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Case Study on Child Protection within OVC Programs

# **INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING FOR IMPROVED CHILD OUTCOMES IN NAMUTUMBA, UGANDA**

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## Acronyms

<b>CCW</b>	Case care workers
<b>CDO</b>	Community development officer
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organization
<b>CPC</b>	Child protection committee
<b>DOVCC</b>	District OVC Committee
<b>HTS</b>	HIV testing and services
<b>KII</b>	Key informant interview
<b>MGLSD</b>	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
<b>MoH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>OVC</b>	Orphans and vulnerable children
<b>PSW</b>	Para-social workers
<b>TSO</b>	Technical service organization
<b>VHT</b>	Village health teams

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A growing body of evidence supports the theory that child protection and HIV care and treatment outcomes are inextricably linked. Protecting children from abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect is essential to achieving an AIDS-free generation; providing children living with HIV access to HIV testing, treatment and the support necessary to live a healthy and independent life are critical objectives of both child protection and care and treatment programming.<sup>1</sup>

This case study describes the process, methods and results of the approach promoted by World Education's Bantwana Initiative ("Bantwana") under two USAID/PEPFAR-funded consortium projects in Uganda: SUNRISE-OVC, a systems-strengthening project primed by the International HIV/AIDS Alliance partnering with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), and STAR-EC, an HIV care and treatment project primed by John Snow International partnering with the Ministry of Health (MoH). The case study focuses on a) the steps Bantwana took to integrate these two projects, b) the development of a Ugandan case management system through collaborative engagement with both projects, c) the initial results of integrating the projects, measurable changes in outreach to vulnerable children and pediatric enrollment in care and treatment, and d) the potential for this approach to impact child outcomes.

These findings were compiled during a portfolio review of OVC programming in Uganda and final evaluation of the SUNRISE-OVC project carried out by the Coordinating Comprehensive Care for Children project (4Children), through interviews with Bantwana leadership (the country director and head of programs), SUNRISE-OVC and STAR-EC staff and district government officials in Namutumba, Uganda.<sup>2</sup> As the portfolio review proceeded, it was clear that Bantwana's decision to integrate its programs had yielded improvements in vulnerable children's access to services.

## PARALLEL PROGRAMMING

Bantwana began working in Western Uganda in 2008<sup>3</sup> and in East Central Uganda in 2009 as an implementing partner on the USAID/PEPFAR STAR-EC project across nine districts with high HIV prevalence. In 2010 Bantwana joined the USAID SUNRISE-OVC project as a technical service organization (TSO) covering nine East Central districts, six of which overlapped with STAR-EC. From the outset, STAR-EC and SUNRISE-OVC worked with two different ministries, and had distinct objectives and approaches and different consortium leadership. STAR-EC was designed to increase coverage and utilization of quality, comprehensive HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis prevention and care and treatment services. SUNRISE-OVC was designed to strengthen the local government social welfare system by building government capacity to coordinate child protection and OVC responses. The two projects each worked with community volunteers, but the SUNRISE-OVC para-social workers (PSWs) provided support at the parish level, conducting home visits and



The STAR-EC project's goal was to increase health coverage including reaching children with preventative services through outreach.

Photo by SUNRISE-OVC

acting as local liaisons to the social welfare office with a child protection mandate, and STAR-EC village health teams (VHTs) and expert clients operated at the village level, conducting home visits and acting as local liaisons to the health facilities. At the parish and village levels, some volunteers act as both PSWs and members of the VHTs. An overview of the Uganda administrative divisions, key child protection actors and coordinating bodies is provided in Annex I.

Three years into the project, just after the midterm evaluation, the Namutumba District was struggling to meet the targets of the SUNRISE-OVC project, and staff had identified gaps in the social service strengthening approach.

*We were performing poorly — our results indicated there were problems. District OVC Committees (DOVCCs) didn't have appointments, strategic plans were not passed yet, and meetings were not consistent. At District, Sub-county level, the Community Development Officer (CDO) would not show you homes they have visited. (KII, SUNRISE-OVC Officer)*

STAR-EC program staff identified similar delivery challenges: according to their OVC Project Manager, in some cases less than 45% of referred patients reached their next service point, and there were no mechanisms to ensure referrals were followed or to ascertain the number of referred individuals who received services following referral. As of 2012, enrollment and retention of pediatric cases was low (5-6%), compared to the UNAIDS estimate of 15% pediatric HIV prevalence.

