Disrupting Harm

Evidence from 13 countries on the context, threats, and children's perspectives of online child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Detailed Analysis of the Frontline Service Providers Survey

Uganda

Last updated 27/4/21

Introduction

The Disrupting Harm frontline workers survey aimed to explore the knowledge, attitudes and practices related to OCSEA that are presenting to those directly working to prevent and respond on the welfare frontline. Insights from frontline workers via this survey allowed us to more deeply explore findings from other research activities such as the national literature reviews and government interviews from the perspective of staff directly engaged in the response to this growing problem.

A convenience sample of 50 interviews were conducted with client-facing frontline child protection workers who were surveyed in each participating country. In order to participate in the survey respondents had to meet the following qualifying requirements:

1) Be an adult over 18 years of age;
2) Work the last 12 months (at least) in the field of social work, psychology or welfare;
3) Manage their own case load directly in the last 12 months;
4) Have caseloads that included children over the last 12 months.

The survey itself included a combination of 68 closed and open-ended questions. The data was collected via SurveyGizmo and administered by Disrupting Harm staff (remotely via phone/Skype – due to COVID-19). Whilst the data collected is not statistically representative, it is still a vital snapshot in indicating scope and broadening our perspectives on knowledge, attitudes and practices related to OCSEA.

NOTE:
In Uganda, the data collection for the survey was conducted during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic from May 11th 2020 to May 27th 2020 where movement restrictions were in place.

Basic Description of Survey Sample

In Uganda researchers interviewed 50 front line service providers, of those 50 respondents 23 (46%) identified as female and 27 (54%) identified as male.

Participants were asked to select a single category that best describes their organisation. In reality, these categories are sometimes not mutually exclusive, however the indications of a category that 'best' describes their organisation does help to depict the range of organisations that participants represent (Figure 1).
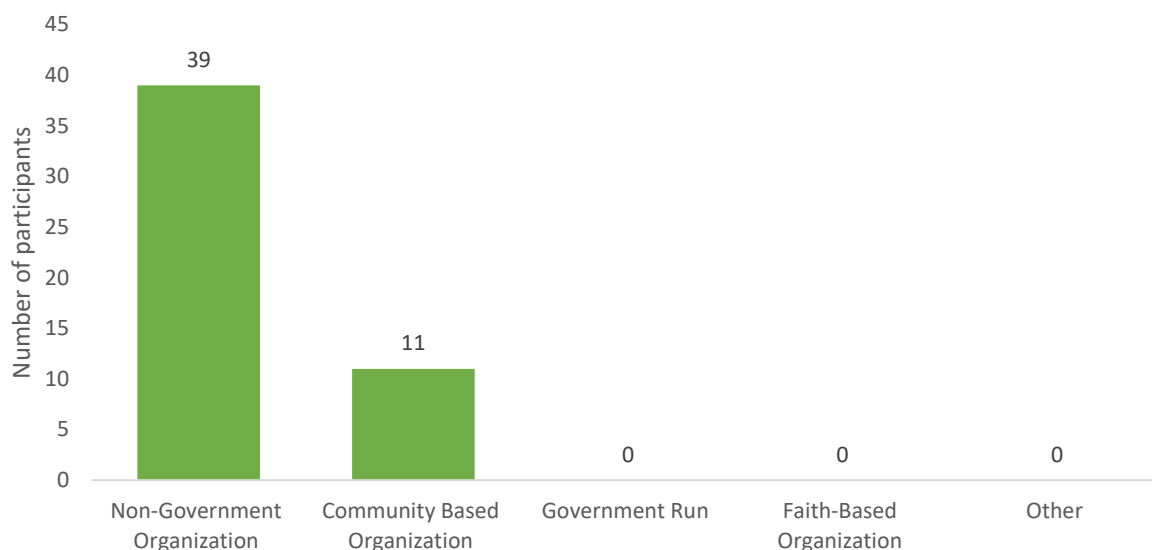

Figure 1. Types of participants' organisations.

39 participants (78%) reported working for non-governmental organisations and 11 (22%) reported that they're working within a community-based organisation. Despite seeking government workers for inclusion, there were no government respondents in the eligible sample in Uganda. This underscores the central role that NGOs play in the country in providing frontline social support.

The frontline social support workers were asked to detail what type of services their organisations provided related to children. The results are illustrated in Figure 2 below.
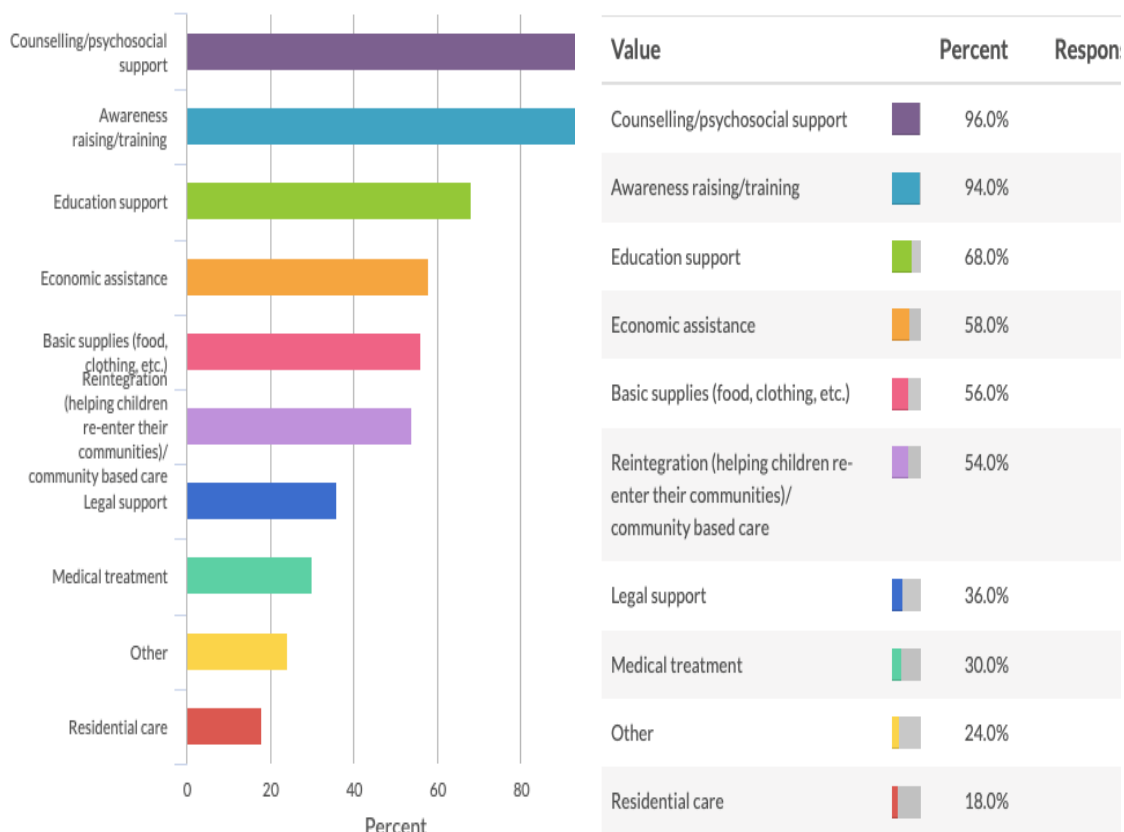
Value		Percent	Respons
Counselling/psychosocial support		96.0%	
Awareness raising/training		94.0%	
Education support		68.0%	
Economic assistance		58.0%	
Basic supplies (food, clothing, etc.)		56.0%	
Reintegration (helping children re-enter their communities)/ community based care		54.0%	
Legal support		36.0%	
Medical treatment		30.0%	
Other		24.0%	
Residential care		18.0%	

Figure 2. Types of services provided by participants' organisations.

As we can see from the graph above, the overwhelming majority of frontline workers surveyed provided counselling and psychological support (n=48, or 96%) and awareness raising services (n=47 or 94%). That was followed by education support (n=34 – 68%), economic assistance (n=29 – 58%), basic supplies (n=28 – 56%) and reintegration (n=27 – 54%). Less commonly provided services were legal support (n=18 – 36%), medical treatments (n=15 – 30%) and residential care (n=9 – 18%). One participant commented: *"Basic supplies are important but at the moment due to shortage in funding it has become a challenge to provide the basic supplies"* (RA3-UG-46-A).

Other services mentioned by the frontline social support workers included:

- Coordination, referrals to other agencies and follow-up of cases
- Drug abuse, GBV and HIV/AIDS prevention/testing
- Coordinating alternative care arrangements
- Community development through agriculture
- Carrying out debates and quizzes in schools which broaden students understanding and perceptions as well as increase their confidence and motivation
- Providing life skills training through sports

- Providing vocational skills training
- Actively involving men and empowering women in income-generating activities to increase household incomes
- Providing business or social enterprises training so they are able to become economically independent
- Sexual reproductive health rights services
- Providing behavioural change communication sessions
- Advocacy programmes aimed at protecting vulnerable children especially girls from child marriage and teenage pregnancies

Perpetrator Demographics

To expand on the current understanding of the context in which OCSEA happens in Uganda, the survey sought to explore the typical relationships that were observed by social support workers between offenders and child survivors when they reported having worked with OCSEA cases.

From the 39 respondents who had worked with OCSEA cases, men were commonly identified as perpetrators and facilitators of OCSEA. The most commonly referenced relationship between victim and perpetrator was said to be that the perpetrator was a community member over the age of 18, followed by the other relatives over 18 and strangers. Less frequently reported relationships included: family friend (*"These are the people that are normally associated with the parents, so these children consider them as family too"* (RA3-UG-15-A); *"In this case, the perpetrator uses the best friend of the victim who is not a relative to the victim. This was through sending the victim pornographic clips/videos through the best friend of the victim"* (RA3-UG-11-A); parents/stepparents; community members under 18; foreigners and other relatives under the age of 18.

Similarly, participants were asked about the most common relationships between facilitators and victims in the OCSEA cases they have managed. In this case, 'community member over 18' was also reported as the most common relationship (*"Mostly the relationship between the victim and facilitator is that they are usually community members called aunties"* (RA3-UG-02-A). That was followed by family friend, stranger, community member under 18, parent/stepparent and other relative over 18. Sibling over/under 18, other relative under 18 and foreigner were all selected by one respondent to indicate the most common facilitator-victim relationship. A number of respondents in their additional comments mentioned there was perhaps a misunderstanding that what they were doing in facilitating sexual exploitation was even wrong. For example "*Most of the facilitators are community leaders ignorant about what they do; and cases come from young dancers in a bar*" (RA3-UG-14-A) and *"Though the facilitator was not aware that what she did was aiding OCSEA"* (RA3-UG-21-A). Another one added: *"Mostly these are women locally called 'senga' or pimps that connect girls to the perpetrators"* (RA3-UG-03-A).

