GIRL CHILD VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT IN RESPONSE TO EDUCATION IN MUKONO CENTRAL DIVISION MUKONO MUNICIPALITY, MUKONO DISTRICT UGANDA

Conducted by

CHILD CARE AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT FOUNDATION (CCAYEF)

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List of Acronyms / Abbreviations

CCAYEF	Child Care and Youth Empowerment Foundation
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CDO	Community Development Officer
EFA	Education for All
MDG	Millennium Development Goals

PLE	Primary Leaving Examinations
UACE	Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education
UCE	Uganda Certificate of Education
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation

Organizational Background

CCAYEF is an indigenous non-profit, non-governmental, community-based, charitable organization. It was founded in 2008 and is officially registered and recognized by Mukono District, Mukono Municipality and the Uganda Ministry of Internal Affairs. CCAYEF's establishment as a charitable, non-governmental organization was premised on the noble cause of promoting appropriate child and youth survival, growth and development strategies, and actions that address their growth and development challenges. We are also passionate about the mothers who have a significant impact on child survival.

Over 56% of Ugandans are children below 18 years. They are the most vulnerable compared to other segments of the population and prone to child abuse and neglect, orphan hood, malnutrition, child labour, sexual abuse, dropping out from school and many other forms of violation of their rights. Worse still, the majority of youth between 13 and 24 years who are out of school are also un-employed, they are highly dependent on a smaller percentage of productive population. This is why most of the activities done by the organization are in the areas of adolescent sexual reproductive health,child health and early pregnancy prevention and invocational skills training.

Vision statement

CCAYEF envisions a world of empowered children, youth and communities committed to social justice and peace.

Missionstatement

To improve the well-being of vulnerable children and youth through education, socio-economic interventions, nutrition, sanitation and hygiene

Goal

To deliver high impact, cost effective interventions such asto enable children and youth to realize their full growth and development potential

Executive Summary

School drop-out among girls is a global phenomenon. It is a serious problem that affects personal and national development. Education is a human right for all children, and those who are not in school are being denied that right. Failure to access and complete a basic cycle of quality inclusive education seriously limits future opportunities for children, which cripples the country's human resource capital. With education being a human right, all children regardless of sex, or tribe are entitled to it. In Uganda the education of a child seems a done deal after the introduction of free education on different levels. However, one in twenty school-age children has never been enrolled in school. To a country that ratifies to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the world's most agreed upon international human rights treaty, which makes it a legal obligation for the government to ensure compulsory primary education of good quality for all children, free of costs, this is worrying and challenging.

The purpose of this study is to informabout the CCAYEF program inpreparation for the re-inclusion of girls (school drop-outs) into a formal education system for those who would choose to take this step, and for others to their economic empowerment (vocational skills and business training); after which they shall be better prepared to find a job.

The program aims to increase the literacy levels of girls and young women who were formerly school drop-outs, and to improve their employment situation andincome levels inMukono Central Division. Further, the study aids in the design of appropriate interventions to limit further drop-out of girls in a similar situation from either formal school or vocational studies. Likewise, the study gives recommendations addressing the identified challenges for improved future programme interventions.

Definition of terms

Drop-out

Drop out in this study shall be defined as premature termination of an educational cycle and in this case right from Nursery school to Tertiary level according to the Ugandan Education System.

Girl child

According to the children's act of Uganda (1995), as amended, a child is defined as a person, who has not yet reached the age of eighteen years. The girl child in the context of this study however, is meant to describe any female below the age of eighteen, whether married, pregnant or just out of school.

Vulnerability

Vulnerability in this context shall be defined as the diminished capacity of adolescent girls and young women to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover from the impact of dropping out of school.

Ugandan Education Levels

Nursery level

This is the starting level of formal education in Uganda, this level starts from baby class (3-4years), middle class (4-5years) to top (5-6years) and each step is studied for a period of one year, it's assumed to be the nurturing level of a child and children take 3 years to complete it. It's now commonly known as kindergarten.

Primary Level

It's the next level after completion of nursery, at this stage a child (6-12years) is introduced to various formal education disciplines such as English, Mathematics, Science, Religious Studies and Social studies. This level begins at primary one (P.I) to primary seven (P.VII), and unlike the nursery level, at this level pupils who reach primary seven sit for national examinations, commonly known as Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) for which they get a certificate.

Secondary level

This is the third level of education, where successful candidates who pass (PLE) join at age 13. This level is sub divided into two segments, from senior one to senior four known as the Ordinary Level (O-LEVEL), at this level students sit for Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) examinations and those who righteously pass join the Advanced level (A-LEVEL), this takes two years from senior five (17 years) to senior six (18 years). Those that do not qualify for 'A' are expected to join other professional and vocational institutions for certificate courses. In the same way at 'A' level students sit for Uganda Advanced certificate of education (UACE) examinations and those who pass qualify to join university / tertiary institutes.

University/ tertiary level

This is considered to be the highest level of education in the country of Uganda, at this level students who pass UACE examinations can join different courses of their will and ability and graduate with either degrees or diplomas.

Findings

The findings in this study point to financial constraints as the most prominent factor explaining the high school drop-out rates among girls of Mukono central division. Approximately 300 of the sampled girls stated that lack of money was the reason why their parents requested them to drop out of school, while approximately 95 of thesampled girls stated that early pregnancy/ marriagealso contributed to their dropping out of school, and 11 claimed that parental neglect was a major factor; 5 stressed cultural preferences, namely rather educating boys than girls.

1. Introductory background information

1.0　Introduction

For over a decade now the importance of schooling for all children has come to be accepted as a societal goal, gone are the days when people, at least in the more educationally backward regions of Uganda questioned the relevance of school educationduring the daily battle for survival of the poor, particularly poor women. Education is a human right for all children, and those who are not in school are being denied that right. It is emphasized in international treaties and declarations, in particular; the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989); the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA, 2000); and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG, 2000). The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is, with its near universal ratification, the world's most agreed upon international human rights treaty. Uganda has ratified the CRC,too,which makes it a legal obligation for the government to ensure compulsory primary education of good quality for all children, free of cost.

Education is more than just schooling. It contributes to societal development by promoting and supporting a holistic child view and complementing cognitive learning with social and emotional learning. The role of education as a vehicle for overcoming marginalization and social exclusion must be reinforced in all societies. However, for a decade now, a growing number of pupils in Uganda have been dropping outof school every day, every year, most notablyin case of the girl child; this is certainly a burden to the families, the society and the nation.

Commitments to girls' education have been made in a number of international and regional agreements and frameworks, ratified by the majority of African counties including Uganda. The right to education is entrenched in international human rights treaties such as the United Nations on the Rights of the Child –Article 28. Many African states have introduced national policies to enact their commitments to girls' education under these international and regional frameworks. Some of these include the African Charter on Human and People's Rights 1986; The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 1999; ADEA Conference of African Ministries for Education, international development agencies, researchers and education experts (2008).

