The Effectiveness of Community-Based Child Protection Mechanisms: A case of Mukuru Kwa Njenga Informal Settlements in Nairobi, Kenya

Reuben Mulwa Kivuva[1], Pia Okeche[2] & Mildred Lumayo[1]

[1]*Department of Sociology, Gender and Development Studies, Kisii University, Kenya*
[2]*Department of Political Science, History and Peace Studies, Kisii University, Kenya*

Abstract:
Background:
Child abuse is a global problem. Globally several policies, strategies, and guidelines have been put in place to deal with the situation. One of the methods proposed to deal with violence against children is the implementation of Community Based Child Protection Systems. The performance of Community Based Child Protection Systems has been riddled with various challenges like poor enforcement of the existing laws, the different subsystems of childcare, justice, law, and order working independently of each other. The study aimed at assessing Community Based Child Protection Systems and their implications on child safety in Mukuru Kwa Njenga informal settlements in Nairobi County. Expressly, the study set out to evaluate the forms and extent of child abuse; to establish the pathways used in dealing with violence against children; examine the influence of socio-cultural practices on the implementation of child protection programmes; to investigate the coordination of Community Based Child Protection Systems, and to establish the mediating effect of institutional arrangements on the relationship between socio-cultural practices and implementation of Community Based Child Protection Systems in Mukuru Kwa Njenga, Nairobi County.

Materials and Methods:
The study employed a cross-sectional survey research design to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. From a target population of 27,389 households in Mukuru Kwa Njenga, a sample size of 280 participants was selected using both purposive sampling and random sampling techniques. The respondents were drawn from Mukuru Kwa Njenga informal settlements in Nairobi. Piloting of the data collection instruments was carried out in Korogocho to which revealed that they were reliable and valid. Qualitative data was analysed and presented as narrations and verbatim. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 25. Both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis, means of central tendency, correlation and regression analysis were also carried out. These were presented in tables and graphs. The study revealed that new ways had been put in place to avoid different child abuse cases being detected and acted on. Institutional arrangements were found not to have a moderating effect on the relationship between socio-cultural practices and the implementation of Community Based Child Protection Systems.

Results: The study revealed that more than four-fifths, 81% (228), of the respondents had witnessed child maltreatment in Mukuru Kwa Njenga. This could have been a result of the concerted efforts of sensitization on child rights put in place in the Mukuru Kwa Njenga informal settlement. The 81 per cent is an indication of a high frequency of reporting of child maltreatment cases. There was also a case of people resorting to other means of dealing with the problem of child abuse. Others did not bother to report for they felt nothing would be done. There was also the fear of revenge from the family of the perpetrator.

Conclusion: The study recommends that the government should strengthen existing policies that advocate for appropriate child protection and enhance community participation to improve the effective implementation of CBCPMs. These findings are important to stakeholders involved with children's rights, like policymakers, researchers, and students of devolution theories.

Key Word: Maltreatment; child abuse; Community Based child protection mechanism.

I.   Introduction

A lot of attention has been devoted to protecting children throughout the world. This has been done through declarations from conventions like the Convention on Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). All of them are agreed that a child is any person aged below 18 years (Amiri and Tostensen, 2011). However, contextual realities have different considerations. For example, in some communities, age does not determine childhood. This is particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, where girls aged below 18 years in some traditional African and Arab societies are married off as they are deemed fit to be married as adults as they can perform some household chores (Olowu, 2002). In addition, the habitat or the environment the child is living in like the slums.

In India, parental tolerance of child abuse is well documented as part of the family units' cultural philosophies (Bhattarchyarya, 2021). The problem is exacerbated if the family lives in the slums. For example, in India, about 49,000 slums spread across the country is home to over eight million children under the age of 6 years according to a report "Forgotten voices- the world of urban children living in India" (UNICEF/PwC-India, 2015). The report further shows that there was a 24 per cent increase in crimes against children between 2010 and 2011 and an increase of 52.5 per cent during the 2012 to 2013 period. Most of the crimes against children were reported to have been higher in slums of highly urbanised states like Delhi and Maharashtra. The list of states with the most crimes against children ranked these states third and fourth. Most of the crimes were children working as domestic helpers. The report also showed that physical abuse, slapping, kicking, and burns, among others, were also reported by about 70 per cent of the children, and 32.2 per cent reported sexual abuse (ibid).

