

# Child Exploitation, Abuse and Violence Among Communities in Nakuru and Kakamega Counties, Kenya

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# Abbreviations

<b>AICS</b>	Italian Agency for Development Cooperation
<b>CCI</b>	Charitable Children Institutions
<b>CISP</b>	International Committee for the Development of Peoples
<b>CP</b>	Child Protection
<b>CPIMS</b>	Child Protection Information Management System
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation
<b>DCS</b>	Department of Children Services
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>FGM</b>	Female Genital Mutilation
<b>IEC</b>	Information, Education and Communication
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interview
<b>K-NOTE</b>	Kenya National Outreach Counselling and Training Programme
<b>MARPA</b>	Matungu Rural Poverty Alleviation
<b>MoE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>MoH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>SBCC</b>	Social and Behaviour Change Communication
<b>TriM</b>	Translate into Meaning

# Executive Summary

## Scope of the Assessment

This report presents the findings of an assessment conducted by the International Committee for the Development of Peoples (CISP), with funding from the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), in collaboration with the Department of Children Services, and with the support of Matungu Rural Poverty Alleviation (MARPA) and the Kenya National Outreach Counselling and Training Programme (K-NOTE) in Nakuru and Kakamega Counties, Kenya. This is a quantitative study with the objective of providing evidence-based information about the knowledge, beliefs and practices of children, adult community members, service providers and government authorities in Kakamega and Nakuru Counties in relation to child protection and safeguarding, and ascertaining their links to normative factors.

A range of tools were developed to measure: 1) the level of knowledge on child rights, child protection and safeguarding topics (personal knowledge) of all four categories of people; 2) the level of adherence to harmful beliefs justifying violence (personal attitude/belief) of all groups; 3) the level of practice of abuse and violence according to children; 4) the perceived level of incidence of violence in the target communities according to the adults (descriptive norm); 5) the perceived level of acceptance of violence in the community according to the adults (injunctive norm). The sample size of adult community members and child respondents in each county was large enough for the findings to have a 95% confidence level, +/- 5% margin of error (confidence interval), and 0.5 standard deviation. The data collection was conducted between August 2020 and February 2021.

## Findings

**Knowledge:** The survey measured the level of knowledge<sup>1</sup> of children, community members, service providers and county authorities through a questionnaire. The findings revealed that:

- 1) The average level of knowledge of interviewed children on child rights and responsibilities was 71% (72% for boys and 70% for girls; 73% in Kakamega County and 69% in Nakuru County);
- 2) The average level of knowledge on child rights, protection and safeguarding of the community sample was 74% (78% in Kakamega County and 68% in Nakuru County);
- 3) The average level of knowledge on child protection service delivery of the service providers was 69% (74% in Kakamega and 63% in Nakuru);
- 4) The average level of knowledge on advocacy for child protection was 70% among local authorities working with children and public officials on child protection advocacy (75% in Kakamega and 65% in Nakuru).

**Beliefs:** The survey assessed the personal beliefs of children and community members that justify harmful behaviours within the community through a questionnaire. Among the children surveyed, the detected average level of adherence to harmful beliefs and social norms contributing to

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<sup>1</sup> The average level of knowledge is equivalent to the probability of a child correctly answering a randomly selected question of the tool.

violence against children in school, at home and in the community was 34%<sup>2</sup> (35% of boys and 33% of girls; 37% in Kakamega County and 31% in Nakuru County). Among the adult community members, the average level of adherence to harmful beliefs was 15%.

***Practices:*** From the responses of the children surveyed, the level of physical punishment and/or psychological abuse against boys and girls occurring in the target schools was 50%<sup>3</sup> (53% of girls and 47% of boys; 50% in both Nakuru and Kakamega). In particular, 71% of the child respondents indicated that corporal punishment (caning, kneeling on the ground) was permitted in their school. The level of physical, psychological and sexual abuse against boys and girls occurring at home and in the community was 23%<sup>4</sup> (24% for boys and 23% for girls; 23% in Kakamega and 21% in Nakuru).

***Occurrence:*** Among the adult respondents (community members, service providers and authorities), the perceived level of occurrence of physical, psychological or sexual violence against children and adolescents in the target communities was 63%<sup>5</sup>. Notably, the three groups had similar perceptions of the occurrence of violence in the target communities, with the exception of physical violence, which had a much higher perception of occurrence among community member respondents (92% instead of 79% and 76% of service providers and authorities respectively).

***Acceptance:*** Among the adult respondents (community members, service providers and authorities), the perceived level of acceptance of physical, psychological or sexual violence against children and adolescents in the target communities was 38%<sup>6</sup>. Notably, the three groups had similar perceptions of the acceptance of violence in the target communities, with a slightly higher perception among the service providers.

## Recommendations

These findings may inform practitioners on the development of empowerment, prevention and response strategies, including social norm change approaches. In particular, key recommendations include:

- A special effort in Nakuru County is needed to address the knowledge gaps of children, community members, service providers and county authorities that may justify violence against children.
- There is a dire need to address the gaps in awareness among school-going children of their rights and responsibilities, and on the equality of rights between boys and girls.

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<sup>2</sup> The average level of adherence to harmful beliefs is equivalent to the probability of a respondent adhering to at least one random harmful belief among all the statements of the tool.

<sup>3</sup> The average level of occurrence of violence/abuse in school corresponds to the probability of a respondent reporting that a random form of violence among the ones mentioned in the questionnaire had occurred in his/her school during the preceding three months.

<sup>4</sup> The average level of occurrence of violence/abuse at home and in the community corresponds to the probability of a respondent reporting that a random form of violence among the ones mentioned in the questionnaire had occurred in the preceding three months.

<sup>5</sup> The average level of perceived incidence of violence corresponds to the probability of a respondent perceiving that a random form of violence among the ones mentioned in the questionnaire was occurring in his/her community.

<sup>6</sup> The average level of perceived acceptance of violence corresponds to the probability of a respondent perceiving that a random form of violence among the ones mentioned in the questionnaire was accepted in his/her community.

- Service providers should conduct outreach, and work closely with village elders and chiefs to ensure that sexual violence is not tolerated in the target communities, and is punished according to Kenyan law.
- The findings strongly outline the need to address the several knowledge gaps among service providers and county authorities.
- Service providers and authorities, together with community champions of change, should be invited to play a key role in triggering changes for harmful social norms in the target communities.
- Actors should engage children in extensive peer-to-peer education to demystify the beliefs that justify harmful practices against children.
- Corporal punishment is a widespread practice in both counties that requires intervention at all levels.
- Child labour and parental neglect are common issues in Nakuru that require special attention.
- Promoting the importance of prioritising education of children in the family economy is recommended.
- The occurrence and acceptance of sexual violence towards girls and boys, and the tendency to blame girls for their dress or behaviour, require serious change in the targeted communities.
- Local authorities and leaders in Nakuru should seriously address female genital mutilation.
- It is imperative to sensitise both parents and children about the negative effects of child marriage and the positive impacts of girls' education on their lives and the lives of their future families.
- Discrimination against children with special needs, children with HIV/AIDS and children born out of incest – especially in Kakamega – should be addressed.



*Children enjoying their right to play at Lureko Village in Mumias West*

# 1. Introduction

## Background

This report presents the results of an assessment conducted by the International Committee for the Development of Peoples (CISP), with funding from the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), within the 'Safe Communities for Safe Children and Adolescents in Kenya' project, in Nakuru and Kakamega Counties, Kenya. The three-year project (2019-2022) aims to tackle the root causes of child abuse, violence and exploitation, and to strengthen the child protection (CP) systems in four target sub-counties: Naivasha and Gilgil Sub-Counties in Nakuru County, and Matungu West and Mumias Sub-Counties in Kakamega County. The initiative is being implemented in collaboration with the Department of Children Services (DCS), the Ministry of Education (MoE), and the Ministry of Health (MoH) through a consortium of six partners: CISP (the lead agency), Kenya National Outreach Counselling and Training Programme (K-NOTE), Matungu Rural Poverty Alleviation (MARPA), Kenyatta University School of Economics, Translate into Meaning (TriM), and the Italian Health Institute (ISS).

## Child Protection Issues in Kenya

The Kenya 2019 Violence Against Children survey revealed that 52% of boys and 39% of girls in Kenya experienced physical violence prior to the age of 18. Around 16% of girls and 6% of boys experienced sexual violence, while 7% of girls and 5% of boys reported emotional violence. Among 18-24-year-old females, 9 in 10 victims who reported experiencing sexual violence did not seek help. Among females, the most common perpetrator of the first incident of any sexual violence in childhood was a current or previous spouse, boyfriend, girlfriend or romantic partner (44%), followed by a classmate/schoolmate (18%) and other (30%). Among 13-17-year-old females, 12% experienced emotional violence by a parent, caregiver or adult relative over the 12 months preceding the survey.

According to the 2014 Kenya Demographic Health Survey (KDHS), 21% of the female population of child-bearing age (15-49 years old) reported having undergone female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C), with the Somali (94%), Samburu (86%), Kisii (84%), Maasai (78%), Embu (31%), Meru (31%), Kalenjin (28%) and Taita Taveta (22%) communities recording the highest FGM/C prevalence rates. FGM/C prevalence rates vary considerably, with ethnicity being a key decisive factor. Compared to prevalence rates of 27% in 2008-2009, 32% in 2003 and 38% in 1998, a steady decline in the practice has been observed.