Below are a number of quotes from participants describing their insights into some of the child sexual exploitation and OCSEA cases they worked with:

- **Boy/Girl cases**

"Girls are more affected compared to boys due to having many vulnerabilities" (RA3-UG-05-A);

"All cases handled during the time are mainly from girls. Cases from the boys are rarely handled" (RA3-UG-32-A);

"Boys are not much affected compared to girls and girls from 11-13 and 14-18 have higher chances of being victims since they have more access to Internet" (RA3-UG-05-A);

"The girl child is more exploited than the boy child, the perpetrators who are men expose these children to pornographic/sexual materials hence manipulating their minds" (RA3-UG-11-A).

- **Amount of cases**

"There are not many cases of online child sexual exploitation and abuse; even when they exist most of them are clandestine and never reported. The culture of silence prevails in regard to the above subject" (RA3-UG-29-A);

"Because of the lockdown, we have been mostly referring to response organisation" (RA3-UG-27-A);

"Due to lockdown challenges and movement restrictions, meeting clients directly has been extremely hard" (RA3-UG-25-A).

- **Types of cases received**

"The young people we have interacted with are mostly females and after being sexually exploited, they are promised to be given money in return due to the task put before them to perform" (RA3-UG-38-A);

"These younger girls are introduced to porn photos and videos by their older friends and eventually end up sexually exploited by their "male friends" (RA3-UG-24-A);

"Majority of the young people are victims of online sexual exploitation in a way that most of them tend to have smartphones as a contributing factor to their being sexually exploited. As these young people are online with their friends (mostly whites) they task them to take their nude pictures and private parts and send back to them, or video chat undress themselves and touch their breasts and private parts as they are watching" (RA3-UG-38-A);

"A Ugandan father reported to our office a case of the wife (Bulgarian) who was exposing their four-year-old daughter to pornographic materials on her cell phone and then sleeping with the kid in the same bed. A nine-year-old girl and two 12-year-old girls were gifted with a smart phone and lured to take semi naked pictures (only nickers on) and send them to their friends" (RA3-UG-50-A);

"Majority of the young people are victims of sexual exploitation unknowingly due to the fact that they are unaware of these occurrences, yet they are harmful to them in the different ways such as emotional, physical, psychosocially and so many others" (RA3-UG-38-A);

"In our area most children are found of watching movies, some usually go to video halls where they learn different behaviours that are not good and eventually become disrespectful to their parents and the community" (RA3-UG-09-A);

"The OCSEA cases are not reported to the CP structure probably because there is little sensitization around them being an offence" (RA3-UG-01-A);

"It is an established fact that refugees, especially youth, commonly utilise online communication and are victims of pornography, paedophiles and fraudsters who economically and sexually exploit them. However, it is an established fact that most refugees yearn to be relocated to a third country. Consequently, a few of them are lured and exploited (including sexually) under the guise of getting them lucrative resettlement in overseas destinations, with promises of well-paying employment, education scholarships and a better life. Ultimately though, many of the victims end up being victims of prostitution brothels, house maids under servitude and drug cartels. Paradoxically, it is reported that such online sexual exploitation and abuse is highly organised and often executed with the connivance of community-based agents; but, also, the actual parents and/or caregivers of the victims, especially children. Most of the protection cases, most of which go unreported, including school drop-outs; defilement; rape; and arranged early marriages (where parents of the children and caregivers are typically accomplices)" (RA3-UG-29-A).

Scenarios

Participants were presented with four scenarios depicting situations in which at least one offender victimised a child through different modes of online sexual abuse and exploitation. After being provided with definitions of 'OCSEA', a 'perpetrator' and a 'facilitator' earlier in the survey, the participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that the child was a victim and that the offender had committed an OCSEA-related offence.[1] These questions were designed to elicit insights about how participants assessed different forms and situations of OCSEA. It should be noted that responses are likely based on a combination of the participant's knowledge on the issue, including how these issues may (or may not) be defined in law in a country, as well as influenced by social norms and beliefs. Irrespective of the basis for responses, the results indicate areas that are well understood (sometimes almost unanimously) and others where training and consistent messaging is needed to ensure consistent responses.

A four-point Likert scale was used to assess agreement related to statements for each of the scenario questions. Where interesting indications in differences occurred, we note them, but otherwise combined 'slightly agree' and 'strongly agree' together and 'slightly disagree and strongly disagree' together, resulting in binary agree/disagree categories for the analysis presented here.

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[1] Names for the scenarios were changed to common names in each country for the translations but have been edited in the analysis to be consistent across all the Disrupting Harm reports.

Scenario 1

Palila pays a 16-year-old younger relative, Tamah, to undress while filming and later posts it online. Mamo, who does not know Palila, watches this interaction online from home 30 miles away.
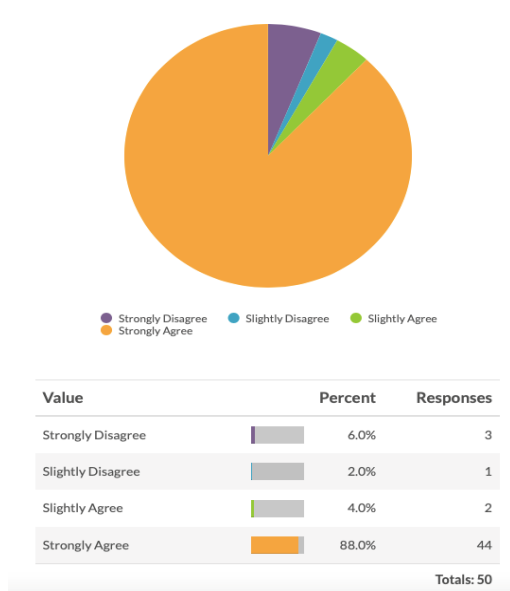

Value		Percent	Responses
Strongly Disagree		6.0%	3
Slightly Disagree		2.0%	1
Slightly Agree		4.0%	2
Strongly Agree		88.0%	44
			Totals: 50

Figure 3. Do you think that Tamah is a victim of OCSEA?

Value		Percent	Responses
Strongly Disagree		16.0%	8
Slightly Disagree		18.0%	9
Slightly Agree		20.0%	10
Strongly Agree		46.0%	23
			Totals: 50
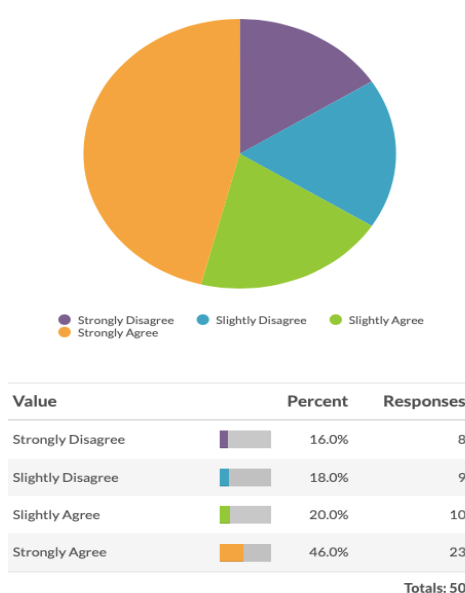
Figure 4. Do you think that Mamo has committed an OCSEA related crime?

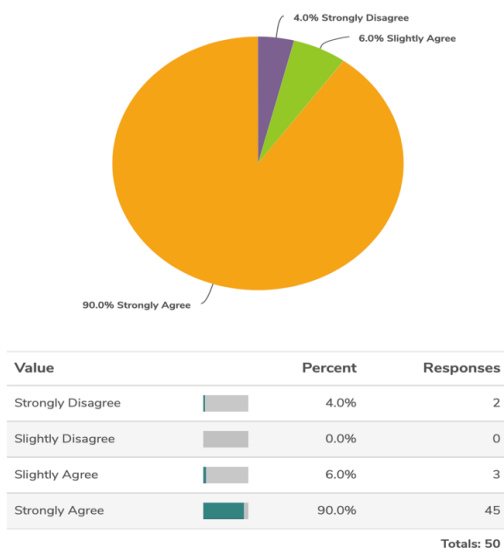| Value		Percent	Responses
Strongly Disagree		4.0%	2
Slightly Disagree		0.0%	0
Slightly Agree		6.0%	3
Strongly Agree		90.0%	45
			Totals: 50

Figure 5. Do you think that Palila has committed an OCSEA related crime?

Nearly all of the participants agreed that the child (Tamah) was a victim of sexual exploitation (n=44 – 88%) and that the adult (Palila) who paid and filmed her had committed an OCSEA-related crime (n=48 – 96%).

Of the three circumstances in this scenario, participants seemed to struggle the most to identify if the remote third-party viewing the material (Mamo) had committed an OCSEA related crime – though this was still skewed towards agreement. 46% (n=23) of respondents felt strongly that Mamo had committed an OCSEA related crime, and 20% (n=10%) only slightly agreed. If we grouped these together as a binary question, we would see that 66% (n=33) agreed, while 34% (n=17) disagreed.

Some of those who disagreed that Mamo had committed an OCSEA-related crime commented:

"Mamo is innocent because he does not know the persons concerned so I see Mamo as innocent" (RA3-UG-46-A);

"I believe the sense of guilt is derived from wilful knowledge before one commits the offence" (RA3-UG-46-A).

Those who agreed with all statements added:

"Tamah is a child according to the constitution of Uganda since she is below 18 years. Hence, she is green about what she is engaged in, but, Palila will be charged guilty before the law and even the pornography act" (RA3-UG-38-A);

"The fact that Palila has paid and the victim has accepted the money show their intentions to commit a crime. Mamo can only watch such a crime if he/she visits the online sites. So, she is abetting the crime" (RA3-UG-50-A);

"16 years is still a child in Uganda's constitution. The one who saw it online is a victim as well" (RA3-UG-20-A).

Scenario 2

Kaimi is a 17-year-old student. Kaimi has struggled to make good grades this year and is worried that Uli, a teacher who is a close family friend, will tell Kaimi's dad. Kaimi offers to send Uli naked pictures if he promises not to talk to the family. Uli accepts.
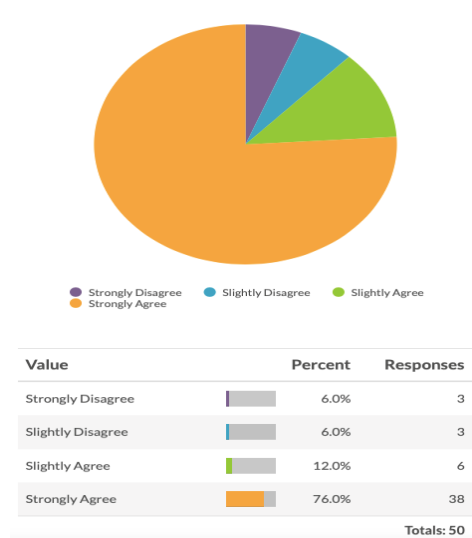

● Strongly Disagree   ● Slightly Disagree   ● Slightly Agree
● Strongly Agree

Value		Percent	Responses
Strongly Disagree		6.0%	3
Slightly Disagree		6.0%	3
Slightly Agree		12.0%	6
Strongly Agree		76.0%	38
			Totals: 50

Figure 6. Do you think that Kaimi is a victim of OCSEA?

