CHILD SACRIFICE IN UGANDA

Case study
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Although Uganda has a legal child protection framework in place, a vast majority of children are confronted with sexual, physical and emotional abuse on a daily basis and in all settings, from homes to schools, streets and institutions.

Among the harmful practices that affect children, child sacrifice has been identified as an emerging form of violence against children in Uganda. Child sacrifice is the killing, mutilation or removal of body parts of a child. From that definition and in a child protection perspective, child sacrifice is also closely related to trafficking of children and in some specific contexts one can observe some links with the issue of children accused of witchcraft.

If the practice of child sacrifice is not new per se in Uganda - isolated cases have been always known - it is to note that during the past few years the number of reported cases of Child sacrifice have impressively increased however a question remains: is it due to more reporting or to more practice? One is unable to say… there is a lack of crucial evidence when doing research about the phenomenon in Uganda. Child sacrifice has been recently identified by the Government of Uganda as a major child protection concern. However, it is important to recall that we are facing a lack of information regarding the practice which revealed to be a real challenge when studying child sacrifice from a social practice and change perspective and a KAP study as well as ethnography one are urgently needed.

The practice of child sacrifice is generally rooted in deep traditional beliefs. A number of socio-economic and cultural factors have been put forth to explain the sudden increase in its occurrence in recent years. Analysts have attributed the practice to poverty, weak legislation and poor parenting. It is commonly described in Uganda as “an activity of witchcraft, thriving in situations where a people who believe in this practice believe in wealth creation through traditional means, often at the expense of human life” (UNICEF Uganda, 2009). According to the Uganda Police Force and child protection agencies these factors are being exploited by traditional healers who are responsible for most of the child trafficking and homicides related to ritual sacrifice.

The Government of Uganda is working to address it. A National Action Plan against Child sacrifice has been drafted and should be validated in the last quarter of 2011 and an Anti-Child Sacrifice/Human Trafficking Task Force, under the Uganda Police, was also set up to combat ritual murders.

Studying the practice of Child Sacrifice in Uganda from a Social Change point of view was quite challenging. If we all agree to say that Child Sacrifice is not a Social Norm, condemning Child Sacrifice has been more difficult to apprehend as a Social Norm. If empirical and normative expectations are present, the contingency element is not, there is a lack in information and awareness related to this practice among the communities. We concluded that Condemning Child Sacrifice is a Social Norm but a “weak” one that would need complementary measures to effectively fight against the practice and change behaviors.

We identified three areas on which we could think about working with respect to social change. The first one is to work on the beliefs themselves on which the practice of child sacrifice is grounded. This

1 Child sacrifice is illegal under Ugandan law, international law and religious law. The Children Act makes social or customary practices that are harmful to child’s health illegal. The Witchcraft Act 1957 makes witchcraft illegal. The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act 2009 makes human sacrifice illegal. Any person convicted of child sacrifice can be sentenced to death. Child sacrifice is also prohibited by religious laws in Uganda and respected traditional healers have also denounced Child sacrifice.

2 For more information about Children accused of witchcraft, refer to “Children accused of witchcraft, an anthropological study of contemporary practices in Africa” – UNICEF WCARO April 2010

would infer as an urgent imperative the identification of opinions leaders in the community such as “respected traditional healers” who can officially with their natural authority condemn the practice. We need to identify trustful leaders; trust is going to be a key element in this strategy to fight against Child sacrifice as we are tackling deep rooted beliefs and cultural practice link to gods, spirits and magic.

The second angle of our strategy is the necessary building of common knowledge around child sacrifice, since the communities are facing a lack of knowledge around the practice, it is crucial to move out of the current state of ignorance. Though we know that there is no public support to this practice, the communities themselves would need to know it as well and reach that point of common knowledge and from there condemn the practice. Efforts to educate and raise awareness should be done in partnership and dialogue with communities themselves. Awareness raising should be an ongoing process that allows exchange of ideas and beliefs. This awareness raising process should be followed by a diffusion stage after activation of social networks in order to get the information spread out and get all communities to reach a consensus banning and condemning the practice of Child Sacrifice.

