by observing the UN Children's Rights Charter.

With the objectives of improving the status of and conditions for children in Uganda, UNPAC invited several researchers, ministry representatives, and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to participate in a situational analysis and the establishment of base line data to serve as a national resource 'bank'. This bank was to facilitate the planning, implementation, evaluation and monitoring processes for all intervention strategies being applied in the country. As a means of obtaining some of the required information, a few research surveys were conducted, during August to September 1993 ( UNPAC, 1993). A review of the previous research, and analysis of the findings of the surveys revealed the need for research regarding child abuse and neglect.

Studies were needed to determine the extent and severity of the problem, the pattern and trends in their development, and the types of action that could be taken to ameliorate the problem. The need for research in child abuse and neglect in Uganda

has gathered support from the African Network for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect-Uganda Chapter. Uganda faces many challenges in its attempts to improve the life experience of its children. Researching and identifying the types, level and extent of abuse and neglect is an important step in developing sound strategies for improving children's lives.

This study contributes to the research agenda of UNPAC by focusing on understanding parental constructions of emotional abuse and neglect from birth to six years old. Hopefully, the prevention and management implications which emerge from this study will contribute to the development of more effective strategies to combat child abuse and neglect in Uganda and other African countries.

## **The Problem**

The plight of abused and neglected children has received unprecedented attention during the past 35 years. In response, policies, programs, and initiatives have been developed in many countries. Media coverage has resulted in a dramatic increase in the awareness of the issue of child abuse and neglect. However, as will be shown in the following three chapters, children continue to be maltreated within families. Despite clear evidence across race and culture that neglect, sickness and death among the young are undesirable and socially destructive, the problem remains unresolved.

Societal perceptions of what constitutes desirable child behaviour and parenting behaviour vary considerably. Differences within communities, class, race and religious groups will affect the way children are reared. Similarly, differences in values and beliefs, family structures and views on collective responsibility generate



distinct patterns of parenting behaviour. Each societal group applies its own criteria when identifying behaviour deemed as violating to children. This can create problems for government agencies and community organisations seeking to ameliorate child abuse and neglect. Intervention models developed in one country may not be appropriate for another. Intervention models developed in Western countries and made use of in Uganda have failed to create the anticipated changes. There has been lack of recognition of diversity in the construction of problems relating to parenting behaviour and how these are determined by the cultural context. This study argues that effective intervention models need to be developed that are derived from context-specific baseline data which depict real circumstances and problems experienced by children and their parents.

### **Parameters for the study**

For several reasons the constructs of emotional abuse and neglect were chosen for this study. First, there are gaps in the available literature on the apparent seriousness of the effect of these two malpractices on children from infancy. Second, literature also suggests that there is need to combine some forms of abuse in attempts to study child maltreatment. Some researchers and scholars express the view that categories of child abuse and neglect are not mutually exclusive. Garbarino and Gilliam (1980) estimated abuse and neglect happen in the same families and occur together 50 percent of the time. Buchanan (1996) also suggested emotional abuse was evident in all forms of child abuse; physical, sexual and neglect. Willis et al. (1992) reported an overlap at the maltreatment theory level and proposed the need to attempt to integrate models of child maltreatment. The third reason for studying the two constructs is that to date most research has isolated individual components of child abuse and neglect, leading

leading to fragmented and compartmentalised knowledge in this area. This fragmentation makes the understanding of relationships between parenting and child abuse and neglect problematic.

The period of early childhood from birth to six years was chosen as it is recognised as a crucial period of development and habit formation. Epidemiological studies, discussed in the following chapters, show that serious behaviour problems are often well established by the age of school entry and then remain constant. There is always evidence that children who subsequently develop severe behaviour problems show a pattern of negative, oppositional and aggressive behaviour in the pre school period.

Generally, research findings point to the importance of prevention strategies focusing on parents and families. It is, therefore, hoped that by identifying parents' constructs of emotional abuse and neglect, subsequent consideration of preventative management strategies based on the knowledge gained, will contribute towards breaking the inter-generational cycle of child abuse and neglect.

## **Research questions**

This study was designed to examine how Ugandan parents in the Jatti district construe emotional abuse and neglect of young children. Four subsidiary questions have been derived from this overarching question:

1. What do parents in the Jatti district consider constitutes emotional abuse of children from birth to six years?
2. What do parents in the Jatti district consider constitutes neglect of children from birth to six years?

3. What do parents in the Jatti district consider to be factors contributing to emotional abuse and neglect of children from birth to six years?
4. What are the implications of these findings for government policy in Uganda?

### **Significance of the study**

In African countries it is only during the last decade that scholarly interest has been generated in the area of child abuse and neglect. Consequently, theoretical and empirical research in child abuse and neglect in Africa is rudimentary and absent in some countries. Less attention may have been focused in this area due to the emphasis placed on the more prevalent childhood challenges of malnutrition, infection, and major paediatric problems which claim many lives each year. Furthermore, as will be shown in the following chapter, even in countries where extensive research has been conducted such as in the United States and United Kingdom, most studies have used clinical psychology methods. These have tended to study each aspect of abuse in isolation and have not explored parents' construction of child abuse and neglect as a means of finding alternative ways of addressing this problem.

The outcomes of this study will provide people in the Jatti district, UNPAC and other international donor agencies, with an informed perspective of how parents construe emotional abuse and neglect of young children. Furthermore, findings of this study should provide policy makers in Uganda with the necessary descriptive basis for policy development and its implementation. This is considered important as without an understanding of people's values, beliefs, attitudes and other contextual factors, policy makers misunderstand and distort the issues they purport to redress. In the case of the Jatti district and Uganda, through UNPAC, findings of this study will help

organisations that deal with child protection and related services to plan and prioritise intervention strategies.

In addition the preventative management implications to emerge from this study will be of practical assistance to people involved in educating communities and children in Uganda about child emotional abuse and neglect. The findings from this investigation should also be of interest to researchers and scholars of psychology, education, sociology and allied disciplines as well as practitioners who specialise in child and family welfare.

The consequences of emotional abuse and neglect are serious and have far reaching implications for victims as well as society in general. Today's children are tomorrow's parents and leaders, and this provides the impetus for breaking the inter-generational cycle of child abuse and neglect in order to ensure a better future. Overall, this study will contribute to the needed baseline data in order to achieve one of the United Nations' overall goals for the period 1990-2000. These are, firstly, to provide protection for, and improve the quality of life of, the millions of children in especially difficult circumstances and, secondly, to promote the acceptance and observance, in all countries, of the recently adopted Convention of Rights of the Child.

### **Thesis outline**

This study is divided into twelve chapters. The first chapter provides a background to the study, starting with a brief statement about the importance of the study in Uganda. This is followed by the statement of the problem, purpose and parameters of the

study, operational definitions, research questions and finally, the significance of the study.

The literature review for this study is presented in three chapters. Chapter Two highlights Western views about child abuse and neglect. Chapter Three is a review of literature relating particularly to the African continent. It shows that little research has been done in the area of child abuse and neglect. Nonetheless, some of the studies report some forms of child abuse that do not appear in the Western literature. Chapter Four focuses on cultural factors. It draws from both the Western and African perspectives of child abuse and neglect across times and cultures. It highlights cultural values and belief systems and the associated definitional issues.

Chapter Five describes the theoretical framework of the study, the design and methodology used, participants, data collection and data analysis procedures. Strategies used to increase validity and authenticity are also provided in this chapter.

Chapter Six places the study in context. This chapter presents a case study of typical family life in the Gama village in the Jatti district in Uganda, focusing on household arrangements, marriages, family types, the position of children, perceptions of childhood, and the socio-economic status of the people of Jatti.

The construction of emotional abuse is discussed in Chapters Seven and Eight while the construction of neglect is discussed in Chapter Nine. Factors thought to contribute to emotional abuse and neglect are discussed in Chapter Ten.

Chapter Eleven provides a summary of what is considered "good enough parenting," and discusses the data regarding parents' construction of emotional abuse and neglect of children from birth to six years. Chapter Twelve focuses on the findings and their implications for government policy in Uganda, and provides a conclusion to the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **WESTERN RESEARCH INTO CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

#### **Introduction**

This review of related literature sets the context for the study and highlights previous research findings. The review in this chapter is confined to Western research literature. The African literature will be reviewed separately in Chapter Three. More specifically, the literature reviewed in this chapter highlights the evolution of thinking in relation to the maltreatment of children. The focus of concerns include:

- common causes of emotional abuse and neglect and their effects on children;
- common characteristics of child abusers;
- some intervention strategies used to address these phenomena; and
- different theoretical perspectives of child abuse.

Research methods used to explain the dynamics of child abuse and neglect are also examined in this chapter.

#### **Effects of child abuse and neglect on children**

Recent studies in Western countries reveal that child abuse and neglect damage the psychological, social, physical and intellectual development of children. Some

specific examples include the link between child abuse and neglect to high rates of psychosis and depression (Briggs & Potter, 1995), developmental delays (Barahl, Waterman & Martin, 1981; Iverson & Segal, 1990), and violence, social aggression and deficiencies in social skills (Herrenkohl & Toedter, 1984; Herrekohl, 1983; Iverson & Segal, 1990)

Neglected children have been found to engage in alcohol consumption or acts of self destruction. They are aggressive and are unusual in their lack of response to pain and distress (Briggs & Potter, 1995). In some countries child neglect has also encouraged the serious problem of street children thereby retarding their development (Tuwangye, 1993).

Dean (1979) uses the metaphor of an internal wound when commenting on the complex nature of emotional abuse. Dean considers emotional abuse to be potentially more devastating and crippling than any other type of abuse. Emotional abuse differs from other types of abuse in that the victim may not be aware of the abuse and the abuser may not recognise his or her behaviour as abusive (Oates, 1982; Tomison, 1995). Emotionally abused children may also develop character and behaviour disorders as well as mental illness. However, little research directly addresses these effects. Emotionally abused children have been found to be overly aggressive, suspicious, inclined to avoid eye contact, unable to make friends, overly compliant and tend to make inappropriate interpersonal relationships (Iverson & Segal, 1990). They have anxiety traits such as thumb sucking, poor bladder and bowel control, psychoneurotic reactions and overly adaptive and self-destructive behaviour (Briggs, 1990). They are prone to telling lies and stealing, display suspicious behaviour and



demonstrate a lack of trust in others. Briggs (1990) also reports behavioural tendencies, including depression and withdrawal, an insatiable search for affection and approval, lagging in emotional, social and intellectual development, low self-esteem, inability to become independent and a tendency among victims to abuse their own or other children in later years. Maher (1987) agrees that these consequences can persist in adulthood.

## **The inter-generational transmission of child maltreatment**

The inter-generational transmission of child maltreatment appears to be perpetuated through socio-political factors, recurring cultural patterns, psychological and biological factors all of which can be categorised as extra familial and personal factors. Although they act in combination, the following sub-section highlights each separately.

### **Socio-political factors**

Poverty (DHSS, 1974), policies that lead to political conflict (Richman, 1993), lack of access to birth control (Dytrych, 1992; Raddulian, 1992), ethnic or gender discrimination (UNICEF, 1991), abolition of all social pathologies (Dingwall, 1994), government identification, definition and regulation of social problems (Parton, 1985), and the effects on child protection of the politics of 'individualism' versus 'collectivism' (Cooper, et al., 1995) provide evidence that political ideologies and direct government politics and policies have a dramatic effect on child rearing circumstances and may promote the transmission of child maltreatment (Buchanan, 1996).

Some researchers also associate poverty with child abuse and neglect (Durning, 1992; Gil, 1970). These and some other studies support the proposition that social factors lower the threshold at which parents can parent effectively and that these patterns can influence parenting over two or more generations.

Nonetheless, research in child maltreatment provides a paradox. The claim here is that many parents, despite severe social disadvantage, provide adequate care for their young. The paradox appears to have roots in the realisation and growing recognition of the relationship between social diversity and the quality of care that parents are able to provide for their children. The development in child care and protection has changed the focus from child abuse per se, towards policies which support families and prevent child maltreatment (National Research Council USA, 1993; Department of Health, 1995). Evidence that many, although not all, of the long term negative outcomes from physical and emotional abuse may also be accounted for by the matrix of childhood disadvantages from which they often emerge, is adding fuel to the fire (Mullen et al., 1996)

### **Biological factors**

The biological cycle in child maltreatment appears to have two realities; some parents are biologically more vulnerable to the risk of abusing their children and some children are biologically more vulnerable to being abused (Rutter, 1989). Biological factors may also impact on inter-generational patterns of disease and poor health care. For example, the more mothers have poor health the more children are born damaged. Alternatively, inherited characteristics may lower the ability of adults to parent, and the ability of the child to be reared effectively. Biological factors, in addition to

psychological factors, are therefore a potent force in the development of inter-generational child maltreatment.

Recognising the effect of inter-generational patterns of poor health and disease, The United Nations Human Development Report (1994), emphasised the need to create healthier life conditions for families world wide. The report stressed that the purpose of human development programs is to create an environment in which all people can expand their capabilities and opportunities for the benefit of present and future generations. No child should be doomed to a short life or a miserable one, merely because that child happens to be born in the wrong class or in a wrong country or of the wrong sex. This assertion has relevance for children and families in the district of this study as well as children in many developing countries. As already noted above, parents need enabling conditions to play their parenting roles effectively.

### **Psychological factors**

The pioneer model in the treatment of child abuse is the psychological model which originally focused on the abuser's personality and characteristics as the chief determinants of violence and abuse. The premise behind the psychological model which was popular in the 1970s, was that abusive parents had personality disorders which broadly meant they were unable to control their aggressive impulses. This limited view discouraged a focus on the social and cultural factors but fitted well with the opinion, then held by psychologists and psychiatrists, that personality traits were determinant of a great deal of human behaviour.

The recognition of social factors as a cause of child maltreatment did not gain ground until late 1970s (Straus, 1979). Using interviews to collect data from 1146 families with a child aged between 3 and 17, Straus demonstrated a strong case for the role of social factors in the aetiology of abuse. Nonetheless, he also recognised the influence of psychological characteristics of the parents and the children. Straus concluded:

It is likely that certain combinations of factors are much more potent than either of the factors by themselves; and also much more potent than one might have imagined by adding together the effects of each of the two factors. (Straus, 1979, p. 214)

Belsky (1980) provided further support for the role of social factors in the abuse of children. Referring to a model by Garbarino (1977), and drawing on existing research findings, he developed a more comprehensive model of child abuse risk factors. Central to his model was the concept of risk factors at different levels: the ontogenetic, micro-system, exo-system, and macro-system. The model was further developed by Cicchetti and Rizley (1981). Here the difference was that there are not only 'vulnerability' factors and transient 'challenges' but also 'protective' factors and transient 'buffers' which protect families. According to this model inter-generational transmission was best understood by examining the transmission of risk factors. Cross generation transmission was operated by either increasing vulnerability or by decreasing protective factors. Intervention could therefore reduce risk factors and increase buffer factors. Maltreatment was expressed only when potentiating factors overrode compensatory ones (Buchanan, 1996).

In other related studies, Egeland and Jacobvitz (1984), and Hunter and Kilstrom, (1979) suggested that having a high IQ, and being able to identify abusive experiences and deciding not to repeat them were compensatory factors. As time progressed, other

compensatory factors such as having healthy children (Hunter & Kilstrom, 1979; Smith & Hanson, 1974), a supportive spouse (Egeland & Jacobvitz, 1984; Herrenkohl & Toedtler, 1983; Quinton, Rutter & Liddle, 1984), good social supports (Hunter & Kilstrom, 1979), and few stressful life events (Egeland & Jacobvitz, 1984) were added to this list.

While investigating factors that could increase the likelihood of abuse occurring, at the personal level, Kaufman and Zigler (1989) reported a history of abuse, low self-esteem and low IQ were likely to increase risk of abuse. At the micro-system level (family level) they reported unhealthy children, children with behaviour problems, being a single parent, poverty and marital discord to prompt emotional abuse and neglect. At the exo-system level, unemployment, isolation, and poor peer relations were recognised to be negative indicators. In addition, at the macro level, an acceptance of corporal punishment as a means of disciplining children, viewing children as possessions and economic depression were identified as factors that increase the possibility for the maltreatment of children (Kaufman & Zigler, 1989).

### **Studies in attachment, self-esteem and attribution**

Studies in attachment guided by attachment theory which originated from Bowlby (1953, 1979, 1984) and the psychoanalytical tradition demonstrate the influence care givers have on young children. Central to the concept is that the early relationship between care giver and infant is the model for later relationships.

In a study of 36 families with maltreated infants between 6 and 11 months of age with siblings between 2 to 10 years, Crittenden (1984) demonstrated that siblings as young

as two years old were already displaying some of the salient aspects of their parents' pattern of child-rearing. Data suggested that the maternal style of child-rearing was influential on child behaviour at a very early age and that most children demonstrated behaviours similar to their parents.

Sroufe (1983), studying pre-school children classified as either 'insecure' or 'anxiously attached' in infancy, also found that children re-created relationships with their teachers that were consistent with their earlier relationships with their primary care-givers. As reflected in the Crittenden and Ainsworth study (1989), a child who had been neglected expected others to be unresponsive, unavailable, and not willing to meet his or her needs. Data showed that maltreated children brought these expectations to relationships and responded to others in a fashion consistent with these expectations.

Egeland argues that it was not violence that is passed on from generation to generation but the ongoing theme of the care-giver relationship. The findings on the 'emotional unresponsiveness' or 'psychologically unavailable parent' support these ideas (Egeland & Sroufe, 1981; Egeland, Sroufe & Erickson, 1983).

Erikson, Egeland and Pianta (1989) further postulated that, from the attachment experience, maltreated children learn the role of both victim and the victimiser. Crittenden (1985) examined the role of power and coercion seen in parent and child behaviour among maltreating families. She suggests that abused children would be expected to show submissive behaviour in the presence of a powerful care giver and aggressive behaviour in their absence. She contended that, on the other hand,

aggressive behaviour in their absence. She contended that, on the other hand, neglected children would be expected to exhibit withdrawal behaviour. Attachment theory is criticised for ignoring wider contextual issues, although Crittenden and Ainsworth (1989) feel it permits the integration of environmental conditions.

The cross cultural research of Rohner and Rohner (1980) linked studies of self-esteem and theories of attachment. They noted that 'rejected' children world wide, when compared with 'accepted' children, tended to be more aggressive and hostile, dependent or defensively independent, according to levels of rejection. Evidence pointed to an impaired self-esteem and a sense of self-inadequacy. Such children might also be emotionally unstable or unresponsive. Rohner and Rohner (1980) concluded that we tend to view ourselves as we imagine 'significant others' see us. If we have, therefore, been rejected by the most 'significant other' who is the primary care giver, we define ourselves as unworthy and inadequate human beings. This study also concludes that rejected children would be more likely to reject their own children than parents who were not so rejected.

Newberg and White (1989) took a different approach in assessing conditions under which parental cognitive processes that could lead to child maltreatment. They contend that:

a mother's capacity to foster the healthy development of her children may be influenced by her own upbringing. This capacity could also be influenced by one's own self-esteem, depression, the quality of the social and physical environment, knowledge of the developmental norms and how she understands the child's needs (p. 303).

## People who abuse children

Contrary to earlier beliefs, there appears to be no single personality profile which is directly and invariably related to maltreatment. Most of the characteristics identified in perpetrators have also been found in samples of non-perpetrators. Nonetheless, a number of studies suggest that abusive and neglectful parents have intellectual deficits (Oliver, 1985; Brunnquell et al., 1981). However, it is not clear from the reviewed literature whether association between intellectual deficit and risk for maltreatment is causative or correlational in nature. Nonetheless, it could be possible that parents with low intellectual levels have greater difficulty in parenting and might have problems in:

- acquiring parenting skills;
- learning about child development;
- identifying and appreciating needs of children; and
- coping with stress.

Most child interaction studies have characterised physically and emotionally abusive parents as rejecting, harsh, and unpredictable, while neglectful mothers are variously characterised as treating their children in angry and inconsistent ways. Mothers of maltreated children appear to be the only group who did not increase their guidance from the unstructured to the structured situation. However, a study by Mash, Johnston and Kovitz (1983), using a similar approach, had conflicting findings. Abusive mothers increased their guidance from free play to the task-oriented setting, but this was reported as being done in a reluctant and less supportive manner. Some studies suggest that perpetrators of physical abuse may be more easily aroused by social



stimuli, and that neglectful parents may be slower to habituate to arousing stimuli (Friedrich, Tyler & Clark, 1985; Frodi & Lamb 1980).

In regard to personality, Friedrich et al. (1985) reported lower scores on a socialising scale of the California Personality Inventory by abusive parents, and the lowest scores by neglectful parents. In this study, physically abusive fathers were found more introverted than comparison fathers. In addition, interpersonal relationships of both abusive mothers and fathers were characterised by unhappiness and hostility. Generally, the literature reviewed suggested that parents, particularly mothers of physically abused and neglected children, interacted less, were more negative in their interaction, and were less adept at providing useful and appropriate guidance to their children.

Cross culture studies concerning the process by which parents and family ecology may influence children's social behaviour have reported the serious impact of the family on the child's social emotional competence (Belsky, 1984; Chen & Rubin, 1992; Chen, Rubin & Sun, 1992; Cillessen & Ferguson, 1989; Dekovics & Janssen, 1991; Patterson, 1986; Rubin, LeMare & Lollis 1990). In addressing abuse and neglect, O'Neill (1994) emphasised that interventions in child neglect need to be considered in the context of the family, community and culture. Tomison (1994, 1995) proposed on-going management and preventive approaches through the strengthening of family support schemes.

## **Repertoire of parenting skills**

### **Parental beliefs**

Giovannon and Becerra (1979), Cleaver and Freeman (1995), and Korbin (1991) suggested that societal perceptions of what constitutes desirable child behaviour varies according to social, economic and political factors, values and beliefs, family structures and other associated factors. Iverson and Segal (1990) suggest that parenting skills like any other skills are learnt primarily through observation. They argue that inadequacy in a repertoire of parenting skills differ from maltreating beliefs. They attribute this to parents subscribing to a certain set of beliefs, and truly believing their behaviour is not dysfunctional, whereas parents who lack the necessary repertoire of alternatives may see their behaviour as dysfunctional, but lacking the necessary information to change their behaviour in an adaptive way. Consequently, parents who have a limited repertoire of parenting skills can continue to maltreat children because of lack of alternative models to emulate.

Although there is no research which directly compares the behavioural repertoire of abusive and non-abusive parents, several studies have found maltreating parents to be more rigid or inflexible in their parenting behaviours (Milner & Wimberly, 1980). There is a likelihood that the inflexibility may be due to lack of awareness of alternative repertoires. Studies by Newberger and White (1983), and Polansky et al. (1985) supported Iverson and Segal (1990) in the contention that maltreating families are often more isolated than non-maltreating families. Cleaver and Freeman (1995) suggested that the way parents define, interpret and give meaning to their situation is closely related to their previous experience in parenting and how they were parented.

they were parented. They suggested that faced with any unexpected difficulty parents bring to bear familiar, previously successful strategies.

Thus, determining the extent to which parents possess the awareness of a broad range of child rearing behaviours is an important first step in preventing child abuse. Until parents develop this base of skills, they will be likely to experience difficulties in their relationship with their children and may view their children as the source of stress and frustration. On the other hand, if the parents possess a foundation of parenting skills but continue to mistreat their children, the problem may involve other factors which would need to be investigated, established and addressed.

### **Knowledge of child development**

Milner and Wimberly (1980) found that knowledge of child development reduces levels of abuse and neglect inflicted on younger children. Individuals who lack the knowledge that younger children cannot anticipate danger or reason certain solutions to problems may leave children unsupervised. Often not realising that the situation is potentially harmful and when a problem arises children are blamed and maltreated. Further, children who are expected to be capable of unrealistic competencies may be harshly punished because they are seen as 'not trying' (Milner and Wimberly, 1980).

In the appraisal of children's behaviour, studies reviewed suggest that abusive parents rate their children as behaviourally disordered (Aragon & Eyberg, 1981). In some cases such ratings reflected parental misperceptions, demonstrating lack of knowledge of child development and lack of exposure to alternative adaptive parenting models (Mash et al., 1983).

In a study by Frodi and Lamb (1980), abusive parents rated the crying infant as more aversive than did the non-abusive parents, supporting the contention that they find certain aspects of children's behaviour more annoying than their counterparts. Similar findings were reported by Friedrich, Tyler and Clark (1985). Further evidence was found by Wood-Shoeman and Cone (1986). In their study, abusive and at-risk mothers rated videotaped scenes of children more negatively than the non abusive mothers. Further, in a study of attributions and expectations by Larance and Twentyman (1983) both abusive and neglectful mothers demonstrated more negative expectations of their children than did the control group of parents.

These findings support the hypothesis that maltreating parents often hold negative views about their children. This attitude is likely to arouse anger which leads to a maltreatment reaction when a child does something. Several studies also confirm the proposition that maltreating parents have higher stress levels than non maltreating parents (Cicchetti & Rizley, 1981; Oliver, 1985).

### **Intervention strategies**

Various countries have devised different strategies to assist the victims of abuse and neglect overcome the damage inflicted on them, and to develop self-esteem, assertiveness, confidence and personal safety skills. A review of efforts for management of child maltreatment in different countries reveals ideas which echo articles in the UN Children's Rights. Children's courts and legislation of child welfare concerns are being redressed, reactivated or initiated and welfare advocacy groups and counselling services are also being strengthened or introduced in more numbers.

School curriculum and out-of-school learning resources for children and parents and radio and television programs have been developed and the initiative is spreading to more countries. Nonetheless, this study contends that, for increased effectiveness, such initiatives should take into consideration the culture and constructions of child abuse and neglect of the intended beneficiaries.

## **Theories of child maltreatment**

There is a large body of theories which have attempted to address child maltreatment. Some of the child maltreatment theories are now reviewed as they can contribute to an understanding of causes of child abuse and neglect and of intervention strategies.

### **Psychological theory**

Theorists working in the discipline of psychology tend to identify the causes of abuse as arising primarily from an individual perpetrator's psychological problems. In this relationship, the theory postulates that a person who abuses suffers from a psychological pathology which accounts for the maltreatment inflicted on the child. This has for some time been regarded and discussed as the main cause for child maltreatment. However, there is now evidence that child abuse does not only happen at one level as the following theories suggest.

Essentially, psychological theories hypothesise characteristics which distinguish maltreating parents from non-maltreating parents. They describe perpetrators of physical abuse to have characteristic tendencies including depression, immaturity and impassivity. In addition, perpetrators are reported to be self-centred, hypersensitive,

and quick to react with poorly controlled aggression and to have pervasive anger, to be dependent, egocentric, narcissistic, demanding, and insecure.

Neglect has been conceptualised to result from the character deficits of neglectful parents. Without discounting the adverse environmental conditions which influence ecological factors, Polansky and his colleagues viewed neglect as resulting from a mother's personality characteristics deficits such as infantilism and apathy-futility (Polansky et al., 1985). They suggested that the loneliness and isolation commonly found in neglectful mothers may largely be a result of personality. Unlike non-abusing mothers, neglectful mothers have been found to be reluctant to use available support systems for the well being of their children. This may not only be due to lack of access but also the neglectful mother may just not be very concerned about their children's welfare (Polansky et al., 1985).

### **Social theory**

Social learning theory tends to elaborate on the manner in which socially sanctioned violence is passed through families from one generation to the next, and analyses contingencies which can be associated with specific acts of maltreatment. Further, it explores ways in which violence may be socially prohibited on one level, and sanctioned on another. Social learning theory is, therefore, useful in conceptualising causes which maintain maltreatment in given family structures. This theory postulates that individuals learn certain behaviour patterns from experience and that specific social conditions exist which encourage certain behaviours to be repeated.

Punishment is recognised as a way to stop unwanted behaviour and rewards to enhance the occurrence of wanted behaviour.

Social exchange theory is based on the assumption that human interaction is governed by pursuit of rewards and avoidance of punishments or costs and that there is an expectation of reciprocity in exchanging rewards. When rewards are not reciprocally exchanged increased anger, resentment, conflict and violence may result (Gelles & Straus, 1979).

Social theorists Gelles and Straus (1979), Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1980), and Gelles (1983) assume causes of child abuse and neglect to be basically a result of interaction between cultural and environmental factors. Consequently, they contend that depending on environmental conditions any individual can become abusive and neglectful towards children (Gil, 1970).

Gil (1970) generalised that multifaceted child abuse and neglect takes place on two levels, namely, the interpersonal level and at the institutional level. At the interpersonal level, maltreatment takes place in the home and in children's 'settings' while the institutional level includes wider perspectives such as policies and practices regarding child care, education, welfare and intervention institutions and agencies. At the societal level, Gil contended there was an interplay of values, social, economic and political institutions and processes by which the rights and lives of all children are determined.

Furthermore, Gil related levels of causation by organising factors and associating them with the aetiology of maltreatment, taking people a step further from discussing and describing child abuse at one level of individual interaction to examining society

at large. Boss (1987) referred to these as institutional and societal levels of child abuse and describes societal abuse in terms of socio-economic circumstances and practices followed in a society.

### **Transactional theory**

Transactional theory is derived largely from the ecological perspective. It focuses on child development in the context of the parent-child relationship and the socio-cultural and environmental factors which promote or disrupt this relationship. In this regard, Cicchetti and Rizley (1981) proposed a framework for conceptualising maltreatment which organises individual, socio-cultural, and environmental factors according to whether they increase or decrease the likelihood of maltreatment and according to whether they are temporary or lasting.

According to this theory, potentiating factors which increase the likelihood of maltreatment include socio-cultural, individual, and environmental factors. These factors are grouped according to whether they are transient or enduring. Examples of transient potentiating factors include job loss, divorce, or stress resulting from other environmental factors. Enduring potentiating factors include personality characteristics associated with maltreating parents, social values consistent with maltreatment, and environmental factors such as poverty.

Compensatory factors, which are said to decrease the likelihood of maltreatment, are also grouped according to whether they are transient or enduring. Examples of transient compensatory factors include a good job, the availability of social support, and other environmental factors which decrease stress in the family. Enduring



compensatory factors include positive personality attributes, good social skills, high intelligence, and other factors which contribute to an individual's ability to cope with different situations (Cicchetti and Rizley, 1981).

Furthermore, transactional theory emphasises parent-child developmental forces.

Healthy child development involves adaptive behavioural organisation in reference to developmentally salient tasks (Aber & Cicchetti, 1984). This was demonstrated in a study of how maltreatment affects parent-child attachments in the second year of life. By disrupting such attachments, maltreatment was thought to cause the child to be developmentally at risk and to cause delays in language development. Research support for the transactional perspective has primarily focused on the developmental sequelae of maltreatment. However, there is now enough evidence that maltreatment disrupts the socio-emotional functioning of young children. Transactional theory emphasises the factors which contribute to maltreatment. The inclusion of compensatory factors allows for the conceptualisation and development of active prevention efforts, both with maltreating parents and the child victim.

Pertinent with some of the above theories, other research studies provided evidence regarding how conditions such as economic hardships influence parental attitudes and behaviours in child-rearing (Conger et al., 1990; Patterson 1986; Rubin, LeMare & Lollis, 1990; Weiss et al., 1992). In studies by Cox et al. (1989) and Jennings et al. (1991) psychological stressors such as unavailability of social support system and marital discord were found to contribute to maternal insensitivity, unresponsiveness and coldness in parenting practices. Conger et al. (1992,) and Rubin, Le Mare &

Lollis (1990) associated supportive and non-stressful ecological conditions with parental responsivity and warmth.

Furthermore, in the Dartington Social research study of parental perspectives in cases of suspected child abuse, Cleaver and Freeman (1995) reported parents defining and interpreting social meaning to their situation in relation to their previous experience, including examples of how they themselves were parented. Faced with unexpected difficulties in their parenting roles they were reported to resort to familiar previously successful strategies.

## Summary

Psychological models and theories have dominated research into child abuse and generated a large volume of work examining the personality and biological attributes of victims, perpetrators and family members. It was not until the 1970s that researchers recognised that it was deficient to study individuals without fully taking into account their social and cultural contexts. Contemporary researchers have begun to attach a greater importance to social and cultural factors in relation to research into the maltreatment of children.

Overall, the research literature provides evidence of the serious impact on children of child abuse and neglect. There is evidence that emotional abuse and neglect damage the psychological, social, physical and intellectual development of a child and lowers self-esteem. Emotional abuse is described as intangible, with internal wounds being potentially more devastating and crippling than any other type of abuse. Generally the researchers agree that these consequences can persist into adulthood. Within the body

of research reviewed there is a growing recognition of the need to consider intervention strategies in the context of the family, community and culture, and to strengthen the family through on-going support. The next chapter considers literature from the African continent on child abuse and neglect.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **AFRICAN RESEARCH INTO CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

#### **Introduction**

Scholarly research in the area of child abuse and neglect is a recent development in Africa. Consequently not much has been done. Nonetheless, this chapter presents and discusses studies that have been conducted in several countries in Africa. Though few, the studies seem to suggest that socio-cultural and socio-economic factors contribute significantly to child abuse and neglect on the African continent.

#### **Incidence and forms of child abuse and neglect**

##### **Incidence of child abuse**

Concerned about the incidence of child abuse reported in the media, Kaddu, Nakanjako and Nyonyintono (1998) collected stories and cases of child abuse and neglect reported in the print media in Uganda from 1986 to 1996. These were later categorised and analysed to provide a general picture of reported child abuse and neglect in the country.

During this period of ten years child defilement was the most frequently reported form of abuse appearing in the press 178 times. This was followed by murder and dumping which appeared 76 and 40 times respectively. By comparison bonding/selling children, denying a child education, and suspected murder appeared only once. Other forms included harmful labour, negligence, inadequate feeding and incest.

Although these data constitute the voluntary reporting of what people identified as abnormal treatment of children in their various districts in Uganda, this information confirms the existence of different types of child abuse behaviour and practices and points to areas needing to be researched. It also raises a number of questions. For example, nothing is directly mentioned about emotional abuse. Further, neglect was mentioned only twice. The significance of these figures is unclear. For example, do the results mean that kinds of abuse not mentioned do not exist? Another possibility is that unmentioned types of abuse and neglect are the most common and have reached a point of being taken for granted and have become normal expectations and occurrences and therefore do not attract attention for mention and reporting in the media. These issues will be addressed later in the present study.

### **Some African forms of child abuse**

Obikeze (1984) interviewed 2000 parents in Nigeria regarding the behaviour by parents considered abusive. They included economic exploitation, starving or denial of food, frequent or severe beating, general neglect, excessive hard labour, frequent bullying or nagging, and pawning or slavery. In this study parents identified pawning as a form of child abuse and this is not found in the Western literature. Pawning is

where a child's labour is used to pay a debt incurred by his or her parents in meeting some family needs. This could, for example, be an arrangement for paying off loans for land, goods or medical services for another member of the family. Obikeze (1984) suggests that pawned children can at best become second-rate temporary members of another family, and that if the credit is not redeemed by the child's maturity, they become concubines or slaves. Pawning, however, was perceived differently by parents in different states in Nigeria. In some states nearly 50 percent of the parents expressed the view that pawning was an acceptable practice, while in most states, over 80 percent of parents condemned pawning and regarded it as unacceptable practice.

In the Obikeze (1984) study, Western ideas of child maltreatment such as physical abuse and emotional neglect hardly featured among what parents considered to be abusive behaviours and practices. Beating of children, except in the extreme, was seen as an acceptable part of parenting.

Menjuni (1991) suggests there is another type of abuse that does not appear in the Western literature. He reports a case where a father cut off the leg of his daughter who had run away, having refused to enter into an arranged marriage. The father took refuge in the traditional laws that permitted such actions. Explaining the seriousness of such an act, Menjuni argued that 'forcing a child to marry a man she does not know and perhaps does not love is emotional abuse in itself; to cut off her leg is a crime against humanity' (1991, p.14). Such behaviour may not be associated with emotional abuse by the parents but by any international standard it would clearly be an extreme form of abuse.

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Nyonyintono (1997) attempted to identify cultural antecedents to violence against children in Uganda. Using focus group discussion and questionnaire, a cross section of 93 participants took part in this study. These participants included children, teachers, religious leaders and adults representing the cultural/ethnic groupings in Uganda. Of the 50 children, 30 were from primary schools and 29 from secondary schools in four schools in the study area. Findings indicated that both adults and children accept pain as a means of discipline and punishment. Pain, especially during the practice of beating/canining children, was considered to be violence against the child. Denial of food, a common punishment, was criticised and not acceptable according to both children and teachers. Some religious leaders, however, regarded denying a meal or specific item of food as acceptable punishment. The most abused group of children were those who were not living with their biological parents, especially their mothers. Step-parents were the most common abusers of step-children. Polygamy and extra marital relationships were the most common practices which exposed children to violence from adults.

### **Sexual abuse of children**

A recent ANPPCAN workshop provided information about sexual abuse and exploitation of children (Kaddu, Nakanjako & Nyonyintono, 1998). Hosted by Uganda in April 1998 and attended by representatives from Ethiopia, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Zambia, the workshop members reported that children in their various countries were sexual abused and exploited both within their families and by outsiders. It was recognised that sexual exploitation of children could result in serious



lifelong, life-threatening consequences for the physical, psychological and social development of children

Analysis of the reported cases of child abuse and neglect in the print media in Uganda from 1986 to 1996 projected sexual abuse as being the leading form of abuse among different types that were identified (Kaddu, Nakanjako & Nyonyintono, 1998). It contributed 42 per cent of the 476 cases reported. Children in all walks of life were reported to be victims. The majority of cases of abuse were reported to occur in the family neighbourhood or school when children would be going about routine activities including play and running errands.

Poverty, parental negligence, absence from school, cultural beliefs and practices and political insecurity in some areas were identified as the major predisposing factors to sexual abuse. In some areas, for example, parents raised children in crowded areas where the brewing and selling of alcohol were taking place. Some parents raised income from brewing or selling alcohol with the help of the children. These and other related circumstances exposed children to risks of sexual abuse from drunkards. As well, some poor parents and guardians were easily persuaded to accept compensation for sexual abuse of their children or even marriage of sexually abused children to the defiler in order to raise money or realise other material benefits to meet pressing family needs.

Neema and Kiguli (Kaddu, Nakanjako & Nyonyintono, 1998) reported that children who did not attend school were the most vulnerable to sexual abuse as they were forced into the world of work or life on the street. Street girls, house girls and baby

sitters were among the most sexually abused children. Child prostitutes in Kampala operate away from their places of abode, while in Lira, adults and child prostitutes operate at home using brewing and selling alcohol as a 'front'.

### **School sanctioned child abuse**

The Ugandan government and community is showing growing concern about the methods used by teachers as well as parents to discipline children. Voices such as those quoted below question methods used by both schools and families towards achievement of this well-intentioned goal.

In this regard, for example, the Report of Child Law Review Committee (1992) noted with concern the use of canes in schools. The Committee condemned beating and flogging of school children for discipline and learning purposes. It was noted that primary school teachers beat children as a matter of course. This observation is supported by a study of punishment in Ugandan schools (Kakama, 1993, p. 43, quoted by ANPPCAN, 1997). Kakama suggested that corporal punishment for children and even for wives, though condemned, was a common practice in most families in Uganda. In this study both adults and children pointed out that 'sometimes beating was very excessive'. Teachers, especially the untrained ones, tended to beat children excessively. Some parents also were said to exercise a lot of cruelty while beating children.

In addition to beating children, some teachers in the catchment area of the study by Kakama made children dig very big pieces of land. They ordered them to fetch water from long distances in the set, usually very short, time. When water was brought some

from long distances in the set, usually very short, time. When water was brought some teachers told the child to pour it on the ground. Children were made to stand for long periods in the hot sun or on one leg. Others were made to suspend various heavy objects in their hand or carry them on their head. And some others were ordered to kneel, crawl or lie on the ground in awkward positions. ANPPCAN (1997) regarded these punishments to be acts of violence on children. Such acts reflect anger and cruelty on the part of the teacher or adult rather than the genuine desire to teach the child self control and good behaviour, which is the basic purpose for using punishment to discipline children (ANPPCAN, 1997). Members of this Association regretted the practice and saw it as deeply entrenched in the socialisation practices. Consequently ANPPCAN posited a view that this being the case, parents cannot always be relied upon to protect their children from violence in the school system and at home.

During the Children's Awareness Week, the Minister of Education presented the view of his Ministry regarding instilling discipline in schools. Addressing a cross section of stake-holders in Jinja and Kampala in May 1997, the Minister of Education, the Honourable Amanywa Mushega, condemned beating as a method of disciplining students. He stated that teachers who beat school children randomly would be punished and headteachers who protect such teachers would be dealt with accordingly (Kaddu, Nakanjako & Nyonyintono, 1998).

The Rukare Commission Report on the Causes of School Strikes in Uganda (Ministry of Education, 1967) defined discipline as instruction, training, exercise or practice of the mental, moral and physical powers to promote order, regularity and efficient

obedience. Using this view to explain their stand about methods used to inculcate discipline ANPPCAN members regarded the Rukare Commission description of discipline as a very important submission. The definition was interpreted to mean that the degree of imposition of discipline, therefore, needs to be related to natural mental and emotional development and growth of social awareness of the child. In other words, discipline must be sensitive to the situation of the child, bearing in mind the need for children of different ages and circumstances to be disciplined through the use of different but appropriate methods. Failure to realise this principle often leads to the use of ineffective and sometimes harmful methods which may create problems in the personality of the child and in the school system (ANPPCAN, 1997).

ANPPCAN recognises the school system as being in position to set the pace for fighting violence against children and to lead to the gradual breaking of the vicious cycle of domestic violence. This Association argued that whether adults were severely punishing, or even abusing, children at home or not, that was no excuse for schools to inflict undue pain on pupils in the quest for control of their behaviour. Nonetheless, ANPPCAN concluded by sounding a warning that schools alone could not possibly manage to eliminate child abuse and neglect in society and called for the support of everybody with a stake and interested in child welfare to join the fight.