With regard to child marriage, the 2014 KDHS data shows that marriage occurs relatively early in Kenya. Among women aged 25-49, 29% were married by the age of 18, and 9% were married by the age of 15. Among women aged 20-25, 27% were married by the age of 18, and 7% were married by the age of 15. Of the girls and women aged 15-19, approximately 2% were married by the age of 15. Therefore, the 2014 prevalence rate of child marriage in Kenya was approximately 23%<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Analysis by Information Research Solutions based on 2014 KDHS data, taking into account all surveyed girls and women aged 15-49.

## Child Protection Issues in Nakuru and Kakamega Counties

A social norms assessment conducted by CISP in June 2020 identified social norms and practices in the target communities of Nakuru County that contribute towards child abuse. These include: sending out boys to sell items on the street or in markets (child labour); cases of drug selling and abuse (such as bhang); school dropouts; sexual exploitation and abuse by parents; rape cases. In addition, Naivasha and Gilgil Sub-Counties are important stops along the Nairobi-Western Kenya transport corridor, so parents who have been sex workers expose girls to sex offenders.

In Kakamega County, the major child protection concerns are: poor or harsh parenting and the lack of empowerment and guidance of children and adolescents – which also lead to child abandonment, teenage pregnancy, child marriage, low access to medical services, discrimination against children with HIV/AIDS, sexual abuse, school dropout, physical and psychological violence and child labour. Within the county, the rate of teenage pregnancies was found to be particularly high in Mumias and Matungu West Sub-Counties, estimated at 11% of mothers (JHPEIGO, 2016). Stigma is a significant impediment for pregnant girls to access maternal and newborn health services.

In both counties, the communities lack proper information on child protection, child rights and services. Children and adolescents lack adequate knowledge of their rights and awareness on how and where to report abuses and get help. Violence, exploitation and abuse in the target counties is the result of interrelated social, political and economic issues; for example, parental neglect and irresponsibility is closely linked to poverty, lack of education and limited economic opportunities. The gaps in the institutional child protection system include: weak integrated child protection services; weak institutional capacity for coordination among key actors; inadequate information management system and evidence generation; poor participation of communities and civil society organisations (CSOs) in demand for quality services and preventive programmes; slow and under-responsive justice system; minimal prioritisation of child issues in national and county government plans, and by extension inadequate budgetary allocation towards CP initiatives. Furthermore, in Kakamega and Nakuru Counties, gender disparities exist in access to services, with girls receiving less education than boys, and more girls experiencing sexual abuse and child marriage than boys. Meanwhile, traditional masculinity issues deter men from actively participating in the protection of children.

### Study Objective

This study sought to quantify the prevalence of existing child protection and safeguarding concerns in Nakuru and Kakamega Counties, as well as their links to social norms and the level of knowledge and attitude of the target groups. Specifically, the objective of the study was to provide evidence-based information about the knowledge, beliefs and practices of children, adult community members, service providers and government authorities in Kakamega and Nakuru counties in relation to child protection and safeguarding, and to ascertain their links to normative factors. The findings may inform practitioners on the development of empowerment, prevention and response strategies – including social norm change approaches.

## 2. Methods

Personal knowledge, attitude and practices, together with social norms, have been extracted from a quantitative study and a cross-sectional survey conducted between August 2020 and February 2021 across four categories of people: children, adult community members, service providers and government authorities.

### Study Population

Concerning community members, the sampling frame was the total number of households in the target locations within the respective counties (Kenya National Census data, 2019). For children, the sample was extracted from the total population of children attending classes 4, 5 and 6 in 10 public primary schools. The schools were selected with the support of the local authorities based on the level of vulnerability of the targeted population of children, and the fact that there was no external intervention at the time of the survey. Class levels 4, 5 and 6 were chosen based on the capacity of the age group (10-14 years old) to discuss sensitive child protection topics, and the possibility of interviewing the selected group after two years (because a proportion of the children would still be in the same school).

For service providers, the sampling frame was the list of available private and public institutions that contribute to child protection, including police stations and posts, sub-county public primary schools and hospitals, as well as CSOs and Charitable Children Institutions such as the County Children's Offices of the DCS. For government authorities, the researchers considered the list of county and national government positions with responsibilities in the child protection sector, including local authorities (at the county and sub-county levels) from the DCS office and administrative representatives from the national government and county government.

### Sampling

To calculate the sample size of adult community member respondents in each county, the study utilised the Israel & Glen formula, with a 95% confidence level, +/- 5% margin of error (confidence interval), and 0.5 standard deviation. The random selection was carried out following the criteria of one every fifth household within the selected villages. The same formula and parameters were used to define the sample size of children, and respondents were selected randomly using class registers provided by the targeted schools. Concerning the service providers and authorities, the sampling frame was too small (between 68 and 224) to determine a significant sample size according to the Israel & Glen formula. Instead, in each county, the survey targeted between 20% and 50% of the target groups by randomly selecting their representatives.

Therefore, 1,535 people were to be involved in the study: 735 children, 640 community members, 90 service providers and 70 authorities from each county. The study actually reached 1,517 people: 713 children, 650 community members, 87 service providers and 67 authorities (52% of the children were girls, and 65% of the authorities, 56% of the service providers, and 49% of the community members were women). 90% of the children were between the age of 10-14 years; the remaining 10% were between 15-18 years old. The majority of the service providers and authorities were within the age group of 25-44 years, while the majority of the community members were between 45-60 years old.

## Measures

The data collection tool was developed based on the outcomes of the CISP social norms assessment conducted in July 2020. The specific child protection and safeguarding issues this study focuses on were identified through a participatory process involving the project consortium partners and the county authorities. A different tool was administered to each group of respondents – children, community members, service providers and county authorities. The questionnaire considered the respondents' age group and their role in society. The tool was developed to assess knowledge, beliefs, practices, normative and injunctive norms of the target groups. Specifically, the study measured: 1) the level of knowledge on child rights, child protection and safeguarding topics (personal knowledge) of all four categories of people; 2) the level of adherence to harmful beliefs justifying violence (personal attitude/belief) of all groups; 3) the level of occurrence of abuse and violence according to children; 4) the perceived level of incidence of violence in the target communities according to the adults (descriptive norm); 5) the perceived level of acceptance of violence in the community according to the adults (injunctive norm).

Based on the scope of the assessment, the questionnaires were developed differently:

- 1) For the level of knowledge, there was a set of multiple-choice questions for each of the four categories of people, with possible 'True', 'False' or 'Not Sure' answers;
- 2) For the personal attitude of community members, six different scenarios were presented, and a series of statements were provided on the following topics: discipline and physical violence, gender discrimination and child labour, child discrimination, child pregnancy and marriage, sexual violence, FGM, and child marriage. The survey participants could choose to answer the statements with 'Agree', 'Disagree' or 'Not Sure'. Children were asked multiple-choice questions with 'True' and 'False' as response options;
- 3) To assess the practices, children were asked if they or someone they knew had been survivors of violence/abusive behaviours in school, at home or in the community in the past three months. They had the option to answer 'Yes' or 'No' to a set of questions, and 'Not at all', 'A bit' or 'A lot' to another set of questions;
- 4) For the social norms, a series of questions starting with 'In your community, how likely is it' were asked, giving the interviewees the multiple-choice response options of 'Very likely', 'Somewhat likely', and 'Not likely'.

The tools were jointly reviewed by CISP, the partners, the government officials and the enumerators. Once finalised, they were uploaded to KoBoCollect and tested, and a few corrections were made to ensure quality of the collected data.

## Human Subjects' Protection

The data collection was carried out by rigorously trained researchers to adhere to the Do No Harm CISP policy and other operational policies. The study was conducted in line with the necessary conditions of privacy, confidentiality and informed consent. The DCS approved the study tools in Kakamega and Nakuru Counties, and parents signed a consent form for the children interviewed.

## Statistical Analysis

Through the analysis of collected data, the study identified the average level of knowledge and adherence to harmful beliefs (attitudes) of children, community members, service providers and government authorities in the two counties, as well as the reported occurrence (practice), the perceived incidence (descriptive norms) and the perceived acceptance (injunctive norms) of harmful beliefs. The average level determined was a reflection of the probability that a randomly selected individual among the respondents within the four categories of people either answered correctly (had knowledge), adhered to a harmful belief, perceived a form of violence as occurring (existence of a harmful descriptive norm), or perceived a form of violence as being accepted by the community (existence of a harmful injunctive norm).

## Collaborating Partners

This study was funded by AICS and led by CISP, who developed the study method, collected and analysed the data, and wrote the report. The two local organisations, MARPA and K-NOTE, in Kakamega and Nakuru, respectively, supported the tool review, testing, and data collection. The DCS reviewed and approved the tools.