The third and last angle of our strategy aims at the creation of a “new” social norm. To fight against Child sacrifice, we should think about a positive value regarding children of the communities and create a positive social norm of Keeping the children from the community safe from any form of violence and abuse. This norm is not a “new norm” per se. In traditional Africa a child did not belong only to his biological parents but to the entire community. This value however has eroded over time and the situation is that children today are less protected by their own communities. By re-creating this Social Norm, families and communities will re appropriate themselves back their roles of child protectors of all children in their communities therefore fighting against violence and harmful practices.
PART I. DESCRIPTION OF THE PHENOMENON OF CHILD SACRIFICE

1. What is Child Sacrifice?

Child sacrifice is the killing, mutilation or removal of body parts of a child. From that definition and in a Child Protection angle, Child Sacrifice could also be closely related to trafficking of children and in some specific contexts one can observe some links with the issue of children accused of witchcraft.4

2. If Child Sacrifice is definitely categorized as an harmful practice, questions remain regarding its interpretation: An “African tradition”? A “Cultural belief”? An adapted “ancient practice”? An answer to these questions would be crucial if we want to tackle the issue within a Social Change perspective.

A fact: Number of children suffering from violence as a result of cultural beliefs in Sub-Saharan Africa is increasing each year. The media regularly report figures on the number of violent acts against children in the context of practices related to these beliefs. Few people, however, consider the deep-rooted causes of this violence as some kind of “African tradition”.

It is important here to clarify that while it is true that certain ancient practices have been more or less maintained, then adapted to contemporary contexts, other practices that appear to be ancient or claim to be are often of very recent origin. Such is the case regarding the sale of body parts (especially from people with albinism) or the mainly urban phenomenon of children accused of witchcraft. According to the most recent anthropological studies, witchcraft and the sacrifice of people with albinism for example cannot be interpreted solely in terms of “African tradition”. It is rather a “new” tradition or an “invented tradition” (Eric Hobsbawm - 2006)5. In other words, these are “flexible” traditions that have been adapted to the contemporary world.

→ By “flexible” we may assume that behavior change is possible

Irrespective of the type of so-called “traditional” practices, the consequences are the same regarding child sacrifice: children are tortured and killed and children survivors of sacrifice require medical and psychosocial support. Child sacrifice is among beliefs and practices that currently affect children in sub-Saharan Africa. These practices promote violence against children, thereby infringing fundamental rights of the child.

3. Child Sacrifice in Uganda

The practice of child sacrifice is not new in Uganda, isolated cases have been always reported from time to time. However during the past few years the issue has been more widely reported. According to the 2008 Uganda Police Crime Report, the murder of children for ritual purposes rose by over 800% over a year.

However, we need to put an emphasis regarding the challenge one is facing when it comes to collection of data and information around child sacrifice in Uganda. This was a major issue in terms of programming UNICEF prevention and response as well when it came to write this case study.

Studies by the African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect (2009) have revealed that close to 3,000 children disappear from their homes annually in Uganda. The plight for the majority of these children is never known or documented but there is a strong suspicion among child protection activists that many of the children reported as disappearance

---

4 For more information about Children accused of witchcraft, refer to “Children accused of witchcraft, an anthropological study of contemporary practices in Africa” – UNICEF WCARO April 2010

cases are eventually sacrificed. It is also believed that most of the cases are actually not reported to the Police and as such the exact magnitude of the problem remains in question.

→ Identified lack of information on the issue. Need for more information from a social change perspective.

For the past couple of years, Child Sacrifice has been identified in Uganda by the Government and main child protection actors as one of the emerging forms of violence against children.

4. Factors identified as contributing to Child Sacrifice in Uganda

From the Course on Social Norms we know that in order to prevent and respond to such harmful practice as Child Sacrifice we need first to understand this recurrent violence. Though to reach that point of knowledge, there is a primordial necessity to understand the social mechanisms that culminate in such behaviour, as well as a necessity to consider it in a wider context.

The practice of child sacrifice is rooted in traditional beliefs and a number of socio-economic and cultural factors have been put forth to explain the sudden increase in its occurrence in recent years. A rapid assessment on Child Sacrifice in Uganda has been issued by the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) in 2009 and clearly identified a range of factors contributing to Child Sacrifice in Uganda, respondents unanimously agreed that economic motives are the main drivers for child sacrifice.

4.1. Economic factors

Key economic factors have been identified as playing a key role in offsetting and sustaining child sacrifice in Uganda: Desire for wealth and business prosperity for the initiator, Poverty for the kidnapper.