● Strongly Disagree   ● Slightly Disagree   ● Slightly Agree
● Strongly Agree

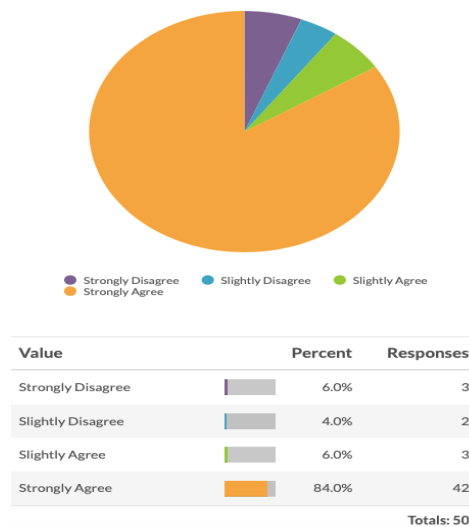| Value		Percent	Responses
Strongly Disagree		6.0%	3
Slightly Disagree		4.0%	2
Slightly Agree		6.0%	3
Strongly Agree		84.0%	42
			Totals: 50

Figure 7. Do you think Uli has committed an OCSEA-related crime?

Nearly all of the participants agreed that the student (Kaimi) is a victim of OSCEA (n=44, or 88%). As we can see in Figure 6, 3 participants strongly disagreed (6%) and 3 slightly disagreed (6%). One respondent who disagreed commented that they felt no crime had yet occurred as pictures weren't sent: "*In this scenario I do not see Kaimi sending naked pictures*" (RA3-UG-36-A).

45 participants agreed that the teacher (Uli) has committed an OSCEA related crime (90%) and 5 disagreed (10%). None of the respondents who disagreed with the statement provided additional comments. Others commented:

"Uli is a person above 18 which means he knows what he is doing, that is already a crime" (RA3-UG-05-A);

"Uli would have advised Kaimi on the best thing to do but he or she just facilitated the process by keeping Kaimi in fear, and then accepted to receive the naked pictures from a child (Kaimi, 17)" (RA3-UG-21-A);

"Uli is an adult whereas Kaimi is still a child hence she is doing it for the sake of gaining good marks. And since she is still a child the teacher is expected to be of a good reasoning capacity than her" (RA3-UG-38-A).

Scenario 3

Sam is a 10-year-old whose family struggles to make ends meet in their rural village.
Sam's uncle, Alex, has a good government job and has always given money to help the family out. Recently,
Uncle Alex wrote a message to Sam on Facebook asking to have a secret meeting at his house. When Sam
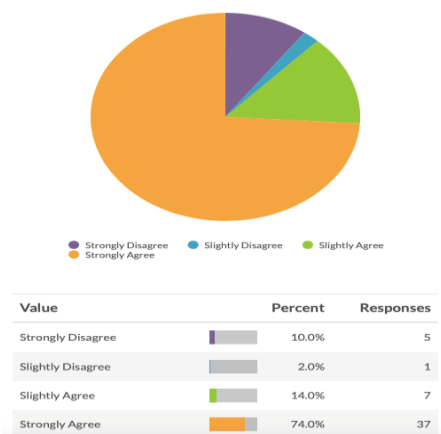*arrives, Uncle Alex asked Sam to sit on his lap and began touching his private parts.*

Value		Percent	Responses
Strongly Disagree		10.0%	5
Slightly Disagree		2.0%	1
Slightly Agree		14.0%	7
Strongly Agree		74.0%	37

Figure 8. Do you think that Sam is a victim of OCSEA?

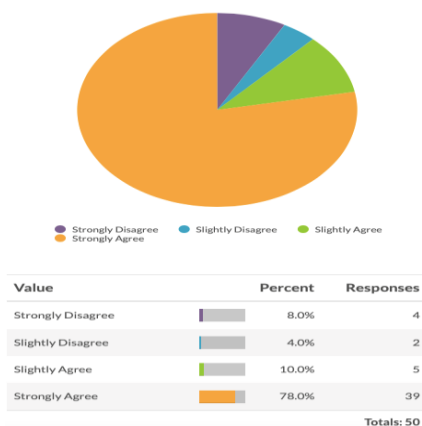| Value		Percent	Responses
Strongly Disagree		8.0%	4
Slightly Disagree		4.0%	2
Slightly Agree		10.0%	5
Strongly Agree		78.0%	39
			Totals: 50

Figure 9. Do you think Alex has committed an OCSEA related crime?

44 participants (86%) agreed and 6 disagreed that the 10-year-old Sam is a victim of OSCEA and that Alex committed an OCSEA-related crime – Figures 8 and 9.

From the additional comments it appears that for some respondents, the perception of whether a crime had occurred or not was linked to the offline physical abuse rather than the indication of online grooming (via messaging service):

"I slightly agree because Uncle Alex uses Facebook to contact Sam, though he doesn't send any pictures of them online" (RA3-UG-06-A);

"Much as Sam received the invitation through Facebook but the actual act of sexual abuse was not an OCSEA. It was a physical act of sexual abuse. But maybe if it was not because of Facebook, Sam would not have got the information to visit Uncle Alex in his office" (RA3-UG-42-A);

"This act was not posted online though it is sexual abuse" (RA3-UG-37-A).

Others however did comment on the grooming process:

"Sam may be partly a victim of OCSEA since Alex lured him via online and this makes it an OCSEA related crime because it involved online communication between the perpetrator and the victim" (RA3-UG-50-A);

"*Alex is grooming child abuse and used media to facilitate the invitation*" (Participant ID RA3-UG-35-A);

"It has occurred through a mixture of online and offline but still it remains OCSEA" (RA3-UG-28-A).

Scenario 4

Joe is 16, and his girlfriend Lucy is 15. They have been dating for a year and regularly have sex. Sometimes, when they can't be together, they send photos to each other of themselves naked. Joe's friend Matt knows about this and breaks into Joe's phone and forwards naked pictures of Lucy to a group of their friends.
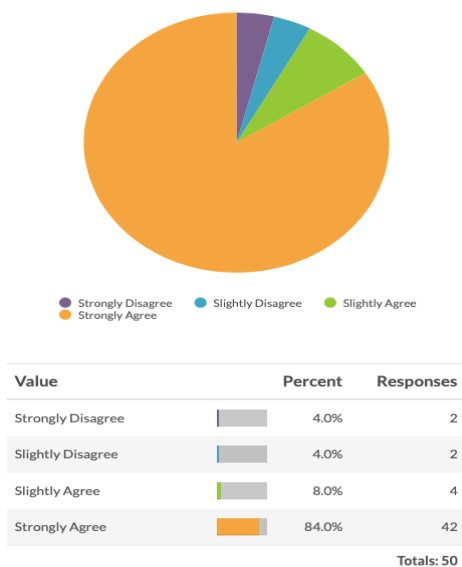

Value		Percent	Responses
Strongly Disagree		4.0%	2
Slightly Disagree		4.0%	2
Slightly Agree		8.0%	4
Strongly Agree		84.0%	42
			Totals: 50

Figure 10. Do you think that Lucy is a victim of an OCSEA related crime?

Value		Percent	Responses
Strongly Disagree		10.0%	5
Slightly Disagree		10.0%	5
Slightly Agree		14.0%	7
Strongly Agree		66.0%	33
			Totals: 50
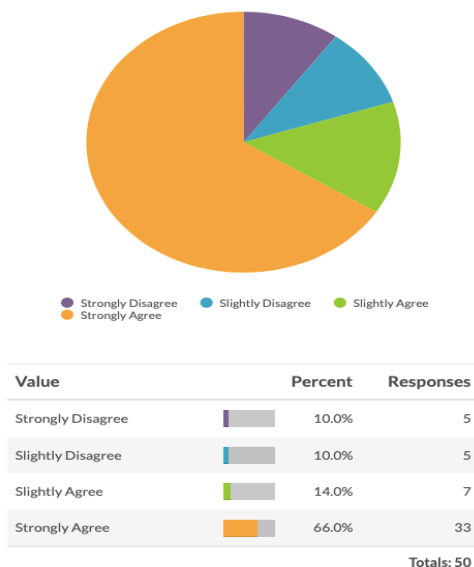
Figure 11. Do you think that Joe is a victim of an OCSEA related crime?

Value		Percent	Responses
Strongly Disagree		8.0%	4
Slightly Disagree		8.0%	4
Slightly Agree		22.0%	11
Strongly Agree		62.0%	31
			Totals: 50
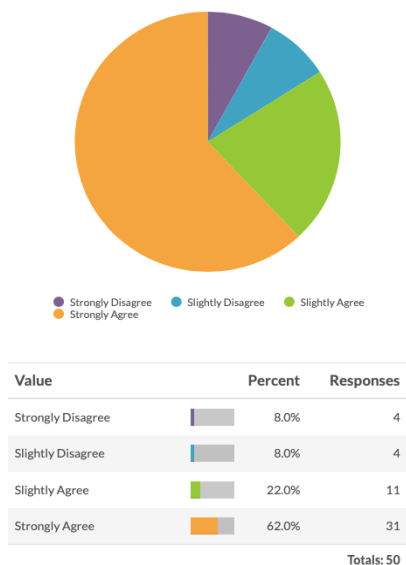
Figure 12. Do you think that Joe has committed an OCSEA related crime?

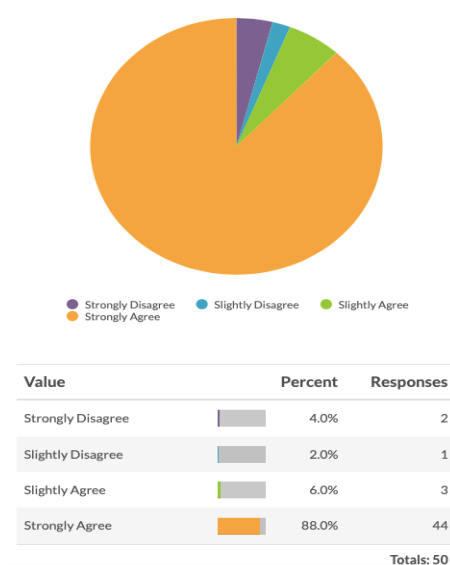| Value		Percent	Responses
Strongly Disagree		4.0%	2
Slightly Disagree		2.0%	1
Slightly Agree		6.0%	3
Strongly Agree		88.0%	44
			Totals: 50

Figure 13. Do you think that Matt has committed an OCSEA related crime?

The vast majority of participants agreed that Lucy is a victim of OSCEA (n=46, or 92%), while 4 disagreed (8%) – Figure 10. Although with less certainty, still the majority of participants agreed that Joe is a victim of an OSCEA related crime (n=40, or 80%); 10 participants disagreed with the statement (20%). At the same time, 42 respondents (84%) agreed that Joe has committed an OSCEA related crime (31 strongly and 11 slightly).

Nearly all of the participants agreed that Matt has committed an OSCEA related crime (n=47, or 94%). As we can see in Figure 13, 3 participants disagreed (2 strongly and 1 slightly). While none of the respondents who disagreed provided additional comments, others added:

"This kind of case happens a lot! So called "friends" get access to their friends' phone and share and or link them to sex offenders" (RA3-UG-24-A);

"Using online channels to share naked pictures is a crime. Therefore, Matt committed a crime by sharing what was not meant for the public, while on the other hand the two could have also committed a crime though they turned out to be victims. Other children viewing these pictures are also victims" (RA3-UG-32-A).