*MARPA Activity Field Coordinator, Edward, facilitating an SBCC event at Musamba*

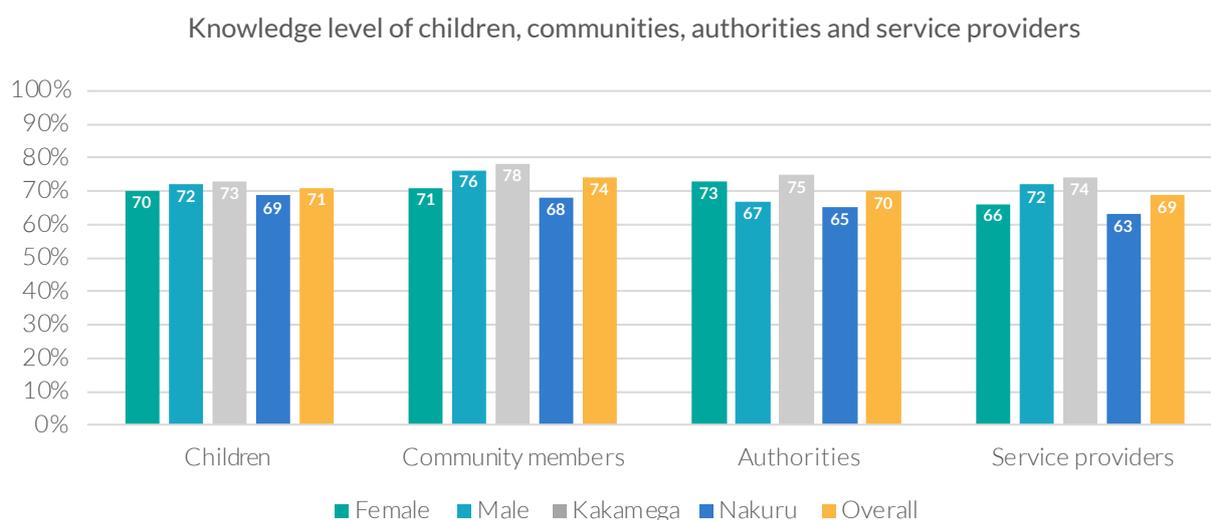
## 3. Findings

The findings presented in this section cover five themes:

- 1) Knowledge of child rights, protection and safeguarding among children, community members, service providers and authorities;
- 2) Beliefs of children and community members justifying violence against children;
- 3) Occurrence of exploitation, violence and abuse against children in school, at home and in the community according to children (practice);
- 4) Perception among community members, service providers and authorities of the level of occurrence of physical, psychological or sexual violence against children and adolescents in the targeted communities (descriptive norms);
- 5) Perception among community members, service providers and authorities of the level of acceptance of physical, psychological or sexual violence against children and adolescents in the targeted communities (injunctive norms).

### 3.1 Knowledge on Child Rights, Protection and Safeguarding

The research measured the level of knowledge of child protection, child rights and safeguarding of children, among the children, community members, CP service providers and authorities in the two counties. The study assessed four sub-themes within the categories of respondents in the four sub-counties: knowledge of child rights and responsibilities; knowledge of child protection and safeguarding; knowledge on CP service delivery; knowledge on CP advocacy.



**Figure 1:** Level of knowledge of children, communities, authorities and service providers on child rights, protection and safeguarding

### 3.1.1 Knowledge of Children on Child Rights and Responsibilities

The survey revealed that the average level of knowledge of the children interviewed on child rights and responsibilities was 71%<sup>8</sup> (72% for boys and 70% for girls). The knowledge level was higher in Kakamega County (73%) than in Nakuru County (69%).

#### **Child rights**

It was evident that there was a limited understanding of child rights among children, because 48% of respondents (50% of the girls and 45% of the boys) indicated that being taken to school and being provided with school learning materials was a privilege and not a right.

#### **Punishment**

Regarding physical violence, 75% of the children (78% in Kakamega County and 72% in Nakuru County) believed that some teachers practiced caning because it is allowed by the law in Kenya. On reporting child abuse, an average of 97% of the respondents agreed that a child should report to an adult if they know of a schoolmate who is mistreated in school or at home.

#### **Leadership and power**

A concerning high proportion of the survey participants (50%) agreed with the statement that a leader is someone who uses force to get things done; among them, more girls (55%) agreed with the statement than boys (45%). However, regarding communication, 92% of the respondents were aware of the qualities of a good leader, and agreed that open communication is one of these qualities. In terms of power, 75% of the respondents (81% in Kakamega and 67% in Nakuru) agreed that gaining respect from the community is a form of power. On human dignity, only 53% of the interviewed children (65% in Nakuru and 43% in Kakamega) defined the fulfilment of child dignity as respect for a child regardless of whether the child reciprocates that respect.

#### **Gender equality**

Gender equality was appreciated by only 81% of the respondents (89% in Kakamega and 72% in Nakuru), who confirmed that all children are equal, and that chores should be assigned irrespective of gender. On peaceful coexistence among children, 92% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that if a child hits another child, it is okay to hit them back in defence.

### 3.1.2 Knowledge of Community Members on Child Rights, Protection and Safeguarding

The average level of knowledge on child rights, protection and safeguarding of the community sample was 74%<sup>9</sup>. Broken down by county, the knowledge of the Kakamega community member respondents was higher (78%) than in Nakuru (68%).

#### **Parental responsibility**

Regarding parental responsibility, 20% of all the respondents believed that a child belongs to the man, and that a woman has a secondary right to custody of the child. Moreover, 14% of the community members were convinced that only the child's father is responsible for providing for the child's needs.

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<sup>8</sup> The average level of knowledge is equivalent to the probability of a child correctly answering a randomly selected question of the tool.

<sup>9</sup> The average level of knowledge is the probability of a respondent correctly answering a random question.

**Gender equality**

Gender inequality in the target communities was evidenced by the fact that 33% of the community members (39% in Kakamega) indicated that a girl has no right to inherit from her parents because she will get married and be supported by her husband. Moreover, 14% of community members felt that when needed, a girl should help her parents at home even while her brother goes to school.

**Education and punishment in school**

A concerning high proportion of the respondents (38%) agreed that children need to be given food but do not need to go to school if parents cannot afford school fees – even though education is a basic child right in Kenya. The situation is particularly critical in Nakuru County, where 60% of the community members agreed with the statement. It is also alarming that 43% of the interviewed community members (66% of the women and 64% of the Nakuru respondents) were not aware that corporal punishment in school is against the law. 79% of the community members believed that corporal punishment in school and at home is necessary to educate a child. Corporal punishment in school and at home was found to be commonly practiced, and the lack of correct information is a relevant justification for the perpetrators of corporal punishment (43%) who indicated not to be aware that it is forbidden by law.

**Discrimination**

Discrimination against children living with disabilities was still found to be common, as only 75% of the community members were sure that a disabled child born out of incest has the same rights as other children. Concerning child participation, only 72% of the community members agreed that children know what they want better than anyone else, and so have the right to freely express their concerns to adults.

**Reporting system**

The level of knowledge among community members on how to report and present evidence of sexual violence against children was 87%, which is encouraging. However, 28% believed that in order to achieve justice in cases of child sexual violence, alternative methods are better than the formal system established in Kenya. For example, 76% of the respondents were against paying for services from service providers to achieve justice. 21% of the community members (24% of the women and 28% of the Nakuru respondents) believed that whenever an incident of child sexual abuse occurs, the case should be quietly resolved at home by the parents of the concerned children/adult, and 27% of the community members believed that the survivor's family should be compensated by the perpetrator. Finally, while a high percentage (92%) were against marriage when a girl reaches puberty, 17% agreed that when a girl becomes pregnant she does not need to go back to school after having a child.

**3.1.3 Knowledge of Service Providers on Child Protection Service Delivery**

The study revealed that the average level of knowledge on child protection service delivery among the service providers was 69%. In terms of gender, there was minimal difference. The average level of knowledge in Kakamega and Nakuru was 74% and 63% respectively.

**CP services**

Notably, the majority (97%) of the service providers agreed that it is their role to ensure that a child receives appropriate services from other actors until the closure of the case. A significant proportion (40%) agreed that caregivers, parents or someone the child trusts do not have to be present when communicating with children who have been abused.

The service providers were also queried about the utilisation of the Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS) as an instrument for managing child abuse cases. Only 40% of the service providers in Kakamega, and 17% in Nakuru, disagreed with the fact that CPIMS is an instrument used only to record data on child abuse cases, and does not track intervention cases such as supervision or referrals from Sub-County Children's Offices to other agencies. Notably, very few service providers (33% on average) recognised the importance of professional counselling for child survivors of violence, children in conflict with their family and society, or children in need of psychological support.

### ***Sexual and reproductive health education and services***

Regarding sexual and reproductive health education, an average of 61% of the service providers (69% in Kakamega and 52% in Nakuru) were aware that the topics are covered in the Kenyan national (competency-based) curriculum. A smaller group of service providers (10%) were not in favour of including sexual and reproductive health topics in the curriculum. 21% of the service providers (28% in Nakuru and 13% in Kakamega) believed that children and adolescents should not access sexual and reproductive health services in hospitals or dispensaries.

### **3.1.4 Knowledge of Local Authorities on Child Protection Advocacy**

The average level of knowledge on advocacy on child protection was 70% among local authorities working with children and public officials on child protection advocacy. The level of knowledge was higher in Kakamega (75%) than in Nakuru (65%).

### ***Advocacy and partnership***

Only half (52%) of the county authorities believed that, as child protection actors, they should participate in the budgeting process. The study revealed a limited understanding among authorities that widespread participation and partnership of different actors are key for the success of advocacy actions. For example, 42% of the authorities (56% in Kakamega) believed that community members do not play a role in the development of policies, and 40% were not convinced that involving opponents would have an impact on advocacy initiatives. 12% and 9% in Nakuru and Kakamega, respectively, felt that the authorities should not be a part of child protection networks, because these initiatives are driven by civil society.