In Sub Saharan Africa, informal settlements host 62 per cent of the urban population as compared to 43 per cent in South Asia (Abbott, 2000). There are about 200 informal settlements in Nairobi where the living conditions are thought to be among the worst in Africa due to too high population densities. Due to the high population densities, accessibility of some of the essential services like clean water, sanitation systems, and proper infrastructure is a challenge. Other challenges are social cohesion levels decline, exposure to several risks like family separation, working and living in the streets, sexual exploitation, and abuse and HIV/AIDS and violence. It is also complicated to plan and provide for these services (Kimotho, 2015).

The slum dwellers face a myriad of challenges. The list of the challenges is long, and many of these disadvantages reinforce each other in a vicious cycle (Mehta and Dastur, 2008). Due to the haphazard development of houses in the informal settlements, then it becomes difficult to layout service provider networks. The lack of provision of services by the authorities creates a gap that must be filled. This is where 'slum gangs' come in and begin providing the locals lacking services, albeit in a dangerous and risky manner. For example, illegal power connections are made to the nearby power lines and power is supplied to the locals as well as the enforcement of the rule of law and other rights by vigilantes in the slums (Kimotho, 2015). In such places, the security of the children is not assured. Besides, given the contextual and cultural meanings given to child abuse, the protection of children is dependent on the understanding of what child abuse is by the gang that is in control at any given time.

The recognition of child rights as human rights resulted from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC) in 1989 (UNICEF, 2008). Up and until then, the rights, duties, and welfare of children were hardly afforded any consideration making children suffer in silence. They suffered under unacceptable social-cultural, political and educational norms and practices. Due to their age, children have been denied rights and those who are refusing them do not consider these rights to be fundamental human rights (ibid).

Legally, therefore, the children's status remained passive, and they were considered part of their parent's property. This meant that parents were legally allowed to punish and control the behaviour of the children. Unlike those days, children have now been recognized as social beings with legally protected rights (UNICEF, 2008). However, the enforcement of child rights has been carried out in a standalone manner for a long time. That is, various acts and programmes deal with a particular kind of abuse of children (UNICEF, 2013). These have been made to strengthen the quality of services offered to child abuse survivors in the country.

To address this challenge, a systems approach to deal with child abuse was agreed upon (UNICEF, 2008). This approach is termed as Child Protection System. According to UNICEF (2008), Child Protection Systems is comprised of a set of laws, policies, regulations, and services needed to support the prevention of and responses to Child Protection-related risks. These include health, social welfare, security, education, and justice at the national stage. Given that children live in communities; the approach is expected to be replicated at the community level as at the national level. At the community, the Child Protection System is known as the Community-Based Child Protection Mechanism (CBCPM), which is essentially supposed to strengthen the National Child Protection Systems (NCPS). Their importance arises from the fact that they are easily accessible and are as an alternative to responding to the various violations children are subjected to. This makes them be

the first point of concern/care for the protection of children from abuse, violence, exploitation, and neglect and thereby promoting the well-being of the children (ibid).

The CBCPMs is composed of all those groups or networks dealing with responding to and preventing child violations to vulnerable children at the grassroots level. Community groups like women's groups, youth groups, peer groups, and family support groups as well as traditional groups are such groups and or networks (GoK, 2009). Included in these networks are groups formed in the community or working in the community like Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) or any other child protection committees started either by the national Government or Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), all these form the CBCPMs. Some of these groups, like family support, peer groups, and women groups, are informal support mechanisms since they are not part of the Child Protection Systems led by the governments. At the same time, other support mechanisms like the chiefs and village elders are part of the government-led Child Protection Systems in countries like Kenya. Therefore, CBCPMs are those systems that have been put in place at the community level to deal with child protection problems and are informally constituted or have members who are not part of the government-employed staff (UNICEF, 2013).

However, the implementation of the CBCPMs has been shown to have mixed results- both successes and failures. For example, in the United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK), Germany, among other countries in Europe, have had their success stories (Lachman, 2002). The Child Protection Systems' successful implementation has been credited to the structures and systems that have been put in place in response to the laws against child abuse. They have also availed resources to the implementing agencies. This has resulted in empowered citizens who are able to link cases of child violations from the informal systems like neighbourhood watch with the formal systems. In addition, most of the community members have a shared understanding of child rights (Lachman, 2002).