1 Long, S. and Bunkers L. *Building Protection and Resilience: Synergies for child protection systems and children affected by HIV and AIDS*, 2013. For the IATT on Children and HIV and AIDS

2 The 4Children team did not conduct a formal evaluation of the STAR-EC project, but met with STAR-EC staff during the portfolio review and development of the case study.

3 Under the Western Uganda Bantwana Program (WUBP 2008-2013), Bantwana used an integrated economic strengthening, child protection and psychosocial support (PSS) package to assist 5,000 highly vulnerable children and families, and established a referrals and linkages service delivery model that formed the basis for the integrated models expanded by Bantwana under STAR-EC.

Reflecting on these issues, Bantwana leadership recognized that although the project structures and objectives were different, the goals were the same: to improve the well-being of all children, and by more effectively connecting and leveraging the work of the two projects, there might be an opportunity to increase their impact.

*STAR-EC is looking for the same children as SUNRISE. If you're going to have a lasting intervention, you have to have OVC and HIV together. We were lucky. We were participating in both OVC and HIV Care and Treatment programs. USAID asks STAR-EC about OVC, and when they reached SUNRISE, USAID asks about care and treatment. (KII, Senior Leadership, Bantwana Initiative)*

### THE DECISION TO INTEGRATE

In 2013, just over midway through implementation of the STAR-EC and SUNRISE-OVC projects, and with a recently launched Youth Empowerment Project added to their portfolio, the Bantwana country program in Uganda made the decision to integrate their HIV Care and Treatment and OVC programs, transitioning from being project focused and managing three distinct projects, to an integrated approach focused on child outcomes. Bantwana invited staff to come together and identify the gaps in the system that were making it difficult for children to access services, and propose solutions. Support was subsequently offered to pilot the proposed changes to the system where needed.

Staff reported that the integration process was challenging in the beginning as the team needed to identify a common language, and build relationships between staff managing large projects in different sectors. In initial stages of OVC integration, the STAR-EC staff would not approve any activity that involved social welfare staff such as the CDO or a member of the Child Protection Committee (CPC), because social welfare staff were not recognized under the health system.

*The language of child protection is not the same language of health — we had to sell it to our own staff. We had to build trust. If you're going to work with an expert client or Village Health Team (VHT), that is okay, but with community development staff they ask, what are their roles, how do they contribute to their program? (KII, Senior Leadership, Bantwana Initiative)*

Following facilitated discussions between staff from both projects, Bantwana proposed the following changes, testing solutions proposed by staff from both projects to fill perceived gaps in the existing system.



Integration of the two projects led to better coordination of case conferencing. Here a CDO is providing psychosocial support to a caregiver and during the monthly meeting, the CDO approves closure of cases.

Photo by SUNRISE-OVC

- 1. Integrated staff meetings facilitating sharing and lessons learned.** Bantwana held regular meetings with all project staff, requesting that each project provide an update on a) what they did last week, b) what they planned to do next week, and c) a lesson learned or insight from the past week's activities. The combination of regular meetings and strategic emphasis on learning and sharing helped staff to identify opportunities for collaboration.
- 2. Task shifting to interns/locums.** Bantwana hired interns, often recent university graduates, who were placed at the health centers and tasked with supporting integration through referrals to the CDO's office, police or other civil society organizations (CSOs). These organizations provided support when they identified potential child protection concerns, such as neglect and abuse, and/or children needing adherence counseling, psychosocial support or basic care, including food, clothing, shelter and education support. Other linkage facilitators were placed at the CDO's office to receive children and their caregivers referred by the health center or other services, and record their details in the Case Management book issued by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. Interns would then check the service register, identify the appropriate service provider, make a contact call to ensure the desired service is available and refer or escort the client to the next point of service. The intern then helped to update the registers after confirming feedback that the client received the service.
- 3. Monthly Case Conferences at sub-county level.** Relevant community-based organizations providing services for OVC and affiliated community actors, including PSWs, expert clients, health workers and police officers, began to meet once per month to review their case books and discuss challenges, sharing experience across sub-county parishes.<sup>4</sup> Monthly meetings were typically attended by

<sup>4</sup> Case conferencing later became an integral component of the Namutumba Case Management Model, and monthly case conferences are now also attended by community are workers managing cases at the village level.

at least one PSW to share cases identified, referred and monitored/followed-up. The CDO would approve closure of cases once all stakeholders (case care workers, police, local council leaders, head of education institutions, VHTs, health workers, etc.) agree that the child is out of danger following a home visit or feedback report from a case care worker (CCW) or CDO, if a service has been provided and the child's needs have been met.<sup>5</sup> This is a component of the Namutumba case management model described below.