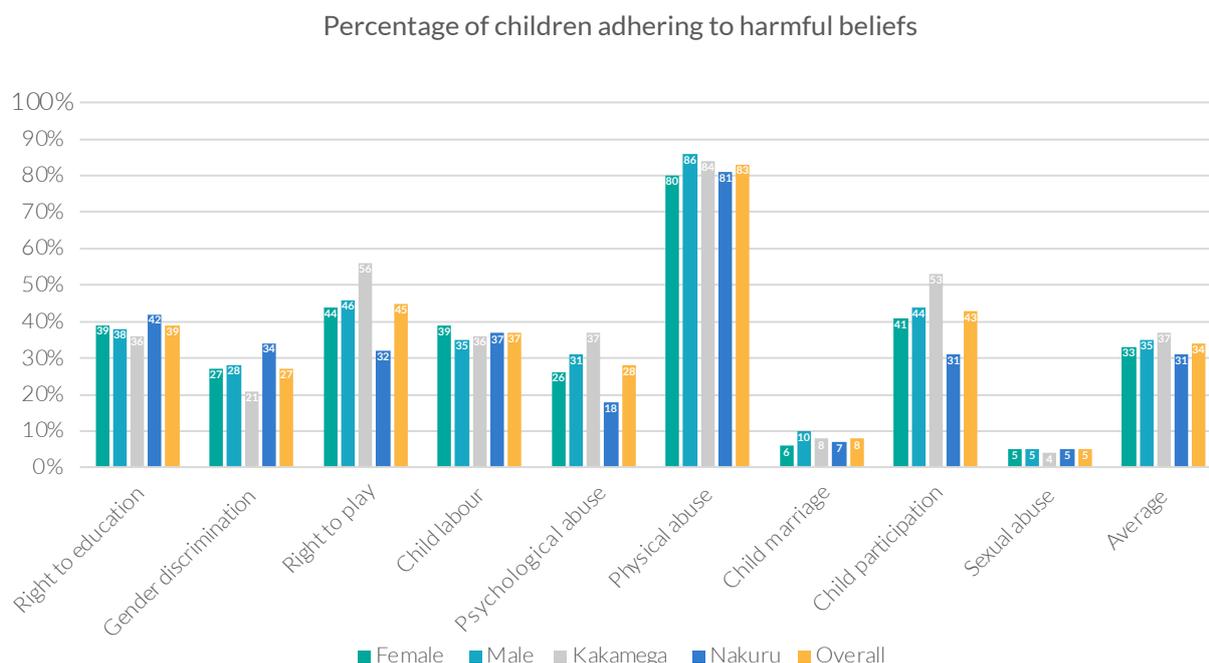
All the authorities in Kakamega agreed that participation in the development of county budgets and plans by the citizens is a requirement by law, while in Nakuru, only 68% agreed with the statement. On matters of policies, only 39% of all the authorities interviewed (45% of the women and 32% of the men) were sure that the county had no specific child protection policies that were relevant and adequate to address the challenges affecting children.

## **3.2 Personal Beliefs and Adherence of Children and Community Members to Social Norms that Contribute to Violence Against Children**

### **3.2.1 Children's Beliefs**

A set of questions was administered to children to identify the harmful beliefs against children that the respondents perceived as being justifiable. Among the school children, the average level of adherence to harmful beliefs and social norms that contribute to violence against children was 34%<sup>10</sup> (35% of the boys and 33% of the girls, with 37% from Kakamega and 31% from Nakuru).

<sup>10</sup> The average level of adherence to harmful beliefs is equivalent to the probability of a respondent adhering to at least one random harmful belief among all the statements of the tool.



**Figure 2:** Level of adherence of children to harmful beliefs that contribute to violence and abuse against children

### Child rights

The children interviewed in the targeted schools were asked questions focusing on rights to education, rights to play and rights to participate in school, at home and in the community. On rights to education, 39% of the children (42% in Nakuru and 38% in Kakamega) felt that it is correct for a child to be given food, but not a must to go to school if their parents cannot afford fees. 45% of the children did not believe that a child has the right to play. 56% of the children in Kakamega and 32% in Nakuru affirmed that they should not be allowed to play at home but should always help their parents with family chores.

When adults discuss matters relating to a child, the child has the right to participate in the decision-making process that concerns them. From the interviewed sample, 43% of the children felt that a child should not sit with the adults when they are discussing matters of the child's concern. A larger proportion of the respondents (56%) in Kakamega, compared to 32% in Nakuru, did not think that children should be involved in matters affecting them.

### Abuse in school

The survey sought to establish the proportion of children who believed that the emotional and physical abuses that they were subjected to in school were correct. Overall, the level of acceptance of psychological and physical abuse in school among the interviewed children was 47%<sup>11</sup> (53% in Kakamega and 39% in Nakuru). More specifically, 40% of the interviewed children (54% in Kakamega and 23% in Nakuru) indicated that they found it correct for a teacher to ask a child to clean the toilets or to stay in school up to late hours if he/she has done something wrong. A smaller proportion (17%) of the respondents (21% in Kakamega and 12% in Nakuru) found it correct for a teacher to call children abusive names if they were disruptive in class. However, a large proportion (83%) of the respondents (86% of the boys and 80% of the girls) felt it was right for a teacher to cane a child if they did not do their homework.

<sup>11</sup> This is the probability of a child considering at least one of the abuses listed in the survey tool to be normal.

### Abuse at home and in the community

Gender discrimination was analysed based on the perceived right to education of boys and girls. Among the children targeted by the survey, 27% (28% of the boys and 27% of the girls) affirmed that they found it acceptable for a girl to help her parents at home while her brother goes to school. More respondents in Nakuru (34%), compared to 21% in Kakamega, believed that the harmful practice of discriminating against girls was right.

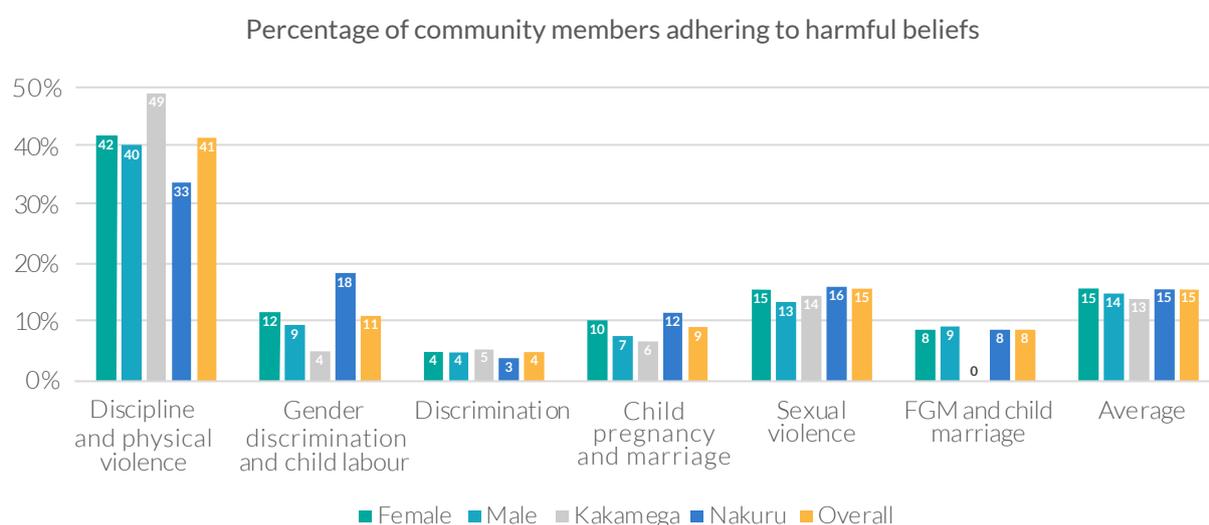
Child labour is another harmful practice that was found to be accepted by many children in the target areas. 37% of the survey respondents (39% of the girls and 35% of the boys) felt that it was right for a child to work to earn their family a living.

Child marriage is prohibited by law in Kenya. However, it is still practiced within some families and communities. 8% of the survey respondents believed that it was correct for a girl to be married after the age of 14, if she comes from a poverty-stricken family. More boys (10%) than girls (6%) were in favour of marrying off a girl at the age of 14 years.

When it comes to sexual abuse, children should immediately report such cases to a responsible adult. From the survey, only a small proportion (5%) of the respondents thought that children should not report if they are touched in a sexual way.

### 3.2.2 Community Members' Beliefs

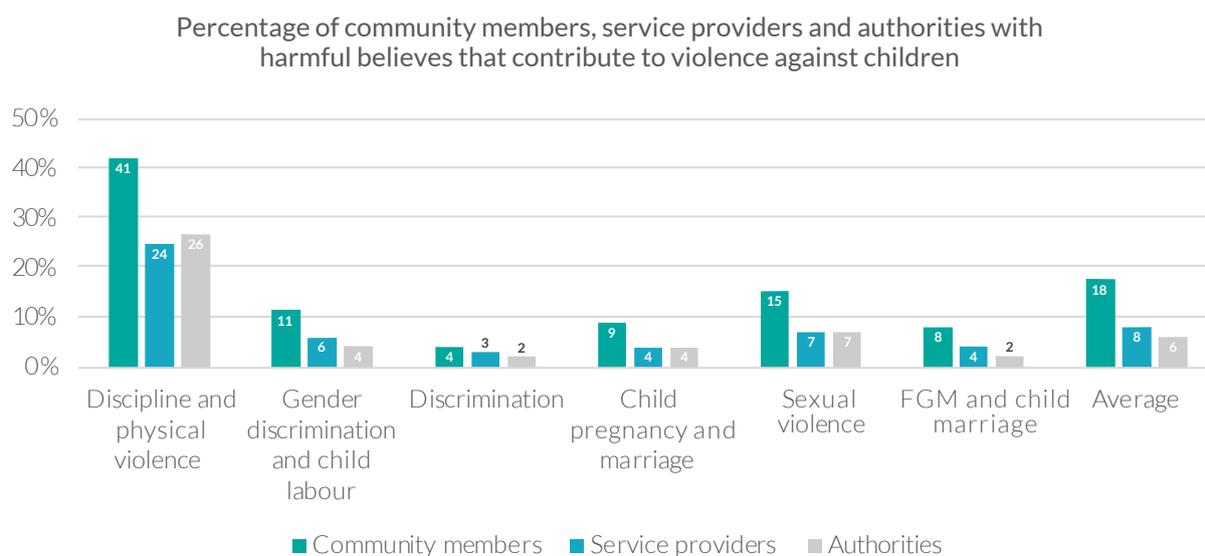
The study intended to analyse the attitude of community members and their adherence to harmful beliefs that contribute to violence against children, and the prevalence of these beliefs. It was found that 15%<sup>12</sup> of the community members believed in harmful social norms that contribute to violence against children.



