

Vulnerability

Support

Empowerment

Commonwealth delegates to hold side meeting over children's rights

By Vision Reporter

The First Lady and Minister for Education and Sports, Janet Museveni, has welcomed the proposal by the Commonwealth secretary general, Hon. Patricia Scotland, to hold a side meeting to discuss issues about empowering children on the sidelines of the forthcoming 9th Commonwealth youth ministers meeting in Uganda.

The children's meeting, scheduled for August 1, was proposed by the Commonwealth secretary general to advocate for all children to grow up with their parents or communities as opposed to being placed in child care institutions or orphanages.

During a meeting she hosted last Thursday at State House in Nakasero, Mrs Museveni said she is happy with the proposed meeting to discuss mechanisms of reducing the number of children in orphanages and ensure that they grow up with their families.

She said this while interacting with officials representing organisations that are partnering to ensure that children grow up with their parents and communities who called on her to brief her on the status of the preparations for the side event.

The team, led by the youth and children minister, Florence Nakiwala Kiyingi, included Layne Robinson, (head of programmes youth division) and Karen Williams (conference manager) from the Commonwealth Secretariat.



Mrs Museveni (in grey and black jacket) Kiyingi (on First Lady's immediate right) with delegates from the Commonwealth Secretariat and other officials at State House, Nakasero in Kampala last week. PPU photo

Others were UNICEF's chief of communications Jaya Murthy; Child I Foundation's country director Christopher Muwanguzi; UWESO's chief executive officer Jennifer Aguti; Uganda North American Youth Development Association's executive director Charles Muyimba; FUSA president Moses Magogo and officials from the ministries of gender and education and sports.

According to a release from her office, Mrs Museveni said she does not support the practice of children growing up in orphanages because they lose grip of their ancestral roots. She said it is better for the vulnerable children to be

The First Lady said vulnerable children should be supported while living in their communities

supported while living in their communities.

She cited the model of the Uganda Women's Effort to Save Orphans (UWESO), an organisation she founded 30 years ago, which focuses on empowering the households through the mother or caregiver in villages across the country.

UWESO, at their Masuliita Children's Village, also

rehabilitates street children, who are later re-integrated into their communities.

The First Lady commended the work of the Government and its partnering agencies in this cause to ensure that they come up with a model that will not leave any child behind.

Kiyingi said Hon. Scotland believes Uganda has the potential to come up with a

model that can be rolled out in the 54 Commonwealth member states.

Support grant

While discussing possible solutions that would enable the empowerment of children, Murthy shared a proposal of a new model of a child support grant that would be quite similar to the Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment (SAGE) of sh23,000 each month for the senior citizens. He said the SAGE has been successful and has led to an increase in school enrolment, a number of household eating two meals a day, employment rate and median wage.

Aguti said they hope to make use of the over 4,200 community groups they have formed which reach over 126,000 vulnerable households to equip and skill the households and enable the effective utilisation of the social assistance grant intended for children.

Muwanguzi, in a brief on Child's I Foundation, a child protection civil society agency, said their vision is a Uganda with every child growing up in a loving family. He said they ensure this by using a number of resources to create a pathway for the transition of children from institutions to a loving home.