In Africa, the implementation of Community Based Child Protection Systems has not fully embraced. For example, in Ghana, it was reported that there were cases of non-cooperation by some parents towards some of the procedures as outlined in law (Ghana NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child (GNCRC), (2005). In Uganda, adequate protection for vulnerable children remains a challenge due to the varied violations and abuses that the children are subjected to despite the country having progressive laws and policies ensuring their safety. While in Kenya, the measures put in place to protect children from maltreatment, according to a report by Kenyan Laws on Children showed partial implementation, and neither were they effective. The main reasons fronted for the poor implementation of child safety policies have been credited to, constraints of resources and skilled personnel and limited knowledge of these policies (Kuyini, 1998; Ofori-Addo, 1994), partial and or fragmented implementation of the child protection system by the different subsystems of childcare; justice, law, and order as a result of working independently of each other (Ugandan Ministry of Gender, labour and social development (MoGlsd) (2013).

The establishment of the National Child Protection System and its Framework (NCPSF) in 20002 (GoK, 2011), was to ensure children's safety which has remained elusive. According to the International Labour Organization, Kenya was ranked sixth in the world in the use of child labour which is among the most frequent abuses children are subjected to (ILO, 2003). Despite the enactment of the strict Sexual Offenses Act (SOA) of 2006, most of the children's handlers are lax in implementing the Act. Sections 14 and 15 of the Act are self-explanatory that child sex tourism and child prostitution are criminal offences. Same as in the children's Act of 2006. However, Kostelny, et al. (2013), in a study they carried out in two slums areas in Mombasa, reported that there was rampant child sexual abuse and exploitation. The report further showed that the abuses were perpetrated primarily by people in positions of power and authority like teachers, parents, and elders.

In Nairobi, particularly in the slums, child violations have increased substantially in the recent past. These abuses, especially sexual abuses, were perpetuated to children aged below 15 years, especially from April 2012 to April 2013, which saw a drastic increase in the slums of Nairobi. Less than 50 per cent of the abuse cases reported to the relevant authorities for most of the violations are committed by people who are known and trusted in the community (Gender Violence Recovery Centre and ChildLine Kenya (2013). According to the Wangu Kanja Foundation (WKF), which works in the slums of Mukuru Kwa Njenga, between 2014 and 2018, 422 cases of child abuse were walk-ins at their facility (Frankel et al., 2018). Of these, 140 were cases of defilement, with 100 cases being assault cases.

Child Protection Mechanisms at the community level are for ensuring violations and abuses against children do not occur. The protection mechanisms include both the formal system and the informal system. The formal system includes all government-led interventions to protect children from abuse, such as government structures and institutions. It also comprises all the actors from local to the national level in a cross-section of social welfare, education, health, and law enforcement structures. The informal system is based on and driven by traditional values of shared responsibility for the children's wellbeing (Mutua, 2002). Among African communities, the Obuntu concept used in East Africa, ubuntu in Southern Africa protected children from abuses as it holds that it is a community's collective responsibility to raise children (Shamala, 2008). However, instead

of the two systems working together, they seem to be working independently of each other. Besides, while the informal structures are more likely to be responsive to the vulnerable children's needs as they are closer in the community, they are over-spread (Shamala, 2008).

Child maltreatment is a global problem. Several policies, strategies, and guidelines have been put in place to deal with the problem. In Kenya, child protection is anchored in the many international and regional frameworks that Kenya has domesticated into the children's Act (2001) and enshrined it in Article 53 of Kenya's constitution 2010. All of these aim to safeguard all children's rights and ensure that the children are protected, respected and their rights are fulfilled (Save the Children 2005). However, with all these legal instruments and institutions in place, the rate of violence against children continues unabated in both the country's rural and urban areas. According to the 2019 census, one in two young adults experienced mistreatment as a child in one form or another (KNBS, 2019). A study conducted in 2016 by Child Welfare Organisation and Childline Kenya indicated that nearly 800 children had been mistreated in Kenya. The study paints a grim picture in that 3 out of 4 of the abused cases ranging from sexual, physical and neglect could cause irreversible physiological and mental damage to the children. Ninety per cent of those mistreated cases were girls. It also shows that 33 per cent of police and law enforcement officers commit violence against children in our society. At the same time, 28 per cent of those who mistreated children were parents and caregivers.

In addition, in the slums, where most urban residents live, children are always at risk of being violated. In the slums, cases of people under the influence of alcohol having sex is a common occurrence. There is also increased child trafficking cases reported every week of a child disappearing; children verbally abused by the hour is a sort of a "way of life." The continued use of abusive words such as a "prostitute" by parents towards their children pushes them to live the labels and start engaging in sex work even before they turn 18 years. The conscription of young people, some as young as nine years, into slum gangs such as the "Gaza Sect," which operates in the eastern parts of the city like Eastleigh and Mukuru Kwa Njenga, exposes them to defilement and death. Defilement from the elderly gang members, and if they rebel or refuse, they are killed or gunned down by the police. These, therefore, reveal poor enforcement of the existing laws or the inadequacy of child protection, which Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms seeks to address at the lowest level-the community. It has also been blamed on partial and or fragmented child protection systems by the different childcare, justice, law, and order subsystems. This study, therefore, sought to assess the implementation of CBCPMs in the Mukuru Kwa Njenga slums.