Despite the existence of such policies, public awareness of government policies and initiatives forgirls' education remain very low. Girl child school dropout remains high, although the specific percentages are not clear or not available.

1.1   Background of the Study

In 2000, the international community promised that all children would be and also stay in school by 2015. However, in 2013, there were still 57 million children out of school; one in ten children was still denied his/her right to education. Half of these-57 million children live in Sub-Saharan Africa. Out of school patterns vary across and within regions. It is therefore critical to analyse contextual reasons for early school dropout. UNESCO estimates that there are globally some 215 million child labourers and more than 150 million children with a disability, while 39,000 girls below the age of 18 get married every day.

On November 16th, 2016, *New Vision*, one of Uganda's print media, published the article "Where did 1.2 million pupils go?" Giving alarming statistics on primary school dropouts, the article stated that "only 543,071 pupils sat Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) last year", out of the 1,763,284 who enrolled in 2006, which forms a complete cohort.This implies that in the last seven years, 1,220,213 pupils were lost on the way.

United Nations Educational scientific and cultural organization (UNESCO) reports that the school dropout rate in Uganda is the highest in East Africa with only 25% of students completing the primary education cycle of seven years. At this rate the secondary school dropouts could also be similar.

Recognizing education as a human right – also as ascertained in the Constitution of Uganda – has implications for education development and necessarily entails values, knowledge and skills that revolve around the principles of non-discrimination, participation and equality. One of the reasons why the education system in Uganda has still not materialized is the absence of investment in an equitablemainstream education system. Quality private education for the 'haves' and poor public education for the 'have-nots', continue to leave poor and otherwise marginalized children out of school. Even though the government of Uganda introduced free education at primary and lower secondary level, parents still face a problem of paying for school materials and lunch fees for their children and a number of them have dropped out due to that. The most disadvantaged and poor are often the first to be affected in such a situation. Only one country in the entire world – Chad – has shown a higher percentage of primary school dropouts than Uganda.

Policies to improve access and school progression for all, as well as reduce the numbers of children dropping out of school, are critical if Uganda's education system is to yield. The Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2012 Statistical Abstract) estimates the current primary Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) at 83.2% with parity between boys and girls. The national measurement for completion cohort survival to end of primary grade 7 showed a far more grim picture of only 33% of children completing primary education. These rates have not shown much improvement over the past decade. The low quality of education service delivery

plays a role in low primary completion, too. This is attested by high repetition rates (at approx. 12% p.a.) which are linked to child unfriendly learning environments. As a result, Uganda is unlikely to achieve the primary education MDG that was previously thought to be within reach and at this rate it is the same for secondary and tertiary/university education.

As a result of substantial school education drop out, many children are leaving school without acquiring the most basic literacy, numeracy and life skills. Their brief schoolingexperience often consists of limited learning opportunities in overcrowded classrooms with insufficient teaching-learning materials and poorly trained, motivated or supported teachers. Failure to access and complete a basic cycle of quality inclusive education seriously limits future opportunities for children. Who these children are, varies by region and context, but those that are socially excluded are most likely a high number of girls. As progress is made towards the education for all, from an equity point of view, more attention must now be given to girls who are out of school. These are at risk of being excluded or marginalized.

Therefore,with regard to the above background,CCAYEF has for 10 years shown concern about the welfare of adolescent girls and young women who drop out of school in all communities under her mandate. This time, CCAYEF tried to take a deep study to fully dig into the school dropout phenomena, mainly among girls, of Mukono Central Division and particularly among those who have already shown interest in being empowered under her program.

1.2   Objectives of the study

The study sought to get an in-depth understanding of the vulnerability of girls who are out of school to prepare the re-inclusion of girlsinto formal education and vocational skills training with the aim of increasing their literacy and income levels in Mukono central division, Mukono district of Uganda.

The specific objectives were

a) To identify the wide range of causes of girl child school dropout
b) To tracethe different educational levels at which girls dropout of school
c) To trace thevarious consequences that befall girls when out of school
d) To design an appropriate model for re-inclusion of school dropouts into formal school and vocational skills training programs

1.3   Study Rationale

Uganda was among the first African countries to introduce universal primary education (UPE). Many more schools were built, teachers trained and school fees abolished. This development did not stop at primary, later universal secondary education (USE) was introduced, education in Uganda is solely monitored and governed by the government,

however the key players include both government and private sector, those who can afford private education have their children there and low income earners have their children go to the free government schools.

In spite of the effort made by the government and the private sector in Uganda to deliver good quality education, there are still many school age children who leave school at an early stage. Country patterns show a large percentage of dropouts starting from grade 1. Dropout figures tend to decrease after grade 1 but often rise again from grade 5 onwards as primary completion approaches. According to the Uganda Education Management Information System (EMIS) report of 2009, the average primary school completion rate was reported to be 52%, retention rate in primary school being 53% for boys and 42% for girls. However, during the release of the primary seven national exams results in February 2013, it was reported that over one million pupils or about 71% who enrolled in primary one under the universal primary education (UPE) in 2006, were no longer in school. This big figure should be attributed to the drop-out rate.

UNESCO reported that in East Africa Uganda has the very low "primary survival rate" of 33%, this being the number of children starting together in primary 1, progressing through the cycle with their peers and still being together when finishing the primary cycle in primary 7. For comparison, the primary survival rate in Kenya is 84%, in Tanzania it is 78%, and in Rwanda 81%.

A number of reasons have been advanced but no context-specific research has been carried out to confirm and rank the causes of school dropouts as well as map out strategies to address this problem. Therefore lack of evidence makes remedial measures experimental instead of systematic and directed,there is also no guidance for further program design.

From other related research in Ugandan context it is clear that there are push and pull factors that influence whether children stay in school. Push factors may be the prevalence of corporal punishment or cultural norms that create barriers for girlsto enrolment and completion of school, while pull factors may be strong issues in the family that preventchildren from going to school such as family commitments and searching for money.

This study documents variousreasons for dropout of school which are vastly different according to various socio-economic backgrounds. CCAYEF's purpose of the study is to asses girls' vulnerability such as to preparethe re-inclusion of girls, of school dropouts, into formal education for those who wish; and through vocational skills, business training, and links to jobs strengthen others towardseconomic empowerment. The major aim is to heighten their literacy levels, improve employment opportunities and increase their income levels.

1.4 Conceptual Framework to Assess Girls' and Young Women's Vulnerability

This conceptual framework represents CCAYEF's synthesis of literature on how to explain girl child school dropout phenomenon. It maps out the actions used in the course of the study given the previous knowledge of other researchers' point of view and their observations on the subject of research under study.

