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**JOINT STUDY PROGRAMME IN SOCIAL WORK WITH CHILDREN AND
YOUTH**

**MASTER THESIS
PROTECTION OF CHILDREN RIGHTS IN RWANDA: PERSPECTIVES OF
SOCIAL WORKERS**

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome

CRC Convention on the Rights of the Child

ECD Early Childhood Development

GOR Government of Rwanda

HIV Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus

MIGEPROF Minister in the Prime Minister's Office in charge of Gender and Family
Promotion

MINEDUC Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Research

NCDA National child development Agency

NCPD National council of person with disabilities

NRS National rehabilitation services

GBV Gender based violence

STI sexually transmitted infections

INTRODUCTION

Children rights related issues have been a global concern throughout generations and studies are done continuously to document best practices on ensuring children's rights(Nurhayati et al., 2021). Rwanda as a member of the United Nations, has ratified international human rights conventions committing the state to adhere to internationally agreed principles and standards relating to protection of children's rights and has made significant progress, however, there's still various children rights violations that exhaust the insufficient workforce of professionals untitled to care and protection of children(Abbott & Sapsford, 2012).Social work profession has had as main duty to ensure protection and safety of children in various practice areas(Tilbury, 2013).Rwanda, like in many other countries, social workers under the position of child welfare staff, wear many hats: They are mandated to oversee and implement children's rights protection interventions in collaboration with families, state's institutions and private agencies whose policies and actions affect children.

Problem statement: Rwanda is a small african country with 12 million population where young people represent nearly half of the total Rwandan population, and those who are below the age 35 represent nearly 70% of the Rwandan population(Sangwa, 2021).Despite the remarkable economic improvements of the country, 39% of households live in poverty(Betancourt et al., 2018).As a situation characterized by lack of necessary income to meet one 's basic needs, poverty is a huge challenge and a mother to several social problems menacing people's lives, especially young people(Kalinganire & Rutikanga, 2014).The majority of families in rural areas about 90% are engaged in subsistence agriculture exposing them to highest level of poverty(Cho & Kim, 2017). Rwanda desires to move from an agricultural based economy to a knowledge based economy therefore education play a central role in that social economic transformation(Niyibizi et al., 2018). Fundamentally, the family is the first school that transmit the basic skills needed for life, However, not all families are adept to take care of the child in an appropriate way and meet his developmental needs(Jecinta et al., 2019).The fact that some parents give little time to parenting sessions aimed at implanting positive cultural values and practices intended to empower children to properly fit in the community(Mukashema & Sapsford, 2013).and that, the increase in domestic violence and spousal conflicts which leads to separation and divorces has created significant number of children with no parental maintenance(Kayiranga & Mukashema, 2014).All this call for creativity in terms of addressing children rights violations that arise and it is required application of different approaches by social workers and other professionals to empower the community so that it may develop

effective mechanisms that boost children's capacity to grow as active member of the society, as one way of ensuring their rights.

Relevance of the study: Children's rights are fundamentally included among human rights to be fulfilled and the welfare of the children is associated to the realization of their rights by adults (Nurhayati et al., 2021). In CRC, there are four wide categories of children's rights including survival, development, protection and participation (Abbott & Sapsford, 2012). In domain of social sciences few studies have researched about children rights in Rwanda where some studies put a focus only on survival rights and challenges related to child nutrition (Ahishakiye et al., 2019), whereas others focused on effectiveness of survival and protection rights programs (Barnhart et al., 2020) and others about finding if children's rights to participation are featured in Rwanda (Murray, 2010). These studies were partial in the sense that they explored only one dimension of children rights yet beyond subsistence there is also other needs and protection concerns that hamper the wellbeing of children. Consequently based on previous studies about some children rights, this research consider all the children rights as indivisible and explores the protection of survival, development, protection and participation rights of the children in Rwanda according to the perspectives of social workers. Improving protection of children rights can be achieved by comprehending service provider's viewpoints especially social workers. Nonetheless, a gap in knowledge about social work services provision about protection of children rights about in Rwanda.

Relevance of research: This study will contribute to expand knowledge about effective approaches to protection of children rights so that they may be used to orient decision-makers in the practical implementation and motivate their duplication.

Its goal is to analyze social work interventions related to protection of children's rights in Rwanda and identify best practices and lesson learned by social workers while ensuring children's rights.

Objectives

1. To outline the children rights ensured in Rwanda
2. To identify best practices from social workers in protecting children rights
3. To determine lesson learned by social workers while protecting children rights.

Research methods

- This research selected qualitative research methods in which the analysis of scientific literature regarding children rights protection is carried.
- Semi-structured interviews and content analysis was applied for data analysis.

Structure of thesis

This thesis is partitioned in two parts the theoretical has two chapters that expose children rights in Rwanda and interventions related to protection of those rights and second part the empirical part has two chapters in which there is research methodology ,presentation of data, interpretation analysis of findings ,conclusion and recommendation. It is composed by 6 tables,1 figure and 1annexe of research instrument. This thesis has 49 pages.

Vocabulary of main concepts

-Best practices: *“Best practices are preferred techniques or approaches for achieving a valued outcome”*(Crampton, 2015).

- Lesson learned: *“processes that involve formal and informal learning”*(Jugdev, 2012).

-Early Child development Programs: Programs dedicated to enhancement of biological, social emotional , cognitive, language development changes of children occurring from conception to 6 years and equip parents with skills related to child upbringing(McMahan, 2021).

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING PROTECTION OF CHILDREN RIGHTS IN RWANDA

The literature review for this study provides an in-depth understanding of key aspects related to this study. Initially, the chapter discusses empowerment and person centered theories used together to explain the social workers interventions and highlight among them best practices and lessons learned in protecting children rights. Then it is presented a contextual outline of children's rights mainly survival, developmental, protection and participation rights, in the Rwandan context.

1.1 Person centered theory

Person/client-centered theory postulates that the unconditional positive regard, provision and perception of genuineness and empathy are specific conditions in a helping relationship which, influence personal growth and change ,and that all people gravitate toward self-actualization and suggests social workers should develop professional relationships with clients that are warm and affirming to ignite growth and change.(Makofane & Shirindi, 2018).Relationship is associated to resilience and development of qualities such as high self-esteem and a belief in one's self efficacy; in individuals. Interventions under the lens of person centered theory highly consider relationship as a central and key component of bringing about change and allow service users to be involved in a different balance of power(Lietaer, 2021).Evidence suggests that positive and supportive relationships with adults, both therapeutic and non-therapeutic, have the potential to contribute to positive subjective experiences and/or positive outcomes for at-risk youth(Heib, 2020). Professional relationship is the cornerstone of person's healing process and valuing the worth of an individual is paramount in the personal centered theory(Tickle & Murphy, 2014).

Person centered theory in social work with children suggest consulting children which is not only a right thing to do but an obligation. (Lake & Jamieson, 2016)pointed out that finding out children's wishes and feelings, and seeking to understand children's own perceptions of their needs and their life by involving them in the process is associated with positive outcomes and that local authorities and policy makers are expected to value service users' experiences and perspectives, particularly

when they are deemed at risk. The process of identifying the problem or understanding the meaning of the behavior is long and to reach it social workers chose interactive methods wisely considering age, gender, linguistic and cultural backgrounds of people with whom they are interacting with. Social work with families requires attention, dedication and respect of values related to the profession as social workers are expected to conduct assessment to find out what kind of problems or challenges ,children or young people are facing so as to address them in collaboration with the family, public or private agencies(Goodall, 2015).

Carrying out assessment of children who may be living in problematic and challenging family environments is a difficult psychosocial experience and sometimes may include social workers trying to engage with unreceptive or dishonestly compliant caregivers and with occasionally terrified and irritated children (Wilkins, 2015).All expressed behavior has a meaning and it is a way of communication which is if well understood the piece of information collected provide a path way to identify a solution to the problem presented(Macgowan & Schmidt Hanbidge, 2015).

In protecting children rights, several interventions conducted put at the center the child and Person centered theory offers suggestions regarding how professionals interact with their clients so that the client's worth and dignity are validated offering the potential for personal growth and development.

1.2 Empowerment theory

Empowerment is layered concept of individual, organizational and community social work approach(Noordink et al., 2021).It is also explained as the concept that focus on modifying power relations for the sake of those who don't have enough and may be seen as a destination or end goal since it cares about enhancing growth in confidence, consciousness, the grasp of new abilities and awareness as well as mutual support and struggle to fight for one's rights and recognition(Zimmerman, 2012). Liu & Wang,(2021)asserted that empowerment is at the same time a concept and a practice model used in empowering individuals that make changes when they take a firm resolution and determination to find out within themselves abilities, spotting and eliminating structural obstacles or using other several methods working towards the rise of individual and collective strengths of the oppressed to assess the condition and its repercussions on them so as to make changes about it(Lustick et al., 2020).The empowerment approach according to Turner & Maschi, (2014) is beneficial in assisting vulnerable groups as it enable them to believe in themselves and explore new good ways to handle their lives, Its principles are relationship building, recognition of one's abilities, conscientization and teamwork and rest on the belief that the client has awareness about her situation and holds within himself the power as the foundation of the care process to come

out of that situation. For individuals, the process involves nurturing in them positive beliefs about their capabilities to control situations, enhancing their critical thinking and encouraging them to join others with same ambition of change (Alam & Kibria, 2020). Empowerment happens when social needs and desires are determined in order to exploit capabilities and resources required to impact situations and circumstances (Mahbub, 2021). This correlates with what Rawlett (2014) classified as conditions required for an individual to be qualified as empowered he explained that understanding of what is power and where lies his powerlessness come before getting consciousness leading to search for support that facilitate positive transformation.

According to this theory, people know their needs and understand better than anyone else what they are facing and the role of the practitioner is to lead the client to point where he realizes what specifically he can do about the situation and find out barriers that prevent him to reach his target (Raphaely & Marinova, 2021). Central to this theory is the assumption that complementarity between the helper and the client where respect of abilities, insights of each party are helpful to change the situation clarifying that practitioners have skills and knowledge necessary for them serving as a guide and contributor instead of expert but the clients are the experts on their needs and situations who need to discover strengths or identify ways to remove obstacles to change they want to reach in their life.

Raising families Self-efficacy and empowering them to protect children rights

Supporting the perspectives of psychologist Albert Bandura (1977) who described self-efficacy as belief in self-ability to perform well in some circumstances or while accomplishing specific tasks, Singaravelu (2021) explains self-efficacy important factors naming experience of mastery where success increases it but failure decreases it. Modeling is another factor in the sense that seeing others succeeding signify that success can also be reached or failure maybe experienced if other have also failed. Moreover (Joo et al., 2019) present self-efficacy as a feeling of being empowered to carry out an activity. Central to self-efficacy is the assumption that people got within themselves the power to transform situations (Rawlett, 2014). Considering the stated viewpoints above by different authors self-efficacy can be explained as a conviction that a high or low performance in a specific task can be attained. Perception about individuals' self-efficacy can inform on how a person plan to reach his ambitions (Singaravelu, 2021). This correlate with the study about lifestyle in female teachers, which found out that raising self-efficacy is related to improved life style (Abbasi et al., 2021). In relation to protection of children rights, raising the self-efficacy of families is important in all interventions, since performance of families duties can be affected if their self-efficacy is low. Mouton &

Roskam,(2015)affirmed that parents with difficult children were doubting about their abilities to fulfill parenting responsibilities. There is a link between behavior and self- efficacy beliefs because usually people conduct tasks that they feel they are capable to conduct well and escape those they feel they cannot perform well(Chong & Kua, 2017).

