



PRESS STATEMENT

DELIVERED BY

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ON THE

**STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR CHILDREN HOMES AND
MEASURES TO CURB VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN
DURING THE CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC IN UGANDA**

**AT THE
UGANDA MEDIA CENTRE, KAMPALA**

13th APRIL 2020

Dear Members of the Press,

In line with the directives issued by H.E. the President and the Ministry of Health to safeguard the population from the Corona Virus (COVID-19), the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development has developed a number of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) to guide the various stakeholders under the Ministry in the conduct of their business during the COVID-19 period.

The Ministry has been issuing these different Standard Operating Procedures from time to time.

It is my pleasure this moment to issue to you the Guidelines on the Management of Children's Homes and measures on improving prevention and response to cases of Violence Against Children in the Country.

A: CHILDREN'S HOMES

Ladies and gentlemen, there are over 6,000 children resident in children homes and rehabilitation centres operated by both Government and licensed NGO owned facilities. These include 7 Government Remand Homes (in Naguru, Kabale, Ihungu/Masindi, Fort Portal, Mbale, Gulu and Arua), Naguru Reception Centre, and Kampiringisa National Rehabilitation Centre), and 143 approved Children Homes managed by NGOs and Faith Based Organisations.

Unlike, the Youth Skills Training Centres and Vocational Rehabilitation Centres for Children with disabilities under the Ministry, which closed along with the schools and training institutions on 20th March 2020 on H.E. President's directive, the above institutions did not close because of their unique nature.

The Guidelines for their continued operation are as follows:

1. Each institution shall establish a COVID-19 Task Force, comprised of at least 3 people including one child of not less than 12 years from the Institution. The task force shall enforce the following COVID prevention and mitigation measures:
 - i) All children brought to the Institution for admission are first screened by the Health Workers, tested and confined in separate places for 14

- ii) New juveniles to the remand home shall first take a bath and be given a uniform, and their clothes disinfected;
- iii) Ensure availability of hand washing facilities and/or sanitizers at strategic points in the institution and ensuring regular hand washing by all persons;
- iv) Daily disinfection and cleaning of surfaces of buildings (bedrooms, lounges, verandahs, kitchen, washrooms, stores, dining room, library, furniture) and all areas where children frequently touch
- v) Provision of protective gear such as masks, gloves and gumboots to staff interacting directly with children;
- vi) Continuous awareness creation on causes, symptoms, transmission and how to prevent transmission as well as updates on COVID-19 to children and staff by Health Workers or the Institutional nurse inducted by Ministry of Health;
- vii) Display of accredited IEC materials at institutional premises and relay of recorded messages on Covid-19;
- viii) Establish a procedure for separating sick children and staff from those who are well without creating stigma;
- ix) Screen and refer suspected children to health facilities for medical attention, depending on the situation;
- x) Promotion of social distancing through:
 - Suspension of games and sports and other recreation activities that require close contact;
 - Suspension of joint prayer sessions/ services;
 - Observance of the 4-meter distance during movements between persons within the institution at all times;
 - Children to remain within the institution premises and should not be allowed to visit other residences within the institution;
 - Suspension of all social events including birthday celebrations.

2. Each institution should ensure minimal contact with persons from outside by enforcing the following:
- i) No visitors are allowed to enter the Institutions during the quarantine period;
 - ii) Staff of the Institution should as much as possible stay within the institution premises. Those who get out must thoroughly wash or sanitize their hands or where possible be subjected to temperature test at the entrance on return;
 - iii) Delivery of supplies shall be done by only a driver and a turn man (in a truck delivering supplies) to the Institution. These two must be subjected to all safety measures put in place including hand washing/sanitizing at the gate and social distancing as they interact with staff, before and after off-loading the supplies;
 - iv) NGOs or individuals who wish to provide support to the Institutions shall first get clearance of the RDC/Head of the District Task Force. In the case of Government Institutions, the Head of the institution shall get clearance from the Permanent Secretary MGLSD;
 - v) All activities involving taking juveniles to Court and tracing and resettlement in their families and communities are suspended.