## **The social and economic contexts of child abuse and neglect**

### **Poverty and child abuse**

Kawooya (1995) reported 69 per cent of the working population in the catchment of her study earned below the average income level and 31 per cent had reasonable

income. Poverty and the associated denial of basic necessities and resultant frustration and depression were found to significantly affect the manner in which parents fulfilled their parenting roles. Some parents loaned their children for temporally custody with the more able families. Many of such children were abused in their custodial situations.

In Kawooya's 1995 study, 80 per cent of the community participants concurred with the view that polygamous marriages led to child abuse. Broken marriages, leading to single parenting, also contributed to child abuse.

The hypothesis that marrying young girls was a form of child abuse was refuted by 69 per cent of the respondents. Some participants shared the view that when a man gets the consent of the girls' parents for marriage that such a marriage should not be associated with abuse. As well, 74 per cent of the participants associated failure to meet children's basic needs with child neglect. For example, children who were let to go hungry and whose personal hygiene was not attended to were thought to be neglected by their parents or guardians.

Recommendations included the need for community awareness education programs, the revision and enactment of laws to protect and prevent children from abuse, and the need to abolish corporal punishment in schools. Kawooya (1995) also recommended the need for a network through which cases of child abuse and neglect could be monitored and reported and the need to resource more effectively the Ministry of Gender and Community Development so that it could play its assigned role of protecting children from abuse and neglect.

Swadener, Kabiru and Njenga (1995) reported that responses to questions about the major problems facing families in Kenya were typically quite similar. The most common concern was the increasing poverty and the related economic problems. Top on the list in terms of frequency was the cost of living which had dimensions, including the loss of purchasing power for basic necessities. Second on the list was the rapidly rising cost of education for children.

Food was identified as the first necessity although the parents and other people who were interviewed said it had become harder to feed a family. The rising cost of food was affecting the family's diet and eating habits. The issue of insufficient food was closely tied to problems of lack of access to sufficient land. More families were renting land than in the past. Urban families were completely dependent upon the market for food which the low income earners did not easily afford.

Another aspect of the high cost of living which was having a negative impact on child rearing was housing. Rents had become higher. This led to overcrowding and associated challenges ranging from discipline to the rise in number of street children. Some of the most crowded housing conditions were on plantation farms, where, although provided free to permanent workers, large families often occupied one or two rooms.

The Kenyan study reveals the impact of rapid social and economic changes on child rearing and parents' construction of pre-school education. Findings by Swadener, Kabiru and Njenga (1995) indicate the quality of child care was affected by the social and economic challenges families were experiencing. Topping the list of problems

social and economic challenges families were experiencing. Topping the list of problems that impacted on the quality of child care was poverty and its associated economic challenges. As the cost of living increased, parents lost purchasing power for basic necessities and for meeting some of their children's needs. The new socio-economic order required mothers to join the labour market to meet the cost of living. This development in turn dictated the need for mothers to have someone to help them take care of their young children while they were away at work. Mothers who did not engage in employed labour also had long working hours in gardens trying to ensure food security and in playing their other domestic roles.

Generally, most mothers who were not able to employ a maid to assist with child care and other domestic work, expressed concern about the lack of time and attention they were able to give to their children. They also indicated that the new socio-economic order had led to less extended family style of living and denied many families assistance from grandmothers. This led to the need for establishing early childhood care and education pre-school centres. Most of the centres were established by groups of parents in catchment areas.

Because of what surrounded parents and their families, their construction of the pre-school care and education program varied. Parents working on farms, plantations and gardens, the slum dwellers and cattle keepers associated the program with custodial care while 'middle' and 'upper' class parents associated it with providing readiness to enable their children to be selected and admitted into 'good' primary schools. Getting into 'good' primary schools was competitive and needed children to be made ready for the selection procedures.

However, parents frequently expressed regret and sadness at not being able to provide for their children. In rural areas parents reported they were not able to provide enough nutritional food, and were unable to afford school fees and school uniforms for their children. Mothers in urban areas and on factory plantation sites expressed concern about the lack of time and attention they were able to give their children. These parents also indicated that they no longer had the kinds of extended family assistance with child care which they recalled from the past. Grandmothers and older siblings were no longer an assured support. Older children would be at school and some grandmothers would be engaged in other activities or would not be staying with their married sons and daughters.

#### **Changes in family roles and structures and child abuse**

Swadener, Kabiru and Njenga (1995) also reported changes in the family role and structure to affect child rearing. The issues they reported include a growing number of single parents, usually mothers, who were bringing up children while living under stress and financial hardships and the associated rise in divorce and separation. During the interviews, grandmothers spoke against new developments relating to weaning practices. Some mothers were weaning children at an early age and to less nutritious tinned foods which some families often could not afford.

Grandmothers were not in favour of bottle feeding. Other communities expressed their preference for the traditional breast feeding. Although weaning was preferably done at around two years, the new socio-economic demands were preventing this



from happening. Many mothers had to look for paid employment for the survival of their families. Some children were left behind without adequate care.

Nonetheless, in the traditional Sambaru and Masai communities, grandmothers still provided much of the child care for 'under threes' and girls were often kept out of school to assist in child care. Generally, the transition from a communal, extended family model in which older relatives were available for child care, to individual, nuclear family situations, in which working parents were left with fewer options for care, especially of children below the age of three years, presented challenges to some families.

Traditionally raising the child was a responsibility of not only the biological parents; the extended family and the community also played a big role in preparing the child for life which included discipline and guidance. Many of the parents interviewed regretted the loss of the extended family, working with the community to raise the child and to provide counselling assistance to sustain marriages.

### **Access to child care and education**

According to Swadener, Kabiru and Njenga, (1995) early childhood care and education (ECCE )were seen by parents as keeping children safe from various dangers while parents and other care givers did other essential work. In fact, for under threes, the custodial function of child care appeared to take precedence over such aspects of ECCE as early stimulation, verbal interaction, and the opportunity to play and use manipulative materials. However, the expectation held by parents of 4 and 5 year-old children attending pre-school units was of preparing children for formal education.

This function was unquestioned by most parents interviewed across all settings. Nonetheless, for parents on the tea and coffee plantation sites custodial care was more emphasised than the readiness concern. This was due to the fact that pre-school was in private hands and was paid for by parents. Only 30 per cent of children of ages three to six attend and a much smaller percentage of children under three years were in formal care.

Like mothers on plantations, mothers in slum settings were away from home for many hours a day attempting to support their families through casual labour or in small market or micro enterprise activities. They, too, associated pre-schools with custodial care. As well they expected nursery schools to enhance children's nutrition where feeding programs were available, and as children approached school entrance age, preparation for standard one.

Unlike parents working on farms, plantation and gardens, the slum dwellers, and cattle keepers, the 'middle' and 'upper' class parents viewed pre-school from an early age as important for preparing their children for entrance into formal education. They wanted their children to get places in good primary schools. Admission into such schools was competitive and required pre-school preparation.

Parents in Kisumu, Nairobi and Embu typically had someone to help with children and housework. Such families had different expectations from the pre-schools. They were more interested in pre-schools making their children ready for formal education than playing the custodial role. Two of the families interviewed appeared to view a quality nursery school program with a trained teacher as more beneficial to their

children than leaving their children with an ayah for the entire day. Such parents saw early reading, writing and other school-related skills as critical for their children.

In most African countries the socio-economic order is changing. Unlike the past when the African mothers worked in and around their homes, keeping in close contact with their young children, today they are gradually engaging in paid employment outside their homes. In many countries the extended family style of life is gradually changing and tending to nuclear family life style. This means that the support mothers used to get from the extended family members, like grandmothers, is missing in some families. Also because of the new social order requirement that children go to school at the age of six, older siblings are not available in many families to assist their mothers to looking after their young brothers and sisters. This has therefore introduced need to have day-care centres and nursery schools where children can be taken care while the parents go to work and fulfil other family obligations.

Nonetheless, pre-school provisions are more associated with urban settings. There seems, therefore, to be need to extend more and affordable pre-school services in the form of day-care and nursery schools to benefit rural families. For effectiveness and acceptance, these should take into consideration the culture and social and economic conditions that surround the beneficiaries.

## **Conclusion**

The review of research literature on child abuse and neglect in African countries indicates the need for further investigations to establish the types, the incidence and extent of child abuse and neglect in the country. It is clear from the literature that not only are there differences between Western and African researchers regarding the definition of child abuse and neglect but even among African commentators there is

considerable differentiation. Furthermore, it may seem straight forward for researchers to define child emotional abuse and neglect in particular terms but the utility of their findings must be subject to doubt if there are wide differences between their constructions and those of the people among whom they are conducting their research. It would seem from the African literature reviewed that many practices regarded as abusive by researchers are seen as practical 'remedies' by people under economic and social pressure. This important issue will be further considered in Chapter Four.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **CULTURAL FACTORS AND DEFINITIONAL ISSUES**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter focuses on cultural factors associated with child abuse, highlighting the importance of cultural values and belief systems. The chapter also considers the associated definitional issues.

#### **Cultural factors**

The literature reviewed in Chapters Two and Three suggests that throughout history there has been a wide range of culturally condoned forms of child maltreatment in both Western and non-Western countries, leading to a tendency for each surviving generation to inflict on the new generation the suffering they endured as children. This appears to be true at a general level even though the forms of maltreatment differ from society to society. Chapter Three shows that a practice condemned by one culture might be regarded as normal by another. In fact, practices in 'other' societies may appear barbaric to Western, ethnocentric eyes (Korbin, 1981). For example, Bruce-Chwatt (1985) points out how Western professionals condemn the unnecessary suffering and dangers of female circumcision in non-Western countries yet male circumcision is widely accepted in Western cultures. This study highlights the need to understand cultural contexts as a pre-requisite for minimisation of child abuse and neglect in general, and child emotional abuse and neglect in particular.

Evidence which demonstrates how cultural factors perpetuate child maltreatment can be found in many studies, including Levinson (1989) and Whiting and Edwards (1988). For example, Whiting and Edwards demonstrate that parenting styles that are aggressive can evolve from different living conditions. Newell (1989) and Leach (1993 ) suggest that child maltreatment may be related to the extent that physical chastisement is accepted by societies. While some societies do not need to beat children in order to rear them efficiently, others believe in 'spare the rod and spoil the child' (Levinson, 1989; Haeuser, 1992 ). Physical chastisement is reported in both developed and developing countries. The extent to which it is carried out within some societies prompts the question whether some cultures regard it as a necessary part of child rearing. The dilemma, as Buchanan (1996) points out, is where chastisement ends and abuse begins.

### **Multiple definitions of child abuse and neglect**

The evolution of maltreatment into a social problem has given rise to several theoretical and definitional issues in terms of societal values and attitudes. Iverson and Segal (1990) propose that definitions, explicit or implicit, are fundamental to the understanding of any given phenomenon. They argue that unless the parameters of what is being discussed are understood, misconception is inevitable. Definitional ambiguity and inconsistency diminish both the validity of individual studies and the confidence with which various studies can be compared (Ghate & Spencer, 1995; Iverson & Segal, 1990).

However, because of the complex cultural differences among researchers, and because they examine child abuse in strikingly different contexts, there appears to be no universally accepted, operational definition of what constitutes child abuse and neglect (Besharov, 1981). The controversy, Wolfe (1987) suggests, exists in part because the nature of child maltreatment does not lend itself to clear definitions that apply to each new situation. For example, there are problems of intentionality in judging whether or not an act is abusive in a given socio-cultural context. Maher (1987) expects that child abuse definitions will continue to evolve and contends that cultural differences make it difficult to define child abuse cross-culturally.

Korbin (1981) describes child abuse as behaviours that are defined as abusive by a particular society such as signalling a departure from the normally tolerated cultural behaviours. She also includes deficiencies like poverty, inadequate housing and nutrition as aspects of child abuse and neglect.

In Australia, Briggs (1995) considered emotional abuse to include attitudes or acts detrimental to, or preventing, the development of a positive self-image in the child. The US Department of Health and Human Services (1980) included scape-goating, belittling, denigrating, or other overly hostile treatment like threats of sexual or physical assault, overworking, close confinement or withholding of food, sleep, or shelter as forms of punishment, as acts of emotional abuse to children. Additions to this list would include punishing a child for normal behaviour, preventing or inhibiting a child bonding with the primary care givers and punishing the use of accepted social skills normally used outside the family setting, to the list of emotionally abusive practices.

Garbarino, Guttman and Seeley (1986) identified five other forms of emotional abuse:

- *rejection* whereby care givers refuse to acknowledge and recognise the child's worth and legitimacy of needs;
- *isolation* as in situations where the child is denied normal social relationship - making him/her feel alone in the world;
- *terrorising* by verbal assault, bullying, frightening and making the child feel that the world is hostile;
- *ignoring* which includes depriving the child of essential stimulation and responsiveness, stifling emotional growth and intellectual development; and
- *corrupting* by causing or leading the child to involve in destructive anti-social behaviour, thus reinforcing deviance and making the child unfit for the social experience.

As indicated in Chapter Three, Obikeze (1984) identified 'pawning' as a form of child abuse which is not included among the forms of abuse identified by Western researchers. Pawning is where a child's labour is used to pay a debt incurred by his or her parents in meeting some family needs. Child abuse has, therefore, become an 'umbrella' term encompassing the physical, emotional and sexual maltreatment of children.



## **Cultural values and belief systems**

Iverson and Segal (1990) suggest that cultural values and belief systems greatly influence child rearing practices. They argue that child maltreatment is perpetuated by families where members apply long held beliefs and values as the ideal standard for child rearing and do not regard their practices as abusive.

Nespor (1987) hypothesised beliefs to reside in episodic memory, which is influenced by experiences lived and culturally transmitted knowledge, from one generation to another. Nespor (1987) and Pajares (1992) proposed that beliefs can be difficult to change during adulthood and can only change when they prove unsatisfactory and are challenged by more successful alternatives.

Elms (1976) suggests that attitudes exist in some form within the individual, either as patterns of physiological sensitivity (for example, a mental and neural state of readiness) or as persistent organisations of thoughts and feelings, ready to be expressed when the appropriate occasion arises. He contends that attitudes reflect the operation of some hidden or hypothetical variable, functioning within the individual; this 'variable' shapes, acts upon, or mediates observable behaviour. In practical terms, all that is evident of an individual's attitudes externally are certain kinds of overt and verbal behaviour, from which one can construct a picture of the non-observable, inner attitudes.

However, Rehler et al. (1988) argue in support of knowledge having a greater influence on human behaviour. They contend that since knowledge is fluid and evolves as new experiences are interpreted and integrated into existing schemata, it

must take priority over beliefs. Consequently, they concluded that knowledge and not beliefs ultimately influence one's thoughts, decision making and actions. On the other hand, Lewis (1990) and Rokeach (1968) regard beliefs and knowledge as overlapping. In support of Lewi, Pajares (1992) proposes that beliefs influence cognitive knowledge while attitudes and values form an individual's belief system.

In regard to understanding what makes individuals become what they become and believe and behave in the different ways they do, Garbarino (1977) emphasises the impact of 'environmental press', the combined influence of forces working in a setting to shape the behaviour and development of people in the particular setting. He further contends that individuals and their environments are mutually shaping systems, each changing over time, and each adapting in response to changes in the other. In a study of this nature, it is therefore considered important to understand the environmental context in relation to the unique personal attributes individuals have and use in response to the pertaining conditions that surround them. It follows that if behaviour is to be understood it must be studied and considered in context. This is especially important when researching sensitive areas such as child abuse and neglect.

## **Summary**

The above literature recognises the importance of studying child abuse and neglect in cultural contexts. The culture and the environment are associated with values systems, child rearing practices, and the construction of child abuse and neglect. Practices which might be viewed as abusive in one culture might not be considered abusive in another culture due to the contextual circumstances surrounding families and their

children. Consequently, in Chapter Six the rural district in which this study is situated is closely examined.

# **CHAPTER FIVE**

## **THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Introduction**

This chapter links the theoretical perspective with the research questions and the design of the study. It describes the setting and participants. The methodology for data collection and analysis procedures adopted to ensure authenticity of the findings are described. Finally, the ethical considerations guiding the study are discussed.

### **Theoretical framework of the study**

#### **The ecological perspective of human development**

In the search for answers to what parents in the Jatti district consider to constitute emotional abuse and neglect of young children, it was necessary to explore not only the conditions pertaining in the environment, but also the interplay of the unique personal attributes of parents and their children as they respond to their environmental circumstances. Given that the ecology of human development model maintains that it is a combined influence of forces in the environment that shape the behaviour and development of people in a given setting, it was thought appropriate to base this study on such a model.

Application of an ecological approach in the exploration of parents' construction of emotional abuse and neglect was further influenced by additional related factors, namely:

- children of the age birth to six years, by the virtue of their nature, depend on adults for survival;
- their reality lies in the relationship they have with the primary care givers, particularly the mother in most families and in most societies;
- it is impossible for individuals to exist independently of the influence of other people and other systems that impact on their communities and families; and
- as proponents of the ecological perspective on human development contend, different people react differently to the same environment just as different environments prompt different behaviours.

According to proponents of the ecology of human development, a child's environment includes the family, neighbours and the community. As well, the environment is subject to the less immediate forces such as laws, shared social attitudes and institutions that directly or indirectly affect the child.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggests that we cannot fully understand the relationship between the child and the parents without understanding how the conditions surrounding the family affect the interactions between a child and parent and defining each family's particular experience. It is also true that the more critical factors affecting the early development of a child are embedded in the

environment in which the child is born and reared. It is contended in this study that through these realities a child is abused or not abused.

Proponents of the ecological perspective, such as Essa (1996), suggest that it is viewing parents, their children and families as parts of various systems that help to avoid seeking simple explanations and acknowledge to the complex interactions that often underlie parents' and children's behaviours and the way they construe related phenomenon. More specifically, Bronfenbrenner (1979) identifies four spheres of influence on children and their families:

- the micro system which is the family level and the most immediate environment surrounding the developing child;
- the meso-system which is the community context;
- the exo-system which influences the child, but which the child cannot directly influence as in the case of the local economic climate and social services; and
- the macro-system which is a broad ideological and institutional pattern in a particular culture or sub-culture within which the family, the community and the political influences operate.

Bronfenbrenner conceives the individual's experiences 'as a set of nested structures each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls' (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22). He suggests that in asking and answering questions about developmental risks there is need to look at the next level 'beyond' and 'within. Generally, the ecology of human development approach emphasises the interplay of person and social influences. In sum, proponents of ecological

perspective perceive an individual's growth and development to be shaped and influenced by the interaction of a network of environmental systems including the family, community, culture and national events (Bronfenbrenner 1977,1979; Garbarino, 1977; Garbarino, Guttman & Seeley (1986) ; Garbarino & Gilliam, 1980). In this study, these and other influences which interact and impact on the lives of parents and their children are explored through the use of qualitative research methods to collect and analyse the experiences of parents and their children.

## **The research design of the study**

### **The selection of the site for the field work**

This study was conducted in a rural district in Uganda which has been given the fictional name of Jatti. The district was selected in consultation with the Secretariat of the Uganda National Programme of Action for Children (UNPAC). The Secretariat which is charged with the responsibility to interpret and implement the UN and the OAU Children's Charters recommended the selection of this district for this study mainly because of the interest the people had shown in the children's welfare projects which UNPAC had introduced in the country. This district is one of the 39 districts in Uganda. Generally, Jatti district is known for crop and animal farming and its keen interest in education and community development.

The choice of language to use in the study was another factor that led to selection of the rural district used as the setting. As indicated in Chapter One,

more than 30 local languages are spoken in Uganda although none are used as the national language. English is the official language that is spoken by less than 50 per cent of the population and is not commonly spoken in the rural areas. Consequently, using English for data collection would have meant omitting parents who did not speak English. Even with parents who spoke English as a second language, it was felt that they would be more comfortable using the mother tongue. This view was based on the realisation that emotional abuse is not an easy topic to discuss and that some mother tongue terms and expressions may not have their equivalents in English.

Given this situation, choice to work with people with whom the researcher spoke the local language was considered an advantage. It enabled involving parents who did not speak English and also ensured free expression. In addition, use of the local language without an interpreter developed more trust between the researcher and participants. It also empowered parents and made them feel the study was meant to understand their situation for their benefit and that of their children.

### **Selection of participants**

Selection of participants was done with the help of the Jatti district UNPAC Sub-Committee chaired by the Assistant District Administrator. The Sub-Committee was informed that it was important to obtain a cross-section of parents to ensure the capturing of a broad base of parents' views of both the urban educated and the rural uneducated mothers and fathers who had young children. It was further requested that participants should be of different age



groups and religious beliefs. In addition the Sub-Committee suggested inclusion of grandparents. Inclusion of grandparents was considered important because of their influence on parenting practices. Although grandparent influence was strong in extended families, the Sub-Committee members believed that urban families were not free from it. The Sub-Committee recommended that participants of the age range 18 to 55 years participate in the study.

Participants were selected from two types of settings: the rural setting and the urban setting. Being an agricultural country, in Uganda and in the district of the study, the majority of the population live in the rural areas. Although some of the people who live in rural areas are educated, have a reliable income and are relatively wealthy, in this study, parents who were categorised as rural participants were parents who used traditional methods to farm, and their income depended on availability of the local market for their produce. Participants in this category had little or no school education. They had either dropped out of the primary education cycle or completed it without resuming further formal education. They improved their knowledge and skills mainly through informal and non-formal education. Some of these parents also played leadership roles in their communities.

On the other hand, the second category of participants, referred to as the urban educated, were urban dwellers who had completed at least the first cycle of four years of secondary education. These participants lived either in or around the capital and administrative centre of the Jatti district, in county headquarters, or commercial centres in the district. These parents were engaged in professional

jobs and commercial businesses. Generally the urban educated group of participants were parents who had regular cash income. By comparison, they were better off than their counterparts in the rural area in terms of regular income and education.

During the data collection preparatory meeting with the District UNPAC Sub-Committee, it was considered important that children of the age six years be involved at some stages in the study. Children would help to establish whether or not some of the behaviours and practices which parents considered constituted emotional abuse and neglect corresponded with children's feelings and experiences regarding the same.

As in the selection of parents, some children who participated in the study were from rural settings while others were from the urban parts of the district. Consequently, both male and female children of the age six years took part in the study. The children who were categorised as rural came from families of rural uneducated parents and were not at school. On the other hand, children who were categorised as urban were from families of urban educated parents. They attended primary school. In both cases, however, no child belonged to the parents who participated in the study although they came from urban areas and the villages where the parents who took part in the study came from. This arrangement was meant to encourage freedom of expression by both parents and children.

At this meeting the researcher expressed a need to have some background information regarding family life of the people in the district. The Sub-Committee recommended that the researcher visit Gama village and meet with Niima of the Kanimba family. This was done as the first activity in data collection for this study and findings are reported in the following chapter.

### **Other sources of data**

Besides collecting data from the participants recommended by the Sub-Committee, the study was enriched through informal but focused conversations with 86 adults at an individual level and 73 children of the age six years at different times and in different places during the data collection year. Views were also shared with groups of people, totaling 265, who attended seminars and conferences in different places in the district addressing child and family welfare concerns. Data were also collected from newspapers and the national TV and radio and by studying relevant government documents and those of other organisations working for the welfare of children and their families.

### **Data collection procedures**

Data for this study were collected over 12 months from January to December, 1995. A triangulation of case study, focus group discussion, interview and workshop methods was used to generate the data. Altogether the data were collected over five phases. In Phase One, use was made of case study method while in Phase Two a focus group technique was employed. In Phase Three data were collected through interviews. For an in-depth understanding of specific issues, the case study technique was once again employed in Phase Four.

Finally, a workshop method was used in Phase Five. This was designed to enable participants to validate findings and confirm the researcher's interpretation of parents' construction of emotional abuse and neglect.

Each phase was started by piloting procedural arrangements and the tools that would be used later. For some questions the piloting suggested the need for rewording, rephrasing and sequencing. As well, piloting led to identification of some specific prompts especially for emotional abuse questions. A description of each phase of data collection now follows.

#### **Phase One: Case Study of Niima**

To achieve an in-depth understanding of emotional abuse and neglect it was necessary to use case study method in data collection. This method was used at two different phases of the study, namely, in Phases One and Four. Holding to the theoretical perspective, it was necessary to understand the daily life of families in the district and what influenced their child rearing practices. This was achieved through a visit to Niima of the Kanimba family in a rural village. The information provided by Niima helped in different ways. It enabled the researcher to focus the interview questions, to collect more informative data, to analyse and interpret the data and to appreciate the participants' construction of emotional abuse and neglect. The case study of Niima was conducted in March 1995 and findings are reported in Chapter Six. Other case studies which were used to follow up the interview data were conducted later in Phase Four of the study.

## **Phase Two: Focus group discussions**

The focus group technique has been found to be an effective data gathering tool in the studies of Bach and McDaniel (1994) and Kitzinger (1994). Focus group discussions provide insight and data that could not have been accessible without stimulus of the group discussion, participant to participant and facilitator recall aiding in the collegial 'sharing of experience' atmosphere. As LeCompte, Millroy and Preissle (1992) and Lederman (1990) argue, focus groups are data rich, stimulating to participants, and cumulative and elaborative over and above individual responses. They enable participants to express their thoughts and feelings and through group dynamics to generate authentic information.

In this study, focus group discussions were used to elicit parents' views about emotional abuse and neglect of children. Four focus group discussions were conducted, two in urban catchment areas and the other two in rural settings. The letter of invitation is contained in Appendix A. Although conducted at different times during the months of April and May 1995, the four focus group sessions followed similar procedures. In each case groups of 16 adults, as described in Table 1 below, met for a four hour session with a short break after the first two hours. As an 'icebreaker', all participants were invited to share some information about where they came from, their families and the work they did.

**Table 1: Profile of participants in focus group discussion**

Detail	Female	Male	Rural	Urban
mothers	16		8	8
fathers		16	8	8
single mothers	8		4	4
single fathers		8	4	4
grandmothers	8		4	4
grandfathers		8	4	4

Participants were informed of the confidentiality with which data was to be handled and how it would be used. The 16 parents formed two groups of eight members per group. Each group worked on its own under the leadership of a nominated facilitator and secretary to record group deliberations. The two groups worked on similar tasks. Dividing the full group into two small working groups was intended to reduce dominance by a few members and passiveness by the majority which is a common characteristic of large group discussions. This format allowed female and male parents as well as grandparents to sit and address the questions together in their respective small groups and at a later stage as a combined group.

Each participant listened and added to the others' comments. There was an evident level of involvement and interest in the topics being discussed. Another advantage of group interview in the context of this study was that group members' checked on and confirmed their colleagues' statements and ideas.

This acted as a triangulation of concepts and ideas. Views, actions and attitudes were subjected to peer scrutiny and evaluation.

Using her previous experience gained through organising and conducting workshops and discussion groups in her job as an Inspector of Schools in Uganda, the researcher knew that if care was not taken the views of some individuals could be lost at the expense of those who might want to dominate. To minimise this weakness, the composition of groups was structured to encourage everybody to participate in the discussion. The groups were kept small and it was difficult for a member to hide among others, as is common with big group discussions. Group leaders were also reminded to guard against this.

With the consent of the groups, two audio recorders were used to facilitate accurate recording of the deliberations of each group for later listening and transcription. The researcher visited each one of the sub-groups at work to share experiences, encourage, prompt when and where necessary, and to provide information. The first two hours were spent on discussions at the small group level. After the refreshment break, the two groups got together for another two hours. During this session, group secretaries reported their groups' deliberations. Each report was briefly reflected on by the general group, allowing freedom to extend or add a new idea, to make remarks, ask questions and challenge a point of view.

Having two small groups working and reporting on similar tasks had several advantages. Firstly, it encouraged more participation by each member in the group and it provided for divergences in thinking about similar issues. Furthermore, it allowed for more time to be spent on each of the questions for discussion. When the groups came together there was more opportunity for reflection on each issue raised. This also allowed for further sharing of experiences and cross-pollination of ideas. Focus group started by considering the features of good parenting of young children. This led to the discussion of what they considered constituted emotional abuse and neglect of children of the age birth to six years. The subsequent discussion focused on what participants considered to be experiences and factors that surrounded emotional abuse and neglect and how these could be minimised.

Use of focus group and generating of views from the groups was aided by the existing government structure and approach of the Local Council (LC) system which empowers people to address matters pertaining in their communities. Participants were able to speak out and share their views. As described in the country context, this system links the grassroots communities with the national parliament using the bottom-up approach. This also fits well with the choice to use an ecological approach to this study. The people at the local community level, for example, were aware that some conditions that affect their families and quality of parenting result from decisions made by their members of parliament and that other conditions were community based. The focus group data suggested areas that needed follow up through individual interviews and case studies conducted in Phases Two and Three respectively.



### **Phase three: interviews**

Procedures and the proposed semi -structured interview questions were piloted and refined. This yielded a set of questions which were adapted as one of the means through which to elicit parents' construction of emotional abuse and neglect of children of the age from birth to six years.

Twenty parents were selected to participate in the third phase of this study. This was done soon after completion of the focus group interviews. As already outlined above, selection of participants was done with the assistance of the District Committee of UNPAC which is composed of members from the six counties of the district. The Committee recommended a list of 25 parents from whom 20 could be invited to participate in this phase. The list was studied and 20 parents were selected. The letter of invitation is contained in Appendix B. Children were selected with the help of parents who participated in this phase. As indicated above, no child belonged to the parents who were involved in this phase. Children who were involved in the study did not belong to the parents in the study; they were drawn from the village catchment area where the parents in the study came from. This was thought to be a better way of involving children and parents in a sensitive study of this nature. It was important to avoid a situation which could be interpreted by some participants as children reporting on their parents as this would raise ethical issues and could handicap the study in some ways. Data from children was triangulated with adult data thus enhancing reality. Table 2 below provides details of the 20 adults and the 10 children who were interviewed.

**Table 2 Profile of participants in interviews**

Detail	Male	Female	Rural	Urban	Total
mothers		6	3	3	6
fathers	6		3	3	6
single mothers		2	1	1	2
single fathers	2		1	1	2
grandmothers		2	1	1	2
grandfathers	2		1	1	2
children	5	5	5	5	10

The urban participants included primary school teachers, community development workers, health workers and traders.

Participation was voluntary. The letter of invitation requested parents to indicate whether or not they were able to participate. Participants confirmed their involvement by returning a consent notification slip as in Appendix C. Rural parents who could not read and write were visited and their participation confirmed verbally. Permission for children's participation in the study was obtained from their parents. Two parents who were not able to participate because of earlier commitments to other programs were replaced by others.

Using semi-structured interview questions each participant was interviewed separately in his or her home. This became convenient for the participants and also enabled the researcher to see first hand some of conditions and behaviours participants associated with emotional abuse and neglect of young children. To

obtain verbatim accounts to supplement and complement field notes and to facilitate accuracy in transcribing and later interpretation, an audio recorder was used with the consent of the participants.

The audio tapes were transcribed before proceeding with further data collection. Each interview informed the proceeding interview. Burns (1994) refers to this strategy as 'progressive focusing'. The interviewing was conducted over three months, beginning in June 1995 and ending in August 1995.

#### **Phase Four: Case studies of four parents**

Following the completion of the interviews four case studies were conducted. Two mothers and two fathers were involved in this phase. They were chosen to provide more information-rich descriptions and to further reflect on and extend data given by participants in the previous phase. It was assumed that a few cases studied in depth would yield deeper insights about how parents in the district construed emotional abuse and neglect of young children. A mother and father were from the rural setting and the others were from the urban setting.

A letter of invitation as in Appendix D was sent to the selected parents seeking their voluntary participation and written consent. The discussions were held in the participants' homes. With the consent of participants, the conversations and discussions were also audio recorded. In addition, field notes were taken during the discussions and more notes were made after transcribing each of the sessions which included the researcher's interpretations and views. Each interview took from one and half to two hours on each of the three to five

occasions each parent worked with the researcher on one or more of the selected questions.

Throughout this study at regular intervals, the researcher compared and contrasted emerging views which revealed commonalities and differences articulated by the different participants. Each of the participants read a copy of the transcription of the previous session in order to confirm or change it. Reading was done on behalf of the adults and children who could not read. This strategy served several purposes. Firstly, it enhanced mutual trust and shared understanding of the participants' meanings; secondly, it served as a reminder to the work covered in the previous session and 'warmed' up the participant to the issues to be discussed. The more times the researcher worked with a participant the closer they became and the more they disclosed their deeper views about parenting practices and emotional abuse and neglect of children which led to deeper reflection. The derived data were analysed as described in the data analysis section below. Overall validation of the data was done using a workshop method in the fifth phase of the study.

#### **Phase Five: Workshops**

Finally, two workshops were conducted to reflect on and confirm what parents considered to constitute emotional abuse and neglect of children of the age from birth to six years, what they considered to be experiences and factors that surrounded emotional abuse and neglect of children of this age group and how the associated behaviour, practices and conditions could be minimised. These

workshops also served to confirm the interpretation of the participants' ideas. A total of 20 participants were involved in the two workshops.

Ten parents as described in Table 3 below who demonstrated keen interest and competence to perform tasks in this phase were selected from those who participated in at least one of the previous four phases of the study.

**Table 3 Profile of participants in the workshops**

Detail	Female	Male	Urban	Rural
mothers	6		3	3
fathers		6	3	3
single mothers	2		1	1
single fathers		2	1	1
grandmothers	2		1	1
grandfathers		2	1	1

During the workshop each of the ten participants was given three lists of possible forms of emotional abuse and neglect. The first list included what participants in the previous phases of the study considered to constitute emotional abuse of young children in the district of the study. The second list included practices which were thought to constitute neglect while the third list included factors thought to contribute to emotional abuse and neglect.

Workshop participants were requested to reflect on the contents of these lists and then rate in terms of their agreement or disagreement (Appendix E). When each finished working on the individual sheets the members came together as a

group to reflect on their ratings and a composite record was produced and then discussed. Each group was then asked to add to the lists what they felt could have been included but was missing.

The same procedure was followed by the second workshop which involved ten participants who were again selected in consultation with the District UNPAC Committee. The selected members included two members of the UNPAC Committee, six participants one from each of the six counties in the district and two opinion leaders. None of these members had participated in the previous four phases of the study. Members of the second workshop deliberated on same tasks as the participants in the workshop. Similar procedures were followed. A comparison of the responses by the two workshop participants registered a general agreement. Overall, through the five phases of the study there was considerable congruence.

The workshop strategy involved a change in empowerment of participants from the conventional power relations between the researcher and the 'subjects' of research in a way that gives people being investigated greater control.

Furthermore, in this study, it was one of the means the researcher used to avoid the production of knowledge which subordinates the knowledge of the group being studied to that of the outsider/ professional expert. As in group interviews, participants in the workshop groups shared views and reflected further on tasks at hand through the questions and remarks posed by other participating members.

## **Data analysis**

### **Method of Analysis**

Data analysis and data collection were done concurrently with preliminary data analysis informing on-going data collection. Completion of the active data collection phase blended into formal data analysis. At a theoretical level, analysis begun with the design of the study and started practically as soon as the first set of data were gathered and ran parallel to data collection. Analysing qualitative data is an eclectic activity; there is no one 'right' way of analysing qualitative data. Consequently, a choice was made to base analysis of the data for this study on Schumacher and McMillan (1993) and Miles and Huberman (1984, 1994) models of qualitative data analysis.

Furthermore, the two models regard qualitative data analysis as a systematic process of selecting, categorising, comparing, synthesising, interpreting and checking to provide explanations of the phenomenon being studied.

While in the field, audio recording was done with the consent of participants and analytical notes were made. These helped in moving from raw data to a more abstract level. At the end of each day, the analytical notes were summarised and audio tapes were transcribed. Transcription of the audio recorded data was always done before going back to the field for another formal activity. This strategy was meant to enable the researcher to learn from the data at hand and to focus the next activity.

After transcribing audio tapes, the transcripts were shared with participants to confirm that the transcription was a true record of what they said and meant. They were free to add and subtract information. Any adjustments were incorporated in the final transcript. Transcripts were studied for their content to gain a sense of the whole. To get in-depth understanding of the data, the researcher concentrated on one transcript at a time, before linking it with the data obtained from other participants. This provided the researcher with provisional understanding which progressively contributed to the larger phenomenon of interest, namely, emotional abuse and neglect of children of the age from birth to six years.

### **Procedures**

The data were categorised according to an organising system of topics predominantly derived from the data themselves. Consequently, a file folder for each of the derived topics was established. As data were studied, topics were generated and whenever a topic was noticed, it was written in the margin of a copy of the transcript. Some topics were recurring. Identified topics were listed on a separate sheet of paper after studying a transcript.

As the study of transcripts continued and new topics were identified, they were added to the list of topics. Topics were compared for duplication and overlapping meanings. Similar topics were clustered together on a chart, using stickers. For each cluster of topics the best fitting name was stated from among the original topic labels, or a new one was created. The derived topics were categorised as major topics, unique topics, and leftover topics.



Codes, in form of abbreviation of the topics were developed and written next to the appropriate data segment. Some segments had more than one code at the start. This process helped to indicate how well the identified topics corresponded with the data and was a means of checking whether there were other important though unrecorded topics in the data.

After trying out this form of data analysis on several transcripts it was refined and adapted. A listing was made of the topics which were found in all or in almost all the transcripts. The list was re-examined and unique topics considered important for this study were identified and transferred to a separate list. The topics were compared and contrasted in relation to the data. Topics were tested to see whether they constituted sub-topics or whether there were topics in the data that had not been recognised. Refining the topics was ongoing during the data analysis. The result was that some topics fitted into more than one category and other topics were not central to the research problem.

Summaries of field notes and notes made during the interim data analysis and the transcripts were studied. This involved displaying the data and re-examining data segments and the derived categories and patterns. Once again, the process was cyclic, one of returning to the data to validate each topic, category and pattern and then modifying or recasting ideas. This provided preliminary conclusions which were further tested and analysed. The exercise of pattern seeking and re-examining ideas that had already emerged from the data was used to evaluate the data for information adequacy, usefulness and centrality.

This process enabled the researcher to determine how well the data illuminated the research problem and which data were central to the unfolding story. The derived patterns were also linked to the conceptual framework and the research questions.

Although gauging data correctness was done at the time of each field experience it was further addressed during the later phases of the data analysis. Re-examination of trustworthy evidence was addressed by qualitatively assessing data that led to established patterns. Among other things which were done, this involved looking at the specificity of statements and who provided the data. Some of the statements were included in the thesis. Triangulation by cross-validation of the source, data collection strategies and theoretical frames was utilised to ensure regularities in the data that lead to the established patterns (Denzin, 1978).

Finally, conclusions and their meanings were re-examined for their plausibility and confirmability. Workshops were conducted to assist in this regard. Although some of the data analysis was tedious and time consuming it was necessary and ultimately rewarding.

### **Authenticity and reliability of data**

According to Schumacher and McMillan (1993) reliability in qualitative research refers to the consistency of the researcher's interactive style, data recording, data analysis, and interpretation of participant meanings from the data. In this study, reliability was handled within the actual study to obtain

consistency. Reliability concerns were embedded in the study right from the design stage. This included making explicit researcher's role, participant selection, social context, data collection and analysis strategies.

Several strategies were employed to promote reliability and authenticity. For example, concrete, precise descriptions from field notes and interviews which are hallmarks of qualitative research and the principle method of establishing reliability of patterns. Schumacher & McMillan (1993 ) data was utilised in this study. Participants who were interviewed in depth reviewed their transcripts to confirm representativeness and accuracy of their views. Where necessary participants made some changes in the transcripts.

Care was taken in the choice of the setting and language to use. It was important to ensure full understanding and communication between the researcher and participants. The researcher knew and was able to communicate with participants in their local language. This promoted free expression and was helpful in discussing sensitive issues regarding emotional abuse. Participants reviewed syntheses of the transcripts.

Triangulation was the principal strategy for achieving validity. Two forms of triangulation were employed. First, data were collected from different settings- focus groups, case studies, interviews and workshops were conducted. Data from each setting were carefully analysed and compared with the data from other settings. It was recognised that in relation to a sensitive topic such as child

abuse, there may be possibility of a participant to withhold information and understate matters, particularly when disclosing information in public.

Second, data were collected from different groups-victims (children) and perpetrators (adults), fathers and mothers, single parents and members of the extended families. The correspondence of constructions of child abuse and neglect constituted a powerful validity check.

### **Ethical considerations**

To protect the interests and rights of participants three steps was taken. Firstly, permission to conduct the study was sought in writing from the Uganda National Research Council (see Appendix F). The Council was fully informed about the nature and purpose of the research. The Council introduced the researcher to the district the study was conducted. Secondly, participants were fully informed of the purpose of the study and their expected role. Participation in this study was voluntary as indicated in letters of invitation to participate contained in the appendices. It was made clear that parents could withdraw from the study at any time. Thirdly, participants were informed of confidentiality that would be maintained throughout the study. They were assured of an accurate and respectful description of their cultural beliefs and practices. It was also made clear that data would not be used for purposes other than specified for the study. Participants who were formally interviewed were given an opportunity to read or listen to the reading of the transcription of their interview and to confirm or make adjustments in case of misrepresentation of their views.

Steps were also taken to protect participants from being identified by readers of this report. This was done by using pseudonyms during data collection and in documentation of this study. All interviews were conducted in places with the required privacy and the audio taped records were kept safely and destroyed after transcription.

## **Summary**

This chapter has outlined and linked the theoretical framework and the design of the study. The chapter describes the site where the study was conducted, the participants, the methodology used to collect and analyse the data as well as measures that were taken to ensure the authenticity and reliability of data. The ethical issues were also considered. The next chapter provides a description and analysis of the data elicited through an in-depth case study of the family and community context within which child abuse and neglect may take place.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **THE FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT**

#### **Introduction**

The researcher believes that to be in the position to discuss and propose policy implications to minimise associated behaviour, practices and conditions, it is important to understand the context in which the children and their families live. This position is consistent with that of Bronfenbrenner (1979), Garbarino (1977) and Polansky (1985). This is supported by the proponents of ecology of human development who believe that to appreciate what a given group of people understands constitutes emotional child abuse and neglect and the factors that surround this psycho-social phenomenon, it is necessary to focus on context.