Desire for Wealth and business prosperity

The desire for wealth and business prosperity would be the main reason for individuals involved in sacrificial rituals. Child sacrifice is conducted in order to gain favour in the form of protection and blessings and to appease the gods. In all the districts visited during the rapid assessment child sacrifice was blamed on rich people who wanted to increase their wealth.

The perception that many Ugandan communities have embraced materialism as a core value was expressed by respondents. People earn respect and recognition in their communities because of their wealth and economic power. The adoption of wealth as a new value has driven certain people to seek means of acquiring possessions at all costs.

Child sacrifice has also been identified as a measure of insurance to protect investments against future risks and losses. Instead of insuring their properties and business through the insurance sector, businessmen rely more on superstition and belief in divine protection, which involves child sacrifice.

It is believed that the practice of child sacrifice has slowly turned into a clandestine business involving traditional healers and business men.

Traditional healers have realized that child sacrifice is a lucrative business opportunity. It has been reported that some traditional healers are actually taking advantage of the fact that a number of businessmen and women have a strong belief in child sacrifice. Some traditional healers have fuelled the practice, through encouraging the business people and acting as their allies; they offer to acquire for them children who will be sacrificed, in exchange for important sums of money. On the opposite of the business men, these traditional healers engage in the child sacrifice transactions, not because of the belief in the effectiveness of the sacrifice, but because they see an opportunity to earn money from the business men.

According to most of the Ugandans, traditional healing has over the years evolved from a service rendered to the community, into a lucrative business. The high returns from traditional healing have attracted people looking for work to join the “business”. The lack of regulation makes it possible.
Traditional healing in Uganda is an informal profession. Additionally, the communities used to and still place a lot of trust in traditional healers, especially those who charge exorbitantly.

**Poverty**

Poverty was identified as a factor underlying the growing wave of child sacrifice. People who are trapped in the poverty cycle, with little or no hope of escaping their circumstances, are easily lured into kidnapping children for sacrifice. Discussions with the respondents revealed that poor people accept to connive with traditional healers and business men. The role of the poor in child sacrifice rituals is to identify and kidnap children. Poor people do not join the transaction as potential beneficiaries of the blessings anticipated from the ritual sacrifice.

### 4.2 Spiritual factors

Belief in “supernatural powers” was identified as one of key factors responsible for child sacrifice. Individuals with such strong beliefs, have unquestionable faith in the same traditional healers and are inclined to engage in acts of child sacrifice, as long as they believed that this was required by the spirits and or gods. There is a lot of respect and obedience towards the gods. Individuals are interested in appeasing the gods for protection, luck, blessings, and fortune.

Blind faith in the supernatural renders people incapable of doubting what is perceived as instructions from the deity. Beliefs such as these are capable of motivating people to engage in inhumane acts.

There was consensus in all community discussions and interviews, that child and human sacrifice is a new practice, which is not recognized in indigenous traditional religious rituals and worship. Nonetheless, respondents acknowledged that the concept has always existed as a myth, but there was never any real evidence of actual occurrence of child sacrifice. Respondents reported hearing about the problem, in their communities when they were growing up, but could not recall any actual occurrence of this practice. Rumors of child sacrifice were in the past linked to ‘big’ projects, such as construction. It was generally said that projects of this nature required a sacrifice of human blood to be accomplished.

→ Case of Pluralistic ignorance? Or just case of Collective Ignorance?

One could think about some similarities with a case of Pluralistic Ignorance when people ignore or have false ideas about what other people think. Public Ignorance can therefore allow a norm disliked by the majority of the population to survive for as long as people are unable to freely express their true feelings about it.

In our case, the majority of the population dislike the practice but since it is hidden and most of the time taboo, no one talk about it; though rather than calling our case a case of pluralistic ignorance we should just infer a case of collective ignorance as communities may ignore that there could be a norm for them to protect the children of their own communities and they also ignore the existence of Child Sacrifice.

→ Identified need for Common knowledge?

From above it is becoming clear that there is a real need for raising awareness and knowledge within the communities about the practice of child sacrifice. We need to reach a state where people know what other people know about Child Sacrifice to reach a point where everyone know that everyone knows about it, condemns it and value the life of their children.