This was done by CCAYEF in order to know how particularvariablesin the study connect with each other. Thus, it identifies the variables required in the research investigation and was CCAYEF's "map" in pursuing the investigation. CCAYEF was guided by institutional theory while carrying out the research process because this theory is very much applicable to the topic in question.
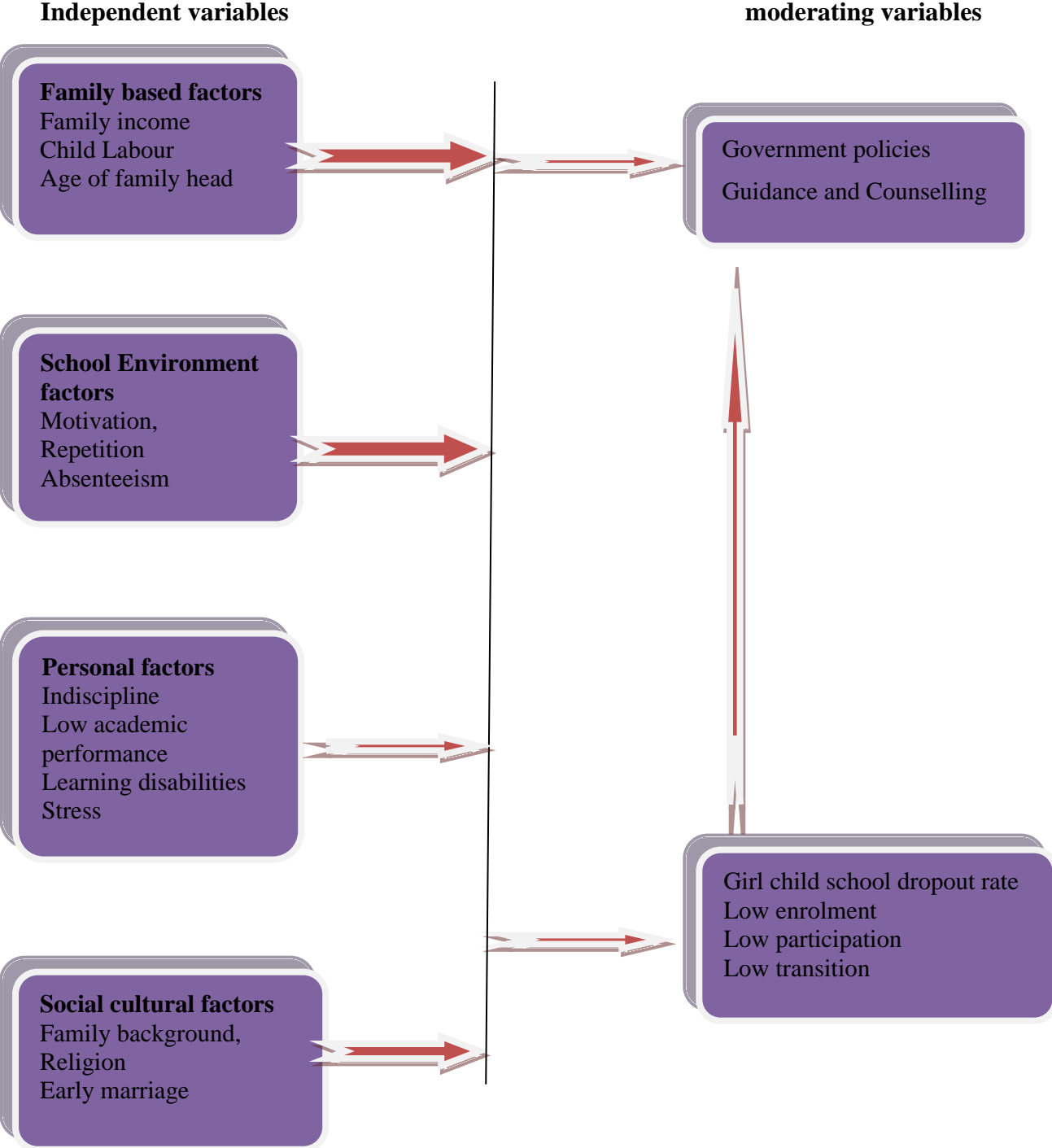
Institutional theory was developed by Rumberger (2004). The institution perspective focuses on school characteristics, policies and practices. Rumberger argues that structural features of schools such as the size, the resources available to the school, and an access to high quality teachers influence dropout rates. This framework shows that too much emphasis has been placed on "high risk youth" and their families, and not enough on the "high risk settings" in which these adolescents live. Research suggests that the decision to stay in or to leave school is affected by multiple contextual and political factors that interact during the lifetime of a student.

Russell Rumberger developed a conceptual framework based on an individual and an institutional perspective (2004). This framework suggests reciprocal relationships among these two factors together with the possibility that these relationships can change over time as children progress through school. The framework's individual perspective focuses on child attributes, child background characteristics, child engagement in schooling, and educational performance.

There is a strong relationship between child background characteristics (race/ethnicity, gender, poverty, special education placement, and language) and dropping out of school. Equally important is what the child's experience is once it is in school. Children who are engaged in learning and in the social dimensions of school are less likely to leave school. Children may, for example, leave school because courses are not challenging enough or because they have poor relationships with their peers and teachers (Allenworth& Easton, 2005). Poor academic achievement, both in high school and in earlier grades, is a strong predictor of dropping out. High absenteeism, student discipline problems, and student mobility are also associated with dropping out (Rumberger& Arellano, 2008).

The individual perspective also factors in the importance of earlier preparation. A child's success in the first year of school is highly correlated to his or her potential for graduation.

Children who do not successfully maintain an adequate freshman course load, either because of attendance or academic achievement, are less likely to graduate (Allensworth& Easton, 2005, 2007). This research suggests that a highly individual approach is needed in order to identify and remedy dropping out of school.

Independent variables   **moderating variables**

Family based factors		**Government policies**
Family income		
Child Labour	→	Guidance and Counselling
Age of family head		

| **School Environment factors** |
| Motivation, |
| Repetition |
| Absenteeism |

| **Personal factors** |
| Indiscipline |
| Low academic performance |
| Learning disabilities |
| Stress |

| **Girl child school dropout rate** |
| Low enrolment |
| Low participation |
| Low transition |

| **Social cultural factors** |
| Family background, |
| Religion |
| Early marriage |

2.   Methodology

Mainly the qualitative method was used to gain an insight on causes of girl child school dropout. Qualitative studies aim to gather an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the reasons that govern such behaviour. Hossain (2011:145) asserts that qualitative researchers, study people in their natural settings, to identify how their experiences and behaviours are shaped by the contexts of their lives such as the social, economic, cultural and physical contexts. Qualitative methods produce information only on the particular cases studied. The quantitative approach was also used to a limited extent to determine the prevalence and frequency of opinions and perceptions of the samples on girl child school dropout.