Domestic violence is among the least reported crimes in the world. Studies in different regions of the world have shown that women are exposed to physical violence by their spouses in some part of their lives and several related harms affect not only the perpetrator and the victim but also the children living in the household where it occurs(Rieder & Elbert, 2013).Domestic violence is a dangerous psychosocial problem which if not well addressed can affect the development of the country. Therefore, it is of utmost importance for any nation to identify the contributing factors and find ways to eradicate the problem. Uwagie-Ero, (2014) argues that domestic violence is to a type of abusive behavior in a relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain control over another intimate partner and it is rooted in unequal power relationships between men and women and can take a variety of forms: physical as the use of physical force such as hitting, slapping, kicking, burning or pushing. It can be emotional or psychological, such as humiliation, threats, insults, pressure and expressions of jealousy or possessiveness, such as controlling a person's choices and activities or restricting their freedom of movement, and can be both verbal and non-verbal. It can also be sexual, meaning pushing or forcing someone to perform sexual acts (from kissing to sex) against their will, or making sexual remarks that make someone feel humiliated or uncomfortable. It doesn't matter if the person has previously consented to sexual acts, consent must be given every time. Another form is economic violence, where another person exercises complete control over a person's money and other economic resources to exert power. This includes controlling the family's money, not sharing income, food or clothing, or withholding access to a partner's resources and benefits, or selling property without his or her consent. It can be used to control a person's movements, such as preventing them from meeting up with friends, etc ¹

Violence against children is defined in Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including physical aggression, sexual coercion and psychological abuse and controlling behavior(Butrymowicz, 2015) The above definitions specify the type of harm

¹ What is the definition of domestic violence? (2018, October 3). Findlaw.Com.
<https://www.findlaw.com/family/domestic-violence/what-is-domestic-violence.html>

caused by the act itself towards children or women. Domestic violence and violence against children are two human rights violations that are most likely to occur simultaneously in a household. If a mother is a victim of domestic violence, there is a high probability that the children will also experience violence (Stern & Heise, 2019). Family violence is often part of a cycle of violence that begins, repeats, and gets worse over time. With each new cycle of violence that occurs, the violence may become worse and more aggressive, and the phases or periods of peace may become shorter. Understanding why violence occurs in a family begins with recognizing the triggers that can lead to the use of violence and finding ways to deal with them that help prevent escalation to violence. Bandura (1977) confirms that boys who have grown up in a family where the mother is abusive use violence as a coping strategy to relieve stress and identify with the father who has perpetrated violence against the mother. This shows that children imitate and identify with their parents by learning and acting out violence. If the father feels he must have and maintain power and control over the mother by dominating her with violence, the child in that household will follow the example of the parent. (Murray 2012) confirms that maternal mental health problems, stress and lack of social support as a result of domestic violence will negatively affect parenting skills which expose children to various harms irrespective of the fact that children are highly resilient individuals, the constant experience of violence poses a serious threat to their physiological and psychological well-being and families with violence have many problems which have big implications on the community as well. It has been reported that 52% of children who witness family violence have behavioral problems, 39% have adjustment disorders, and 60% of children blame themselves for domestic violence (Barran 2014), but also that children who are younger and have long-term exposure to domestic violence develop psychological problems earlier (Maçastena, 2020). Several theories in social work affirm that the growth and manners of the person come from the continuous interactions between the individual and his environment (Mugadza et al., 2019). Usually, the family is the first place where children learn basic life skills and it is their primary social group, therefore, the safety of the family is crucial for children and parents are expected to build a favorable environment for better development of their children. When these basic needs are not met, children develop psychosocial problems, such as low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, physical aggression, and school failure, which are also more common among children in households with domestic violence (Therese et al., 2020). Secondly, domestic violence and violence against children can be passed from one generation to another: Rates of violence against children are higher in families with a history of violence between parents (McMillan et al. 2013). When children grow up in such a

family, they develop ways to cope with violence by integrating it into their normal lives. Children spend most of their time in institutions such as schools, but their performance can be affected if they do not receive the safe environment, supervision and guidance they need according to their age: Growing up in a family where there is ongoing domestic violence can lead to a variety of mental health problems, including attention problems, declining school performance, anxiety problems, social difficulties, oppositional and aggressive behavior, and sleep disturbances (Osofsky 2005). Although some children who experience domestic violence show difficulties in their schoolwork, there are other children who escape into learning and perform very well because they have no safe space other than learning, making school life and work an escape" (Sterne and Poole, 2010, p. 23). Domestic abuse is a significant barrier to participation of children as it serve as a barrier to opportunities for relationships with people outside the immediate family, extracurricular clubs for these children, even though participation in these activities facilitates the development of social skills and self-confidence(Alotaibi et al., 2020).

In social work interventions, this is very important to consider and can indicate areas that needs to be emphasized when parents express that they are frustrated or communicate that they need support in fulfilling their parenting responsibilities therefore it is good to assess their self-efficacy beliefs.

A coping strategy is an act or a sequence of activities used in managing a difficult or hostile situation or in modifying one's reaction to such a situation. A support group is platform where people who have same difficulties meet to share emotions and feelings in order to learn from each other, and reflect on the ways to better handle problems ,to find solutions in a safe environment(Prashizky & Larissa, 2021). Talking with trustworthy people about difficulties and share how these have affected you individually while carrying them alone is healing and enable access to advice ,emotional and moral support provided by the group(Breuer & Barker, 2015). This was supported by one author when he mentioned that the purpose of support group is to facilitate the exchange of information and establish social networks(Nimrod, 2012). Family support is referred to as assistance provided to a member of family in different ways, it can be financial or emotional(Kamaryati & Malathum, 2020).Encouraging parents to seek support through joining discussions in the community is qualified as being part of a support group and opportunities to come out of dangerous situation like abusive relationship are explored in deep.Children are dependent on adults for development in different dimensions of their lives and their rights need to be protected(Nurhayati et al., 2021).It has been asserted by Landgren (2005) that knowing their rights as children make them more equipped and can not only help to reduce risks but also make them less exposed. In other words, for children to

have awareness about their rights can contribute to their protection and hence boost their self-efficacy in fulfilling their rights which is in line with what Liu & Wang(2021)posited that individuals' necessities are satisfied to when they discover that they have abilities to have influence on situations and this discovery motivate them to act.

The government of Rwanda has done all which is in their abilities to protect the rights of children and designed a system where crimes against children are punishable by the law and made policies that help not only social workers but all the actors to collaborate and track their progress toward achievement of those goals since the protection of the children is not only a local matter but a global preoccupation. In her study, Abbott et al., (2015)show the progress of Rwanda 's achievement in different areas and it shows that the majority of programs and activities revolve around the wellbeing of children and their protection within the family because children grow up in the family and dependent on the family for meeting their needs. Challenges that undermines the possibility of family to protect the rights of children are various and the social work profession when conducting interventions focuses on equipping family with additional skills and try to evaluate the coping strategies the family is using to manage those problems so as to work together on improving or changing when it is necessary. Barnhart et al.,(2020)conducted a study about the violence in family and its implication on children and it was noted that children ' wellbeing is affected when parents's problems are not considered as part of children 's life since the quality of care they receive when their parents are supported is much better which is why join planning between government and non-government institution about problems and target setting is paramount for social workers who daily interact with families and children are able to show the clear picture of what is happening in their life and how to boost the wellbeing of family specifically with the focus on children. Farrell et al., (2017)found that the problem of poverty is the root cause of violation of children rights where parents psychological abilities are challenged and the implications are replicated on children life in several ways .

In rwanda also as a developing country ,poverty affect the family leading to separation of children with their families when they decide to go on street mainly to look for better opportunities (Bazubagira & Umumararungu, 2020).Additionally,Ahishakiye et al.,(2019)argues that the development of children is affected when parents are failing to feed children adequately which maybe because they don't have possibility to do so due to poverty leading to inability to get

appropriate nutrition as breastfeeding mothers or they don't have much knowledge about management of life stressors which affect their wellbeing and parenting.

The gap in terms of knowledge has been tackled in different ways where awareness sessions are conducted in the community through different platforms and contribute in prevention against violations of children rights which may arise due to lack of knowledge about attitudes to be adopted in certain situations.

Condo et al.(, 2014)highlight the contribution of community based structures in health promotion and safeguard of survival rights of the children and the wellbeing of parents who play a big role in meeting the developmental needs of children and the fulfilment of their developmental rights in general since the parents abilities to meet emotional ,social and economic needs depend on their health status which is why the family 's responsibilities for caring children is not only in Rwanda culture but also other nations that talking about children rights includes caring about family 's interactions with community and assessing its abilities in fulfilling those responsibilities. In his study ,(Kuehr, 2015)discussed about orphans management and the policy of placing children in families instead of raising them in institution where it was found out the realization of children's rights to grow up in family depend on the involvement of community based structures in terms of tracing the parents of those children or searching for foster families who are willing and are capable to raise children and protect their rights as needed. The collaboration between government and these community structures provide positive outcomes for a developing country where the ability to get a big number of specialized personnel is still low.

Also (Wessells, 2021)pointed out that the collaboration between community based structures and the government depend on regular follow up and assistance depending on their areas of interventions since the policies are always changing and their need to be updated in terms priorities and needs to be met in their work and assessed in terms of performance so that they become more productive and more efficient and the social work interventions carried out with individuals or communities benefit a lot from this partnership because different actors working for the protection of children rights work with children in response when the violation of their rights occurred or others work in prevention against these violations.

Gerver,(2013)found that in his study about the education of girls in Rwanda, that some children do not know their rights which has serious implications on their psychosocial wellbeing and pointed out that family conceal the violations that have been committed against their children on one hand but on the other hand there are also children who don't have meaningful conversations with their

families which may prevent from the violations of some of their rights in relation to sexual abuse where money is exchanged against sexual activity with children. It is important for children and families to have adequate information about children rights not only because it make them more empowered in face of social problems that may be target children but also because the quality of life of these children is improved when they know how to behave in conditions of uncertainty. Maçastena,(2020)found out that children rights are sometimes violated when children are recruited by arms groups to be used as prostitutes or children soldiers and involved in other war related crimes which is common in developing countries where there are ongoing security problems and the rights of children are easily violated causing harm to them and basing on that we can see how children are vulnerable in different ways and their contribution to protection of their rights depend also on the adults behaviors towards them. This correlates with what Nurhayati et al.,(2021)affirmed when she argues that the children rights awareness is essential for families .Through education transformation is achieved and the Government of Rwanda ensured that children may access to education as their knowledge in many areas are expanded because teachers are among the community member who are supposed to contribute to the protection and fulfillment of children rights since they work closely with families in terms of guidance and mutual support for the wellbeing of the children and the prevention against unwanted pregnancies is done in collaboration with schools and families where children have discussions around reproductive health.(Tuyisenge et al., 2018).

2. CHILDREN RIGHTS IN RWANDA

Child rights are specific entitlements enacted specially to protect girls and boys from their prenatal stage up to their late adolescence (Butrymowicz, 2015). A key difference between ensuring child rights and doing child protection is that doing child protection is centring all efforts on the realization of children's specific rights to protection (Wessells, 2021). From the right based approach, rights are perceived as indissoluble standards guiding care and welfare obligations towards children (Pells, 2012). The rights of the child are referred to as processes that involves strengthening and providing to children a safe space conducive for their acquisition of physiological and mental abilities (M. Ahmad, 2020). Children rights are guidelines and provisions regarding physical, psychological and supervision needs to be met by parents, society and state while rearing children.

The society is supposed to intervene when parents are not accomplishing their duties and the purpose of social services is to ensure the wellbeing of every individual which means adults and children inclusive but they do not substitute family in terms of provision of care and love (Sund & Vackermo, 2015). The realization of children's rights demonstrates strength and power of a country in different cultures. The United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child (hereinafter UNCRC or CRC) is a globally binding treaty on the rights of children which holds few articles that address states' obligation in concerns which affect children(Nurhayati et al., 2021).

The CRC outlines the Children's rights by dividing them in several categories: General rights including rights to life, prohibition against torture, freedom of expression, thought and religion, information and privacy. Secondly rights requiring measures to protect children from abuse, neglect and exploitation not only economic but also sexual exploitation.

Thirdly, civil status of children like the right to acquire nationality, to preserve one's identity, the right to remain with parents considering the best interest of the child and the right to be reunited with the family.

Fourthly, development and welfare rights which includes the right to reasonable standard of living, right to health and basic services, right to social security, the right to education and the right to leisure. Finally, a category of rights concerning children in special circumstances mainly orphans, refugees and children with special needs. These rights also consider specific regulations about adoption, cultural issues, and prohibition on the recruitment of soldiers under 15 years of age or their rehabilitation (Butrymowicz, 2015).

Rwanda as a member of the United Nations, has ratified many international human rights conventions committing the government to adhere to internationally agreed principles and standards relating to the protection of child rights.

According to them, a child is anybody aged below eighteen (18) years with the exception of what is provided for in other laws(Abbott & Sapsford, 2012).The Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) is the key government ministry responsible for ensuring the strategic coordination of policy implementation related to gender, families, women's empowerment and children(Betancourt et al.,2020).Under MIGEPROF,the National Child Development agency for Children was established in 2011, mandated to undertake child-rights monitoring and oversight, and to design and implement child-protection interventions. A child rights observatory office also is inside the national commission for human rights in charge of child-rights advocacy with partnership of other several government bodies and agencies whose policies and actions affect children's lives and these national

institutions are responding to the state's commitment to international child protection standards by ratifying several international legal instruments such as the International Labor Organization Conventions 138 and 182; United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), CRC optional protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on child trafficking, child Prostitution, and child Pornography, and the African Charter on the Rights and the Welfare of the Child just to mention a few (Abbott, 2015).

Children represent the architecture of both the present and future of the country. If no proper stimulation and interventions towards their growth and development, their future might be disordered. Child rights protection and promotion represent also an essential tool to enable children to realise their development potentials using available resources within the Country.

