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**REPUBLIC OF KENYA**

**MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE, GENDER, SENIOR CITIZENS AFFAIRS AND SPECIAL PROGRAMMES**

**STATE DEPARTMENT FOR GENDER**

**CONTRIBUTIONS TO UNGA REPORT 2022 – THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR AT THE OFFICE OF THE UN OHCHR**

**Introduction:**

Children guarantee the existence and the future of any nation. A country that does not take care of her children risks extinction.Children and youth form 60 percent of the Kenyan population. If adequate attention is not given towards the promotion of children’s and young person’s welfare, crime, truancy and rebellion increase to unmanageable levels. The most prevalent form of child abuse in Kenya is child neglect and abuse which entails acts of omission and commission against children and young persons. Adults who are either well known to children or who are entrusted to their care and protection often take advantage of their venerability especially when one or both parents die.

1. **Updated data on vulnerable groups of children and information pertinent to the reporting examples of vulnerable groups of children under the Framework of SDGs**

In Kenya, data collection and reporting of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs) is mainly carried out by the National Bureau of Statistics. There exist gaps on data collection regarding vulnerable groups in the collection of administrative data due to weak coordination of data collection processes especially from grass root sources and civil society organizations. However multi-agency efforts have been put to monitor gender indicators such as social protection, child protection, early child development, education, women in leadership and decision-making, GBV helpline (real-time incident data), child abuse cases, and various categories of cases such as births, deaths, marriage, divorce among others. The challenge exists in reporting of cases where cultural, religious and other barriers exist.

There is limited digitization of paper-based records and poor of coordination among stakeholders. Kenya has made strides in filling this gap by mainstreaming gender related issues with the government deploying officers at national and county levels. These officers aid in data collection by liaising with personnel from different sectors and reaching to grassroots in order to transfer data from sources that are otherwise unreachable. Nevertheless, these efforts may not meet the ISO standard for producing statistics or are not using mainstream methods such as Demographic and Health Surveys and census. Convening Workshops, seminars, conferences and such like fora have ensured the sharing and dissemination of this data.

1. **Threats to sale and sexual exploitation of Children**

Child poverty and destitution compel vulnerable children to roam the streets in search of food and irresponsible adults take advantage of them. Children are thus sold out for labour of are prone to sexual and physical exploitation. The technological advancement experienced world over has led to the growth of lucrative child pornography and related sexual abuse materials.

Poverty and vulnerability increases the risk of sale and sexual exploitation in order for families to meet survival needs such as food, shelter and clothing. Gender roles may mean many victims of sexual violence, including hundreds of boys who may never tell anyone. Kenya introduced social protection such as cash transfers for Orphans and the Vulnerable Children(CT-OVC), Cash transfer for the people with disability, Hunger Safety net and Cash Transfer for the elderly all aimed at ensuring children and household members have access to basic needs subsequently reducing the risk of exploitation.

During disasters such as drought, the government distributes relief food to marginal areas in a bid to mitigate the negative effects of hunger. The Kenya government introduced free basic education for all in a bid to end illiteracy therefore ensuring enrollment as well as retention of vulnerable children in school. The provision of free and subsidized secondary education has further enabled many adult learners remain and complete their education. Additionally children are less likely to get into violent extremism, and are able to uplift their standards of living thereby reducing risks brought about by poverty.

1. **Manifestations of sale and sexual exploitation of children**

Kenya is committed to end all forms of Female Genital Multilation (FGM). In the year 2011 His Excellency, Uhuru Kenyatta, the president of the republic of Kenya made a commitment to end FGM by 2022. The government in collaboration with other stakeholders has therefore put measures in place to end FGM among all communities that have been previously engaging in this harmful practice. Further, the government has taken measures through the National Steering Committee on Child Labor, by creating and convening a Technical Working Committee, county-level child labor committees, and increasing the number of prosecutions for worst forms of child labor.

The government enacted the National Prevention and Response Plan on Violence Against Children to coordinate multi-sectoral activities that address violence against children, including commercial sexual exploitation and other worst forms of child labor. 30% of all government tenders are set aside for special interest groups that include; youth, women and persons with disabilities. This ensures access to financial resources by guardians therefore uplifting the standards of living with the result of reducing child exploitation for labor and exploitation . The Street children have been accommodated under the umbrella of National Youth Service in order to gain technical and life skills that will ensure they are kept off the streets and are able to contribute in nation building.

1. **Protection needs and Contextual challenges amid the efforts to combat sale and sexual exploitation of children**

Some children in Kenya are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including domestic work, commercial sexual exploitation, agricultural labor; sometimes this is because of human trafficking. Due to covid lockdowns some of these exploitations increased as sources of livelihoods dwindled. Further, as children were mostly at home, some with no access to internet facilities that enabled online learning, children were often left to their own devices. This resulted in an increase in child and teenage pregnancies with many girls not reporting back to school when lockdown ended.

The boy child also is vulnerable to myriad of challenges. Owing to the increasing unemployment rate, many boys and young men have been attracted to the increasingly popular motorcycle public transportation industry.In the worse scenario,Young men are are taught to ride bikes within a day and ferry passengers the following day. As a result, many fall victims of road accidents endangering themselves, their passengers and other road users. The government increased hotline services and created public awareness on toll free numbers to call in the events of child and gender related distresses. Further the providers of care work such as nurses and community health workers were included in the essential services therefore exempted from curfew restrictions. Cash transfer were also provided to hardcore poor households to cushion them against adverse effects of Covid 19 such as hunger and deprivation.

**5). Practical measures taken to address the vulnerabilities in institutional, family and online settings**

The government has in place The National council for Children's services that comprises of inter Ministerial representation. The Council Coordinates government efforts on issues related to child rights and welfare, including child labor. Further, the government established county-level child labor committees, targeting 15 counties based on prevalence of child labor and child trafficking.

The National Policy on the Elimination of child labor includes measures to establish child labor-free zones, increase financial support for labor law enforcement, raise awareness, improve accessibility to education and social protection programs, and integrate child labor into corporate responsibility programs.

The National plan of Action for children in Kenya Provides an operational framework for coordination, planning, implementing, and monitoring programs for children's welfare. It outlines programs, awareness-raising activities, and research with the goal of reducing child labor and other child exploitation cases by 50 percent by 2022.National Prevention and Response Plan on Violence Against Children in Kenya that provides goals and multi-sectoral actions to address violence against children, including commercial sexual exploitation, child trafficking, and other worst forms of child labor, through laws and policies, family support, education and life skills, community awareness, response and support, and coordination.

School feeding Programs serves hot lunches to vulnerable children to improve school attendance. The government made an educational allocation of approximately $4 million. The Presidential Secondary School Bursary Scheme, supports the education of vulnerable children by ensuring they remain in schools and complete their education. National Safety Net Program which is a government-funded, 5 year cash transfer and social safety net program, with support from the World Bank, has enabled households with vulnerable and orphan children receive regular financial to improve the their quality of life. Through partnerships, the Government has allowed children at risk of gender based violence, exploitation and other dangers at home to remain in safety at school during holidays. Children’s protection and care is therefore a significant enable of states to achieve inclusive and sustainable social economic development.

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