The main aim of this publication is present the findings of the investigation of the effectiveness of Community Based Child Protection Systems in Mukuru Kwa Njenga, Nairobi County.

II. Methodology

A cross-sectional survey design was used for this study. According to Neuman (2011), a cross-sectional survey is a process of gathering evidence at a point in time. This design was chosen as it determines and reports things as they are at a particular time. The major purpose of cross-sectional survey research was to report the extent to which child security has been influenced by the implementation of CBCPMs (Orodho, 2005) which the study sought to find out. The study employed both probability and non-probability techniques. A Random route walk which is a random selection method was used to select the various households for the study. A random point in the study site was picked to start the random route walk. The interviewers followed the instructions strictly according to Bauer's instructions on a random walk. That is, utilizing the various matrix options whenever the interviewers get to junctions as well as observing the skip patterns of every 5th household as advocated for in the random route walk.

III. Result & Discussion

A total of 280 respondents were reached. Of these, female 62.5% (189) and male 32.5% (91). More than half (57%) of the respondents were aged above 40 years with those aged between 40 – 49 years being the majority (36.1%) and the other 22.9% being aged above 50 years. The study also found that the majority (68.6%) of the respondents had a secondary and above level of education. Of these, 38.3% (107) had completed secondary school education, while 30.4% (85) had a university education level. Another 4.3% (12) had an incomplete primary level of education and an additional 27.1% (76) had some secondary education. The study further found that about 58% (161) were married with the rest 41.1% (116) and 1.1% (3) being single and separated or divorced respectively.

Over two thirds (68%) of the respondents sampled from Mukuru Kwa Njenga informal settlement were Christians with Muslims (27.5%) and a 3.6% being traditionalists. This implies that most of the respondents believe in one God. In terms of occupation, more than six tenths (64.7%) were either in small scale businesses or in hawking. Of these (32.9%) were in small scale businesses and (31.8%) were in hawking. Those respondents doing casual jobs were 22.5% with the least being 7.9% of the respondents being in salaried employment.

The study revealed that more than four-fifths, 81% (228), of the respondents had witnessed child maltreatment in Mukuru Kwa Njenga. The rest 19% (52) reported that they had not witnessed any child mistreatment. These findings could be interpreted in two ways. One is that this study was carried out in the slums a place facing a lot of challenges and hence likely to have many cases of child abuses. This finding may imply that the respondents did not perceive the various child abuses as severe violations of children worth of reporting. This could have been a result of the respondents "normalizing" these abuses. Secondly, the 81% (228) that reported having witnessed child maltreatment could have been as a result of the concerted efforts of sensitizations on child rights put in place in the Mukuru Kwa Njenga informal settlement. The 81 per cent is an indication of a high frequency of reporting of child maltreatment cases. This is contrary to Lynne, Gifford, and Evans (2015). According to them, child maltreatment cases are underreported in most countries despite there being policies for mandatory reporting. Most of the main causes for the underreporting were being attributed to unawareness of the written protocols on reporting of child maltreatment, lack of reporting knowledge, and interviewing techniques.

In addition, the study revealed that the respondents would treat cases of child abuse differently ways. This was in response to the question of, "what would you do in case you came across a case of child mistreatment" was "what makes child abuse or mistreatment go unreported?" The question elicited six responses, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Reasons For Not Reporting Cases Of Child Abuse

Reason child abuse cases go unreported	Frequency	Per cent
Don't know where to report	68	24.3
Perpetrator well known	5	1.8
No action likely to be taken	60	21.4
Fear of victimization	101	36.1
Don't care attitude	7	2.5
It is normal	39	13.9
Total	**280**	**100.0**

Source: Survey Data 2019

According to Table 1, if the perpetrator is well known 1.8% (5) is a reason enough not to be reported if they are involved in case of any incidences of child mistreatment. Table 1 also shows that 2.5 % (7) and 13.9% (39) respondents respectively stated that a "don't care attitude" and "it is normal" as other reasons for not reporting child abuse incidences. On the other hand, the biggest reason for not reporting was the fear of victimization 36.1% (101). It was followed by not knowing where to report 24.3% (68) and that there is a likelihood of no action taking place 21.4% (60).