Different Civil Societies Organisation and National Commission for Child have made provisions that fulfilment of the responsibilities related to the Child Rights lie both on the caregivers/parents and the Country. However, despite the effort made so far, there are still some cases of child rights violations as highlighted by different research papers such as the recent "*Violence Against Children and Youth Survey, findings from National Survey 2015-2016*" published by the Ministry of Health in 2017.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child; 1989 Article I defines a child as anyone under the age of 18 unless otherwise stated in already existing legal provisions and the Optional protocol of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other documents has defined anyone of age of 18 as child. Child rights comprise all rights which will be enjoyed by the children from the time of conception until childhood.

. In order to fulfill the rights of children, government of Rwanda initiated the following institutional frameworks and mechanisms that have been put in place:

- The Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF), responsible for coordinating all stakeholders involved in child rights and protection issues.
- The National Commission for Children (NCC), established by the Law N° 22/2011 of 28/6/2011, is an autonomous body in administration, financial and human resource management, supervised by MIGEPROF.
- The National Early Childhood Development Program (NECDP), established in 2017 by Prime Minister' instructions, with the mission to coordinate all interventions related to early childhood development (ECD) in the country.

- The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) which established an observatory of the rights of the child composed by community volunteers at Sector and District level and a coordinating unit at National level. They monitor respect of children's rights and report cases of children's right violation.
- Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB), with a specific division in charge of children's matters, committed to boost the quality and professionalism in prevention, investigation and justice delivery for child rights violation cases.
- The National Rehabilitation Service (NRS) which deal with the issue of street children among other priorities and includes programs of reintegration, family strengthening and prevention. One of the NRS centers, Gitagata Rehabilitation Centre, provides to former street children with rehabilitation services, including formal education and psychosocial therapy.

There are provisions related with children and also the parliament has passed the different bill related with child rights.

- The Law N°71/2018 of 31/08/2018 relating to the protection of the child, covering all aspects of the rights of children and complying with all ratified international treaties. It is also containing offences and penalties from Article 27 to 37, according to the Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda of 2003 revised in 2015.
- The Law N°68/2018 of 30/08/2018 determining offences and penalties in general contains some articles protecting a child, not provided in the law N° 71/2018 relating to the protection of the child.
- The Law N° 66/2018 of 30/08/2018 regulating labor in Rwanda in its article 6 stipulates that it is prohibited to subject a child below the age of eighteen (18) years to any of the following forms of work.
- The Law N° 32/2016 of 28/08/2016 governing persons and family which provides for the safeguard of the child in the family and the enjoyment of this right by all categories of children.
- The Justice for Children Policy, 2014: The policy seeks to establish and enforce child-friendly restorative and rehabilitative correctional services by the justice service providers.

- The National Legal Aid Policy, 2014: to provide an effective and sustainable framework for the provision of accessible and quality legal aid services to the poor and vulnerable which positively impacts on society.

Survival rights

Children have rights to a name and nationality and access to quality healthcare, age-appropriate nutrition, clean drinking water and an environment which is safe for living and conducive for growth and development(Singh, 2021). This right emphasizes on children's access to education in clean environment, entertainment, sports and rest, love, respect and care from the parents, physical, mental, moral and social development of the children as the basis for development and basis for livelihood of the children. Stunting, impaired or low optimal physical growth, and cognitive development deficits are serious threats to life of children that it is required to prepare measures that enhance the wellbeing of children and their parents(Nsereko et al.,2018).

Parents are expected to identify situations that may bring significant harm for children or that may pose risk to wellbeing of their children and address them beforehand, since their primary duty is to provide for the needs of their children but sometimes due to ignorance they fail to get access to information and resources available in their environment(Ahishakiye et al.,2019) for instance, children fail to get immunization (Nwankwo & Orua,2020).or get a balanced diet necessary for their growth.

Promotion of survival rights in Rwanda is ensured through collaboration between local government agents and district hospitals to assist the parents of new born to get easy access to birth registration services allowing a new born to have a name and nationality and access to health care services required (Binagwaho et al., 2016).

Awareness raising sessions prepared with behavior change as a goal are facilitated coupled with the use of interactive and participatory techniques to reach the large audience where psychodrama methods, play therapy and animation are used to empower parents by community health workers supervised by social workers and has contributed to decrease of child mortality where the health practices have been widely disseminated through those sessions(Condo et al., 2014). Public health care is based on a traditional three-tier system: health units providing the most basic curative and preventive care and backed up by primary health care centres, and other inpatient facilities offering diagnostic and curative services.

Health sector funding is one of the most critical issues affecting the delivery of quality health services. Spending on health sector is relatively low: during the period 2014–2019, an average of 2.6 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was spent on the health sector, accounting for 8.2 per cent of the Country’s health budget, an allocation not sufficient to provide basic health care to its citizens, especially disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. According to the Rwanda Malaria Indicator Survey, 2017, 73.82% children were covered by any health insurance which is similar to the EICV5². This, however, put children in danger due to lack of health insurance against unexpected illness and it can drain household wealth from out of pocket health expenditure.

Preventive care and nutrition status:

The RDHS 2014-2015 data reveal that 92.6% of children aged 12-23 months have received all basic vaccines, and that 94% have vaccination cards. The percentage receiving all basic vaccinations is almost the same for rural and urban areas at 92.5% and 93.4%. Right to best interests includes nutritious food, protected shelter, healthy environment, clean drinking water, immunization and primary health care and other provisions. Rwanda, a country with a population of around 12 million in 2019 (Projected from RPHC 4). Half of its citizens are under the age of 18. The section attempted to analyze the situation of child rights on the following subjects in the given time as per the statistics availed in Rwanda.

Name, Birth Registration and Right to Nationality: The Civil registration in Rwanda is governed by Law n° 001/2020 of 02/02/2020 amending law n° 32/2016 of 28/08/2016 governing persons and family, and the period for birth registration has been doubled to 30 days after birth, while the requirement to seek a Court Judgment Supplementing Birth Registration, has simply been removed (article 100 of the law governing Persons and the Family 28/8/2016)³ as an attempt to increase the chances of parents to prepare themselves and register their newborn within legal limits.

According to Rwanda Vital Statistics report, 2019, the registered births rate goes to the registration completeness rate of 87% countrywide with a symmetric rate between male and female. The legal registration time respect, analysis showed timely registration rate equivalent to 78% of the total number of births registered in 2019.

Developmental rights

Health related impediments due to problems faced during the first 3 years of life, irrespective of when they are discovered are infringement on an individual’s right to full developmental potential

² NISR (2018). EICV5 Main Indicators Report

³ Law no32/2016 of 28/08/2016 persons and family, Official Gazette No 37 of 12/09/2016

displaying as a defilement of that individual's right to health(Binagwaho et al., 2016). A child's developmental rights involves physical, intellectual, emotional ,social and behavioral needs to be met by parents and state working together to facilitate easy access to information ,play and leisure, cultural activities and education as a key to unlock, access, acquire new physical and mental abilities needed throughout their transition from childhood to adulthood(Peleg, 2017).In the fulfillment of development rights of the children, the government of Rwanda emphasized on the provision of education and designed policies that address social problems like poverty and malnutrition that may pose threats to development of children like ECD programme to support the holistic development of children aged 0 to 6 and to make sure that all children are mentally empowered, healthy and safe, while their families and communities are equipped with necessary skills to care for them(Jensen et al., 2021).Access to primary education has been facilitated to all children and young people allowing them to complete 9 years of free education of good quality (Mahlangu, 2019).

The Rwandan education policy aims to reinforce the quality of education, to stimulate Rwanda's cultural values, and to produce graduates who are independent entrepreneurs able to compete locally and globally(Pierre Celestin, 2021). Also there is national reproductive health policy created in 2003 highlight six measure points about safe childbearing, adolescent reproductive health, family planning, prevention and management of sexual violence, prevention and treatment of genital infections (STI and HIV/AIDS and social change to increase women's decision making power. Regarding youth, the policy insists on the role of information, education, communication and access to HIV/AIDS testing services and adolescent reproductive education is incorporated in teaching curricula with sessions facilitated by Faith-based anti-AIDS clubs established in schools or at community level so that awareness of reproductive health and prevention against unsafe sex may be achieved(Tuyisenge et al., 2018).

Different actors from various organizations collaborate to provide services to parents aiming at their empowerment to enable them to understand ,not only normal health processes of child development but also the influence of socio economic factors like family environment, political, climate on the development status of the children(Karangwa et al., 2010).since ,social problems undermines the children rights to development ,it is a must for family as shield has to take the lead in securing children and for parents to be assisted to implement their duties of protecting and fulfill developmental rights of children (Britto & Ulkuer, 2012).

The state of child right in Education is very encouraging from the current Education Sector Strategic Plan 2018/19-2023/24, but shows a financial gap to sustain the learning outcomes. Despite, the full

scholarship given to all students willing to join Teacher Training College, the enrolment of child has increased. But children enrolled in (pre)primary are outside the intended age group continue to enrol in pre-primary education and therefore will already be over- or under-age on transfer to primary school. The participation rate of learners aged between 4-6 years (Nursery age group), 7-12 years (primary age group), 13-18 years (secondary age group) and 19- 23 years (tertiary age group) respectively stands at 36.8%, 98.9%, 70.9% and 14.2%⁴. In 2019, the promotion rate increased from 80.0% in 2018 to 82.2% in 2019, the repetition rate decreased from 13.4% to 10% while the dropout rate increased from 6.7% to 7.8% during the same period. Hence, the transition rate (from primary to lower secondary level of education) increased from 71.6% in 2017/2018 to 72.2% in 2018/2019. While the ESSP target was to achieve (80%), adequate measures should be taken to improve the transition rate from primary to secondary education. The transition rate decreased by 0.2% for males while it increased by 1.4% for females.

respectively.⁵ The same RDHS findings indicate that childhood malnutrition decreased between 2005 and 2015, but that chronic malnutrition (~37%) remains a major concern.

Protection rights

Protection rights are rights requiring measures to protect children from abuse, neglect and exploitation of any kind. Includes also a category of rights concerning children in special circumstances mainly orphans, refugees and children with special needs (Singh, 2021). Family is the first institution which is supposed to protect the rights of children and meet their emotional, physical, and social needs (Jecinta et al., 2019). The government of Rwanda has focused all his efforts to strengthening the ability of the family so that it may protect children through different services and policies. Girl education policy centers on addressing the female school dropout rates triggered largely by unwanted pregnancies and promoting increased access to female school attendance and completion in schools is a priority where in combination to the national behavior change communication policy for Health that was established with the aim of preventing the transmission of communicable diseases, messages against unsafe sex are shared and call for abstinence as a protection against HIV /aids and unwanted pregnancy (Tuyisenge et al., 2018). The National Early Childhood Development Program (NECDP) was established to coordinate all interventions related to early childhood development (ECD) and other child protection and education issues (McMahan, 2021). In addition to that there is National Rehabilitation Service (NRS) handle the problem of street

⁴ Rwanda Education Statistics Book 2019

https://mineduc.gov.rw/fileadmin/Documents/statistics/Rwanda_Education_Statistics_2019.pdf

⁵ Rwanda Demographic Health Survey, 2014-2015

children provides to them rehabilitation services, including formal education and psychosocial therapy among other priorities. It runs programs of reintegration, family strengthening and prevention (Ngamije & Yadufashije, 2020). Deinstitutionalization policy about care reform for reintegration in community children and young people who were in institutional care was established to enable orphans to receive warmth and attention provided by the family (Kuehr, 2015). Lack of safety in family is a threat to psychological wellbeing of children (Therese et al., 2020). Moreover, child abuse is a result of different factors where main contributors are parents (Chaudhury et al., 2016). A study on the role of family and community level collaborations in supporting Rwandan child raising practices revealed that father neglect and abandonment is a threat to children's physical, psychological, and social wellbeing (Honeyman, 2013).

Response to child abuse and other gender based violence cases is coordinated by ISANGE one stop centers which provide comprehensive medical, psychosocial and legal support to survivors (Thomson et al., 2015).

With the globalization, these interactions have been even extended that they go beyond the borders of the country and extend to further nations with whom communication is enabled through language via internet and socio medias, and access to content declared harmful to children can be easily accessed by them like pornography and other harms, reason why the child online policy was established and includes strategies to maintain children safety in their use of internet (Davidson et al., 2019).

Child right goes beyond protecting children from maltreatment and exposure to physical and psychological torture. However, to date, corporal punishment continues to be lawful in the home and alternative care settings and continues to be socially perceived and accepted as a disciplinary act. It is in the same setting, to fully realise the implementation of the Integrated Child Rights Policy, and there are still some gaps because Parents and teachers should be sensitized to continue adopt positive discipline by avoiding corporal punishment as a method of disciplining. They should ensure that schools and early childhood development centers are free from violence. Community rehabilitation schemes should be established for children as a diversionary measure for pretrial detention and as an alternative to custodial sentences. There is need to strengthen advocacy for children who get unwanted pregnancies by providing sufficient legal assistance in court.