Within the qualitative approach the study adopted a case study research design. A case study is a field of inquiry that investigates a specific area in order to gain access to the real life context where the problem is clearly visible (Punch 2000:15). It is an intensive in-depth study of a specific individual, group or institution in a specific context. The case study design was used because CCAYEF wanted to have a clear understanding of why and how girl child school dropout happens.

The population of the study comprised girls from 15 to 19 and young women from 19 to 24 years of age, teachers, parents, and government officials. Purposive sampling was mainly used to select two government officials, the division schools inspector, community development officer (CDO), and out of school girls from the division.It was used because purposive sampling by nature seeks individuals and sites that can best supply relevant information needed to answer research questions raised (Cresswell, 2008:214).

The sample size consisted of 400 out of school girls (15-19 years) and young women (19-24 years), 3 teachers, 2 government officials and 5 parents giving a total of 410 participants.Data were collected using an interview guidewhich was designed to assess girls' and young women's vulnerability in the context of reasons related to their dropping out of school, the level at which they dropped out and what happened to them when they had gone out of school. A guide was also designed to assess other stake holders in the education sector such as parents, government officers and teachers.

In addition, documentary review was employed as another way to gather information, this was done in form of revisiting and internalizing the following sources:

- A review of the findings of three recent surveys conducted in Uganda and Mukono Municipality in particular
- UN Educational scientific and cultural organization (UNESCO)
- A Youth Behavioural Survey done in Mukono Municipality, with both girls and boys of 10-19 years from 11 secondary schools.

2.1   Data collection procedure and analysis

In the data collection procedure interviews were structured in English and the process was conducted in both English and Luganda which were the applicable languages for the majority of respondents interviewed. Data analysis was done by CCAYEF, it involved examining what has been collected and making deductions and inferences, data was analyzed thematically and answer codes were used. A combination of two qualitative data analysis methods was used, the template analysis style and content analysis using open coding, The template analysis style was necessary for a possible comparison of the five samples' findings, while the quasi-statistics was used as a validating method to ensure that the inferred themes and categories precisely reflect the perspectives of the participants involved in the study. To ensure trustworthiness, strategies such as interpersonal relationship and trust building, triangulation of data gathering methods, member checking and consensus with the independent coder and dependability audit were employed.

3.   Results and Discussion

The study identified numerous factors that make girl children drop out from school. The causes found with the help of this study can be categorized as social, economic and environmental. The study underlines the fact that dropping out of school cannot be tagged to a single cause but rather to a combination of causes. The economic causes,such as poverty, lack of scholastic materials, school fees, poor living conditions, and domestic work,are understood as the tangible, qualifiable and quantifiable issues that keep children from going to school and even force them out of school. These factors are presented and discussed in this section.

3.1   Causes of girl child school dropout

All the participants interviewed except the key informants were girls and young women out of school who at that time were undergoing vocational training and empowerment at the organization. Theygave reasons as to why they are out of schoolas shown in chart 1.

Chart 1: Causes of girl child school dropout
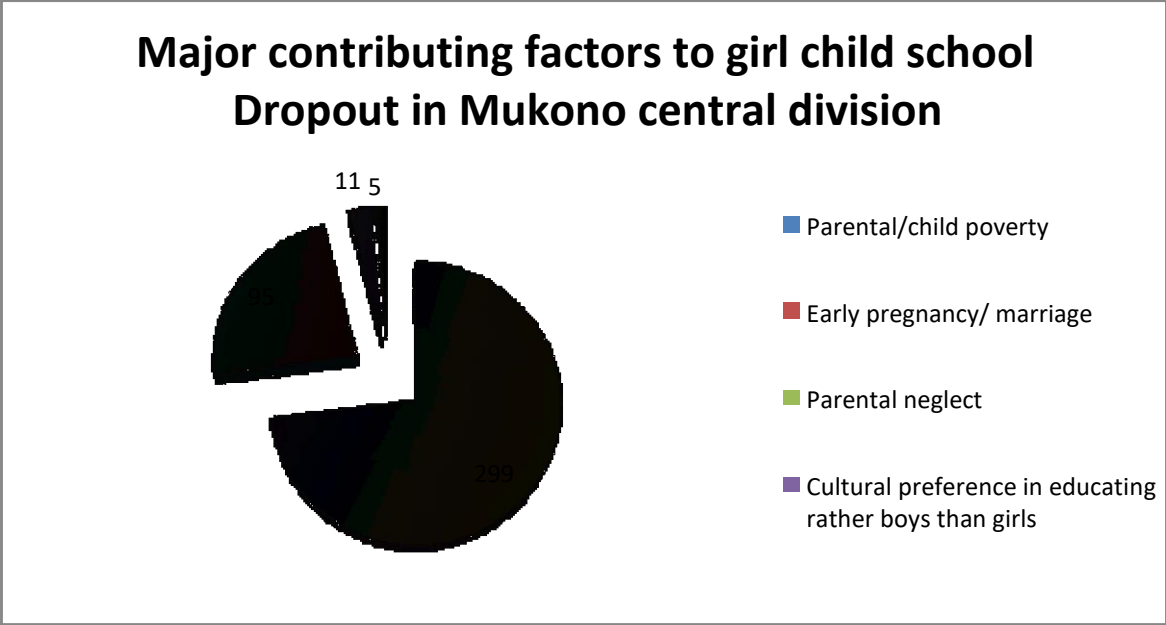
The study on girl child school dropout confirms several previously established causes for children dropping out of school before completing a certain education level cycle. The various causes given by many respondents can be corroborated with the findings of similar studies carried out in other districts of Uganda by Christine MbabaziMpyangu (PhD), Eric AwichOchen (PhD), EriaOlowo Onyango (PhD), and Yovani A Moses Lubaale (PhD) in their study 'Out of School Children Study in Uganda, (March 2014)'.

Going into detail for each of the causes would need more time and space but some of them need to be discussed as a pointer to the seriousness of the problem in order to reflect on what can be done to ensure that a girl child can stay in school until they complete a certain education level.