**Figure 3:** Overall levels of adherence to harmful beliefs and social norms that contribute to violence against children among community members per gender and county

<sup>12</sup> The average level of adherence to harmful beliefs is equivalent to the probability of a community member adhering to a random harmful belief among all the statements of the tool.

For the sake of deepening the study, the outcomes of the community responses were compared to those of the service providers and authorities. As illustrated in Figure 4, some service providers and authorities had negative beliefs that contributed to violence against children, but they were fewer than the community members who also had negative beliefs. This is encouraging because service providers and authorities, together with community champions of change, may play a key role in triggering changes of harmful social norms in the target communities.



**Figure 4:** Overall levels of adherence to harmful beliefs and social norms that contribute to violence against children among community members, service providers and authorities

### **Discipline and physical violence**

50% of the community members (58% in Kakamega and 43% in Nakuru), both female and male, believed that when children are not performing as expected or arriving late to school, they should be disciplined through corporal punishment to learn from their mistakes. 39% of the community members (46% in Kakamega and 32% in Nakuru) considered humiliating punishments to be the right measures to educate children.

### **Child labour**

Despite the extremely dangerous working conditions of children – during the night, for example – 20% of the community members either agreed or were uncertain that it is inevitable for children to work up to late hours because they need to support their parents. In Nakuru specifically, 32% of the community members were in favour of child labour, compared to 8% in Kakamega. In Nakuru, 21% of the community members (compared to 3% in Kakamega) were not concerned by the fact that children were put at risk of exploitation and abuse when sent to work at night. In terms of gender disaggregation, there were minimal differences between men and women in agreeing/disagreeing with the statements.

### **Discrimination**

The study focused on discrimination against children with HIV/AIDS, which manifests itself in several ways, including restricting access to information, social services and amenities, and preferential treatment disadvantaging some children in the family. Only 5% of the community members agreed with discriminating behaviours, such as the notion that children with HIV/AIDS should be segregated to prevent infecting others in a marketplace or at school. Similarly, only 3% were of the opinion that children with HIV/AIDS should not be sent to school, despite it being

their right. Almost all of the community members (98%) confirmed that teachers should help children with HIV/AIDS associate with their schoolmates, by talking to fellow students about the harm of negative attitudes towards people living with HIV/AIDS.

### ***Child pregnancy and marriage***

Child pregnancies and early marriages are common threats to equal rights for girls in the community, as pregnant girls are often denied an opportunity to complete their education. Overall, the findings revealed that about 15% of the community members were not convinced that reproductive health education is a responsibility of parents; that families should not marry their daughters when they are pregnant; that cases of child pregnancy should be reported to the authorities; and that girls should not go to school if they are pregnant. In cases of child pregnancy, almost all (92%) of the community members were against the idea of parents seeking an older man to marry the girl quickly to avoid embarrassment.

With regard to parents reporting cases of child pregnancy and marriage to the police or the DCS Sub-County Children's Offices, a significant proportion (11%) of the community members indicated that cases should not be reported, while 5% were not sure whether to report the cases or not. 20% of the female community members did not favour reporting cases to the authorities (compared to 10% of the male respondents). The data shows similarities between the two counties, except for the proportion of community members against the decision to report child pregnancies to the Children's Officer and the police (24% in Nakuru, compared to 9% in Kakamega). Furthermore, 24% of the community members in Nakuru were in favour of marrying off a pregnant girl, compared to 7% in Kakamega. In this case, therefore, communities in Kakamega appeared to be more protective than those in Nakuru.

### ***Sexual violence***

Sexual violence has a profound impact on physical and mental health by causing physical injury and a range of sexual and reproductive health problems with immediate and long-term consequences. The study findings show that only 5% of the community members believed that girls who are victims of rape should not report the incident to their family or to anyone else to protect their honour. Moreover, only 5% of the community members thought it was unnecessary to report such cases to the police. This is contradicted, however, by the fact that 24% of the respondents did not disagree with the option of the survivor's father reporting the case to the village elders to facilitate the mediation with the perpetrator. The findings further indicate that 16% of the community members were of the opinion that the survivor's parents should ask the perpetrator to pay a fine. It is also important to underline that 18% of the community members believed that the way a girl is dressed is relevant and may justify the perpetrator's actions, while 9% of the community members were uncertain.

### ***FGM, child marriage and education***

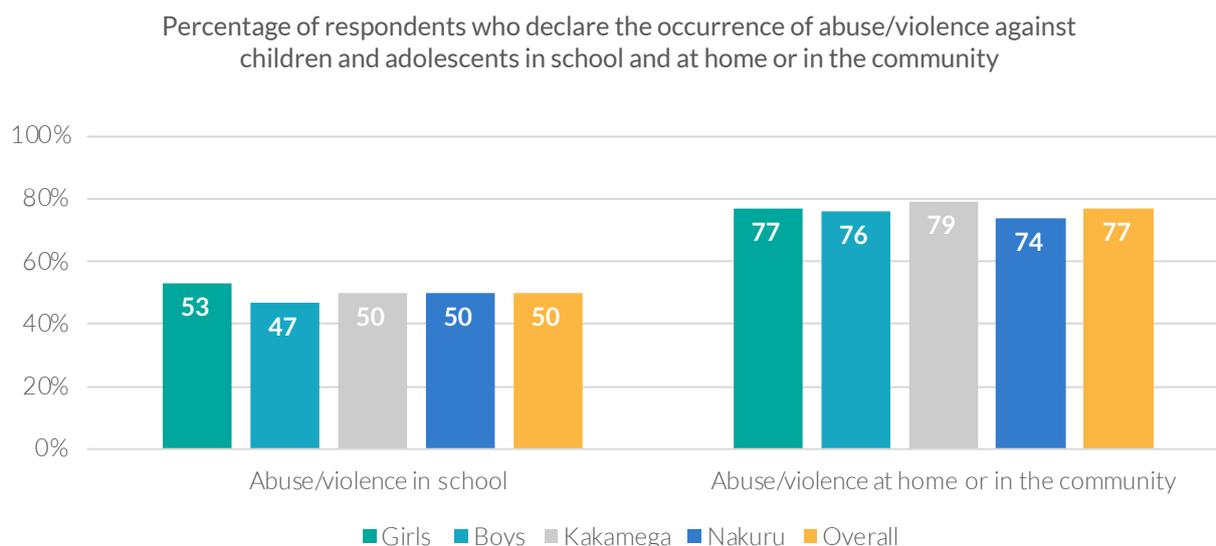
The assessment on FGM was only carried out in Nakuru; the findings of the 2020 CISP social norm assessment indicated that FGM was not practiced in Kakamega. FGM has been widely linked to child marriage and education, as children who undergo FGM end up leaving school and getting married at a young age. 22% of the community members in Nakuru accepted and justified FGM and child marriage as indigenous practices. 17% did not agree with the fact that a girl should report the case to the authorities or service providers if she is forced to get married or undergo FGM.



*A shadow image - captured by a teenage mother during the Photovoice workshop - depicting violence towards pregnant young girls. The accompanying message reads: 'Early pregnancy exposes girls to physical and psychological abuse from parents and guardians. As a community, we need to stop that.'*

### 3.3 Practice of Child Exploitation, Violence and Abuse According to Children

To assess the level of abusive practices against children in the target communities, the children were asked whether they or someone they know at school were victims of certain abuses/violence within the preceding three months.



**Figure 5:** Levels of occurrence of violence against children and adolescents in school and at home or in the community

#### 3.3.1 Physical Punishment and/or Psychological Abuse Experienced by Girls and Boys in School

According to the children, the level of physical punishment and/or psychological abuse against boys and girls occurring in the target schools was 50%<sup>13</sup> (53% of the girls and 47% of the boys; 50% in both counties of Nakuru and Kakamega).

##### **Physical punishment**

Physical punishment is unlawful in schools according to the 2010 Kenyan Constitution. However, 71% of the child respondents indicated that corporal punishment (caning and kneeling on the ground) was permitted in their school. At the county level, caning and kneeling on the ground was higher in Kakamega (77%) than in Nakuru (64%), according to the children interviewed. 69% of the respondents (73% in Kakamega and 65% in Nakuru) reported that corporal punishment was administered by teachers in the preceding three months. An average of 63% of the interviewed children indicated that a teacher had administered corporal punishment to them during the ongoing school term. More children (66%) in Kakamega reported to have received corporal punishment from a teacher than in Nakuru (59%), and more boys (66%) confirmed receiving corporal punishment than girls (59%).

<sup>13</sup> The average level of occurrence of violence/abuse in school corresponds to the probability of a respondent reporting that a random form of violence among the ones mentioned in the questionnaire had occurred in his/her school during the preceding three months.

