



STRENGTHENING THE SCHOOL- COMMUNITY CASE MANAGEMENT AND REFERRAL WEB



GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING VILLAGE CHILD CASE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES (VCCMCs) IN UGANDA

The Bantwana Initiative of World Education, Inc.
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▶ ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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► ABBREVIATIONS

CCA	Community Change Agent
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CDO	Community Development Officer
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FBO	Faith-Based Organization
MGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
PSWO	Probation and Social Welfare Officer
PSW	Para-Social Worker
PTA	Parent/Teacher Association
RTRR	Guidelines for Reporting, Tracking, Referral, and Response
SCCM	School-Community Case Management Committee
SCM	School Management Committee
VAC	Violence Against Children
VACiS	Violence Against Children in Schools
VCCMC	Village Child Case Management Committee

► DEFINITIONS

Physical abuse: The intentional use of force against a person that results in or has the potential to result in physical injury or death

Sexual abuse: Unwanted sexual touching, unwanted or physically forced sex, sexual contact due to intimidation or coercion, and sexual behavior that a person does not understand or give consent to

Defilement: A sexual act with a person under the age of 18 years, with or without his/her consent. A sexual act involves penetration of the vagina, mouth, or anus, however slight, of any person by a sexual organ or the unlawful use of any object or organ of a person on another person's sexual organ (penis or vagina).

Child neglect: Any situation where parents or guardians purposely do not provide basic needs (food, shelter, education, etc.) or adequate physical and emotional care for a child

► BACKGROUND

Together with the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), through its Violence Against Children (VAC) Programme and the National Child Helpline, has issued guidelines on case management reporting, tracking, referring, and responding to cases of violence against children in schools and surrounding communities through the violence against children in schools (VACiS) working initiatives. These guidelines emphasize the importance of strengthening the child protection system at all levels, especially at the community level, where mechanisms to detect and respond to child rights violations can prevent abuse and improve the wellbeing of the lives of children.

The Bantwana Initiative of World Education, Inc. (WEI/Bantwana) has developed the School-Community Case Management (SCCM) curriculum, which adapts content from the Guidelines for Reporting, Tracking, Referral, and Response (RTRR); Journeys curriculum handbooks; MGLSD guidelines; and case management best practices that WEI/Bantwana has learned over several years of undertaking this work. The SCCM curriculum has been used to train and strengthen child protection systems in 13 districts in Uganda.

Through implementation of the SCCM curriculum, WEI/Bantwana has identified the use of Village Child Case Management Committees (VCCMCs) as an exemplary model for mobilizing communities to identify, resolve, and refer cases. This practice is an additional mechanism that strengthens the child protection system at both the community and household levels, which is worth establishing in other districts by Probation and Social Welfare Officers (PSWOs) and Community Development Officers (CDOs) as part of their prevention and response efforts to VAC.

► PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This guide has been developed to support CDOs and PSWOs at the district and sub-county levels to effectively support the formulation of VCCMCs in their areas of jurisdiction. With ongoing support and guidance from CDOs and PSWOs, the committees can become an integral part of the child protection system. This guide will be useful in replicating the proven practice of VCCMCs in helping to prevent and respond to VAC in Uganda.

Other child protection stakeholders, including civil society organizations (CSOs), faith based organizations (FBOs), and community-based organizations (CBOs) may use this guide under the guidance of CDOs at the sub-county level and under the supervision of the Probation Social Welfare Office at the district level.

VCCMCs should always be supported by the CDO in day-to-day operations and to ensure the high standards and quality of services being provided. The work of the CDO will be supervised by the PSWO, who reports to the Assistant Commissioner of Children's Affairs at the MGLSD in the Department of Youth and Children.

The VCCMC will work with other mechanisms, such as the Child Helpline Action Centers at the district level, and will therefore strengthen linkages between the community, para-social workers (PSWs), and respective district-level case management structures.

► WHAT ARE VILLAGE CHILD CASE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES?

The VCCMC is responsible for identifying and handling cases of violence against children that can be solved within the community. Cases that are beyond their capacity are always referred to CDOs, parish or village local councils, School Change Agents, PSWs, and other relevant child protection service providers in their localities.