### 5. Who is the child victim?

Despite evidence that all children, including those under the care of their own parents, are susceptible to become victims of child sacrifice, children without parental/adult care and oversight are considered to be the most at risk.

Generally families are unaware of the potential risk of child sacrifice. As a result children are left on their own.
This demonstrates the need for community awareness on the risk of Child Sacrifice and deepen a behavior change around the notion of Protection of All Children in the community.

**PART II. STATE OF THE FIGHT AGAINST CHILD SACRIFICE IN UGANDA**

1. **A national commitment to fight against Child Sacrifice in Uganda and the existence of a Legal norm against Child Sacrifice**

Child sacrifice in Uganda has been identified by the MGLSD, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the National Council for Children as a “major child protection concern that demands more attention”. In 2009, an inter-ministerial Anti-Child Sacrifice/Human Trafficking Task Force, under the Uganda Police, has been set up to combat ritual murders.

It is to note as well that Uganda has a legal framework in place in terms of child protection. Thus, Child sacrifice is illegal under Ugandan law, international law and religious law. The Children Act makes social or customary practices that are harmful to child’s health illegal. The Witchcraft Act 1957 makes witchcraft illegal. The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act 2009 makes human sacrifice illegal. Any person convicted of child sacrifice can be sentenced to death. Child sacrifice is also prohibited by religious laws in Uganda and respected traditional healers have also denounced Child sacrifice.

However we know from the Course that criminalize social practices might not be always effective but using the Respected Traditional Healers might be an entry point to reach common knowledge and tackle the cognitive dissonance that we might be facing here as people trust them.

**A National Action Plan against Child sacrifice:** UNICEF supported the MGLSD and the NCC to draft a National Action Plan against Child sacrifice. The Plan emphasizes the creation of a systematic engagement on prevention in a sustained manner as it is only through this that we can prevent the victimization of children in the first place. The draft Action Plan identifies 3 areas for focused attention. 1) An increased understanding of the problem, 2) addressing issues which impact on the supply of children for sacrifice and 3) deterring the demand for child sacrifice.

There is recognition amongst governmental and non-governmental organizations that the elimination of child sacrifice requires a three pronged strategy: 1. To prevent the occurrence of child sacrifice; 2. To improve scale, quality and capacity of investigation, law enforcement and prosecution of cases of child sacrifice and 3. To effectively respond to the physical, psychosocial and medical needs of victims/survivors of child sacrifice and their families.

**Action of UNICEF and Child Protection partners:** UNICEF and its partners have been providing both technical and financial support to health and law enforcement authorities and civil society organizations to provide both prevention and response services.

To date, and although many organizations seek to do work in this area, there has only been one coordinated initiative focused on prevention. This was in the form of an in-school poster-campaign supported by a coalition of NGOs which came together to raise awareness of child sacrifice. Although the campaign was successful as a first step, and helped to raise public awareness, this was a one-off initiative.

2. **UNICEF new initiative: A 6 months partnership with Livelyminds**

Based on the Country Programme Action Plan between the Government of Uganda and UNICEF, UNICEF will be starting on July 1st 2011 a 6 months partnership with Lively Mind (Uganda) Ltd. Lively Minds’ child sacrifice prevention programme is a behavioral change campaign that aims to eliminate child sacrifice by tackling the beliefs and mindsets that are sustaining it.
Lively Minds has developed and piloted an interactive community-based approach that is supposed to tackle the root cause of the problem i.e. the mindset through an approach of behavioral change interactive communication. The initial pilot targeted existing Lively Minds’ community groups and proved successful, with communities requesting further workshops, copies of the educational resources and follow up activities. UNICEF and Lively Minds’ will expand this pilot to 36 primary schools to see if the programme is successful with children at primary school level.