Summary

Participants overwhelmingly correctly identified the children as victims and the adults as offenders across the four scenarios. However, in two questions there were some divergences. The first question related to the scenario (Scenario 1) in which an adult paid his 16-year-old female relative to undress while he filmed it and later posted it online. In this scenario, an unrelated individual, Mamo, who did not know the child or the other adult, watched the interaction online from home 30 miles away. Nearly all of the participants agreed that the child was a victim of sexual exploitation and that the adult who paid and filmed her had committed an OCSEA-related crime. However, out of 50 participants, 10 (20%) only slightly agreed that the other adult viewing the child sexual abuse materials online (Mamo) had committed an OCSEA-related crime, 9 (18%) slightly disagreed and 8 (16%) strongly disagreed.

The second item with some divergence related to the scenario (Scenario 4) in which a 16-year-old male, Joe, and his 15-year-old girlfriend, Lucy, were sometimes sending each other naked photos. In that scenario, Matt, Joe's friend, broke into Joe's phone and forwarded naked pictures of Lucy to a group of their friends. The majority of participants agreed that Lucy and Joe were victims of OCSEA and that Matt has committed an OCSEA related crime. However, participants also overwhelmingly agreed that Joe had committed a crime. 11 (22%) respondents chose to 'slightly agree' and only 8 (16%) disagreed that Joe has committed an OCSEA related crime (Figure 12). While technically two children consensually photographing themselves naked is a crime in Uganda, there is ongoing debate about this thinking. For example, if the images had remained between the two consenting parties harm may not have been experienced. In a 2020 study on self-generated content, it was found that children thought it could even provide advantages in their relationships and/or increase their self-esteem.[2] On the other hand, when the materials are forwarded without consent, they may end-up circulating the web and being acquired by offenders.[3] Additionally, the normalisation of sexual content, both in terms of images and sexualised online conversations, may lead to victims underreporting because they may fail to perceive what is happening to them as abusive or exploitative.[4]

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[2] ECPAT Sweden. (2020, May). "I början vart det lite läskigt men nu är det vardag" En rapport om yngre barn och egenproducerat material. [Translated from Swedish].

[3] Bracket Foundation. (2019). Artificial Intelligence: Combating online sexual abuse of children. 10.

[4] Palmer, T. (2015). Digital Dangers: the impact of technology on the sexual abuse and exploitation of children. *Barnado's*. 35.

Vulnerabilities

Based on their knowledge and experience, participants indicated whether they believed a list of factors about the child and society increased children's vulnerability to general sexual exploitation (i.e. all kinds) and more specifically to OCSEA.

- **Factors about the <u>child</u> identified as increasing vulnerability to general sexual abuse and exploitation**
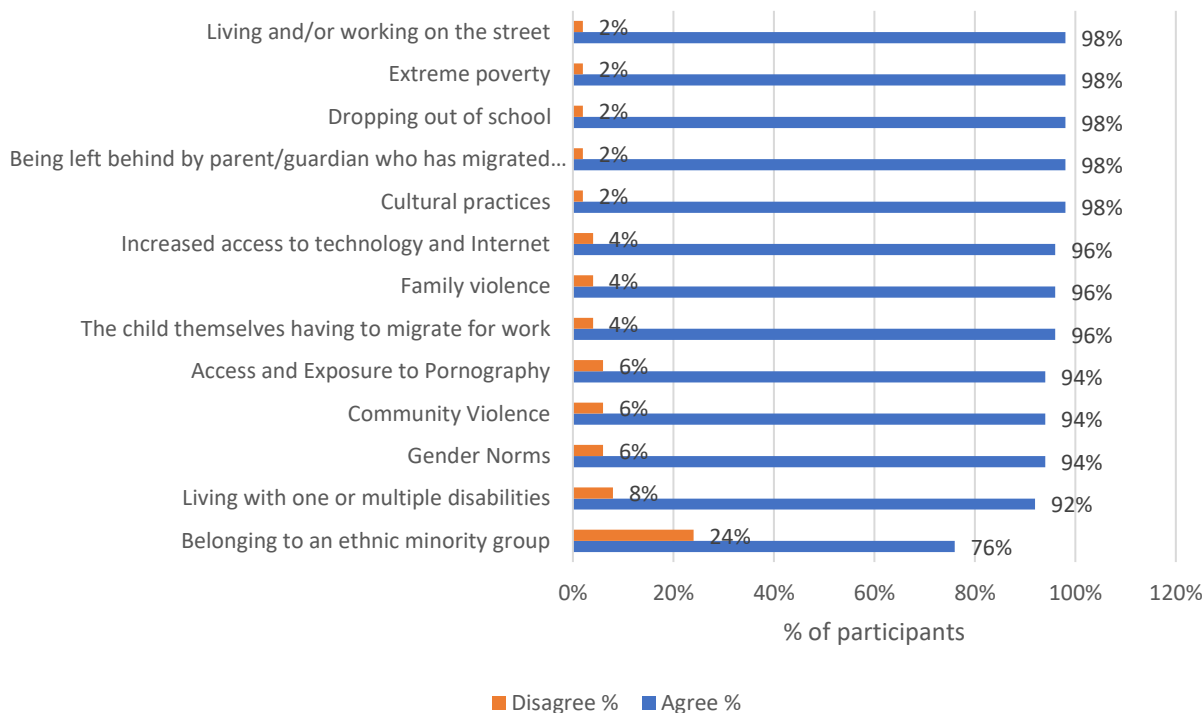

Living and/or working on the street — Disagree 2%, Agree 98%
Extreme poverty — Disagree 2%, Agree 98%
Dropping out of school — Disagree 2%, Agree 98%
Being left behind by parent/guardian who has migrated… — Disagree 2%, Agree 98%
Cultural practices — Disagree 2%, Agree 98%
Increased access to technology and Internet — Disagree 4%, Agree 96%
Family violence — Disagree 4%, Agree 96%
The child themselves having to migrate for work — Disagree 4%, Agree 96%
Access and Exposure to Pornography — Disagree 6%, Agree 94%
Community Violence — Disagree 6%, Agree 94%
Gender Norms — Disagree 6%, Agree 94%
Living with one or multiple disabilities — Disagree 8%, Agree 92%
Belonging to an ethnic minority group — Disagree 24%, Agree 76%

% of participants

■ Disagree %   ■ Agree %

Figure 14. Participants' perceptions of factors about the *child* impacting children's vulnerability to general child sexual exploitation.

There was broad consensus among the respondents regarding their ideas about which of the possible factors about the child can increase vulnerability to sexual abuse and exploitation in general. In Uganda, 98% of frontline workers agreed that living/working on the street, extreme poverty, dropping out of school, being left behind by parent/guardian who migrated for work and cultural practices increase the vulnerability to child sexual exploitation. Nearly all respondents also agreed that increased access to technology and Internet (96%), family violence (96%), having to migrate for work (96%), access and exposure to pornography (94%), community violence (94%), gender norms (94%) and living with multiple disabilities (92%) increases children's vulnerability to child sexual exploitation. Slightly smaller agreement was found around the 'belonging to an ethnic minority group' – while 76% said it increases vulnerability to child sexual exploitation, 24% disagreed.

Additionally, respondents were given the option to comment on other sources of vulnerability in their country, which may not have been included in the survey options. They noted the following:

- Child headed households
- Family neglect
- Sports and talented children like dancers
- Separation from biological parents with no other care
- Peer pressure
- Incest
- Staying/working at border point/landing sites
- High level of idleness
- Participation in funeral rites overnight
- Religious practices
- Lack of stringent laws
- Immoral practices within the community

- **Factors about the <u>child </u>identified as increasing vulnerability specifically to <u>OCSEA</u>**
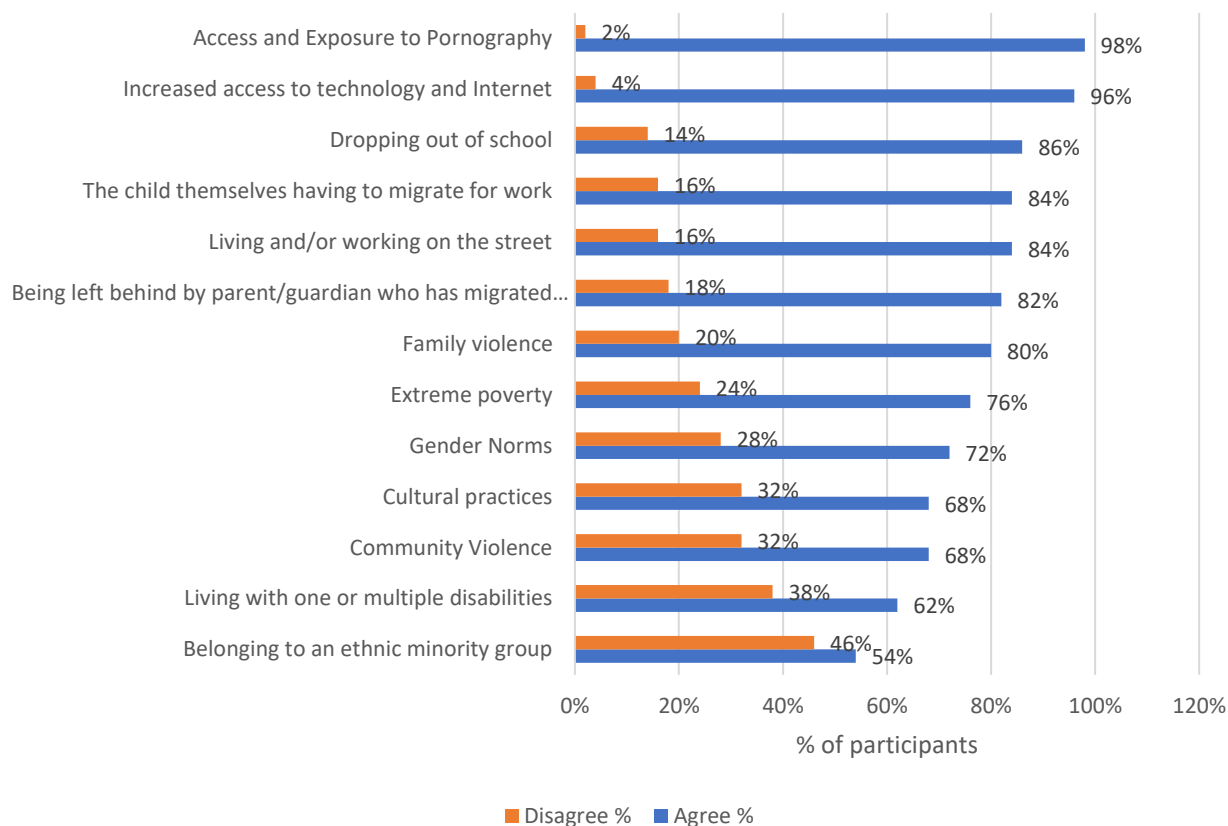
Figure 15. Participants' perceptions of factors about the *child* impacting children's vulnerability to OCSEA.