It was established that some community members did not know where to report (24.3%) was as a result of lacking awareness of where to report either civil or criminal matters. Even the child protection framework does not have a clear definition or mandates if any the chiefs and village elders have in resolving cases of child abuse. This has meant the devising of various mechanisms to resolve disputes in the community. That is, different child violations have different ways of handling them by considering the context of the abuse. For example, child neglect. Some of the considerations are, "is the child of a single parent or has both parents", "what is the income levels of the family", and "what is the age of the parent(s)" among others.

Fear of victimization is understood from the idea that once a person reports some of the types of mistreatments children are facing in the informal settlement, the person reporting is assigned more work to do. According to FGD held,

"…the police will tell you…go and find out why the children have not been taken to hospital, or 'how do you know the children have been neglected'. Or if the children have lacked food 'why don't you go and buy them food" FGD 006

Another had this to say,

"if a child has been sick and has lacked medical attention…….one is told 'why don't you take the child to hospital?" FGD 002

The above two excerpts show that sometimes the police officers tend to usurp the role of magistrates by dismissing cases of child maltreatment at the investigation level. This was especially true where cases of incest, child labour, neglect, and abandonment. According to the study respondents, the police opted to refer such cases to the local leaders for resolution.

Most of the child abuse interventions require the person reporting to spend money that they had not planned to spend in responding to child maltreatment. A discussion with police respondents laid bare the challenges that they face in handling child abuse incidences. The challenges ranged from spending money from their own pockets to buy food for children left unattended to or lack of transport from their police stations to the locations where the incidences are reported. One of the police officers handling the gender desk said the following,

"…… sometimes I do receive a report of a child who has been found abandoned in the slums, and most of the abandoned children are the newly born babies…the child has no clothes. If the child is brought to the station before taking it to a children's home, he/she has to have some clothes on. Or at least to have some wrappers around it" She pauses and asks, "What do I do?" a rhetorical question. She continues, "in this case, I will ask either for donations from my colleagues and hope it's enough to buy the necessary things, or I will have to top up money from my own pockets; or I just get the items donated to me by fellow officers who had small babies and are no longer using these clothes or alternatively it becomes my sole problem and get what the baby needs all by myself; you see unless I do that the child will continue to suffer" KII 003

Other officers said that the process of seeking justice for mistreated children is a long and tedious one that makes would-be witnesses fail to report incidences if they come across them. The process starts with taking their statement on what they witnessed and up to reporting. After they have filed their statements, they have to appear in court like several times. The initial times could be by using their own money or being facilitated to appear in court. However, the problem is when the court cases take a long time before the hearing of the cases commences. Due to the severity of the punishment for those found guilty, the perpetrators and their lawyers make deliberate efforts on having the court cases drag for a long time. This is by asking for postponements which the courts always give. This frustrates the witnesses as they cannot afford the fares to attend court when needed. This makes the would-be witnesses by reporting fail to report these incidences. One participant in a FGD demonstrated this when she said,

"sometimes it is hard to get a perpetrator to court because there is no money to do so. It is not easy to go to the courts sometime because it has so many complications. There is the frequent going to the courts and coming back several times, until the survivor or witness feels like there is no reason to spend so much money for a process, they are not seeing any progress, they feel they would rather just leave it alone" FGD 003

Apart from the frustration of the length of time taken by the formal justice systems in addressing child maltreatment, intimidation by the police, the situation gets more compounded in instances where children stay in the same locality/place with the perpetrators of the violence such as their relatives. Once the perpetrators who are relatives of the children get freed on bond, they return home where they end up repeating the abuse or more harm to the children. The bonded perpetrators may also inflict more harm on the family member who made the report to the police in the first instance. This is also another reason for not volunteering to report any child violation one witnesses.