The programme’s objectives are in two-fold:

1. To break the cycle of belief that sustains the practice of child sacrifice by raising public understanding and appreciation of child sacrifice a crime both in legal and moral terms
2. To raise public consciousness and promote understanding on how to protect children from child abduction and sacrifice

The Programme started on 1st of July 2011 for 6 months and seeks to achieve the objectives by undertaking a series of activities that are focused on two key areas:

a. Education and Awareness
   The programme is designed to educate participants in the following manner:
   - Promoting a better understanding of the crime of Child Sacrifice. This will include information about what child sacrifice entails, why people turn to child sacrifice and the factors sustaining it
   - Raising awareness of the social and ethical consequences of child sacrifice. This will lead to an understanding that child sacrifice is murder and is a moral and legal crime (rather than a legitimate traditional belief)
   - Creating an understanding that sacrificing a child is not the way to achieve prosperity or happiness
   - Raising awareness of the rights of children

b. Empowerment for Action
   - To create a culture of vigilance by raising awareness of how to safeguard against child sacrifice, how to recognize suspicious behaviours and take action if suspicious behaviours are recognized
   - To involve youth in a campaign, demonstrating peaceful ways to achieve positive change

Lively Minds will be working with schools administrations and teachers to implement the programme and it will be delivered within the routine school timetable during English composition lessons rather than as an optional extracurricular activity.
PART III. INCORPORATING THE LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE COURSE ON SOCIAL NORMS, SOCIAL CHANGE

From the Course of Social Norms and Social Change, a lot of questions emerged regarding Child Sacrifice as a harmful practice to fight against. What is Child Sacrifice in Social Change vocabulary? Or What is it not?

Is it a Social Norm?

If we go back to the definition a Social norm is a behavioral rule that applies to a large class of situations, and that individuals know that the rule exists and when it applies (Contingency element), these individuals prefer to conform to the rule when they expect a sufficiently large part of the population to conform to the rule (Empirical expectation) and when they believe that a sufficiently large part of the population think they ought to conform and may sanction their behavior (Normative expectation)

From the definition above enounced we can conclude that Child Sacrifice is not a Social Norm, there is no such behavioral rule to sacrifice children that applies to a large class of situations. There is no empirical expectations nor normative expectations from the communities around this practice, no one expect others to scarify children and no one think that the others think that they ought to scarify children. But again, we lack evidence here, we are facing a challenge. Note that we could also look for the leopard skin/hot spots approach to determine if there would be some pockets of geographical concentrations but again, this is an area where we lack information.

BUT is the Condemnation of the practice of Child Sacrifice a Social Norm?

If we again go back to the definition, we could think that yes there is a Social Norm against child sacrifice. The empirical and normative expectations are present as no one expects someone else to sacrifice a child and no one is expected by someone to sacrifice a child. However the contingency aspect is missing as no one has a clear conscious of this Social norm as based the “unknown” no one talk about it, there is no awareness about this practice thus about this prescriptive Social Norm can be qualified as “weak”

→ There is no Social Norm sustaining the practice of Child Sacrifice and a weak Social norm condemning the practice but there is for sure a massive lack of information and awareness related to this practice among the communities even if the legal system condemning the practice is in place (Law against child sacrifice, Police Task Force…) and if the media have been lately raising the issue (newspaper, TV, Internet)

What we know is that this practice is deeply rooted into beliefs of prosperity of a small number of people who have been most of the times indoctrinated by traditional healers. Dealing with cultural beliefs is often dealing with taboos and the unknown, therefore we might be facing a case of (pluralistic) ignorance where people ignore what other people think.

We are definitely facing a challenge in terms of collection of information regarding this practice; we would need more information to act on it.

We could identify 3 areas of work incorporating the lessons learned from the Course in the case of Child Sacrifice the three of them being based on community dialogues, conversation and engagement.

1. Work on the belief on which Child Sacrifice is grounded
2. Reach common knowledge about the practice of Child sacrifice and condemn it.
3. Creating a “new” positive Norm: Protecting the children of the community

1. Work on the belief on which Child Sacrifice is grounded

One way of changing the practice of Child Sacrifice would be to work on the different beliefs sustaining it i.e. tackling the belief itself.

This would infer that opinion leaders such as the “respected traditional healers” would get involved in communities to denounced the practice of child sacrifice and the beliefs linked to it.
Some of them have already condemn that practice. This would be a good entry point as in Uganda people usually trust their traditional healers and even more if they have been identified as “Respected traditional healers”. Trust is key factor here as there is most probably going to be a conflict between what the ones who believe in child sacrifice do think and what they are going to be told by the respected traditional healers. If the trust they have in the respected traditional healers is stronger than their disagreement with the message then the message might be accepted. We know that traditional leaders are opinion leaders and therefore we know that they usually help to diffuse ideas very rapidly.