There was less consensus among the respondents regarding their ideas around which factors about the child can increase vulnerability to ONLINE sexual exploitation and abuse. In Uganda, participants ranked the following as the top sources of vulnerability to OCSEA. Highest agreement was found around factors such as: access and exposure to pornography (98%), increased access to technology (96%), dropping out of school (86%), children having to migrate for work (84%), living and/or working on the street (84%) and being left behind by parent/guardian who migrated for work. High agreement (however smaller than in the case of child sexual exploitation) was found also around family violence (80%), extreme poverty (76%) and gender norms (72%). 68% of participants also agreed that cultural practices and community violence increase vulnerability to OCSEA in Uganda. Bigger differences were found around 'living with one or more disabilities (62% agreed, 38% disagreed) and belonging to an ethnic minority group (54% agreed, 46% disagreed).

When respondents were given the option to comment on other sources of vulnerability in their country, which may not have been included in the survey options, they noted the following:

- Limited/controlled liberty
- Increasing Internet companies
- Peer pressure from peer groups
- Sports and talented children
- Drug addiction
- Parental neglect
- Unemployment /idleness
- Lack of assertiveness
- Staying and living at border point/landing site
- Excessive use of gadgets (addiction to use of computers and phones)
- Access to video halls in the villages
- Availability of devices such as smart phones

When respondents were given the option to comment additionally on the **similarities and differences in children's vulnerability to OCSEA and sexual exploitation in general**, they noted the following:

Similarities

"Children's vulnerability is similar to vulnerability to sexual exploitation generally due to the push factors. For example, in extreme poverty children are at higher risk and are prone to both forms of abuses (above) for small gifts such as food or money. On the other hand, the vulnerability to OCSEA may differ from general sexual exploitation due to access to technology. For example, children that access Internet often without regulation/control are at a higher risk to access online sexual content in which they may pick interest, hence addiction may develop desire to record/share sexual content and they are then prone to seduction from perpetrators of OCSEA compared to children who cannot access technology/Internet" (RA3-UG-40-A);

"It is similar because the same factors cause vulnerability to OCSEA and sexual exploitation in general" (RA3-UG-06-A);

"Everything depends on an individual's exposure to the world. The reason as to why OCSEA is similar to general sexual exploitation, is that many people, including children, have access to phones and then the groups plus environment expose them a lot. Children like copying what their peers do, while adults use the advantage of their vulnerability" (RA3-UG512-03-A);

"They are similar given that with the increased access to technology and Internet, almost all the contact sexual abuse or exploitation of children ends up online. All the factors for vulnerability are the same, although OCSEA is a subset of general sexual exploitation" (RA3-UG-21-A);

"It is similar given that most of the causal factors are the same" (RA3-UG-23-A);

"Vulnerability of children to OCSEA and child sexual exploitation in general are largely the same because both practices tend to fuel or drive the other in the event that either the perpetrator or the child have access to unrestricted Internet use. Though generally any factor that drives a child's vulnerability to any form of sexual exploitation will ultimately make them also susceptible to OCSEA" (RA3-UG-07-A).

Differences:

"OCSEA requires exposure of a child to acts of sexual exploitation like pornography, sending pictures, etc that can make a child vulnerable while other sexual exploitation and abuses are more of manipulations of victims/influence of parents/culture among others" (RA3-UG-11-A);

"OCSEA maybe isn't physical" (RA3-UG-35-A);

"In the recent years, there has been a great increase in the number of children accessing modern technologies including phones, computers etc. making children more susceptible to OCSEA than sexual exploitation generally. Across the globe, there is lack of clear policy framework to protect children from OCSEA. For instance, in Uganda there is no proper policy guidelines like a National Action Plan on OCSEA to protect children" (RA3-UG-39-A);

"Because they are children below 18 years, they are vulnerable if showing their bodies online, although it's not directly with a perpetuator - so this is sexual exploitation since the victims sometimes are ignorant on online sexual exploitation" (RA3-UG-37-A);

"With OCSEA, families living in extreme poverty may not face it, yet with sexual exploitation the status of a family does not stop abuse from happening" (RA3-UG-25-A);

"Children's vulnerability to OCSEA is completely different from vulnerability to sexual exploitation generally because OCSEA factors depends on the availability or access to online technology where sexual

exploitation factors do not depend on access to technology and the factors are all over in the communities, unlike OCSEA which is not easily accessible and is costly" (RA3-UG-42-A);

"It is different because in Uganda as a country, there are very few cases of online child sexual exploitation. Most cases of child sexual exploitation are physical where the perpetrators entice the child with small tokens before physically and sexually abusing them. However, with the increasing rate at which children have access to technology and online devices, OSCEA will be a great concern in the near future" (RA3-UG-47-A).

- **Factors about the <u>society</u> identified as increasing vulnerability to general sexual abuse (any types).**

When asked, "in your country, indicate if you think the following factors about society can increase vulnerability to sexual abuse and exploitation in general" – survey respondents reported the following factors as sources of vulnerability to general sexual exploitation:
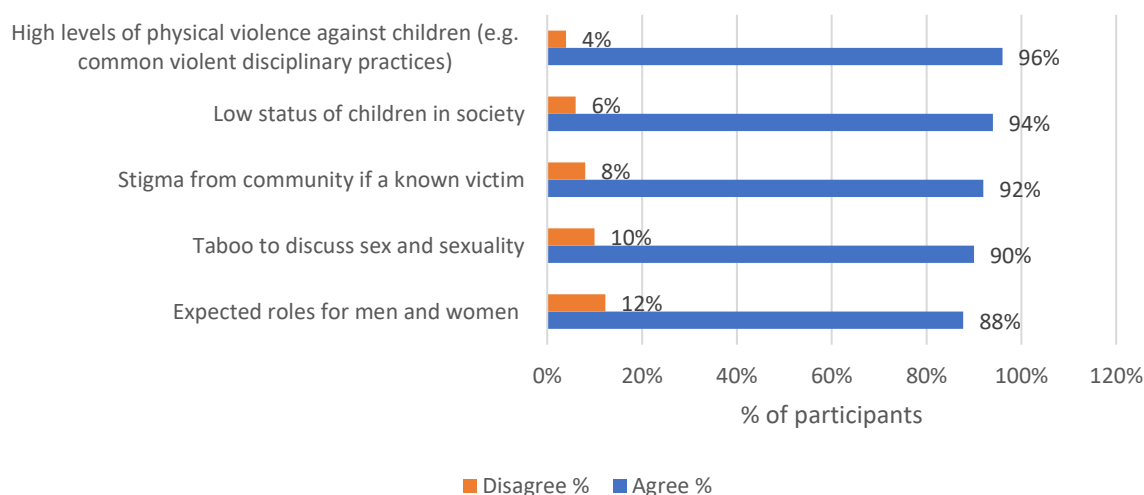

High levels of physical violence against children (e.g. common violent disciplinary practices) — 4% / 96%
Low status of children in society — 6% / 94%
Stigma from community if a known victim — 8% / 92%
Taboo to discuss sex and sexuality — 10% / 90%
Expected roles for men and women — 12% / 88%

% of participants

■ Disagree % ■ Agree %

Figure 16. Participants' perceptions of factors about *society* impacting children's vulnerability to general sexual exploitation and abuse. N=50*
*Note: the 'expected roles for men and women' factor was based on 49 responses

As we can see from the above, there was broad consensus among the respondents regarding their ideas around which factors about society can increase vulnerability to sexual abuse and exploitation in general. 96% of respondents agreed that high levels of physical violence against children can increase vulnerability, 94% agreed that low status of children in society can increase vulnerability, 92% agreed that stigma from the community can increase vulnerability, 90% agreed that taboos around discussing sex and sexuality can lead to increased vulnerability and 88% agreed that expected roles for men and women can increase vulnerability to OCSEA.

Additional factors about society mentioned by participants that they believed strongly increased children's vulnerability to sexual exploitation included:

- Low levels of education
- The parent's attitude towards their children
- Inadequate, weak and/or lack of knowledge and enforcement
- Family negligence
- Poor access to sexual reproductive health services
- Gender-based violence among parents
- Cultural practices
- Power imbalances between men and women
- Social norms around sexuality

- **Factors about the <u>society</u> identified as increasing vulnerability specifically to online forms of child sexual exploitation and abuse**
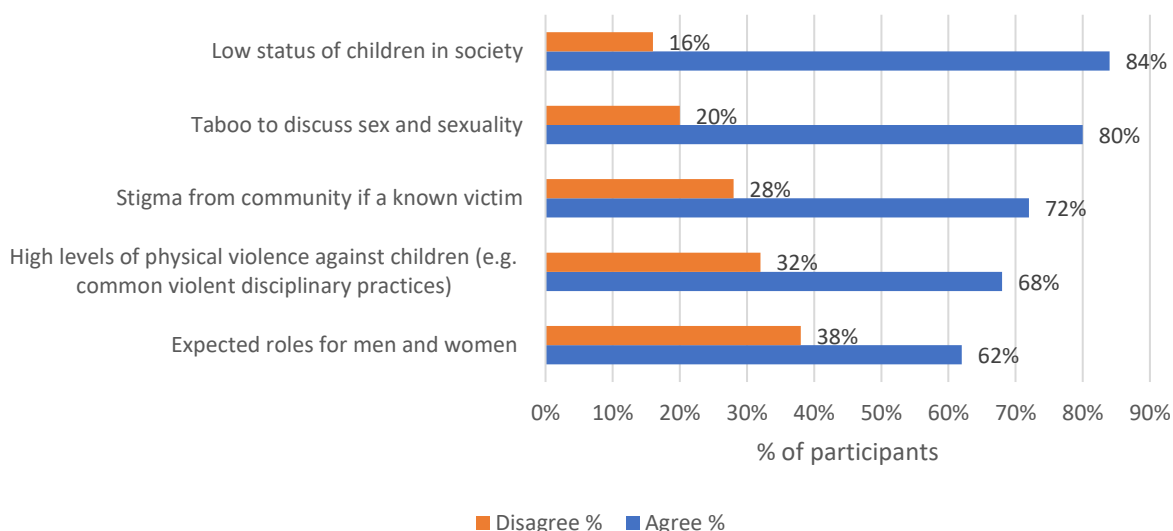
Figure 17. Participants' perceptions of factors about the *society* impacting children's vulnerability specific to OCSEA.

Less consensus was observed when participants were asked to identify if the same factors are sources of increased vulnerability for ONLINE sexual abuse. Within the options given, 84% of respondents identified low status of children in society (compared to 94% in the case of child sexual exploitation) and taboos around discussing sex and sexuality (80% agreed compared to 90% in the case of child sexual exploitation) as the largest sources of vulnerability. That was followed by stigma from the community (72% agreed), high levels of physical violence and expected roles for men and women (62% agreed compared to 88% in the case of child sexual exploitation).