There is further work to support this position. Gelles and Straus (1979), Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz (1980) and Gelles (1983) also consider causes of child abuse and neglect to be a result of interaction between cultural and environmental factors. Cicchetti and Rizley (1981), proponents of transactional theory, express a similar view. They focus on child development in the context of the parent-child relationship and the socio-cultural and environmental factors which promote or disrupt this relationship.

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Consequently, in conducting this study the researcher began by trying to understand family life in local context. This chapter therefore, describes family life in the Jatti district in terms of family formation, the roles of different family members, family activities and functioning, the position of children, the socio-economic conditions, and community social services. It is contended that the nature of the life captured in this discussion impacts on parenting practices and on the ways parents construe emotional abuse and neglect of children.

In this chapter, the researcher adopts a narrative approach. To facilitate the narrative flow the account is reported in the first person.

### **An evening in Gama**

One of the villages visited for data collection is Gama. I had been given Niima as one of the parents to interview. However, when I arrived on a Sunday evening, she had gone to fetch water. Twelve children in two teams of six were playing a game popularly known as 'ekibaare' (building a brick tower). Boys were competing with girls. Eight other children were looking on, cheering the players. A grandmother was holding a crying child on her lap; four others of almost the same age were seated two on her left and two on her right. Two girls aged about 12 years were helping her to sort beans, putting those for cooking in one basket and 'kanyobwa', for planting, in another.

In the background someone was pounding something, while some others were threshing millet, the beats rhythmically echoing one another in harmony. Someone banged down what appeared to be a bundle of firewood, sighed in relief and asked where the children were. 'Playing at the front,' another voice answered. 'On those



bricks again? Will they eat those bricks they are building? Some must go to fetch water and others to collect firewood. Boys and girls,' she called hurrying to the front of the homestead where the children had created their playground. She was holding a stick in her right hand. 'Hey!' she called waving the stick. 'Enough is enough! Do you hear? Boys to Kiru and girls to Kiruruma. Right now or else....,' a woman in her forties ordered. 'We need a lot of water and good firewood to make porridge and cook food for people who will be working on grandma's bean garden tomorrow.'

A girl with a brick in both hands skilfully dodged the ball aimed at her. (If the ball had touched any part of her body or cloth as she placed the brick, her team would have lost the game.) She quickly put on the last brick, and boys hoped the tower would fall...but it did not. The girls had won and excitedly burst out singing 'twabasinga! twabasinga!' (we've won). Yelling and clapping, they took the lead, running to their houses to get tools to use.

Still chanting 'twabasinga!' girls came running with 'jerricans', pots and calabashes for water. As they were rushing to the well, they almost bumped into Niima with a 20 litre 'jerrican' of water carried flat on her head, a bundle of firewood on her shoulder, a calabash of water in the left hand, holding a conversation with her baby who was tied on her back. She was looking exhausted with sweat running down her face. Behind her were two little girls aged about five and six. Each carried a calabash of water on her head supported by both hands. Gama is a very hilly village with homesteads built on the hillsides. Water is fetched from the foot of a steep hill.

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<sup>1</sup> When it was time for planting a major food crop, the daughters-in-law of Kanimba mobilised themselves and their close friends to plant a big garden for their parents -in-law who could no longer do gardening work. They would organise care for the garden up to the time for harvest and storage of the crop. This was a method to ensure that these parents had enough food for their use. It made life easy for the family looking after them. Muzel Kanimba and his wife had grandchildren and other relatives staying and visiting them now and then. They needed to have enough food. It was Lorena's turn to mobilise for the planting of beans. She would be responsible until harvest and storage of this crop.

After putting down her load, Niima stretched her neck and dried the sweat with both hands. As the baby on her back started crying, she hurried into the house, and returned with a mat and spread it under a tree. She untied the crying baby from her back, and sat down with her legs stretched. She lay the baby flat on her lap and started stretching her limbs one by one telling her they had completed one of their evening activities. She held both arms at the back and returned each straight at its side. In the middle of the baby exercise, she called me to join her under a tree where we had our conversation as she breastfed her baby. When I requested her to tell me about herself and her family, Niima looked at me, cast her eyes all over the homestead as if to suggest 'There it all is. That is what it is. What more do you want me to tell you about my family and myself?'

### **The Kanimba family**

She told me about her family:

My name is Niima and I am married to Denge, the eldest son of Muzei <sup>2</sup>. (She whisperingly said the name looking left and right). I hope no one has heard me. I am never expected to say the names of my father and mother-in-law...not even that of my husband. I call my father-in-law Shwenkuru and my mother-in-law Kaaka just like we teach our children to call them. Shwenkuru is one of the very old men in Gama village who fought during the first world war<sup>3</sup>. He has medals for that. Shwenkuru, though very old and with many old and responsible sons is still regarded the head of

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<sup>2</sup> Muzei is a kiswahiri word used as a respectful title when addressing old people.

<sup>3</sup> Uganda was a British protectorate up to the time of Independence, 9th October, 1962. During both the first and second world wars, some Ugandans were selected to fight or provide support to those who were fighting

this family. He is consulted on the important decisions regarding anyone who is living in this homestead. The next in command is Biita.

Biita is the first son of Shwenkuru and the only survivor of six children he had with his first wife. The other five died when they were still babies. I was told they died of measles. My father-in-law had three wives. The first one, the mother of Biita died about ten years ago and the second one died five years later. The second wife left six daughters. They had all got married by the time she died. Kaaka, that one over there (she said pointing at her) is the only one we are left with and although very old, she helps us very much, especially with children. She is the mother of my husband. She altogether has nine children; six sons and three daughters. She lost four babies. One died of whooping cough and three of measles. With the exception of Mambo, my youngest brother-in-law who is at the University, all my brothers and sisters-in-law are married and with children. Mambo always tells us that when he finishes his course and gets a job, he will buy himself a big piece of land elsewhere. That he wants to be independent like his brother, the teacher. We are not surprised because it seems educated people like living alone with their wives and children and one or two other people to help them with children and house work. They do not go digging like we do. They go to the market instead. That is what he wishes his family to be isolated.

In fact because of the deaths caused by measles in this family, and the scare it has created, we do not refer to it by its name. We call it 'omwinaazi' (the killer). And to be on the safe side, Kaaka makes sure that she herself administers preventive treatment through okushandaga (making special cuts on the skin and rubbing in

herbal medicine). All children treated by Kaaka have their the scars left by the cuts around here (she said showing two pairs of scars below each of her baby's breast).

Asked about other people staying with the family, Niima gave the following account:

Recently, we had Ketura and Muto, my sisters-in-law, coming from their husbands' homes to stay with us. Ketura was divorced and her husband has already married another wife who we hear is about to give birth. They must have made that baby when Ketura was still there...probably during the time he was roughest. He harassed her together with her children and at one time we thought he would kill her if she did not leave. The oldest son and daughter came here to ask their grandparents to intervene. Ketura did not want to leave her children. My little one, you do not know what we go through to bring you up ( she said, looking the baby on her lap in the eyes, shaking her head as if in regret and expecting response from her). She came with only three children, the youngest. Four were left under the mercy of their step-mother.

It seems Muto is also here forever. Her husband died of AIDS (she said in a whisper and continued). The hospital told them he had AIDS but they refused to believe it. So they started moving him from this and that medicine man for treatment. They deceived them and told them that her husband was bewitched. Each charged them a lot of money. They sold almost everything to meet the costs, although unfortunately nothing worked. He eventually died thin like this (she said showing the index finger). After burying him, she came back here with all her five children and I think they are not going back. They do not have anything to go back to. It is only the house they are left with. All the land and the few cows they had were sold. She is so depressed and rebukes everybody especially

her children. It is as if they are the ones who killed her husband. She beats them like goats and tells them she too will soon follow their father. It is good that those children are here. At least they have our sympathies and we intervene when she gets mad on them. Poor children (she said shaking her head).

So, as you can see, we are a big family with grandmothers and grandfathers, grandsons and daughters, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters-in-law, sons and daughters, cousins, nieces and nephews, uncles and aunts and other relatives young and old, staying together. Each of the houses you see around belongs to one of us. And Shwenkuru is very proud of his family that he will be buried by many grandchildren and great grandchildren.

I then asked Nima to tell me about her duties and responsibilities. The following section gives a description of Niima's day which she referred to as 'from cock crow to midnight'.

### **A mother's day in Gama**

At the second cock crow (this is at about 5 am) I jump out of bed and peel what I need to prepare for breakfast. In most cases I prepare 'akatoogo' (cooking bananas mixed with beans or something else). While the food is on the fire, I wash plates and pots used the previous night. After this, I rush to the well and fetch water to use during the day. After the well, I get the older children out of bed and get them to sweep the compound, fetch more water to use during the day and to do other early morning activities. I get the goats from their shade, tie them on the pegs where they wait for the dew to clear before they can be taken to graze in the fields. I clean the shade while checking on the fire. When the food is ready,

I pack some for myself and whoever would be going with me to the garden. I get my baby, tie her on my back, I line the food basket with banana leaves, pour the food in, and place the basket on to my head. With a 'jerrican' to fetch water in one hand, and a hoe and 'panga' (special cutting knife) on the shoulder we head for the gardens.

My mother-in-law and my co-wives are always willing to keep an eye on the children who stay at home. Most times I go with some to help with my work and to look after the baby. But their pace of walking . . . I go regretting I have taken them with me. Those left behind find opportunities to do all sorts of things. On return I start with settling cases of fighting that took place, of those who spoilt things, those who abused their friends and many others. When it is a rainy season you will find them muddy and when it is dry they will be sweating as if they had been digging.

After doing a little work they escape to the playground. They can spend a whole day playing 'ekibaare' and football in that ground over there. I told them next season I will plant peas there. But I know they will create another one. Sometimes they won't even remember to fetch water so that as soon as you come back you put food on the fire. They will just be waiting for you. At times I unwillingly leave one of the big girls behind with them to take care and get them to do some reasonable work. But this means missing one capable hand in the garden.

Gardens which are far away bother us much. We take a lot of time walking. By the time we get there we are already tired. And once you are there you feel you should work as much as possible so that you don't have to go there again and again. On arrival, I organise

where the little ones can keep...those who can't help...those who eat without labouring, like this one here (she said tickling her baby).

If I have gone with some of the big boys one of them does that before joining us in the garden and, if not, then myself or one of the girls does it. If there are wild banana trees we use the leaves for a roof and if not we use anything we can get our hands on. Once constructed, the shade serves as our garden house and kitchen.

Then we get into business. Sometimes we are just opening up the ground. At other times it is digging, clearing the grass and burning or lifting it to specific places. This is what breaks my back. It could also be planting, weeding or harvesting. We really sweat for the food we eat. Weeding during a rainy season is the dirtiest gardening activity. You should see our hands, animal like . . . and our dresses! If it were not for my children I would stay home and if it meant starving I would starve.

But I live for my children. I do not want them to lack food when I am still alive. My mother fed us...we were twelve. I remember her going through what I am going through. She is dead now. Resting. She died before I could do anything for her. Anyway, I have to feed my children. It is not easy though. Is it my ever companion (she asked her baby and continued). You are my witness, aren't you? Always on my back. Seeing all I do. Together to the well, weeding in the rain . . . harvesting in the hot sun...cooking in the smoky kitchen . . . threshing, pounding and grinding millet which you don't eat. Poor soul, you must get tired too. (She said looking the baby in the eyes. The baby smiled.) But at times you annoy me as if you do not understand we have a lot to do. You do not allow me to do as much as I wish.

(She turned back to me). When you have concentrated and doing well, trying to clear a big lot before the clouds change, it is when they cry for food and start fighting over nothing. There isn't anything they can't do. Then you start settling cases. By the end of the day I'm completely exhausted and disgusted with all of them! Bringing up children is not a joke.

Just before the end of the day I make sure we look for firewood otherwise I could get home and find nothing to use. After collecting firewood, we get on our journey back home. When we reach the well we fetch water and take it home with us.

When I get home I start by checking on how things went during the day. I check on Shwenkuru and Kaaka (parents-in-law), my husband if he has not gone to Mairemwwe (a drinking place), my co-wives (wives of brothers-in-law) who will have returned from their gardens and other things.

After this running up and down, with the help of the old children we start preparing supper. This means going to the banana plantation or the potato garden or grinding millet. By the time we are through with peeling, got the goats from where they would have been grazed, done the cooking, settled all the children's cases and served the food, washed the plates and pots, bathed the children and put them to bed, pounded millet and winnowed it, it is usually well after eleven o'clock. It is after this that I embark on grinding millet and making porridge for the younger children and the old parents to keep them going the following day. Then I take a bath and crawl to bed. By the time I enter the house it is already midnight and everyone is fast asleep, snoring.



## Other family members: roles and responsibilities

The following section reports how members of the extended family participate in the daily life of a family in a rural setting. It is a continuation of the data collected from Niima of the Kanimba family. She describes her husband's duties and responsibilities and how her mother-in-law, sisters-in-law and her own children help. Members of the extended family in Gama play different roles in the rearing of young children.

I will start with my husband (she said). He is the head of this family and as the head he is expected to make sure we have paraffin, soap, and salt to use. When we are sick he is supposed to get us treated although quite often he does not. If my mother-in-law was not able to try this and that we would have buried many children. He also finds fees for the children who are at school and is supposed to buy us clothes.

We have a big banana plantation where he spends some of his time when it is not his turn to graze cattle and has not decided to join his friends at Miroemwe. Sometimes we really get stuck more especially during the rainy season when the trucks can not get into this area because of this hill and slipperiness. That means no buyers, no money and therefore no paraffin. Once it rains no vehicle gets here. We are forced to carry the bananas on our heads down to the trading centre which is quite a way. At times he asks his brothers to help with their bicycles. The cows do not milk well, so he does not sell milk. The little that is got is for the two youngest children and for tea for our old parents here. It is when we want to do a big thing that he can sell a cow, just like when he wanted to buy the iron sheets for the house. Because we do not have paddocks, he takes turns with our sons and his uncle's sons who are not at school to graze the cows. These days no one can let you

graze in his or her land. So you either use your own land or you take the cows to the communal grazing areas which are far from us here.

My mother-in-law helps me quite a lot with children, more especially when they are sick and during the time of weaning. She is an expert, first class in caring for weaning children. We call her the 'children's doctor'. She knows herbs curative and preventive for most childhood diseases and other health disorders. Many other women come here to ask for herbs and roots to treat their children. She is well known for that.

She also tries to make sure we all get on well together and that we cooperate amongst ourselves as wives, and with our husbands. She is the most senior counsellor and judge in this family. And when I was newly married and did not know people in this village she advised me about people...what could be done with this and not the other woman. For us we are lucky with her because mothers-in-law can make your life impossible. They can act like spies and play a kind of rival's role trying to gain favours from their sons.

My sisters-in-law also help but not as much as they should. You see they think their brother married me to do the work. He paid bride wealth (As a custom a boy paid bride wealth to the girl's parents before he could take her for a wife. This was usually in form of cattle, goats and money.) Some think you have stopped their brother from buying them things. They see you as a rival more especially if before marriage he was giving them some support which he is not able to give after marriage. In such a situation they may not like you at all. They look for weaknesses in you and can make your life and that of your children unnecessarily difficult.

They can make you unpopular although others can be good and very friendly and can regard you as their blood sister and carry on with you and help with children, in gardening and with cooking. When you are on good terms with your married sisters-in-law they can help in settling some family conflicts by talking to their brother. They can also help in disciplining children.

I also get a lot of help from my own children especially the girls. They are always with me-in the garden and in the kitchen. They also assist with their younger sisters and brothers. I don't know what I would be without them. Right early I train children to help in looking after their infant brothers and sisters. And I have found this very helpful. The boys help with the banana plantation, grazing and firewood. They are actually the ones together with me who maintain the banana plantation although neither they nor myself can sell a bunch of bananas from it. If one did and he knew it would be a big case. So we don't. It is him who sells and spends money. At times we go without paraffin for days because of his drink. The boys also help with grazing the animals. This they must do, otherwise he will not contribute towards raising the bride wealth when they want to marry. Anyway children must learn to work as early as possible otherwise you will be leading them nowhere.

Niima's experiences suggests that a wife's role is that of bearing and caring for children, and supervising the household. The rural mother's domestic, reproductive, and socialising child-rearing role can be said to be one of physical hardship, drudgery, and subjection to her husband. Women in the Jatti district, like their counterparts in other districts in Uganda, have remained a vulnerable group. For example, despite the fact that rural women contribute a lot toward growing crops and looking after

animals, which generate the family income, most of them are made to depend on men for anything that costs money. Many of them are illiterate and overburdened by both orphans, the result of AIDS and civil strife. They are also affected and handicapped by being denied inheritance rights of their husband's property, especially land.

## **Marriage, bride wealth and their impact on families**

### **Marriage**

Marriage in the Jatti district is either monogamous or polygamous. In the traditional culture a man was allowed to marry as many wives as he wished and could afford. Although this is now minimised, due to Christian marriage vows, this practice still prevails in some families. In the great majority of families a man pays a bride wealth for each wife. Marriage is not recognised by the parents of the girl until the bride wealth is paid. Traditionally, wives were considered economic and status assets. The more wives, the more children, and the greater the free labour was at a husband's disposal. This labour helped him become 'richer' by working in his gardens, raising cattle and participating in other economic activities. A marriage without children was not regarded as a worthwhile marriage. Soon the husband would look for another wife or wives to produce children. In some rural communities most of these beliefs and practices still prevail.

In the traditional culture, the cost of maintaining children was not as challenging as it is today. For example, it did not include sending children to schools. If anyone fell sick, he or she was treated by a traditional healer who would in most cases be paid in kind and from what the family owned. A traditional healer could demand to be brought a specified type of goat or a cock to appease the gods that would have led to

the recovery of the sick. Such traditional healers still serve in some areas. Such practices are more common with families that diagnose and interpret every health problem with witchcraft. Unlike past practices, child rearing is now more demanding, with the government requiring all primary school going age children to attend school. As well, children need to be decently dressed, better housed and fed, and require medical treatment when ill. Most parents recognise that child up-bringing is more demanding than in the past. However, they have not accepted the need to have fewer children than their grandparents and parents.

In polygamous families several wives are married to the same man. Each wife may have a house of her own in the same or in a different homestead. In some circumstances, it is also possible to find several wives staying in one house. In the case of divorce, children who are still very young and those breast feeding, go with their mother, while the older children remain with their father. The law requires mothers to keep custody of children until after they are weaned. During this time fathers are expected to provide support either in cash or kind towards maintenance of such children.

When children become of age, they are taken back to live with their father or father's close relatives, as in the Jatti culture, children belong to men. Divorced parents who find that children who are left under their care might do better with a close relative, make arrangements for this to take place. Grandparents, uncles, and aunts can, therefore take on the role of parents for some children.

Most divorced women return to their parents and do not remarry until the bride wealth has been refunded to their former husband. Due to the incidence of divorce,

remarriage, AIDS, war orphans, and the extended family network, in Jatti district one finds all kinds of relatives; old, middle age and young staying together as a family.

Men are expected to build their own houses before they marry. Except in special circumstances, no man is expected to bring and marry a woman while staying with his parents in the same house. This is regarded as disrespect for parents. In the extended family set-up, a father surrenders a piece of land to a son who is ready to build a house and marry. Each son is entitled to a share of his fathers' land. You therefore find small plots of land that once belonged to the father, divided into smaller plots belonging to different sons. The ageing parents can finally live with one of the sons' families for care. Even when very old, a father remains a respected head of the whole extended family and advises on important family issues. Authority over almost everything is with the father.

Unmarried sisters and brothers continue to live with their parents, although some stay with their married brothers' families. When girls get married they go to live with their husbands. Being a patrilineal community, descent is traced through the male line.

They are the sons who inherit their fathers' property and usually it is the first son who becomes the heir.

In most rural communities a woman has no control over family property, even over that which she herself has brought to bear. All her belongings are traditionally at her husband's disposal. However, there are now several initiatives providing awareness education to change these attitudes. Furthermore, child and family related laws have been revised, although all these changes are still in their infancy.

Girls and boys who have not been at school get married quite early unlike those who are educated. The law defines a child as anyone below the age of 18. Consequently no one is expected to marry or get married before this age. Despite this, however, due to different reasons, some girls and boys get married before they reach 18 as Magi and Getuka describe.

Magi, a female participant, told her story.

I have more children than I should because I got married when I was still young...fourteen. My father was more keen than anyone else that I get married young as I was. At that time, I did not know what he was up to but later I got to know. He wanted to get cows from me, sell them and maintain my two brothers at a secondary school and he succeeded in doing so'.

Getuka added:

In my case it was my mother. She whispered to me that if I waited to grow a beard and did not use the cows from a sister I follow and the last one of my mother, they would be used and I would have to raise the bride wealth on my own. Aware of how difficult it would be for me I took my mother's advice and put pressure on my father that I had found the right girl to marry although I had not actually found one. If he accepted that I use the cows at the time, I would straight away get on the hunt.

As suggested above, to marry someone's daughter, the intending boy or man had to pay some bride wealth agreed on by the family of the boy and that of the girl in a meeting. The following section associates bride wealth with husband/wife relationship, mother/child relationship, polygamy and its impact on children.

### **Bride wealth**

Bride wealth in form of cattle was paid to the bride's parents. There is now a tendency to include indirectly the cost of a girl's education in the cost of the bride wealth. This is based on the argument that the girl would work and benefit the husband's family more than she would her parents' family that met the cost of her education. Payment of bride wealth had a lot of implications for marriage. For example, some husbands think as they paid for their wives they can be treated in any way they wish. This causes women to take a submissive role and they are therefore subjected to a lot of suffering. Many women decide to suffer unpleasant conditions for the sake of their children, knowing if they leave, their husbands are likely to marry another woman who in most cases would mistreat their children. On the other hand some people argue that it is payment of bride wealth that sustains marriages and reduces divorce rates. This may be true as women know it would be difficult for their parents to refund the bride wealth if they divorced, so most of them accept living to the whims of their husbands. It is also true that payment of bride wealth controls the rate at which men rush into polygamous marriages.

Discussing situations in families that may prompt emotional abuse and neglect, Dido condemned step-parenting that subjected children to ill treatment, and supported women who bore hardships for the sake of young children. With great concern he said:

Most step-parents do not treat well children they find in their new marriages. This is not only true with monogamous marriages it is also true with polygamous families whereby several wives are married to one man. Such marriages are full of jealousies, quarrels, settling cases between wives as well as between children, and



between wives and their own children and step children. It can be very difficult life for both the parents and children.

In another focus group session Kabengye gave reasons in favour of polygamy in the Jatti district:

But at times you have no choice. Take an example of men whose first wives are not fertile. Should they accept to remain without a child? Also when you have been unfortunate to produce only daughters with your first wife, and no son at all, must you accept not to have an heir? As you well know some men take on second and third wives in hoping to produce a son. When the first wife has not produced sons she actually forces you to try with some other person and many people succeed. Don't they?

Furthermore, some women do not care well enough for their husbands and the family in general. For example, some do not want to be responsible for their aged mothers and fathers-in-law. Such wives may also cause a man to take on someone who is more caring. What would she be for? A woman who can not...Anyway, I have always thought Moslems are better off in this regard. They have a license to marry several wives as they wish. Yes, from Mohammed. I like how their wives accept the whole situation. They are more understanding and will not ask you about why you want another wife. No, they can not. I hope you agree with me that they generally get on better with their co-wives, husbands and step-children than the Christian wives who think it should always be one man one wife forever even when they mess you up. However, I am not saying that what Dido has said is not true. It is, true most step parents mistreat children who do not belong to them.

Because most rural parents did not practise family planning, couples produced children until old age stopped them. However, the reviewed African literature and some of the above narrations suggest changes in child rearing practices which are dictated by the new social economic order. In this regard, some parents associated producing many children with economic challenges and failure to meet their needs.

### **The concept of childhood among the Banye of Jatti district**

Childhood among the Banye is conceived in the cultural practices and feelings evidenced in the different ways children are treated in families and society. As highlighted below, generally childhood is a phenomenal period, or state of affairs, during which children are taken not to have their own rights.

Childhood relegates children to property status by some parents. This is evident in the ways parents treat their children and is implied in many sayings such as 'Omwana areetwa omureere, tareetwa eirembo'. This means that a child is born within the family, but does not come from outside the family. This saying emphasises the ownership of a child by parents, especially fathers, making them a supreme authority over the child. In this regard, some parents have been known to give one or two of their children to their close relative, who are either aged, or, childless, usually to exploit their labour. Some other children are given to the well to do families to work for them. In return the working children are fed and clothed. Such children are never consulted about their agreement, some never receive decent clothes and are not as well fed as would have been the terms of service agreed by the mother and the family where the child would be taken to stay. This uprooting of a child from his/her family denies such children the pleasure and warmth of growing together within their own families.

Childhood is also associated by adults with an inability of children to judge and make decisions by themselves. Children's feelings and tastes are often ignored. For example, children may be beaten for not wanting to drink, or eat a particular type of food. Young girls, especially, in cattle keeping culture are forced to drink large quantities of milk in order to make them put on weight. This process is known as 'okwitorira' which means to sprinkle, or, spray with milk. When they lose appetite for milk, they are often beaten or forced to drink it. This is due to the fact that a fattened daughter reflects on the wealth of the family.

In addition, childhood is perceived as the most suitable phase for character training in human development as expressed in the saying 'akati kainikwa kakiri kabitsi'. This means that a twig is easily shaped before it dries and that if you try to do so after it has dried, it breaks or will not take the shape you intended it to take. Consequently, childhood is recognised as a formative period when children are amenable to training and discipline. Data suggest that in most cases, parents tend to use more punitive methods than positive ones. Some of the strategies used were associated with abuse and neglect of children of the age group birth to six years.

Furthermore, parents in the Jatti district conceive childhood as period of dependence of children on adults for their physical and social development. Some adults however take advantage of this dependence and knowingly or unknowingly inflict abuse and neglect on children. For example, some step-fathers and mothers batter children, deny them food and rest, harass them and sometimes starve them to death.

On the other hand, people of Jatti district recognise children's characteristic tendencies to play, romp, hug, sing, and fight as normal expectations of developing children. They therefore exhibit signs of worry when a child is unable to play with his/her friends. It is a sign of ill health. And despite the fact that some children can be said to be overworked, the people know that children are not miniature adults as expressed in the proverb 'omwana n'omwana', implying that children are children and should be let to behave as such.

Jatti is a patrilineal community and, consequently, in most rural families, the birth of a baby boy is generally more welcome than the birth of a girl. A boy is considered as the means through which the lineage of a family and clan will be perpetuated and expanded as elaborated by a male participant in the following extract:

When you produce a boy, you have planted a seed to produce more seeds for your family and clan. I mean your own blood through your sons and grandsons of your sons. Girls are good too, but they are not yours. You take the trouble to bring them up to benefit other clans. When they become of age they get married and leave you to produce children for another clan. If you have educated her and she has gone to Makerere or even England and got a degree she goes with it. The salary she earns she spends on her new family, the family of a clan, of a husband who did not contribute anything to her education.

I think people who are against paying of bride wealth have not produced daughters. What else can a girl's parents benefit from her? Tell me, (he requested). Abolishing bride wealth will mean shuttering the only hope...the only benefit we can get from our daughters. (MRM).

The acceptance for a baby boy over a girl is evident in celebrations surrounding his birth. Among the participants in the study was a woman who had produced eight daughters in succession, each time hoping to have a baby boy. She described her experience thus:

Until you bear a male child you are not sure about remaining the only one wife of your husband. Even if the husband would not mind much his parents, sisters, brothers and uncles would harass him to marry a second wife to bear a son for him and the clan just like they did mine. When I produced a boy we had a feast in this house for almost a week. This time he did not buy kilos of meat. He killed a small bull he had wanted to sell and raise school fees for children. My mother-in-law said I had at last produced a child as if my eight daughters were not children and that his son could now talk among men. But to tell you the truth, I also felt I had at last made it. (FRM).

From the above expressions and feelings, it can be noted that the birth of a baby boy makes a woman become a mother of one of the descendants, a position of prestige and respect to both parents. The father and paternal grandparents feel particularly happy when a wife bears them a male child. The father knows he has an heir and the whole family rejoices that their line of descent will continue. First-born sons, who are produced after daughters, are indulged and pampered in their early childhood and enjoy special treatment from their grandparents.

Nonetheless, births of sons present special challenges to parents, especially fathers who do not have a lot of property. As it has already been outlined above, to marry they have to pay bride wealth. Poor parents therefore have to work hard to help their sons raise a bride wealth. They also have to give up a piece of land as 'entandiikwa' to

each of the sons to start a family. Traditionally, bride wealth in the Jatti district includes cows and some 'hard cash' while 'entandiikwa' includes a piece of land, and a share on the family's banana plantation.

It could therefore be argued that girls might be treated well and affectionately by their fathers and brothers on the basis that they are viewed as economic assets. Upon marriage a bride wealth would benefit their families, when the girls themselves would have left. The brothers do not regard them as threats, as they do not have to share their father's property. Girls are generally regarded as temporary members of families into which they are born. This also explains why a daughter can be more easily accepted than a son into the family of her mother's second marriage. A son would not be welcome due to the male inheritance rights.

Regardless of their gender, a child's position within a Jatti family is of obedience, participation in family activities and respect for elders. Children, especially those of the age below six years, are expected to do as they are told. Discipline is strict and based upon the expectation that children must learn to be and do as the family and community expects, from an early age. The girl child remains disadvantaged in several ways, for example, as previously mentioned, if financial constraints exist boys rather than girls attend school.

Adult roles are learnt by children from parents, and other members of the extended family, family neighbours and friends. For example, children as young as 5 years old, usually girls, are regularly assigned the task of providing daytime care for their infant siblings. Young girls can be seen carrying babies on their backs while their mothers and older sisters and brothers are busy performing other work. They assist in various

ways, under the supervision of an adult when they have not learnt to act independently. Generally, a child's life is dominated by his or her role in the family by the division of labour, and by observance of the expected discipline.

Children are considered valuable for their labour and contribution to domestic work including fetching water and firewood, cultivating, herding and sibling care which sets the mother free to perform family work. Childless marriages encourage polygamy in search of children. Many rural women continue with child bearing until menopause. Despite the challenges encountered in rearing children, parents are proud to be parents and to be called so and so's dad or mum.

Other parents were of the view that producing many children was the only way to create a balance in the population, given the high death rates. Nonetheless, it remains a reality that caring for many children presents multiple challenges in a district and country where people experience poverty. Some parents recognised that large families resulted in low standards of living, poor nutrition and high illiteracy rates.

Nonetheless, few families had a small number of children as the following focus group discussion reveals.

'Do you now want to oppose the bible my friends ? It tells us to do what?' a middle aged man asked.

'Produce and fill the land,' a church warden answered.

'OK, but don't let children go hungry, or be dressed in torn clothes. And don't rebuke and beat them for nothing when some of us have returned from drinking,' a male primary school teacher argued.

'And don't send them to graze cows and goats instead of sending them to school,' a young woman added.

'You are right, many children are difficult to look after,' a male participant said emphatically. 'But you also know about marriage without children. It is one of the reasons why some men marry more than one wife,' he added.

'When you produce few children like family planning says, you may lose them all when still young or to AIDS when they grow old. But when you have about ten, a few can survive,' a young woman argued.

Generally, these data suggest that rural people in the Jatti district produce children without serious planning, but rather as nature makes possible. Despite the fact that the Family Planning Association and churches encouraged having family sizes that could be managed by couples, rural parents had not responded like the educated and urban parents. And although some couples were aware of the physical and emotional drain of frequent child birth and the demand child rearing has on wives, many still believed the more children they had, the more assistance they would receive and the better care they would be given in their old age.

Research by Action for Development in 1991 revealed high fertility rates among the Ugandan population. This was associated with early marriages and the desire to have large families. Optimal family size was found to be high with 46 per cent of the women in the study, expressing a desire for eight or more children. The fertility rate places Uganda among the countries with the highest fertility rates in Sub-Saharan Africa. In some areas, if a wife becomes infertile, she and her close friends and relatives interpret it as bewitchment by a jealous co-wife or by an ancestor spirit.

Uganda also has a high infant mortality rate. The official figure for infant mortality is 115 deaths per 1000 live births, and the cumulative under five mortality rate is 172 deaths per 1000, while maternal mortality rates are 80 deaths per 1000 (ACTIONAID,



1994). It is estimated that more than a half of all deaths in Uganda each year are children below the age of five years.

### **The socio-economic conditions of the rural families**

The majority of illiterate parents live in rural areas with very little income. The average homestead has less than 3 acres, and some young couples may not have a full acre of inherited land to use. It is, therefore, imperative that these families find a means of earning additional income to supplement what they harvest from the land available to them. The families who ignore these imperatives rarely send all their children to school because they are unable to afford the education costs. This perpetuates illiteracy in families, communities and the country at large. In 1998 the government started providing free education to four children per family, as a step towards achieving free primary education by the year 2003. Government, through the Centre for Continuing Education and the Adult Education Program of Makerere University, are trying to reactivate rural adult education by the use of community development officers and NGOs.

Government resources which are devoted to health care remain low. The health system was destroyed during the war period which ended in 1985 and much still remains to be done in order to meet the needs of the people. The health problems which constitute the immediate causes of deaths in children are mainly communicable diseases, poor nutritional status and the AIDS virus (Ministry of Health, 1992).

In addition, poor families in rural areas find it difficult to take family members to hospitals and dispensaries for medical treatment. First, some are sceptical of modern medicine for the treatment of some diseases. Secondly, they may be unable to afford

to pay for the services. Some parents believe in traditional healers to the extent that even when patients receive modern treatment they still go to the traditional healers to get local herbs as added treatment. Crude and painful extraction of babies' false teeth (ebiino) and the imagined millet grains from babies' chests (oburo) by traditional healers subjected infants in rural areas to torture. On the other hand, the government cost sharing strategy to enhance medical services had not made it easy for poor families to afford basic health care. Although well intended, this strategy in some way encouraged poor, illiterate parents to treasure the services of traditional healers. In rural areas, large numbers of health problems are associated with bewitchment of some kind or to failure to perform a cultural function.

In some communities people hold to traditional eating practices which places husbands first, children second and women in the third position as regards to who eats what and who misses out in the case of shortages. Although most women can now eat goat meat, chicken and eggs, which in the traditional culture could only be eaten by men and boys, in rural areas, men (especially husbands), still enjoy the privilege of being served before children and women.

Improved survival, protection and the development of children may not occur unless the health and nutrition of children and their mothers is enhanced. The national health policy is based on the principles of primary health care with emphasis placed on community based interventions in health promotion, disease control, sanitation and simple curative and rehabilitative health care.

However, as the voices in some of the above interview extracts suggest, it does not mean that any system that is accepted as normative by particular people is workable.

There is a difference between workability, acceptance and value-satisfaction. It is also not true that everyone who accepts a particular system as normative is consequently happy and satisfied with it and his or her position within. Nor is it true that one system necessarily produces as many problems as another.

## Summary

This chapter has described some of the conditions that surround some of the families in the Jatti district. Niima's story of the composition of her family, description of her day's work, and how members of her family assist in carrying out family duties and responsibilities, projects the busy and demanding lives of women, especially those who depend on subsistence farming.

These data suggest that in the Jatti district, a family is basically the union of a husband and wife whether monogamous or polygamous, with or without children, nuclear or extended. In Jatti villages one finds complete extended families consisting of grandparents, their sons, and their sons' wives and children. There are also partial extended families, with one or more brothers mainly due to congestion, having left the traditional homestead and bought land and settled elsewhere. There are joint families with the grandparents deceased, unmarried brothers living alone or with their mothers, their fathers being deceased. Finally, there are nuclear family households, consisting of a husband and his wife and their children.

The domestic organisation of the multi-household extended family homestead provides valuable support to parents in rearing children. For example, parents have a ready company that shares similar interests. They have someone to turn to if the need arises. As they visit one another's homes and as children move from house to house,

colleague parents may notice some developmental or behavioural problem can bring this to the attention of the mother or father. Parents therefore have the opportunity to learn from one another. The extended family homestead also provides infants with access to a varied range of people who take care and interest in them. Men and women collaborate to complete the more demanding activities. Some parents however think extended family living denies them privacy and makes them behave as others do and expect and not as they would wish, if left on their own.

Among the Banye, childhood is conceived in the cultural practices and feelings evidenced in the different ways children are treated in families and society. Generally childhood is a phenomenal period, or state of affairs, during which children are taken not to have their own rights. Infants are indulged during their first year, however, their second year is characterised by rapid weaning, the arrival of a sibling, and restrictive discipline. As a child approaches the third year, most of his or her wilfulness is curbed, and autonomy limited. The education process is home-based for most children who are below the age of six. This involves training in female related roles for girls while boys are oriented towards the assigned male work.

The socio-economic conditions of the rural families in the Jatti district suggests that the majority of illiterate parents live in rural areas with very little income and with inadequate social services. Knowing about family and community life in Gama helped the researcher in the collection, analysis and interpretation of data presented in the following chapters.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **EMOTIONAL ABUSE AND THE BASIC NEEDS OF CHILDREN**

#### **Introduction**

Every society sets its own standards regarding socially acceptable behaviour. In most cases, standards reflect values, beliefs and attitudes which greatly influence peoples' constructions of any given phenomenon. Eliciting what people of the Jatti district considered to be acceptable parenting practices facilitated understanding and interpretation of participants' views about emotional abuse and neglect.

This chapter examines three themes. The first theme focuses on children's need for food, health care and bedding. The second and the third themes respectively focus on the process of weaning and meeting children's need for clothing.

#### **Meeting children's basic need for food**

All adult participants in the study expected responsible parents to provide sufficient food to their children. Participants at different times in the four phases of the study reported food provision as a fundamental responsibility of parents in caring for their children. Adequate food supply was associated with positive physical and emotional

outcomes for children. On the other hand, lack of food and inadequate feeding of children were factors that they associated with abuse and neglect of children.

### **Adults' perceptions**

Focus group participants shared compelling arguments that feeding children was an act which involved more than the maintenance of physical care. Although failure to prepare food for children and withholding it from them was associated with physical abuse and neglect, participants in this study also associated these behaviours with emotional abuse. Two closely related comments summarise the group discussion:

A child who is not fed keeps thinking about nothing else but food and drink. Such a child feels unloved and not cared for. Such a child feels neglected and can not be happy. So responsible parents ought to provide food and drink to stop their children from worrying about food and drink. (FRM)

This view was echoed by the participants of focus group B. For example, the participant identified as MEM commented:

Children who are hungry most of the time cannot enjoy life as much as children who are well fed and do not go hungry. Hungry children are most of their time miserable. They think and worry about where and how to get something to eat and not who to play with or which game to play like the satisfied children. Some hungry children actually lose interest in play. And when a child reaches this stage you can be sure that something is going very wrong somewhere somehow. In fact as you very well know a child who loses interest in play is likely to be ill. This is why I feel that hunger does not only affect a children's physical health alone but also affects their emotional well being. (MEM)

The participants all shared the belief that overt rejecting behaviour exhibited by carers, and passive neglect as manifested in improper feeding, are acts of emotional abuse and neglect, and that this behaviour diminished the child's perception that he /she was well loved and cared for.

Some participants suggested that due to hunger children devised survival strategies, which are morally and socially condemned, and which may put children in further trouble with their carers. Participants narrated examples of some children who steal either from home or from neighbours or go and 'hang around' so that they can be invited to join the family for the meal. When these children are found out they are punished. An urban grandmother who was born and raised in a rural village, but was now living with her son in the Jatti township, expressed the views of many urban and rural participants who associated hunger with emotional abuse during focus group discussion sessions:

Hunger makes children cry. It makes them miserable. And others come to you complaining of a sore tummy and headache and a pain here and there, some of it is probably imagined. It leads some children to go and 'hang around' other peoples' houses and wait for them to serve a meal and invite themselves to it. It makes them behave like beggars, especially in the town where food is bought from markets and is measured to be just enough for the family members. Hunger even leads some children to steal. Parents in villages must work hard to produce food for their children and those living in towns must find money to buy food for their families. (FRGm)

In addition, a young mother with five children who lived in a densely populated slum area described her experience with some children in the neighbourhood:

Even when you don't call them to the meal they invite themselves. When your children wash their hands they too wash theirs. Some younger children will not go even when you tell them off that they are supposed to eat at their own homes and their share is not included and should go. On the other hand, older children may walk off dragging their feet, carrying their hands on their heads, feeling small, humiliated and embarrassed. In the village my mother can afford to call children who come at meal times to join her family for a meal because she does not buy the food. She gets it from her gardens. But most of us who depend on the market may not afford to do so. Many times I sympathise with such children but I would have measured just enough food for my family. After all, every child has its mother to care. I know in the past this could never happen. If you behaved like this you would be the big news for the village that you refused children to eat. But today things have changed. Some people can still talk about you but you may not do what you can not afford just for the sake of pleasing other people's children and the public. (FRM)

A rural grandmother's description of what she considered to constitute emotional abuse was not very different from the views expressed by the urban residents. During her interviews she also associated emotional abuse with the provision of food. She shared with the researcher the story of how she saw some of her neighbours treat young children when they cried for food:

Some children are left to cry until they can cry no more. They cry for a period of time and stop and start all over again. With some



bad cases you can tell how many intervals were taken by counting the number of dry tear lines on a child's cheeks. Such children can not be happy and feel good about themselves and their carers. But I also very well know that some children are difficult to bring up. Some never get satisfied no matter how well you try to feed them. (FRGm)

In turn, a middle-aged, female, rural case study participant described how some of the children from her extended family and the community reacted during meal times.

When eating they might not notice anyone entering the kitchen or house where they are eating from. Their eyes are fixed on their plates. They are thinking about nothing else but food they are dying to get. (FRM).