**Psychological abuse**

Psychological abuse involves the deliberate use of a range of words and non-physical actions with the purpose to hurt, influence, confuse or frighten a child mentally and/or emotionally. Some of the humiliating punishments practised by teachers in school include, but are not limited to: calling children abusive names, insulting them, using vulgar language, forcing children to clean toilets, and keeping them in school after others go home. Overall, 26% of the child respondents indicated that they had experienced a teacher administering a humiliating punishment on them or their peers during the ongoing school term. This occurred more in Nakuru (32%) than in Kakamega (20%), and more among boys (32%) than girls (20%). At a personal level, an average of 22% of the respondents reported receiving a humiliating punishment by a teacher in the ongoing school term. At the county level, more children in Nakuru (31%) reported having personally received humiliating punishment in school from a teacher, compared to 13% in Kakamega. In addition, 24% of the boys and 19% of the girls reported receiving such punishment.

**3.3.2 Physical, Psychological and Sexual Abuse and Violence Experienced by Girls and Boys from Parents/Guardians and Community Members**

According to the children, the level of physical, psychological and sexual abuse against boys and girls occurring at home and in the community was 23%<sup>14</sup> (24% for the boys and 23% for the girls; 23% in Kakamega and 21% in Nakuru).

**Physical violence**

The survey aimed to determine the proportion of children who had been subjected to some form of physical violence caused by their parents, guardians, or community members in the preceding three months. An average of 38% of the respondents (38% in both Nakuru and Kakamega) interviewed in the survey reported receiving some form of physical violence during the said period. A slightly lower proportion of girls (36%) indicated that they were victims of physical violence than boys (40%) within the same period.

**Psychological violence**

Psychological violence was found to still be a rampant practice in the target counties: 30% of the children interviewed confirmed that they had been called abusive names by parents, guardians, or community members within the preceding three months. At the county level, psychological violence was higher in Nakuru (37%) than in Kakamega (33%).

**Sexual abuse**

24% of the respondents (25% of the girls and 23% of the boys) who were asked if they knew of any child in their community who had been sexually abused in the preceding three months answered affirmatively.

**Child labour**

Child labour robs children of their childhood, interferes with their ability to attend regular school, and may cause harmful mental, physical and social consequences. The survey aimed to ascertain the proportion of children in the community who undergo forced work to support their families to earn a living, including, but not limited to: selling products in a marketplace and working on a farm for many hours. 13% of the children interviewed (16% in Kakamega and 9% in Nakuru) indicated that they go through either a bit or a lot of different forms of forced labour, with 14% and 11% being girls and boys, respectively.

<sup>14</sup> The average level of occurrence of violence/abuse at home and in the community corresponds to the probability of a respondent reporting that a random form of violence among the ones mentioned in the questionnaire had occurred in the preceding three months.

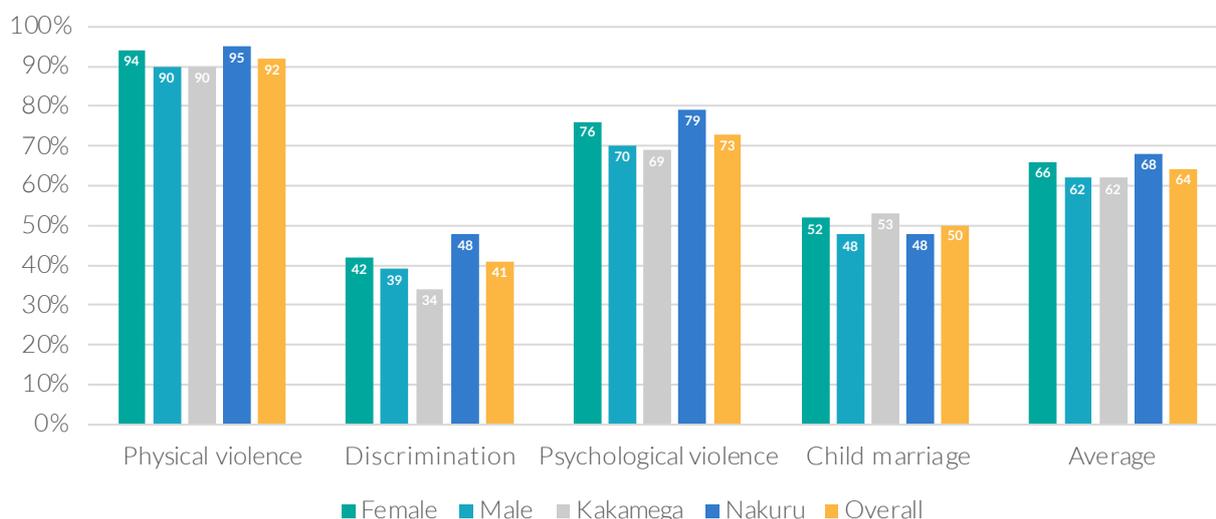
### **Discrimination and gender inequality**

Respondents were asked to discuss their experience of incidents of discrimination against children based on poverty, taboo children, children living with disabilities, children born out of wedlock, among others. 24% of the respondents (27% in Nakuru and 21% in Kakamega) confirmed that they had seen either a bit or a lot of forms of discrimination against children in their community. 12% of the child respondents (19% in Nakuru and 6% in Kakamega) affirmed that boys and girls in their family/community were not given equal opportunities, and 17% said that gender equality is respected only for some aspects in their family.

## **3.4 Perception of the Level of Occurrence of Physical, Psychological or Sexual Violence Against Children and Adolescents in the Target Communities According to Adults**

The study determined the perceived level of occurrence of physical, psychological or sexual violence against children and adolescents in the targeted communities, by questioning community members, service providers and authorities about their perception of the likelihood of occurrence of certain scenarios of abuse and violence. Overall, the perceived level of incidence of physical, psychological or sexual violence against children and adolescents was 64%<sup>15</sup>. While the perception of the incidence of violence was similar among males and females, at the county level, the average of all community members was higher in Nakuru (68%) than in Kakamega (62%).

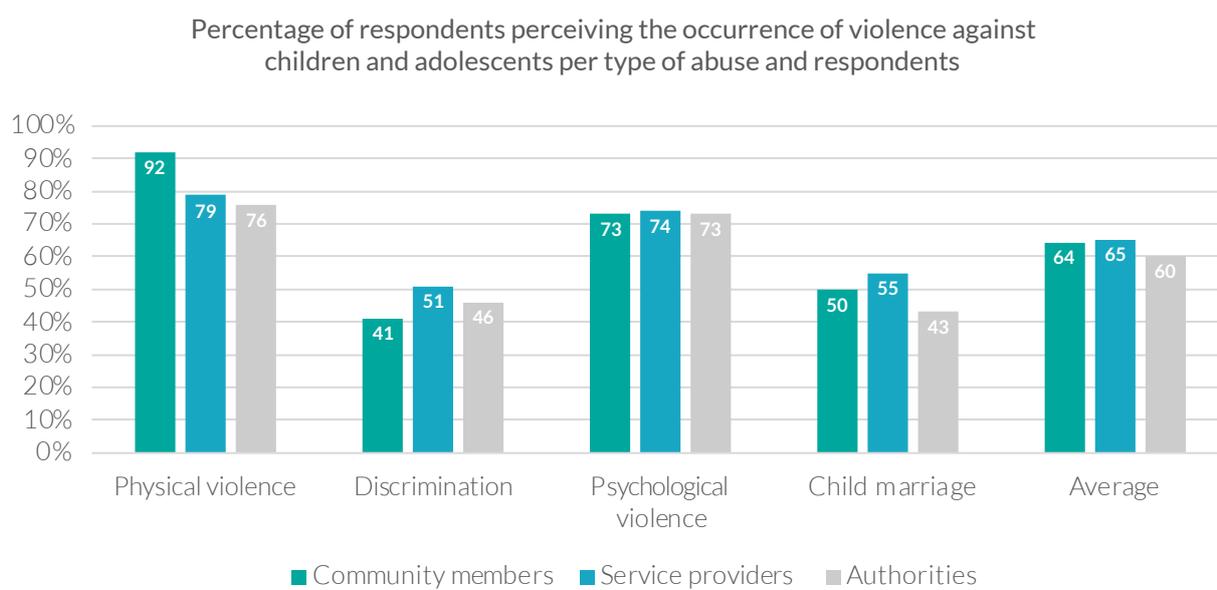
Percentage of community members perceiving the occurrence of physical, psychological or sexual violence against children and adolescents



**Figure 6: Perceived level of occurrence of violence against children and adolescents among the community members in Kakamega and Nakuru Counties**

<sup>15</sup> The average level of perceived incidence of violence corresponds to the probability of a respondent perceiving that a random form of violence among the ones mentioned in the questionnaire was occurring in his/her community.

Figure 7 illustrates how the community members, service providers and authorities perceived the level of occurrence of physical violence, discrimination, psychological and sexual violence against children and adolescents in their communities. Notably, the three groups had similar perceptions of the occurrence of violence in the target communities, with the exception of physical violence, with a much higher perception of occurrence among community members (92%), compared to 79% and 76% among service providers and authorities respectively.



**Figure 7:** Perceived level of occurrence of violence against children and adolescents in both counties, separated per type of violence/abuse and average among community members, authorities and service providers

### Physical violence

Across the three categories of respondents, the majority indicated that it was very/somewhat likely that children would be disciplined using corporal punishment if they made a mistake at home (93% of the community members, 85% of the service providers and 82% of the authorities). The service providers and local authorities in Nakuru perceived a higher occurrence rate of corporal punishment in school (82% of the local authorities and 81% of the service providers) compared to those in Kakamega (67% of the service providers and 58% of the local authorities). In addition, 78% reported that it was very/somewhat likely that children would be disciplined using corporal punishment if they made a mistake in school (91% of the community members, 74% of the service providers and 70% of the local authorities).