B: VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

There have been a number of cases of abuse of children including Violence against Children reported during this COVID-19 Period. The Ministry would like to guide as follows:

- i) Parents, Guardians and Caregivers should be alert on what the children are doing at home and use this time of lockdown to understand their children better by engaging with them meaningfully, e.g. share positive life experiences to help them understand what it means to be a responsible person in society.

- ii) Parents, Guardians or Caregivers should ensure that Children remain within the home premises and should not be allowed to visit relatives, friends or neighbours during this period.
- iii) In case violence against a child or child abuse is witnessed within the a family or community , concerned community members should report to the LCs, Police or call Sauti-116 toll free emergency service number immediately.
- iv) Any person who delays to report or appropriately handle a case of child abuse brought to his/her attention will be handled in accordance with the law.
- v) Parents, Guardians or Caregivers should limit the time children spend watching television and access social media and instead engage them in more constructive tasks e.g. assisting in housework or doing their school holiday work.
- vi) Parents, Guardians or Caregivers should communicate simple, clear, child-friendly messages to children on the unique risks and vulnerabilities they face to help children understand COVID-19 pandemic, especially the preventive measures.

D: STREET CHILDREN

- i) The COVID-19 National Taskforce in collaboration with KCCA has incorporated into their emergency response plan withdraw of street children with a large number of them already being temporarily accommodated at Nakivubo Primary school. The ultimate end is to resettle them back to their families.
- ii) The Ministry reminds the general public to maintain social distance with persons still on the streets and also desist from issuing any handouts as that contravenes the current safety regulations.
- iii) Food provisions have been made for children in all institutional centers. Distribution started in Kampala. Wakiso will be covered next as we move to other parts of the country.
- iv) As for children homes whose care orders have expired, I have granted overstay clearances for this period. The same applies to issuing of new care orders.

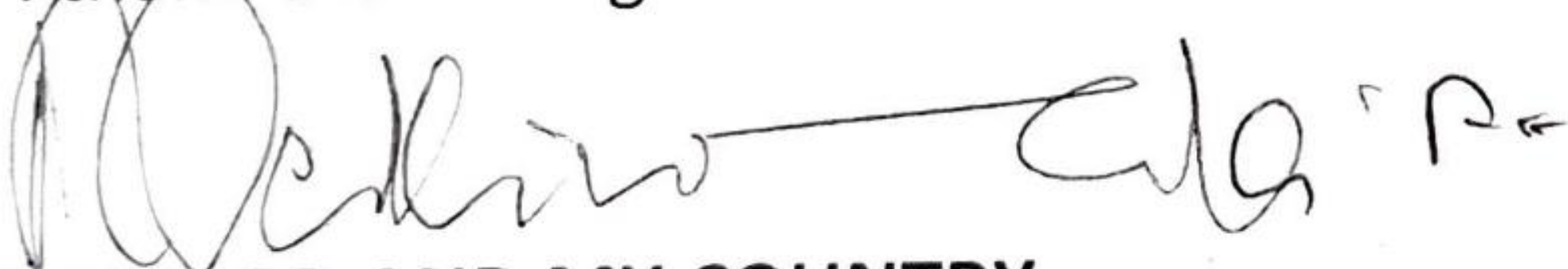
E: YOUTH ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

- Government commends all youth who have seen opportunity and opened up online businesses in response to the prevailing needs. More youth are encouraged to seize this opportunity since online transactions are projected to exponentially grow even after the COVID-19 crisis.
- Those with motorcycles should establish quick networks and engage in deliveries. This is a sustainable enterprise even after the COVID-19 lockdown, provided you run your services ethically.
- The youth are also implored to spend this time engaging in productive activities at home like farming, finalizing their course works, writing books, composing music, etc.
- I also take this opportunity to remind you that all youth political elections from village to national level were suspended until further notice.

F: CONCLUSION

I would like to thank the media fraternity and the general public for your enduring cooperation and support in the fight against abuse of children's rights and now in the prevention of COVID-19.

I thank the management of the Media Centre for this opportunity.



FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY.