

Assessment of Changes in Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices Regarding the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Napak District of Karamoja, Uganda

Context

This briefing note presents a summary of methods, findings, and conclusions from a two-time-point study¹ assessing changes related to the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) in Napak District of the Karamoja region in Uganda. The Community Action to End Child Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation project, also known as ‘Community Action’, was funded by the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery (GFEMS) and implemented by Terre des Hommes (TdH) and Dwelling Places in Napak from 2021 to 2022. Community Action targeted both prevention and response to CSEC with the aim of protecting 2,000 at-risk children. The project sought to reduce vulnerability to CSEC and raise awareness among community members to identify and report suspected cases.

This study was conducted by ICF in collaboration with Makerere University with two objectives: (i) to evaluate the effectiveness of Community Action in changing the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of Napak residents regarding CSEC and child trafficking; and (ii) to produce a population-based estimate of the prevalence of CSEC in Napak in 2022.

The project activities evaluated in this study included establishing child right clubs and supporting CSEC victims to return to and remain in school; increasing knowledge among Napak residents of child trafficking laws and policies and responsible parties, and strengthening positive parenting practices.

¹For the briefing note on the first time-point study, see: <https://bit.ly/3H9lqWE>

Key Findings

Exposure to the Community Action project: Nearly 40% of adults in the Napak district attended at least one of Community Action’s in-person offerings (*the “exposed” group*) including theater plays, parent trainings, and community dialogues. Men had greater levels of attendance and active engagement compared to women. One-fifth of children participated in a child rights club activity (*the “exposed” group*), and participation was similar for boys and girls.

Changes in knowledge: The study tested adults on their knowledge of: *Trafficking in Persons Act of 2009*; the *Napak District Child Protection Ordinance*; and the term “*child trafficking*.” The project had a positive effect on adult knowledge of the Trafficking in Persons Act of 2009 (statistically significant), the Napak District Child Protection Ordinance (not statistically significant), and the term “child trafficking” (not statistically significant).



21.7% Increase in awareness of Trafficking in Persons Act of 2009



9.4% Increase in awareness of the term “child trafficking”

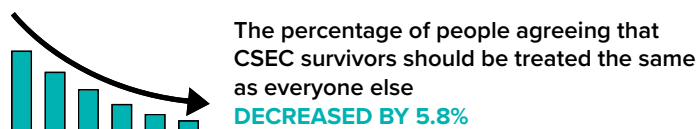
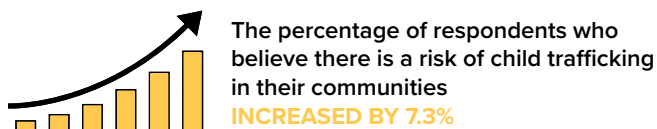
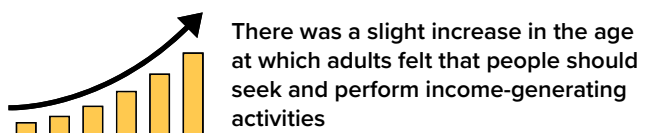


7.6% Increase in awareness of Napak District Child Protection Ordinance

Changes in attitude: There was a slight increase in the age at which adults felt people should seek and do income-generating activities to provide for their families and the age at which it is good to go and look for food and money in another town. The increase was greater for the exposed Community Action adults (not statistically significant).

While a decrease was observed across all respondents, the percentage of people who agreed with the statement “CSEC survivors should be treated the same as everyone else” was greater for the exposed Community Action participants (not statistically significant). Respondents may have disagreed with the statement because they feel CSEC survivors need additional supports rather than being treated the same as everyone else.

The percentage of children who believe that migrating is the only way to make enough money to survive decreased for both the unexposed and exposed groups between baseline and endline, with a slightly greater decrease for the exposed group (not statistically significant).



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Changes in practice: Results suggest a positive effect on practices regarding caregivers knowing their children's whereabouts (not statistically significant), but the KAP study did not register any differences in adult perceptions of children's truthfulness.

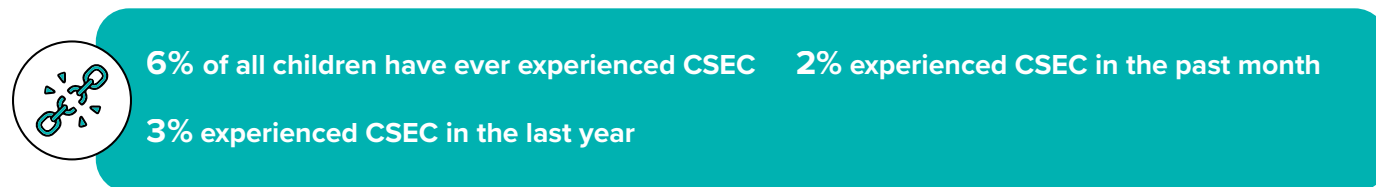
More children stated that their parents know where they are after the project carried out educational activities than before it began (statistically significant). Similarly, the proportion of children who reported that their caregivers know their friends very well also saw an increase after the program.

The proportion of children who report never keeping secrets from their caregivers decreased for children in the unexposed group and increased for children in the exposed group (statistically significant), indicating that the project had a positive impact on parent child communication. The proportion of children who report talking to their caregivers about important things a lot increased in both unexposed and exposed groups. The increase was greater in the exposed group, but the difference was not statistically significant.

Changes in practice



Prevalence of CSEC: At endline, a total of 6% of children have ever experienced CSEC, 3% experienced CSEC in the last year, and 2% experienced CSEC in the past month in Napak district. The sample size of children who had experienced CSEC is too small for reliable analysis by gender or age. While endline estimates are lower than baseline estimates, these results are not directly comparable due to changes in mode of survey administration from entirely self-administered to interviewer-administered for half of children.



Methodological Approach

Similar to Time 1, the Time 2 study was designed to provide estimates representative of all adults and all children ages 12 to 17 in Napak District. The probability sample covers the intended intervention area and comparison areas in the Napak district. Efforts were made to survey the same households as Time 1 to ensure comparability across time. Where sampled households from Time 1 were no longer available, the adjacent house was used as a replacement observation.

The final Time 2 sample size was 888 household-level (adult) interviews and 414 child interviews. Of these 888 households, 756 also participated in the Time 1 study. Of the 414 children, 278 also participated in the Time 1 study. For further details, see [full report here](#).

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Limitations

During Time 2 data collection the field team discovered that the program had been implemented in areas outside of the originally expected areas, causing contamination of the comparison sub-counties. As a result, the exploration of effects of the intervention on the entire group that had access versus those that did not was infeasible. Instead, the study assigned survey participants into “*exposed*” and “*unexposed*” groups after the fact, based on responses to qualifying questions. While the analysis of the demographic characteristics of the two groups shows them to be very similar, the people who chose to attend and participate in project activities may be different in unmeasurable ways from those who did not attend and participate. In addition, those in unexposed group may have been exposed to other programming, for example TV and radio awareness raising that was conducted under this project or other projects.

The field team also observed a noticeable absence of children in many study areas, at a level that was significantly greater than Time 1. This is likely because the survey took place during a period of famine that coincided with the project closeout. This famine caused many households, including those with children, to move to less affected areas; there may be some intrinsic biases in the sample from those households that stayed behind. Attempts have been made to account for biases more broadly by using post-stratification weights, but the weights do not adjust for nonresponse bias specifically from the exclusion of the absent children. Other external effects may also have had an effect on the response rates, such as COVID-19.

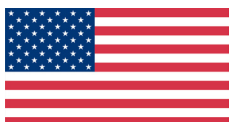
Time 1 used self-administered survey techniques for all children, while Time 2 used a mix of self-administered and interviewer administered modes for the most sensitive questions. Data exploration suggests that comparing Time 1 and 2 for some indicators is infeasible because of differences in responses due to the approach taken in survey administration.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Community Action participants demonstrated shifts in KAP that the project hoped to achieve. Three key indicators demonstrated statistical significance between participants and non-participants. However, the lack of statistical significance in other changes may reflect insufficient power to detect the effect rather than a lack of effect. Overall, the results suggest that the Community Action project was successful in its efforts to raise awareness around child trafficking and improve parent-child relationships.

There is still a need for interventions to prevent CSEC in Napak district. Future programming could explore CSEC that is taking place within Napak communities as well as CSEC that results from child trafficking away from Karamoja, given that the study observed migratory patterns among the target population.

Future programming could explore **how to increase the participation and active engagement of women**. Future research and evaluation activities should explore whether **similar programming conducted over a longer period of time with a longer period between waves of data collection results in a sustained change in KAP and the prevalence of CSEC**.



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