3.2   Parental and Child Poverty

Poverty is the number one cause of school dropout; it is mentioned as serious hindering factor towards education among all the interviewed girls. It is important to note that most people live in abject poverty. They are too poor to provide for themselves and their children's school materials, which are a necessity at school. Sometimes children leave school to work for their own school fees and in the process; they are assimilated into the work industry at a tender age, and thus forgetting about school. Below are a few voices concerning povertyfrom the respondents during a private interview:

> *When my father passed away, my mother did her best to push me high in education and after my completion of primary seven, my mother had lost a job, and she opted that I sit to give chance to my little siblings to acquire some education too…*

Although this statement is referring to one girl respondent, it was confirmed by the community development officer (CDO) of Mukono municipality when she stressed that,

> *….have you realized that these days schools are becoming much expensive and a lot of scholastic materials are requested from parents considering this economy of today were everything is expensive, many people are poor; what do you expect parents who are not well off to do?Definitely dropout will occur…*

Thus, it was agreed that while some practitioners and researchers may be tired of the phenomenon of poverty as a major cause for school dropout, it still presents itself as a reality to reckon with as we discuss why a girl child drops out of school. The question to ask furtherthen is why poverty is persistent. We should also bear in mind that education is the key to transformation of both the individual and the community. It is therefore vital to emphasize this to the parents who think that they are too poor to educate their children. The phenomenon of poverty varies from home to home, district to district and regions. This study however did not establish why the girl childrenare taken out of school rather than the boys when the economic situationgets tight among families.

3.3   Early pregnancy/ marriages

Most girls drop out of school because of early pregnancy and pressure from parents to get married. At times children drop out of school because they feel grown up and ready for

marriage, which can be the case for those who joined late. Some parents even prioritize marriage and feel that it is the most favourite choiceamong everything, and so they consider school less important.Early pregnancy is viewed as a social problem. According to the results,95 respondents interviewed talked about early pregnancy / marriages as their major reason for being out of school, and the key informants stressed the same.

> *...I had a desire to continue school, and my performance was not bad, but during my primary seven vacation I was deceived by my boyfriend, and we engaged into an act of sex, realizing after some time that I was pregnant, telling it to my parents, the father swore not to educate me more and advised me to get married.*

Another young woman who is now married should be quoted:

> *...the truth is I got pregnant in my senior three and I had nothing to do other than dropping out of school and get married.*

Therefore teenage pregnancy is a factor that explains higher school dropout for girls currently undergoing economic empowerment.

3.4   Parental neglect and cultural preference in educating boys to girls

Some parents have got a very poor perception or attitude towards the education of a girl child, which eventually culminates into school dropouts. Most parents in the villages are not aware of the importance of education and therefore see no use of taking their female children to school, for they believe that it is just a waste of resources and time since there will end up in marriage. This perception is also cultural as many cultures do not believe in the value of education, some parents do not care whether the girl child has gone to school or not and if that situation happens to a child who is not self-motivated, that child will automatically drop out of school. Another quote from our interviews stresses that fact:

> *Parents in this division have not done enough in nurturing and providing role models to their children as an incentive for them to stay in school.*
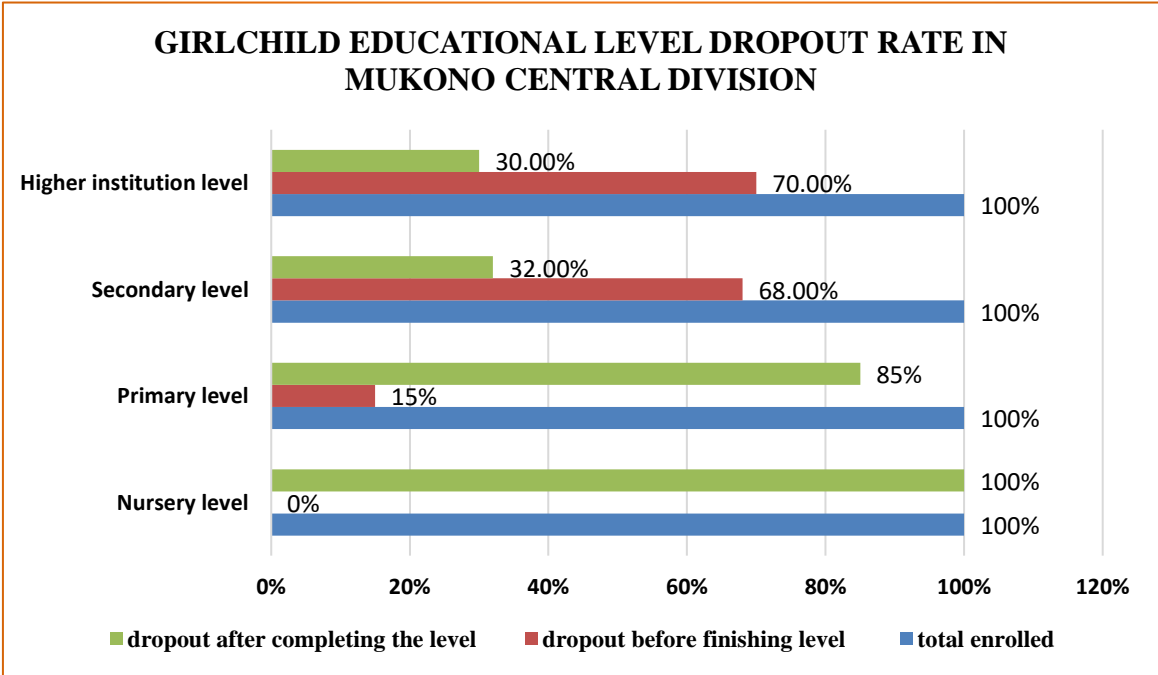
A government official echoed.

> *When I reached my senior four my father, in agreement with my elder brother, agreed to have me out of school so as to concentrate all the support for my younger brother to go high in his studies, saying that he had more chances of succeeding in education than I.*

Girls explained that parental neglect goes beyond parents neglecting their roles of giving orientationin matters of sex.According to the many girls being victims of teenage pregnancy, if their parents had educated them about sexual issues perhaps they would not be mothers by now, and hopeful in school.

Cultural preference in educating boys over girls still exists in some families; respondents argued that parents still believe that when you educate a girl your efforts will be ruined as she will help another family (namely the husband's) than a boy,who will always cater for them. Some parents have gone ahead in arguing that no matter how longgirls go to school, their end result is marriage; such a school of thought has made many girls miss their human right of receiving education in Mukono central division.

3.5   Tracing for different educational levels at which girls dropout of school

Question two seeks to trace different educational levels at which girls dropout of school in Mukono central division.

GIRLCHILD EDUCATIONAL LEVEL DROPOUT RATE IN MUKONO CENTRAL DIVISION

- Higher institution level: 30.00%, 70.00%, 100%
- Secondary level: 32.00%, 68.00%, 100%
- Primary level: 85%, 15%, 100%
- Nursery level: 100%, 0%, 100%

Legend: dropout after completing the level | dropout before finishing level | total enrolled

Chart 2: **Dropout rate in education levels**

The chart above shows the cycle in educational levels in which girls dropped out of school. In the chart above its clearly evident that parents and other stakeholders in the community have undergonesome effort to push girls into school as is evident by the enrolment percentage of 100% at each education level. It further shows that all girls interviewed had undergone

nursery level and fully completed that level. However, according to the findings, out of 100% of the girls enrolled only 15% dropped out before completing primary level, and 85% dropped out after finishing the same level. In the same vein, the percentage of girls that dropout after completing secondary education is at 32%, however, those who dropout before completing the level is already at 68%. For those who join tertiary level and other higher institutions of learning the percentage of those who finish the level and graduate is 30%; there is another 70% of dropout before completing that level.