Bringing together staff from both social welfare and care and treatment projects created a collaborative and open environment to launch more ambitious initiatives as well. Staff were asked, "What is that one thing that can bring changes?" The Bantwana Country Director had experience piloting a case management model in Zimbabwe, and asked project staff and community development officers, "What is the child protection system? Is it working? What are the challenges? What would work here? How can we close the gaps?" The

development of a Uganda-adapted case management model was proposed to address two critical gaps in the system: 1) linking community/village level child protection mechanisms to the sub-county and district system and 2) creating one mechanism for both health and OVC issues at the community level. With these objectives in mind, the CDOs in Namutumba District, worked closely with Bantwana STAR-EC and SUNRISE-OVC staff to create the Namutumba Case Management Model.

## RESULTS

As the Bantwana experience shows, effective multi-sector integration, just like systems-strengthening, is a process, starting with regular meetings to share plans, lessons learned and ideas across projects, piloting new initiatives and integrating successful approaches into the larger project. Yet, the introduction of the integrated case management model led to a rapid and impressive increase in OVC service delivery, tripling the number of OVC served between the first and final quarter of 2014. It is still difficult for each CDO to reach all households in the sub-county, but they receive support from community

<sup>5</sup> Highly vulnerable cases like those involving HIV+ children would be left open indefinitely to help ensure that children and families were able to attend clinic appointments and had adequate adherence support.

<sup>6</sup> STAR-EC Program Year 6 Annual Report 2014, pg. 32

## Namutumba Case Management Model

**Case Care Workers.** Bantwana works with communities to identify experienced community volunteers to be trained to identify, assess, assist, and as needed, refer children and families in need of child protection services. Case care workers (CCWs) are expected to be literate and have a demonstrated interest in child protection, and in many cases CCWs are also trained PSWs or members of village health teams. PSWs and CCWs share an overlapping mandate, but CCWs coordinate the child protection response at the village level as part of the village *child protection committee*. CCWs are trained in case documentation to improve monitoring, coordination and closing of cases with approval of the CDO. They are also provided with notebooks and lock boxes to use for case management and referrals, as well as contact lists of functional service providers within their catchment area (referral guides/service directory).

**Child Protection Committees.** CCWs are members of community-level child protection committees that operate under the guidance and leadership of local councils, and create direct linkages with district officials through monthly meetings and consultation on child protection committees. CCWs are responsible for tracking and monitor cases, and will share reports with their CDOs.<sup>6</sup>

**Case conferencing.** CCWs from each village meet monthly with other CCWs and the CDO, together with other child protection actors (health workers, local leaders, police, religious leaders, orphanage institutions and school managers) in their sub-county, to review open cases, document the types of cases being referred, actions taken and services received. Cases which have been successfully resolved by the CCWs are closed by the CDO. Participants are careful not to mention children by name to ensure their privacy is protected to the extent possible.

**Follow-up and case closure.** Following the case conferencing meetings, an assessment is taken to measure whether the services provided were sufficient to meet the child's need. In some cases, follow up home visits may be recommended. Once it is clear that the well-being of the child has improved, the case is closed by the CDO, who stamps and signs the case. Depending upon the complexity of the case, 80% of case are closed within two months, and more sensitive or complex cases such as defilement or sexual abuse remain open until the court convicts the offender. HIV positive cases remain open to allow for regular follow-up and adherence support.

**Table 1: Number of OVC served per district and quarter in 2014<sup>7</sup>**

Sub-county	Quarterly targets	No. of OVC served Jan–Mar 2014	No. of OVC served Apr–Jun 2014	No. of OVC served Jul–Sep 2014	No. of OVC served Oct–Dec 2014
Kamuli	2,691	1,147	557	2,741	3,284
Mayuge	2,691	734	1,192	2,929	2,863
Bugiri	2,277	813	1,257	2,317	2,903
Kaliro	1,242	629	577	1,550	1,430
Namutumba	1,449	675	385	1,497	1,586
Iganga	3,312	609	872	3,549	3,871
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,662</b>	<b>4,607</b>	<b>4,840</b>	<b>14,583</b>	<b>15,937</b>

Number of OVC served was compiled locally by the CDO and district CDO, and submitted to the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development via the electronic OVC management information system. Services received typically include psychosocial support, education support, health care, HIV care and treatment and nutrition.