All children have the right to protection from discrimination, child labor, exploitation, mistreatment, exposure to dangerous jobs, violence, detention, and rehabilitation. Special provisions have to be

made for disabled and orphan children, legal protection of all children and other rights are also guaranteed.

Child Labor and Economic Exploitation: Children between five and 12 years are allowed to perform unpaid household chores but are not allowed to work more than 20 hours a week. Children aged between the ages of 13 to 15 are allowed to perform light work, which includes domestic work and other family income generating activities inside or outside of their household, in not more than 20 hours a week. The minimum employment age in Rwanda is 16 years⁶. Children between the ages of 16 to 17 are, however, allowed to perform all activities except the worst forms of child labor and hazardous work. Unfortunately, in the report entitled “*2017 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Rwanda*”⁷, 5.2% (151,257) of children (6 to 14 years) remain engaged in the worst forms of child labour mainly domestic forced works. Most of the children perform dangerous in agriculture (69%), services (22.3%) and industry (8.7%).

Violence and harassment survey (2019) findings revealed that 5.3% of children interviewed reported to experience one or multiple forms of violence against children. 3% of parents affirmed that their children experienced one or more types of violence against children and the most prominent forms of violence reported include sexual violence, physical violence and emotional violence. Regarding sexual violence, 11.1% of children interviewed confirmed to have experienced sexual harassment. Similarly, 11.5% of parents interviewed confirmed that their children experienced sexual harassment. The other type of violence experienced by children is physical violence and the results revealed that 50% of children interviewed have been beaten during the period prior the survey. However, only 32% of parents reported that they have used corporal punishment on their children.

Justice, rehabilitation and juvenile detention: the survey findings show that 12.7% of interviewed children are aware of the legal assistance provided for children. On the contrary, 20.5% of parents’ respondents are aware of the legal assistance for children in conflict with law and 19% of parents reported to be aware of the alternative punishments for minors. Only 14% of children respondents were aware of the aforementioned alternatives to custodial sentencing. From 2012 to January 2019, a total of 1,307 street children have been rehabilitated at Gitagata Rehabilitation Center and reunified with their families. Nevertheless, the National Commission for Children’s comprehensive assessment on the street children phenomenon in Rwanda released in 2019 reports that 2,882 children (2,621 boys or 91% and 261 girls or 9%) are still living on the street.

⁶ https://ncc.gov.rw/fileadmin/templates/document/national_policy_for_elimination_of_child_labor.pdf

⁷ <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1104616/download>

Early pregnancies referred to as having a child within the adolescent years (10-18 years old), teenage pregnancy remains a national public health issue of massive importance. Childbirth at an early age is associated with increased health risks for both the mother and the baby. Thus, the current Rwanda DHS 2014/15 reveals that about 17% of mothers (15-18 years) begun childbearing. Hence, the legal marriage starts strictly from 21 years. Besides, many parents and community members recognised that teenage pregnancy is a problem in the community, and measures are in place to protect teenage including sexual and reproductive health awareness and legal enforcement to interrupt with the teenage pregnancies.

Participation rights

There are many perspectives about Children participations rights, in social sciences, according to Peterson-Badali & Ruck, 2008 , participation rights are understood as children's active engagement in community problem solving related matters.

(Young et al.,2014)explains that promoting participation rights of children is reserving for them a seat in decision-making and planning. It is allowing them to share views and opinions ,to make choices, to adhere to any religion and associations(Murray, 2010).Herbots & Put, (2015) used Hart 's model of participation to demonstrate participation as a process with different forms that depends on each other: Initiation, being the first where the child come up with initiative alone or with the adult, secondly there is information as a form where he/she collect information, after that there is consultation where she/he express views and opinions ,fourth is engagement where after consultation views and opinions are considered and is given opportunity to work on them or together with someone else ,the last level is when the child get to take the final decisions .Not only scientific evidence reveals that children are able to make powerful contributions as active member of their society but also child participation starts in family then comes school, where autonomy and self-regulation are learned and it is expected to be a safe environment where by the means of education, the child acquires cognitive, emotional, and social skills under the guidance and collaboration of trusted people like educators. For instance, through school clubs, girls have managed to speak up for themselves, take actions and challenge some harmful practices like female gender mutilations and child marriages in Kenya(Ongaga & Ombonga, 2012).In Rwanda, Children between 15 and 18 age range are elected from each sector to represent others, besides regular meetings held in their communities ,they facilitate the national children's summit ,an event organized every year, where they meet senior government officials to address different problems (Abbott & Sapsford, 2012).

The National Children's Summit which started in 2004 is organized every year, involving 488 children representing others from all 416 Sectors, 30 representing the Districts, 30 representing children with disability at District level, and two children per each refugee camp (a girl and a boy) attend it together with senior officials from Government and civil society. Since 2016, children and youth participate in holiday's civic forums "*Intore mu Biruhuko*" and discuss on governance, hygiene, values, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, GBV and human trafficking related issues. However, in practice, child participation is often tokenistic, it may exclude vulnerable groups, and evidence of its impact is frequently limited.

Conclusion

The social work profession in Rwanda regarding children and families, is done in a way that the government in collaboration with non-government institutions make sure that the rights and needs are taken care of, and there is a way to assess if what has been planned has been achieved. It was noted that social workers achieved a lot and without collaboration each organization or institution can work in isolation and not achieve well its targets or mission but children rights to survival development, protection and participation in Rwanda are considered in full, where programs and policies dedicated to fulfill these rights are conducted in close collaboration and social workers are the key people in facilitating the realizations of activities. Several nongovernmental organizations have focused their activities for the welfare of the children and have been advocating for the commitments expressed at the national and international level by the state in the field of child rights and have also been contributing for reducing the number of violations of child rights and by rehabilitating the victims of such rights violation. There have been several efforts from the international sector in the field of child rights. Different conventions and declarations have become the directive principles in the field of child rights.

3. BEST PRACTICES IN PROTECTING CHILDREN RIGHTS IN RWANDA

Comprehensive assessments

In the protection of children rights it is important when working with children and families to find out the challenges or threats to their rights from the children themselves when they are able to express themselves according to their age or from other people involved in their lives however carrying out assessment of children who may be living in problematic and challenging family environments is a difficult psychosocial experience and sometimes may require engaging with unreceptive or dishonestly compliant caregivers or frustrated and occasionally terrified and irritated children (Wilkins, 2015). The resistance of people involved is a challenge but need to be approached well not only to maintain a good relationship with those involved but also making sure that the safety and wellbeing of children is not affected as the purpose of all the interventions. the importance of nurturing good relationship was highlighted in many practice models for instance Laursen,

(2000) argued that the good relationship with children is essential as previous relationship with their families or primary caregivers may have had problems that bringing a change in terms of being different in interacting with them matters. Another important area that needs consideration in assessment is making sure that the interventions is being conducted with respect of culture of those involved(Bhatti-Sinclair, 2015).

It is a challenge for assessors when the culture of the family or some practice related to that are harmful for the children development or are a violation of their rights because they need to be identified ,challenged and eradicated as it was noted by (Ongaga & Ombonga, (2012)child marriages ,female genital mutilations are part of some cultures and are indeed violation of their rights with consequences on the children ,their families and the society.

Sometimes the rights of children are violated due to the ignorance or inability to recognize the impact of the actions on the life of children. For instance a mother may chose to remain in abusive relationship with his husband because he provides for the family regardless of the fact that the environment within which the children are growing up is posing threats to their wellbeing as there was found a strong correlation between domestic violence and poor parenting(Maçastena, 2020).It is imperative to conduct assessment and collect all information and use it for the wellbeing of children and their family in general ,and for the assessment to be comprehensive it need to consider different source and networks in the child life to find out only problems but solution and power on which the intervention may stand on for change to be achieved in the life of the children and their family.

The role of interactive social work methods

Social work is a certified application of theory and methods to response and prevention of psychosocial dysfunction, incapacity or deficiency including emotional and mental disorders and is based on knowledge of one or more theories of human development within a psychosocial context(Ramsay, 2003).Social work uses several methods while accomplishing its objectives for example role play, relaxation techniques, psychodrama methods, play therapy, therapeutic board games and animation. One can ask himself why children and youth need to build trust in social workers, how do they do that? This can be done through building a good relationship between the children, youth and social workers, Hence the need for the social workers to apply different interactive methods.

One of the method inspired by role theory is role play method. Role play is participation in simulated social situations that are intended to illustrate the roles and contexts that govern real life situations using bodily, verbal instruments for communication to express themselves or characters they represent in a more direct manner(Krossa, 2020).It can be used in case work services with children by workers to remove misunderstandings , false impressions about social workers and their work in order to give children a correct orientation regarding social work when they are refusing to attend interviews or they are dodging meetings, hiding themselves when they know a home visit is scheduled etc. To facilitate a change of that behavior, role play may be used to remedy to that inadequate role perception of social workers in the life of those children in a certain context and it can facilitate active participation of children as they are enabled to understand what is happening and why it is important for them to be there. The process of identifying the problem or understanding the meaning of the behavior is long and to reach it social workers chose interactive methods wisely considering age, gender, linguistic and cultural backgrounds of people with whom they are interacting with. Culture is viewed as a learned meaning system that consists of patterns of traditions, beliefs, norms and symbols of a community and Intercultural communication is the conversations and interactions that occur between people from different cultural groups(Bhatti-Sinclair, 2015).Adjustments problems are commonly found in foreigners in a host country and necessitate assistance in acculturation process while they are attempting to overcome culture shock(Inoue & Ito, 1993). Among many methods used in social work with related to that is animation. Through arts and craft activities children /youth are given opportunity to create the favorable environment where they feel comfortable, respected and safe to share or to express indirectly what it is hard to talk about and to let someone inside their safe zone(Crociani-Windland, 2018).Theses creative methods are innovative and artistic techniques enabling partakers to express their thoughts and feelings using an imaginative and creative tools through activities such as map drawing, sentences completion ,imaginary charts, photographing (Saraçer & Senol, 2020).The use of puppets and other toys are also widely used in during assessments sessions to get views of the child and to understand his environment :Social work with families requires attention, dedication and respect of values related to the profession as social workers are expected to conduct assessment to find out what kind of problems or challenges ,children or young people are facing so as to address them in collaboration with the family, public or private agencies(Goodall, 2015).Carrying out assessment of children who may be living in problematic and challenging family environments is a difficult psychosocial experience and sometimes may include social workers trying to engage

with unreceptive or dishonestly compliant caregivers and with occasionally terrified and irritated children (Wilkins, 2015). All expressed behavior has a meaning and it is a way of communication which is if well understood the piece of information collected provide a path way to identify a solution to the problem presented (Macgowan & Schmidt Hanbidge, 2015). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 12 and 13 establishes children's rights to be heard and to participate in planning and decision-making about issues that affect them and defines participation as a continuing procedure that gives to children access to clear and full information about what is happening and the possible consequences of speaking up it and highlight their right to freedom of expression and opportunity to have their voices heard (Bradwell, 2019). Social workers are expected to be very skilled in engaging in communication with children about sensitive matters, and it is through play that children mostly share what is going on in their lives comfortably (Fye & Rainey, 2021). Play therapy has been associated with behavior modification referred to as the endeavor to change human behavior and emotion in a positive way and following the laws of learning and it is also known as effective tool to reduce to fear, anxiety, and distress in medical interventions (Kiran et al., 2018). Children spend most of their time in institutions such as schools, but their performance can be affected if they do not receive the safe environment, supervision and guidance they need according to their age: Growing up in a family where there is ongoing domestic violence can lead to a variety of mental health problems, including attention problems, declining school performance, anxiety problems, social difficulties, oppositional and aggressive behavior, and sleep disturbances (Almiş et al., 2020). Psychoeducation is one of the method used in social work where skills are taught to young people, it can be about anger management, conflict resolution or positive coping strategies. For example, In Africa, to prevent unwanted pregnancies, an interesting movie is advertised in village and when young people come, after the movie life skills sessions about safe sex or other reproductive health topic is discussed. Despite the fact that children and young people face different problems that necessitate intervention of social workers, fear and worries associated with the implications of disclosing problems about their families to social workers may push them to conceal such information even though other professionals like teachers or neighbors may have cues about challenges the children are facing (Alotaibi et al., 2020) When such cases are referred to social workers, in consideration of norms, rights and policies a method is to be used to retrieve that sensitive information from children so as to develop intervention plans after making sure that he or she is acting in best interest of child or young person and that he or she is not exposing that client to additional harm. Interventions guidance explain the importance of

communicating with children and young people and build relationship with them using the interactive social work methods , to be able to provide services that answer to real problems effectively because lack of meaningful conversations with children to find out their needs and risks compel social workers to rely on information provided by parents or caregivers who sometimes are harming the children and this lead to adverse consequences(Hromková, 2020). several cases have been reported where children received social work interventions and reports revealed that home visits ,school visits have been done but the case was terminated by the death of the child died from serious injuries or malnutrition or any other cause(Cooper, 2005).Additional issues arise from parental alienation cases where children end up with a caregiver who is incompetent ,emotionally distant or provide an environment which is unsafe for the child, only because assessments conducted lack the voice of the child or improper methods have been used to find out what is happening in the life of the child to plan effective interventions.

there are many interactive social work methods applied for children and youth in the intercultural context but role play, animation, play therapy, psychoeducation has been discussed as well as the context of their application: social workers apply them on children, youth and families to build good relationship with them, to help them express themselves indirectly when it is hard to express directly what is hard in their lives .the methods are also used to retrieve sensible and useful information children, young people or their family may hide consciously or unconsciously to social worker yet it is needed for them to provide comprehensive services. Failure to conduct meaningful conversations or interactions with children and young people lead to poor interventions and expose them to further harm including death.

