

Orphanages cited in child trafficking

LIRA

By Patrick Okino

In a bid to reduce child trafficking and violence against children, the gender ministry has started closing illegal children's homes and orphanages across the country.

"Many of those homes are illegal and about 90% have not registered with us," said Kyateka Momdo, the commissioner youth and children affairs in the ministry.

"Children are being trafficked through such centres and some connive with the district probation and welfare officers," he said.

Momdo made the revelation during a meeting organised by

Africhild Centre at Lira Hotel.

Africhild Centre is a research organisation on children affairs at Makerere University.

The gender ministry presented a research on violence against children, which indicated that northern Uganda leads with 36%.

"We got reports from the UK and US that people use children's homes to traffic children. Sometimes they take them promising to sponsor them for education, but instead abuse them," he explained.

The survey dubbed Uganda Violence Against Children Survey was conducted by the gender ministry in 2015 in partnership with Unicef and Africhild among others.

According to the gender

ministry website, about 800 orphanages or residential care institutions are in Uganda, but less than 35 are licensed. The centres are housing about 50,000 children.

Over 80% do not have a child protection policy and 50% have completely unacceptable care standards.

Lydia Najemsa, one of the officials from the ministry, said physical violence was high, followed by sexual violence.

The Lira district LC5 vice-chairperson, George Okello Ayo, blamed the Government for decentralisation where the district has no control over money and other resources.

"We cannot reduce violence against children because there is no money to fight the vice," he said.