### Discrimination

Only a small proportion of the interviewees across the three categories (20% on average) indicated that it was likely for families in their community to send boys to school, and to let girls stay at home and not finish school<sup>16</sup>. Similarly, they indicated (26% on average) that it was likely for families to send boys and not girls to secondary school<sup>17</sup>. These proportions were higher in

<sup>16</sup> The likelihood for families in their community to send boys to school and to let girls stay at home and not finish school corresponds to the probability of families selected randomly in the community sending boys to school and letting girls stay at home and not finish school.

<sup>17</sup> The likelihood for families to send boys and not girls to secondary school corresponds to the probability of families selected randomly with children of secondary-going age allowing only boys to proceed with secondary education after finishing their primary education, with girls remaining back at home.

Nakuru (35%) than in Kakamega (15%). Moreover, only a small proportion of people (30% on average) indicated that it was unlikely for boys to equally participate in household chores (cleaning, cooking, fetching water, serving meals, washing dishes, etc.) in the same way that girls do.

Concerning the perception of the treatment of adolescent girls, 38% of the service providers, 31% of the authorities and 19% of the community members (or 31% in Nakuru and 14% in Kakamega) indicated that it was unlikely for families in their communities to send a pregnant girl back to school to complete her studies after she has a child. Unfortunately, almost all of the respondents thought that it was likely for pregnant girls to hide their pregnancies. This reflects a serious problem of stigmatisation and discrimination against pregnant girls.

The discrimination against children with HIV/AIDS was perceived to be widespread (52%), and the perception of discrimination against children with disabilities was even higher (60%).

### ***Psychological violence***

Psychological violence against children includes restricting a child's movement, ridicule, threats and intimidation, discrimination and stigmatisation, rejection and other non-physical forms of hostile treatment. The study assessed the likelihood of scenarios occurring in the target communities, in order to determine the prevalence and acceptance of psychological violence against children.

A significant proportion of respondents across the three categories (56% on average) agreed that it was likely for parents to deny their children access to basic needs such as food, shelter or clothing. In terms of providing for children, an average of 55% of the respondents believed that it was likely for parents to abandon their children in the streets to fend for themselves. While this proportion was fairly low in Kakamega (34% on average), in Nakuru it was found to be likely for parents to abandon their children in the streets to fend for themselves (79% on average).

Intimidation, humiliation and abusive language are measures often taken by parents in the targeted communities. An average of 88% of the respondents across all the categories indicated that it was likely for parents in their communities to use harsh language that is intimidating to abuse their children. A similar proportion reported that it was likely for people in their communities to publicly humiliate children using abusive language when they make a mistake. Notably, 79% of the community members, 69% of the authorities, and 66% of the service providers indicated that families were likely to withdraw their love and care for their children as a form of manipulation to control them.

In terms of gender disaggregation, almost equal proportions of male and female respondents agreed or disagreed with the likelihood of the scenarios of psychological violence against children and adolescents occurring in their community. Community members and service providers were found to be more likely to deny the likelihood of violence against children as compared to the authorities.

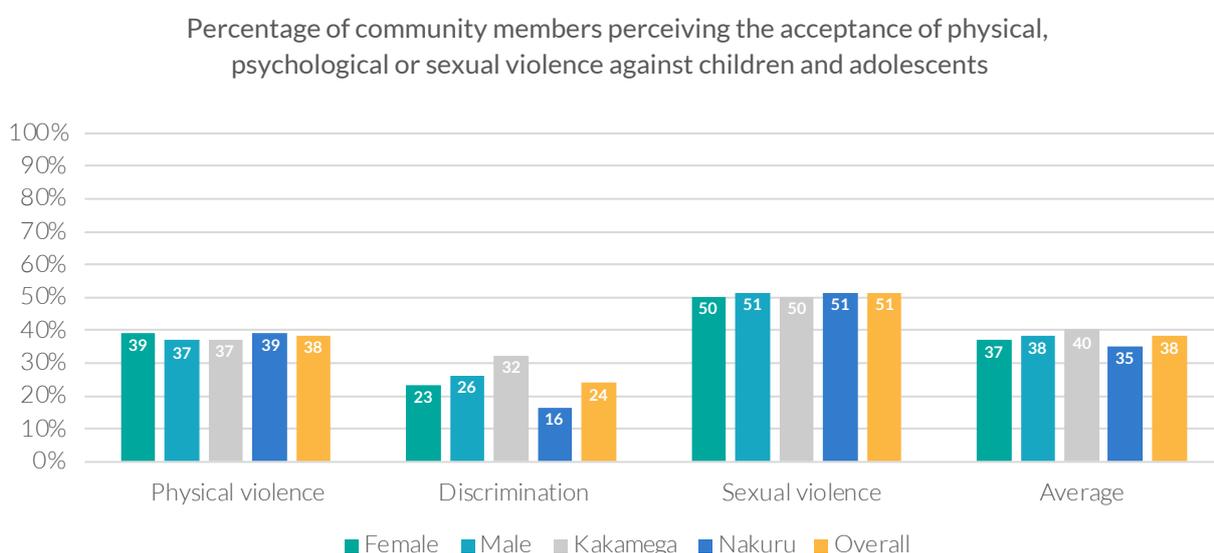
### ***Child marriage***

In both counties, the incidence of child marriage was perceived to be high; an average of 64% of the respondents across all categories indicated that people in their community marry off their girls when they are pregnant, while 37% indicated that communities marry off their daughters after they have reached puberty.

### 3.5 Perception of the Level of Acceptance of Physical, Psychological or Sexual Violence Against Children and Adolescents in the Target Communities According to Adults

Similar to the level of occurrence of physical, psychological or sexual violence against children and adolescents in the targeted communities, to gauge the level of acceptance of this violence, community members, service providers and authorities were queried about their perception of community acceptance of certain types of abuse and violence (through behaviour such as not reporting cases of violence to the authorities, for example).

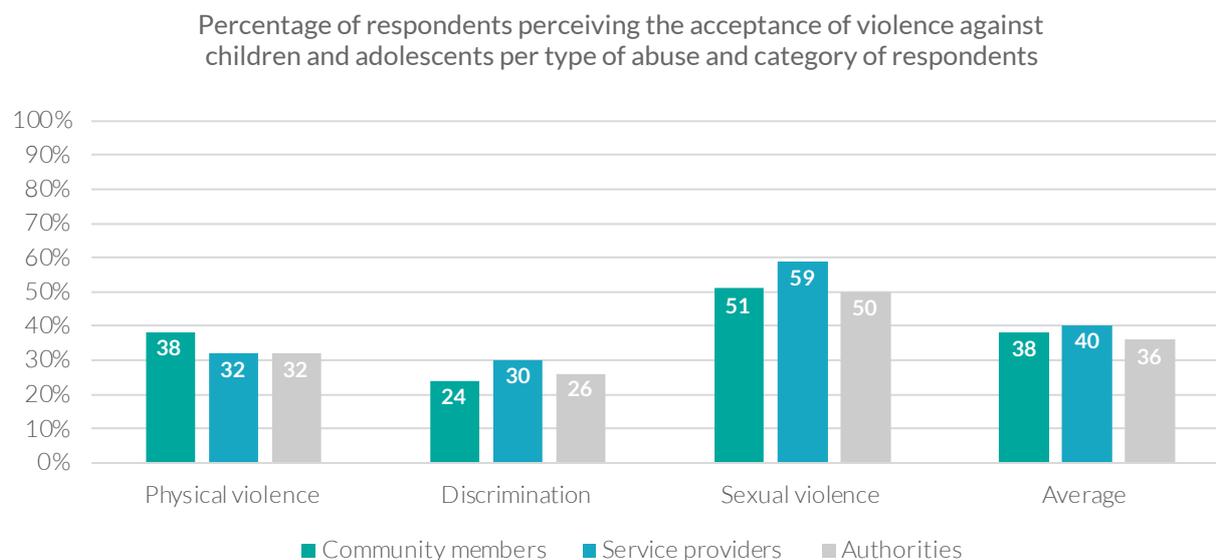
Overall, the perceived level of acceptance of physical, psychological or sexual violence against children and adolescents was 38%<sup>18</sup>. While the perception of the incidence of such violence among males and females was almost equal, at the county level, the average among the community members was lower in Nakuru (35%) than in Kakamega (40%).



**Figure 8:** Perceived level of acceptance of violence against children and adolescents among the community members

Figure 9, on the following page, compares the perceptions of the community members, service providers and authorities of the level of occurrence and acceptance of physical violence, discrimination, psychological and sexual violence against children and adolescents in their communities. Notably, the three groups had similar perceptions of the acceptance of violence in the target communities, with a slightly higher percentage among the service providers.

<sup>18</sup> The average level of perceived acceptance of violence corresponds to the probability of a respondent perceiving that a random form of violence among the ones mentioned in the questionnaire was accepted in his/her community.



**Figure 9:** Perceived level of acceptance of violence against children and adolescents in both counties, separated per type of violence/abuse and the average among community members, authorities and service providers

### Physical violence

85% of the adult respondents (90% of the authorities, 88% of the service providers, and 83% of the community members), said that corporal punishment cases were only reported when the perpetrator is a stranger, or someone not known to the child's family. While corporal punishment at home was perceived to be reported less frequently to the authorities (71% of the service providers, 49% of the authorities, and 45% of the community members), cases of corporal punishment in school were perceived to be the least reported (49% of the authorities, 43% of the community members, and 37% of the service providers).

### Discrimination

36% of the respondents in Kakamega and 18% in Nakuru reported that it was unlikely for girls to access sexual and reproductive health services and information. 78% of the respondents indicated that it was likely for pregnant girls to access maternal health services.