Each committee meets at least once per month on specific days agreed upon by the group. Members are encouraged to meet more regularly, and in situations of emergencies or cases requiring an immediate response, the committees can meet any time.

The VCCMC consists of at least seven members. Membership should include officials and community members who are experienced in handling cases of violence against children. An ideal VCCMC would consist of (1) one or more PSWs, (2) a Community Change Agent, (3) a School Change Agent, (4) a member from the Local Council (LCI), (5) a religious/opinion leader, (6) a Village Health Team member, and (7) a member from the parent/teacher association (PTA) or school management committee (SMC). Other child protection stakeholders, including civil society organizations (CSOs), faith based organizations (FBOs), and community-based organizations (CBOs) may use this guide under the guidance of CDOs at the sub-county level and under the supervision of the Probation Social Welfare Office at the district level.

► ROLE OF THE SUB-COUNTY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS

CDOs support the formation of these committees with help from PSWs or other VAC resource persons, such as members of VHTs and religious/opinion leaders, in communities or schools that may not have PSWs. Sub-county CDOs provide ongoing supervision of the committees to ensure that their operations conform to recommended principles and practices of VAC prevention and response work.

Other support supervision functions include case audits, supervision of registers, and mentoring the committees. CDOs ensure that committees deal with non-statutory cases, mainly of a preventive nature that can be handled at that level, and that that statutory cases identified through the VCCMC are effectively referred to service providers at the sub-county or beyond. CDOs are also responsible for closing cases.

► HOW TO FORM A VCCMC: A STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS

The formation of a VCCMC is supported by the CDO at each stage and takes the following steps:

Step 1: Assess the child protection situation in the community where the VCCMC is to be formed.

Step 2: Create awareness about the child protection situation in the community and on the need for the VCCMC.

Step 3: Engage the community to agree on the criteria for the selection of committee members, which involves emphasis on the need to include key child protection players, such as opinion leaders, religious leaders, traditional leaders, teachers, retired civil servants, chiefs, local council members, etc. It is also important to ensure that members that are nominated are committed to upholding the rights of children.

Step 4: Together with members of the community, select the committee. Select individuals for the positions of the chair, secretary, mobiliser, and others, as may be decided by the community.

Step 5: Train the members of the VCCMC on their roles and responsibilities. This training should include a thorough review of the case management procedures and proper conduct of engagement with children and their caregivers.

Step 6: Provide ongoing support supervision and mentoring continuously to ensure that the committee is providing quality services

▶ OPERATION OF THE VCCMC

Once the VCCMC has been formed, each member is assigned a role to play on the committee (i.e. chair, secretary, mobiliser, time keeper, etc.).

Members of the VCCMC identify cases and determine whether they are statutory or non-statutory so that the cases may be handled appropriately:

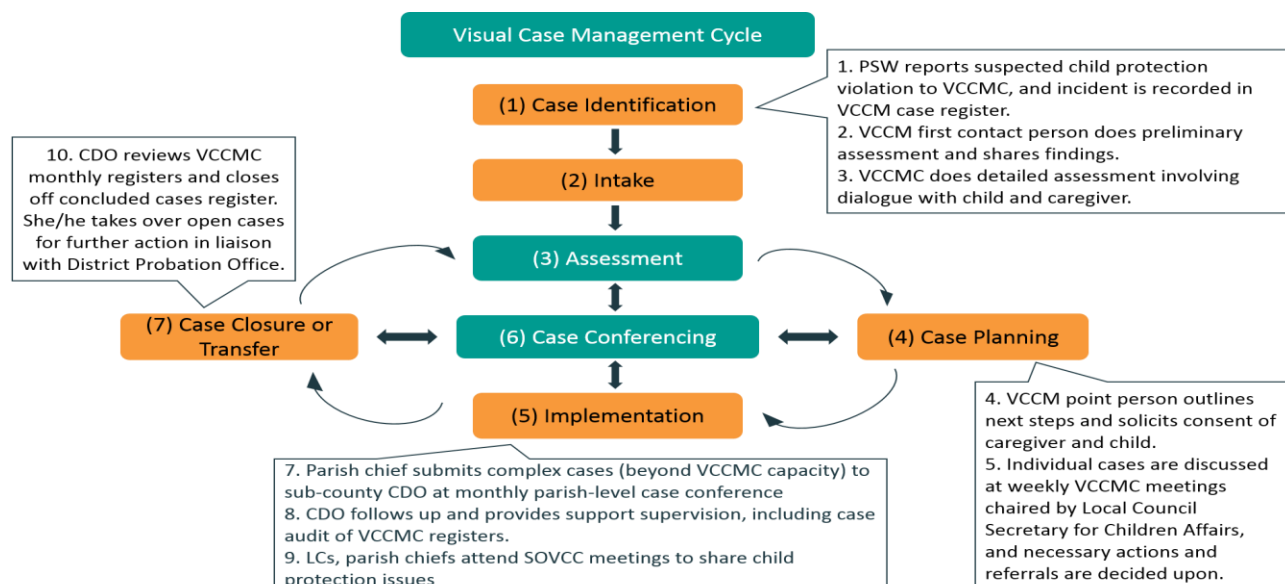
- **Statutory cases** are referred to the police and to the CDO, who also refer the case to the appropriate authorities.
- **Non-statutory cases** are handled via appropriate case management procedures.