However, to understand fully this belief we would need an ethnography study on that issue and we do not have it now so maybe we should try to approach another angle: Promotion of social change through dialogue on child sacrifice.

Note that this is based on the strict assumption that “respected traditional healers” are really not committing Child Sacrifice as they claim not to.

2. **Reach common knowledge about the practice of Child sacrifice and condemn it.**

In the assessment that preceded the development of the Ugandan Draft Action Plan “lack of awareness” was identified as a key factor predisposing children to child sacrifice. Significantly, the Draft Action Plan recommends the adoption of a “proactive approach to awareness raising through the design and implementation of behavior change communication strategy that targets family, community, district and national actors”

We know as a matter of fact that generally in Uganda families are unaware of the potential risk of child sacrifice. As a result children are left on their own and subject to abduction and later sacrifice.

There is a need to reach common knowledge. People should know what the other people know and know what other people know they know. We do have reasons to think that the communities affected by Child Sacrifice are locked in a state of ignorance; therefore it might be desirable to try to move in the direction of common knowledge.

This can be done through discussions. We know for a fact that there is no public support to this practice but what if people were able to gather and discuss about this and officially take position and declare that they are against this practice of sacrificing their children?

Efforts to educate and raise awareness are crucial in our case and should be done in partnership and dialogue with communities themselves. Community dialogue can help in bridging the gaps between the practice of child sacrifice, the legal, social and moral norms on the one hand and national and international human rights norms on the other. Awareness raising should be an on-going process that allows an exchange of ideas and beliefs.

We note that communication campaigns should develop effective ways to discuss child well-being and safety in a respectful manner and avoid paternalistic education approaches that have failed in the past (see Wessells, “What are we learning about protecting children in the community”).

**Very important:** The dialogues must include religious leaders and traditional healers in order to identify common ground to combat child sacrifice and to mobilize religious leaders and traditional healers. We know that this practice is not only prohibited by domestic and international laws but as well by religious laws in Uganda and the respected traditional healers have denounced it.

These are key opinion leaders in our script. They can help to break the cognitive dissonance.

➔ Reach common knowledge on the practice among the communities and activate social network to diffuse it, to have the information spread out that communities have chosen to speak out and condemn the practice, therefore we could reach a consensus on banning child sacrifice from all communities. This common knowledge will be reinforced by the use of the media at national level, as the phenomenon has been the subject of many reports by the media over the last year – see BBC video [http://joannab-everyday.blogspot.com/2011/05/uganda-child-sacrifice-1-of-2-bbc-our.html](http://joannab-everyday.blogspot.com/2011/05/uganda-child-sacrifice-1-of-2-bbc-our.html)

---

6 See Mike Wessels “What are we learning about protecting children in the community?” 2009
3. Creating a “new” positive Norm: Protecting the children of the community

In parallel to this Dialogues, we could also think about fighting the harmful practice of Child Sacrifice through the creation of a Norm that communities will endorse once they will have reach the situation of common knowledge above mentioned. We already saw that the social norm condemning Child Sacrifice is qualified as “weak” Therefore we could think about a positive value regarding the children of the community, a positive norm of keeping the children from the community safe. Then, we are not facing the risk of breaking the social link by bringing a negative message but on the opposite, the discussions will be oriented to the importance of the children. We would therefore embrace a holistic approach not specifically focused on Child Sacrifice only.

However it is important to recall that this will need to get genuine community discussion of pros and cons, genuine community decision and commitment to the norm. We know that so much in Community Conversations depends on the content of the information. This is really important as the message should be perfectly adapted to the community and the community should be the owner of the process and should be empowered, we do not want to focus our work on “population at risk” only but on whole community.

→ Families and communities should appropriate themselves back their role of child protectors

We all know that the growing culture of individualism as opposed to collectivism undermines the community child protection structures that were a feature of the African society. In traditional Africa, a child did not only belong to his biological parents, but to the entire community. Every community member had a duty to protect children within the community. This value has however been eroded over time and especially when the 1.8 million of Ugandan living in Internally Displaced Camps for some 15 years went back to living in remote villages of origin. This leads to a situation where children are less protected within their own communities.