A young woman from Budi near- Maka township, who was also bothered by children from neighbouring small units popularly known as 'omuzigo' (meaning one or two-roomed shanty houses in slum areas). Some children where she lived arrived close to the time she would be serving her children lunch. She shared her experience with the researcher:

The situation is worse when food is served on a big communal eating plate. No one looks at the side until the food is finished. And when food is finished they scoop everything off the plate using their fingers. The plate is left like it has been washed clean. They then lick their hands. Some keep eyeing the plate or saucepan where the server might have left some little food for an absent member of the family. They don't quickly move from the eating place. They hang on in the hope for more food to be added. (FRY)

At the workshop a single mother of three children, aged between three and six, who lived in rented accommodation in Jatti township, talked of how she dealt with children who appeared at her door at meal times:

I serve a special plate for them. Doing it this way, I do not cheat my children. I make sure that my children get enough. At the same time I give the uninvited visitors something to eat, to make them feel they have not been left out. Although they keep eyeing my children as they eat their share I do not feel very guilty because I would have done the best I could for them. At times I am forced to ask them to go to their homes as soon as they finish their share, and sometimes I am forced to tell them lies that they are being called at home so that they can go. (FEY)

Some participants criticised the way some parents handle children found eating with neighbouring families. Methods used were also associated with emotional abuse. The following observation and remark by a female, middle aged office worker, living in Jatti township, represents views of many participants who talked about this issue.

Once out of the neighbours' compound and even in the presence of a neighbour's family, the child faces it rough. Some parents do not wait to get home. No. There and then they want to show that it is a child who is to blame. They beat, pull and push the child and rough him or her up for everybody to see. The child is told off right there that he or she is greedy and never gets satisfied and has now turned into a food squatter as if he or she is never fed at home. The child is rebuked threatened and give a hundred and one warnings never to eat in other peoples' homes. The children go crying and some are further punished by denying them food at home. Such treatment makes children feel small, seem greedy, and feel, guilty

in front of everybody. That frustrates and depresses them. A satisfied child would just go to the neighbours to play with other children and not with the aim and hope to be called to join others to eat when it is meal time. (MEM)

Furthermore, some participants associated hunger with unrest at night, lack of sleep and over anxiety. The following comment from a rural grandmother who was interviewed, summarises the view by several other people who participated in focus group discussion and case study:

Children who do not get enough to eat do not quite sleep at night. They keep worrying about their hunger while their intestines loudly crash one another instead of crashing food and blasting booms of gas because of over eating<sup>1</sup> (Nibaraara amara niganiozana nibateekateka ahabyokurya omumwanya gw'enjunga z'ebinyampo kuraara nizirashana, omugono guri ahaiguru). I think there is no doubt that not meeting children's needs for food and drink affects children's emotional well being. (FEM)

In a conversation with one of the leaders of a local women's club she explained community views about mothers who do not work hard in gardens to produce enough:

In some cases failure was linked with laziness and care free attitude. She also talked of some indicators that would suggest some children were not well catered for. For example, a child found in isolation, squatting with both hands supporting ones' head would be suspected to be suffering from depression. She referred to

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<sup>1</sup> In the culture of the Jatti people a family that eats and gets satisfied is associated with passing booms of gas at night, sleeping soundly and snoring. For example in the far past men looking for a girl to marry would at night go and stand outside the window where the girls slept to listen and hear if they would be snoring and blasting booms of gas. To them such acts suggested a quality of people who work hard. Snoring was associated with fatigue and gassing with amount of food eaten. The logic being that you may not gas out what you have not eaten. To produce enough food to eat results from hard work and that when you work hard you get tired and when you lie down you start snoring because of fatigue.

parents' harassing of children who ate at other peoples' homes, with scape goating behaviour. 'Such parents feel their children have 'let out the cat' and must be punished for putting them to shame'. (FRM)

She also described the carrying of hands on one's head, and squatting and supporting one's head with both hands, in terms of their culture:

Carrying hands on one's head was a demonstration of disappointment and implies everything possible has been tried without any success. The child views himself or herself as a failure or rejected. (FRM)

### **Children's perceptions**

Subjecting young children to hunger as well as the treatment children receive from parents when found out to have eaten or 'hang around' a neighbours' house at meal time, are all considered to inflict emotional abuse on young children. Some six year old rural and urban children were asked what they felt when they went hungry and they made the following responses:

'I feel that no one loves and cares for you' (rural)

'I get annoyed and cry' (urban)

'When I am hungry and I am beaten I feel very bad' (rural)

'I feel very annoyed with my mother when she refuses to listen to me and instead pushes me off and orders me to shut up' (urban)

'I don't know what to do. I find myself crying' (urban)

'I feel hated' (rural)

'I hate anyone who says keep quiet' (urban)

'I hate my mother when I am hungry' (urban)

**'I feel that my mother does not love' (rural)**

**'I feel my mother does not care for me' (rural)**

**'I go to my bed. I cover myself and cry' (urban)**

**'Hunger makes me hate everybody even my friends and toys' (urban)**

**'When I am hungry I feel like going to my grandmother's place who always has something to give me' (rural)**

**'I don't want anyone to call me or touch me' (urban)**

**'I feel like dying' (urban)**

On the other hand the following responses were made when the same children were asked to tell what they felt when they were well satisfied:

**'I feel very happy' (rural)**

**'I want to go and play with my friends' (urban)**

**'I feel my mother is good' (rural)**

**'I don't cry' (urban)**

**'I don't fight' (rural)**

**'I collect and clean my toys' (urban)**

**'I help my mother and other people to do some work' (rural)**

Data collected from the children in the form of response behaviour to times when they were hungry and when they are well satisfied, corroborates parents' construction that the failure to meet children's need for food leads them to feel emotionally abused and neglected.

## **Weaning practices**

The second theme that was addressed was weaning. Parents associated appropriate weaning of babies with good parenting. The following section presents parents' construction of emotional abuse in regard to weaning practices.

### **Beliefs about weaning**

Mothers in rural areas in Jaiti district continue to breastfeed until they are unable to do so. In most cases breastfeeding is stopped when a mother conceives the next child often very soon after the last birth. Some rural uneducated parents believe that if a mother conceives, and at the same time continues to breastfeed, the child being breastfed will fall sick because of the breast milk and warmth from the foetus. Therefore, in the manner of belief and practice, most rural parents send children as young as six months, to be weaned by their grandmothers. This was generally referred to as 'grandmother weaning'. However, before the child is finally taken to the grandmother for weaning, he or she is gradually introduced to feeding on schedule. To make a child lose interest in breast feeding, most rural parents use punitive methods. These methods include smearing hot pepper or other offensive substances on the mothers' breasts. Weaning time can be described as a miserable period for rural children. It is a period during which the mother-child relationship can be compared with a period when one of two lovers indicates disinterest and finally leaves the other still desiring to continue with the relationship.

Participants shared different views about the way weaning of children was conducted. Most of the urban educated participants were not in favour of sending young babies to their grandmothers' for weaning, while most of the rural uneducated parents

especially those from remote villages, cherished the experience. The rural participants, who depend on the hand-hoe for food and income, saw it as the only possible solution to the difficulties experienced by both the infant and a mother who would in many cases already be carrying her next child.

### **Grandmother weaning**

The rural uneducated participants described sending a child to stay with the grandmother as the most effective way to make the child forget their mother's breasts. A comment by a focus group rural participant, summarised the view that was held by some of the participants who cherished grandmother weaning:

Our group is of the view that keeping a child close to the breasts that he or she was not going suckle can be more frustrating than taking a child to stay away from the mother. You keep the child anxious for nothing. You, in fact, encourage the child to long for breast feeding more than ever before and this encourages him to cry with the hope that mother would soon compromise. It certainly makes children feel the mother does not care for them. It is better to get such a child staying away than keep him seeing what he is not going to have. It is actually like showing a dog meat you are not going to let it eat. It's salivating can very well be compared to the anxiety a child develops, only to end up a disappointed. During this time some children loose a lot of weight, some fall sick and all of them without exception become susceptible to frustration. Any little thing puts them off.

During the interviews, a middle aged female subsistence farmer used a Kinyankole proverb to support the need to make arrangements to isolate the child from its mother:

Manya ngu ekitatariho tikiriza mwana. (Implying that a child does not cry for something he or she is not seeing). What I know is that if a child cries for the first one or two weeks and does not see the mother he/she is crying for, he/she soon forgets and settles down with his or her grandmother. (FRM)

Workshop participants suggested another dimension to the effect of 'grandmother weaning' on children. A primary school teacher described the characteristic tendencies of children raised by their grandmothers:

Some don't even want to share with their friends. They are grubby and use crying as a method to get things done for them. Some continue to look and feel miserable even in the company of their playmates. They are neither at ease with themselves nor with other people. They are suspicious of everybody and everything except their grandmother. (MEM)

A retired Medical Assistant raised the possibility of grandparents' being unable to provide good care for a young child. For example, he suggested that some grandmothers were unable to provide nutritious food for a child during the sensitive weaning period, and in many cases showed a comparatively lower level of sensitivity about hygiene.

During weaning the use of deterrents such as the application of hot pepper and offensive smelling herbs; ignoring the child and allowing them to cry incessantly; rebuking and beating them for the desire to be breastfed and breaking the parent-child bond by isolating babies from their mothers and other familiar members was considered emotional abuse of young children. This was regarded as denying the child love and company of familiar members of the family. Some children were said to feel



lost and abandoned at their grandparent's home and to lose trust in their mothers, making grandmothers the 'new trusted loving and caring mums'.

Nonetheless, without exception participants acknowledged and recognised the role grandparents play in child rearing and more especially at the time of weaning, when the children or their mother are sick and when the mother is heavily pregnant. The data suggest grandparents are important and respected elders in the extended family, especially in rural areas. They provide and supply their families with a strong set of values which are passed on from generation to generation. In Chapter 6, Niima outlined the counselling role grandparents play in the extended family. However, this was not without contradiction. Some of the urban educated participants were of the view that grandparents were outdated and spoke against practices like 'grandmother weaning'.

Despite the controversy, however, both the rural and urban participants recognised grandparents nurturing role as twofold:

- indirectly by supporting the child's parents; and
- directly by caring for the child.

The data further suggest that, as nurturers, grandparents act as a safety net for the child when parents fail. Consequently, their influence on parenting cannot be ignored. This is more important especially in rural areas and to young parents who use them as consultants in the process of bringing up young children. The following narration by a cases study participant who had eight children summarises views held by rural participants about grandmothers' role in child rearing:

I don't know how I would manage without my mother-in-law who is always by my side and my mother who always weans my babies - our nurse when sick and my ever ready mid-wife. (FRM)

### **The need for adequate clothing**

This section focuses on the third theme, namely, what participants considered emotional abuse in the process of meeting children's need for clothing and bedding. As stated earlier in this chapter, among the silent unwritten standards of child care, providing clothing and bedding for young children is an important responsibility of parents. Unlike the past, when dressing of young children was not considered an issue of great necessity, parents in the district are now emphatic about the need to dress children from birth. Failure to meet this need is generally regarded as failure in responsible parenting.

### **Adults' perceptions**

Adults linked failure to meet a child's need for clothing and bedding with emotional abuse. The view of one of the urban participants, who was interviewed, summarises the views of a number of both urban and rural participants:

Children who are properly dressed feel good about themselves. They feel it and say it. You hear them comment about their clothes. They try to get you to talk about them. When you don't readily say anything they make you say something. For example, they ask you whether they look smart, whether you know the person who bought the cloth for them and so on and so forth. Such words and feelings to me suggest that such a child is proud of himself and of his or her parents. It actually makes them feel loved and cared for. You need to meet one of such children going to or coming from

Sunday school or a visit. They are in high gear and if you don't give way you might be stepped on. (FEM)

The feelings of a five year old daughter quoted during focus group discussion by her mother, link without contradiction the feeling of the parents with the feelings of many children who participated in the study:

My five years old daughter told me she was not going to church any more if she was not bought a decent dress to look like others. 'I want to look like Alice and Doris, Marth and Beth' she said. In fact she gave a long list of her friends and talked about what she liked about each of the friends' clothes and described them in some detail. Once she started she went on and on. When I did not answer back, she drew my attention by touching, tapping and even turning my face to her and asked whether I was hearing what she was saying. For fear to hurt her feelings I promised to buy her a dress after selling some of the coffee we were drying and packing in bags ready for sell. From then she asked almost every day when the coffee would be sold. It became a song and a big debt too. In fact I regretted why I ever said what I said because I wasn't sure whether her father would give money for a dress when he still had school fees debts and had not even paid his graduated tax. (FRM)

During a focus group discussion, a young female primary school teacher who taught Sunday School children, describes the concerns associated with dress:

Well dressed children group together and pair together when it is a get a partner game. They feel good about themselves. They volunteer to answer questions to tell stories to act and demonstrate how to do things. On the other hand, most of those not well dressed behave in the opposite manner. They have low self esteem.

They kind of want to hide in the background. They feel shy when you ask them to stand up and do something. Certainly, the way we dress our children has an effect on the way they regard and feel about themselves especially when they are in a group with others.

(FEY)

At the family level, non provision was said to affect the participation of family members in family income generating work. A comment by a focus group participant, a middle-aged subsistence farmer, emphasised a common theme:

Children and their mothers feel moody and will not willingly help to get work done. It becomes a tug-of-war to get work done. In most cases, children pull with their mothers. For example, you can loudly call a child who is in the kitchen not far from where you are and fail to get a response. They ignore you. They pretend not to have heard. You actually loose their respect as a father and head of the family. When you are able to provide, they all feel happy and there is happiness in the home. (MRM)

Interview data support the view that meeting children's need for clothing and bedding enhances cooperation and cordial interaction in the family. A male subsistence farmer describes his positive experience after buying his son new shoes:

He changed into a happier, confident and proud young boy. You would hear him telling his friends about his shoes. With his new shoes he could do anything. He promised to keep his shoes clean which he did very well. He asked me why I was not visiting so and so and said he would go with me on my next visit. I guessed he wanted to have opportunities to show off his new shoes. He looked forward to the beginning of the school term when he would go to

school. For some time he proudly showed his shoes to anyone who came to visit us. (MRY)

In another family when a mother bought a second hand T-shirt for her son, he became very excited and repeatedly thanked her. Upon returning from school he told her that everybody had commented that he was very smart and that the children called him to join their play and share their playthings. He said their teacher also allowed him to ride on the tricycle, which she usually gave to smart children.

### Children's perceptions

The six year old children from both subsistence rural backgrounds and urban educated families who participated in the study were asked what made them feel loved and cared for. Dressing was at the top of their lists. The following table identifies and summarises the children's views on dressing

**Table 4 A summary of views of six year old children on clothing.**

When need for clothing is met	When need for clothing is not met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feel good, loved, cared for</li> <li>• tell their friends and other people about their new clothes</li> <li>• admire and like themselves</li> <li>• want to go for Sunday school to church and visit</li> <li>• like visitors to come home</li> <li>• are happy with themselves and with their parents</li> <li>• like being sent on errands</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• do not feel loved and cared for</li> <li>• want to be bought clothes to make them look good</li> <li>• feel bad about their appearance</li> <li>• do not like going for Sunday school, church and visit</li> <li>• do not quickly go to greet visitors</li> <li>• are unhappy, feel unloved by their parents</li> <li>• do not like being sent on errands</li> </ul>

Children's responses showed positive behaviour, including high self-esteem and a positive self concept, when the need for clothing was met and contrary behaviour when the need was not met.

Reflecting on the authenticity of the data and how it was interpreted by the researcher, a workshop participant supported the data by describing what he regarded as a common phenomenon associated with Christmas in his and other rural communities:

Everybody expects a new dress for Christmas. They keep waiting for Christmas not because they are good Christians and want to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. No, they just would be looking forward to a time for getting new clothes. And if you do not buy them the clothes you are in trouble. They get completely down hearted, loose the morale for Christmas. Such feelings are nursed for a long time, and not only during the festival days. The situation is made worse by the village talk about the same. The family becomes gloomy with less talk and no jokes for a long time in future. A good wife might understand that you could not afford to buy a dress for her because of the reasons she might know but children may never forgive you. They refuse to go for Christmas services and to participate in some other activities-that they have nothing to wear.  
(MEM).

## Summary

The above data shows how participants associated failure to meet a child's need for clothing and bedding with tension, frustration depression, humiliation, discontentment, and feelings of being unloved and not cared for. These and other related feelings manifested in child behaviours such as, feeling bad about oneself, unloved by ones parents, not wanting to go to church, Sunday school, being sent on

errands, and not coming out to greet visitors, suggest feelings of low self-esteem and a negative self- concept.

In this study, mothers showed more concern over the clothing of young children; fathers seemed to lean more on dressing older children. Case study data quote mothers as doing the best possible by collecting pieces of left over pieces of cloth from local tailors and by asking well to do parents in their neighbourhood to extend to them old clothes their children were no longer using. They use collected pieces of cloth to make their daughters' dresses and shirts for their sons, and to patch torn clothes.

The seriousness of failure to meet children's need for dressing, clothing and bedding has far reaching effects on families. In this regard, for example, rural women leave their husbands and go to their parents' homes in protest if they and their children are denied cover for the night, clothing for daily work, and a more decent cloth for Sunday wear and other occasions. This failure has led some wives to take their husbands to local courts. They are required to do this because most rural women are not involved in selling products from their manual labour on the land. As explained in Chapter Six, husbands take over the responsibility of selling farm produce and of spending what is earned. This makes rural women dependent on their husbands for anything that costs money.

Failure to meet children's need for food and inappropriate weaning practices were also associated with emotional abuse of young children. Children's descriptions of what they felt when hungry and when they were well satisfied corroborated parents' construction that not meeting children's need for food made them feel emotionally

abused and neglected. Children who were not catered for were tried to fend for themselves, a process that was recognised as subjecting them to humiliation, embarrassment, frustration and depression. These feelings were manifested in different ways, including crying in the presence of their parents, hiding, walking carrying both hands on their heads, losing interest in childhood activities, wishing to stay with relatives they knew would provide food and telling their friends and other people that their parents did not love and care for them. Non-provision is seen to lower children's self-esteem, while provision appears to raise it and lead to the development of a positive self concept.

Parental behaviours such as punishing children of this age for normal behaviour as in situations when they cry for food when hungry were considered to constitute emotional abuse of children of this age group. Furthermore, rebuking and beating a child for wanting to be breast-fed, ignoring a child and letting it cry incessantly, using deterrents such as application of hot pepper and offensive smelling herbs, breaking the mother-child bond by taking the child for grandmother weaning at an early age, were some of the weaning practices which were considered to constitute emotional abuse during the weaning period.



## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **EMOTIONAL ABUSE AND THE INCULCATION OF A WORK ETHIC**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents participants' views on what they considered to be emotional abuse in the process of teaching young children family and community desired discipline and work skills. In the Jatti district discipline, and the acquisition and development of work skills are important values. Consequently, much emphasis is placed on the development of traits like obedience of order and rules and respect for the elders as children participated in family work.

In the Jatti district it is important that parents, especially those who depend on rural agriculture, get a child to contribute to family work at the earliest time possible. Teaching involves practical demonstrations and learning usually occurs after short periods of observation followed by encouragement to help until a child is able to do some tasks alone. In this way, a child is kept in the family work environment where he or she sees others work and gradually joins in.

Although parents play the most significant role in introducing work skills to children they are helped by members of the extended family. As well, the immediate community enhances this training in different ways. For example, the community provides the yardstick by which parents measured themselves. The togetherness and mutual support in this socialisation process results from the attitude that a child did not only belong to the biological parents alone but also belongs to the clan. In most cases, unlike in the urban setting, one clan constitutes the majority of the population, in a village, in rural areas.

Different behaviour modification strategies were used towards the achievement of these goals. This chapter presents and analyses what participants considered to constitute emotional abuse in the process of teaching young children what the family and the community considered to be good discipline and necessary work skills.

## **Behaviour modification strategies**

### **Use of rebuke language**

The data suggest that although some differences exist participants suggested that most parents used rebuke language which was associated with emotional abuse. They used it to correct, encourage or punish a child for not behaving, learning or working as well as expected. During the focus group deliberations, an urban educated mother of two children was of the following opinion:

I think it is absurd to have to call a child ekifeera, ori busha, toine mugasho' nokubendeza kufa ngu kashandare, keitwe esheeshe, kagwaho, katerwe enkuba, kaitwe omuraramo'(respectively

implying a wish for ones child to burst and die there and then, get struck by lightening and die of chicken-pox). How can a parent open ones' mouth to wish a child he or she has produced to be struck by lightening and perish, to bust and die, never to be able to do anything useful or to die of small pox which finished people. Children who are rebuked and cursed so must feel unwanted.

(MEE)

A woman informed the researcher during an interview how some words keep flashing back on her mind. She said she remembered them too well. They were flung at her frequently by her mother when she was a young girl:

' You stupid , useless good for nothing girl!' I used to get depressed because the name calling cut me deeply. And because of what I went through I try as much as possible not to do the same to my children' . (FRM)

Some participants took the view that most parents unconsciously repeated language used by their own parents and seldom meant abusive things they said. Some others strongly believed that whether meant or not, once said in a quarrelling manner the message carried was negative and causes emotional hurt. Table 5 below is a compilation of the rebuke and curse language that was repeatedly mentioned during focus group discussion, interviews and case study sessions.

**Table 5 Frequently used rebuke language, users and situations**

Rebuke language	Frequent users	Situations
kafe otyo (curse-wishing one to have a bad end)	rural uneducated	disgusted non compliance
katerwe enkuba (wishing one to be blasted by thunder)	rural uneducated	non compliance disgusted
kaitwe omuze (wishing one to die of chicken-pox)	rural uneducated	non compliance disgusted
Omwanda (chaotic)	rural uneducated	fatigued non compliance disgusted
Rwata	rural uneducated	non compliance disgusted
ekifeera (good for nothing)	rural uneducated urban educated	dissatisfied with performance disgusted
kainare (curse-wishing one to have a bad end)	rural uneducated	disgusted non compliance

These data associated parents in rural areas with more frequent use of rebuke language, than their counterparts in urban settings. As well, there is a difference in the type of rebuke language used by the two categories of parents. Rural parents, especially mothers, were reported as making greater use of the curse type of rebukes than fathers. Examination of the data in Table 5 above suggests that particular forms of rebuke language are associated with most of the

disciplinary measures taken on children. Furthermore, some participants knew children who would not be rebuked by their mothers everyday.

Interview data were consistent with the focus group data. In addition, it provided an in-depth understanding, and included new dimensions, of what was considered to constitute emotional abuse of young children. For example, during interviews participants talked about rebuke language which included cursing, actions like spitting on children, pointing sharp fingers accompanied with threats, silencing children and subjecting them to frightening experiences which threatened their lives. These are elements of emotional abuse.

Use of rebuke and curse language was associated with emotional abuse of young children. Nonetheless, participants were of the view that some parents were not aware of the psychological implications that constant use of such language has on children. Some condemned it from the point of view of Christianity, while others regarded it to be dirty language and left it at that level. Some others, however, went beyond this and associated it with the crushing of children's spirits.

In addition all of the workshop participants, supported the view that the use of rebuke and curse language emotionally abused children. A middle-aged, female Cooperative Assistant's remark represents a consensus view of the workshop participants:

I think we need to put ourselves in children's shoes in order to know what they feel about what some parents say and do to them,

humiliating, embarrassing, hitting and ordering them about like soldiers under their command. I believe this creates some wounds on children's minds which become more and more septic as the affected children grow and continue to be treated so. The good thing is that some of such wounds heal when the child is treated well although some others may never heal. (FEM)

This view was endorsed by a father of six children who said he clearly remembered how he felt fearful and anxious whenever his father came home. 'To this day I can still hear his foot steps as he approached the doorway'. He recalls how he used to rebuke, curse and beat him:

... and it goes through me like chill. My father was never happy with how we did things, not even with my mother. I do not remember him thanking anyone for any work done. It always lacked in one way or the other. We were beaten and rebuked for not doing things the way he wanted. (MEM)

### **Using negative descriptions about children's appearance and performance**

The use of negative descriptions, with reference to bodily appearance, was among the behaviours associated with emotional abuse of young children. Many participants shared Jowa's view.

I have learnt from experience that children, like adults, hate to be told they are ugly, have protruding eyes, oversize heads, spider legs, oversize lips and the rest of it. Such remarks make children feel bad about themselves. They make them feel inadequate and start to wish they were like so and so who is well talked about.

They hate it and they develop dislike for people who describe them so.

Personally, I always feel something running through my blood stream when someone calls me 'akashaija'. Surely, if I am short and small I don't think I need to be reminded of the obvious over and over again and in ways intended to hurt me and make me feel smaller and useless. I strongly believe that if such remarks hurt me at my age, they must hurt young children more. They must make children dislike or hate themselves or wish they were someone else. Starting off life like that I think is a very bad start although from my experience with children I know, when the parents and other people change their attitude and begin to see and say good things about children, children also change what they think about themselves. I am not suggesting that I don't ever use this kind of language myself. I do. But I know what it means to many children. I lived it when I was a young boy because of my small size and even now when I am an adult, a man with a job, a wife and children. (MEM)

Generally, participants took the view that such negative judgement and blame caused annoyance, frustration and inadequacy, which in turn created feelings of a negative self-concept and the lowering of one's self-esteem.

Safiina used the child-to-child interaction she observed, to support Joasi's belief that negative descriptions hurt and frustrated children. On her way to the shopping centre, Safiina found her neighbour's children in high tempers because one had referred to the other as 'kahara we n'obwobuguru bwemitego' (a belittling expression suggesting extremely small ricketed legs). Encouraging her younger sister to move fast and bring firewood which she needed to cook lunch, the ten year old girl said to her young sister :

You little girl with stick like ricketed legs are you walking on water? Can't you move and bring me firewood with which to cook your food. (Baitu kahara wen'obwobuguru bwemitego nogyenda omunyanja, torahusya enku nkabatekyera.) The little girl shouted back 'kaburye' (you can have them and eat them-an expression used when one is very annoyed) and burst crying and refused to make any further move.

Their mother had gone to work in gardens over the hills and had left the ten year old daughter in full charge of the family. She had asked me to check on the children at various intervals. When the younger sister saw me approaching she moved to meet me carrying both arms on her head, looking and feeling depressed. Before I could ask what the matter was she burst crying accusing her elder sister for rebuking her. In the middle of the story, she grabbed her sister and started punching her saying 'and you, you, you'. The accused argued that what she said could not be the cause of what her younger sister was doing because 'many times their mother called her so and she never cries and never refuses to work'. (FRM)

Many participants supported these views and said all such descriptions are emotionally abusive language (ebijumo) and created negative feelings about oneself. The use of belittling prefixes and those that denote ugliness and other unwanted qualities, like size, are seen to cause feelings of inadequacy in a child which negatively impacts on one's self-concept and self-esteem.

### **Negative name calling**

Name calling was also categorised as emotionally abusive behaviour. It was considered to engender in children feelings of rage, hatred, resentment and inadequacy. Julia and Jaki described their childhood experiences to justify this.



Julia was born and raised in Kashambya village and was now the mother of seven children. Jaki's parents were primary school teachers and always taught around the Jatti township and Jaki was now married with two children. Like her parents, she was a teacher. Julia and Jaki respectively shared the following experiences with the focus group participants:

I remember quite clearly what I used to feel when some people called me names like 'nyabutama' (small girl with little funny ugly cheeks), 'akahara komweryo' (skinny little good for nothing girl), 'kafire we' (you little thing useless as dead, stupid, good for nothing) 'kashema we' (ignorant and stupid). Many times it sparked off fighting with children of my age and with my brothers and sisters. (FRM)

Jaki did not end up fighting but hated both herself and her mother when she called her ugly names due to failing to complete an assigned task well.

When she was very nasty and called me whatever she choose to call me, when there was an opportunity I quietly went to lie on my bed and silently started calling my mother names she called me. One day in the middle of this she shouted my name. It was as if the sky had fallen on me. I thought she had heard what was going silently inside me and was calling me to teach me a lesson I would never forget in my life as she used to say whenever she wanted to beat me. (FRY)

Muhi, a trader in Jatti township, described her seven year old daughter's perception of name calling:

One time a man who used to call my daughter funny names, I guess without meaning to hurt, came to visit us. When I asked my daughter to bring him a stool to sit on, she went and never returned. I called her several times reminding her to bring the stool.

She never responded. When I went to the back yard to get the stool, there she was firmly sitting on it and not ready to move off it. When I asked her why she was behaving in such a funny way she signalled me to go away and mumbling that she hated the man and was not going to get off the seat for him. 'Let him go...a man who calls me names each time he sees me as if I don't have my own name', she spoke loud for me to hear. She refused to get off the stool. I had to look for another one. This taught me a big lesson about names we call children. I guess if this young girl had authority she would have told this man never to come to our home. It is true this man quite often used belittling and degrading words and expressions on my daughter in a playful and joking manner. But there she was, hurt deep down. (FEM)

Interviews yielded data that were consistent with the above focus group views. Girigori's memories of negative name calling when he was a young boy were not different. Girigori, now a retired Medical Assistant, said he hit back at children of almost his age when they called him names.

When my brothers, sisters and playmates who were not much older than me called me bad, funny and annoying names I hit back by calling them names too. I knew the older ones would, like my parents, hit back heavily if I dared do so. So I would just bitterly stomach whatever they called me. I must say I found that experience very painful. And although this happened many times I never got used to it. And the older I grew the more I hated it, and the people who called me so. (MEM)

Workshop participants confirmed that excessive blame and negative labelling constituted acts of emotional abuse of children of this age group. They added dimensions that had not been raised. A local women's club leader outlined a

child's reaction to name calling and a primary school teacher, the use of negative descriptive prefixes as in the following comments:

Hot and quick tempered children react by crying and withdrawing if the person who has assaulted them is older than themselves. For children of around the same age name calling sparks off heated quarrels involving exchanges of bad and ugly names and rebuke language. And it is true that in most cases name calling among children especially of around the same age leads to fighting.

It is because children may not have much they can do to the assaulting adults, that some quietly withdraw. I used to do this quite a lot myself. For sometime I would, kind of engage in a silent quarrel and exchange of names with the person who would have assaulted me, especially my mother. You can't speak otherwise you would be inviting fire. You would actually be digging your own grave. But for sure, using my own experience, a battle goes on silently in the offended child's mind who dares not open her or his mouth for fear of punishment. (FRM)

A primary school teacher found the use of prefixes which negatively describe a child's physical build, work skills and competence for work, to be emotionally abusive language.

I think referring to a child as too small and useless, as in 'kareebe', (too fat for anyone's liking), as in 'kireebe' and ill behaved and ugly as in rureebe and use of words which suggest a child is not admired as in words 'ekyana' (too fat, ugly), orwana (disgusting appearance), and 'akaana' (minute and ugly) also hurts and depresses children who are called so. You can tell this from the way they react to you when you call them so. Anyway I personally never liked people who referred to me like that. And from my experience

with children both at home and school, I know children hate it.

(FEY)

The awareness of self fulfilling prophecy was also evident in many narratives.

The following transcripts of workshop participants summarise some of the views expressed:

*Boona:* Many nk'okumirikumanya eiziina n'oburogo. (As you know a bad name kills like poison). This is a mother tongue proverb implying that some children become what you call them. If you keep calling a child a rebel, fighter, naughty, bad, good, clean or useless, worthless, good or bad, the child lives up to what you suggest he/she is capable of doing and becoming. (FRGm)

*Sezi* That is true. If the names are good they help in making a child good and if they are bad and blaming they make a bad child worse. (MEE)

*Siba* My son has also started behaving like Rutebemberwa, a name his grandmother called him. He always wants to lead and not to be led just like the meaning of his name. He now wants to lead everybody. You should see him with his playmates. (MEY)

*Yasiini* Your son is like my neighbour's son. But for you you are lucky because he just wants to lead. My neighbour's son was called ekihandu (rebellious) and in response he nicknamed himself 'Rutatina' (meaning someone who fears nothing) and he is now in many ways just that. He is ten years old but he is the most daring child of all the children of his age group

in our village. And you may not easily move him to do anything he doesn't want to do. (MRM)

*Boona* Actually I have found calling children names which praise what they are and what they do well, very rewarding. Even when you do not quite mean what you are calling the child. I now know what to do when I want cooperation from my little naughty son. I call him names that make him feel big and good and that make him feel good about himself. Names like 'kishaija' and for my little girls 'kikazi'. When I call them so they can do anything for you. On the other hand, anyone who calls him bad, belittling and degrading names invites trouble. He comes fuming to accuse them. (FEY)

Nonetheless, some rural participants felt that parents did not always use the names and descriptions with the intention of belittling, degrading, humiliating, demoralising annoying, frustrating or hurting the child. In fact, some categorically stated that parents were well intentioned as Mende suggested during a focus group discussion:

We do and say whatever we say because we want them to achieve something. It is for their own benefit. Some of the names are meant to encourage a child to learn how to do things for themselves and to behave well. Not to be lazy but not to hurt in any way as some of you think. (MRE)

Some participants suggested that it was not part of their culture to praise expected good behaviour, performance and appearance as this would 'lame' children. Some subsistence farmers suggested that whatever is done in the process of teaching children to be good and useful people, should not be regarded as abuse. They claimed this to be a well intended cultural way of

disciplining children as outlined by Tito a middle-aged man, during focus group discussion:

I personally do not think that it is worthwhile wasting time on the obvious. If a child does well, she or he is just doing what he or she is expected to do. It is when a child starts to do things or behave in a way he is not expected to do that parents should put their feet down to discipline and correct them. Children need to accept to be corrected. We all went through that. (MRM)

Nonetheless, there were some urban educated parents and rural grandparents who opposed this idea. They contended that young children do not consider and look into the future like adults and therefore should not be treated like adults.

The workshop participants supported the idea that children should be treated like children and not like adults. They also agreed on the need to instil discipline and work skills. However, they suggested that in practice some parents expected adult standards in the performance of children on tasks and that some children, especially in villages, were overworked. The following exchange from an interview summarises this view:

It is true that children can not regard what hurts them as good. They can not see goodness in calling them bad names, beating them and threatening them. If even some older children may not, then how can we expect the little ones to do so? (FRY)

They can not. When they are hurt they are hurt and that is that. They can not be hurt and not be hurt because someone is shaping them for the future. I know some of us at times do things without knowing what they might lead to but facts remain facts. What hurts hurts and what does not hurt does not. (FRM)

That is true. And not knowing does not stop children from being abused. Even when you hurt without the intention to hurt you will still have hurt. In short, ignorance is no defence. (MRY)

The different views held by the urban educated and the rural uneducated suggests the existence of two separate cultures in the district and even among families. One culture is gradually questioning some of the long-taken for granted practices while the other still holds on to traditional practices with little change. Those belonging to this latter culture parent their children as they, themselves, were parented.

Throughout the data collection phases the researcher compiled a list of the commonly used name calling expressions and descriptions. These are presented below.

**Table 6 Commonly used names and descriptions**

Common names descriptions	Frequent users
Akanyanjoka (with worm-like size)	rural uneducated
Obuguru bwemitego. (with little, funny ricketed legs)	rural uneducated
Nyabutama (funny little cheeks)	rural uneducated
Serutwe (with an extremely big head)	rural uneducated
	urban educated
Nagomaisho gemitunu (ugly toad-like eyes)	rural farmer.
Enyiragaju yekikoono (as black as a crow)	rural uneducated
	urban educated
Kareebe/rureebe/kireebe (small or big body size, disgusting)	rural uneducated
	urban educated
Ekifeera/orufeera/akafeera (suggesting one is useless)	rural uneducated
	urban educated
Ekifiire/orufiire/akafiire (suggesting one is useless)	rural uneducated
	urban educated

Participants indicated that these names were emotionally abusive because of the impact they had on children's minds about themselves and their carers. Many of these names were said to make children feel criticised and ridiculed, annoyed, frustrated, belittled, degraded and humiliated, unvalued and unloved. In addition, some participants suggested that some seemingly positive name calling and descriptions, also subjected young children to emotional abuse.



Some mothers narrated stories of how their daughters and sons became depressed when neighbours and relatives, especially old men and women, jokingly called the little girls their 'wives' and the little sons their 'husbands' ('omukyara' and 'omwami' respectively). The story of Gabuda and her daughter is typical of most of the participants' construction of emotional abuse:

Of course the adult would be meaning well. But it gets on my daughter's nerves. In fact, when she sees this elderly man approaching she takes off so that she does not give him a chance to call her 'omukyara' (wife) but he still asks where the 'omukyara' would be. If she heard from where she would have hidden you would hear her yelling that she was not. She even asked me to tell the old man that she did not want him to call her his wife. (FEM)

Conversations with the children in the study provide additional data which supports the contention that negative name calling and descriptions have a negative impact on their self-concept and self-esteem. This was evident in answers to different questions but was most explicit when they were asked to identify the names they liked and hated to be called. Each time they gave a name or descriptive phrase, they were asked to explain why they liked or did not like being referred to like that.

**Table 7 What children like and do not like to be called**

What I like being called	What I do not like being called
omwana murungi (good child)	omwana mubi (bad child)
ekyana kirungi (big, fat, nice child)	ekyana kibi (big, fat, ugly child)
akaana karungi (nice, small, sweet child)	akaana kabi (small, nasty, ugly child)
kishaija (good boy)	omwanda (chaos-like)
kikazi (good girl)	omusiru (ignorant, stupid, unintelligent)
Super man	ekitini (timid)

All children preferred to be referred to with positive names and descriptions and hated the reverse reference. They expressed love for names that did not belittle, degrade or humiliate them. They loved to be called nice names, heroes and heroines, champions and other names that upgraded them. They also showed dislike for names that denoted failure and inferiority and expressed preference to those that provided encouragement and recognised their successes in regard to discipline and performance on tasks.

This list supports much of the focus group discussion, the interviews and the workshop views (Appendices G, H, and I). Nonetheless, it challenges the view raised by some of subsistence farmer category participants that the expected good discipline and performance does not necessarily have to be praised. Preference for positive names and descriptions that acknowledged their goodness in discipline and performance on tasks was expressed by both rural and urban children.

## **Use of emotionally abusive actions and gestures**

Beating, spitting on a defaulter, pointing a sharp warning finger, pushing and pulling a child with rage and disgust, and pulling ears accompanied with negative judgement and rebukes were among the actions that participants associated with emotional abuse of young children.

Although it was evident that most parents believed in the cane as a means of disciplining children, and getting work done, mothers were said to flog children more than fathers. The data also suggests that the cane was used to silence children and achieve obedience without questioning. In contrast, however, some participants especially the urban educated category, condemned the beating of children. They indicated that some children were badly beaten, even for very minor mistakes and small offences, which might never have been intended, but resulted from the process of learning. Hunga and Kondo's comments are typical of views expressed by participants who associated beating with emotional abuse:

I think some parents go beyond what is expected. They actually flog children. They beat, hit and smack anywhere, they pull their ears and arms and push them and bang them anywhere. When you are not aware of the cause of the beating you might think the child has committed a very big crime. Such children live in misery and worries all the time because of domestic harassment (omwaga).

(FEE)

I also believe beating children the way some parents do is beyond what it should be and creates intense fear in children. What do you think causes children to warn their friends that when Maama or Taata (Mum or Dad) comes will kill you or will make you urinate. It

is fear of the cane and what goes with it. And they are right because that is how parents threaten when they are beating them. Children are ordered to be silent or else they are killed. 'Silence right now. If I hear any more noise, I'll kill you,' usually said with a raised stick or hand ready to strike, or said with a bent hand ready to close off the noise by a tight hold on the mouth with the support of the other hand at the back of the head. This threatens children and causes them to live under fear (omwana kutura ahahaire omutima). I regard such parent behaviour to emotionally abuse children. (MEY)

Mbabo, a middle aged male participant from Lusa village, described a situation he witnessed:

One evening I visited a family in my village and found a child of about five or six years crying holding her face in her hands. When I greeted her she did not respond. Instead, she hid her face in between her legs sobbing and shaking her head suggesting I should leave her alone. When I pulled her left hand off her left side of the face there was a clear stamp of an adult's hand, firmly fixed. She had even wet herself. Her mother had beaten her for not guarding hens from eating millet which she had put out on a mat to dry and grind for the evening meal.

The mother was in the back yard winnowing and removing stones from the millet she had swept from where the chicken had scattered it. She was complaining bitterly about children who when you give work to do abandon it for play. That her daughter never does what she is told, her ears are always standing like those of a rabbit listening to hear children shouting at play so that she escapes to join them.

They don't know what we go through to raise their food. How could she not attend to the chicken. You send them to the well, and what do they do when they get on the way? They start their games

and won't come home until you send someone to call them. She deserves what she got. In fact she could have had more. My millet . . . I even do not know whether this is going to be enough to make a meal.

Most of the rural participants supported the above mother's views of 'in spare the rod and spoil the child'. The following remarks made during focus group discussion, interviews and case study sessions express this belief.

Kwonka manya obwe bwona noburyo bw'okuhana omwana ngu okamwihamu omuntu. Ebyo byona tihaine ekyarisire omwana. (This suggests that such are well meant behaviour modification strategies used in good faith to reform children. None of them has ever killed a child). (FRE)

Wateera omwana ngu tiyakora mirimo ye narishi ngu yagira emicwe mibi nooba nomuhana noba otarikumwanga. (When you beat a child or rebuke him because of laziness or refusing to work it is not because you hate him, it is because you love him and you want him to learn and like something for his own benefit in future). (FRM)

Okuhana tiguba mwaga. (Proverb implying that disciplining children is not ill intended harassment). (FRM)

Oteine kihana afa kubi. (Proverb implying that a child without anyone to harass him/her ends up being a useless fellow). (FRM)

It is true children need to be disciplined, but the fact remains that they feel bad, unloved and become timid when each time they do something they are flogged, rebuked, spat on. (FEE)

Nibahahara emitima (Suggesting that if each time children make even the smallest error they are beaten they become extremely timid and expectant of trouble all the time. (MEGm)

Besides beating, participants associated holding tight on a child's mouth to stop him/her from yelling so as not to draw other people's attention (okukwata ahamunwa), spitting on a child (okucwera uha mwana), 'okurabya omumaino (making a hissing sound while closing the upper and lower ridges of teeth, suggesting that a child is as small as the air that passes through the closed sets of teeth, thus belittling a child), okukana (tongue click sound suggesting a child is useless) and, okubema (done by closing one's teeth while biting the lower lip, making a fist while leaving the thumb out and holding the thumb to the lower lip, thereby communicating a curse) with emotional abuse. Table 8 summarises these and other related actions, the frequent uses and situations that prompt use of these negative behaviour modification strategies.

