

Modeling INSPIRE Global tool for Child Protection to Strengthen Social Service Workforce in Uganda: A reflection on interventions by the National Association of Social Workers of Uganda-NASWU.

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NASWU engaging with child protection stakeholders during COVID-19 in Buyiga Island, Mpigi District –Central Uganda.

INSPIRE, is a global framework of seven interlinked and mutually reinforcing strategies for a holistic, evidence-supported, multi-sectoral commitment to ensuring that children can achieve their full potential free from violence. The acronym focuses on implementation and enforcement of laws, norms and values, safe environment, parent and care giver support, income and economic strengthening, response and support services and education and life skills as a viable and sustainable approaches to ending violence against children. The tool was assembled through collaborative efforts of up to 10 global agencies including World Health Organization, Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, The Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, Pan American Health Organization, PEPFAR, and Together for Girls, UNICEF, USAID, The World Bank, and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime -UNDOC.

With World Health Organization estimating 1billion children aged 2-17 years to be affected by physical, sexual, or emotional violence or neglect as of November 29, 2022, and the National Violence against Children (VAC) Survey Report 2018 indicating that 34.7% of children in Uganda

experience multiple forms of violence, strengthening social service workforce in Uganda using INSPIRE tool remain a top priority of the National Association of Social Workers of Uganda to ensure children of Uganda including adolescents, grow up with greater freedom from all forms of violence plus giving appropriate care, support and access justice needed to those that experienced violence to ensure physical, mental and social wellbeing.

The efforts by NASWU to model INSPIRE as a tool for strengthening social service workforce is a concerted effort to prevent and reverse the immediate and long-term public health consequences and economic costs associated with violence against children including its potential to undermine investments in education, health, and child well-being, eroding the productive capacity of future of children, impairing brain development and nervous system of children, increased risks of injury, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, mental health problems, delayed cognitive development, poor school performance and dropout, early pregnancy, reproductive health problems, and communicable and non-communicable diseases.

NASWU for the last five years has made the following interventions modeling INSPIRE tools to strengthen social workforce in Uganda.

Equipping trainer of trainers

The National Association of Social Workers of Uganda (NASWU) in recognition that social workers are the frontline workforce in matters of violence Against Children, has trained and equipped her executive and management team with knowledge on INSPIRE package and its contextual application in social work practice settings.

The training has also been extended to selected senior social workers from different social work agencies to build the capacity of social work service organizations in the country on INSPIRE Package and its seven strategies.

With initial support from the Children's Rights and Violence Prevention Fund (CRVPF), NASWU held a Training of Trainers workshop on INSPIRE Package on 7 -8 June, 2019 of 30 trainer of trainers and a total of 50 trainers from different social work agencies, academic institutions and government departments have been trained to-date. As a result, INSPIRE strategies have been integrated in organizational strategic plans, and the trained trainers cascaded the information in different communities in Uganda.

Continuous Professional Development of Early Career Professionals based on INSPIRE

NASWU is working with Universities in Uganda to equip social work students and recent graduates on INPIRE seven strategies. Between 2022 and October 23, 2023, a total of 519 students and recent graduates from Metropolitan International University, Bugema University, Kumi University, Nkumba University, Ndejje and Cavendish University Uganda have benefited from this training. The training of university students has revealed important outlets and positively

influence their networks of friends, family and communities to protect children from Violence as they are respected in their communities and knowledgeable through their training.

Discussions with early career professionals has provided a unique opportunity for our association to listen and compare different cultural practices, structures and values. For example majority of the youth trained confirmed that Ubuntu values based on the sense of community, love, compassion are foundations for child protection among many African families and communities, while negative cultural practices in many African communities like auctioning of girls among Jonglei state of South Sudan, female genital mutilation among the Sabins in Eastern Uganda, and concealing information by family members where a child has been violated continue to perpetuate violence against children. All the students trained have signed commitment to be community bystanders and ready to report cases of violence in their communities on 116 national toll-free lines.



A group picture of students and staff of Bugema University after INSPIRE training in January 2023

Advocacy

Using online platforms like webinars, Facebook engagement, WhatsApp messages, Instagram, and Twitter, NASWU is integrating INSPIRE approaches to share messages on protecting children against all forms of Violence. Frontline social workers are also supported with tools like the Standardized Case Management tool, and the Uganda National Child Protection Policy 2020 both with direct link to INSPIRE tool. Since the outbreak of Covid-19 in Uganda in 2020 to date, NASWU has organized 20 online webinars and two advocacy campaigns focusing on child protection and targeting frontline social service workers. A total of 1045 frontline social service

workers from social work agencies, government ministries and departments and private sector participated in online webinars and advocacy campaigns to protect children from violence focusing on different child protection areas like protecting refugee children, children in alternative care, child labor, child trafficking, and child mental health and psychosocial support.



Ruth Stark (2nd L,) the former IFSW president, Joined NASWU team to engage with refugee children living with albinism in Nakivale refugee settlement –Western Uganda,

Mentorship

National Association of Social Workers of Uganda is also using the INSPIRE tool in her mentorship program to support social workers in communities who want to start child protection community change projects and organizations focusing on child protection and those with interest in research. Up to 30 social workers from Uganda, South Sudan and Rwanda have been supported by NASWU for the last two years.

INSPIRE tool presents a great opportunity for evidence-based child protection social service workforce strengthening in Uganda especially in dealing with all forms of violence against children, from child protection policy development, to prevention and response. The tool resonates with the social-ecological model as it looks at social, economic and cultural factors as either risk or protective factors to childhood violence. NASWU intervention experience using INSPIRE reveals better outcomes when the interventions are done in collaboration with community structures, affected children and their families to effectively address the root causes of violence against children in order to achieve target 16.2 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of “ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against, and torture of, children.”