As per the findings, it's quite visible that the dropout rate of girls before completing a certain level increases as the levels of education go higher. The highest level of dropout among girls happens at primary level with 85% after having finished that stage, and 15% even before completing.

The overall assessment of the educational level dropout rate in Mukono central division according to CCAYEF is described as a 'dropout increasing pyramid". With the gap between the enrolment percentage at primary level and the graduation percentage at the higher institutions, it is quite evident that the dropout rate among girls increases as together with the level of education.

Such a pyramid is supported by the factors explored in the first question; however such dropouts come with consequences as is presented in question (3).

3.6   Consequences that befall girls when out of school

Question three sought to find out if girls had faced any consequences of dropping out of school. According to the findings in the chart below one can see that three major consequences were named by the majority of respondents.

Chart 3: Consequences of girl child school dropout

CONSEQUENCES OF GIRLCHILD SCHOOL DROPOUT

- early marriages: 51%
- child labour: 38%
- poverty and ignorance: 11%
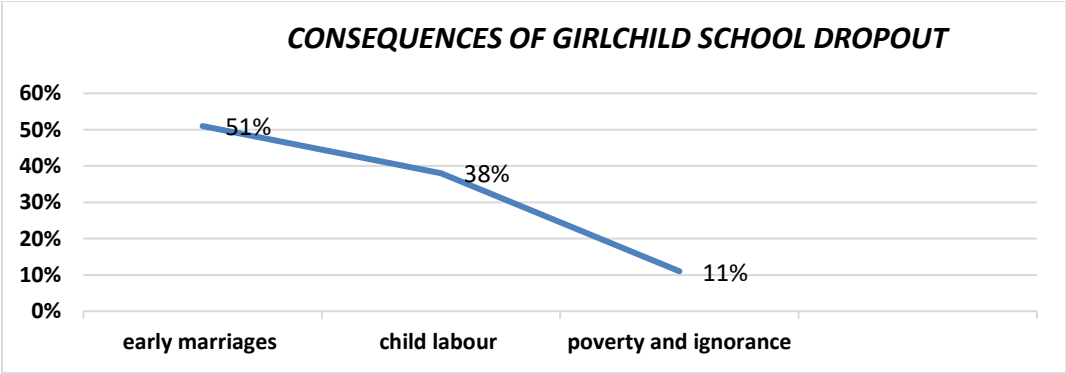
In the results above, out of the 410 respondents interviewed, 211 spoke of early marriage as an outcome of girl child school dropout (a strong 51%); 154 respondents named child labour a consequence of girl child school dropout (still some 38% of interviewees); and 45 out of school girls said that poverty and ignorance were an outcome of school dropout, a group of 11% out of our total.

3.7   Early marriages

According to the results in chart (1) poverty is one of the major factors underpinning girl child school dropout. Where poverty is acute, girls are not able to continue school, and dropping out of school is the only option left to them. When out of school girls are regarded as an economic burden, parents advocate for their teenage girls' marriagesinthe hope of exchanging them for wealth. Girls interviewed lamented being married off to older men. In the interviewing process one girl was quoted

> *Right now am married because I could get no support from anyone after dropping out of school when I got pregnant. My parents were not willing to cater for me,and my baby's basic needs. They also needed money from the man who had impregnated me. And instead of imprisoning him, they married me off to him for material gains.*

One parent notedthe followingon the same issue:

> *Girls are married off earlier when out of school due to the strong social pressure their families need to conform to. Failure to conform can often result in ridicule, disapproval or family shame, and out of fear for shame they let their young girls get married. Some parents marry off their children for material gains.*

Girl child school dropout and early marriages are inseparable! The moment a girl is out of school, society will regard her as"marriage material" and as a source of riches and therefore, marry her off. Some teen girls also may lose hope for a brighter future through education and instead start looking for it in marriage.So girl children are most protected as long as they stay in school.

Child labour

According to ourresults, the phenomenon of child labour is closely related to that of out-of-school children (girls) as presented in chart 3 above. A majority of girls not in school are engaged in some form of work activity.Out-of-school girl children are at a greater risk of child labour, and child labourers are at greater risk of being sexually abused. Statistics from

this study indicate clearly that out-of-school children are engaged in child labour as bar maids, market vendors and sex slaves in order to meet human essential needs.

One young woman noted that

> *... when I stopped going to school in my senior two(at 14 years of age), after a year I got pregnant but the man who made me pregnant refused to look after me and the baby and I resorted to market vending –selling vegetables.*

In that regard CCAYEF's study shows truly that school dropout not only affects girls in terms of missing school, but it forces them into early marriages and child labour where they are at risk of contracting dangerous diseases like HIV/AIDS

3.8   Where would the girls be if they had not dropped out of school?

During the research study, such a question was asked to establish whether girls had had dreams before they dropped out of school. These could act as a source of motivation after re-inclusion into the empowerment program.

The interviewed girls expressed thatthey had got great dreams and perhaps had great hopes about education, had it not been for the stopping factors raised above. They lamented that they greatly loved school but that unavoidable circumstances came in, as one girl noted,

> *My dream was to be an accountant and that was all I yearned for.Unfortunately I did not make it, so if I had continued with school I would be now at the university completing my course and ready to serve my community.*

In the vision of such a girl all her hope of ever being an accountant is lost, but as CCAYEF we believe we can regain that girl's dream through re-including her into formal education. On the same note one young women interviewed who is alreadyundergoing economic empowerment said that,

> *Even if I had continued school I had no hope of going to campus, but I wanted to complete senior six and then branch for a catering course, but now I can't make it.*

As CCAYEF we believe that such dreams among girls are not lost, we believe that through the **'CommunityDriven Girl-Child Empowerment Model',** adolescent girls and young women out of school shall realise their dreams and through this become a very powerful part of our society.

4. Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendation

4.1 Conclusions

The Girl Child Vulnerability Assessment in Response to Education

The conclusion that emerges from the evidence presented in this report is that most girls and young women in MukonoCentral Division are out of school mainly due to evident reasons that society and as well as the girls themselves shared. The reasons given included, but were not limited to, parental and child poverty, early pregnancy and marriages, parental neglect and cultural preference in educating boys to girls. Girls out of school are faced with a number of challenges of which early marriages, child labour, poverty and ignorance are alarming and deserve serious intervention. The fact that these girls had had a lot of dreams while still in school indicated that being out of school has left them vulnerable, with no option for survival and with seeing their dreams doomed. The aim of this report is to helpwith the re-inclusion of these girls into vocational education and into formal education in case of those who still need it. It goes further to explain the **'CommunityDriven Girl-Child Empowerment Model'**that will be used when implementing the empowerment process. This will also have an impact on those already in vocational training and those in formal education to stay focused in school.