**Table 8 Emotional abuse actions and gestures**

Actions	Frequent users	Situations
okuteera	urban educated	failure to work
(flogging children	rural uneducated	poor performance
		non compliance
okutunga akakumu (harsh pointing of	urban educated	poor performance
warning finger	rural uneducated	non compliance
		failure to work
okurabya omumaino	rural uneducated,	non compliance
(described above)	urban educated	failure to work
		poor performance
okucwera aha mwana	rural uneducated	non compliance
(spitting on a child)		failure to work
		poor performance
okunyurura amatu	rural uneducated	non compliance
(painful pulling of ears)	urban educated	failure to work
		poor performance
okukwata ahamunwa	rural uneducated	non compliance
(described above)	urban educated	
okuhema	rural uneducated	non compliance
(described above.)		failure to work
		poor performance
okukana as	rural uneducated	non compliance
(described above)	urban educated	failure to work
		poor performance

These data suggest that both categories of parents believe in a 'spare the rod and spoil the child' strategy to discipline their children. However, some participants suggested that flogging is more common with rural parents than with the urban educated. Other strategies, used by both rural and the urban educated, include the pulling of ears. Some participants associated this action more with the urban educated. Some participants thought this was done more often by mothers than fathers, as was flogging by the rural, uneducated families. 'Okurabya omwana omumaino' and pointing a warning finger also cut across the categories. As in the case of the use of rebuke language, the above data associated the use of more crude strategies like spitting on children, blocking a child's mouth so that when he/she cries or shouts the neighbours do not hear, and 'okuhema', with some rural uneducated parents. This could be due to the fact that a majority of rural parents mimic parenting styles by their parents and are unaware of other methods of teaching and encouraging young children.

In most instances, some parents were quoted as using a combination of several of these strategies on one child; rarely was one strategy used singly. Some participants suggested that more mothers than fathers use more combinations of these behaviour modification strategies both within a short time and a prolonged duration. The prolonged duration was thought to be more emotionally harmful, than a combination of short term abuse after which the parent or carer tries to create peace with the child. Culturally however, parents rarely want to admit to their children that they are wrong. They try to justify their actions in such a way that makes a child feel in the wrong, thus painting the child to be the cause of the problem. Parents admitting their wrong is thought to weaken parental



authority. In some circumstances this can enhance a child's loss of trust in the adult and an increased feeling of insecurity.

During case study sessions with six year old children, they were asked to name and, or describe parental behaviour they liked and did not like when being taught good discipline and work skills. Their views are presented in Table 9 below.

**Table 9 Strategies children did not like used to teach them discipline and work skills**

Mother tongue expression used by children	Equivalent /near equivalent in English
Kuntera	beating me
kunjuma	scolding me
kunzurura amatu	pulling my ears
kunshundika oku	pushing and pulling me
kunshohoza aheru nyekiro	sending me outside in the dark
okuncweraho	spitting on me
okunkana	belittling me
kunyeta ebiziina bibi	calling me bad names
kunshwaza omubantu	shaming me in public
kundabya omumaino	passing me through their teeth
kumbuza obusingye	making me unhappy
kutuma abantu banjwara	causing family members to be against me
okuntumaguza burikanya	giving me too much work
kunzibira kuzaana	stopping me from playing with my friends
kunyima ebyokurya	denying me food
kunyeta omushema	calling me stupid
kuntontomera	shouting at me
kunyanga	hating me

In the above list of treatment children do not like being subjected to the behaviours considered to be emotionally abusive by participants in the focus

group, interviews, case study and the workshop. The list highlights children's resentment for degrading, belittling, rebuke language and punitive actions like beating.

### **Community concern about emotional abuse of children during the process of teaching them discipline and work skills**

Mother tongue proverbs were used by some participants to justify their beliefs that measures used to discipline, and to teach a child work skills were applied in the best interest of the child, and should therefore not be categorised as emotional abuse. 'Kora turye tiguba mwaga' is one of the proverbs which was quoted by most participants. This proverb implies that requiring a child to work, so that the child and other family members get something to eat is not harassment. Nonetheless, it suggested cultural awareness of harassment a child might be subject to while participating in domestic work. The term 'omwaga' is an inclusive term and refers to general domestic harassment which some children are subjected to by their carers. It is expressed through a combination of the behaviours and domestic practices considered by participants to constitute emotional abuse of young children.

Related to 'omwaga' (domestic harassment) is the term 'okuhana' a word which can be interpreted as 'well intended disciplinary measure'. The workshop participants suggested that this was generally a positive umbrella term which some parents used to cover up and explain all sorts of abusive treatment they subjected children to. A remark by a female middle-aged educated participant summarises most of the views which were expressed:

Any bad treatment you can think of, be it verbal or actions can be christened as 'okuhana' that is well intended disciplinary measure. Even flogging and whatever kind of harassment can be described as 'okuhana' (well intended disciplinary measure). (FEM)

Manya tugira ngu 'owahana omwana aba atamwangire aba namwendeza gye' (implying that parents say and do what they say and do in the best interest of the child to make them good and useful citizens). (MEE)

However, the urban educated participants and grandmothers expressed the view that even when intended for the good of the child, some discipline strategies went beyond the expected degree (okuhenda amateeka) and became abusive. The following table gives examples of judgemental remarks made by the community, and significant others.

**Table 10 Expressions of community concern about emotional abuse**

Mother tongue expressions	Translations
Reeka kuguma nontuntuza omwana	It is not good to keep frustrating a child
Okwe tikuba kuhana nekindi	That is going beyond positive disciplining
Anyangareize omwana aha bw'omwaga	That child has been affected by domestic harassment
Omwana ahururukire ahabwomwaga	That child has emaciated because of domestic harassment
Namukozesa nkekiharani	She/he overworks the child
Omwana tarikuta hansi kibunu	That child never sits to rest, she/he is over worked.
Hati ari nkekihaha	The child has completely lost confidence, he/she is fearful and timid all the time
Wena nomureeba ari omumitima buri kanya akarikuba ari wenka	She/he is always depressed.
Ogwemwana amaganya nogamureeba ahamaisho	Worries can be seen on his/her face
Emigambireye neyabamaganya	The way the child talks suggests he/she is miserable
Okwe nakwe nokwita tikuhana	That is killing and not disciplining or teaching anything
Nacunaguza omwana ekihinguraine	He/she harrasses the child unnecessarily
Tikirungi kuguma nokankamira omwana buri kanya	It is bad to keep shouting at a child all the time

Analysis of these remarks suggests no contradiction with construction of parental behaviours that were associated with emotional abuse and children's response behaviour to them. The use of rebuke language, punitive methods to correct children's behaviour and to teach work skills, the use of a negative and

harassing tone when interacting with children, and overworking and harassing children, are all identified in the above remarks.

Consistency in the construction of child emotional abuse is apparent in a comparative reflection of parental emotionally abusive behaviour (Table 8), strategies used to discipline children which children did not like (Table 9) and the community views about parenting young children (Table 10). Either directly or by implication each of the behaviours confirms some of the behaviours and practices considered to constitute emotional abuse of children of the age birth to six years. Of importance to note, are the divergent views which relate to traditional styles of child rearing. These created contradiction in the construction of emotional abuse by the urban educated and the rural uneducated participants. In some cases behaviours that urban participants considered to inflict emotional abuse on children, were viewed by some of their counterparts, the rural participants as normal ways of bringing up young children.

On the other hand, some participants suggested discipline and ability to work were hereditary. They used a mother tongue proverb 'guzaranwa tiguhanwa' which suggested that most of the child manifested behaviours, for which they are emotionally and otherwise abused, is sewen in the blood at the time of conception (nakomushagama). Attitude and stamina for work, and excessive greed for food, were among the named seeds assumed to be planted at conception.

When reviewing the data to confirm its authenticity and interpretation by the researcher, the workshop participants identified that tone of voice used also inflicts emotional abuse on some children. The tone of voice used by a parent or carer was thought to play a big role in making some of the disciplinary remarks and actions become more emotionally abusive in the process of instilling discipline and work skills. The workshop participants' consensus view was summarised by a retired Medical Assistant and a leader of a local women's organisation as follows:

If when one wanted to beat a child and beat him or her without the shouting and screaming the situation would probably be different. The manner in which some parents and carers shout and scream as they beat and pull ears and point warning fingers makes the action which when calmly and positively handled would not be abusive. Even when the child is close by, some mothers still shout as if they are informing a whole village of what has happened. And the louder the child cries the louder the mother shouts and the harder they hit. (MRE).

Children know what the tones we use mean. They also know how to interpret expressions on our faces as we deal with them. They certainly know when you are disgusted with them and when you are not. They know the meanings of our different ways of pointing the warning fingers and the pushes we give them to get them out of our way. They are able to tell which of the actions we use suggest approval and those that do not. (FEM)

The list of behaviours and practices children identified as abusive is consistent with the list in Table 11 below which was compiled from the case study adult participants' responses when they were asked to name parental behaviours they considered to constitute emotional abuse.

**Table 11 Behaviour inflicting emotional abuse on children**

Parental Behaviours	
shouting and screaming	name calling
humiliating	harassing
scolding and rebuking	frequently getting angry with children
overworking a child and denying rest	degrading and bellitling
denying play time	overcritising effort by a child
seldom showing affection	flogging, scourging, beating
seldom speaking nicely	threatening

Most participants categorised the parents' behaviour as domestic harassment (omwaga) providing as examples: children's weaknesses rather than their strengths; constant use of blame and negative judgement of a child's efforts; overwork; rebukes; harsh punishments especially flogging; punishing a child for not reaching standards above those expected from children of the same age group; denying children time off for rest and to play with friends.

The adult case study participants were also asked to name anticipated child response behaviours to the parental behaviours each mentioned. Tables 12 and 13 below resulted from analysis of the different lists which were compiled as each of the participants answered the question.



**Table 12 Children's covert response to parental emotional abuse**

Children's Covert Feelings	
they are worthless	they are useless
they can not do anything right	they are not clever
they are not loved	they are lazy
they are good for nothing	they are stupid
they are stupid	they are failures
they have no future	what they do is not appreciated

**Table 13 Children's overt response to parental emotional abuse**

Children's Overt Response[	
frustration	anger
helplessness	depression
worried most of the time	tearful
refusing to eat	withdrawal
keeping a distance from parent	carrying both hands on the head
sobbing	yelling in fear of punishment
complaining about overwork	

The general consensus was that children must be taught to work and develop sound self-discipline. However, most of the urban educated people suggested that the teaching of work skills should be done gradually, and in moderation in order not to constrain children. There was concern that some parents expected too much from children, and this view was shared and well supported by

grandparents from both urban and rural settings. On the other hand, the rural subsistence farmer participants, argued that it was because the urban educated parents could afford to employ house helpers to help in domestic work that they did not require the assistance of their children. Eriya's view includes views of quite a number of the urban, educated participants. Eriya had just recently retired from serving as a medical assistant.

There is no doubt children must be taught to work but this should not mean killing them in teaching them to do so. I hope you agree with me that some children are actually over worked and called all sorts of names, ridiculed and beaten. Many times you hear parents especially women shouting on top of their voices telling their children how useless they are and how they are lazy . That they just wait to eat ready food to which they don't make any contribution. They are told they are failures and they have no future and will not be able to feed themselves and their children (toine mugasho, oryafakubi rwata, noriira busha, tihaine ekyoryetambira ori omworo runuuka). This must hurt children who from right early get involved in family work. If children were free to say what they feel about what we say or do to them they would put some of us to real shame. And when they make a slight mistake or don't do as well as expected, it is as if they have committed a big offence. (MEE)

On the other hand, some rural uneducated participants expressed contrary views as in the words of a middle aged mother of eight children.

But children must be made to work otherwise they grow up useless for themselves. They will not be able to feed their own children. We can't afford that to happen. No, not at all. They must be taught and made to work as early as possible. I don't even see anything really wrong with telling a child how lazy and useless one is if one is lazy and stupid. (MRE)

The above data contextualised in the process of instilling discipline and work skills suggest both similarities and divergences in the construction of emotional abuse. Generally, however, the descriptions expressed in terms of what participants experienced in their childhoods, and in terms of behaviour manifested by their own, and their neighbours' children, point to use of blame, negative judgement and name calling to constitute emotional abuse and neglect of young children.

For example, regarding divergences, while most of the urban educated parents regarded name calling as emotionally abusive, some rural parents regarded it as a normal way of disciplining children and teaching them to work. This has implications for inter-generational cycles of child maltreatment. They held to the claim that anything done for the good of children for their future lives was not abusive.

Some other participants, with the majority of the urban educated, argued that children think and act like children, and not like adults. What they live is the reality in the present. Harassing children as an investment for the future, was regarded as an inappropriate strategy which subjected them to emotional and other forms of abuse.

A mixed group of rural subsistence farmers and urban educated participants, suggested that what other people regarded as intended abuse, was innocent abuse. This was described as a situation where parents act without knowing the impact their behaviour was likely to have on a child. Others categorically stated

that ignorance was no defence and that abusive behaviour was abusive, whether the parent was aware of its consequences or not. The divergence in the construction of emotional abuse, seemed to result from among others, the way the participants were themselves parented, differences in levels of education, and belief and non-belief in traditional practices.

As already suggested above, despite these differences the majority of participants, shared the view that some of the manifested parental behaviours in the process of instilling discipline and work skills were emotionally abusive. Such behaviour included blaming, belittling, degrading, humiliating, threatening, anxiety provoking, fear inducing, annoying, frustrating, and use of devastating language and actions like spitting on a child and 'okuhema' (okuhema is a facial expression where a person bites ones upper lip with the lower teeth, feasts his or her hand leaving the thumb facing up right and holds the hand against his or her mouth facing the victim child. It is communicates messages that demean, belittle and regard the victim child as of no value). Name calling which created in a child feelings of inadequacy, hatred for the adult offender, feelings of being unloved and unvalued, rage, devastation, frustration, and depression were also considered to be emotionally abusive behaviour.

Blame and name calling were seen to spark an exchange of rebuke names and fighting among children of same age group. It was reported to cause more emotional pain and 'inner retaliating' when a child had no other way of relieving oneself of the felt anger and rage. As well, examples of children

making up abusive names, which they silently called their adult carers were quoted.

The data also suggested that although some children were often subjected to this experience they did not become insensitive; instead the hurt deepened as they grew older. For some such childhood experiences are never forgotten as in personal childhood stories voluntarily outlined by participants. Other participants said they did not want their children to be treated as they were treated, which suggested that their experiences had been negative ones.

Generally the data revealed how in the process of achieving positive ultimatum goals, parents lost sight of the side effects of the methods used on children. Most participants recognised that treatment of children as inferior frustrated and depressed many of them and made them feel harassed and unappreciated. Some parental behaviour was said to cause children to feel like they were always behaving and doing things the wrong way, thus causing them to develop a negative self concept and low-self esteem.

Some participants emphasised how wrong it was to blame children for things which were not of their making, such as making consistent negative references to a child's weak spot like an ugly, unproportional or deformed part of the body. Use of prefixes which denote negativism like 'ka' as in 'kareebe' commonly used on thin children, 'ki' as in 'kireebe' and 'ru' as in 'rureebe' commonly used on fat children, was said to be loaded with expressions that communicated parental disgust with a child's personality, characteristics and behaviour.

Children's response behaviour included expressions of disgust, rage, busting into tears, refusing to eat, bouncing back the rebukes audibly and inaudibly, refusing to comply when 'offender' is another child and complying when the 'offender' was an adult. The data show how at times children were torn between whether they should or should not comply. Others withdrew as a result of desperation and loss of trust in themselves due to blame, ridiculing, degrading and belittling language, used as disciplinary measures to comment on or correct their performance.

In the above data, the difference in the response behaviour to similar negative descriptive language when used by, a mother, and a sister of similar age, could be a manifestation of several things. In this regard, the seeming positivity and compliancy response to the mother could probably be due to, among others, fear of punishment the mother is likely to give if this child refused to comply. Nonetheless, it could also be sheer tolerance of the undesired, imposed adult behaviour, which young children may not do anything about. In this culture children are expected to respect adults and obey without questioning.

On the other hand, the non-compliancy behaviour and the rage manifested in the child to child interaction, could be a demonstration of the child's genuine feelings when their physical nature and way of doing things is unfairly attacked. The fighting behaviour when called names and described negatively was an outlet through which to release suppressed feelings.

Not only the children but also those people who described them negatively resented the descriptions, blame and names. Some participants suggested that dislike for people led some children to their keeping a distance. This was also considered to be a start of constrained interactions which led to the development of feelings of neglect by either children or parents alone, or by both.

As already mentioned, the mother tongue proverb 'eiziina n'oburogo' to some extent provides a clue to parents' conception of the impact of negative judgement and negative name calling. Positive labels, were regarded by some participants, to enhance positive behaviour while negative labels enhanced non-acceptable behaviour. The above and other narrations point to parents' awareness that children absorb other peoples' descriptions of themselves and that these greatly influence one's self esteem, character and behaviour.

This construction of emotional abuse is close to Briggs and Potter's (1995) description of what the emotional abused child experiences and what Iwaniec (1995) identifies as emotionally abusive parental behaviour. According to Briggs and Potter (1995) emotional abuse of children includes the element of 'chronic attitude or act' that is detrimental to or prevents the development of a positive self-image in a child. In addition, parents who persistently criticise, shame, rebuke, ridicule, threaten, humiliate, induce fear and anxiety, and are never satisfied with a child's behaviour and performance, are emotionally abusive and cruel (Iwaniec, 1995).

However, the data regarding blame and negative remarks referring to ability and competence for work, suggest some degree of departure in the participants' construction of emotional abuse and neglect. As expressed in the quoted interview, case study and workshop excerpts, generally the urban educated participants considered some of the measures used in the process of instilling work skills in young children to constitute emotional abuse of children of the age birth to six years. Some of the rural uneducated held diverging views about some of the behaviours and practices. In this regard, some of the rural uneducated participants considered some measures taken towards ensuring children's acquisition and development of work skills to be in the best interest of the child and should not therefore be regarded abusive. At the surface level, this could be interpreted to carry a similar meaning to the UN definition of abuse. Nonetheless, some parents could use such an explanation as a positive justification for their behaviour and not in the best interest of the child. Also, as suggested by some participants, some parents might not be aware that their behaviour had a negative and emotionally abusive impact on their children.

Throughout the data collection phases the researcher compiled a list of the commonly used name calling expressions and descriptions. These are presented below.



**Table 14 Commonly used names and descriptions and users**

Common names and descriptions	More frequent users
akanyanjoka (with worm like size)	rural subsistence farmers
obuguru bwemitego (with little funny ricketed legs)	rural subsistence farmer
nyabutama (funny little cheeks)	rural subsistence farmers
amaisho gemitunu (ugly toad like eyes)	rural subsistence farmers
serutwe (with extremely big ugly head)	rural subsistence farmers
enyiragaju yekikoono (as black as a crow)	rural subsistence farmers
kareebe/rureebe/kireebe (bodily size as disgustingly small or big)	both rural subsistence farmers and urban educated
ekifeera/orufeera/akafeera	both rural subsistence farmers and urban educated
ekifiire/orufiire/akafiire (suggesting one is useless)	both rural farmers and urban educated

Participants said these and other related names were emotionally abusive because of the impact they created on children's minds about themselves and their carers. Many of the names were said to make children feel criticised, ridiculed, annoyed, frustrated, belittled, degraded, humiliated, undervalued and unloved. Furthermore, some participants supported the idea that some seemingly positive name calling and descriptions also subjected young children to emotional abuse.

Some mothers described how their daughters and sons became depressed when neighbours and relatives, especially old men and women, jokingly called the little girls their 'wives' and the little sons their 'husbands' ('omukyara' and

'omwami' respectively). The following story of Gabuda and her daughter is typical of most of the participant's' views of emotional abuse:

Of course the adult would be meaning well. But it gets on my daughter's nerves. In fact when she sees this elderly man approaching she takes off so that she does not give him chance to call her 'omukyara' (wife) but he still asks where the 'omukyara' would be. If she heard from where she would have hidden you would hear her yelling that she was not. She even asked me to tell the old man that she did not want him to call her his wife. (FEM)

Conversations which were held with the children in the study, provided additional data which supports the view that negative name calling and descriptions have a negative impact on their self-concept and self-esteem. This was evident in answers to different questions but was most explicit when they were asked to identify the names they liked and hated to be called. Each time they gave a name or descriptive phrase, they were asked to explain why they liked or did not like being referred to like that.

**Table 15 What children like and do not like to be called**

What I like being called	What I do not like being called
mwana murungi (good child)	omwana mubi (bad child)
ekyana kirungi (big fat nice child)	ekyana kibi (big fat ugly child)
akaana karungi (nice small sweet child)	akaana kabi (small nasty ugly child)
kishaija (good boy)	omwanda (chaos like)
kikazi (good girl)	amahira (purse like)
Super man	omusiru (ignorant, stupid, unintelligent)

As the above list suggests without any exception, all children preferred to be referred to using positive names and descriptions and hated the reverse. They expressed love for names that did not belittle, degrade or humiliate them. They loved to be called nice names, heroes and heroines, champions and other names that upgraded them. They also showed dislike for names that denoted failure and inferiority and expressed preference to those that provided encouragement and recognised their successes in regard to discipline and performance on tasks.

This list does not in any way contradict data derived from the focus group discussion, the interviews and the workshop. Nonetheless, it challenges the view raised by some subsistence farmer participants that the expected good discipline and performance does not necessarily have to be praised. Preference for positive names and descriptions that acknowledged their goodness in discipline and performance on tasks was expressed by both rural and urban children.

### **Summary**

Generally, the descriptions expressed what participants experienced in their childhoods and in relation to the behaviour manifested by their own and their neighbours' children. The evidence suggests that the use of blame, negative judgement and name calling constitute emotional abuse and neglect of young children.

However there was some diversity of opinion. Most of the urban educated parents regarded name calling as emotionally abusive whereas some rural

parents regarded it as a normal way of disciplining children and teaching them to work. This has implications for inter-generational cycles of child maltreatment. They held to the claim that anything done for the future benefit of children was not abusive.

Some other participants, including the majority of the urban educated, argued that children think and act like children, and not like adults. What they live is the reality in the present. Harassing children as an investment for the future, was regarded as an inappropriate strategy which subjected them to emotional and other forms of abuse.

A mixed group of rural subsistence farmers and urban educated participants, suggested that what other people regarded as intended abuse, was innocent abuse. This was described situations where parents act without knowing the impact their behaviour will have on a child. Others categorically stated that ignorance was no defence and that abusive behaviour was abusive, whether the parent was aware of its consequences or not. The divergence in the construction of emotional abuse, seemed to result from among others, the way the participants were themselves parented, differences in levels of education, general exposure, belief and non-belief in traditional practices.

Despite these differences the majority of participants, shared the view that some of the manifested parental behaviours in the process of instilling discipline and work skills were emotionally abusive. Such behaviour included blaming, belittling, degrading, humiliating, threatening, anxiety provoking, fear inducing,

annoying, frustrating, and use of devastating language and actions like spitting on a child and 'okuhema' (okuhema is a facial expression which belittles the child). Name calling which created in a child feelings of inadequacy, hatred for the adult offender, feelings of being unloved and unvalued, rage, devastation, frustration, and depression was also considered to be emotionally abusive behaviour.

The data also suggested that although some children were often subjected to this experience they did not become de-sensitive and that the hurt deepened as they grew older. For some such childhood experiences are never forgotten as in personal childhood stories voluntarily outlined by participants. Other participants said they did not want their children to be treated as they were treated, which suggested that their experiences had been negative ones.

The data revealed how in the process of achieving positive goals, parents lost sight of the side effects of the methods used on children. Most participants recognised that making the child feel inferior, frustrated and depressed many children, and made them feel harassed and unappreciated. Some parental behaviour was said to cause children to feel like they were always behaving and doing things the wrong way, thus causing them to develop a negative self concept and low-self esteem.

Some participants emphasised how wrong it was to blame children for things which were not of their making, such as making consistent negative references to a child's weak spot like an ugly, unproportional or deformed part of the body.

Use of prefixes that communicated parental disgust with a child's personality, characteristics and was also thought to be wrong .

Children's response behaviour included expressions of disgust, rage, busting into tears, refusing to eat, bouncing back the rebukes audibly and inaudibly, refusing to comply when 'offender' is another child and complying when the 'offender' was an adult. The data show how at times children were torn between whether they should or should not comply. Others withdrew as a result of desperation and loss of trust in themselves due to blame, ridiculing, degrading and belittling language, used as disciplinary measures to comment on or correct their performance.

On the other hand, the non-compliancy behaviour and the rage manifested in the child-to-child interaction, could be a demonstration of the child's genuine feelings when their physical nature and way of doing things is unfairly attacked. The fighting behaviour when called names and described negatively provide an opportunity to release suppressed feelings.

Not only did some of the children resent the descriptions, blame and names, but also those people who described them negatively. Some participants suggested that dislike for people led some children to their keeping a distance. This was also considered to be a start of constrained interactions which led to the development of feelings of neglect by either children or parents alone, or by both.

## Summary

As already mentioned, positive labels, were regarded by some participants, to enhance positive behaviour while negative labels enhanced non-acceptable behaviour. The interviews and case studies point to parents' awareness of how children absorb other peoples' descriptions of themselves and that these greatly influence ones self esteem, character and behaviour. In addition, it would seem there is an awareness that parents who persistently criticise, shame, rebuke, ridicule, threaten, humiliate, induce fear and anxiety, and are never satisfied with a child's behaviour and performance, are emotionally abusive and cruel.

The data does suggest some degree of departure in the participants' construction of emotional abuse and neglect. Generally the urban educated participants considered some of the measures used in the process of instilling work skills in young children to constitute emotional abuse of children of the age birth to eight years. However, interviews with the rural uneducated indicated diverging views about the behaviours and practices. Some of the rural uneducated participants considered certain measures that were taken to ensure childrens' acquisition and development of work skills to be in the best interest of the child, and should not therefore be regarded abusive. On the surface this could be interpreted to carry a similar meaning to the UN definition of abuse. Nonetheless, some parents could use such an explanation as a positive justification for their behaviour and not in the best interest of the child. Also, as suggested by some participants, parents

might not be aware that their behaviour had a negative and emotionally abusive impact on their children.



## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEGLECT**

#### **Introduction**

The previous three chapters presented and analysed data describing what participants considered to constitute emotional abuse of children of the age from birth to six years in the Jatti district in Uganda. This section focuses on what participants considered to constitute neglect.

In the Jatti district childless marriages are shaky. In Chapter Six Niima and other participants inform the study that husbands marry a second and more wives in search of children. It is also true that when a girl gets married even before she has been a month in the marriage she is bothered by questions to find out whether or not she has conceived. Chapter Six also indicates how the birth of a baby is celebrated. Nearly everything about the baby seems to thrill its parents and close relatives. Baby's first smile, first words, and first steps are momentous occasions. Parents regale friends and relatives with stories and in urban families with photographs. Babies are loved and treasured in the Jatti district.

However, the data suggest that in some families, a tragedy may unfold as the years pass. Due to different circumstances the parents' playful cooing may give way to harsh and mean words; affectionate hugs may give way to angry blows or an absence of touch altogether; and parental pride may give way to bitterness. The affected children do not take long before realising the change in love care and attitude. The data show that parents may not show children the love, care and attention the young child needs. It must be admitted that parents today face tremendous pressures, some of them on an unprecedented scale. For parents who may not deal with them appropriately, such pressures can take a real toll on the job they do as parents. Children may not be expected to understand all these pressures facing their parents and may feel neglected.

The data suggest that by their very nature, children are needy and hungry for love and attention. Absence and denial of these and failure to meet children's other physical and psychological needs for survival, growth and development was considered to underpin neglect of young children. What follows is presentation and analysis of data pertaining to what participants considered to constitute neglect of children of this age group.

The data are presented in four sections. These sections respectively focus on participants' construction of rejection of biological children; different ways of isolating children, failure to meet children's physical and psychological needs and step-child/step-family rivalry related behaviours and practices which were considered to constitute neglect of young children in Jatti district.

## **Rejection and neglect of biological children**

### **Rejection at birth**

Participants suggested that some children are rejected at birth because of their sex. Baby girls were reported to be more victims of this circumstance than baby boys. Although this view was expressed by both the urban educated and the rural uneducated it was more often associated with the rural uneducated than with their counterparts, the urban educated. This could be because traditionally girls and women were regarded to be dependent on boys and men. Thus boys were seen to be more clever, useful and enterprising and most important they were associated with perpetuation of the family line and clan.

As Nijma and other participants inform us in Chapter Six, births of sons, especially the first son who may come after producing a line of daughters, means so much to the couple. The father is sure that his line of descent will continue. The mother gains confidence. She feels she has become a permanent member of the family. She is sure of her son's share of the family property when her husband dies. Her worries of her husband marrying a second wife in search of a son are very much reduced. In fact such sons are 'over babied'. Their care makes obvious the parents' preference which makes the rest of the children become envious and feel neglected and rejected. It is also true that parents with sons and without daughters get anxious to produce daughters. Generally however, what seems important to most parents is to have a son among the children- to have an heir to the father's 'throne'.

Thus some daughters, born instead of the anxiously expected sons, are denied warm parenting from birth onwards. Such children are not well accepted and receive 'second class' care and they feel it more and more as they grow old. In some families naming of such daughters reveals this kind of rejection as suggested by a case study urban educated participant.

Names like Kyenderesire tell you feelings of at least one of the parents or feelings of the grandparent who might be asked to name the child. Kyenderesire means that parents will just have what the womb has brought. Mark you-what the womb has brought, not parent's preference. Boonabaana is another of such names and there are many others. Here again, one of the parents or both parents are not happy when they learn it is a baby girl. But after second thought, realising there is not much that can be done about it, the parent consoles himself for herself by calling the child Boonabaana meaning girls are also children. (MRY)

During interviews some participants suggested that when some of their children grow old, they demand to know circumstances that led to calling them such names. Changing of the negative names to new ones that are positive and imply acceptance suggest positivity, acceptance and success in life was quoted as evidence of the serious psychological impact such names have on some children.

An urban educated participant gave the example of a friend of his who on several occasions embarrassed her father when he approached her for help. He referred to her as his son. She would tell her father off that she was a girl, a

woman and useless and since his preference was a son and he had several with his other wives he could go to them for the help he needed. Her mother did not produce a son and her father married two other wives who produced sons but none of them was doing as well as herself. Her auntie had met her education costs and was a graduate holding a high post in a business company.

Table 16 below gives more examples of such names which imply initial feelings of rejection which may or may not change and affect the love and care given to a child. This compilation is derived from the data as participants talked about children who are rejected at birth.

**Table 16 Names which suggest rejection of the sex of the child**

Name	Sex of child	Implied meaning
Kyozaire, Kyenderesire	female	It is what was conceived and produced and not the choice
Kibanugire, Kyangirwe, Kitarikwendwa	female	Not desired
Fokworora, Kirugirem	male and female	Will bring him/her up although this is not what we wanted
Komunda, Kazairwe, Kozaire	male	It is what the womb has brought

Workshop participants confirmed the existence of rejecting children at birth because of the sexes they happen to be and also associated it with neglect. Elaborating on this a primary school teacher said this feeling has no boundaries. In the district of the study it cuts across fathers and mothers of various ages,

educated and uneducated, rural and urban as well as rich and poor parents. His point of view summarises related views by different participants:

I have found that fathers and mothers who would be anxiously expecting baby boys and find they have produced a baby girl do reject them right from the news 'it's a girl'. On the side of fathers, rejection of a baby girl is not only expressed in the names they choose to call them but also through the care given to the mother. Some births of baby boys are celebrated by slaughtering of a fat goat, sheep, or calf and preparing a big meal for the extended family members and close friends. (MEM)

### **Denial of warm mothering**

Cold mothering as expressed in denial of eye contact, cuddles, special treats and other forms of responsive feedback when feeding and interacting with babies and young children was also considered to constitute neglect of children of the age from birth to eight years in the Jatti district in Uganda. The leader of a local women's organisation described cold mothering using examples of some of the practices and behaviours she was helping the mothers to minimise. Among such behaviour and practices she included mothers who do not pay attention to their babies while breast feeding them. She talked of mothers who pull out the breast and do not even help the baby to make a start. That some mothers carry on with their own work or conversation as the child struggles to properly grasp the breast. She compared this with what happens with what she described as the more caring mothers who use eye contact, who cuddle, pat lovingly, encourage and express happiness as the child feeds. She associated non-care in the feeding

as a routine practice which she conceived to constitute neglect. She concluded that:

‘ Children who lack closeness and warm mothering from their mothers or fathers seek the same from other people. They easily express desire to be lifted and cuddled by people who visit the family while those who have close relationship with their mothers and fathers cling to them and do not want to be touched by outsiders. (FEM)

Ignoring children's calls was also categorised as parental rejection which causes feelings of emotional neglect. Talking about this, during an interview, a male participant expressed his concern:

Many times children cry and get no immediate response from parents, especially from mothers. At times I wish I was in position to attend to the crying child who is ignored by its mother. What one hears as a mother's response to a child who is crying loud and hard is an occasional shout back of ‘ stop it ‘ without taking a step-to see what is happening. Such takes everything for granted and thinks there is no serious cause, the child is just fussing when actually there might be a very good cause and the child is needing attention. (MEM)

Participants quoted examples that reveal some biological children are rejected by their own parents. Although the culture places a high value on children and consequently childless marriages are no marriages and lead to polygamy and other practices in search of children, as highlighted in Chapter Six. Some participants expressed the view that this parental love, is not expressed clearly and openly by some parents to their biological children. With some parents,

clear and open expressions of love were said to diminish as children grow. Some interview data revealed that there were some children in the district whose parents were distant and cold and showed little affection, this, too, was associated with neglect. This was generally referred to as denial of warm mothering in the case of mothers and 'okuteera ekiganja' in the case of fathers. Cold mothering includes denial of eye contact, cuddles, special treats and other forms of responsive feedback when feeding and interacting with babies and young children. Denying children appropriate supervision and encouragement; dismissing and discouraging children's attempts to please parents; not bothering about how a child fed and slept and refusing or reluctantly responding to a child's calls were other behaviours and practices considered to constitute neglect of children of the age birth to six years in the Jatti district in Uganda.

As well, workshop participants confirmed the existence of rejecting children at birth because of the sex they happen to be and also associated it with neglect. Sons were generally preferred to daughters as expressed in celebrations around their births and in the names given to a daughter born when parents would be anxiously expecting a baby boy. All the rural participants made mention of the importance to have at least one son for perpetuation of the family line and the clan. Although the urban educated shared a similar view, they at the same time knew girls could be successful in life as independent entities and could be as helpful as good sons, or could even do better. Consequently the urban educated participants were not as bothered as the rural uneducated parents about producing sons. Some concluded their remarks regarding this with the mother



tongue expression 'boonabaana' implying that it did not matter to them what they got, both boys and girls were children.

The data also reveal practices of negative discrimination in some families. This was said to happen more in polygamous families than in monogamous families. Some children are disowned by their own fathers and correspondingly treated differently from the rest of the children.

### **Denial of warm parenting**

The data suggest some biological children are not free of neglect. Some participants suggested that although children are loved and valued by their parents as is highlighted in Chapter Six this parental love is not expressed clearly and openly by some parents. Clear and open expressions of love deteriorate as children grow. Some interview data revealed that there were some children in the district of the study whose parents were distant and cold and showed little or no affection and this was associated with neglect. While some participants suggested that parental love was natural and was an obvious expectation, others especially from the urban educated category observed a need for parents to express their parental love to their children openly and clearly. A leader of a local women's organisation shared the view that children learn an important truth: that they are lovable and have worth. She compared the behaviour of children who grow in families where clear and open parental love is expressed with behaviour of children who grow in families where parental love was not openly and clearly expressed. She suggested children who have not experienced open and clear parental love may not know how to express love to

their playmates, workmates and later to their own children. The following data highlight views by different participants.

During focus group discussion a group secretary reported his group was of the view that some fathers quite often put off babies, toddlers and infants and make them feel rejected. He used an example of how some approaching toddlers seeking their father's company are waved off by their fathers (okuteera ekiganja).

We think that toddlers who when they see their fathers anxiously crawl to them expecting to be lifted and cuddled are put off when they are waved back. Instead, some toddlers are told to go back to their mothers, that they (the fathers ) have no time for them or that they are dirty. They are waved off just like that. During our discussion we remembered that some fathers could have no time and the anxious toddlers could be dirty but still we strongly felt sending an anxious child away like that is very bad (okuteera ekiganja). Some of the children treated like this turn back crying, feeling rejected. Some fathers even threaten to beat if the toddler does not move off quickly. When repeated many times we feel it makes some toddlers resent their fathers. And many do so and form a closer relationship with their mothers. (MEM)

The data also reveal practices of negative discrimination in some families. This was said to happen more often in polygamous families than in monogamous families. Some children are disowned by their own fathers and correspondingly treated differently from the rest of the children. In this regard, the experience of a grandmother who was interviewed includes some of the views that were

expressed in different ways by different participants about negative discrimination of biological children by their own parents.

I wish you all knew Moni, a small girl who is a 'duplicate' of her father who rejects her and many times disowns her without shame saying, 'You are not mine. You are someone else's. Your mother should take you to your father.' We started thinking he would be just joking and making some fun but he continued to do many things that suggest he actually resents his daughter, his blood. He blames Moni for everything that goes wrong even when her mother and or her sisters and brothers make clear who was involved. He always finds a way of implicating this little girl. When other children make noise the father comes shouting and screaming at Moni that she should stop disturbing him even when she has not said a word.

Moni a seven years old girl is left out for special privileges and treats. And to avoid getting in trouble she tries to keep out of her father's sight. She refers to her sisters and brothers as the loved ones (abakundwa) and calls herself (kyangwa) the hated. When she started primary school, she was withdrawn in the middle of the second term, that there was no money to pay for her school fees. She is not bought dresses by her father. It is her grandmother who sees to Moni's clothing.

One time when I got to their home and asked where his father was, she whispered pointing to the direction where he was. I thought this little girl had some flu and probably had

lost her voice and that was why she was whispering. When I asked to make sure she said she did not want her father to hear and know she was around. 'I do not want to get in trouble', she said whisperingly. (FRGm)

## **Isolating children**

### **Isolating a child from the family cycle**

Another behaviour that constituted neglect was isolating a child from participating in family chores and in some other cases denying one the opportunity of growing under the care and support of ones own parents, sisters and brothers. Interview and case study participants revealed how in form of punishment some children could be denied opportunities to behave and work like the rest of the other children in the family. Although this was a more common punishment for step-children, some biological parents also used it. Some participants regarded punishing a child in this way to have more serious negative impact on a child than when one is overworked.

Several participants suggested that some children who were isolated in this way resorted to loitering in the village. This treatment was also associated with denying a child opportunity to learn to do some work and take some responsibilities. Some step-mothers were said to use this method to intentionally destroy a step-child and make him or her useless.

Workshop participants extended this view to leaving some children outside the family circle when talking about things and taking decisions. They contended

that this too subjected children to experience neglect. A middle-aged participant shared his experience.

This affects all children like it does adults. I grew up at a relative's place and this used to hit me badly. You become so suspicious. It is as if they are talking and telling lies about you, back biting you. You feel worse when they laugh at a time you are in a close range. I know some people may think that it could be because there are things young children should not hear in adult conversations. True. But if this was the case and a child was told so he/she would not feel left out of the circle. Sometimes it is just with the aim to hurt and to frustrate. And certainly such behaviour makes a child feel excluded and neglected. You inevitably wonder why you are left out. (FEY)

A rural mother who experienced this when she was young talked of what it feels like in support of those who considered excluding children from the family circle to be an act of emotional neglect.

At times they closed themselves in a room and started talking whatever they would be talking. Actually this took place in different places. For example, I remember them in the kitchen, under the tree, on the verandah and on the way to the well. What used to hurt me most would be times when they would burst out laughing. At times they talked whisperingly when they would see me approaching. I felt I was regarded as an outsider. I guess step-children and orphans feel worse in situations like these. (FRY)

Not allowing a child to get close to the his / her parents or guardians was also seen as an act that leads to emotional neglect. Participants reported this to be behaviour which in most cases is practiced by parents and carers who are frustrated and stressed. Other situations that isolated a child from caring adults

include weaning practices and the consequent birth of a new baby. In this regard the data suggest use of punitive methods of weaning which worsen the toddler's already bad condition which is usually full of suspicion, tension, and uncertainty about his/her position as detailed in Chapter Seven. Child labour (okutendera) and pawning were also reported in very poor families.

Child labour was described as practices whereby children as young as five years are let to go and stay with and work for the more able families. Girls usually are contracted for baby sitting and boys for herding goats and sheep and later cows. They start by being paid in kind, usually feeding and clothing and later when these children grow old and realise how they are working for almost nothing the terms may change to cash payment. Boys could be contracted to herd animals for a number of years at the end of which they would be given a young bull. Participants reported such children to be overworked and harassed, and some escape and return to their homes.

On the other hand pawning was associated with payment of a heavy bill incurred on treatment by a local medicine 'doctor'. Generally the very poor people have the largest families, they live in conditions that subject them to ill health and more than anyone else most of them believe in witch-craft and treatment by local medicine 'doctors'. As an arrangement to make sure that the 'doctor' does not loose out, an agreement is made that in case the client fails to meet the bill the doctor would be given one of the client's children, in most cases a girl child. They target girls who, when obtained, provide considerable free labour and are gradually turned into wives.

### **Child labour: working for other families for survival needs**

Although the people in the district emphasise acquisition and development of work skills at the earliest age possible they expressed divergent and mixed feelings about child labour whereby young children go to work for other people outside their families. Some participants associated such conditions to subject young children to emotional abuse and neglect as a case study and interview participants respectively explained.