Each member covers a certain school and community environment and documents cases that she/he presents to the VCCMC. The committee sits at least once per month to discuss progress on cases: both those that need to be closed and those that can be referred beyond the jurisdiction of the committee. For non-statutory cases, the VCCMC will conduct a detailed case assessment, involving dialogue with the child and caregivers. This may involve one-on-one discussions, fostering more awareness, and ensuring that such cases are mitigated. The chairperson is the team leader of the group, and as such, she/he is responsible for recommending cases for closure in consultation with the PSW. The VCCMC will forward such cases to case conferences in order to be closed by the Community Development Officers. The PSW and chairperson (or any other member) may attend these case conference meetings.

The committees should organize mini-case conferences at the village level with support from the PSW and CDOs to enable them to share their experiences on the cases that they are handling. In these village-level case conferences, they can present cases for closure, seek advice from the key actors, and can also learn how to handle other complicated cases. The VCCMC members will also benefit from exposure to government policies on children, and through this participation, they will begin to understand the legal frameworks that protect children as well as the district policies that have been developed to further strengthen the child protection system.

The committees will follow the process shown in the diagram below to handle cases that they have identified:

Figure I: Community Level Case Management Pathways



► WHAT CASES ARE HANDLED BY THE VCCMC?

As earlier stated, the committee cannot handle statutory cases; VCCMCs can only manage non-statutory cases. The difference between the two types of cases is outlined in the table below.

Table 2: Statutory vs Non-statutory Cases

Statutory Case	Non-statutory Case
Child marriage	Hygiene and cleanliness in households
Sexual abuse, including defilement of boys and girls	Food and income insecurity
Physical abuse causing grievous harm	Child participation issues
Abandonment and severe neglect	Need for school fees
Children living outside the family environment	Children currently out-of-school, but with intention of being returned by caregivers
Emergency food need and severe malnutrition	Need for school uniforms and books
Emergency health care needs	Domestic violence leading to psychological trauma

► ROLE OF PARA-SOCIAL WORKERS/COMMUNITY CHANGE AGENTS

The PSW and/or Community Change Agents are crucial to the function of the VCCMC and integral to the case management process as a whole. They are responsible for the following areas:

- Creating awareness on child protection issues in the community in order to prevent child abuse and neglect;
- Prevention and early detection of VAC cases;
- Deeper understanding of the family and community context, including mapping of available services and change agents in the community;
- Supporting and mentoring the VCCMCs in identifying child protection issues to address and prevent; and
- Promoting increased access to services for children in the community.



Finally, the PSW and/or Community Change Agent can also bridge the human resource gaps that are often experienced at sub-county and district level in the Community Department. These community resource persons can report on the progress of the cases handled by the committees and help monitor the progress of those referred by the committee.

Conclusion: It is anticipated that this guide will further be refined in joint consultation with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development with the intention of leveraging national-level case management advocacy work.

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