The bonding of child abuse perpetrators and the risks they pose once out on bond frustrates the community. This kind of delays for survivors of child abuse cases in having their cases resolved and or settled by the formal systems have made the community to mete out instance justices to perpetrators of child abuse. The meted justice ranged from scolding a mother who was seen to be neglecting their children or not taking them for medical care to the members of the public lynching suspected perpetrators of sexual abuse instead of taking the cases to the police. In one of the FGDs a participant said,

"nowadays most community members tend to think mob justice is the best option for some offences. This way they are assured that at least something has been done since most of them loose interest once the cases have gone to the police as most of the tend to lose interest except when they get summoned to record their statements……. they don't keep on following up the cases so they don't know whether the perpetrators get to prison or not." FGD 005

In almost all the FGDs conducted, it was felt that the formal justice system was in favour of perpetrators of violence against children more than the survivors especially in cases where the perpetrator has a lot of influence in the area or money. In addition, the burden of proof which is heavily placed on the accuser to prove their case against the perpetrators on what they are saying is actually what really happened. This is the

mismatch between the Kenyan constitution, 2010 and the sexual offenses act. The constitution stipulates that all suspects are innocent until proven guilty and therefore are entitled to a bond; whereas the sexual offenses act stipulates that the courts of law have a responsibility to protect all vulnerable witnesses. This leads to community members to not testify in the courts against perpetrators of certain abuses like defilement, child trafficking which have stiff sentencing and penalties as they are not assured of their safety.

This is in agreement with Njehu (2015) findings who carried out a study to analyse the extent of child mistreatment, especially sexual abuse in Korogocho slums in Nairobi. She reported that 74% of the respondents indicated rape and defilement cases were high in the area. She also reported that even though 72.5% of the respondents reported these cases to the relevant authorities, no action was taken against the offenders. And a further 75% of the respondents reporting that they were not aware of any convictions made in relation to child sexual abuse in the area. This showed an apparent dissatisfaction with law enforcers when it came to child sexual offences since the majority of the offenders were neither arrested nor convicted.

Child maltreatment seems to be widespread in the informal settlements, but it is underestimated and is either underreported or missing even in the official reports from healthcare centres. This could be attributed to the religious and sometimes the cultural aspects of the community. These could be due to the tendency of avoiding to engage in any discussion of sensitive subjects that are sometimes seen as private matters and or the secrecy kept between members of the family. For example, among the Muslims and especially the Arabs, the way parents rear their children is considered a private matter such that outsiders are expected not to interfere. It is also acceptable for a parent to physically punish a child and yell to it as this is considered a normal way of rearing them (Chavis et al., 2013; Khamis, 2000). As far as sexual abuse cases are concerned, the tendency is to hide them due to the stigma that the families identified to have had such abuses get (Khamis, 2000). Even though many cultural practices are observed in the informal settlements, any form of abuse identified must be reported without any delays.

However, for reporting rates to increase various barriers that prevent reporting have to be surmounted. Among these is the fear for one's safety and their families. This is supported by scholars like Lazenbatt and Fremann (2006) who have documented this as one of the main reasons for not reporting child abuse in the UK. It is also supported by Piltz, and Wachtel (2009) in their integrative review for reasons nurses failed to report suspected incidences of child abuse when seeking healthcare services. They found that to report incidences of child abuse in small communities was difficult as there was the likelihood of assumption of the person who made the report to the authorities.

Besides, there is the fear of the family being pushed away from the same services that could be beneficial to the abused children and the feeling that to report such cases, is to betray the family where such abusive cases are taking place (Nayda 2002). The ultimate aim of this is to protect the children and their families from more abuse in future. According to Feng and Levine (2005), people's past experiences with law enforcement agencies have resulted in many would-be reporters of child maltreatment being hesitant to report such. This stemmed from the fear of overburdening the system and the interventions provided have not always been beneficial to the children.

IV. Conclusion

The overall picture emerging from the study is that child maltreatment is still widespread in Kenya, especially in informal settlements. The finding is important because it is inconsistent with the global trend but consistent with the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa, where the problem has been increasing. The findings demonstrate mixed results meaning that the child protection mechanisms could be effective if more efforts are put in place to fight child maltreatment are indeed working. This is especially in creating awareness of the rights of the children. They give hope that it is possible to win the war on child maltreatment if these efforts are deepened, broadened, emboldened and scaled up. It has also emerged that the would-be witnesses to child maltreatment are reluctant to be involved with the legal justice system due to the lengthy and messy court processes which leave most of them drained financially and emotionally.

A well-organized child protection system is needed to deal with the phenomenon of child maltreatment. It is not the responsibility of a single entity or agency, or governmental institution to protect children from maltreatment. Therefore, institutions from the community, the government and the private need to protect children from being abused. In addition to the collaboration, there is also a need to have clear laws and regulations that call for accountability and responsibility in child protection against child maltreatment. Subsequently, the government should have straightforward policies that define child abuses that move them from theoretical to practical meanings and a transparent chain of responsibility in handling these incidences. The study also recommends revamping or establishing one-stop child-friendly centres at the police post or stations operated by trained police on child rights.

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