Empowering family centered partnerships

Social work interventions are effective when they involve different people having the same goals since they put together their skills and strength to fulfill their mandate. Early & GlenMaye, (2000)affirmed that collaboration is important and it begins when the family and the social worker discuss and agree on things they want to achieve and ways they can use to accomplish them.at this initial level, when the goals and objectives are defined the introduction of other actors that will be involved is general but he family and children are informed about the process and the rules to be followed are agreed upon. Eramian & Denov, (2018)found out that in Rwandan culture, all information is not directly shared clearly but as long as people get to know each other the communication style change and openness and clarity in discussions is attained. This is a challenge

for working with families because at the beginning the accuracy of information received is doubted by the social worker who need to spend much time to be able to reach desired outcomes. Garbarino et al., (2020) argued that some children who used to be associated with armed groups due to their history are hidden in communities by their families as a protection against stigmatization which at the same is a barrier to reach their full potential since some of their needs like access to education and other psychosocial support services related to their condition are not provided to them. Karangwa et al., (2010) also argued that children living with disability in some families are physically segregated against where they are hidden to the public. All these make challenging the involvement of other actors needed for the provision of comprehensive services related protection of children rights however the exploitation and better use of community based structures allow to overcome the majority of these challenges also this is supported by Condo et al.,(2014) affirming that community based structure are an integral fragment of protecting children rights and maintenance of family wellbeing. Wessells,(2021) also supported this explaining that community based structures need to be used and supported according to the intervention context. in addition to that there is needed coordination meetings and other platforms were actors meet regarding the children rights service provision or interventions because it is associated with positive outcomes on all sides(Young et al., 2014).

Social work practice in children rights protection

Social work profession encourages social change and development of individuals with respect to values like social justice, respect for diversities and mobilize and empower individuals and communities to overcome challenges of everyday life(Rahman T M, 2021).

In Rwanda, Professional Social work was formed following the 1994 Tutsi genocide that caused a serious destruction of social fabric (widespread displacement, pregnant women as a result of rape, increase of unaccompanied and separated children, and many more problems. It was as late as 1998 when the National University of Rwanda initiated a Bachelor programme in social work in the context of dealing with the complex problems fueled by the effects of the genocide(Kalinganire & Rutikanga, 2014).Generally, the people of Rwanda are young and exposed to various social problems :poor information on reproductive health exposing adolescents to HIV/unwanted pregnancies and STI and juvenile delinquency exposing young people to human trafficking and recruitment by armed groups or being exposed to forced prostitutions and many more harms(Tuyisenge et al., 2018) .The social work profession in Rwanda regarding children and youth,

is being done by the government in collaboration with non-government institutions make sure that the rights and needs of children and youth are taken care of (Abbott & Sapsford, 2012).

Strength based approaches

Strength-based practice embraces a range of features, including an empowerment orientation that lies on individuals capabilities, respects caring, collaborative relationships between practitioners and clients, and believe that individuals have the capacity for change, and seek to promote self-reliance (Caiels et al., 2021). Strength-based approach provides a way of helping individuals, families, and organizations respecting and capitalizing their abilities and resources available around them or inside them with hope that their situation is not eternal and can be transformed (Christensen & Antle, 2021). It is rooted on the assumption that interaction between individuals and surroundings have implications and shape them. It moderates the power differential between practitioners and individuals (Laursen, 2000). A strength-based approach postulates that people have abilities and resources necessary for their own growth and change, therefore does not insist on problems during assessment rather it focuses opportunities (Liu & Wang, 2021). Strengths-based and empowerment-oriented practices emphasises on client assets and environmental resources which can boost his development (Berman, 2003).

Rights based approaches

A rights based approach is a holistic child welfare and protection approach to respond to various risk factors across a range of areas where participation of children is mandatory as it consider them as individuals with dignity, abilities, and interests to be acknowledged and nurtured (Lake & Jamieson, 2016). It capitalizes the human rights of children irrespective of their age or maturity and does not treat them as subjects but active member of society. Children rights are referred to by Nurhayati et al., (2021) as a section of human rights needed to be ensured, safeguarded and implemented by individuals, institutions and nations. There are legal standards that orient the protection of children's interest. According to (Ulhaq, 2021) protecting children is a duty of every human being because there are the most vulnerable creatures and that application of the laws has a deterrent effect against the violation children rights. Among violations of children rights includes child mistreatment, referred to as an intentional or non intentional act such as emotional, physical and sexual abuse as well negligent action perpetrated against a minor (Subashi & Bregu, 2021). The social workers are advocates for children rights since their interventions are seeking to protect or respond to the rights

of children in different areas . Ulhaq, (2021) argues that different social factors contribute to the violation of children rights, requiring for social and psychological and financial assistance for the caregivers of children so that children rights may be protected. Weiss-Gal & Gal, (2009) pointed out that advocacy is a social work practice seeking the fulfillment of social rights by influencing a particular resolution ,decision ,law or policy that affect individuals or communities inferring that there is two different parties where one is on the lower position being affected whereas the other part on higher has benefits. In some communities, the welfare of children is monitored by communities and it is common for them to have a say in their upbringing(Mugadza et al., 2019).meaning that they can be even a problem as they are involved in the life of children.there is also school whose contribution and role in safeguarding the children rights is valuable (Miller et al., 2014).Adopting the right based approach in protection of children rights is considering all these actors available around children ,their family, school and community. According to UNCRC, The children rights protection is a primary duty of states. In Rwanda, the CRC convention was ratified in 1991 inspiring the strategies and programmes dedicated to welfare of children and their families.

A number of policy were developed accordingly ,civil society organization collaborate the design programmes in line with it and monitoring of these activities is done regularly where each actor is held accountable to fulfill his mandate(Abbott & Sapsford, 2012).

National policy for orphans and vulnerable children recognize that orphans need to be protected and supported by state and community to have same rights as other children and there are volunteers who are available in community to monitor the rights of these children(Pells, 2012).children are expected to be cared in family settings and when both parents are not alive the extended family members are supposed to care for them earlier shown the children belong to the community.

It is common for children to be mistreated by family member but child abuse is reported either at school or community level so that necessary steps maybe taken against the abusive parents.Gerver, (2013)found out that sexual abuse is sometimes perpetrated against girls by family acquaintances who were financially supporting the family and they could not report the abuse perpetrated because they are silenced either by the family members or the perpetrator of the abuse. This shows that not only orphans are vulnerable but also some other vulnerability like poverty expose children and their families to other threats which are responded to by social workers in partnership with other actors. The girl education policy is dedicated to the protection of girls rights to education and prevent against unwanted pregnancy which is also widespread(Tuyisenge et al.,2018).the vulnerability to girl child is related to culture where discussions around reproductive health are taboo and sometimes the lack

of information associated with lack of guidance on behalf of parents expose the child to such problems. Awareness raising conducted within the community is a way of bridging that gap between about knowledge and is carried out community structures and schools(Condo et al., 2014). Protecting children rights also in prevention ,it was found that provision of life skills trainings help in addressing risky behaviors among children(Fallah et al., 2021).other efforts also child friendly reproductive service provision are existent in community as the children have rights to have access to information and health services as stated in the prevision of law and the CRC(Singh, 2021).in terms of prevention there are also other platform dedicated to promote and assist community so that behavior change may be reached since knowledge is power and debunking some myths around sexual education is important for children and their families(Stern & Heise, 2019).

The National Policy against Gender based violence policy is dedicated to respond the domestic violence problems which are not only affecting families but also affect children and the policy highlight the needs to be met in service provision (Thomson et al., 2015).Domestic violence has a devastating impact on women, affecting them as mothers and undermining their parenting skills by not only exposing the children they are supposed to raise and care for to additional child protection problems, but also making children future perpetrators of violence as they identify with and mimic violent parents who have conditioned and normalized the use of violence in their daily lives(Maçastena, 2020). Domestic violence causes significant harm to victims and society in general as affirmed research has shown that it not only threatens the lives of victims, but also affects the health of children by exposing them to mental health problems and behavioral disorders and by limiting their participation and performance in school(Therese et al., 2020).The existence of these policy is very important in social work interventions as it provides guidelines on how to protect the life of children growing up within the unsafe family environment.it was found that the phenomenon of street children also is associated with gender based violence happening in families where children without parental care decide to live on the streets(Abbott et al., 2015).

The National health sector policy was also established to respond to illnesses associated with ignorance and poverty(Binagwaho et al., 2016).the provision of this policy not only orient health related attitudes and service delivery which is essential for children but also for their parents and communities .

Summary of the theoretical approaches:

In summary, basing on versatility, efficiency and the fact that that they place service user at the center of the process, valuing their perspectives, Person centered theory and empowerment theory were used as an effective guiding intervention for protection of children rights. It has been realized that social worker empower families to overcome problems and be able to function on their own. It could be stated that applying the person centered theory to children rights, involved building a close and strong relationship with the parents without exhibiting a judgmental attitude or blame them for being a source of problems. Social work interventions focus on boosting the parents' confidence to be actively involved in the life of the children and be a positive role model.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section comprises a type of research, sampling procedure, data collection, analysis methods and ethical considerations used to conduct the study. A number of study limitations and ethical issues are also addressed.

Type of research

In this study, qualitative research method was used to explore the protection of children rights in Rwanda. The qualitative research studies the interaction between two or more people and analyses their circumstances (Rosero, 2021) and focuses on understanding people's experience (Smith et al., 2020). Being exploratory and providing a way to analyze the opinions, thoughts and feelings of social workers, empowerment theory and person centered theory was used in interpretation and data analysis of this research about protection of children's rights in Rwanda the choice of the above mentioned methodology was judged realistic and practical to meet the research objectives.

Sampling procedure

Sampling is the act of gathering particular sources of data that allow to meet research objectives and better understanding the phenomena under study (Gentles et al., 2015). Purposive sampling is a type of sampling under which participants are selected according to a predetermined criteria for inclusion relevant to a particular study (Makofane & Shirindi, 2018).

For this study, Purposive sampling was applied to a research population of social workers working in child rights institutions with experience and involvement in ensuring children's rights for 2 years.

Sampling description

The study was conducted with 7 social workers: 3 females and 4 males residing in Rwanda, with working experience in working with children and families. All the respondents fulfilled the criteria to participate in the study. The participation in this study on behalf of these social workers was made possible because an explanation was made to each of them through email and they accepted to participate.

Table 1: Description of research participants

Study participants:	Gender	Age	Work experience
Social worker1	F	35	7
Social worker2	M	33	4
Social worker3	M	31	5
Social worker4	M	40	7
Social worker5	F	28	3
Social worker6	F	27	3
Social worker7	M	37	5

Data collection methods

For our study two types of data collection methods were chosen one is interview another is document analysis .Using them together will help in capturing necessary data to inform the research. Interview is a type of data collection method which consist of a conversation between two people face to face or online (Ahmad, 2020) The interview method was judged suitable for collecting data because as explained by (Stuckey, 2013)the method is renowned for giving meaning to feelings, thoughts ,beliefs and behavior of people.

Semi structured interview

Semi structure interviews is a data collection method using a set of questions allowing open discussion but also remain focused on the research aim (Whitehead & Whitehead, 2016). This type of methods allows participants to express freely themselves allowing the researcher to collect rich data. Interviews were conducted using zoom, depending on the availability of participants.

Data analysis methods

Content analysis is a technique to analyze trend and patterns into document(Kakulu, 2014) It was chosen to analyze interview data because it allows easy coding and categorization of data. All interview were transcribed verbatim then coding was done, this helped in analyzing and interpret the data in a structured way.

Ethical issues

Before beginning research, measures to address ethical issues that can arise are to be put in place on the grounds that failure to address them affect the research ,therefore it is ideal to

anticipate outcomes and weigh both benefit and potential harm(Orb et al., 2001) besides, ethical norms allow to ensure how researchers will be accountable(Ugwu, 2019).