Most of the factors listed above contribute to girls' and young women's vulnerability and threaten girls' and young women's development by jeopardizing their accumulation of human capital be that either in education or health - including their psychological well-being and physical safety, curtailing their opportunities for economic empowerment by limiting their participation in training activities provided by this and similar projects.

In spite of the numerous challenges which girls and young women in Central Division face, they are still optimistic that life will change some time,someday. This is the very reason this **'CommunityDriven Girl-Child Empowerment Model'**has been developed.

4.2 Recommendations

This section offers the main recommendations for project design. Table 1 below presents mitigation strategies associated with the different risks identified in this report and classifies the strategies according to their impact and their cost or operational complexity. This section puts together different strategies in order to create key features of project design. It also presents key partnerships for any project to consider, and overall recommendations on how to use the findings of this assessment during project design and implementation.

Key feature of project design

The project shall use the **'Community Driven Girl-Child Empowerment Model'** to address some of the risks that adolescent girls and young women face after they dropped out of school. The strategy shall target communities in order to promote the complete participation

of all its members. Different aspects of the model shall be used at different stages of project implementation. At the beginning of a project, community meetings shall be used to inform community members of the objectives and activities of the project and their responsibilities spelled out, and to get their buy-in,such as to avoid suspicions and potential community backlash. Special emphasis shall be made to ensure the participation of the guardians (and/or boyfriends) of the girls and young women, along with the adolescent girls and young women themselves.

General recommendations for girls still in school

- CCAYEF recommends that, school based Peer Health Clubs should be established and empowered to pass on rightful information and life skills to fellow students on reproductive health issues in order to address the knowledge gap among students which usually contributes to early pregnancies and STIs including HIV which eventually lead to dropping out of school and later life confusion.
- Facilitate the spirit of community policing to ensure safe environment for children in school. Work with families, churches and other community organizations to develop a collaborative program for dropout prevention. The strongest area of agreement between the opinions of experts and program practices is in the efficacy of collaborative, community wide multi-component programs using a variety of approaches.
- Provide a broad range of instructional programs to accommodate girls with different needs into formal education, including menstrual hygiene management, such as to reduce on stigma among boys.
- Encourage and support programs that motivate parents to participate at all levels of their children's education.

General recommendations for adolescent girls and young women out of school

- **Cognitive restructuring classes:** Girls out of school are vulnerable and without hope which disables their cognitive abilities. In order to regain hope and reset their life goals, several topics addressing their challenges should be brought up. In CCAYEF they are mainly referred to as "teen classes". This package helps to restructure the minds of the girls and put them back to normal. This package should be conducted together with one-on-one counselling sessions, home visits made and then individual assessment of each girl to be able tofind out the girl's main empowerment area of interest.
- **Vocational skills training:** Vocational skills training centers are in high demand. The government should put such centers in place in order to reduce the number of unemployed school dropouts. Skills trained may be both long and short term. Girls and young women should be given an opportunity to choose skills they are interested

in. These skills trained provide quick economic returns to the girls. Short courses may include jewellery making, flower arrangement and decoration, liquid and bar soap making and hair shampoo. Such courses take between 1-6months. Among the long term courses could be tailoring and fashion design, hair dressing and salon, to mention but a few. Most of these will take a whole year.

- **Life skills training**: Life skills training should be provided on top ofvocational skills training. Girls out of school should acquire training and knowledge in life skills and other areas that can facilitate theirpeaceful living in their communities and allow for healthy competition in the business world such as gender relations, citizenship, conflict resolution skills, sexual and reproductive education, and parenting education.

- **The Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLA) and functional literacy training:** In addition to vocational and life skills training, VSLA and functional literacy training should be taken into consideration. This is to help girls on how to manage their money and at the same time educate them on ideas of saving and investment.

How to use the findings of the Vulnerabilities Assessment

On one hand the study is helpful forgeneral ideas of project design and can help shape the main features of a project beingcreated in order to asses girls' vulnerability and to prepare the re-inclusion of girls, especially school dropouts, into the formal education system if they so desire. For others, such a project can lead into economic empowerment through acquiring additional vocational skills, business training, and getting linked to jobs.

Any project team could use the results and detailed recommendations of this assessment to guide other CSOs in different areas to tackle the same problem.

TABLE 1: The Community Driven Girl-Child Empowerment Model – *Problem Factor and Mitigation Strategy*

Problem factor	Associated prevention/mitigation strategy	Impact of addressing the problem	Cost/ Operational complexity of implementing strategy
Parental/ child poverty	• Vocational trainings • Life skills and entrepreneur trainings • VSLA and financial adult literacy	High High High	High. Medium to High. Medium.
Early pregnancy/ marriages	• Schools Peer health clubs • Cognitive restructuring • Involvement of parents in the education life of their children • Counseling sessions among girls and boys • In school teacher training sessions focusing on girl-child retention in school and boys' empowerment to support girls.	High High High	High. Medium. Medium to High.
Parental neglect	• Community dialogues • Initiation Parent Driven Girl-child Empowerment Model • Community sensitization and out reach • Group Counseling sessions among parents	High High Medium Medium	High High low low
Cultural preference in educating boys to girls	• Gender information trainings sessions. • Community perception change sessions		

Table 2: TheCommunity Driven Girl-Child Empowerment Model –*Key Partnerships to Enhance Girls' Empowerment and Advocacy*

ADVOCACY ISSUE	PERSON TO ENGAGE	STRATEGY	EXPECTED OUTCOME
Gender/ mind change	Local Government/Community	Community Sensitization/ Strategic meetings with policy makers	Passing of an ordinance on girl child education periotization
Teenage pregnancy/ Early Marriages	Parent/Teachers /Uganda Parliament/ police	➢ Parenting training sessions for parents ➢ Training sessions for teachers in adolescent counselling to teachers ➢ Parliament engagement on passing a law amendment for pregnant girls to remain in school	➢ Positive parenting among parents ➢ Proper handling of adolescent' SRH issues at school level ➢ Pregnant girls will conclude their studies despite the pregnancy
School retention for girls	Ministry of education/ District education department and parents	➢ Engagement on conviction of sexual abusers of girl children in courts of law ➢ Development of school based girl rosters and designing of a follow-up strategy for lost girls.	➢ Conviction of abusers will be a lesson to others ➢ Girls followed up and brought back into school can be supported to complete their studies
Parent/ Child Poverty	Ministry of finance/ community leaders	➢ Establishment of VSLA community based groups and advocating for top-up packages towards the good performing groups.	➢ Eradication of poverty ➢ Development of a saving culture among families

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Appendices

ANNEX I: interview guide for girls and young women

THE GIRL CHILD VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT IN RESPONSE TO EDUCATION INMUKONO CENTRAL DIVISION, MUKONO MUNICIPALIITY, MUKONO DISTRICT

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Hello, my name is………………………..and I have been asked to…………………….

