

Seven universities research on children issues

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- Written by Frank Kisakye



Seven Ugandan universities have each received a Shs 20 million grant from African Child (AfriChild) to undertake child-focused research.

The research results are set to be disseminated later in April this year. Participating institutions include; Makerere University, Kyambogo University, Muni University, Uganda Christian University, Uganda Martyrs University, Gulu University and Nsamizi Training Institute.

Makerere will research on children's experiences and perspectives on parental and community involvement in their schooling, while UCU is conducting research on integrated behavioural model on sanitation and hygiene outcomes among pupils in public primary schools in Mukono municipality.

Nsamizi Training Institute is conducting research on HIV/Aids prevention and treatment and adolescents' access and utilisation in Iganga district while Kyambogo University is researching on the voices of children on the role of parents.

Gulu University is researching about child poverty antecedents and adolescence growth in post-war northern Uganda while Uganda Martyrs University will find out the effects of child labour on the education and health of children working in stone quarries in south-western Uganda.

Muni University is researching about child labour and learning outcomes in fishing communities in West Nile.

“It breaks us as AfriChild when researchers from other countries come and research about us and publish this information without our input. The more we research about us, the more we find the solutions for our issues. They [foreigners] make recommendations that are outrageous because they don't understand us,” said Joyce Wanican, the executive director, AfriChild.

“For developed countries, when they see an issue, professors are consulted. You see them hosted on CNN, Aljazeera, BBC. When are we seeing our own professors on TV, UBC, on NTV giving expert opinions? Let us share knowledge; if the government chooses to ignore it, you would have done your job.” she added.

The same message was reiterated by the dean of postgraduate studies at UCU, Prof Kukunda Bacwayo, who said it is disappointing that there aren't enough research books and papers written by Africans on African issues.

“I read books about Uganda and the authors are anything but Ugandan...They will tell the story the way they think. We as Africans need to tell stories about ourselves. Please let us not stop at only gathering information. Let us publish.” she told the inter-university researchers.

RESEARCH WITH CHILDREN

AfriChild board member Emily Gakiza called on universities to change their approach to research. She said it's important that children are involved in research since the policies that will emerge as a consequence affect them directly.

Indeed, associate professor Fabian Nabugomu of Kyambogo University said there is a tendency to ignore children's input when researching about them. He gave an example of the recently released Primary Leaving Exams results that caused so much debate in urban areas. He said in all the debate, nobody bothered to find the views of the candidates as they all concentrated on the examinations body Uneb and the schools.

“Countries that pay lip service to research are always at the wrong end of socio-economic indicators. They always have high levels of poverty, corruption is high, disease is rampant....” Nabugomu said.

Wanican hopes that research will help foster more progressive development policies for children because, she said, having a higher dependent population is not good for any country. The dependants make little contribution to the economy and yet overwork the few employed who have to work longer hours and pay higher taxes.

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