When respondents were given the option to comment on other sources of vulnerability in their country which may not have been included in the survey options, they noted the following:

- Low levels of education
- Parenting styles/norms (Permissive and authoritative styles)
- Parental attitude towards their children like parental talks and advice
- Lack of counselling or parental neglect
- Sexual practices
- Peer pressure
- High level of vulnerability among women
- Poor access to sexual and reproductive health services
- Access to technology
- GBV among parents
- Drug abuse
- Social norms around sexuality

When participants were asked specifically **why societal factors increase vulnerability to OCSEA differently to sexual exploitation generally** they commented:

"Online is done secretly by the parties involved and some people in the society think sexual exploitation is only physical" (RA3-UG-37-A);

"They are similar because they are all dictated by social and economic factors" (RA3-UG-17-A);

"Children that do not have a supportive and protective social environment, including families, friends and social systems are much more susceptible to OCSEA than their peers from protective societies" (RA3-UG-39-A);

"Depending on how and what children are going through, they are going to be tempted to opt for online sex since through that the children think they will acquire quick money" (RA3-UG-15-A);

"Because with OCSEA children think it's not easy to find out they are doing this act in a way to avoid stigma" (RA3-UG-16-A);

"The lack of knowledge about policy and enforcement of OCSEA makes OCSEA a norm. It's still hard for society to appreciate privacy. When it comes to adolescent youth, it becomes even more difficult. They just share and are exploited/silenced with such photos and videos" (RA3-UG-24-A);

"Boys and girls are more likely to face OCSEA because of gender and age factors. Societal factors mount considerable pressure on children and their families to conform to social norms because of fear of reprisal or alienation from society" (RA3-UG-43-A);

"Yes, for example taboo to discuss sex and sexuality propels children to find out more on sex related information on the Internet, friends who show them blue movies and other pornographic materials" (RA3-UG-19-A).

Reporting

In order to explore what influences decisions about reporting cases of child sexual exploitation and abuse, participants were asked to indicate whether they believed particular social and cultural factors influenced reporting both on general child sexual exploitation (all kinds) and specifically related to OCSEA in Uganda.
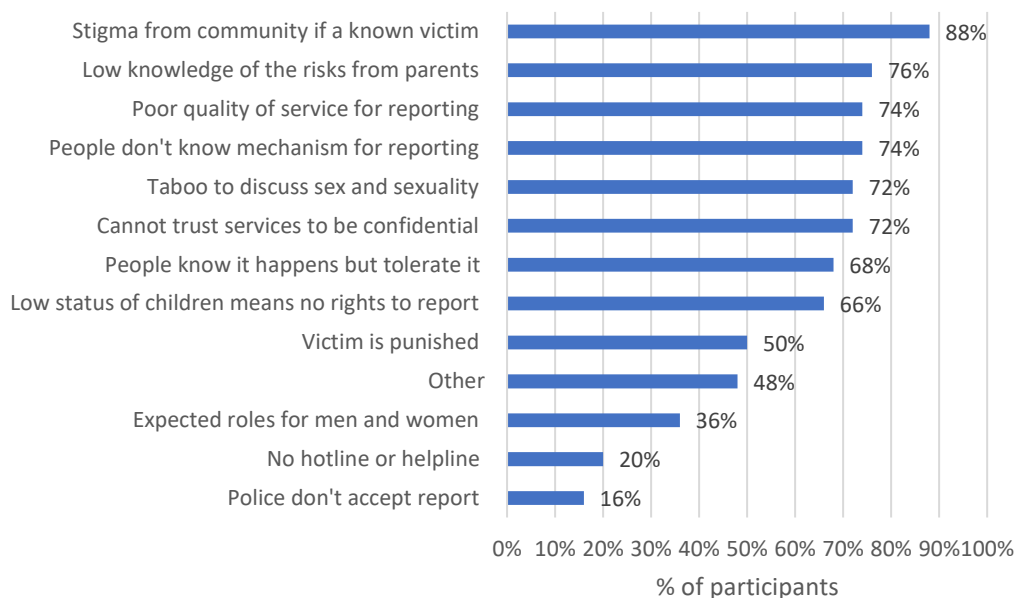

Figure 18. Social and cultural influences on reporting *child sexual exploitation in general*

Figure 18 shows that stigma from community (n=44 – 88%) was perceived as the main factor influencing reporting child sexual exploitation. That was closely followed by 'low knowledge of the risks from parents" (n=38 – 76%), poor quality of service for reporting (74%), people not knowing the mechanism for reporting (74%), taboos around discussing sex and sexuality (72%) and not trusting services to be confidential (72%). 68% of respondents also thought that people know it happens but tolerate it and 66% that low status of children of children means no rights to report also influenced reporting. Fewer participants thought that the fact that police don't accept report influences reporting child sexual exploitation (16% agreed) and that there is no hotline/helpline for reporting (20% agreed).

Outside of what was reported above, other factors mentioned by participants that influence reporting child sexual exploitation in general included:

- Corruption in police and judiciary
- Delay in handling reported cases (case backlog, high levels of corruption in the country)
- Fear of losing respect in the society
- Ignorance of the law
- Lack of direct laws
- Threat or intimidation for perpetrators

- Low knowledge levels
- Cases reported to police being mismanaged
- Lack of evidence
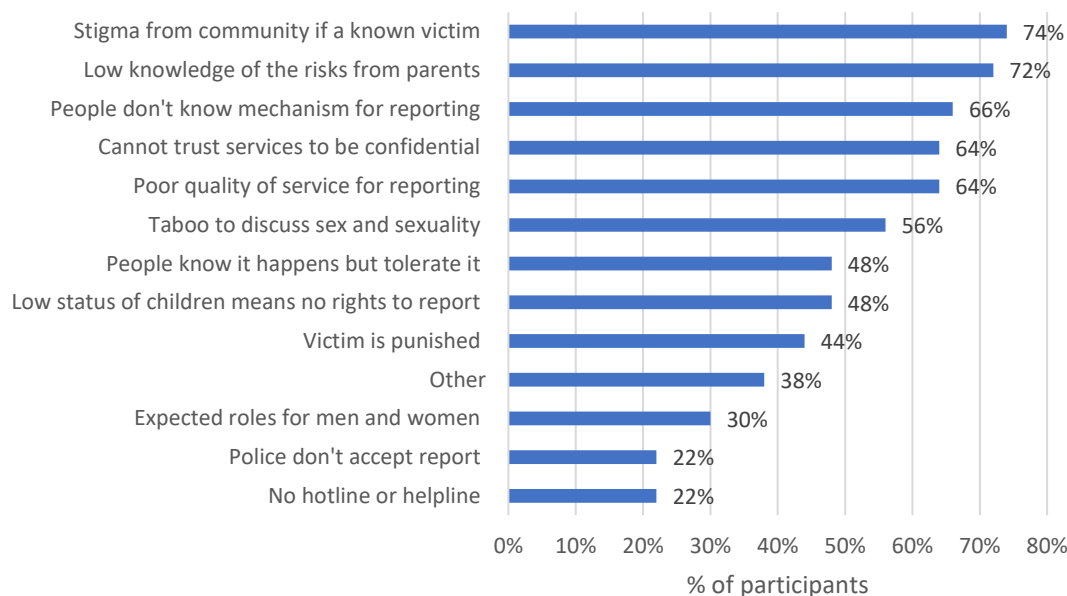- Most of the perpetrators being relatives and close relatives

Stigma from community if a known victim — 74%
Low knowledge of the risks from parents — 72%
People don't know mechanism for reporting — 66%
Cannot trust services to be confidential — 64%
Poor quality of service for reporting — 64%
Taboo to discuss sex and sexuality — 56%
People know it happens but tolerate it — 48%
Low status of children means no rights to report — 48%
Victim is punished — 44%
Other — 38%
Expected roles for men and women — 30%
Police don't accept report — 22%
No hotline or helpline — 22%

% of participants

Figure 19. Social and cultural influences on reporting *OCSEA*

In regard to OCSEA, as we can see above, respondents reported nearly identical values for what prevents reporting OCSEA in Uganda compared to factors influencing the reporting of child sexual exploitation in general. Stigma from community if a known victim (n=37 - 74%) and low knowledge of the risks from parents (n=36 – 72%) were rated as having the biggest influence on reporting (followed by not knowing reporting mechanisms and not trusting that these services will be confidential).

Outside of what was reported above, other factors mentioned by participants that influence reporting OCSEA included:

- Delays in handling of reported cases
- High levels of corruption in the country
- Inferior complex
- Lack of knowledge on modern technology
- Lack of support when case is reported especially to the relevant authority
- Loss of confidence in legal process due to corruption
- Low response rates from authorities in addressing the matters reported
- No stringent laws in place

- OCSEA not widely known; besides there's a culture of silence and clandestine operation
- Parents may not know what happens online or on the Internet
- People do not know what to do
- Perpetrator being in a different country

One NGO-worker commented: *"It is very important to note that online sexual exploitation of children is one of the under/rarely/not reported cases in Uganda. And yet they may be very common since many of the children in the current world are exposed to technology"* (RA3-UG-32-A).

Availability of Support

Respondents were asked to evaluate the overall availability and quality of medical, psychological, legal and reintegration services for child victims of OCSEA.
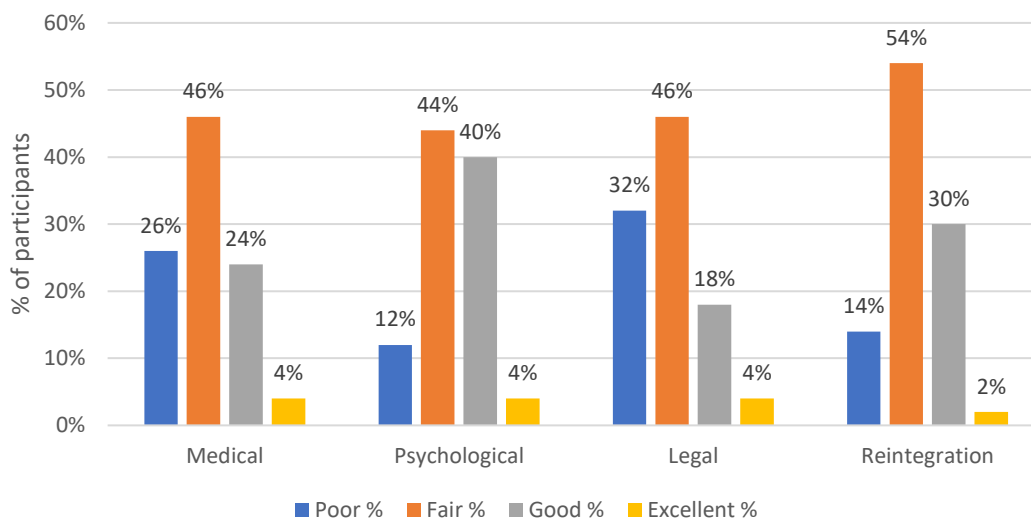
Figure 20. Perception of *Availability* of Services
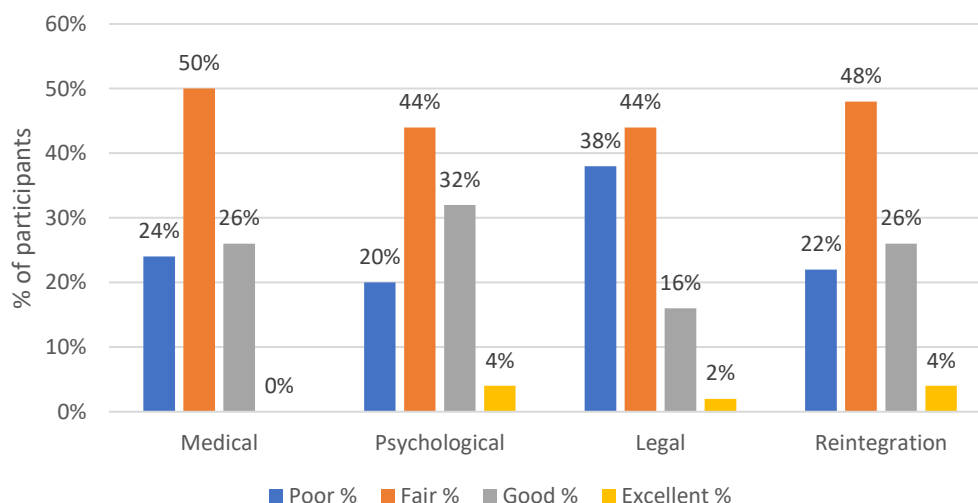
Figure 21. Perception of *Quality* of Services