Details about how to behave with participants have been outlined as follow: It was clearly explained that participation is voluntary, no damage is to be done to them and their privacy will be protected. Through an informed consent process, a verbal or written statements was shared with research participants to inform them about the topic of the study, its potential benefit or harm, and the specific steps taken to ensure social workers privacy and to keep their data confidential. Their names were not recorded on any data collection instrument .Even though their first names were used during the interviews, to facilitate rapport, individual names were not recorded in the transcript of the interview. Each social worker was assigned a code for use on all data collection materials, notes and transcripts.

The institution from which social workers were recruited was included in their codes in order to identify the social worker by group, allowing the socialworker groups to be known during analysis but no names nor codes linking social workers' names and institution are shown in this study and will not be cited anywhere as requested by participants,only sw will be used when referring to them.

Limitations of the study

The study considered the experiences of social workers only yet there are many different actors involved in ensuring children rights in Rwanda like the police and others. Secondly, the interviews were conducted in Kinyarwanda, the native language of respondents but transcribed back to English. The translation from one language to another may have affected the quality of data which can endanger the validity of research.

4.1 PRESENTATION AND DATA ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The chapter presents in detail the results of the study by giving an outline of data emerged from semi structured interviews conducted with 7 social workers covering their perspective about the work they do in ensuring children’s rights. The findings are analyzed on the basis of empowerment Theory and person centered theory .The results seek to answer the research question how are the children’s rights protected in Rwanda?

The categories and subcategories of data that emerged are illustrated below.

Category 1: Identification of threats to realization of children rights

With the purpose of find out how children rights are being ensured by social workers, it was mentioned that some activities are done in order to respond to issues that affect children welfare in general and specifically violate their rights. those activities are considered as best practices in ensuring children rights: Identification of threats to realization of children rights was a category that comprise a subcategory of poverty, as a violation to survival rights of children of which social workers conduct many interventions to address and thus prevent the rise of other child rights violations that could happen because of poverty.

Category	subcategory	Proving statement
Identification of threats to realization of children rights	Poverty	<i>“We help families with special issues that affect the rights of children: very poor families, families with conflicts, families with children with disabilities, to be supported in the care of these children through Income generating activities, medical support, guidance/counselling, conflict resolution and conduct regular follow up with families who have received children from orphanages, former street children to help families solve problems when available so that children can stay in families.”Sw7.</i>
		<i>“For the family who lives in poverty, they receive social protection supports include creating cooperatives, money, foods, shelter, health insurance, livestock to support them to take care of themselves and their children”.Sw3</i>
		<i>” Poverty is one of the challenges but also wrong mindset from the population that sometimes think they need to be provided with everything all the time and manifest a lack of willingness to strive to meet their needs by themselves” Sw1.</i>
		<i>“Poverty into families causes the neglect of the child rights on the expense of other urgent family needs.”Sw2.</i>
		<i>”We Provide food to the child when needed; training parents on combating malnutrition, and build homes for families in need” Sw5.</i>

	Unsafe family environment	<i>"We work with former street children to return them back in their families"</i> Sw7.
		<i>"we provide training and supervisions to volunteers on running awareness sessions aiming at fight against child labor, school abandonment, and address street children problems, domestic violence's issues"</i> Sw5.
		<i>"We have special conversations with families of children at high-risk of abuse or denial of basic rights among them includes teen mothers, prostitutes"</i> Sw4.
		<i>"Some parents are still abusing children, especially those who still have the perception that giving birth to a baby girl is a loss"</i> Sw2.
		<i>"We remove the children being in institutions and take them to the families we prepared for, and the child is placed in a family with respect to her wishes and view"</i> Sw6.
		<i>"Children living in families of parents who are influenced by alcohol. These tend to continue violating the rights of children despite the several sessions held with them"</i> Sw1.
		<i>"Existence of step parents who always have negative feelings/attitudes towards the non-biological children is always a challenge"</i> Sw3.

Poverty

It was mentioned by the respondents in this study that they play a big role in addressing and preventing numerous issues where poverty is among the factors that influence violation of other children rights, more importantly, the interventions are carried out in consideration of the needs of the families .this was explained below: *"We help families with special issues that affect the rights of children: very poor families, families with conflicts, families with children with disabilities, to be supported in the care of these children through Income generating activities, medical support, guidance/counselling, conflict resolution and conduct regular follow up with families who have received children from orphanages, former street children to help families solve problems when available so that children can stay in families."* Sw7

Social workers pointed out that in community there are resources available to be used and assisting families to access them is among their priorities.it was illustrated in the statements below: *" For the family who lives in poverty, they receive social protection supports include creating cooperatives, money, foods, shelter, health insurance, livestock to support them to take care of themselves and their children"*.Sw3

Regardless of the fact that poverty is a problem, additional challenge that emerged was the way of thinking which was described as wrong and expressed by passive involvement of families in meeting family needs as mentioned:

” Poverty is one of the challenges but also wrong mindset from the population that sometimes think they need to be provided with everything all the time and manifest a lack of willingness to strive to meet their needs by themselves” Sw1.

The wellbeing of children specifically matters related to their rights can be ignored or sacrificed and subsisting is only a priority and due to poverty a focus is made to urgent family needs: *“Poverty into families causes the neglect of the child rights on the expense of other urgent family needs.”Sw2*

When the assessment reveals that basic needs are not met ,in the interventions it is included the family support to meet those basic needs”*We Provide food to the child when needed; training parents on combating malnutrition, and build homes for families in need” Sw5.*

In brief, Respondents shared that poverty of families cause problems that endanger the life of children growing in them. In addition to poverty itself it was also noted that family behaviors in the condition of poverty are a problem when they don't pay attention to children's rights and focus on subsisting only or when they show passive involvement in meeting family needs. Addressing poverty related issues take the large amount of social workers time who in partnership with community based organizations, conduct different interventions dedicated to improve the living conditions of the affected families, by orienting families to social development programs available and advocacy to have access to these services. These interventions are carried out according to needs identified and resources available in community are mobilized to help families prioritizing the wellbeing of children.

Unsafe family environment

The respondents highlighted the challenges posed by unsafe family environments to realization of children rights and shared how it is important working with families and shared services provided to children and families. As far as the safety of children is concerned, no children is supposed to stay in streets and it is important for them to grow up in families ,among interventions conducted includes collaborating with families and children living in streets so that address that as it was illustrated below

.“We work with former street children to return them back in their families” Sw7.

The partnership between social workers and other community based structures was highlighted were they explain how they work together in prevention and response of child rights violations and social problems affecting children. Using their expertise social workers equip community based structures with skills and they make sure that these structures perform according to the rules and guidance they received

*"we provide training and supervisions to volunteers on running awareness sessions aiming at fight against child labor, school abandonment, and address street children problems, domestic violence's issues."*Sw5

Social workers explained that their interventions take considerations of the uniqueness of needs and vulnerabilities of every child and family, and interventions conducted are tailored according to related specific features.

"We have special conversations with families of children at high-risk of abuse or denial of basic rights among them includes teen mothers, prostitutes". Sw4

It was pointed out that the safety of children is families is disrupted by gender stereotypes found in some parents as a contributing factor of child abuse

"Some parents are still abusing children, especially those who still have the perception that giving birth to a baby girl is a loss" Sw2.

Also in response to Deinstitutionalization policy which says that all children must be cared in families, social workers explained the approach they use:

*"We remove the children being in institutions and take them to the families we prepared for, and the child is placed in a family with respect to her wishes and view"*Sw6.

Social workers pointed out that persistence and monitoring is required for children from families where there is history of parental alcoholism, as they noted that children rights are violated continually regardless of number of sessions done with them, the focus is to be placed on children as mentioned:

*"Children living in families of parents who are influenced by alcohol. These tend to continue violating the rights of children despite the several sessions held with them"*Sw1.

Children have to be cared in families not in institutions but sometimes, step parents show negative attitudes towards their non biological children, and it is among the challenges faced in their interventions with families as explained by social workers

*"Existence of step parents who always have negative feelings/attitudes towards the non-biological children is always a challenge."*Sw3

They explained that unsafe family environment under which children are living in is a threat to realization of children rights where social worker collaborate with families either through home visits , awareness raising about social issues ,challenging negative perceptions about gender and other interventions .The conditions through which children are living in are monitored regularly and issues like negative attitude of step parents towards their non biological children ,gender stereotypes , history of parental alcoholism are barriers to realization of children rights within families where social workers and other actors continue to handle .

Category 2: Develop strategies for realization of children rights

To understand how children rights are ensured, social workers shared how they work and what they do specifically in ensuring children rights which is detailed under the category of strategies for realization of children rights. Subcategories includes policy knowledge and implementation, creating effective and strong partnerships, capacity building activities for families.

Category	subcategory	Proving statement
Develop strategies for realization of children rights	Policy knowledge and implementation	<i>"Laws and policies on different child welfare matters in Rwanda assist in delivering quality services to children coming from poor families or vulnerable in general"</i> Sw7.
		<i>"A child protection law has been established and there is also a child development agency, this has contributed to decrease of damages to children and parents understood that any actions that harm the well-being of children is punishable by the laws and when a child is being abused by neighbors they easily share information with authorities."</i> Sw3.

		<p><i>“In Rwanda, we say that the rights of the child are respected based on the will of the state, which has led to the creation of various laws and regulations, strategies and practical actions related to child rights and protection ,Child Development policies, justice for the child and National Child Development Agency the leading institution that coordinate activities but also supervises other government and non-government which allows a better coordination of efforts and checking whether the targeted goals are being achieved with the respect of values of the profession and also in the best interests of children and youth or other beneficiaries.”Sw1.</i></p>
		<p><i>“We have policies and laws created regularly as needs are identified through National child development agency, and it is very useful. Before the creation of National child development agency there was no joint planning between various government agencies, and each ministry or agency had focused on its mandate without sharing or learning from other partners since activities relevant to various rights of the child were planned in isolation.” Sw2.</i></p>
	<p>Creating effective and strong partnerships</p>	<p><i>“Family and Child Protection Program has been established in each District, Volunteers called friends of family have been appointed .all these groups help us as social workers to reach vulnerable families and accomplish our duty to protect children rights”Sw6.</i></p> <p><i>“Through regular meetings, we were able to design a case management system, with clear roles, functions and expected outcomes, all this allow better performance for various actors involved in protection of children’s rights and to update each other on their activities and progress in fulfilling their mandate”Sw1.</i></p>
		<p><i>“We organize district-level meetings to take action ensuring that the rights of the child are respected, including meetings with child protection officers and collaborate with the NCDA, NCPD, local authorities and centers like orphanages or street children institutions”sw4.</i></p>

		<i>"As Social workers we help in setting up Early Child Development programs to address malnutrition problems and provide trainings and supervision to workers and community health volunteers on how to ensure proper child development like prepare a balance diet and also we run education sessions about child play and provide parenting trainings for families"</i> Sw3.
	Capacity building activities for families	<p><i>"We empower families so that they protect children's rights through different trained volunteers and local leaders who conduct regular home visitation in which they discuss with family members on how to respect child rights"</i>Sw5.</p> <p><i>"we sensitize parents and other caregivers about immunizations programs to families and advocate for them in terms of accessibility to medical care and pediatric care. Also awareness sessions about COVID 19 preventions measures for children are facilitated"</i>Sw2.</p> <p><i>"We equip parents with knowledge to be able to have discussions with their children about topics like prevention against risky behaviors like drug abuse, delinquency ,street life, unprotected sex and its implications on health ,values and love of school,"</i> Sw4.</p> <p><i>" for families we have activities like parenting training"</i> Sw6.</p> <p><i>"We work with families through sensitization that encourages them to fulfill responsibilities mentioned above and understand its importance to the child"</i> Sw3.</p> <p><i>"Families are educated on child rights during meetings organized by the organizations, or organization officials attend to the local government meetings at the village level and request to be allowed to talk about the child rights"</i>Sw7.</p>

Policy knowledge and implementation

Social workers described laws and policies as vital tools to be known and used as they aid in provision of services in their daily interventions especially with vulnerable children and families.

*" Laws and policies on different child welfare matters in Rwanda assist in delivering quality services to children coming from poor families or vulnerable in general."*Sw7.

A connection was established by social workers between the existence of laws and policies about children rights and the decrease of children rights violations and the improved attitudes in families and communities in general where laws and policies serve as boundaries for parents and indicate them how to behave regarding the care of children because they understood that they will be held accountable. This was explained in these sentences:

“A child protection law has been established and there is also a child development agency, this has contributed to decrease of damages to children and parents understood that any actions that harm the well-being of children is punishable by the laws and when a child is being abused by neighbors they easily share information with authorities.”Sw3.

