

Govt asks employers to give mothers space for breastfeeding

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KAMPALA. Government has mooted a 13-point plan to guarantee child rights protection from their time of inception to at least 18 years, prioritising areas of child survival and health, education and development, protection and participation.

The plan which marked the departure from the National Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children (OVC) policy is contained in the sixth draft of the National Children's policy that was presented by ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development last week.

Under child survival and health, the policy imposes responsibility on employers to provide places for breastfeeding mothers at places of work.

On the other hand, it promotes early childhood care, regular revision of the curricula to ensure it complies with the recognised standards as well as children's individual needs, under the priority area of education and development.

As an entry point to child protection, the policy proposes the creation of a child helpline as a support system for children and young people seeking support, care and protection.

It also develops a national strategy for addressing cyber-crimes, including online bullying, pornography, and other internet based child protection risks and violation as well as ensuring that children participate in the development and design of all programmes that have an impact on their survival, protection and development.



Requirement. Monitor Publications breastfeeding room. The new policy imposes responsibility on employers to provide places for breastfeeding mothers at places of work. PHOTO BY RACHEL MABALA

Unlike previous policies, in this, government has set up an implementation framework to track compliance which involves periodic assessment of key indicators by priority intervention areas as well as assigning different roles to various government ministries and other government departments.

Vulnerability

Uganda has one of the youngest and most rapidly growing population in the world, with 57 per cent below the age of 18 and about half (48.7 per

cent) younger than 15, according to the Uganda National Bureau of statistics (UBOS) 2016.

Furthermore, estimates indicate that up to 96 per cent of Ugandan children experience some level of vulnerability of which 51 per cent or approximately eight million children are considered moderately or critically vulnerable.

Although children's vulnerability is wide spread in all regions of Uganda, the magnitude is higher in post conflict areas, especially in northern Uganda.

Police last year released statistics

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S POLICY

Delayed. Mr Joseph Ssewungu, the Kalungu West MP, noted that the policy was long overdue but said Parliament should scrutinise it before its implementation. "In Uganda's political system and especially the NRM government, there are very good policies in place but not implemented by government why because they fear spending money on want the policy directs them to do," he said.

Positive. The Federation of Uganda Employers (FUE), has also welcomed the inclusion of child spaces at workplaces in the policy. "From the perspective of an employer, it is going to increase employee productivity. From the perspective of the child, they are going to grow up with their mothers," Mr Daniel Opio, the policy and research officer at FUE, said.

on child abuse which indicated that 43,682 cases of violence against children were registered naming Lira as the worst district for Ugandan children to live in.

Mr Mondo Kyateka, the commissioner for youth and children affairs at the ministry, said the intension of government is to review the OVC policy and replace it with a holistic integrated national children policy given the change in the current social trends which have rendered all children vulnerable.

"The intensity of vulnerability may differ from one group to another but all children by virtue of the fact that they are children are vulnerable so we have run away from calling it an OVC we are replacing it with a more holistic policy called the national children policy," Mr Kyateka said.

The policy was unveiled during a meeting organised by Africhild, an African research centre on children affairs based at Makerere University, to discuss and give input into the draft National Child Policy.

In the event where society has become individualistic, Ms Joyce Wanican the executive director of Africhild centre for the study of the African child in Kampala, noted that it makes it necessary to have a new policy to provide more protection to all children.

"Before that, our society was a whole that is why we did not have orphans. They were adopted naturally but now we are seeing children heading households. We have to be careful with our modern trends and how it is affecting our social setting," Ms Wanican said.