Figures 20 and 21 show fairly consistent ratings between all services, and also with regards to both the quality and availability of those services. As we can see, with references to both quality and availability, respondents ranked most of these services as 'fair' (44%–54%). The availability of psychological services was given the most favourable ranking with 40% ranking them as good and another 4% as excellent. This was consistent for the quality of services, which also saw psychological services as being ranked the highest (32% ranked as good and another 4% as excellent).

When respondents were given the option to explain their appraisals of the quality and availability of services above, they noted the following:

"There is still a big knowledge gap on the awareness of OCSEA since most of the perpetrators and facilitators are people close to children - mostly close relatives to whom these children depend for their well-being - making it difficult for some children to report or to seek for the available services. This is in addition to few service providers that support children recovering from OCSEA" (RA3-UG-21-A);

"For example, if the case is reported at the police station, they lack skilled personnel to work on cases related to online sexual abuse like tracking of perpetrators" (RA3-UG-19-A);

"OCSEA is rarely reported and therefore government has not prioritised these services. However, non-governmental organisations are trying to do something amidst meagre resources" (RA3-UG-32-A);

"The support has not been good due to poor funding of the health sector from the central government" (RA3-UG-46-A).

To better understand what affects the availability of support services for children, respondents were asked to indicate to what extent particular factors they believed had an influence on the availability of services for children.
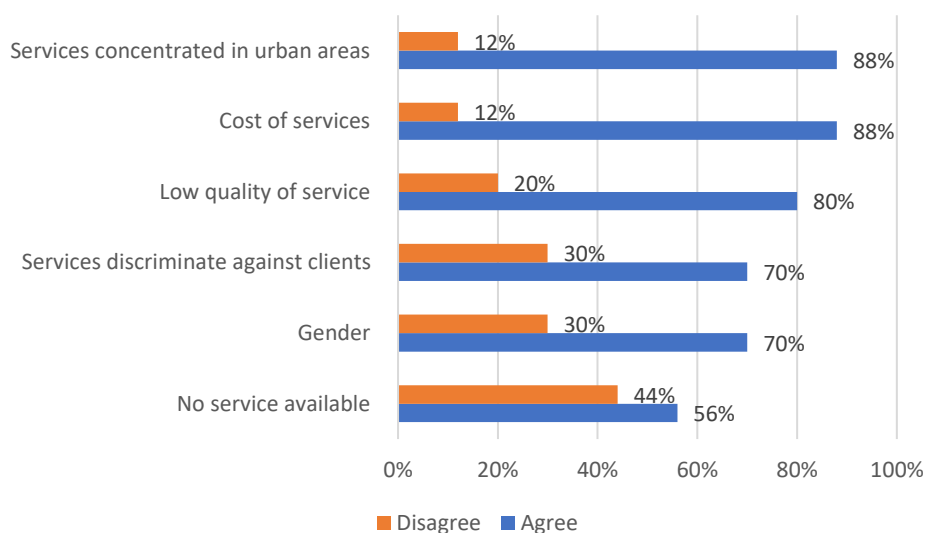

Figure 22. Factors affecting the availability of support services for child victims of child sexual exploitation

Figure 22 indicates that factors perceived as having the biggest influence on the availability of support services for children recovering from child sexual exploitation was the location – services were concentrated in urban areas (88% agreed) and cost of services (88% agreed). That was followed by low

quality of services (80%), services discriminating against clients (70% agreed), gender (70% agreed), and lastly, unavailability of services (56% agreed).

Participants additionally mentioned factors such as:

- Ignorance of the community about the existing laws
- Lack of knowledge on where to get support
- Stigma in cases to be reported
- Long time for investigations
- Access to justice taking long periods of time
- Lack of a comprehensive support system for victims
- Limited skills among probation officers who have a role to manage and represent children in courts

When participants were asked to indicate to what extent those same factors affect the availability of support services for child victims of OCSEA, the results were similar (Figure 23).
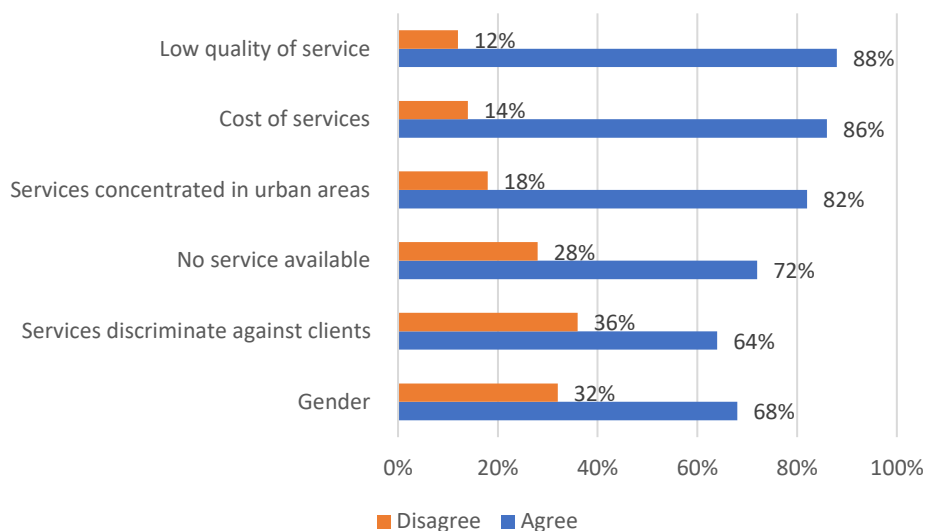

Figure 23. Factors affecting the availability of support services for child victims of *OCSEA*

In cases of OCSEA, it was the low quality of services (88% agreed) and cost of services (86% agreed) that were deemed to be the most prohibitive factors affecting the availability of support for children recovering from OCSEA. That was followed by the fact that most services are concentrated in urban areas (82% stongly agreed), unavailability of services (72% agreed), services discriminating against clients (64% agreed) and gender (68%).

When respondents were given the option to comment on what affects the availability of support for children recovering from OCSEA, which may not have been included in the survey options, they noted the following:

- Lack of knowledge on where to get support
- Level of awareness is low
- Ignorance of services
- Stigma
- Lack of safe places
- Lack of information about OCSEA
- Access to justice taking long periods of time
- Limited skills - we have few trained counsellors to manage OCSEA

Respondents also commented:

"Factors affecting availability of support services to survivors of OCSEA generally include structural, social, individual and economic and they complement each other" (RA3-UG-39-A);

"Support to children recovering from OCSEA is mainly affected by lack of information and knowledge about the dangers of online sexual exploitation" (RA3-UG-32-A);

"Services for OCSEA are limited to urban centres and the cyber unit of police is still weak and therefore support to victims is limited" (RA3-UG-50-A);

"Evidence gathering and investigations are quite costly. Rehabilitation require specific skills which is concentrated in urban centres mostly and not with the rural poor" (RA3-UG-43-A).

Investigations and Convictions

Participants were asked to estimate the amount of OCSEA cases they managed in the last 12 months and determine approximately how many of those resulted in investigations and convictions. It should be noted that these indications were merely estimates, not reliable counts of official cases.

30 participants indicated that in the last 12 months, at least one case of OCSEA they managed directly resulted in a complaint filed to the local police/judicial authorities (total 314 cases estimated).

24 participants indicated that in the last 12 months, at least one of the cases they managed resulted in an investigation (total 197 estimated).

13 participants indicated that in the last 12 months, at least one of the cases they managed resulted in a conviction (total 87 estimated).

The numbers of reported cases represent only a fraction of the number of OCSEA incidents that we expect are occurring, the majority of which continue to never come to the attention of social workers or law enforcement.

Law Enforcement and Government Support

In order to understand frontline social support workers perceptions of responses by local law enforcement on the issue of OCSEA, respondents were asked to answer, "Based on your work which best describes local law enforcement's: 1) awareness of OCSEA crimes; and 2) response to OCSEA crimes. Their responses to this question are depicted in Figure 24.
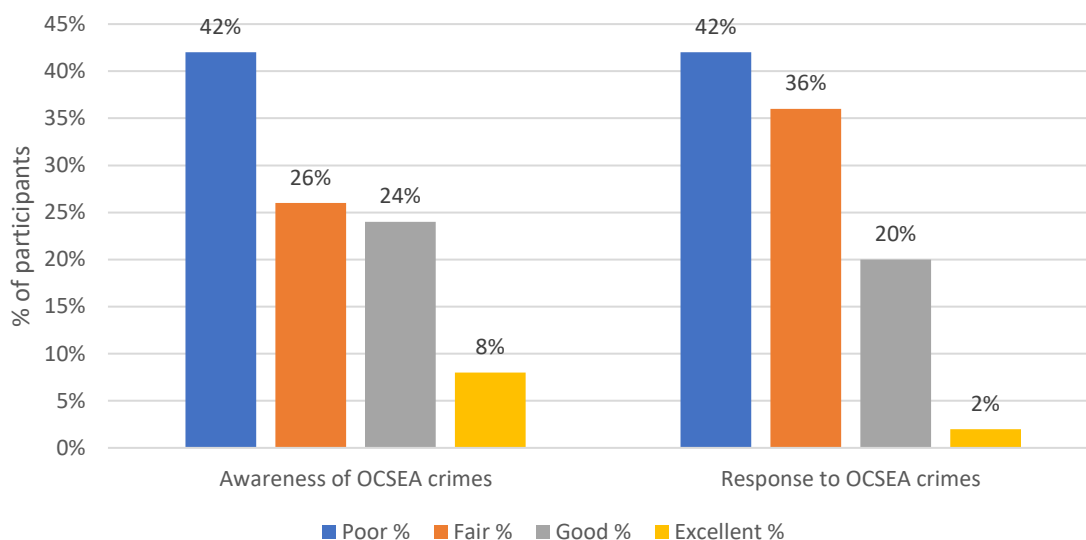

Figure 24. Participants' perceptions of local law enforcement awareness and response to OCSEA

Based on the above, we can see that both local law enforcement's awareness and responses in Uganda were rated quite poorly. Awareness was assessed to be slightly better than the response, however both questions resulted in 42% of respondents assessing them as poor in these areas.