They continued explaining how the presence of laws and policies about child rights and National Child Development Agency demonstrate the government commitment and will to fulfill children rights and there is a collaboration between government and social workers through administrative ,structure support and consultation on how service provision is meeting the needs of children and their families:

“In Rwanda, we say that the rights of the child are respected based on the will of the state, which has led to the creation of various laws and regulations, strategies and practical actions related to child rights and protection ,Child Development policies, justice for the child and National Child Development Agency the leading institution that coordinate activities but also supervises other government and non-government which allows a better coordination of efforts and checking whether the targeted goals are being achieved with the respect of values of the profession and also in the best interests of children and youth or other beneficiaries.”Sw1.

Social workers added that they have a platform within which monitoring of interventions is carried out to assess the impact on children and families so as to make changes when needed. They also pointed out how it has been useful:

“we have policies and laws created regularly as needs are identified through National child development agency, and it is very useful. Before the creation of National child development agency there was no joint planning between various government agencies, and each ministry or agency had focused on its mandate without sharing or learning from other partners since activities relevant to various rights of the child were planned in isolation.” Sw2.

The social workers explained that presence of laws and policies has been useful in their daily activities not only these were described as useful tools that facilitate better delivery of their

services but also they are important for children ,families and communities as they have been associated with the decrease of children rights violations perpetrated by families and communities in general who have understood that some practices are harmful to children and are punishable by the laws and clearly indicate the behaviors which are acceptable in safeguarding the children rights like reporting and sharing information with the actors in charge so that required actions may be taken to respond to those violations.

Creating effective and strong partnerships

When working with community based initiatives, effectiveness in service provision relies in facilitating easy access of services and close collaboration as explained here:

“Family and Child Protection Program has been established in each District, Volunteers called friends of family have been appointed .all these groups help us as social workers to reach vulnerable families and accomplish our duty to protect children rights”Sw6.

Coordination meetings allow information sharing and definition of roles between actors as better service provision in child welfare depend on collaboration between organized and functional channels as explained here:

“Through regular meetings, we were able to design a case management system, with clear roles, functions and expected outcomes, all this allow better performance for various actors involved in protection of children’s rights and to update each other on their activities and progress in fulfilling their mandate”Sw1.

The presence of actors from distinct institutions was also linked with monitoring of children rights realization as asserted by Sw4 in this way:

“We organize district-level meetings to take action ensuring that the rights of the child are respected, including meetings with child protection officers and collaborate with the NCDA, NCPD, local authorities and centers like orphanages or street children institutions”sw4.

It is important to note that problems identified require immediate actions and, since among the resources available to respond to them include the expertise and knowledge of social workers, it is understood that their guidance and orientation to involved child welfare actors about provision for needs of children is well exploited in many areas as stated:

” As Social workers we help in setting up Early Child Development programs to address malnutrition problems and provide trainings and supervision to workers and community health volunteers on how to ensure proper child development like prepare a balance diet and

also we run education sessions about child play and provide parenting trainings for families”Sw3.

The partnership between community based structures and social workers facilitate certain interventions like family support interventions which are carried out as a result of information sharing between social workers and community health workers about status of families where those who are in need are identified and assisted to safeguard the wellbeing of children .This way explained in these words:

”we provide livelihood support to needy families so that they can take care of their children and provide them with basic necessities in partnership with community health volunteers” Sw2.

Creating effective partnerships aiming at protection of children rights allow social workers to access information shared by community based structures about families worthy to be supported in meeting basic needs of children growing in them, leading to family support interventions. There is also mutuality between those community structures and social workers who work closely with them through trainings and supervisions needed not only for quality service delivery but also stimulate behavior change at all levels involved. Effectiveness of interventions carried out also is assessed during coordination meetings facilitated at different levels where actors with distinct responsibilities and expertise in protection of children rights not only share with others about their roles and responsibilities but also collaborate to facilitate easy access of services by children and families and update each other about their progress in fulfilling their mandate of protecting children rights.

Capacity building activities for families

Children rights related discussions initiated by volunteers who are member of community are effective because families know these volunteers and can ask them questions or guidance anytime as they are easily accessible within their community. These kind of interventions were describes as empowering for families as stated :

“We empower families so that they protect children’s rights through different trained volunteers and local leaders who conduct regular home visitation in which they discuss with family members on how to respect child rights”Sw5.

Ignorance may impede the access to some health services, posing threats to development and wellbeing of children, reason why during sensitizations some negative attitudes and harmful practices are eradicated so that acquisition of knowledge and other useful information is facilitated to families this was explained along these lines:

*"we sensitize parents and other caregivers about immunizations programs to families and advocate for them in terms of accessibility to medical care and pediatric care. Also awareness sessions about COVID 19 preventions measures for children are facilitated"*Sw2.

Expanding knowledge of parents about different topics is beneficial for them as they need to discuss and provide guidance to their children because, in order to have meaningful discussions with children, there are some attitudes to be adopted according to the topic of discussion and these skills to facilitate discussion with children are developed during dialogues held in community as they stated here:

"We equip parents with knowledge to be able to have discussions with their children about topics like prevention against risky behaviors like drug abuse, delinquency ,street life, unprotected sex and its implications on health ,values and love of school," Sw4.

In their interventions with families it was also explained that trainings are organized on parenting as follows:

" for families we have activities like parenting training" Sw6.

"We work with families through sensitization that encourages them to fulfill responsibilities mentioned above and understand its importance to the child" Sw3.

Different means are used to reach a big audience and, existing platforms like large government meetings are used as opportunity to include a message about children rights and was stated by social workers in these words:

*" Families are educated on child rights during meetings organized by the organizations, or organization officials attend to the local government meetings at the village level and request to be allowed to talk about the child rights"*Sw7.

Capacity building activities for families are conducted not only to empower them so that they may expand their knowledge but also they may be able to facilitate discussions with their children. Using different channels and platforms available in community to reach big audience, social workers run awareness raising sessions about children rights. A part from this, in collaboration with social workers, volunteers are supported and guided in various ways so that they visit families to discuss about different matters around protection of

children rights and it is effective because families know these volunteers as they are living together in community making it easier for them to reach out to them anytime and have fruitful relationships. Furthermore, social workers identify barriers that limit families to access health related services needed for the development of children to address them and ensure that family attitude towards access is improved, as it is important that children needs in term of health are met by their families who are caring for them. Among barriers identified include ignorance which limit families to access those health services provided in community causing some practices or attitudes unfavorable to wellbeing of children, reason why receiving attention of social workers is paramount.

Category 3: Lessons learned in ensuring children’s’ rights

Category of lessons learnt in ensuring children rights consists of sub categories: the use of solution focused approaches, right based approaches.

Category	subcategory	Proving statement
Lesson learnt in insuring children rights	Use of a solution focused approach	<i>“Prevention and response to the problems is everyone’s responsibility including religious organizations. Partners should play a role in changing wrong mindset of families who show that not only they are poor but also can’t do anything for their families that all they need is financial support to fulfill their responsibilities as parents. And positive parenting trainings are needed to help families in fight against poverty.” Sw1.</i>
	Strength based approach	<i>”Everyone is unique and has his own needs, before conducting any intervention it is needed to do individual assessment.”Sw3.</i>
		<i>”Promoting the rights of the child is a journey and to achieve this requires collaboration between the authorities, families and children. Ignoring the rights of the child has many consequences for the child but the most important thing is that the child who is not given his or her rights also lives as a parent who violate the rights of her children. Caring for the rights of the child is important because when the child is cared for and protected he reaches his full potential which contribute to the creation of happy and harmonious families thus has a positive impact on the country and the world at large” Sw2.</i>
	Rights based approach	<i>”The lesson I learned is that everyone who lives with children must be patient heart because children make mistakes and, lack of patience while dealing with them that can affect their development.”Sw4.</i>

	Rights based approach	<i>"A child raised by parents who understands the rights of the child grow up well socially and emotionally, studies well, behave well, and can support others" Sw6.</i>
	Right based	<i>" Making the child rights as an issue that is concerning every person will greatly help to improve the conditions of children" Sw7.</i>

Social workers explained how they adopt a solution focused approach in their interventions using resources available around them precisely how they use the respect communities have towards their faith based organizations as a tool to aid in changing wrong mindset of some families :

"Prevention and response to the problems is everyone's responsibility including religious organizations.

Partners should play a role in changing wrong mindset of families who show that not only they are poor but also can't do anything for their families that all they need is financial support to fulfill their responsibilities as parents. And positive parenting trainings are needed to help families in fight against poverty." Sw1.

Social worker highlighted the importance of assessment in their interventions to understand their clients and find out their needs:

"Everyone is unique and has his own needs, before conducting any intervention it is needed to do individual assessment." Sw3.

Social workers emphasized the need to promote children rights as a process in which partnership at different levels is needed to prevent that infringement of children rights may not only affect them but also be passed on to next generations :

"Promoting the rights of the child is a journey and to achieve this requires collaboration between the authorities, families and children. Ignoring the rights of the child has many consequences for the child but the most important thing is that the child who is not given his or her rights also lives as a parent who violate the rights of her children. Caring for the rights of the child is important because when the child is cared for and protected he reaches his full potential which contribute to the creation of happy and harmonious families thus has a positive impact on the country and the world at large" Sw2.

There are also some attitudes required in their daily activities as they mentioned, which involves restraining themselves for doing harm in their practice as it may affect children:

”The lesson I learned is that everyone who lives with children must be patient heart because children make mistakes and, lack of patience while dealing with them that can affect their development.”Sw4.

It was stated that protection of children rights has a positive impact on children’s behaviors more importantly their ability to start and preserve social connections and interactions with others:

”A child raised by parents who understands the rights of the child grow up well socially and emotionally, studies well, behave well, and can support others”Sw6.

Condition of children will be improved if everyone make children rights a concern:

” Making the child rights as an issue that is concerning every person will greatly help to improve the conditions of children”Sw7.

Protecting children rights is a process where partnership of actors at different levels is needed to safeguard the children of the current and next generations. Positive outcomes related to good behaviors and better social interactions have been noted in children where their rights are ensured. Approaches used includes using resources available in community like faith based organizations to create change being beneficial in reaching big audiences and are targeted to aid in changing attitudes related to addressing problems arising from poverty where there is passive involvement of community.

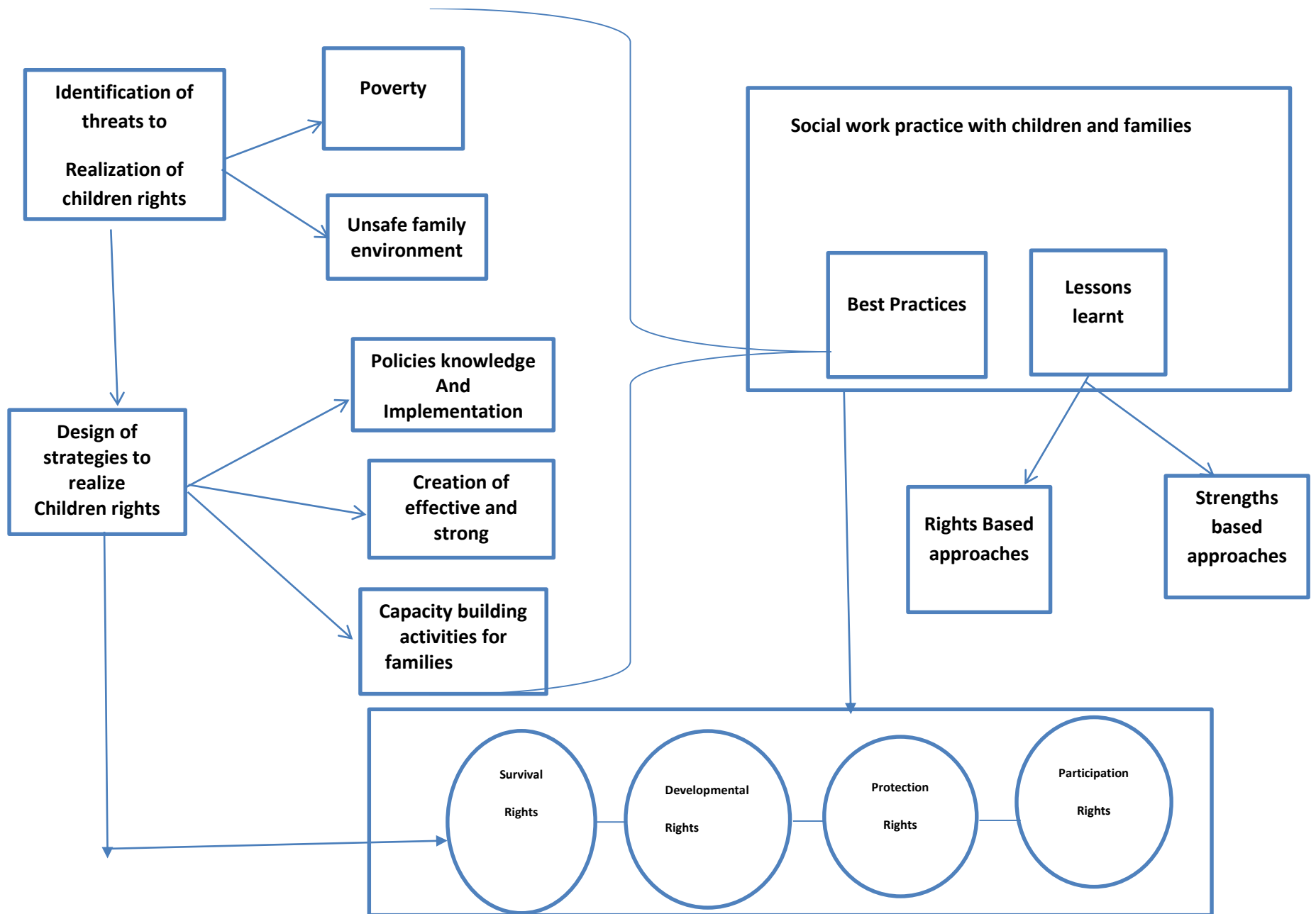
4.2. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Table of category and subcategories