### Sexual violence against children and adolescents

39% of the respondents indicated that it was likely for people to accept sexual violence against girls as a normal part of life, while 25% indicated that people accept violence against boys. 73% of the community members indicated that people in their community think that a girl is defiled because she was not dressed properly or was misbehaving. More specifically, 71% of the authorities in Nakuru indicated that it was likely that other people in their community thought that a girl was defiled because she was not appropriately dressed or was misbehaving (compared to 39% of the authorities in Kakamega). This is alarming not only because it justifies the perpetrators' actions but also because it blames the survivor for the violence she has suffered. This requires significant attention and action through mass sensitisation campaigns and community discussions.

A high percentage of the service providers believed that families do not report defilement of their girls to the local authorities or the police to protect the family's reputation. 70% of the authorities in Kakamega indicated that it was likely for families to report sexual violence against their girls only if they had serious physical injuries, compared to 88% of their counterparts in Nakuru.



I DON'T WANT  
TO SEE  
YOU AGAIN!

► Artwork by a student depicting the stigmatisation within her community against child pregnancy. The accompanying message reads:

*'A young pregnant girl deserves information, education, support and respect; not the stigma.'*

## 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

- The average level of knowledge on child rights and safeguarding detected by the survey of each of the group categories (children, community members, service providers and county authorities) was lower in Nakuru than in Kakamega. The difference in the level of knowledge between the two counties is up to 10% for the adult groups. This calls for a **special effort in Nakuru County to address the knowledge gaps that may justify violence against children.**
- The survey revealed that **there is still a dire need to address the gaps in awareness among school-going children of their rights and responsibilities, and on the equality of rights between boys and girls.** In particular, on the right to education, which is a basic right for every child, the government advocates for compulsory access to primary education for every child in Kenya. However, there are children who are in school and do not know that it is not just a family decision, but also an obligation to send a child to school. In addition, some children think that it is normal to prioritise boys in terms of access to school when resources are limited. Therefore, a joint approach is recommended: to sensitise children and parents and ensure that any case of school abandonment is reported and addressed.
- The confusion of the handling of sexual violence cases among community members – whether through a legal reporting line or an informal case settlement – is an alarming indication of the common practice of informal justice. **Service providers should conduct more outreach, work closer with village elders and chiefs to ensure that sexual violence is not tolerated** in the target communities, and is punished according to Kenyan law.
- The findings strongly suggest the need to **address the following knowledge gaps among service providers:** the importance of strengthening the referral pathway between all actors working on child protection, which may play a very important role in providing quality responses to child abuse, violence and exploitation; the potential and proper use of the CPIMS as an instrument of case management; the need for adolescents to access both reproductive health education in school and services in hospitals and dispensaries.
- **Advocacy skills and strategies should be enhanced among county authorities,** with particular attention to: their role and responsibilities in policy and budget development; participatory methods for community members to demand for services that address gaps in their locations; existing child protection policies that are relevant and adequate to address challenges affecting children.
- Service providers hold on to less harmful beliefs than authorities and community members. This is encouraging because **service providers and authorities, together with community champions of change, should be invited to play a key role in triggering changes of harmful social norms in the target communities.**
- Children still hold on to beliefs that harmful practices against them are acceptable. In particular, many children think that physical, psychological, and sexual abuse at home and in school is normal. There is a need for more discussion with school children and peer-to-peer education to demystify harmful social norms against boys and girls. **Actors should engage children in**

**extensive peer-to-peer education to demystify those beliefs that justify harmful practices against children.**

- **Corporal punishment is a widespread practice in both counties, which requires intervention at various levels.** Despite the fact that physical punishment is unlawful in schools under the 2010 Kenyan Constitution, 71% of the child respondents indicated that corporal punishment (caning, kneeling on the ground) was permitted in their school. It is interesting to note that this was also well known among the adult respondents: there was almost a unanimous consensus among the community members (93%) that corporal punishment was widespread in schools and homes. The community members perceived a higher incidence rate of corporal punishment than the local authorities and the service providers. Moreover, service providers and local authorities in Nakuru perceived a higher occurrence rate of corporal punishment in school (82% of the local authorities and 81% of the service providers) compared to those in Kakamega (67% of the service providers and 58% of the local authorities). Therefore, local authorities and service providers – particularly in Kakamega – should establish closer dialogue with the communities they serve to monitor corporal punishment practices, especially in schools.

It is highly recommended to undertake Information, Education and Communication (IEC) campaigns targeting children, community members, teachers, other service providers and authorities on the illegality of corporal punishment in school. All groups should be sensitised on the importance of other discipline measures (excluding humiliating and use of abuse language, threatening and psychological violence) that are more effective for the positive growth and development of a child. Concrete examples of the effectiveness of such alternative disciplinary measures should be promoted by champions of change and community leaders.

- **Child labour and parental neglect are common issues in Nakuru that require special attention.** Practical discussions with parents are required to raise their awareness of the risks and consequences of their actions in forcing their children to work.
- **Promoting the importance of prioritising education of children in the family economy is recommended.** This should be done alongside the **promotion of gender equality** to ensure equal access of boys and girls to school and the completion of education, with particular attention to pregnant girls.
- The children interviewed reported that sexual violence was occurring at home and in the community. 39% of the adult respondents indicated that it was likely for people to accept sexual violence against girls as a normal part of life, while 25% indicated that people accept violence against boys. **The occurrence and acceptance of sexual violence of girls and boys, and blaming girls for their dress or behaviour, require a serious change in the targeted communities.** Champions of change should be the key actors leading the promotion of changes of such deeply-rooted beliefs and practices. It is important to dismantle the root causes that justify child pregnancies and marriage, that condemn and blame the girl child, and that take her away from the opportunity to go back to school and choose her own path in life.

It is highly recommended to carry out IEC campaigns among community members and leaders to address the current confusion about if and how a case of sexual violence, child pregnancy and marriage should be reported and managed. Awareness campaigns that promote legal reporting and condemn informal case settlements with perpetrators should be facilitated by local authorities and leaders who may influence a change. Awareness should

be raised among both community members and service providers of the legal reporting pathways for cases of sexual violence and exploitation, and of the importance of providing psychosocial support to survivors through counselling and other specialised services. Underreporting of sexual violence cases and holding the survivors responsible not only destroy the life of the survivors, but also leave the perpetrators unpunished. This failure in justice provides a wrong example to other community members. At the same time, children should be informed on how to report sexual violence, for example, and empowered not to accept the abuse of their peers.

- 22% of the community members in Nakuru accepted and justified FGM and child marriage as indigenous practices. All girls and women have the right to be protected from FGM – a manifestation of entrenched gender inequality with devastating consequences. FGM abolition is firmly in the global development agenda, most prominently through its inclusion in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 5.3, which aims to eliminate the practice by 2030. FGM has been widely linked to child marriage and a lack of child education as children who undergo FGM end up leaving school and getting married at a young age. **Local authorities and leaders in Nakuru should seriously address FGM:** it is recommended that community groups who are against FGM practice to lead community dialogues with those community members who accept and justify the practice.
- In both counties, the incidence of child marriage was perceived to be very high: an average of 64 % across all categories of adult respondents indicated that people in their community marry off their girls when they are pregnant, and 37% affirmed that communities marry off their daughters after they have reached puberty. Educated girls can make informed choices and from a far better range of options, and girls who receive an education are less likely to marry young and more likely to lead healthy and productive lives. **It is imperative to sensitise both parents and children on the negative effects of child marriage and the positive impacts of girls' education on their lives and the lives of their future families.**
- **Discrimination against children with special needs, children with HIV/AIDS, children born out of incest and pregnant girls should be addressed, especially in Kakamega.** This can be achieved by preventing children's isolation and improving access to services and education opportunities..



*A group of children  
within their homestead*



## About CISP

CISP (Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli or International Committee for the Development of Peoples) is a rights-based international NGO established in 1983 in Rome to alleviate poverty and protect human rights worldwide. CISP implements humanitarian, rehabilitation and development projects through its cooperation with public and private local actors in over 30 countries in Africa, South America, the Caribbean, Asia, the Middle East and Europe. Since 1983, CISP has been working in Africa primarily focusing on rural development, food security, economic empowerment, health, education and training, natural resource and environmental management, peacebuilding, protection and gender equity. With a head office in Rome, CISP has regional and country offices throughout its current 30 countries of operation.

CISP has been working in Kenya to carry out development projects by supporting national and county authorities to provide quality, equitable, transparent and accountable services in various sectors. CISP first established its Kenya office in 1991 to serve as a coordination hub for its programming in Somalia, then in 1997 CISP started implementing activities in Kenya through a Livelihoods programme in Kiambu County. Over the next 25+ years, CISP has expanded its activities to 12 counties in both rural and urban contexts in various sectors of intervention, including health and nutrition, protection (children, refugees, GBV), education (early childhood, higher education), governance, agriculture and food security, environmental conservation, livelihoods, youth empowerment and arts and culture.

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## Child Protection

CISP works to protect children's rights across the country by aiming to prevent abuse and reduce the vulnerability and psychological hardships of abused children and adolescents. We partner with national and county governments (Department of Children Services (DCS), Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education), civil society and research institutions to support prevention and response services, while ensuring the meaningful participation of children to empower and educate them on their rights. We support the DCS to provide high-quality, integrated and well-coordinated child protection services at the Sub-County Children Offices, and support positive behaviour change of communities on child rights through a tailored social norms approach. We support community-led advocacy actions at county and national levels through conducting participatory research to generate evidence on gaps in the child protection system.





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