I consider sending off a child to another family where parents very well know their children would now and then regret why they are where they are to be bad. Such children keep thinking and missing their families more especially when everything and every one turns against them. Most of these children are over-worked and rebuked and beaten even for very little offences. Some escape and go back to their homes and others demand to be taken back. Some experience a lot of frustration and depression. You read misery on their faces. (MEY)

I actually feel like crying when I see some of what such young children are made to do for almost no reward. You know some of them are just working for their own meals and clothing. And do you know how often they are bought a dress or shirt? And the type and quality bought for them? It's real cheating. Most of them are brought oversize second hand wear. Some of it looking terrible. There isn't a job they are not asked to do. Some little girls are made to baby sit and lift babies of the almost the same weight as their own. (FRGm)

### **Pawning : child working for repayment of debts**

Although pawning would be done in the best interest to save someone's life to create better conditions for family life all the adult participants in the study conceived it as an act of emotional abuse and neglect. It was condemned with much sympathy extended to children who happen to become victims of this practice. A remark by a female educated participant working for a government department is representative of what different participants said about pawning:

It is true that children never get to know what would happen to them. Some are told they would be staying with a relative for sometime. Others never get to hear about it. They just find themselves there left by their parents in a strange home, abandoned. Some are told lies that they wait there while their parents call and check on something in the neighbourhood and would come for them at a later time. In such a case the child keeps waiting kind of for ever. Such children like those subjected to child labour are overworked and excluded from the family cycle. The worst part of it is the old man turning to the young child for sex. And they do. (FEM)

During the interviews a mother whose daughter was a victim shared her experience:

My eight years old daughter said she would rather be killed at home by her father than go back. It is good to be educated. It is my sister who works in Kampala who saved us. When she heard of what had happened she came here and threatened to take my husband and the medicine man to court. She told my husband point blank that if he continued harassing me or dared to offer any other child to his 'doctor'



she would open a court case. She took my daughter with her.  
I don't know what would have happened if she had not come.  
(FRM)

Although pawning is not a common practice a few children in rural communities become victims. In most cases the client sells the property that could be sold to save the situation of offering his child to clear an incurred debt. Such arrangements were said to be made by fathers and not mothers because culturally children belong to fathers. And because such arrangements are shameful and resented by the community, the involved party usually keeps the information to himself. It is the mothers who let the cat out of the bag as a strategy to mobilise community support to abort the plan and save their children from this suffering. Unlike some practices whose effect was claimed not to be known by parents, every participant who talked about pawning suggested that all parents knew the practice subjected children to all sorts of abuse.

## **Meeting of children's needs**

### **Failure to meet children's physical needs**

As already suggested in Chapter Seven in Jatti district, good care for young children is assessed and discussed in terms of meeting children's basic needs. For example, parents who do not send their children to school or withdraw them for no good reason and who do not provide: enough food and drink, basic clothing like a few dresses, shirts and shorts some for daily wear and others for Sundays and a blanket for warmth at night; medical and other appropriate health care; guidance and supervision to lead a child to become an acceptable member of the family and community at large were considered to be neglectful. As well,

participants regarded parents who do not attend to their children's personal hygiene, sweep and keep clean their houses where they live with their young children, wash and keep clean utensils used by the family, keep the toilets and latrines clean, to be neglectful of their children's well being. They associated these with not protecting their children from ill health.

A case study participant's comment reflects most rural and urban educated participants' views. This participant associated failure to meet children's basic needs with neglect.

Parents especially mothers who do not bother to make sure their children have enough food, who do not bother to clean their children after eating and when they mess themselves up, parents who do not make sure that their children sleep in dry beds and wash their bedding and clothes, those who do not bathe their children, keep their hair nails, ears, and teeth clean can not be said to be very caring parents. That is neglect of young children who can not do these things for themselves. Much as the older children may try, for example to bathe themselves, wash their own clothes and take their bedding in the sun, they still need to be supervised and sometimes reminded. There are also parents who do not bother to keep their houses clean, who never smoke their latrines and keep them clean, and those who do not wash their plates and saucepans. All that can cause children to become ill, just because someone is not doing what he all she is supposed to do for the family. (FEM)

Given the variations in the circumstances that surround parents as they bring up their children, what seemed to matter most is the level of commitment. The level of failure to meet children's basic needs was assessed in terms of whether or not parents were doing their best. Thus, for example, a parent who did not

take the child for medical treatment at a dispensary in the community was considered negligent, and so would be parents who have land on which to grow food for the children but were not doing so due to laziness or drunkenness or carefree attitude. As well, parents who could raise school fees and did not send their primary school age children who would be anxious to go to school were considered to subject their children to develop feelings that they were neglected and not loved.

### **Denying children responsive feedback**

Generally both rural and urban participants associated happiness in a family with responsive interaction. Non-communication was said to be a step-towards a dysfunctional family. Nonetheless, while some participants agreed that children like adults need responsive feedback, some others looked at children's questions as childish, bothersome, stupid and unending. Time was spent on this contentious topic. Both of these views are expressed in the following narrations.

Remarks by an urban educated father from Jatti township and a middle-aged mother working with a non governmental organisation summarise views of most of the focus group participants who associated refusing to answer children's questions with neglect.

Refusing to answer children's questions is one of the things parents do that I regard to be neglect. This is evident in situations like when you see a child holding the back of his or her mother's dress following her wherever she goes inside, outside and around the house asking the same question over and over again without getting any answer. They start asking normally expecting an answer from their mothers which some of them never get. Instead

some children receive warnings, rebukes or are pulled or pushed and locked in some room and ordered to keep quiet. They are shut up like that and are told if they dare open their mouths any more they would 'have it'. (MEM)

Some subsistence farmers, especially mothers suggested children cause parents not to answer their questions by asking at wrong times or asking what some participants called stupid questions when parents are most busy and when others would be very tired needing no disturbance. Related to disregarding children's questions was parents' failure to show interest in children's self-initiated play and creative activities. One common explanation for this failure was to do with time. Most participants said some parents, especially mothers, had such a busy day that left no time for attending to some of such children's needs. It was more important to make sure they had what to eat and wear than answering their questions and seeing and listening to what children had to say about their creative play products.

Some children were said to show the impact felt by for example, walking away in protest into isolation, destroying the work the adult would have refused to see, busting in tears, banging and destroying their toys, or going to accuse the offender to another person. Others were said to resort to seek responsive feedback from playmates, passers by and visitors. A young mother working for a non-governmental organisation narrated her experience with her daughter and son aged four and five.

When I am very busy I actually don't want children to disturb me with their stories, yet they will not leave me alone. When they see that I am not attending to what they are saying and showing me

they start turning my neck to make me face and see what they want me to see. For listening they tap my shoulder and my four year old even tries to open my mouth and get me to talk. As you can see they work hard to get an answer and probably it is no wonder that they get annoyed, cry and miserably walk away feeling bad. Some children destroy the work they wanted to show you. Sometimes my children accuse me to their grandparents or their father or any other person they find. When I have time to listen, attend to and show interest in what they want to show me they feel completely different. They feel good, proud and big. We actually become friends not enemies like when I don't respond. This is why I believe that refusing to go and look at children's work creates in them feelings of neglect. (FEY).

However during the interviews some participants pointed out how some other parents think that not talking to children and not paying attention to their work and questions is not an issue. In this regard non-biological children stood less chance for attention than biological children. Some participants especially the rural subsistence farmers still seemed to be holding to the traditional view that children should be seen and not heard, a message expressed in the mother tongue proverb 'omwana tagamba mubakuru'. The following voices summarise views of some of the participants who were interviewed.

Yes, when I have nothing else to do I can do that but when I have a lot to cope with like I always have some of such things can wait. If anyone chooses to cry he/she is left to cry until he/she can cry no more. Crying never kills children. (FRY)

I have also never heard of a child who has ever died because of not being talked to, but many have died of disease and hunger. So it is a matter of doing what is most important first

then other things can be done later if one finds time for them.

I agree that children's questions should be answered. (FRE)

Well, the rich women who have house helpers can afford time to be with their children to listen and answer their questions.

But some mothers who give birth today and in a few days are back in gardens to dig and ensure food for their families may not find such time. (FRM)

The data elicited from most of the urban educated participants and grandparents from both rural and urban communities suggest refusing to answer children's questions and the failure to listen to children and show interest in their work are two the behaviours that constitute emotional neglect. Participants also suggested additional behaviours including ignoring the child's need to know, taking for granted the child, the questions asked, the needs expressed, and the child's desire to share the joy and excitement derived from accomplished or on-going activities. Instead of the anticipated positive response, some children are ordered to shut up. They are rebuked and confined and others are beaten and intimidated. Depending on the mood and circumstances surrounding their parents some children were said to become scapegoats.

Examples of response behaviour by the affected children was used by some participants to emphasise the impact such adult behaviour has on some of such children. Among others such behaviour was said to include: persistent asking of the same question and crying demanding response, feeling unimportant, feeling rejected and neglected, feeling unhappy, discontented and unsettled, using physical contact strategies trying to cause the adult to respond (tapping on

shoulder and attempting to open adult mouth to say something), getting annoyed, bursting crying, taking steps to accuse the non responding adult to significant others, disliking the adult who refuses to respond and looking for someone who can listen with interest to what the child is saying and doing, feeling let down by trusted adult, clinging to someone who listens and shows interest, and talking non-stop when someone is willing to listen.

This behaviour indicates children's great need for attention and responsive interaction from the caring adults. Most participants were of the view that failure to meet this need subjects children to experience neglect.

Most of the behaviours participants suggested to constitute neglect are similar to behaviour noted in some literature. In this regard, for example, Iwaniec (1995) includes passive ignoring of a child's emotional needs, lack of attention and stimulation as care giver emotional neglect behaviours to young children under their care. She contends that parents who seldom interact with their children, who do not attend to and join in their children's play and encourage new activities and opportunities to learn are neglectful and inhibit a child's vigorous and happy development. Whiting (1976) states that emotional neglect occurs when meaningful adults are unable to provide necessary emotional nurturance, stimulation, encouragement and protection to the child at various stages of development which inhibits the child's optimal functioning.

Ignoring the desire and anxiety by children to know about situations that puzzle them in their process of development; not attending to children's needs be they physical or psychological; not showing interest in children's work which they

think is worth seeing by the most important persons in their lives may not allow a child to live happily during his or her childhood.

On the other hand, most of the rural uneducated participants considered children's questions as bothersome and not important. The general attitude by most participants in this category was that children's questions and the seeing of what they would be calling the mother or father to see could be done when time permits. Most of them used their heavy work schedule as an explanation for not attending to these needs by children. Going to gardens, digging and producing food for the family was considered to be more important than anything else in the life of a family. Some went to the extent of arguing that not attending to children in this way does not kill while disease and hunger kill. Thus, physical survival and development are given priority over psychological well being of children and their cognitive development.

### **Step-child rejection and step-family rivalry (okurwana eihari)**

As already indicated above, warm parenting was also considered to be a very important need of young children. Absence of this and rejection were considered to make a child feel he or she is not wanted and loved. In this regard all participants in the study identified parental rejection with neglect. Some suggested there was nothing which subjects a child to neglect more than parental rejection. However early in the focus group discussion some parents had related parental rejection to step-mothers, fathers and guardians of orphans. It was after several participants told their stories of biological children who



were experiencing biological parental rejection behaviours that participants who had limited parental rejection to step-children and orphans also started giving their conceptions drawing from everyday parent-child relationships.

The one sided view at the beginning was probably due to the traditional expectation that step-children are rarely well accepted and treated by their step-parents, especially mothers. Folk lore, which the researcher believes has influenced parenting of step-children especially in the early years of integrating a step-child into the new family, shows rejection, denial of privileges, negative discrimination, domestic harassment and overworking as some of the expected norms.

One rarely reads or hears local folk role where a step-parent is nice, kind and loving to a step-child despite the fact that not all step-parents are that nasty to their step-children. This however could be intended to discourage producing children from outside a recognised marriage. In the district of the study and in Uganda in general, more than ever before, more children are born outside legal marriages and most of these children are treated as 'folk role' children. This treatment is enhanced by mother-tongue proverbs like 'mukasho taba nyoko' (your step-mother can never be your mother) and 'mukasho takureeba handa' (your step-mother may not be bothered about your happiness especially as regards your need for food) and 'buri mwana aine nyina' (every child has its mother) all implying that a step-mother can never love and care for a step-child like a biological mother.

Consequently, as the data below suggest it seems parental rejection is generally more experienced by children born out of the recognised marriage, and orphans staying with guardians than by biological children staying with their biological parents. And although both categories of children, (biological and non-biological) experience rejection, the rejection experienced seems to vary. For example, while the step-child is frequently reminded that he/she does not belong, the orphan hears this less often and the biological child is never told so. Because of the differences in type of parental rejection behaviours it was found necessary to present examples depicting the kind of rejection experienced by step-children and biological children under separate headings. However, participants suggested that generally among others, rejection subjects children to suffer isolation and lack of a loving, interested and caring adult, lack of guidance and positive supervision, stimulation and encouragement and protection.

Participants unanimously agreed that step-mother/step-child rivalry subjects children to emotional abuse and neglect. Most step-children were reported to suffer from their step-mothers, sisters and brothers' rivalry behaviour. Step-children were treated as outsiders who were intruding in the family's affairs. Consequently they were reminded many times both in words and actions of their not fully belonging to the family they were brought to. Most actions were aimed to harass the child and make him/her realise his/her position in the family; the position of not belonging and that of nothingness. The slave-like treatment most children received from most step-mothers, sisters and brothers was said to constitute emotional abuse and neglect and to have far reaching

effects. This was reported to happen in different situations both directly and indirectly during focus group discussion, interviews, case study and the workshop sessions. The following narrations summarise the different views expressed by different people in different phases of the study.

During the focus group discussion a rural father of six children elaborated on how a step-child is made to feel an outsider and is denied parental love.

It is true that some children are directly or indirectly told every now and then that they do not belong where they are. Such reminder causes step-children and orphans to develop feelings that they are not wanted in the new family. I believe this causes such children to feel they are not accepted and expected where they would be. And in the majority of families this is the beginning of the step-parents and step-children hatred which, as you know, has led to some deaths. Step-children worry about their safety. Some do not mix easily with their step-sisters and brothers. While they isolate him he too isolates himself and in some families this has created lasting hatred leading to bewitchment by step-mothers of their step- children. (MRM)

This situation was believed to exist and was echoed by every participant who was interviewed. A rural grandmother from Kigi village told the researcher of what happened to a child who was not accepted by a step-father.

Do you know what Biibiino did? When he discovered that his bride came with pregnancy by another man, he kept quiet about it but made sure the child did not survive. When the

baby was born he ordered and monitored his wife not to breast feed the baby and the baby died of starvation. (MEM)

During focus group discussion both the urban educated and the rural uneducated participants unanimously agreed that step-children experienced more rejection than biological children. A young mother's comment represents some of the views that were exchanged.

Most step-children are treated like slaves. They are overworked and some step-parents are always complaining and not happy with whatever their step-children do. Even those who work hardest are told that what they got to eat came from the sweat of their step-mother or father while the biological parent is there enjoying life. That they are real parasites. And all this is said in their faces. Even if it were you, I guess you would not think that someone who says such things about you likes you. And what I have come to know is that in some families step-children are harassed with an aim to make them resign or cause their fathers to take them somewhere else, for example, to stay with grandparents, aunt or uncle. Some step-mothers succeed, others fail. Children who stay must accept the terms set by their-stepmother or father. 'Nibabahindura abashumba'. 'Noburogaya.' (The two mother tongue expressions imply that most of such children are treated like slaves and donkeys right from an early age.) (MEM)

A case study participant who was working at the government dispensary in Koma township expressed related views to those expressed by focus group participants. She suggested that step-children were regarded as second class

family members and were now and then reminded they needed to work for their survival in their new family.

Step-mother behaviour of telling step-children that they are a burden, and should listen, obey and work as told or else they should pack and go back to where they came from, I believe creates ill feelings in step-children. And as you know this is usually accompanied by sayings like 'each child has its mother who should care' (buri mwana aine nyina) and that the step-mother was not going to kill herself working for children who have their mothers else where enjoying themselves (tindi hakugokyerabaaba bainebanyina/baishe). There is no doubt that this informs step-children that they are not loved and accepted where they are. (MRE)

During a seminar organised by a Church whose theme was 'The impact of divorce on children', in his presentation, one of the facilitators said some step-mothers conspire with their biological children to demonstrate their rejection of a newcomer step-child.

They teamed up to frustrate a newcomer step-child. The aim was to frustrate the child so that he/she gives up and goes back to its biological mother or that the father takes the child to live with his married sister who was living in the next village. I know both children and adults who have gone through this. (Seminar facilitator).

This was echoed by a workshop participant who said that he knew of a step-mother and her children who were happy when a step-son was hurt and down hearted.

They rejoice in his misery. They want to see him crying instead of feeling happy and playing with other children. In fact it is as if such step-mothers are revenging on these children for whatever went on between their biological mothers and their husbands. In such cases step-children become scapegoats (ribanywera abandi omufunguro). (MRE)

Reflecting on the data collected and the researcher's interpretation, workshop participants confirmed that because of cultural and traditional inheritance rights, male step-children were more likely to be rejected than the female children. Elaborating on this a leader of a local women's organisation said some male step-children were made to live under intense fear. Some were bewitched and died.

It is true that although girls suffer overwork they are not in as much danger as boys. Boys are seen as a threat to inheritance of family property more especially when the step-mother has produced daughters and has no son. Step-children themselves, would have been told of how most step-mothers hate and others reach the extent of bewitching and killing them. This sticks on their minds so much so that they are always on look out for anything that resembles or nearly resembles the treatment they were briefed about. They become so suspicious that even if the step-mother was not bad she would still seem bad to the newcomer step-child. A child lives knowing it is not loved and wanted and feels insecure. Whatever such children see or hear is interpreted to mean smoke for the fire. They live expecting trouble any time. (FEM)

A primary school teacher participating in the workshop conceived the new social economic order to make the situation of step-children worse.

In the past, step-mothers regarded step-children as added mouths to feed. Today step-mothers are not only worried about digging and producing food to feed them. They are more bothered about the money that is to be spent on their education, clothing and medical treatment when they are ill. They see step- children as having come to share a small cake that was meant for their biological children. For example, you very well know that when there isn't enough money it is a step-child who will not start school or who will be withdrawn from school or who will not be taken for treatment at the clinic or hospital. Some are left to recover naturally. Certainly this treatment makes step-children feel rejected. (MEE)

The relationship between step-children and their mothers and fathers has not been healthy through the years in the district of the study. Tradition presents a picture of what used to happen in the past. This has left a trail which still influences step-child /step-parents relationship as examples in the data above suggest. The war between the official wife, the concubine and the husband starts well before the child is born. The child is born in the war, grows at her / his mother's home hearing about some of the waring verbal bullets and later at around four years or less gets into the middle of the long started war when he / she is taken to his / her father's place to join the step-mother family. In polygamous marriages it was said to be easier to accept an out of wedlock child and for the child to fit in than it is in monogamous marriages. This might be

because the wives in the polygamous marriages are probably no longer shocked by the knowledge that their husband could possibly go with someone else.

All participants, the rural uneducated and the urban educated considered step-parenting to subject step-children to experience feelings that he/she is rejected and neglected. Table 17 below summarises the behaviour that was most frequently associated with step-parents which was recognised to cause step-children feel rejected.



**Table 17 Step-parent behaviour associated with rejection of step-children**

Step-parent behaviour	Step-child response behaviour
Telling a child that it does not belong	Feels is an outsider
Treating a child as a worker	Feels unacceptable and unwanted
Stopping a step-child from starting school	Feels hated and depressed
Withdrawing step-child from school	Feels hated and depressed
Telling a child that he/she is a burden	Wishes was not brought from his/her mother
Expressing dissatisfaction with child's performance (work)	Feels worthless
Attempting to bewitch step-child	Feels hated Older children feel insecure
Not taken for medical treatment when ill	Feels unloved and uncared for
Isolating a child	Feels hated Feels is in a wrong place
Consistently blaming, shouting and screaming at and rebuking a child	Feels depressed, Hated, worthless
Overworking a child	Feels fatigued, full of regrets

This behaviour was summarised by the mother tongue phrase 'okurwana eihari'(step-family rivalry). The data suggest some differences in the treatments of biological, step-children and orphans. For example, biological children were allowed a wide range of behaviour and were punished less severely for

deviation than step-children and orphans. Step-children and orphans were not expected to get tired or make a mistake as they performed set tasks but biological children could. They were given more and heavier work than their counterparts some of the work being well above their age and ability. They had no excuse for not finishing set work before or within set time. Failure to perform as expected put step-children in trouble as indicated in parent behaviour and step-children's behavioural responses quoted by participants to express what was considered to constitute and surround neglect of young children in step-families.

Unlike the biological children, step-children had another parent some where else they could go to. Unfortunately the second parent was usually not on good terms with the officially recognised wife/wives. In most cases they would not see eye-to-eye. The official wife/wives regarded their counterpart as an intruder who would be spoiling their marriage. Consequently, when a child born out of wedlock is brought to his father's home when he or she is about three to four years old he/she pays back for the behaviour of his or her mother. The step-mother mistreats the child in revenge for the mother's deeds with her husband. They seem to be step-mother's feelings of jealousy and rivalry that lead to hatred and rejection of step-children.

Most step-mothers seem not to appreciate the innocence of the step-children in the circumstances. This seems to be one of the factors that influence the kinds and levels of emotional abuse and neglect of step-children. As well, it seems to influence lenses through which these children's behaviour and performance on

tasks are seen and judged and the level of patience and tolerance with which it is handled and dealt with. Participants indicated that the following behaviours and practices constituted and surrounded the neglect of step-children staying with step-families:

- Constantly being blamed, rebuked and shouted at
- Being overworked and effort not appreciated by step-parents, sisters and brothers
- Subjected to live under intense fear of punishment in case of not finishing set work or not performing well
- Made to suspect could be bewitched any time
- Made to feel as an outsider left with no sense of belonging to the step-family
- Made to feel as a second class members of the family
- Denied the joy of warm parenting
- Made to feel hated and rejected
- Denied responsive feedback
- Isolating and excluding from family cycle
- Denied of primary education
- Not taken to dispensary when ill and left to suffer the pain and recover naturally
- Parental rejection of biological children
- Denying a child attention and company.

## Summary

Refusing to answer children's questions and refusing to listen to and take interest in children's self-initiated activity was considered to constitute emotional neglect. These views were however more strongly held by participants who have been influenced by formal and non-formal education about children's needs. Nonetheless, the data suggest that even without the influence of education, refusing to attend to a crying child has through the years been regarded as an act of child neglect. This may be due to the general understanding that young children, especially babies and toddlers, have no other language through which to express their needs and feelings. A mother who leaves a young child to cry without finding out the cause has always been blamed and regarded as non-caring and negligent of the child and her role as a mother.

The construction of isolation as an element of emotional neglect reported in this chapter is also pertinent with traditional and cultural conception of a child and childhood. As highlighted in Chapter Six children are regarded to depend on their parents for everything. People in the district know that young children need a close and caring adult for their survival.

In this chapter, participants identified rejection to constitute neglect affecting both biological and step-children. Goldstein, Freund and Solnit (1979) argue that as a prototype of a true human relationship the psychological child / parent relationship is not wholly positive. However, step-children were recognised to be more at risk of emotional abuse and neglect than biological children.

The inability of some parents to meet their children's basic needs was reported. Participants associated failure to meet children's basic needs with neglect. It was considered to cause feelings in children that one was not loved and cared for. Child labour and pawning were also recognised as practices that led children to feel they were not cared for by their parents, more especially those who would be overworked. Child labour seemed to be encouraged by the more able families as a means of cheap labour while pawning could be related to poverty and belief in traditional witch craft.

The above data on neglect point to: deliberate refusal to answer children's questions and showing no interest in children's work and what they say; step-family rivalry; negative discrimination of both step-and biological children; isolation and excluding children from the family cycle; grandmother weaning; failure to meet children's basic needs for food, clothing, education, personal hygiene and health; child labour in form of 'okutendera'; pawning and failure to provide a safe and clean housing accommodation to constitute neglect of children of the age birth to six years in the Jatti district. Participants also associated failure to keep the kitchen, utensils, latrine and toilets clean with neglect of children who might become ill because of the low standards of cleanliness.

## **CHAPTER TEN**

### **FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO EMOTIONAL ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

#### **Introduction**

Chapters Seven and Eight focused on what parents considered to constitute emotional abuse. Chapter Nine focused on the construction of neglect. This chapter considers the factors that parents considered to contribute to emotional abuse and neglect of young children in the Jatti district.

#### **Family type and size and associated challenges**

Participants were unanimous that children are happier raised in a monogamous relationship with the support of extended family members than in a polygamous relationship. As indicated in the previous chapter, polygamy and step parenting of children born outside a recognised marriage were both associated with rivalry and thought to be fraught with emotional abuse and neglect of children. Although traditionally polygamy was more accepted, as wealth was associated with numerous wives and many children, today socio-economic demands have reversed the situation. In the past the incentive to marry several wives and, therefore, produce more children, lay in the desire for free labour to till the land and harvest more agricultural produce, counted in terms of the number of traditional grain stores, cattle, goats and sheep, and

acres of banana and coffee plantations. Today a husband in a polygamous relationship is said to be carrying a heavy burden. This is because while in the past the main concern was providing food, via free labour, today parents are confronted by many social economic challenges. The data make clear how medical expenses, clothing, schooling and even food and shelter may all contribute to a monthly wave of bills which overwhelm many parents.

The abundant land that was once farmed by many families is no longer available. As reported in a child-rearing and community mobilisation study in the neighbouring Kenya, because of new land reform law (Swadener, Kabiru & Njenga, 1997) increase in population and greater interest in farming and other investments by the rich, land has become increasingly scarce for the less able parents in some areas. Chapter Seven revealed how some children are not adequately fed. Participants associated failure to meet children's need for food with emotional abuse. In rural communities the issue of food was, in addition to laziness by some parents, closely tied to access to sufficient land for cultivation. Some families reported experiencing problems in affording rent for the land on which they grew food crops.

These data reveal that the community consider emotional abuse and neglect prompted by food shortage to be more likely within large families, than smaller families, and in polygamous families than in monogamous families. This was explained in terms of what was encountered by some large and polygamous families in the effort to meet needs of their children.

Participants indicated that the larger the family, the greater the expenditure needed to feed, dress, educate and provide medical care. What was highlighted was that the poorer families tended to have a larger number of children. On the other hand, the rich especially those in commercial business, tended to have more than one wife because they could afford to meet related costs.

While the first wife would be the officially recognised wife, the others might or might not be recognised by the husband's family, relatives and the surrounding community. As the data below suggest, children born in a combination of these conditions, experience emotional abuse and neglect more frequently than those born in monogamous families, irrespective of the family size, income and level of education achieved.

A majority of families reported they did not practise family planning in order to produce the number of children they could afford. Because of the rampant rivalry in polygamous marriages, younger wives competed with the senior wife or wives to have as many or more children and property than they did. Generally, rivalry caused tension between relationships among family members. In some cases children do not only become the scapegoats for their biological and step-parents' stress and depression, but also for their step-brothers and sisters. As indicated below, within polygamous families, stress, frustration and depression was frequently reported.

A comment by a middle-aged urban educated male focus group participant, whose father had four wives and himself had one wife and three children, summarises many of the views expressed by focus group participants about polygamous families and



associated rivalries as some of the behaviour, practices and conditions that surround emotional abuse and neglect of young children in the district of the study.

Jealousies and envies that go on between and among stepmothers, children and the co-wives in most polygamous families are so much that no child can escape to be emotionally abused and not at one time or the other feel that himself or herself, his or her mother and biological sisters and brothers are not neglected. There is always the feeling that your father is caring and loving one of the other wives and her children more than he cares for your mother and your biological sisters and brothers. Even if you were not to feel so, your mother and other members of the extended family and even outsiders would make you feel so. They used to rank my father's wives in the order my father loved and cared for them and their children. There is nothing that does not happen in most polygamous families. Grabbing, fighting with both words and actions, pointing accusing fingers to others and telling lies about one another, and using witchcraft to solve some of their problems are some of the things that take place in most polygamous families. Now tell me how a child brought up in such a family can escape emotional abuse and neglect. (MUY)

In an interview with an urban educated grandmother who was raised in a polygamous family, the researcher was given further insight into how wives hate children of co wives who show signs of success in life, and even influence their children to hate one another. She also suggested that despite the rivalry a united family front is presented to the community. This situation was said to lead to internal wars and sometimes led to everlasting enmity and even death. Similar views to those expressed by this interviewee were also expressed by many parents who participated in focus group

discussion, interviews, cases study and the workshop which reflected on the authenticity of the data and how it was interpreted by the researcher:

Co-wives develop jealousies and lead their own children not to like and cooperate with children of the other wives. You find you are enemies but you try to cover this up when outsiders are around. The wars are usually fought internally for fear of what the community might feel and say-fear to put the family especially the husband to shame. For example, I know many cases of children who when they pass very well and win places in good secondary schools fear to take their holidays at home. They fear their step-mothers might bewitch them. Have you ever tried to find out why some university students from polygamous families hung in Kampala during the holidays? For some it is fear for their lives. (FRGm).

During focus group discussions, a rural grandfather shared his experience regarding relationships between co-wives and their children during the time he was a young boy. As quoted below, it was different from what pertains today:

When I was young, polygamous marriages were the order of the day and were not actually as bad as they are today. Instead the more wives and the more children a man had the more respectable he was in his community. Allow me to use my great grandfather's family to explain what I mean. His five wives and their children worked as a team. The young wives knew the first wife was the team leader. In fact the first wife was always asked to suggest families from which the other wives were got from. The whole family sat and ate together. It was not like today when children are stopped from eating food offered by their stepmothers. Recently a

small girl to whom I am a god-father told me she is not allowed to take food or drink from her stepmother. Although jealousies, envies and hatred may have existed they were not as what we are seeing today. No. (MRGf).

During the workshop, a middle-aged rural participant outlined that it was not uncommon for some fathers to leave each wife to cater for the clothing needs of their children who had not attained school going age:

It is also true that some fathers do not take on children until it is time for paying school fees. In rural areas feeding is also left to each mother who must dig together with her children to produce their food. It is only at Christmas when some husbands buy their different families a few kilos of meat. The rest of the responsibilities are left to mothers who at times fail to meet them. This creates problems more especially if in the family one of the wives is more capable and meets her young children's needs better than the rest and if in the neighbourhood there are children of the same age group who are better cared for. The less catered for children and their mothers suffer from envy. (FRM)

Generally, participants shared the view that children and their mothers lived a happier life in monogamous families than in polygamous families. The following remarks, by a mother from a monogamous marriage with six children, summarises the views of participants in the different phases of the study:

Even when you are poor you get peace of mind when you have no one to compete with for the little there might be. Whatever is available is there just for you and your children. You get contented with your own situation. (FRM).

### **Children born out of wedlock**

All adult participants shared the view that children born out of a marriage which is not officially recognised, and who are taken to join a step-family, were at risk to experience emotional abuse and neglect. Workshop participants supported the views expressed by different participants. A middle-aged male primary school teacher summarised the workshop view as follows:

It is true that most women don't want you to bring home children produced outside the marriage. In most cases it is done by force. And when such a child is brought home he or she is badly harassed. It is also true that at the same time such wives do not want to learn that you are providing some support to such children at their mother's place. And they very well know that if you do not, you can be taken to court by the mother that you have neglected the child. Yes, that is what it is, too bad for the child. (MRM)

The above anecdote suggests a consensus view, that step-children born within and outside recognised marriages, are more likely to experience emotional abuse and neglect than biological children in monogamous families. The argument that step-children can be at greater risk of maltreatment from step parents than from their own, is supported by the studies of Daly and Wilson (1982, 1985, 1994). For example, while exploring the links between child abuse and children who were not living with both natural parents, results indicated that both abuse and police apprehension were less likely for children living with two natural parents. Pre-schoolers living with one natural and one step parent were 40 times more likely to become child abuse cases than like-aged children living with two natural parents.

In a study using Canadian and British homicide data, Daly and Wilson (1994) examined killings of children less than 5 years old by step-fathers compared to genetic fathers. In this study, a high proportion of child homicides related to excessive beatings whereas with genetic fathers a substantial proportion of child homicides were accompanied by suicide and/or partner murder. The findings of these studies support the theory that step-parents represent a significant risk factor for child abuse.

Unlike the above findings, in the district of the study, step-mothers are associated with the maltreatment of children more than step-fathers. This is because it is rare for women to take children born to other men into their new marriages. The general practice is that children born out of recognised marriages are collected from the mothers after weaning. When a woman is preparing to marry, and produces a child who would not be collected by its father, she normally leaves the child either with her parents or a very close relative.

Being a patrilineal society, the belief is that all children belong to men, and in this case the earlier a child crosses to the father's side the better. Therefore, the practice is that when a child is able to eat family foods they join their father. What remains a surprise is that throughout the years women have not positively accepted this arrangement. In the previous chapter, a primary school teacher and a grandfather suggested that step-parent mistreatment of step-children has become worse in this modern age than it was in the past. This view was shared by many participants. The primary school teacher associated this proliferation with new social economic demands. One wonders whether equal ownership of children and economic

empowerment of women in such a society might make any difference to abuse outcomes for children.

It was also reported that in the rare case where a mother enters a new marriage with a child for step-fathering, a female is more readily accepted than a male child. As the data in Chapter Six suggest, the step-father knows a female will provide free labour and takes nothing from the family. Rather, she is seen to bring into the family riches in the form of cattle that would be paid for her bride dowry. Unlike female children, a male child would require land to settle on and cattle or cash to pay in form of dowry when he is of a marriageable age. He is, therefore, seen as someone who if kept would encroach on family property and is thus harassed. Only in rare cases step-sons afford to put up with the harassment. The majority resign and return to stay with their maternal grandparents or another close relative. In this regard, some socio-biologists associate non-biological fathers grossly ill-treating the young of their partner, because it is argued, they have no particular investment in the offspring (Buchanan 1996).

Participants also expressed concern over the increasing number of single parents that resulted from the war, and the loss of partners due to the AIDS virus which has become prevalent throughout the country. An increase of children born outside of marriages and of the divorce rate were also reported. Participants suggested the urgent need for the government to act in order to preserve the sanctity of monogamous family life.

## Poverty

Chapter Seven makes clear that the community expects parents to meet a child's need for food, clothing, bedding, health and education, while in Chapter Six, participants highlighted the value placed on children. For example, it was outlined that unlike in Western society, where a couple normally marry for love, in the Jatti community the motivation behind marriage was to produce children. In the Jatti traditional culture, the more children one had the higher the status the couple was accorded by the community. Births of children are celebrated and burials of women who die without producing a child are handled differently from those who have had children. 'Kafe oterebire mukiibunu'<sup>1</sup> is the worst curse a female can be labelled by any member of her family or community.

Nonetheless, the other side of this pride in parenthood was a frequently expressed regret at being unable to provide for their children. This was typically expressed in terms of being unable to provide enough or appropriate foods and health care, unable to afford rising school education costs and difficulties in providing needed clothing. Some children were also said to sleep without appropriate cover. The over-arching issue of poverty and the array of related problems were said to surround emotional abuse and neglect of young children in the Jatti district. The words of a young rural mother who depended on her husband for anything that cost money, summarised the views of the majority of rural participants:

Much as we may want to feed our children well, dress them well, make  
sure they sleep well, take them to the hospital for treatment and send

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<sup>1</sup> *Kafe oterebire mukibunu is a curse that one should die without producing a child*

them to school when they are of age, some of us can hardly afford to do so. We stop at wishing to do so. (FRY)

In this regard, many mothers were quoted that they wished they could afford to buy their children shoes and socks for Sunday wear, slippers, shorts for boys and knickers for girls. Others raised the issue of some families having too little land on which to grow food crops. In a case study conversation, a middle aged woman concluded her narration about poverty and emotional abuse and neglect in a sentence made of two expressive mother tongue proverbs 'Eishi obworo n'embwa, nibukuteeza omwana ngu aze kubyama'.<sup>2</sup>

In daily conversation with the researcher some parents, especially fathers, expressed regret at how poverty stopped them from meeting some of their families' basic needs. This included failure to send their children to school, denying them meat and using herbal treatment by local medicine men and women rather than modern medicines. At the community level, poverty was seen to affect social services and was associated with inadequate resourcing of dispensaries and hospitals. This led staff to demand bribes for services and medicines that people were supposed to receive free of charge. The government was implicated for not providing satisfactory basic resources to hospitals and dispensaries or paying workers reasonable salaries to curb rampant corruption.

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<sup>2</sup> This implies that poverty is so bad that it makes parents beat and mistreat children who have not done anything wrong. Sometimes it forces parents to dictate that a child goes to bed so that he or she does not bother them asking for food or drink.



Participants in different phases of the study talked of how it was not even possible to get an aspirin free. 'You are told the common reminder that even at Mulago the biggest government hospital nothing is free (Na Mulago ebyabusha bikahwayo)'. (MUEY)

That this would be said just to remind you to pay something for the service you need (to cough something is the common expression for this kind of payment). This means that when you are budgeting you need to include money for 'chai' (a polite way of talking about a bribe). If you go empty handed you may as well return with your child not treated'. (MRY)

Transport costs were also outlined as a handicapping factor for the less able parents to take their children to hospitals and dispensaries for treatment. This was said to encourage treatments offered by local medicine men and women which were associated with emotional abuse and neglect of young children. Participants were of the view that easy access to hospitals and dispensaries, and the availability of medicines in these places, would reduce some child emotional abuse and neglect-related practices and conditions.

Cruel extraction of babies' teeth and oburo (assumed millet grain like growth in a child's chest) and pawning, are some of the practices participants said could be greatly minimised. An interview participant from Kabisasi township made the following remarks which encompass the views of different participants regarding this concern.

Some parents may not afford to take their children to hospitals and dispensaries. The buses charge money which some parents may not easily afford. When you add together money for the bribe and transport to take you and bring you back with the child and

probably its mother it becomes much. Poverty is actually bad. It dictates many conditions. I know many parents who take their children to local medicine men just because they can not afford money the Medical Assistants and Nurses ask. I believe children will continue to be taken to local medicine men and others will continue to die in their homes if government hospital continue to operate like they are doing. I know many parents who have one leg in the world of our ancestors and the other in hospitals that is, when they can afford to do so. Those who fail to meet the bill of the local medicine 'doctors' end up pawning their children. (MRM)

Abuse cannot be blamed on poverty alone. Participants suggested that in some families some parents had a non caring attitude to their children which is linked with some incidents of emotional abuse and neglect. For example, some participants talked of parents who lived near dispensaries yet who turned to herbs they learned from their mothers for 'treatment' of childhood diseases, instead of taking children for immunisation and other more appropriate treatment. Others were even said to ignore the traditional herbal medicine handed over to them by their elders. In a conversation with a grandmother during the cases study phase, she complained about how her daughter-in-law had sworn never to chew preventive herbs for her baby (okujumburira which is mouth-to-mouth feeding of chewed herbs and roots to a child) and to pick, boil and use baby bath herbs to prevent her children from catching some of the childhood skin diseases (okujaburira). The daughter-in-law had contended that chewing herbs and roots had spoiled her teeth and baby bath herbs had spoiled her hands. Traditionally a caring mother is expected to chew herbal medicines and feed them to her children from birth to about four years of age. She is expected to do this

each morning before a child eats, and periodically to bathe her baby in baby bath herbs for at least the first two years to prevent the baby from developing skin diseases.

Nonetheless, throughout the data collection phases both the rural and the urban educated participants associated reliable and regular income with happiness in families. The view that financial hardship prompted emotional abuse and neglect of children was unanimous. The following example of a small boy who was worried because of her mother's loss of a job, was narrated by one of the urban middle-age participants and a comment by a rural mother of eight children makes this view clear:

When I visited their home the small boy looked more frustrated than his mother. When his mother went to make a cup of tea for me the little boy told me how his mother was not going to the town because she could not even afford money for the bus. He told me how his mother used to buy a lot of things but was at the time unable to buy even biscuits for him and that his mother had said very soon they would have to take their teas and porridge without sugar. The small boy even asked me if I could help her mother to get a job and if I could give some little money to her mother to at least get her to the town. This six year old boy knew the family depended on his mother's income from the job she had lost. With his small voice, his words touched my heart that if I had a way of getting his mother a job I would do so immediately. Quite often this innocent voice comes back. In fact it wasn't until this time that I got to realise how adults' worries affect children. (MRM)

The rural mother compared financially incapacitated husbands and fathers' behaviour with that of wounded elephants, especially towards the beginning of a new school term:

It is better to keep a distance. Mothers and their children keep their mouths closed until school dues are paid. When worried of how to raise the money for school fees fathers behave like wounded elephants they charge at everybody. They rebuke, beat, blame and harass children and their mothers. Children are told they are a big burden, if they were not there he would not be working day and night and going everywhere to borrow money. They would not have sold land, cattle, sheep or goats. When a child or mother says anything the words are pushed back into their mouths. It is not an easy time. (FRM)

The views expressed above suggest, that although child abuse cuts across social economic groups, it does so unevenly and the risk is considered to be greater among those who are poor, and without a regular source of income. This is pertinent to the sociological model for child maltreatment outlined by Gil (1970), and the findings by Gelles and Straus (1988), Gelles and Steinmetz, (1988) and Brown and Madge (1982). The sociological model suggests that society has the responsibility to ensure all parents have the 'necessary permitting circumstances' to parent. Linking living in poverty with child abuse Brown and Madge (1982, pp. 160-161) categorically stated:

Hopelessness and despair are common among families of very low incomes. The monetary consequence of poverty which includes disconnection of fuel supply and acute shortages of cash to buy food for the family or clothe the children adequately, must create situations where children are not properly cared for in a material sense. And the psychological consequences of chronic anxiety and despair are hardly conducive to happy child rearing.

Summarily, the core of Gelles' sociological perspective (Gelles & Straus, 1988; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980) is that social structures affect people and their

behaviour. The above data support this contention as well as Belsky's (1980) more inclusive model which has four levels, each with compensatory or risk factors.