During the interview, respondent's information will remain confidential, and therefore names not needed. This survey is intended to explore the reasons why girls 15-24 years are not in school in Mukono Central Division, establishing different levels of the Ugandan education system at which most of them drop out. As well as tracing for the individual consequences they face after dropping out.This research project aimsto increase the literacy levels of girls who were formerly school dropouts; improve employment and increase income for adolescent girls and young women in the same Division through access to formal education for those who want, skills and business training, and links to jobs

NOTE

Please kindly answer these questions with much easy and truth, it is for the benefit of us all.

PARTICIPANT'S BIO DATA

   a) Age range: i) 15-19   ii) 20-24

   b) Marital status: i) Single   ii) Married   iii) Cohabiting

A- LEVEL OF SCHOOL DROP OUT TIME

   1. **A t what level did you drop out of school?**
   a) None
   b) Nursery Level
   I) Baby class
   II) Middle class
   III) Top Class
   c) Primary level
   I) Lower Primary level- P. I / P.II
   II) Middle Primary Level – P. III / P. IV / P. V
   III) Upper Primary- P. VI / P.VII
   d) Did you sit for Primary Leaving Exams (P.L.E.)? Yes/ No

    e) Ordinary Level

        I)   Senior one

        II)   Senior two

        III)   Senior three

        IV)   Senior four

    f) Did you sit for the Uganda Certificate of Education (U.C.E)? yes/No

    g) Advanced Level

        I) Senior five

        II) Senior Six

    h) **Did you sit for the Advanced Level Certificate of Education (U.A.C.E)?** Yes / No

    i) University /Tertiary Education

        I)   Year one

        II) Year two

        III) Year three

        IV) Year four

        V) Year five

    j) **Did you acquire any certificates/ Diploma or degree at any higher institution or University?** Yes / No

B. REASONS WHY GIRL CHILDREN BETWEEN 15-24 YEARS ARE OUT OF SCHOOL

1. **What do you consider to be the major reasons you are not in school today?**

    1st reason: ………………………………………………………………………..

    2nd reason: ………………………………………………………………………..

    3rd reason: ………………………………………………………………………..

C. INDIVIDUAL CONSEQUENCES GIRLS FACE AFTER DROPPING OUT

    1. **What changes in your day to day life came by after you left school?**

    1st response: ………………………………………………………………………..

    2ndresponse: ………………………………………………………………………..

    3rdresponse: ………………………………………………………………………..

    Where would you be now if you had continued with your education?

………………………………………………………………………………………………

Thank you for your cooperation.

THE GIRL CHILD VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT IN RESPONSE TO EDUCATION IN MUKONO CENTRAL DIVISION, MUKONO MUNICIPALIITY, MUKONO DISTRICT

This survey is intended to explore the reasons why girls 15-24 years are not in school in Mukono Central Division, establishing different levels of the Ugandan education system at which most of them drop out. As well as tracing for the individual consequences they face after dropping out.This research project aimsto increase the literacy levels of girls who were formerly school dropouts; improve employment and increase income for adolescent girls and young women in the same Division through access to formal education for those who want, skills and business training, and links to jobs

NOTE

Please kindly answer these questions with much easy and truth, it is for the benefit of us all.

A. PARTICIPANT'S BIO DATA
   Designation: i) Youth services provider   ii) Government official   iii) Parents

B. LEVEL OF SCHOOL DROP OUT TIME
1. **At what level did you think most girls drop out of school in Mukono central division?**
   a) **None**
   b) **Nursery Level**
   i)   Baby class
   ii)   Middle class
   iii)   Top Class
   c) **Primary level**
   i)   Lower Primary level- P. I / P.II
   ii)   Middle Primary Level – P. III / P. IV / P. V
   iii)   Upper Primary- P. VI / P.VII
   d) **For those who make it to primary seven, Do they sit for Primary Leaving Exams (P.L.E.)? Yes/ No**
   e) **Ordinary Level**
   i)   Senior one
   ii)   Senior two
   iii)   Senior three
   iv)   Senior four

f) **For those who make it to lower secondary level do they sit for the Uganda Certificate of Education (U.C.E)? yes/No**

g) **Advanced Level**
    i) Senior five
    ii) Senior Six

h) **For those who make it to upper secondary level do they sit for the Uganda advanced Certificate of Education (U.A.C.E)? yes/No**

i) **University /Tertiary Education**
    i) Year one
    ii) Year two
    iii) Year three
    iv) Year four
    v) Year five

j) **Do there acquire any certificates/ Diploma or degree at any higher institution or University there attend?** Yes / No

C. REASONS WHY GIRL CHILDREN BETWEEN 15-24 YEARS ARE OUT OF SCHOOL

2. **What do you consider to be the major reasons as to why girls in central division dropout of school?**

   1ˢᵗ reason: ……………………………………………………………………..
   2ⁿᵈ reason: ……………………………………………………………………..
   3ʳᵈ reason: ……………………………………………………………………..

D. INDIVIDUAL CONSEQUENCES GIRLS FACE AFTER DROPPING OUT

2. **What are the likely consequences/ challenges that befall them when out of school?**

1ˢᵗ response: ……………………………………………………………………….

2ⁿᵈresponse: ……………………………………………………………………….

3ʳᵈ Response: …………………………………………………………………………

How can girls already out of school be empowered?
..…………………………………………………………………………………………
..…………………………………………………………………………………………

Thank you for your cooperation

RESEARCH PROJECT TITLE:"Girl child vulnerability assessment in response to education in Mukono central division, Mukono municipality, Mukono district Uganda"

RESEARCH INVESTIGATOR: Child Care and Youth Empowerment Foundation (CCAYEF)

Research participant's code**: ………………………………..**

DearMr/Ms/DR/Mrs.

You are being invited to participate in a research study on girl child school dropout in Mukono central division.The research will take25-30 minutes we don't anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the above research project. Ethical procedures for a social research studies conducted by child care and youth empowerment foundation require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed, and how the information contained in the interviews will be used. This consent form is necessary for us to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participations. Your participation in this research is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time you if like.

The results from this study will be presented in a research report and journals; if you wish to receive a copy of the results from this study you may contact CCAYEF or visit their website.

I have read (or have been read)the above information regarding this research study on the experience of girl child school dropout and consent to participate in this study.

Name: ………………………........................Signature: ………………………………………

Date ……………………………………………….