Respondents were given the option to provide additional comments to qualify their answers above. Some of their justifications are highlighted below:

"First, the law for online sexual exploitation is not there, we just base on other related laws" (RA3-UG-06-A);

"Awareness creation among government structures and local law enforcement is greatly needed since most of the personnel have never heard about OCSEA or taken OCSEA as a crime" (RA3-UG-21-A);

"Considering that there are rare cases of OCSEA in the country, I would say the services provided are all fair. However, I think that more awareness raising should be done to inform the community and especially parents about OCSEA with the increasing rate at which children have access to technology and Internet in general" (RA3-UG-47-A);

"Most of the stakeholders I interact with seem ignorant or non-committal of the vice" (RA3-UG-29-A).

To better understand the ratings above, participants were next asked about their perceptions of the quality of efforts to address OCSEA (Figure 25).
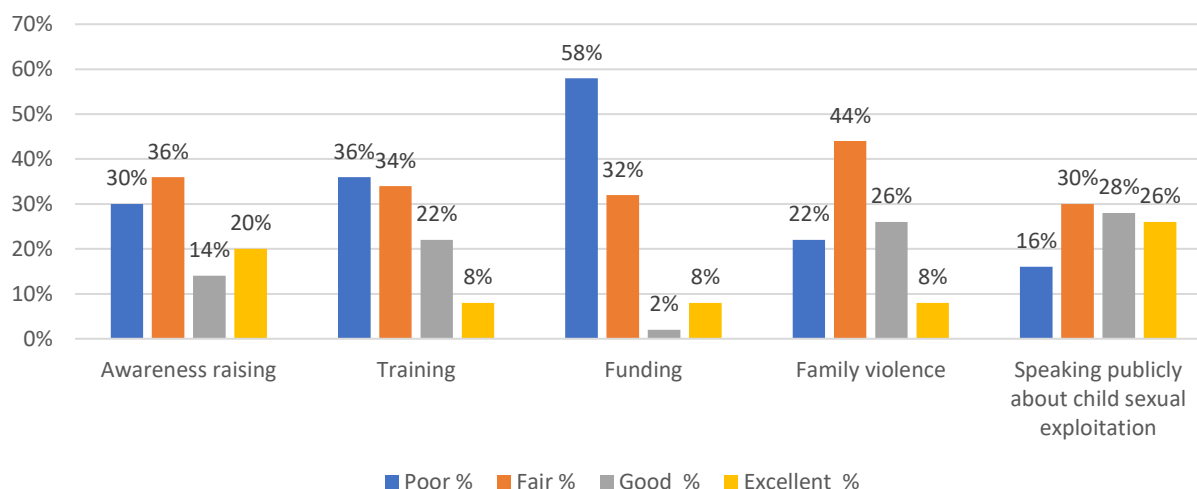

Figure 25. Participants' perceptions of quality of government efforts to address OCSEA

Respondents noted that the government is doing best at speaking publicly about child sexual exploitation, followed by awareness raising. However, only 26% of respondents felt the Ugandan government is doing an excellent job at speaking publicly, and only 20% found them to be doing an excellent job of awareness raising activities. Conversely, 16% reported the government to be doing a poor job of public speaking and 30% reported that the government is doing a poor job at awareness raising. Notably, 56% of all respondents stated their government is doing a poor job of funding the issue, 32% reported funding as 'fair', only 2% rated funding as 'good' and only 8% said funding is excellent. With regards to trainings around the issue of OCSEA, 36% of respondents reported that training around the issue is 'poor', 34% reported that it's 'fair', 22% reported it to be 'good' and only 8% believed the government to be doing an excellent job of training on the topic.

Additionally, participants mentioned that:

"There is a need for all the stakeholders to ensure diligence in the work to support the OCSEA activities if truly they are to yield and have transformation in the community" (RA3-UG520--03-A);

"Awareness creation among government structures and local law enforcement is greatly needed since most of the personnel have never heard about OCSEA or taken OCSEA as a crime" (Participant ID RA3-UG-21-A);

"I would prefer funding OCSEA by supporting following ups to cases, identifying cases in local communities and strengthening the referral system" (RA3-UG-34-A);

"Considering that there are rare cases of OCSEA in the country, I would say the services provided are all fair. However, I think that more awareness raising should be done to inform the community and especially parents about OCSEA with the increasing rate at which children have access to technology and Internet in general" (RA3-UG-47-A).

Next, frontline social support workers surveyed were asked to assess the collaboration on OCSEA between non-government sectors such as NGOs, tourism companies, Internet companies etc. The results are illustrated in Figure 26.
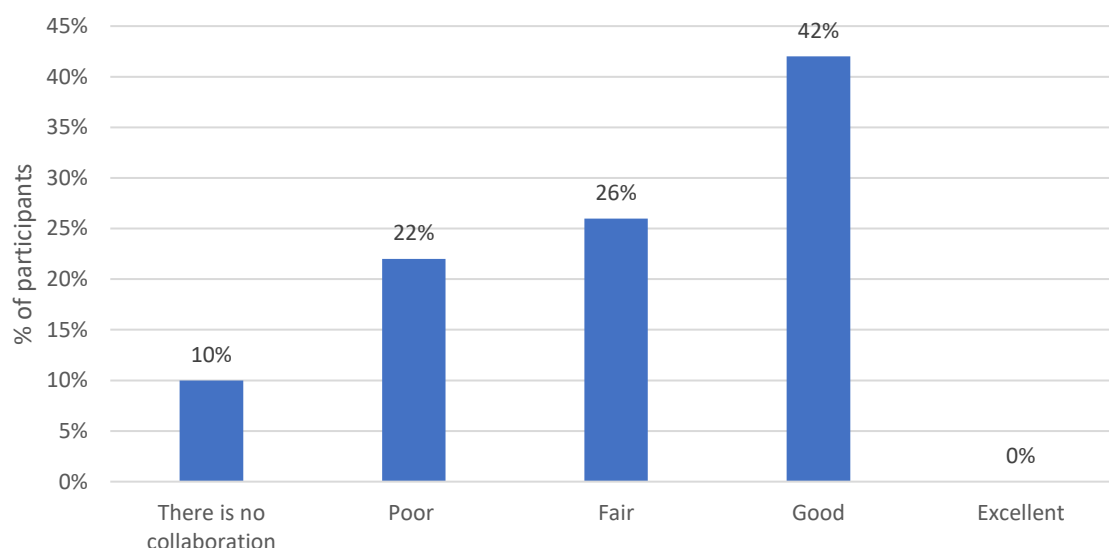

Figure 26. Participants perceptions of collaboration on OCSEA between non-government sectors.

42% (n=21) reported that collaboration between non-government actors to be 'good'; 26% (n=13) reported these collaborations to be 'fair'; 22% (n=11) rated them as poor and only 10% (n=5) described there to be no collaboration in this area.

In additional comments, participants mentioned that:

"Overall, civil society organisations have played crucial roles in improving the quality, availability and awareness of OCSEA and sexual exploitation support services. Interventions have been enhanced at three levels, including individual, societal and national level" (RA3-UG-39-A);

"A lot of awareness raising about OCSEA needs to be done at grassroot and national levels" (RA3-UG-36-A);

"Government officials and some non-government organisations are not cooperating" (RA3-UG-26-A);

"This is largely uncharted territory" (RA3-UG-29-A).

Public Awareness

Lastly, the survey attempted to ascertain the levels of public awareness around the issue of OCSEA in Uganda. In order to do so, frontline workers were asked to subjectively appraise young people's awareness, parent's awareness and the general public's awareness of OCSEA – their responses are illustrated below:
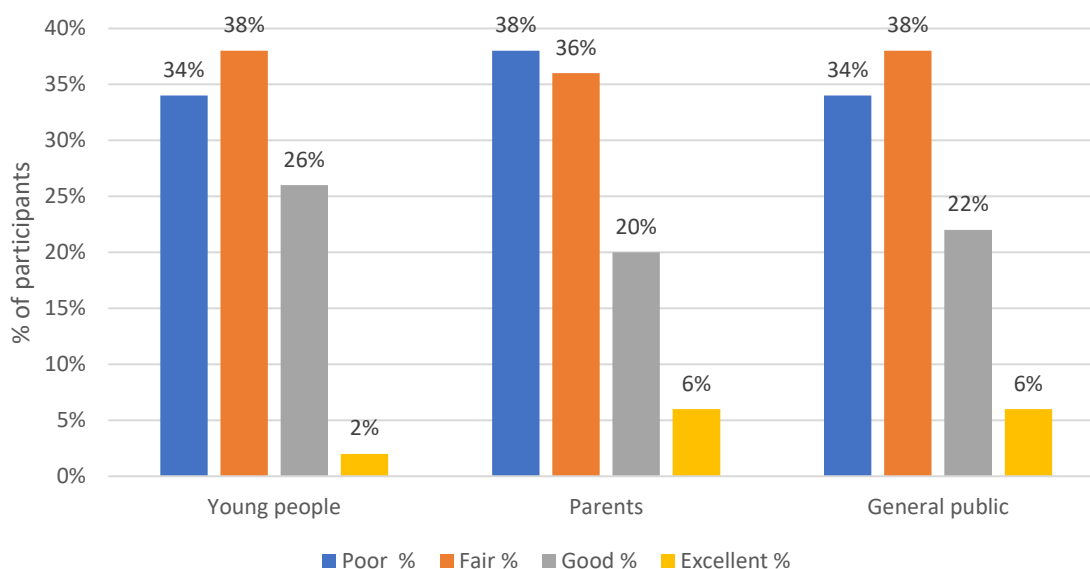

Figure 27. Awareness of OCSEA

As we can see from the above, frontline workers reported the levels of awareness in Uganda between young people, parents and the general public to be fairly consistently skewed towards fair/poor. We can also see that young people were ranked least favourably in terms of having excellent awareness (only 2% compared to 6% in the other categories).

Respondents were given the option to provide additional comments to qualify their answers above. Some of the responses included:

"While Uganda has grappled with child protection related issues, OCSEA has not been a common problem until recently with increased access to phone and Internet. So, most community members are not yet well aware and knowledgeable on issues of OCSEA" (RA3-UG-44-A);

"General awareness on OCSEA across the country is still lacking. Awareness is only slightly done in schools leaving out the non-school going children and the community at large" (RA3-UG-28-A);

"Most players talk about general sexual exploitation but very few emphasise OCSEA prevention. We need to advocate for integration of OCSEA information in most of the service provision packages by other players" (RA3-UG-21-A);

"Government needs to do a lot in sensitizing and enforcing policies around OCSEA. Law enforcement officers do not really know what to do and they respond very slowly if they are at all interested" (RA3-UG-24-A).