None theless, although neglect is more viewed by the participants in this study as a function of adverse environmental conditions, the study also associates neglect with character deficits of neglectful parents. Like Polansky et al. (1985), some participants believed neglect sometimes resulted from mothers' personality deficits. For example, deliberate refusal to take children to dispensaries for treatment and immunisation and refusing to use the readily available herbal medicines echoes Polansky's discussion of neglectful mothers being less able to utilise available support systems rather than actually lacking access to these support systems.

Willis, Holden and Rosenberg (1992) also associate poverty with the maltreatment of children. According to them conditions arising from living in poverty, including stress, drug abuse and inadequate food and medical care, increases the likelihood of maltreatment. On the other hand, Kaufman and Zigler (1993) argue that the lowering of poverty rates will not only improve the general well-being of children but will also have an impact on the rates of maltreatment.

### **Traditional beliefs and practices**

A contentious discussion developed around this topic when an educated urban 'born again' Christian used a blanket statement labelling traditional beliefs and practices as satanic. On the other hand, other educated participants did not share a similar view. The majority believed that some of the traditional practices produced good results and did not inflict harm or abuse on children, and that they should therefore, continue to

be used in the best interest of children. They, however, condemned beliefs and practices that subjected children to unnecessary physical and psychological torture, those that negatively discriminated against children especially girls and those that handicapped development of children.

Nonetheless, the rural uneducated participants held some different views from those outlined by the urban educated. For example, given the inadequacies in the government hospitals and dispensaries and the costliness of services in privately owned clinics, most rural mothers felt that practices like *okushandaga*<sup>3</sup> could not easily be avoided.

They also did not think it had any serious effect on children. Their general view was that no stone should be left unturned in an effort to save a child's life. 'Even when it means going to witch doctors for whatever, life is life and everything must be done to save a child's life.' (FRM)

Rural mothers were more vocal on the use of traditional methods to treat children than any other category of participants. This could be attributed to their direct involvement in the care of children when they are ill, and their lack of control over the family income. Strong belief in traditional medicine and other related practices could also be based on the success of past experiences and their exposure to such treatment during their own childhood. Divergent views were raised as expressed in the following quotes. For example, supporting the use of local medicine men and women for the treatment of childhood disease, some participants argued that local medicine was

superior to modern science medicine. On the other hand, other participants shared the opinion that some parents either knowingly or unknowingly made modern scientific medicine less effective by not administering the medicine following the given instructions. In an interview with a middle-aged rural mother she justified her holding to traditional treatment of some diseases in the following statement:

It is true that you can get some treatment for your child from a dispensary. But suppose the pills and injections do not work like sometimes the don't, should one sit there and wait to bury the child or should one try everything possible to save the child's life? And mind you some childhood diseases can not be treated by hospitals. Some doctors and nurses themselves tell you to take your child back. That he or she might do better with traditional medicine. (Ngu nabaasa kuba arweire ebyekika suggesting the child might be bewitched and needing local treatment or that it could be to do with evil spirits). (FRM)

A case study urban female participant argued that mothers-in-law were the reason for holding to traditional practices, which some young mothers did not believe in. This view was echoed by many educated participants during the different phases of the study:

Some mothers-in-law can not let you free to find the treatment you want for your child. They are always with herbs and all sorts of other funny bit and pieces and razor blades. They examine the child and suspect and confirm the child is suffering or is going to suffer from this and that. If you do not take to their advice and comply

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<sup>3</sup> *Okushandaga involves cutting open a child's skin with a razor blade and rubbing in herbal medicine.*

and in the course of events anything happens to the child then you are in real trouble. (FRY)

And while some participants were in favour of changing from the harsh traditional treatment of children, others expressed the view that not all of it subjected young children to emotional abuse:

Some of it works well and does not even require cutting or burning anyone's skin if that is what is bad. For example, what is wrong with using herbal bath treatment (eshabiiko)<sup>4</sup> which even the educated are using to prevent their children from developing some diseases?' she asked. (FRM)

Some modern changes were also condemned and considered to subject children to emotional abuse and neglect. A grandfather shared the following experience with the researcher:

Some of the modern changes might be good for young children but some others are not. They are terrible. In fact I was surprised when I visited my son and his family in Kampala last year and found their little baby not sleeping in his parents' bedroom. He was isolated in his own room. I think this is one of the modern changes you are talking about. But I wonder whether such a change is good for young babies. Why should babies be isolated from their mothers at such an early age? It is the housemaid who was sleeping in the baby's bedroom instead of the mother. During our time all babies without exception slept on their mothers' chests. They suckled as they wished and got all the warmth they needed from

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<sup>4</sup> *Eshabiiko is a collection of selected herbs which are boiled and used as a special medicinal bath for babies. This treatment is believed to prevent childhood skin diseases.*



their mothers. For many reasons, I feel babies of our time were happier babies than those of today who are mothered by housemaids.

What about ignoring a baby who is crying for breast feeding that it is not yet time for feeding? Some babies are left to cry until it is time set for their feeding. I also do not consider this to be good for children. (MRGf)

### **Parents' daily work load**

Most participants considered parents' heavy workloads especially those of mothers to cause emotional abuse and neglect of young children. As expressed in the following quotes, parents' workload was categorised as one of the underlying causes for some of the parental behaviours that were associated with emotional abuse and neglect of young children. For example, non attendance to children's needs, ineffective supervision, the use of blame and rebuke language, consistent beating of children, denying children responsive feedback, and demonstrating a lack of love and care for one's children were behaviours that were said to be prompted by parents' heavy workload. Some mothers were said to come home too fatigued and exhausted to cope with young children's demands without reacting. A rural grandmother gave the following explanation during the interview session with her:

Because of being busy in and outside the home some parents may not know where their children are and what they would be doing for long hours. Take an example of a woman who might leave home at six in the morning to return at another six o'clock in the evening. This mother is not in position to supervise her children. She might not know how her children who stayed home

spent the day, how they ate if they sat down to do so, she might not find time to bathe them, cut their nails and hair, attend to their teeth and wash their clothes regularly. Such are the mothers of children you find loitering around, in fact all over the place. Some children play and work well together with others but others may not. Some fight and quarrel and others may go without food.

(FRGm)

In the endeavour to ensure work objectives were achieved some children were said to be overworked and harassed and were made to go beyond what is expected of children of the age group. Some participants suggested that some parents did not want to see anyone standing or sitting or playing and that some rarely gave their children a break. A contribution by a leader of one of the local women's organisations during the workshop session, includes the views expressed by participants who considered the nature of domestic work to subject some children to emotional abuse:

You find small girls or boys sweating carrying jerricans, pots or calabashes of water coming from the wells, a heavy bundles of firewood from the forest or gardens where they would be working with their parents, heavy bunches of matooke from the banana plantations or baskets of potatoes from the garden. I know parents give them much in good faith so that what is carried lasts long but some of it is rather too much. And others are made to take on responsibilities that should be done by older children. Although it is all good training but in some cases some children are overburdened. With some parents what seems important is getting work done and not what happens to the child and what the child feels about it. (FRM)

Interestingly, both rural and urban participants reported that when a child was overworked by someone else, parents, especially mothers, complained. The same thing occurred when a child was beaten or rebuked by another person. Such behaviour was regarded as abusive and inappropriate when conducted by other people, but not when carried out by themselves. This could relate to the concept of children as the parents' property. Such reactions suggest that parents are aware that it is inappropriate to overwork and to punish children in a coercive manner. In Chapter Eight children's responses to treatment they accept and resent from their parents included being beaten, rebuked and called negative names.

This situation in which parents and children find themselves corroborates the finding by Azar and Siegal (1990) who recognised the influence of social factors in setting the scene, and acknowledged a lack of parenting skills in coping with particular stages of their child's development to lead to patterns of child maltreatment. In addition, Friedrich and Wheeler (1982) and Milner (1988) linked unrealistic expectations with physical child abusers. Participants in this study greatly associated physical abuse with emotional abuse. They considered physical abuse to be one of the causal factors of emotional abuse and that it created in children feelings that they were unwanted and unloved by their parents.

### **Parent / child personality and character**

Parents' and children's personality and character were also named as causal factors for child emotional abuse and neglect. In this regard, participants suggested that there were children, who by their nature were, very difficult to nurture. Such children were said to have a number of characteristics and disorders which subjected them to a

higher risk of abuse than their counterparts. Personality characteristic and tendencies like aggression, (obubisha) difficult to please (obunyakantu), hot temperedness and quick to react without giving thought to the cause of the problem, (okubakira juba), were for example, traced in some families. Participants suggested some of these were hereditary. Participants shared the view that parents and children with such personality and character were at more risk to emotionally abuse and be abused. The following quotes from interview and case study responses express this opinion:

There are parents who are so quarrelsome (abatongani) that they are always aggressive. It is in their blood because when you look back you find their grandparents behaved in the same way. When a little thing goes wrong they bust out as if something very serious has happened. They can hardly control their anger. Others are always wearing worries on their face and are never happy with anything and with anyone (bamaganya). They are always complaining and have no patience. Although children get used to their parents' nature some do it at a big cost and some others never do. Most of these parents tend to over use the cane, rebuke and curse language to solve their problems with children. But also children who are sickly and cry most of the time prompt their carers to abuse them. They become too demanding. For example there is no doubt that deformed children are difficult to look after. They are an extra burden and may cause any parent to react badly. (FRM)

It is true that aggressiveness (obukambwe) is inherited. The Rwari family is a good example of such families. The Bifas are known for shouting at people instead of talking. None of them including sons and daughters talks without shouting (okukankama) especially

when they are dealing with children. I hate to find any of them punishing a child and even just giving a warning. Recently I had to cut my visit short when a child broke a pot . . . I am not sure if they know that there is anything wrong with their tone. I guess they think it is normal. (FRM)

Most of the above identified characteristics are pertinent to literature on child abuse and neglect. Depending on the model one is applying to the situation, one gets different constructions of the origins of maltreatment. For example, the above data relate to psychological and behavioural theories when applied to maltreatment. In this regard, early authors described perpetrators of physical abuse, with a variety of characteristics, including impulsivity, immaturity, depression (Steele & Pollock, 1968; Kempe et al., 1962), and poor emotional control and inadequacy. In addition, perpetrators were considered to be self-centred, hypersensitive, and quick to react with poorly controlled aggression (Kempe et al., 1962), to have perversive anger (Zalba, 1971) and to be dependent, egocentric, narcissistic, demanding and insecure (Steele & Pollock, 1968).

However, the participants may be wrong in their belief in the inheritability of some of the tendencies such as aggression, anger, poor emotional control and depression.

According to the behaviourists' perspective, all behaviour is learned from the environment into which one is brought. Social learning theorists also reject the idea that aggression is an inner subconscious drive, joining behaviourists in arguing that aggression is learned and takes place in a social context. Nonetheless, participants' view of aggression as an inherited character trait could result from observing family behaviour over generations. Inter-generational recurrence whereby each child born is exposed to a model of behaviour and in turn passes it on to his or her children could

make the behaviour seem as if it is inherited even when it is just learned. Whether inherited or learned, the main point, is the recurrence of emotionally abusive behaviour and its impact on the family and children.

### **Domestic violence and gender differentiated work and responsibilities**

Many participants used examples of male dominance and female domestic violence to demonstrate their concept of the way that parents behaved towards each other and how this relate to child emotional abuse. During the different phases of the study participants reported that parent fighting and quarrelling in the presence of children caused frustration and distress to children. The following story of a small boy told by a rural grandmother illustrates this view:

Recently a small boy told me he did not like his father because he was bad to his mother and beats everybody even when they haven't done or said anything. That the children run to bed when they would hear him getting near home from the small trading centre where he went to drink in the evenings. He said his mother could not hide like they did because she was the first one he would come calling. (FRGm)

Participants said that in such families both the mother and children must listen and obey the head of the family. Hesitation to take instruction would instigate a quarrel or mark the end of communication that would also led to violence. In most cases children were said to keep on their mothers' side, probably because both were treated like property and many times suffered the same fate. Both could be beaten, rebuked and told they were not going to be bought things or taken for paid health treatment.

Men's view that a woman's responsibility was to care for young children and the belief that if fathers got close to children the children would not fear and respect them, was also associated with emotional abuse and neglect. In order to be recognised as the head of the family some fathers were quoted to talk unnecessarily roughly to children in order to make them keep a distance. Some of this behaviour was taken by children to mean dislike and hatred for them. Some participants both the rural and the urban educated suggested such feelings were made stronger by mothers and elder children who, whenever a child defaulted, was told that he/she would be reported to their father for punishment. 'This makes some young children think of their fathers as hating and punishing fathers.' (MRY).

During interviews and case study sessions some urban educated participants blamed mothers for painting them as punishing fathers and suggested it was not necessary for the mothers to wait for the fathers to punish. Rural mothers were reported to use this strategy more than the educated and working mothers. This could again result from the concept that children belong to men and that both the mother and the child are property of the man. However, there were some indicators that the urban educated mothers are growing towards claiming equal ownership of children. The researcher associates this with emancipation of the educated working women.

The following comments by a leader of one of the local women's organisations and a middle-aged man working for one of the Non Governmental Organisations for community development who participated in the workshop, summarised the views of many participants who considered gender differentiated work and responsibilities to surround emotional abuse and neglect of young children:

Some children go into hiding when they hear their fathers greeting people on their return from a day's work. Yet some of such fathers feel great and interpret fear to mean respect. What they want is their presence felt, to be recognised as the head of the family, something the mother and her children very well know. (FRM)

I know of fathers who can not even clean a baby's nose, or hands or anything. Instead they command the child to go to its mother. They wave them off. Or instead of taking action they command the mother to come, pick and clean the child: 'get your child, he is dirty, come quickly I don't want him to touch me'. Because of this, some children think their fathers do not love them. They get closer to their mothers. (MRM)

These observations are consistent with findings by O'Hagan (1993) and Patterson, (1982). In this regard, O'Hagan found poor, and often violent, relationships between parents, frequent quarrels, physical spouse-abuse, cruelty, and an atmosphere of permanent anxiety and fear characterising the home environment, which in turn distressed children in the family. Focusing on parent interaction in families with poor marital relationships, Patterson also reported that in such families parental interaction was either violent or silent, and that communication between parents and children was more of commands and rebukes than anything else. Children were said to pick up the same model of behaviour evidenced in aggressive reactions when dealing with siblings and peers.

Regarding whether or not parents were aware of the impact that some of their behaviour and practices had on children, some participants were of the view that ignorance was no defence and that abusive actions and words remained abusive



whether or not the parent knew their effect on the child. The data also indicated that parents explain what they do that the community condemns and associates with abuse and neglect in terms of disciplinary measures under the cover of 'in the best interest of the child'. Some of the parents do not seem to accept such behaviours as wrong. It appears that the child is construed as the one who is always wrong. Gelles and Cornell (1990) also note that it is not uncommon for parents to justify abusing their child because the punishment was for the child's own good.

These data also reveal male violence being used as a means of controlling women and children and demonstrate how women's suffering spills over to children and puts both mother and child in a distressed state of mind. Buchanan (1996) also reports that what affects women also affects children.

### **Lack of awareness of the effect of behaviour and practices on children**

Some emotionally abusive and neglectful behaviour and practices were said to result from parents' lack of knowledge of how these impact on children. In many instances this was referred to as innocent or non intentional abuse and neglect of children.

Examples included lack of awareness regarding the impact of polygamous marriages on young children; producing many children; some traditional beliefs and practices; parents' work load in relation to failure to provide responsive feedback to developing children, overworking children, and use of coercive punishments and language to teach and correct children, finding time to attend to children's personal hygiene and ensure sanitation for healthful living. Commenting on the data, a retired teacher made the following observation which was supported by the workshop participants:

I think it is no wonder that they handle their children like that. That is what they saw their mothers and fathers do. They themselves were brought up under the control of the cane. They were beaten, rebuked and blamed if they did anything wrong or did not do as well as they would be expected. Why should they be expected to treat their children differently. So like their mothers and fathers they beat, silence, blame and rebuke to teach their children to behave well and work. And I think some do not know how some of the things they do to their children affect them. For example, some parents may not know that over criticising a child is not good. I also know some parents who aim to prove to the child that he or she is wrong and a failure and in the presence of other people. They feel happy when they see a child shy away crying. They think they have taught the child a lesson. And others will not let a child say anything they try hard to overshadow them when they try to say something. (MRB)

Some participants suggested that although it was true that some parents were unaware of the effect of their behaviour on children, it was also true that others were aware but simply continued with the practice. Some of the examples given included work given to some children. For example, some participants suggested that parents would know the bundle of firewood, a calabash or jerrican of water, a bunch of bananas, a basket of potatoes or a baby they were giving a child, was too heavy for the child but because a parent needed the work to be completed he or she overlooked the fact that it was unfair to the child. Requiring little girls to cook and care for their younger siblings while the mother would be away working was often considered good training in responsibility, although it demanded more than the small child could easily cope with. Illustrations, such as when small girls would be found seated crying together with the

younger sisters and brothers they were supposed to be caring for, were quoted to support the view that some children were assigned responsibilities beyond their capabilities. Although some mothers were quoted as sympathising with their children regarding the situations they would find them in and when the children would be tired or made mistakes, others rebuke, ridicule, humiliate and even beat them. This was considered inappropriate on the basis that it would be the adult carer who would have led the child into the behaviour and who would be punishing the child.

## Summary

This chapter has presented participants' views regarding what they considered to surround emotional abuse and neglect of children of the age birth to six years in Jatti district. Family type and size; polygamous marriages; out of wedlock children; poverty and the related challenges; some traditional beliefs and practices; unawareness of the impact of some of the parental behaviour, practices and conditions on young children; inadequate family and child welfare services; child and parents' personality and character; children with deformity related behavioural problems; domestic violence; male dominance and gender differentiated work and responsibilities in families; and job/work related constraints on parents are some of situations which were identified as contributing to emotional abuse and neglect of young children in the district of the study.

In identifying ways in which emotional abuse and neglect of young children could be minimised, participants outlined situations that needed to be addressed by the government and others that could be tackled at family and individual level. In this regard, participants suggested that the government could reduce poverty levels by

helping families to earn meaningful and regular income through enabling them to start small scale income generating projects. Government workers said the little money they earned could not meet their family needs. The situation was considered to be worse with the rural subsistence farmers who depended on the hand hoe, land, weather and market for their agricultural products. Some families were reported not to have land where they could grow food crops for their families.

Educated parents emphasised the need for the government to further intensify campaigns for family planning. Meeting needs of big families was projected as a big challenge especially for the rural families without enough land and regular income. Many mothers suggested the government and churches should help to discourage polygamy. Rural participants complained about the government failure to provide medicine in dispensaries and hospitals for the treatment of their children and other family members. Both the urban and the rural uneducated participants realised they needed to be helped to know more about children and parenting in the modern age. Participants also proposed a need for parents to reduce the frequency and extent of beating and rebuking children. And although everybody maintained that children needed to help their parents in domestic work, most parents especially the urban educated, suggested children should not be overworked.

## **CHAPTER ELEVEN**

### **SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Introduction**

This study set out to examine how parents in a rural district in Uganda construe emotional abuse and neglect of children of the age birth to six years. Four questions guided the study:

1. What do parents in the Jatti district consider constitutes emotional abuse of children of the age birth to six years?
2. What do parents in the Jatti district consider constitutes neglect of children of the age birth to six years?
3. What do parents consider to be experiences and factors that contribute to emotional abuse and neglect of children from birth to six years?
4. What are the implications of the findings for the government policy in Uganda?

The discussion is presented in three sections. The first reflects on the concept of 'good enough parenting'. The second focuses on what was considered constituted and surrounded emotional abuse, while the third section reflects on what was considered constituted and surrounded neglect. The implication of the findings for the government policy in Uganda is occasionally alluded to but is more specifically addressed in the final chapter that follows.

## **'Good enough parenting'**

During focus group discussion (reported in Chapter Seven), 'good enough parenting' was conceived in terms of appropriate and inappropriate child care and socialisation of children. The concept is used to describe how adequately parents meet their children's basic needs and how well children are socialised to become well behaved and useful members to their families and communities. However, there are some divergences and contradictions in the construction by members of the Jatti community of what is considered to constitute and cause behaviours and practices that are associated with emotional abuse and neglect of young children.

### **Physical needs**

Participants in the study were concerned with meeting most of the basic needs of young children; however, the need for food was most emphasised, and was associated with children's need for physical strength. Physical strength was generally associated with good health. Participants recognised that children who were not fed well, were more susceptible to disease than children who were well fed and strong. There are various ways in which this view could have been formulated. First, it could have resulted from different experiences in the lives of families in the district. For example, it could be that what the participants learned from their own parents was most important for children. Secondly, it could be that parents associated strength with children's help with family work, since a weak, sickly child might not help as well as a strong, healthy child. Thirdly, it could be that participants knew that some families did not satisfactorily feed their children. Or, they could have learnt from their parents and grandparents about the historical famine period known as 'Rwaranda' which wiped out some families. Or, this message could have been internalised through

experiences some families go through during bad periods of drought and the Ministry of Agriculture awareness campaigns regarding food security. As well, it could be that feeding children was what organisations, clubs and associations that work in the best interest of families and their children emphasised. Wherever the message came from, it seemed to have been internalised. Despite this widely shared understanding, the field work provided evidence that some families did not meet this obligation.

Unsatisfactory fulfilment of this obligation was associated with several factors.

Participants recognised that;

- (1) some families did not have enough land on which to grow enough food and could not afford to rent pieces of land for this purpose;
- (2) some parents with land did not work hard to raise enough food for their families;
- (3) some families were big and feeding them was a challenge;
- (4) other families sold their harvests for money to meet daily needs and did not store enough food to take them to the next harvest; and
- (5) because of other commitments some mothers failed to prepare regular meals for their children.

Although researchers in Western countries associated inadequate feeding with physical abuse, in this study all participants in each of the four phases of the study identified it as a need that had to be met to ensure children's physical and emotional well being. Failure to feed children of this age range, thus, constituted emotional abuse and neglect.

### **Personal hygiene and housing**

As well, the community expected parents to see to their children's bodily cleanliness and to ensure their hygiene. Bringing up children in dirty home environments was considered as a failure in responsible parenting. In this regard, not keeping clean the house, kitchen, latrines and toilets was associated with neglect. Participants also recognised making children sleep in dirty bedding, not keeping children's bodies clean and not washing their clothes regularly as failure to attend to a child's personal hygiene and to lead to poor health of a child. This kind of behaviour and practice was categorised as personal hygiene neglect. Cooking and serving children food using unclean utensils was also associated with neglect. Participants recognised the relationship between personal and environmental cleanliness and safety with happy and healthy early childhood. Nonetheless, the quality and extent of this knowledge and its application varied. Some parents were more informed, and were more able than others to meet this need.

### **Discipline and work skills**

'Good enough parenting' was also considered to include instilling in children discipline and work skills at the earliest time possible. However, it was recognised that parents who while playing this role overworked children, subjected them to carrying heavy weight, beyond what they could easily lift, would be endangering a child's health. This was seen to be falling out of step of the community code of 'good enough parenting'. Nonetheless, most of the urban participants were aware how some parents who depended on subsistence agriculture, sometimes required children to do more than the community generally considered appropriate for young children. These parents needed support of their children to cope with challenges in meeting family



needs to a greater extent than did the rural educated parents. Sometimes they did not consider the impact some of the tasks had on their children's lives. It was recognised that it was through the process of child care and socialisation of young children that parents inflicted emotional abuse and subjected children to feel uncherished.

### **Education**

The importance of sending children to school to ensure acquisition of literacy skills was recognised by all participants. Not sending children to start primary education and withdrawing them for no good reason was categorised as education neglect. It was considered important for children to at least complete the primary education cycle. Parents struggled hard to meet the education cost for their children. Failure to send children to school was more associated with poverty than unawareness of the value of education. Parents with big families living in rural villages, and without a regular income were more likely to fail to send their children to school, and to withdraw them before completion of the primary school cycle, than parents who had small families with a regular income. In rural families, if there were financial constraints, it was the girl child who would not be let to start or would be withdrawn. Polygamous marriages, prioritisation of needs, not having enough land to raise some income through farming, parents work load and the need to get assistance from children, especially the girl child, were some of the factors surrounding failure to send children to school or to withdraw them.

### **Community initiated intervention to protect children from abuse and neglect**

The seriousness attached to meeting children's basic needs was demonstrated in different ways. For example, within the family in rural communities women who did

not dig to produce food for their children were returned to their parents for counselling and others divorced. A man who did not provide clothing and bedding for his children and pay their school fees, was reported by his wife to the family elders for counselling. Other situations that would subject men to counselling included failure to ensure the availability of a community standard latrine and secure accommodation. Wife and children beating and drunkenness also were cases that qualified for intervention of family counsellors. When this failed to produce results, the brother or father of the wife sued him through the local court, and if he did not oblige, the case reached the district court. Nonetheless, the Jatti women were brought up in a culture that taught them that problems in marriage were primarily to be solved between the wife and husband. It was only when problems persisted that they were expected to involve close relatives. As a result of this cultural expectation, women were forced to keep quiet about many problems they and their children experience in their families.

There was also the fear by wives that taking a husband to court could lead to the husband marrying another wife. Another wife would mean more bodies to clothe, more blankets to buy, more mouths to feed and more children to send to school. Wives knew of this and as much as possible tried to prevent it from happening as it would worsen their own and their children's situation. Polygamous marriage and step parenting rivalry were recognised by both male and female participants to subject children to emotional abuse and neglect. The evidence from the field suggested that step-children were often made to experience emotional abuse than biological children staying with their parents.

### **'Good enough parenting' in other contexts**

On the basis of the above data it can be argued that in general the Jatti standards of 'good enough parenting' do not, in principle, seem to be very much different from those of some of the Western countries. To assume more differences than similarities would in any case be unrealistic, given the fact that parents worldwide have broadly similar responsibilities. In the reviewed literature, Whitting and Edwards (1988) suggested the following as responsibilities of parents to their children:

- See to physical well being of the child by attending to nutritional and other health needs and protect the child from discomfort and harm;
- Relief from anxiety and fear by offering the child emotional comfort;
- See that the infant learns sphincter control and proper hygiene;
- Help the child learn the culturally approved forms of etiquette and norms of social behaviour; and
- Teach the child skills in the early years (pp. 86-87).

In this regard Whitting and Edwards argue that since many of these behaviours and skills are prerequisites for acceptance and survival as a viable member of society the behaviour of caretakers the world over is broadly similar. Nonetheless, they acknowledge, consistent with the findings of this study, that the contexts in which parents find themselves with their children created differences in the ways parents played their roles and were enabled to achieve these goals. The differences, they pointed out, included differences in household composition, gender patterns of workload, available support networks and beliefs about the nature of the children. A comparison of what the parents in the Jatti district considered to be 'good enough parenting' with what the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, (IDCFS) (1985) outline as minimum parenting standards provided further evidence in

similarities in goals of parenting. IDCFS Minimum Parenting Standards fell into five categories namely that

- The family should have income sufficient to meet the family's basic needs for food, shelter, clothing, education, and health care;
- Parents were required to obtain and provide the quantity and quality of food necessary to assure the adequate health development of individual family members. As well in this category of physical standards parents were required to provide a structurally safe and protective living residence, to provide and maintain clothing which is sufficient quantity and quality, to assure the personal hygiene of children and to provide necessary medical care to children;
- The affection standards, required parents to demonstrate or model positive affection in their relationship, to demonstrate positive affection towards the child and to ensure interaction between siblings and non-parental adults and the child(ren) demonstrate positive, age appropriate affection;
- Parents were also expected to demonstrate the ability to educate the child in social interaction skills and to demonstrate an ability to foster the child's achievement of age appropriate academic skills; and
- Parents are expected to demonstrate positive methods of providing appropriate guidance to the child (Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, 1985).

The concept of minimum parenting standards will probably always elude explicit definition and quantification. What constitutes minimally adequate parenting is ultimately a social judgement subject to varied interpretations over time and connected with the particular circumstances of individual cases. Even within the small sample of the Jatti district there were differences and contradictions when participants examined parenting practices of child care and socialisation. As it is suggested in the

introduction to this section participants contended that it was through parents' good intentions to meet children's physical and psychosocial needs that children experienced emotional abuse and neglect. How this happens in the context of families in the Jatti district is the focus of the sections that follow.

## **Emotional abuse**

The findings propose emotional abuse and neglect to be manifested through parental behavioural tendencies which are dictated by the circumstances that surround families and communities. The behaviours and conditions were perceived to impact on children in different forms as they interacted with their surrounding environment. Generally, the different forms relate to failure and/or refusal to meet a child's physical and psychological needs in the process of child care and socialisation.

Emotional abuse was generally associated with experiences and care giver behaviours or environmental conditions that consistently and gradually lead the victim child to experience worry most of the time, depression, live with intense fear, and experience frustration. With some children, this was said to climax in poor feeding habits and to lead to emaciation. Scolding children and using punitive methods to achieve discipline and teach work skills seemed to be at the core of emotional abuse. Failure and or refusal to meet children's basic needs was also linked with emotional abuse. The following discussion addresses some of the behaviours, conditions and circumstances that were identified to constitute and surround emotional abuse and neglect of young children in the Jatti district.

### **Physical chastisement of children**

Physical chastisement constituted emotional abuse and developed in children feelings that they were unloved. Participants believed that consistent chastisement leads children to develop a negative self-concept and low self-esteem. Although both rural and the urban educated families used punitive methods to get children to do what the parents wanted or did not want them to do, participants, especially the urban educated, suggested coercive methods were more frequently used by the rural parents whose families depended on hand-hoe subsistence agriculture. The data suggest that these parents more often than the urban educated, used flogging, smacking, hard pulling of ears, blocking a child's mouth with a hand to stop him/her from yelling when beaten, and spitting on a child than their counterparts, the urban educated. Parents categorised all these behaviours as constituting emotional abuse of young children in the district. Of these, deliberate spitting on a child by a parent to correct the child seems unprecedented in the emotionally abusive behaviours in the reviewed literature. Examples from field work suggest in the Jatti district, chastisement of children in the process of child care and socialisation is a handed over culture from past generations.

Difference in type, intensity and frequency of chastisement as a training and control strategy by the urban and rural parents was associated with variations that existed in the sociological realities the community and the family set for their children. The urban educated and the rural uneducated parents set different goals for their children. Some expectations cut across, while some were more emphasised by one category of parents than the other, and some affected one sex of the children than the other. In some families, this made boys and girls seem to have different needs and rights in the course of time and across culture. As a result, parents and the community groomed

boys and girls to play different roles in their environments. The data associated differences and similarities in the setting of sociological realities for children with different factors including: type of families in which the parents grew and the family's value system, memories of one's childhood, memories of how one's sisters and brothers were brought up; the geographic location of the family in relation to social services; level of education, the family's social status, sex, age, gender, the type of work and religion.

### **Changing from coercive to positive strategies**

It seems clear that to change from coercive to positive approaches in child care and socialisation does not only require conscious effort, but also knowledge of other possible ways of doing so. Parents who have not been exposed to other ways of doing things might not be aware of alternative means to achieve some of the realities set for their children.

Views were also expressed that some parents might not be aware of the impact some of their chastising behaviour had on their children. For example, spitting on a child might be seen as a light and probably harmless reaction as a physical act while it psychologically hurts. This situation points to the need for parenting education that would enable sharing of experiences. It is also through such a program that new ideas could be introduced to change parents' attitudes and practices that need to be modified and to enhance and further enrich those that promote happy childhoods of children.

Nonetheless, some other factors could be at play. The problem could lie in personality of the parent or care-giver. Some might lack the patience and self sacrifice that is

needed and expected in positive parenting. For others, it could be lack of skills in time management rather than time itself. And as the data indicate, other parents could expect adult standards in the child as evidenced in the common judgemental expressions like 'toine maisho', and 'toine magyezi' ('don't you have eyes' and 'are you so stupid').

Furthermore, 'okuhana' which in the traditional culture meant counselling was associated with emotional abuse by participants in this study. Although in the traditional culture 'okuhana' would be done in the best interest of the child, it was now being used as a cover under which many children were chastised. A parent found chastising a child would justify the act by suggesting that what he or she would be doing was in the best interest of the child ('okuhana' or well intentioned counselling). The researcher considers absence of a legal protection of children from parental chastisement puts children at significant risk of abuse.

Under the guise of 'okuhana' parents are likely to claim to be always 'right' and children 'wrong' and therefore deserving to be punished in any way and to any extent as the parent wishes. This is also enshrined in the cultural concept of childhood which equates children with property owned by parents and in proverbs, as in the example of 'omukuru tashobya'. This implies that the elder is never wrong. What took place under the guise of 'okuhana' can be compared to using freedom without exercising the responsibility that would be expected to go with it. Traditionally however, in Uganda and in the district of the study, counselling was more commonly used with older children and adults. What might be needed now, could be to develop age appropriate counselling strategies, which take into consideration the social cultural



context of families, for use with younger children. The advantage here is that counselling would not be seen as an imposed method from a foreign culture.

Secondly, people know of its effectiveness and would probably more readily accept it.

This study also notes that previous research in Uganda, and in other countries, has tended to focus on and to highlight chastisement of children and not the positive forms which parents living in difficult circumstances use. This study regards such culturally embedded positives as the community strengths that should be built on, in the effort to cause change, in the best interest of children. The impact of chastisement on children, could probably be better understood when discussed along other possible positive alternatives, that could be used to instil discipline and get children to learn and work without tears. Existing strengths need to be identified, and promoted. The researcher believes that recognising existing strengths and building on them might fetch better results than intervention programmes which are based in deficit models.

Nonetheless, use of chastisement seems to be wide spread and not limited to families of children in rural communities where a majority of the parents are uneducated. Even the urban educated parents chastised their children. However, this study recognises the impact of a law that is enacted to address the practice. What seems clear is that more than ever before, Uganda is getting concerned about the way children are disciplined both at home and in primary schools and secondary schools (Nyonyintono, 1997).

Nyonyintono (1997) suggests that both adults and children have reached a stage of accepting pain as a means of discipline and punishment. Some findings by

Nyonyintono who investigated cultural antecedents to violence against children in Uganda are similar to some of the findings of this study. For example, participants in both studies suggested that more step children experience abuse and neglect than biological children living with their parents. They also identified polygamy and extra marital relationships as some of the common practices which exposed children to violence.

The picture created by the above literature, and findings of this study, suggest that the use of punitive methods in the home and school contribute to emotional abuse and neglect. The rural parents could probably be said not to know the impact of such punitive ways of dealing with young children. But what about teachers who most likely completed a course of child psychology? Whatever the case might be, the influence of the school on lives of children either directly or indirectly through the behaviour and practices of their parents ought not be underestimated.

In this study, there was a tendency for educated parents and the rural uneducated to use coercive methods to discipline children. For example, children of the educated parents may be beaten rebuked and denied food for failure to recite a-multiplication tables and for not solving the set homework problems correctly. The action taken against poor performance on school work is not any different from that of a rural uneducated parent who beats his or her daughter for failing to pound cassava or grind properly the assigned basket of millet to make flour for a meal. The realities revealed by this, and some of the previous research in Uganda (Nyonyintono, 1997) point to the need for intervention programs that take into consideration the different factors prevailing in the cultural context.

Though lessons from other countries may be useful, the more helpful lessons however, are likely to be those shown to have emerged in countries with similar cultural and socio-economic conditions. For example, what might have worked well in developed countries with very high levels of literacy and high GNP, conditions that allow for the provision of varied social services, may not work in developing countries where the conditions are markedly different. Even within the same country, such as Uganda, what may be suitable for the urban educated may not necessarily work effectively for the rural uneducated. Even for the within categories, different approaches might need to be devised to fit and suit the needs of different families. This view is consistent with the findings of previous research studies which indicate that cultural factors may perpetuate child maltreatment (Levinson 1989; Whiting & Edwards 1988) and that parenting styles which are more or less aggressive can evolve from different living conditions (Newell 1989; Leach 1993).

To address illiteracy in Tanzania, the Tanzanian government found that if they used one channel, that is the regular school, they would never accomplish their mission. It would probably take too long to reach everybody. In the first case, not every primary school age child was going to school as is the case in Uganda and in the Jatti district. Then there were youths who either never went to school or who started and dropped out. There were also adults of different age ranges in villages who also never went to school. The Tanzanian mission was to achieve 100 percent literacy with her population. They chose to use a multi-pronged approach that catered for everybody, each in their own circumstances. As a result, in Tanzania more than 90 percent of the of the school age and adult population is literate. The need to use multi-pronged

of the school age and adult population is literate. The need to use multi-pronged approach to address the phenomenon of child abuse and neglect might be a more promising attempt through which to address child abuse and neglect in the Jatti district, and in Uganda at large.

Consequently this study concludes that intervention programs should be avoided if they:

1. do not take cognisance of the peculiarities embedded in the different families and their levels of social development;
2. choose to use lenses of the dominant culture to assess need; and
3. adopt wholesale intervention programs used in the dominant cultures from either within or outside a given country.

## **Responsive feedback**

Although in their early years, children need responsive feedback to enhance their development, and an understanding of themselves and that of their environment, participants in this study suggested that some children did not receive adequate responsive feedback, especially from their mothers. Urban mothers with comparatively less demanding work loads, were recognised to be in better situations to provide responsive feedback to their young children, than most of the rural mothers. Failure by some parents to provide responsive feedback was associated with emotional abuse. This shortcoming was mainly linked with the busy and demanding workload, rural mothers were confronted with on a daily basis. Descriptions by different participants of a typical rural woman's daily routine, in many ways, resembled that of Niima outlined in Chapter Six. Niima woke up very early each

morning. She kept busy throughout the day and retired to bed very late every night. Such a routine, was considered to contribute to the inadequate responses rural mother's gave in the way of answering their children's questions and in the meeting their children's other developmental needs.

Patient listening to children's questions and requests, and providing responsive feedback, was viewed as a responsibility that would be performed well, by a carer with less constraints, than most mothers experienced in the Jatti district. Rural participants, suggested that the urban educated families which employed someone to help with daily work, were in better position, to sit and listen to their children's questions, and to attend more adequately to their physical and other developmental needs. As in the foregoing discussion of chastisement of children, time was again recognised to stand in the way to use more positive strategies in some families.

Nonetheless, participants, recognised some other factors that contributed to failure by some parents, in the Jatti district, to provide responsive feedback to their children. For example, the data provided evidence which suggested, that not much importance was attached to children's questions. Consequently, like anything else to which little or no value is attached, not much attention was paid to them. Participants recognised that children's questions were answered when they could be answered. They also suggested that some children could be beaten and rebuked for asking questions.

Analysis of data revealed a relationship between ignoring children's questions, and the way some participants referred to them. Some participants regarded children's questions as 'childish' and 'unending'. It appears that lack of time is not the only

explanation of why parents fail to provide responsive feedback to their young children.

For example, the description 'childish' was consistent with the community conception of children and their childhood. Given that children were perceived not to have anything intellectual to contribute, and to be seen and not heard, and to obey elders without question, was in conformity with how their questions were regarded. The description 'childish' could suggest that what children say or have to say may not be worth spending time on while, on the other hand, the description 'unending' pointed to parents' need to be assisted to know more about children's developmental stages and the corresponding expectations.

On the basis of this and other findings of this study, as well as the reviewed literature, the researcher was of the view that parents with a more positive concept of children and their childhood, and parents who were equipped with a basic knowledge of child development and how age-appropriate needs could be met in the context of the family and the immediate community, would not describe children's questions as 'childish' and 'unending'. Other factors being equal, such parents would most probably not ignore children's questions. Instead, they would more readily answer them and encourage their children to ask more questions.

In the construction of ignoring children's questions and requests, it was interesting to find the urban educated participants with rural grandparents, especially grandmothers sharing a similar idea of this nature. This similarity could be explained in terms of exposure to modern alternative parenting styles and the long parenting experience, as

well as roles played by some individuals in family settings. In this regard, while the educated parents could have developed the conception of the importance of responsive feedback to children from their formal education, the media and other related exposure, it is probable that grandparents could have acquired this understanding through their long experience of child rearing. It could even be due to their new position and role they would have graduated to. In this study, participants outlined grandparents' role as that of overall family counsellor. They also acknowledged that grandparents played their role in the best interest of their grandchildren. This is consistent with the view that roles and responsibilities can influence how people perceive and interpret a social phenomenon like child abuse and neglect.

Most rural parents considered children's questions as interfering and disturbing. Participants recognised that, instead of answering children's questions, some parents reacted by slapping, beating, threatening, ordering a child to shut up and stop disturbing. These behaviours were associated with emotional abuse and neglect of young children.

Nonetheless, an interaction between Niima and her baby, as she came from the well with a jerrican full of water on her head and two small ones in either hand, in a conversation with her baby, who was tied on her back, demonstrated that even with busy mothers, responsive feedback could be possible. Even in the middle of the interview with the researcher, Niima positively responded to her baby. She asked for her baby's support and approval of the information she was giving the research (Chapter Six). Niima with her baby did what most of the Jatti mothers and their babies

do, during the first two years of an infant. It seems the shift in the quality and quantity of mother child interaction changes as infants grow. Among other findings, this study noted that closeness and the warm relationship that existed between mothers and their babies, during their first two years, deteriorated as the infant grew to seek autonomy, as discussed below.

Participants recognised that in their first two years, children enjoyed warm and close relationship and positive and supportive interaction with their mothers and other members of the family. They were cherished and everyone was focused on supporting them. Their need for trust and security was enhanced, despite the family's socio-economic problems. Babies were considered to be neglected when they were not talked to during breast feeding, when they were not dressed in clean clothes, when they were not bathed regularly, when they were left alone, when they were not taken for immunisation and treatment when ill. Generally, babies were a treasure to their parents.

The torture babies were subjected to when taken to local medicine 'doctors', for teeth extraction, and removal of the imagined 'millet' on the chest, were associated with parents' unawareness of the impact such practices could have on the child. Separating an infant from its mother at the time of weaning was considered in the same way. Besides, this arrangement freed the mother to find time to concentrate on gardening to ensure food for the family. Some participants associated the health related punitive experiences babies and infants were subjected to with the inadequate health service. These were generally recognised to be decisions taken in good faith to ensure a child's survival. Some of the urban educated parents referred to these behaviours and



practices as 'innocent abuse'. In the Jutti context, 'innocent abuse' meant practices and behaviours done without intent to abuse a child. Most of such behaviours and practices were suggested to result from lack of awareness of their consequences and non availability of alternative means to ensure a child's survival. Given the circumstances, that surrounded rural families that depended on the hand-hoe agriculture, participants shared the view that such parents generally meet most of their infant's needs during their first two years of life.