Category	Subcategory
Identification of threats to realization of children rights	Poverty
	Unsafe family environment
Design of strategies to realization of children rights	Policy knowledge and implementation
	Creation of effective and strong partnerships

	Capacity building activities for families
Lessons learned in ensuring children rights	Use of strength based approaches
	Use of rights based approaches

The figure below show the process of protection of children rights ,it explains the indivisibility of the rights and how the service provision at each level affect the others



Poverty referred to as a situation characterized by lack of necessary income to meet one 's basic needs, is a global challenge and a mother to several social problems which is menacing people's lives, especially in developing countries(Kalanganire & Rutikanga, 2014). Stunting has been found in 38% of under 5-year old Rwanda children in 2015(Ahishakiye et al., 2019).This inability to meet basic needs ,affect families with children who fail to provide a balanced diet needed to grow up well as result they suffer from malnutrition and other related health complication, and is indeed a barrier to realization of survival rights of children .it is among socio economic causes leading to the increase of street children(Kayiranga & Mukashema, 2014).The articles 23 ,24 of UNCRC defines the Survival rights as child's right to life and critical needs like food, housing, living conditions and medical services and protection against damaging practices(Butrymowicz, 2015).Child maltreatment which embrace various harms perpetrated against children physically, sexually, emotionally and neglect has been associated with poverty in child welfare calling for home visit and parenting programs not only as response strategies but also prevention of additional social problems(Barlow & Ffph, 2021).In his study about relationship between school fees and sexual violence among girls,(Gerver, 2013)affirms that that poverty created situations where girls are sexually abused by friends of families who were providing financial support to them and could not be reported to the police since the perpetrator had threaten to stop the support and that financial dependence on a sexual violence perpetrator was creating additional problems including early pregnancies and psychological distress. Farrell et al., 2017 argues that poverty is a risk factor for abuse since the economic environment of the child can expose him to risk of high deadly abuse problems. This has demonstrated the relation between poverty and violation of survival, developmental and protection rights of children and is aligned with findings of the study where social workers explained how they engage themselves and work together with parents to bridge the gaps using various preventive interventions including ECD programs where a holistic approach is used to support families to meet the needs of their children and fulfill their rights. A high rate of children rights violations happen in the family and social work practitioners go back there in order to work with families and empower parents so that they fulfill well their care responsibilities of bringing up children to reach their growth and development .The family is a key social institution where a child is taught his/her first experiences of life and get social, physical, emotional support needed as person to survive (Jecinta et al., 2019). However, not all families are adept to take care of the child in an appropriate way and meet his developmental needs. Maçastena, (2020) claims that there is a strong correlation between domestic violence and violence against children with negative outcomes on children growing up in family as they are likely to be abused by one of their parents the victim or the perpetrator.

In addition to that, she pointed out the devastating effects of domestic violence on mothers where it undermines their parenting abilities not only by exposing children they are supposed to nurture and care to additional child protection issues, but also transform them into future perpetrator of violence, as a result of identifying themselves and imitating violent parents who conditioned and normalized the use of violence in their daily lives. This same phenomena was encountered in Rwanda, where it was pointed out that the increase in domestic violence and spousal conflicts leads to separation and divorces generating noteworthy number of children with no parental maintenance(Kayiranga & Mukashema, 2014). Kamaryati & Malathum, (2020) found out that family is beneficial in providing a relief to its members in periods of stressful life events specifically in cases of suicidal adolescents, the best supporters were parents of these adolescents. Turner & Maschi, (2014) explains that a good collaboration between client and social worker in empowerment based interventions is required and depends on a mutual relationship where the client is respected and seen as expert who have strength to overcome the challenging situation. The social work interventions for children from violent families prioritize the safety of children and through multidisciplinary work with other partners, a care plan is designed in collaboration between social workers and parents after a deep assessment. All this show the importance of the family in safeguarding and promoting the developmental rights of the children, how being involved in the life of their children is of utmost importance ,and the success of interventions performed depend on the attitude of social workers to give due respect to the family while also protecting children. The availability of policies and services aiming at improving the condition of children and families may not suffice if there is no good collaboration between different actors who has within their responsibility the implementation and realization of children rights. The role of policies is stimulate multi sectorial governance and service harmonization approaches to address the safety, durability, and well-being of children and their families. Lake & Jamieson, (2016) linked collaboration between partners with effective service delivery to families in distress, regardless the fact that government have the mandate to protect and fulfill the rights of the children ,because as one actor concentrating on its mandate without sharing experiences with or learning from others does not provide good results since activities are planned in isolation and its required to create referral pathways and communicate regularly with actors not only to manage and provide integrated services but also minimize harm that threaten the families. This correlates with the argument of Wessells(2021)which accounts for the fact that good partnership between the government and community based initiatives facilitated the abandonment of harmful practices like female genital mutilations and child marriages in Ethiopia and allow great health outcomes for mothers and children. Therefore, different actors are key role players in promoting and preserving children rights, and each actor's contribution is meaningful to the team therefore

good collaboration, mutual understanding between different community based networks, organizations, government institutions facilitate the implementation of policies and effectiveness in service delivery. McMahan,(2021) argues that networks based on Partnerships and collaboration are essential because they facilitate resources sharing and knowledge transfer. Children are under the care of their parents however they belong to another wide group which is the society where interactions between them and other member of society contribute to acquisition of new skills needed for the development in different aspects of life, meaning that the member of the society are called to protect the rights of the children and develop awareness on harm that their actions may inflict on children so that they collaborate in preventing them to happen and get skills to respond to them once that they have happened(Ulhaq, 2021).Capacity building activities aim indeed at raising awareness about the responsibilities of adults to protect children and equip them with necessary knowledge in not only about prevention and limitation of actions that may pose threats to psychological, physical and social wellbeing of children but also seek behavior change and indicate the attitude to adopt in some situations suspected to cause harm, what to do and the institutions that can help. This is was further supported by Subashi & Bregu(2021)affirming that capacity building is essential component in creating harmless environment for children and families. Through these activities also children member of the society are equipped with self-protection skills essentially those who do not attend school like street children or teenage mothers. Heib,(2020) affirms that it is necessary to build the capacity of families to cope with social problems and design program that boost positive and safe interactions between children, families and their environment to facilitate child development to reach their full potential by addressing poverty ,criminal social environment and family related problems in society. The findings of our study clearly supported the scientific literature that highlighted the importance of community building activities performed in collaboration with different actors available and have proven to be effective in reaching desired outcomes in terms of upholding children rights.

Conclusion

The results showed that protection of children rights to survival ,development, protection and participation are ensured in collaboration with different actors who bring their resources ,expertise and commitment to fulfill their mandate .There is identification of threats to realization of children rights and response to those threats through creation of strategies where all children, parents and society are involved .social workers are main actors in all levels due to their knowledge of existing resources and facilitate the exploitation of those resources conducting interventions dedicated to help parents to accomplish well their duties and children to realize their rights and be well prepared for future.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the results analysis and discussion, the protection of children rights in Rwanda from social workers perspectives revealed that children rights to survival, development, protection and participation are indivisible requiring comprehensive services for families with focus on the needs of children. The structure of services and related social work strategies and interventions were listed where a combination of various approaches targeting families is carried out by social workers in collaboration with different actors who bring their resources, expertise and commitment to achieve positive outcomes.

it was found that negative attitudes and behaviors like living in street, engagement in risky behaviors that both endangers their life and create additional problems like unwanted pregnancies, contraction of sexually transmitted infections on behalf of children and parents ,behaviors exhibited by the act of denying children opportunity to grow well by presenting inconsistency in meeting their health care needs or exposing them to violence all these signaled the need for performing interventions involving mobilizing individuals and groups to make changes compatible with protection of children rights.

As best practices in protection of children rights ,it was found the identification of threats to realization of these rights within which poverty itself and related psychosocial problems receive attention of different actors mainly social workers that implement related interventions conducted according to resources available in community prioritizing the wellbeing of children.

Additionally, children living social contexts which are perilous to their development in family were also a concern to be addressed and responded to through creation of strategies where all children, parents and society collaborate to make changes. The knowledge and implementation of policies is essential as it facilitates better delivery of services and play role in shaping the attitude of the community towards safeguarding children rights in sense that harmful practices punishable by the law are clarified whereas acceptable deeds are encouraged.

Through creation of effective and strong partnerships, interventions are conducted in collaboration with different actors bringing along their active involvement and expertise. The interventions regarding capacity building seek to support families in overcoming their challenges so that they may be able to accomplish their duties of protecting children rights.

RECOMMENDATION

- The government of Rwanda should reinforce the community outreaches activities and programmes, including crusades, in collaboration with non-government agencies and organizations, to ensure that the government commitments on children's rights are extensively communicated to all. It has been shown that the community based initiatives are having a good impact therefore reinforcing it will also help reach a big audience and improve the condition of many children.
- The government of Rwanda should continue to support children participation related initiatives including organization of field trips to more developed countries to facilitate exchange helping in expanding their knowledge and get international perspective about participation.
- Social workers should increase research initiatives and publication for children rights advancement about Rwanda. This is crucial because it guides future interventions and programs related to children and family and facilitate critical thinking enhancement.

This study highlighted the social work interventions that are being carried out in protection of children rights in Rwanda, it put emphasis on the service provision dedicated to empower children and their families through the use of social work approaches that trust the abilities of families to overcome challenges and boost their self-reliance. It shows that within the community however poor it might be, there is always resources to be exploited in protecting children's rights as they are the future and their wellbeing depend on the care and safeguard of their current abilities. It is advised that Social workers should not only empower families to fulfill their duties but also community based structure should be empowered to be self-reliant.

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SUMMARY

To analyze social work interventions related to protection of children's rights in Rwanda and identify best practices and lesson learned by social workers while ensuring children's rights. Empowerment approaches to families promote children rights to survival, development, protection and participation. Master thesis is composed by two main parts: the first part analyses the theoretical aspects of promotion of children rights and analyses best practices and lesson learned by social workers. The second part demonstrates the methodology, the structure and results of the research of best practices and lesson learned in ensuring children rights. Through purposive sampling 7 social workers from Rwanda were chosen and interviewed where the method of semi structured interview was used for collecting data. The theoretical analysis of promotion of children rights and the analysis of scientific literature revealed that Some problems in social work practice are recurring as the social problems are a vicious cycle, if the approach to management of those problems is documented and shared with others, the time spend on solving them is used in other matters that advance children rights and family wellbeing in general. Evaluating social work practice in Rwanda, provide insights

on approaches that lead to success and can be tested by others to reach good results. Delivery of proactive and preventive services which allow families to take up their care duties and promote autonomy is paramount in upholding children rights. The findings of qualitative research revealed that upon identification of threats to realization of children rights, poverty and unsafe family environment are big humpers to wellbeing of families and jeopardize all efforts that actors use to uphold children rights. Creation of strategies to realize children rights included policy knowledge and implementation, creation of effective and strong partnerships and conduct capacity building activities for families .a combination of these was qualified as a best practice in ensuring children rights and application of strength based approaches and right based approaches have shown good outcomes in life of children and mentioned as lesson learnt y social workers.

ANNEXES 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) In Rwanda, on what basis can we say that the rights of the child are respected?
- 2) How do you work with families to protect children's rights?
- 3) Apart from working with families, what other activities do you do to ensure children's rights?
- 4) What actions do you take to ensure the children rights to development?
- 5) What actions do you take to ensure children survival rights?
- 6) What challenges do you face in your daily activities related to ensure children's the rights?
- 7) Based on your experience, what recommendation would you give on how to overcome these challenges?
- 8) An expert in children rights protection what are lessons learned could you share with your fellows on how to better ensure rights of the children's rights?

9) What best practices in ensuring children's rights could you share so that they may be disseminated?

10) Do you have any comments?