

THE NEED FOR CHILD PROTECTION MEASURES IN THE WORLD BANK SAFEGUARDS- NAMINYA CHILDREN'S CONSULTATION.

In many African societies and the world at large, children are left out of important decisions which at times may have positive or negative impacts or both impacts on their lives. This was the case with the involuntary resettlement that took place in Jinja to pave way for the construction of the dam. Children were not involved in drawing up the policy, neither were they consulted to find out how such a resettlement or project could impact on their livelihoods.

Again, during the ongoing review of the World Bank safeguards, the World Bank has failed to solicit the input of children into this process. Therefore, civil society has decided to help involve children and hold consultations in different countries seeking their views about the importance of including both human and children's rights in the safeguards and their recommendations to the World Bank. The consultation held in Naminya on September 14th, 2013 was the very first time these resettled children have been involved in such a discussion, or given the opportunity to share their grievances. It included approximately 25 children between the ages of 4 and 17.

The children highlighted the following problems affecting them

Food insecurity

This was voted the number one challenge families and children face. Due to the small pieces of land which have been over cultivated, the produce is no longer enough to feed families which at times have one meal a day. Cassava was listed as the most eaten food with greens, a diet that puts children's health at risk. One child stated that *"the plots are small and infertile making it difficult for people to get enough food"*.

Limited access to education

They noted that there is no single secondary school in the resettlement village and the few primary schools are overcrowded. The distance to school of 2.5 km was another challenge as it puts many children off or when they endure it, they get to school late and tired. Others have dropped out of school because their parents cannot afford to send them to school *"Most children have been denied a right to education because their parents cannot afford the send them to school"*. "

Limited access to health services

The children noted that the current health center in the village serves both resettlers and "outsiders" yet there are few doctors (usually one) and nurses (usually 2). The doctors and nurses come in late as they do not stay within the village and do not work on weekends. Sick children whose parents cannot afford transport to other hospitals have to wait until Monday to access treatment. The other challenge was limited medicines which at times run out for months and parents resort to traditional herbs or self-medication for their children. This puts the lives of children in danger and some have died as a result. *"If one of our brother's or sister's gets sick on weekend, we have to carry them for a long distance to other hospitals"*.

Limited access to water

Children complained that the village has only one bore hole which many times is over used and breaks down. The piped water was found to be expensive and therefore was closed off. Girls in particular complained that the long waits at the bore hole or the wells puts them in harm's way for rapists or molesters who have become rampant. *"We walk long distances to fetch water and carry heavy jerry cans of water, get home tired and can't revise our books"*.

Sexual abuse

Although the children were not comfortable stating who in particular has been abused, they confirm that sexual abuse is becoming rampant. *"Men come from outside with a lot of money, deceive our sisters who are still in school. They are either raped or defiled which has led to many dropouts and early marriages"*.

Poor housing

The houses were built without future consideration of increase in family sizes. Many children complained that when it gets to sleeping time, they are piled like "animals" due to limited space. The older boys complained of limited land to build their own houses and staying with their families has become an inconvenience which has forced some to move out and start another life in towns like Mbiko and Jinja. *"The houses were poorly built. At night, many children are piled like sacks of maize in order to fit them in a room"*.

"Induced" child labour

They called it induced because they are not forced by their parents but rather the adolescents take it upon themselves to work during holidays to supplement the families' income. The boys' porter while girls dig for money. However, some boys noted that they do this all the time even during school time to fund for their education which their parents can longer afford. *"We have to work before and after school in order to support our families"*.

Poor infrastructure

During heavy rains which have already started this month, the road becomes impassable. The children confirmed that during such times, they get to school wet, dirty and hungry while some skip school on such days. *"During rainy seasons, we get to school wet and dirty because the roads flood and erode"*.

Broken families

The children noted that many of them do not get the parental love they are entitled to. This is because some parents left due to hardships faced upon resettlement while others are too stressed with life burdens that they do not show them love. *"Since our parents till the land from morning to evening so they have no time for us any more"*.

High adult illiteracy rates

The children noted that because many of their parents didn't go to school, some are using it as a scape goat not to send them to school, mistreat them and others force their children into early marriages.

“Most of our parents are illiterate which has led to massive suffering of children eg; severe beating, denial to education, denial of food etc”.

Recommendations to the World Bank

Most importantly, the World Bank should ensure that both Human and Children’s Rights are included in their safe guards because sustainable development is impossible without respecting human rights. Since Safe guards are supposed to protect people from projects negative impacts, how better can they achieve their objectives than upholding both human and children rights. Development should not only be about income generation but also improving people’s lives and by that, human rights should be upheld. World Bank funded projects are aimed at ending extreme poverty. This will necessitate the World Bank to include human rights because inability to deal with human rights directly will undermine anti-poverty effort

The World Bank should ensure that in the new safe guards, children are particularly looked at and their interests and needs made top priority. The safe guards should ensure that borrowing countries show how the projects are likely to affect the children and how these will be resolved. The children are the future generations of this world, if they are not looked after well, it will have negative impacts on the future generation.

The number and years of World Bank monitoring visits to resettlement areas should be increased to about 10 years. This will give them a better view of how the resettled people are coping in the new area plus counter act on any negative impacts early enough. These visits should include decision making people. Meetings and consultations should always be held with all the people including children and adolescents to ensure that everyone’s view is heard and acted upon.

The World Bank in its review should include that if a project is found to be violating human and children’s rights, funding should stop immediately. This way, borrowing countries will ensure that human rights are respected since they still need funding. This way borrowing countries will be held responsible for violating human rights and if funding is stopped, the World Bank would have shown the rest of the world that it supports and protects human rights.

The children also suggested that a Board of Director responsible for upholding both children and human rights in the different World Bank funded projects should be voted. This person will be responsible for guiding the World Bank where possible to ensure that both human and children’s rights are not violated by World Bank funded projects.

The new Safeguards should address the rights of people with disabilities. They should require borrowing countries to show how the needs and interests of people with disabilities will be met and how such people will benefit from the projects. Since the WB is a member of the UN family, it’s obliged to respect human rights. These rights belong to everybody including people with disabilities.

Older children requested that the new safe guards should show how children who are almost 18 by the time they are relocated and resettled should be helped to make the transition smooth into

adulthood. They should be consulted and their needs and interests attended to. Many times, the resettlement policy does not include them or involve them in the preparation of the policy.

Within the new safe guards, the World Bank should ensure that issues to do with climate change are anticipated and responded to before funding a project. This is because 80% of people in Africa depend on the environment for their livelihood and the poorest countries as research has shown will be most affected by climate change. In the Environmental impact assessment, the World Bank new safe guards should require borrowing countries to examine the likelihood impacts of the project on the environment and ways in which those impacts can be minimized.

The World Bank should ensure that borrowing countries avail help to the resettled families for a longer time about 2 years. This way; families will be able to work to get themselves back to either the level they were on before resettlement or a higher level. This way, the World Bank would have fulfilled its promise that its projects improve people's lives rather than worsen them as it is the case in countries.