The gradual deterioration of responsive feedback by mothers to their children in the subsequent four years after infancy was associated with parents' unawareness of some of the children's developmental needs, of the period two to four and four to six years. On the basis of the data, the researcher noted existence of conflict of the infant's interests with those of the parents. The researcher noted that it was at the time when an infant would be seeking autonomy (two to four year olds), and when an infant would be curious to know about what surrounded him or her and to do lots of things by himself, (four to six year olds) that parents would be imposing on him or her overly strict discipline, in an effort to achieve the well-intentioned community expectations. The community expected parents to instil in their children good discipline and work skills at the earliest time possible.

The researcher also noted that this was a transition period for both parents and their infants. A child would be developing and growing from total dependence, towards 'independence' (two to four year olds)- a period when an infant seeks to view himself or herself as an individual in his or her own right, apart from parents, although dependent on them. At a later stage at around four to six years, an infant would be

developing a sense of initiative when he or she would be very curious to discover his or her environment through vigorous testing, and to do a lot of things on his or her own. This coincided with the time when parents aimed to control the child and shape his or her behaviour to what suited them and in fulfilment of community expectations.

In most cases communication was full of 'Do not do that!', 'Stop it!', 'Do not spoil!', 'Come back!', name calling, criticism, beating, scolding and other punitive strategies detailed in Chapters Seven and Eight. This restrictive and rebuking communication interfered with the child's spontaneity and reality testing. Because of lack of exposure to alternative strategies to compromise the interests of the child with their own interests, parents in the Jatti district tended to stick to or slip back to those they inherited from their parents.

Participants recognised that most parents used coercive strategies in the process of playing their role of child care and socialisation. Chastising children, using rebuke language and denying them responsive feedback were some of the parents' behavioural strategies that participants considered to constitute emotional abuse in this process. Generally however, emotional abuse and neglect of young children was associated with parents' difficulties to cope with the many challenges that surrounded the family and handicapped their meeting of their children's physical and developmental needs. The following discussion focuses on the participants' construction of rebuke language, as one of the parental behaviours, that was considered to be commonly used in the process of instilling discipline and work skills, and inflicted emotional abuse on young children.

### **Abusive language**

Participants in the study recognised that abusive language was used by both urban educated and rural uneducated parents. The differences was seen to lie in the type of rebukes used and the frequency. Generally, rural uneducated parents were to use more curse language than urban educated parents. The urban educated were said to dress up some of their rebuke language. Constant use of rebuke language was recognised by participants to lead to young children to develop a negative self-concept and to lower their self-esteem. In the Jatti district, examples of language which was associated with emotional abuse included negative judgemental remarks and criticism of a child's effort, name calling, labelling adjectives and prefixes which made children feel uncherished, belittled, ridiculed, degraded worthless, humiliated, frustrated and depressed. Some participants also pointed out that sometimes, children were blamed for things which were not of their making. Rebuking a child for not performing as well as adults wished, was also associated with emotional abuse. Some participants suggested that this resulted from expecting a child to perform at a higher level than the level of development a child would have reached. Generally, participants associated inferiority and disrespectful treatment of children with emotional abuse. In addition, participants recognised that some parents took their child's 'specialness' for granted and focused on shortcomings rather than on their strengths.

The data elicited from children who participated in the study in most cases corroborated that elicited from parents. For example, asked what they liked and did not like being called, all children in the study, without any exception, liked to be called names and descriptions that upgraded them and those that encouraged them and recognised their success in regard to discipline and performance on tasks. Both boys

and girls from rural uneducated and urban educated families loved to be called heroes and heroines and champions. They all expressed dislike for names that denoted failure and inferiority.

Recalling their childhood experiences, some participants considered name calling to have far reaching effects. They for example, recognised that it sparked off an exchange of rebukes among age mates and lowered their self esteem. They also recognised that frequent use of rebuke language did not make the victim child insensitive to it but that instead it deepened the hurt as children grew older, thereby understanding better what some of the rebuke words and expressions meant. As well, some participants suggested that what some people regarded as intended abuse was 'innocent abuse', because some parents were not aware of the impact such language could have on children. However, other participants categorically stated that ignorance was no defence, and that abusive behaviour was abusive, whether the parent was aware of its consequences or not.

Participants recognised several factors that inhibited the time parents spent with their children, such as:

1. rural mothers who depended on the hoe for the survival of their families;
2. the urban educated in families where both parents worked;
3. in situations when one person assumed the responsibility of both parents;
4. when both parents used their time for other interests;
5. when there were too many children in the family very close together in age;
6. when there was illness in the family; or

7. when the parents used their time and energy just to provide the basic necessities of life.

Given that self-concept is informed by thousands of impressions received from other people and that by the age of three or four children have already formed ideas about who they are, the need to assist parents to use language that promotes development of a positive self-concept and self-esteem is pressing. Anything that might change or compensate for these conditions may provide more time for parents to attend to their children's needs in a more positive way. However, it may be that some parents might still not use the time to attend to the child. One way to encourage the interest of the parents is to develop an attitude among them that it is important to find time for their children and to show them how to use it. Suggestions how government policy may address the above situations to improve the quality of life of children and of their families, to minimising emotional abuse and neglect of children, is outlined in the next chapter.

## **Neglect**

This study identified nine forms of neglect which affect children in the Jatti district in Uganda. They are:

1. failure or refusal to provide, or delay in providing physical health care;
2. personal hygiene neglect;
3. refusal to meet a child's developmental and psychological needs;
4. supervisory neglect;
5. educational neglect;
6. housing neglect;

7. isolation through excluding a child from the family cycle, pawning , weaning practices and involving young children in working for other families for survival needs;
8. rejection; and
9. discrimination neglect.

Participants pointed out practices like leaving a child to wear dirty and torn clothes or dirty pants, to sleep in dirty and wet bedding at night, to go with their hair uncombed, nails not cut, teeth not brushed and to take several days without bathing and other personal hygiene aspects with neglect of young children. Views were shared that although older children could gradually be led to care for themselves, those below the age of five years needed the support by their parents. Nonetheless, some participants recognised that even this age group needed to be supervised although in many rural families these particular children were made responsible for the hygiene of their younger sisters and brothers.

Rural parents without a regular income faced special challenges in ensuring their children's hygiene. For example, it was suggested some could not afford to bathe their younger children everyday because they could not find time to do so. Some parents, like Niima, came from the fields late and yet had to begin other domestic work including preparing a meal for the family. Water was another problem that was associated with the failure to ensure children's hygiene. Some families got water from long distances and once it was acquired it was rationed for specific use. In most cases it was restricted to cooking. Difficult access to water was associated with the few times in a week some children were bathed and their clothes washed.

Participants recognised other factors that contributed to the poor rural parents not being able to keep their children's clothes and bedding well washed. Firstly they feared that frequent washing rendered clothes old, faster than non frequent washing did. Frequent washing also meant that there was a high consumption of soap which they could not easily afford, given their situation of irregular income. They did not have reliable markets for their farm produce, and therefore had to economise with whatever they had.

A further reflection on water and hygiene revealed water did not only subject children to hygiene neglect but also prompted their being subjected to chastisement and rebukes. Traditionally it was children's work to fetch water and collect firewood. Because mothers were the cooks for the family the children supported their mothers by both fetching water and collecting firewood. Children who did not fetch water and collect firewood were beaten, rebuked or denied food. Some parents did not send their children to school because their support was needed to ensure supplies of water and firewood. Consequently, the researcher argues that attempts to create better childhoods for children in the Jatti district would need to address these and other related factors that surround the child and his family. A child does not live in a vacuum, nor does the family live in isolation of its community. More inclusive intervention strategies might be more useful.

Step-parenting rivalries was also associated with the health status of children. Participants recognised that biological children received more attention than step-children. Some step-parents became more concerned about what their biological

children ate, than with what the step children in the same family ate. Biological children generally looked healthier, more energetic and even happier than their counterparts. Neglect was considered to be one of causes that led to the emaciation and failure to thrive of step-children in families that lacked food. The health of some children was also recognised to be further complicated by being overworked. It was recognised that some step-children were subjected to recover naturally when ill and to lack love . The data suggested some of them were treated like second class creatures devoid of feelings. Like the study by Cantwell (1980) participants in this study associated some of the step-parents' behaviour and practices characterised with knowledge about child development, poor parental judgement, and motivational problems.

Neglect was also linked with the child's development level. Participants expressed the view that behaviours that might be neglectful of an infant might not be neglectful of an older child. The field work provided evidence that neglect of health care and hygiene could result from the limited knowledge of parents, whereas abandonment, could originate in other factors besides lack of knowledge. This pointed to the need to carry out more studies to identify the forms and extent of child neglect in the Jatti district and in Uganda in general. Some of the literature reviewed suggested that, in some developed countries, neglected children typically outnumber those who had encountered other forms of maltreatment, and that in the long run, neglect could have the most far-reaching implication for children (Sedlak 1990 ; National Centre for Child Abuse and Neglect, 1992).



Given that some forms of emotional abuse and neglect were associated with lack of awareness, integrating Crittenden's (1993) information processing perspective with other relevant perspectives when designing intervention programs in an effort to minimise emotional abuse and neglect of young children might be helpful.

Crittenden's information processing model focuses on four stages of response required for successfully meeting children's needs. These stages include (1) perception of essential aspects of children's states (2) accurate interpretation of the meaning of these perceptions (3) selection of adaptive responses and (4) responding in ways that meet children's needs.

An important message from this study is that emotional abuse and neglect needs to be constructed in context. Definitions constructed in the West might not be appropriate in a district like Jatti and a country like Uganda. This study provides evidence that programmes to address emotional abuse and neglect do not have to focus simply on reducing the levels of emotional abuse and neglect or even child abuse and neglect as perceived by the West. There needs to be a wider vision of child well-being. The researcher considers prevention to have much promise. Efforts should target whole populations and contextual causes as a means of reducing the incidence, not only of one type of child abuse and neglect but of all of them at the same time. In the Jatti district what is construed as the different types of child abuse are closely interrelated, so much so that, they need addressing together. Using a holistic approach seems a relevant strategy. As well, emotional abuse and neglect was recognised to be surrounded by different contextual factors, for example, poverty, parents' workload, cultural beliefs, inadequate feeding in families, polygamy and concubining, inadequate social services, lack of awareness regarding child development and how to

meet some of the developmental needs without abusing children. This further suggests need for a more inclusive policy to address the underlying causes in the context. This study regards treatment of symptoms in isolation as a sure way of perpetuating the inter-generational cycle of child maltreatment. Besides preventive programmes, the study recognises the need and urgency to protect child victims. For effectiveness, some aspects of the envisaged policy might need legislation. Findings of this study and their implications to a government policy in Uganda is the focus of the following chapter.

### **The Child's Rights to protection**

Evidence from the UK and US reported in reviewed literature, suggests that there has been too much focus on protection over prevention. The literature acknowledges that in all societies there are extremes of parenting behaviour to children which is deemed unacceptable. The UN expects each member state to make judgements of what is unacceptable treatment of children and to ensure that in whatever society he or she lives, the child's welfare is of paramount concern by the national government. *The Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 19*, makes it clear that national states have a responsibility to use all appropriate measures to protect children: from all forms of child maltreatment while in the care of their parents, legal guardians and/or other person who is caring for them (UN, 1989). This clearly suggests that children's rights to protection override the rights of the parents to non-interference in the family life. In this regard therefore, a policy that places high priority on prevention with clear goals that support families, is likely to be more easily acceptable by parents than when governments focus on protection using punitive methods on parents who abuse children. The researcher believes that if a country put a prevention program high on

its agenda, and uses the same avenue to protect children from abuse and neglect, parents would be more likely to regard the government and other people working for the good of the children as partners rather than as intruders in the privacy of the family.

This can be compared to developing countries that have tried to enforce compulsory primary education without making it free, or at least easily affordable by parents. Similarly, without the provision of enabling conditions, parents are likely to regard people enforcing laws and practices for observance of Children's Rights as intruders in family affairs. Findings from the field make it clear that some families lack enabling conditions for more positive parenting. In this regard, for example, neglect will continue unless parents are empowered to meet needs such as those of education, medication and even clothing. It is recognised that some parents in the Jatti district do not only suffer from economic poverty but also a poverty of knowledge regarding the impact of certain practices on children. In addition, some have no easy access to social services. These and other pertinent issues are the key components to be addressed to ensure observance of the UN Children's Rights. The next chapter focuses on findings and their implications for a government policy in Uganda.

## **CHAPTER TWELVE**

### **FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY IN UGANDA**

#### **Introduction**

Chapter Twelve summarises the findings and addresses implications for government policy in Uganda. This is done in four sections. The first section provides a summary of the findings while the second section discusses policy implications. The third section proposes some recommendations. The fourth and final section provides a conclusion to this thesis.

The construction of emotional abuse and neglect of parents in the Jatti district, has demonstrated a need to define child abuse and neglect within specific contexts. The divergences in the construction of emotional abuse in this study originated from factors including: level of education, social economic status, age, parenting styles, the rural and urban backgrounds from which participants came, type and kind of workload, family forms and sizes, cultural and religious beliefs, availability of social services, and in the way participants judged and explained acts and attitudes.

The evidence produced in this study challenges the simplistic notions of one cause for one effect. A complex web of multiple social-economic, political, cultural forces

impinge on families, and create situations that put children at the risk of abuse and neglect. The following section summarises parents' constructions of emotional abuse and neglect of children of the age birth to six years.

## **Emotional abuse**

This study identified different forms through which children of the age birth to six years in a rural district in Uganda experience emotional abuse and neglect. Both emotional abuse and neglect were recognised as embedded in families even though parents would be carrying out their well intentioned role of child care and socialisation.

- Emotional abuse was described to be those experiences that consistently and gradually led to and caused a child to experience worry most of the time, experience depression, intense fear, feel frustrated, uncherished, degraded and belittlement. Emotional abuse was manifested mainly through strategies used by parents to achieve family and community goals and ensure physical development of children, acquisition of desired discipline and work skills at the earliest age possible.
- Emotional abuse was consequently considered to be constituted in:
  1. use of language that rebuked, degraded, belittled, ridiculed a child as manifested in negative name calling and descriptions of a child's appearance or actions, over criticism, looking for weakness in a child rather than strengths;

2. denying a child responsive interaction, for example, through the deliberate refusal to answer a child's questions and ignoring the child's physical and developmental needs and requests;
3. chastising by flogging, smacking, hard pulling of ears, blocking of mouth to stop a child from yelling as a way of seeking help when beaten, spitting on a child, kicking and cruelly isolating and confining the child;
4. subjecting a child to some cruel traditional treatment by local 'doctors', as in the extraction of babies' teeth;
5. overworking a child; harassing a child for failure to perform some tasks he or she could not do satisfactorily because of the level of development reached;
6. punishing a child for normal behaviour like crying when hungry;
7. failure to meet a child's need for food and clothing and leading a child to feel uncared for and uncherished;
8. pawning a child when one fails to pay bills of local 'doctors';
9. expressing rejection; and
10. discriminating and harassing a child as in step-parenting rivalries.

## Neglect

Although there was an overlap in the construction of what constituted emotional abuse and neglect of young children, neglect was generally associated with failure to meet a child's basic needs or ignoring them. Consequently, neglect was perceived to be constituted in failure and or refusal to:

1. ensure that a child regularly got satisfying meals;
2. meet a child's need for health by providing treatment when ill;

3. ensure a child's immunisation;
4. supervise and provide appropriate guidance to a child;
5. attend to a child's developmental needs ;
6. send a child to school when he or she is of age;
7. let a child complete the primary school cycle;
8. ensure a safe, secure and clean housing accommodation and surroundings including a latrine;
9. ensure that household utensils used in food preparation serving are clean;
10. attend to a child's personal cleanliness of the body, clothing and bedding;
11. ensure love, nurturance, acceptance and company so that a child does not feel isolated, rejected and abandoned.

### **Factors contributing to emotional abuse and neglect**

This study found that many factors contributed to emotional abuse and neglect of young children in the Jatti district. These included:

1. the demanding workload of parents, especially that of mothers;
2. time constraints due to the demanding workload which did not allow parents adequate time to attend to some of their children's needs;
3. lack of knowledge of a variety of alternative age-appropriate ways of meeting young children's development needs;
4. lack of adequate knowledge about child development and what to expect from children at different stages of development;
5. poverty;
6. high costs of education and medical care; inadequate health services and a supporting network for families and their children;

7. polygamy and concubining;
8. producing many children within a relatively short interval of time;
9. putting ownership of material things over and above meeting some of the children's needs;
10. lack of land to grow enough food and cash crops;
11. holding to traditional beliefs and practices like those to do with weaning, setting different sociological realities for male and female children;
12. gender stereotyping of family roles and responsibilities; and
13. personality and characteristic tendencies of parents and that of their children.

All participants in the study associated emotional abuse and neglect with the the experiences children are subjected to towards the achievement of the well intentioned family and community goals, namely, bringing forth healthy, well disciplined citizens each with a package of basic productive work skills to fit them in their families and communities as useful citizens. The extended family, the clan, the immediate community and society at large expected parents to achieve these goals at the earliest age possible.

Focusing on the achievement of the societal goals parents tended to lose sight of the impact of some of their parenting practices, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours on a child's development in the short or medium term. This coupled with hardships dictated by the environment and lack of awareness regarding the developmental needs of children, led to conflicting interests between the child and its parents. The conflict led to some of the above parental behaviours which were associated with emotional



abuse and neglect. This construction of abuse and neglect suggests that all children at some time may experience abuse or neglect as parents strive to achieve these goals. Socio- economic challenges and negative practices of parenting, seem to co-exist in varying degrees within any one family unit.

## **Other pertinent findings**

### **Family size**

Rural parents feared that when one produces few children they might all die during their infancy due to childhood diseases or later of the AIDS virus. Given these fears such parents need to be advised to produce and bring up few children rather than many whom they may not properly feed, clothe or provide medical care and school education. The advantage of smaller families the comparatively better off educated and urban parents with regular income were practicing family planning and had few children. A government policy that aims to improve the life of children would need to address this fear. Among others, this fear proposes a need for improved social services and taking them closest to the people. Availability of well resourced dispensaries and hospitals, for example, would not only reduce infant mortality rates but would also gradually reduce parents' belief in local traditional 'doctors' whose treatment for real and imagined childhood diseases subjected children to emotional abuse. This would also gradually reduce pawning of children which is one form of emotional abuse in the Jatti district.

This study found that overburdened parents with a heavy work load may not play their parenting role very positively: Producing many children means having more

responsibilities while producing fewer children creates less burden. A small family may mean less work and therefore less related fatigue, tension, worries and depression. In a more relaxed atmosphere, it is likely that parents would gradually reduce their use of coercive methods to discipline, teach, supervise and guide their children. Parents, especially mothers, would therefore be able to attend to children's physical, developmental and psychological needs.

Furthermore, this study found that the belief in having many children was generally enhanced by tradition and culture that assumed a parent dependency on children. Parents regarded children as a property and as free labour to help with domestic and agricultural activities from which families earned a living. The more children one had, the more free labour there was at his or her disposal. Furthermore, parents believed that the more children one had the more and better care parents would get during their old age. In this regard children were perceived as an investment for family in the present and for parents' old age survival. Parents need to be helped to see the negative implications of valuing quantity rather than quality. Off-spring who are well cared for and become successful in life may be in a better position to take care of their parents in old age than those who would be struggling for their own survival and that of their children. This kind of parent dependency on children could also be reduced by empowering parents to generate income to improve their quality of life in the present and save something to turn to during their old age.

### **Step-parenting**

This study found step-children to be more at risk of emotional abuse and neglect than biological children staying with both parents. Furthermore, children born outside

family, clan, religious and government recognised bonds were considered to be at more risk of abuse than step-children born in the recognised polygamous marriages. This situation prompts a need to provide awareness education regarding the impact polygamous marriages and concubining have on children born out of such bonding. A reduction in abuse and neglect may be achieved through context appropriate step-parenting education packages. With the many orphans in the country, it would also be appropriate to develop awareness education packages and support services for families caring for AIDS, civil strife and other orphans.

Participants recognised that the payment of bride wealth to reduce divorce rates in Jatti district tended to make wives very tolerant of domestic violence mainly for the sake of the well-being of their children. They knew if they were divorced their husbands would take on another wife and they knew what that would mean to their children. Step-mothers were associated with abuse and neglect of their step-children. Payment of bride wealth also encouraged the submission of women to wife beating which in turn subjected children to emotional abuse and neglect.

### **Gender of children**

This study found that parents in Jatti district hold different sociological realities for female and male children. Educated parents and those living in urban areas and rural uneducated parents held different socio-economic realities for their children. For example, while the educated parents worked hard to ensure education and care for both male and female children, rural and uneducated parents had a preference for their sons' education. Families with financial constraints sent their sons to school rather than their daughters and daughters rather than sons would be withdrawn to help their

mothers with domestic work. As well, daughters were denied the right of inheritance which itself led to the preference of the birth of sons to that of daughters. This calls for a policy component that addresses equality in the treatment of children, especially the education of the female child.

### **The extended versus nuclear family**

Support by the extended family members in rearing of children was valued by the Jatti parents. Grandparents wherever they lived contributed to the rearing of their grandchildren. This was, however, more the case in rural communities. Since the majority of families still live in rural areas there is need to utilise the advantages of such settings in the best interest of the child. However, the new socio-economic order is encouraging the nuclear style of family life, which requires mothers to work outside their homes and children of the age six years go to school rather than provide baby-sitting service for their younger siblings. The onset of the nuclear family pattern dictates the need for alternative support to families in the rearing of young children.

Additionally, the study found that in the families of hungry children, mothers and fathers tended not live happily. Failure by families to meet children's nutritional needs is likely to keep children at the risk of emotional abuse and neglect. Life in such families was associated with frustration and depression, features of family life which prompt emotional abuse and neglect of young children. The researcher believes that for healthy and happy living all families should receive adequate nutrition and health care.

This study also recognised that a conflict existed between the developmental interests of children from the age of two years as they sought autonomy and the interests of parents as they tried to instil discipline and work skills. Such conflict set the scene for parental child emotional abuse and neglect. This pattern might be alleviated if parents had a greater understanding of sequences of development of children and their expected behavioural tendencies.

### **Policy implications**

The study recognises that families in the Jatti district have the potential to meet the important needs of their young children for growth and development, for acceptance, approval, emotional nurturance and closeness. But while some parents claimed to perform this role, others did not do so well because of the surrounding disabling circumstances. The study indicated that when and where the threshold was lowered, large numbers of children were at the risk of emotional abuse and neglect. For effectiveness, this study proposes that intervention strategies should be contextually based to address the varying needs of children and their families and communities. The family and the community were found to be major players in determining the quality of life that children lived.

Pertinent to the above reality, this study presents a proposition that programs should not seek to impose alien concepts and accompanying intervention strategies. The term 'alien' refers to concepts coming from another country or from the city to the rural villages. Some ideas may not work in some of the places where change is desirable. According to findings of this study, the people in each context should devise

strategies to address the challenges. However, lessons could be learnt from other related situations.

The factors contributing to emotional abuse and neglect point to a need for a coherent social strategy. For effectiveness such a strategy should have general political agreement to address needs of children and their families. The use of bottom-up models, whereby parents would be allowed to play a major role in identifying ways to minimise what they recognise to constitute and surround emotional abuse and neglect of young children, are likely to produce better results than top-down models which dictate what should be done and how it should be done. A bottom-up approach, which brings together parents and stakeholders in ministries and departments of health, education, social welfare, economic development as well as non-governmental organisation and training institutions, is most likely to make a difference in the lives of children and their families in the Jatti district and in Uganda at large. The policy should be constructed in cognisance of the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity Children's Rights charters. The United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) requires 'States Parties (to) respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognised in the convention' (Article 5).

Such policies should aim to offer children a happy childhood free from hunger and from abuse and neglect, pressure and stress, insecurity and fear, a time for children to be themselves, and express themselves. The policies should recognise childhood as an important period, a life space, for its own sake. They should promote children's

physical and psychological development. The goal of physical development should not only include health but physical vitality and motor skill. The goal for development of children might be stated in summary form as promoting the development of the whole child, that is, developing children's 'overall competence'. Dealing with one problem at a time or with one aspect of abuse and neglect at a time may not work. More inclusive, synergetic approaches need to be initiated to address conditions at the micro, exo, eso, and macro systems in the best interest of the child.

### **Policy compatibility with culture and context**

This study also proposes that the goal of policies for children and families should reaffirm the values of the family and home within the changing context of contemporary society. An holistic policy that is required is one that involves parents as the main players in the identification of their problems relating to child care practices and in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating their efforts and the support from the government and the NGOs working in the best interest of the child. The more socially valid and acceptable the goals and the procedures, the more likely the parents will participate and the more likely the programme will impact on parenting practices. Given the factors identified to constitute and surround emotional abuse and neglect, a policy to benefit children and their families in the Jatti district may have to address issues other than parenting interventions, for example, family type and sizes, poverty, parents' work load, nutrition and social services.

### **Collaboration in designing and implementing programs**

Formulation of an holistic policy requires having a common front to ensure wide representation of views and ideas, appropriate analysis of need, integration of services, contextual relevancy, acceptance and ownership by the target beneficiaries

of the policy and its implementation program, and cost effective utilisation of the limited resources. Every stage of development and implementation would need to involve parents and governments ministries, NGOs and other people who are interested in, and have a contribution to make towards, minimisation of the different forms of child abuse and neglect and the general improvement of the quality of life of families in the district. Such a group would include line ministries and departments including health, justice, social welfare, child welfare and protection, parents, donor governments and agencies, as well as children, and local and international NGOs.

### **Family types and sizes and parents' workload**

This study revealed that parents with many children experienced more constraints to meet their children's needs than families with fewer children. Failure to meet children's needs lead to emotional abuse and neglect. Family planning education and services given at affordable costs, or free, to needy parents may be needed. This however is likely to create special challenges given the AIDS prevalence in Uganda and the belief held by some parents that when you have produced many children at least some could survive. Nonetheless, there are also examples of families with few children that have not been affected by AIDS. This would also require enhancement of provision of AIDS awareness education.

Demands on parents to work in gardens for long hours and to return home to undertake other family responsibilities when parents are already tired was associated with emotional abuse and neglect of young children. Taking children of this age group to gardens inconvenienced mothers while at the same time leaving these children behind worried mothers. They would not be sure about the feeding, safety and



security of their young ones. Working mothers also had to find someone to look after their pre-school age children while they were at work. Young girls became victims of this circumstance. These and other related conditions may require provision of supplementary child care services, long maternity leave and shorter working hours for mothers. Rural mothers would also benefit from a policy that provided services that made their domestic workload lighter and afforded the time and energy it takes to bring up young children. Such services could, for example, include establishing water supplies in easy reach of families.

### **Parenting education**

Participants recognised the lack of awareness of the circumstances surrounding emotional abuse and neglect. Most parents were not aware of the impact some practices and behaviours had on their children. Such practices included early weaning, non responsive interaction with young children and use of coercive methods to instil discipline and work skills. These and other practices relating to feeding and nutrition, personal hygiene of children, housing and environmental sanitation requirements could be addressed through parenting education programs that further inform parents about the synergy between nutrition, health and cognitive and social emotional development of young children.

Awareness education programs could be used to inform and sensitise communities, policy makers, service providers, parents and the different categories of child care givers including grandparents and children themselves. Child abuse and neglect are practices that have been on-going from generation to generation; their eradication

calls for multi-pronged strategies to break this inter-generational cycle. The children of today are the fathers, mothers and leaders of tomorrow.

Such an education program would require the development of teaching learning materials to use with the different target groups. Video, pictorial cartoons and drama seem to produce greater impact in rural illiterate communities. From the primary school level, the school curriculum could include topics that teach about Children's Rights and the different forms of child abuse and neglect. They should also be advised what to do when at risk of abuse.

### **Clarify and redefine statutes pertaining to child abuse and neglect**

Protections that are context-sensitive to Uganda need to be ensured in legislation. Nonetheless, legislative changes can be helpful only if they are enforced. Legislation alone may not change attitudes and values. The public would need to be informed of changes in the legislative change and the role the Ugandan public is expected to play in the prevention and protection of children from abuse and neglect.

### **Research**

There will be continued need to carry out research to know more about the forms and extent of child abuse and neglect in the Jatti district in particular and more widely in Uganda. Findings would facilitate the design of appropriate intervention strategies. Exploring how cultural concepts could be translated into professional practice would also provide findings that might enrich intervention strategies. It would also be necessary to investigate how strengths in given communities could be used as access gateways to the desired change. For example, much could be gained if use were made

of strengths which exist in the context including: the strong kinship relationships, strong work orientation attitudes, strong orientation to achievement, strong religious orientation, trust and respect for elders, the system of extended family support, the role of grandparents and the overall value attached to children.

It could also be beneficial to investigate a number of other issues. These include: how the community's valuing of good discipline and the development of work skills at the earliest time could be promoted without violating children's rights; the possibility for effective communication which involves negotiation to replace the punitive measures commonly used in the process of teaching, guiding, correcting and supervising young children; how some of the local experiences and traditional wisdom could be used to minimise child abuse and neglect in general and emotional abuse and neglect in particular; and parental authority which is at the heart of the problem of emotional abuse and neglect.

### **Funding of programmes**

Adequate funding will be necessary to ensure the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the policy programmes outlined above. Many projects and programs fail in African countries because of lack of adequate funding. This calls for support from international organisations, developed countries, donor agencies and NGOs to supplement the district and national budgets. It is recognised that efforts that might be started with heavy donor support should gradually be institutionalised as a means of ensuring their sustainability when the project life expires and donor support is withdrawn.

## **Final Remarks**

A focus on the child's rights means acknowledging the child's feelings, wishes and values and potential for growth. This requires involving children and listening to what children have to say. More than ever before children's voices need to be heard by professionals and politicians who have direct influence on policies. The irony is that while a normal expectation would be for governments to take children's hopes, fears, perceptions and needs more seriously than those of adults, it has not been the case. Instead, the tears of adults have through the centuries attracted government attention.

Steps need to be taken to replace the cultural and socio-economic constraints that have for centuries led to children being construed as property without any rights at all. There is need to re-evaluate the legal rules and the social structures that have been knotted together which, to date, fail to protect children from abuse and neglect.

More culturally sensitive and more functional methods of service delivery must be established. In Chapter Six, Niima speaks of the strengths in her extended family and community in general. She cites strong kinship, strong work orientation, strong achievement orientation, and strong religious orientation, trust and respect for elders, cooperation through extended family support, and value attached to children. The wisdom of Niima was echoed by participants in the focus groups and in the interviews of the Jatti parents. These and other existing strengths of the Ugandan people need to be identified and utilised as the country wages a war against child abuse in general and child emotional abuse and neglect in particular.

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## APPENDIX A

P.O Box 22129  
Kampala  
Uganda

Tel: 231200

Dear Mr / Mrs / Dr / Rev .....

### INVITATION TO A DISCUSSION

I am a Ugandan doing a research project at Edith Cowan University, Perth, Western Australia. I am interested in knowing what parents in your district consider constitutes emotional abuse and neglect of children of the age from birth to six years and factors that may lead to emotional abuse and neglect of children of this age group.

To be able to start and complete this project, I need your support in the way of sitting together with other parents and sharing views. To this effect, I have organised to have a meeting with parents in.....at.....Co-ordinating School starting at..... and ending at..... You are cordially invited to this meeting.

Please indicate whether or not you will be able to participate by completing the attached notification slip and enclosing it in the provided self addressed envelop. Your child .....has kindly accepted to return this information to his/her Headteacher's office. I would be most grateful if this was done not later than..... 1996 to enable me to pick this information on .....1996 at 9.00 a.m. and start making the necessary arrangements for this meeting. You will be served a mid-morning cup of tea and some simple lunch. A refund of return journey expenses will be made in accordance with the government established guidelines to those who will use public transport.

Looking forward to sharing views with you.

Yours sincerely,

Edreda Tuwangye



## APPENDIX B

P.O Box 22129  
Kampala  
Uganda

Tel: 231200

Dear Mr / Mrs .....

### INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH PROJECT INTERVIEWS

I am a Ugandan doing a research project at Edith Cowan University, Perth, Western Australia. I am interested in knowing (1) what parents in your district consider constitutes emotional abuse and neglect of children of the age from birth to six years and (2) factors that may lead to emotional abuse and neglect of children of this age group.

I have so far had beneficial discussions with some groups of parents. What I need now is a few parents to participate in the second phase of this project.

I am glad to let you know that when I was inquiring about who could effectively participate in this very crucial phase you were identified as one of the parents I could rely on. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to request you to participate in this study. Could you please indicate whether or not you are able to participate by completing the attached notification slip.

After completing this slip please give it to your child ..... who goes to ..... Primary school. He/she has kindly accepted to return it to the Headteacher's office. I will go to the school to collect this information on ..... February 1996.

If you are able to participate I will get in touch with you to give you more information about this project and the role you are expected to play. We shall discuss to see how your participation can least stand in the way of your other duties and responsibilities.

Thank you for this co-operation. Looking forward to your participation.

Yours sincerely,

Edreda Tuwangye

## APPENDIX C

### CONSENT NOTIFICATION

Please delete what is not applicable, sign and send back this slip in the provided, self addressed envelop to be received not later than ..... of ..... 1996.

Mrs Edreda Tuwangye,

This is to let you know that I ~~will~~ / will not be able to participate in the research project.

Names.....

Signature.....

Date.....

## APPENDIX D

P.O Box 22129  
Kampala  
Uganda

Tel: 231200

Dear Mr / Mrs .....

### PARTICIPATION IN PHASE FOUR OF A RESEARCH PROJECT

This is to acknowledge with great appreciation the contribution you have made to phase one of this project. I wonder whether you might be interested to participate in phase three of the same study.

Phase three provides an opportunity for you and me to have another look at what you consider to constitute emotional abuse and neglect of children of the age birth to six years. We shall also discuss factors that you consider may lead to emotional abuse and neglect of children of this age group.

Please indicate whether or not you will be able to participate by completing the attached notification slip and enclosing it in the provided self addressed envelop. Your child .....has kindly accepted to return this information to his/her Headteacher's office. I would be most grateful if this was done not later than ..... 1996 to enable me to pick this information on ..... 1996 at 9.00 a.m. and start making the necessary arrangements for our meeting.

Looking forward to sharing with you.

Yours sincerely,

Edreda Tuwangye.

## APPENDIX E

P.O Box 22129  
Kampala  
Uganda

Tel: 231200

Dear Mr / Mrs .....

### INVITATION TO A WORKSHOP

I am a Ugandan doing a research project at Edith Cowan University, Perth, Western Australia. I am interested in knowing (1) what parents in your district consider constitutes emotional abuse and neglect of children of the age from birth to six years and (2) what they consider to be factors that may contribute to emotional abuse and neglect of children of this age group.

To be able to complete this project. I need a group of parents to reflect on, confirm and add to views that have been got from parents who participated in phases one, two and three of this study. In order to get this done, I have organised to have two workshops with groups of parents at ..... and ..... Primary Schools.

You are cordially invited to participate in the workshop which will take place at ..... Primary School. This Workshop will take place starting at ..... and ending at.....

Please indicate whether or not you will be able to participate by completing the attached notification slip. You can send this slip in the provided envelop to the Headteacher of .....Primary School. I will collect this information from the school on..... 1996.

Looking forward to working with you.

Yours sincerely,

Edreda Tuwangye.

## APPENDIX F

Date.....

To: The Director  
National Research Council  
Kampala

From: Edreda Tuwangye  
Inspector of Schools  
Central Inspectorate  
P O Box 3568  
Kampala

Dear Sir,

### **PERMISSION TO DO A RESEARCH STUDY "PARENTS' CONSTRUCTS OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE AND NEGLECT OF CHILDREN OF THE AGE BIRTH TO SIX YEARS IN A RURAL DISTRICT IN UGANDA"**

I am a Ugandan PhD student at Edith Cowan University, Perth, Western Australia seeking permission to do a study in the area of child abuse and neglect as summarised below.

#### **Background to the study**

The plight of abused and neglected children has received unprecedented attention during the last thirty-five years, yet the problem remains unresolved. Children continue to be maltreated. Research evidence of parents' perspectives of abuse and neglect is yet to emerge despite the clear reality that abuse and neglect of children originates from families in which children live. In the available literature no studies have addressed parents' constructs of emotional abuse and neglect.

#### **Purpose of the study and methodology**

This study proposes to explore how parents construe emotional abuse and neglect. Taking into consideration various differences in the population in the district of the study, this study will begin with focus group discussions to elicit parents' ideas about emotional abuse and neglect. The focus group guiding questions will seek immediate

articulations of what parents consider to constitute emotional abuse and neglect of children of the age from birth to six years and what they think to be factors that may contribute to emotional abuse and neglect of children of this age group. Views generated will be analysed and used at appropriate stages in the study to guide and focus interviews, and case studies and workshops for conclusion drawing and verification.

Qualitative methodology will be used to generate data which will be analysed using Miles and Huberman, 1984 and 1994 procedures. Selection of participants will be guided by the district level committee, Uganda National Action Plan for Children.

### **Significance of the study**

Knowledge of parents' constructs of emotional abuse and neglect and potential preventative and management strategies to emerge from this study will provide a non western parent perspective about emotional abuse and neglect. Findings will be of assistance to people in the district of the study and other districts in Uganda in general by providing informed baseline data which can guide district child and family welfare policies in ways which directly acknowledge and include the culture of the people. In addition, findings may be used in formulation of action plans, training of personnel; service delivery; designing and provision of awareness education for communities; research and inter agency co-ordination. Furthermore, findings of this study should be of interest to researchers and scholars of psychology, education, sociology and other related disciplines as well as practitioners who deal with child and family welfare. This study will also contribute towards the achievement of one of the United Nations' overall goals for the period 1990-2000, namely, to provide protection for and improve the quality of life of the millions of children in especially difficult circumstances.

### **Ethical considerations**

To facilitate willingness to provide data as well as the validity and reliability of findings, individual, organisation and group rights will be observed during this study. Firstly, permission will be granted in writing from ministries and organisations concerned, and they will be fully informed about the nature and purpose of this study. Secondly, participants will also be informed of the purpose of the study. Participation will be voluntary. It will be made clear to everybody that anyone may withdraw his or her participation at any time, just as the researcher may terminate work at her own desecration.

Further, participants will be informed of advantages of participating in the study, and of the degree of confidentiality that will be maintained and the procedures to be used. They will be assured of accurate and respectful description of their cultural beliefs and practices. There will be clear understanding about the degree to which information requested will be kept confidential. Information will not be used for purposes other than

that specified for this study. All interviews will be conducted in places with the required privacy. Participants who can read will be given an opportunity to read the transcription of their interview. Feedback on the findings will be provided to all participants.

#### **Estimated time schedule**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Time</b>	
1. Arrival in Uganda	Dec	1995
2. Seeking permission and participants	Jan	1996
3. Pilot study	Feb	1996
4. Refining instruments	Feb	1996
5. Data collection	Mar - Nov	1996
6. Workshop	Dec	1996
7. Return to Edith Cowan University	Jan	1997
8. Data analysis	Feb - Aug	1997
9. Thesis preparation	Sept. - May	1998
10. Thesis submission	Aug	1998

## APPENDIX G

### 2nd workshop

What constitutes emotional abuse  
10 participants responses  
- a reflection on findings

Emotional abuse means:	Not sure	Do not agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Use of abusive, degrading language and name calling	1	0	4	5
Refusing to attend to a child's questions and need for attention in different situations	1	0	6	3
Chastising by flogging, smacking and yelling at a child	0	0	6	4
Subjecting a child to a lot of work	2	0	4	4
Punishing a child for normal behaviour like crying when hungry	1	0	6	3
Failure to meet a child's needs for clothing and making a child feel uncherished	0	0	5	5
Pawning a child when parent/s fail to settle bills of local doctors.	0	0	3	7
Causing a child to feel rejected	0	0	2	8
Discriminating and harassing a child as in some step-parenting	0	0	2	8



## APPENDIX H

### 2nd workshop

What constitutes neglect  
10 participants responses  
A reflection on findings

Neglect means failure and or refusal to:	Not sure	Do not agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Ensure a child's regular and satisfying needs	0	0	6	4
Meet a child's needs for health by providing treatment when ill	0	0	7	3
Ensure a child's immunisation			4	6
Supervise and provide appropriate guidance to a child			5	5
Attend to a child's development needs			5	5
Send a child to school when of age	1	0	5	4
Let a child complete the primary school cycle	1	0	4	5
Ensure safe and clean accomodation and environment including a latrine	0	0	6	4
Ensure that household utensils used in food preparation are clean	0	0	7	3
Attend to a child's personal cleanliness of the body, clothing and bedding	0	0	7	3
Ensure love, narturance, acceptance and company and not to feel isolated and rejected.	0	0	8	2

## APPENDIX I

### 2nd workshop

Factors contributing to emotional abuse and neglect  
10 participants responses  
A reflection on findings

	Not sure	Do not agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The demanding workload of parents especially that of mothers	0	0	3	7
Failure to find enough time to attend to children's needs	0	0	6	4
Lack of knowledge of alternative ways to meet children's development needs	2	0	4	4
Lack of adequate knowledge about child development and what to expect from children at different stages	1	0	5	4
Poverty	0	1	6	3
High cost of education and medical services	0	0	7	3
Polygamy and concubining	0	0	4	6
Producing many children within a relatively short interval of time	0	0	5	5
Putting ownership of material things over and above meeting some of the children's needs	1	1	5	3
Lack of land to grow enough food and cash crops.	0	0	6	4
Holding to traditional beliefs and practices e.g. weaning and setting different realities for male and female children	0	0	5	5
Gender stereotyping of family roles and responsibilities	1	1	6	2
Personality and characteristic tendencies of parents and that of their children	0	0	7	3