“To some extent our modern families have contributed to the problem. You see when you say my child, no one else should touch, when someone is touching your child and I am your neighbour I will say it is your problem. When I was growing up seven miles from my home they knew me, son of Mugira and even if someone found me doing something wrong on the way he would take responsibility and even punish me. So, there was collective responsibility over our children as parents irrespective of whether I am the Biological father, the child belonged to the community. For me that was a very good security mechanism for our children. But it has now faded away”.

Interviews held with families whose children had been killed through ritual sacrifices also indicate that inadequate child protection within a family or a community presents major risks for children.

→ Need to reestablish this Social Norm of Children belonging to the community as a whole and we need the community to declare its allegiance to the “new” norm. As soon as the communities will declare publicly their new norm, this one is created, its existence has been acknowledged. This will raise value of a new norm and from that moment on positive and negative sanctions/incentives will arise.

The Social Norm would be: “We all need to keep the children of our community safe”
The whole community would know that the rule exists and when it applies (Contingency element is present)
Individuals will expect the rest of the community to protect the children so they will do the same (Empirical expectation is present)
Individuals will protect children from their community as they believe that a sufficiently large part of the population think they ought to conform and may sanction their behavior. (Normative expectation is present)

We might wonder what would happen to the traditional healers well known in the communities to be involved in harmful practices once there will be this public declaration of the communities officially condemning the practice and reaffirming their commitment to a new social norm.

We need to remember that in our case of Child Sacrifice in Uganda, the legal norm is already in place such as the obvious moral norm of not killing and through these dialogues and public declarations we
will have a **social norm**, the three of them being aligned, harmonized and consistent to one another. We will have an **integrated consideration of moral, social and legal norms**

→ Through this work on social change we plan to change the behavior regarding Child Sacrifice in Uganda

**CONCLUSION**

Child sacrifice in Uganda is a really difficult issue to tackle and for many different reasons, we are facing a challenge regarding information available related to the practice, we are dealing with beliefs, there is a common condemnation of the practice but few people undertake it. In terms of Social Norms and Change, this practice is difficult to address with the tools provided in the Course and we lack information to do so. However, it is strongly hoped that building on Community Dialogues, Opinions leaders, Social Network, Public Declaration we can tackle the issue and see the “rebirth” of a very important social norm that disappeared: **Protection of all the children in the community by all the community members**, giving back their duty to the first duty bearers in charge of protecting the children.
From interviews

“My son, for me I think it’s mainly the rich people in town who want to get more richer quickly who are involved in this acts of child sacrifice. What they do is they go consult witch doctors who demand for heads of children or even other parts so that they become more richer and live in their houses for a longer period of time without anyone in that family dying”. (Men’s FGD, Oyam)

“Child sacrifice has become a business, with demand and supply. Here is a business man who wants his business to thrive, he is advised that if you want the business to thrive you need to sacrifice a child. Then other business men including traditional cultural healers discover that there is money in this; when you tell a businessman that they need to sacrifice, they actually do it. The traditional healers have also started getting the children for the rich men at high amounts of money. It has become a trade but to me the biggest factor is the love for money but of course underlying it all is the firm belief that when you sacrifice, you can have immense opportunities”.

“You cannot construct a building to its completion and have it make money without pouring blood in it. I do not think so myself”. (FGD Boda boda cyclists, Masaka)

“…they say if you don’t sacrifice a child while constructing a big building, you will note (FGD Men, Oyam)

“For us who have been in the practice of healing for a long time we know that people no longer value the help they get from traditional healers who charge little money. They think traditional healers in Kampala who charge UGX 3 million are the ones who are effective”. (FGD Traditional Healers, Masaka)

“Human sacrifice is a concept that has been prevalent in our human society…..it has always been said that all these roads you see, there are heads of people there. At the dam in Kiyira I understand they put there heads of people for it to allow that bridge to be built. We hear that when the Chinese are constructing, they always put heads of people so that they get blessings and so forth. When people are building big houses, they do those things so the concept has been there” (Commissioner for Culture, MGLSD)

“To some extent our modern families have contributed to the problem. You see when you say my child, no one else should touch, when someone is touching your child and I am your neighbour I will say it is your problem. When I was growing up seven miles from my home they knew me, son of Mugira and even if someone found me doing something wrong on the way he would take responsibility and even punish me. So, there was collective responsibility over our children as parents irrespective of whether I am the Biological father, the child belonged to the community. For me that was a very good security mechanism for our children. But it has now faded away”. 