CCWs. With more staff collaborating in an integrated system, target numbers are surpassed without struggle.

In the 1.5 years since the integration initiative began, Bantwana staff have identified immediate improvements in key indicators for both projects. In the words of one STAR-EC staff, *“It over-turned our results.”*

- STAR-EC increased pediatric enrollment and retention (0-14 yrs) from an estimated 4% of population (n=1,719 in 2012) to 7% (n=2,803 in 2014).<sup>8</sup>** Staff attribute the increase in pediatric enrollment to a) intensified HIV testing and counseling in OVC-mapped households with regular follow up visits from CDOs, CCWs and health staff, and b) intensified HIV testing and services (HTS) in fishing communities along landing sites and islands – locations where HIV prevalence is highest. Periodically, a team of health workers together with community-based volunteers trained in HTS visited OVC households mapped by the CDO, and conducted home-based HTS. Integrated HTS outreaches to orphanage homes and OVC dwelling places were also done through engaging CDOs and community volunteers in the mobilization of children and caregivers. This outreach increased identification of HIV positive children and caregivers, and was followed by an accompanied referral to nearby health facilities for enrollment in care and treatment. CCWs and CDOs then coordinated to conduct follow-up visits and provide adherence support, improving enrollment and retention.
- Social Welfare System improved referral completion between the social welfare office and health system or other CSO from 50% in some settings to 85%.<sup>9</sup>** In the initial stages of SUNRISE-OVC, many referrals between the social welfare office and health clinics were not

successful. With improved communication networks, health clinic staff were able to inform clients when the CDO would be in his/her office, and let the CDO know when to expect clients. With additional staff, interns and CCWs, children were often accompanied to the social welfare office, health clinic or other service, although funding for transport and long distances between services remain a challenge.

The improved coordination between health facilities, social welfare staff and other local government officials also helped the offices to better collaborate to identify opportunities for vulnerable children and youth to access services and funding and to resolve issues. For example, an HIV positive youth support group formed under STAR-EC worked with the CDO to apply for a funding opportunity under the government’s Youth Leadership Program to improve their livelihoods, leveraging support across three initiatives. In another sub-county, STAR-EC staff identified high rates of complaints that health workers were charging money to examine victims of defilement (sexual



Through integration, health workers were able to provide HTS to hard-to-reach areas and thus increase their pediatric enrollment and retention.

<sup>7</sup> CDOs and Probation and Social Welfare Officers Case Management books

<sup>8</sup> STAR-EC Program Year 6 Annual Report 2014, pg. 32

<sup>9</sup> 15% unsuccessful referrals are the result of transport challenges, procrastination by caregivers, delayed follow-up visits, fear of HIV stigma among caregivers and young positives and limited reliable service providers.

assault of a minor) in spite of a mandate that defilement victims have access to free care. The issue was raised at the next DOVCC meeting with the chief administrative officer and health officer, increasing pressure on health workers to comply with the mandate guaranteeing access to treatment for victims of defilement. As a result, there are now fewer complaints, and more victims of defilement are able to receive medical care.

As both STAR-EC and SUNRISE-OVC come to a close, Bantwana is looking for future opportunities to continue integrated child protection and care and treatment programming.

*We have tried to make sure that all upcoming projects are using the same structures, the same cadres of community workers. For all our projects, for instance, we are mainstreaming child protection committees. (KII, Senior Leadership, Bantwana Initiative)*

## Local Administration in Uganda and Key Child Protection Actors and Coordination Mechanisms

ADMINISTRATIVE LEVEL	KEY OVC/CHILD PROTECTION ACTORS	COORDINATING BODIES
<p><b>Village</b> is the most local administrative unit in Uganda, and is typically composed of 50-70 households and between 250-1,000 people. Each village will be run by a local council — local council I (LCI) — and is governed by a chairman (LCI chairman) and nine other executive committee members.</p>	<p><b>Case Care Workers (CCWs):<sup>10</sup></b> Frontline child protection officers at the village level, drawn from existing volunteer cadres: para-social workers, village health teams and other adults committed to children’s safety. They are trained on the basics of case management including: child protection, case identification and categorization, referral, follow-up and case conferencing.</p>	<p><b>Child Protection Committee (CPC):</b> Operates under the leadership of local councils in each village, including CCWs, the village chief and three other committed local leaders. The committees are intended to support CCWs to reduce the burden of an already overstretched social welfare staff at the sub-county and district levels, with staff trained to “close” cases where feasible at the village level, and jointly determine which cases require district involvement.</p>
<p><b>Parish</b> is the next administrative level up from the village. A parish is made up of around 6–10 villages. Each parish has a local council II (LCII) committee, made up of all the chairmen from the village LCIs in the parish.</p>	<p><b>Para-Social Workers (PSWs):</b> Frontline child protection officers at the parish level, drawn from existing volunteer cadres: village health teams or community development committees. They are trained in child protection, child rights, documentation and data collection, and report to the sub-county Community Development Officer.</p>	
<p><b>Sub-Counties</b> are made up of a number of parishes (~6); the sub-county is run by the sub-county chief on the technical side and by an elected local council III (LCIII) chairman and his/her executive committee. The sub-county also has local council III (LCIII), consisting of elected councilors representing the parishes, other government officials involved in health, development and education, and NGO officials in the sub-county.</p>	<p><b>Community Development Officer (CDO):</b> Manages OVC and child protection cases, supporting and managing PSWs in the sub-county, providing referrals to the judicial and health systems and civil society organizations for individual children, and working with the Sub-County OVC Committee and district officials to coordinate the broader response.</p> <p><b>Health and Social Welfare Interns:</b> Interns are assigned to health clinics and social welfare offices to assist the clinical staff and CDO with case management and referrals.</p>	<p><b>Sub-County OVC Committee:</b> Coordinates cross-sectoral OVC response at the sub-county level, bringing in education, health, agriculture, planning and other district officials to discuss OVC concerns and identify solutions.</p> <p><b>Case Conferencing:</b> CCWs from each participating village in the sub-county meet monthly with the CDO to discuss cases, share experiences and identify solutions to resolve individual cases and broader concerns.</p>

<sup>10</sup> Key child protection actors and coordinating bodies in italics were introduced by Bantwana WEI to support coordination between the health and social welfare system.



ADMINISTRATIVE LEVEL	KEY OVC/CHILD PROTECTION ACTORS	COORDINATING BODIES
<p><b>Counties</b> are made up of several sub-counties, and sub-county executive members make up local council IV (LCIV). These committees have limited powers, except in municipalities.</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>
<p><b>Districts</b> are made up of one or more counties and any municipalities in that area, and may include a population of 500,000 or more. A district is led by an elected local council V (LCV) chairman and his/her executive and an elected LCV council, with representatives from the sub-counties and technical staff in the district. The council debates budgets, decisions and bylaws. On the technical side, the district is led by a chief administrative officer, appointed by central government. The district government also includes the heads of various departments, such as education, health, environment and planning, which are responsible for relevant matters in the whole of the district. At present, Uganda has 111 districts.</p>	<p><b>Senior Probation and Social Welfare Officers (PSWOs):</b> A member, community-based services department, responsible for improvement of the welfare and rights of children, their protection and development. They are trained to assist victims of sexual abuse to obtain medical examination reports and to have evidence required in court, provide initial counselling to child victims and the family so as to cope with abuse, and to also ensure that the child is protected from any form of abuse.</p> <p><b>District Community Development Officers (DCDOs):</b> Manages OVC and child protection cases at the district level, providing referrals to the judicial and health systems and civil society organizations for individual children, and working with the Sub-County OVC Committee and district officials to coordinate the broader OVC response.</p>	<p><b>District OVC Committee (DOVCC):</b> Coordinates cross-sectoral OVC response at the district level, bringing in education, health, agriculture, planning and other district officials to discuss OVC concerns and identify solutions.</p>

Coordinating Comprehensive Care for Children (4Children) is a five-year (2014-2019), USAID-funded project to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) affected by HIV and AIDS and other adversities. The project aims to assist OVC by building technical and organizational capacity, strengthening essential components of the social service system, and improving linkages with health and other sectors. The project is implemented through a consortium led by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) with partners IntraHealth International, Pact, Plan International USA, Maestral International, and Westat.

