



## Strengthening Child Protection in Africa: Best Practices in Awareness and Stakeholder Engagement

*Insights from Seven National Child Helplines on Preventing Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA)*

### Executive Summary

The Voice Up Africa! project, led by Child Helpline International, brings together child helplines from seven African countries - Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda in a joint effort to combat Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA). Through a collaborative regional exchange, the project documented best practices and learning on addressing OCSEA in two key thematic areas: 1) awareness raising among children and communities and 2) stakeholder engagement at national level.

The report highlights how community-driven campaigns and multi-sectoral collaboration can significantly enhance child protection outcomes. Awareness raising efforts improved OCSEA knowledge and reporting, while stakeholder engagement strengthened national systems and policy frameworks. This brief presents key findings, outcomes and impact, effective strategies and practices, and actionable recommendations to guide future initiatives. The report concludes with the next steps for the child helplines participating in the project, as well as other child helplines in the region.

### Who Was Involved

Seven national child helplines contributed case studies for the collection of best practices:

Country	Child Helpline
Ethiopia	Adama Child Helpline- Enhancing Child Focused Activities (ECFA)
Kenya	Childline Kenya
Mozambique	Linha Fala Criança
Namibia	LifeLine/ChildLine Namibia
South Africa	Childline South Africa
Tanzania	Tanzania National Child Helpline (C-Sema)
Uganda	SAUTI 116

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### Key Findings

- **Awareness raising:** Context-specific, multi-channel approaches i.e. combining school programs, peer-to-peer education, community outreach and media were most effective.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** Multi-sector collaboration, role-based training and integration into national frameworks significantly improved OCSEA response capacity and coordination.
- **Child participation:** Children and youth involvement in design, delivery and advocacy improved message relevance and ownership.
- **Policy impact:** Stakeholder engagement led to strengthened frameworks and strategic plans, updated the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and OCSEA integration into national child protection policy.

### Impact in Numbers

- Over 2.8 million people reached in a single digital campaign (Tanzania).
- Reports and referrals on OCSEA-related cases to child helplines increased significantly, e.g. in Kenya OCSEA reports rose from 14 (2022) to 449 (2024).
- Improved technical capacity of 400+ frontline service providers through role-based training across multiple countries.
- OCSEA integrated into national child protection policies, frameworks and strategic plans in Uganda, Kenya and South Africa.
- One online child sexual abuse case successful prosecuted, and a reduction in the prevalence of child sexual exploitation and abuse in Kilifi and Kwale Counties (Kenya) from 1.7% (2021) to 0.8% (2022).

## Best Practices and Thematic Recommendations

### Effective Strategies and Practices in Awareness Raising on OCSEA and Child Helplines

- Peer-to-peer education and child/youth-led outreach improves relevance, knowledge retention and relatability.
- Community-embedded campaigns leveraging existing community structures i.e. leaders, champions and local networks fosters trust, ownership and impact.
- Tailored approaches and content for cultural and language adaptation combined with accessible formats ensures understanding, inclusion and community acceptance.
- Multi-platform delivery combining offline activities with digital channels (radio, TV, social media) maximizes visibility and reach in a cost-effective way.
- Interactive methods such as role plays, theatre, and storytelling and visual aids improves engagement, understanding, and boosts authenticity.
- Integration of OCSEA awareness into broader child protection efforts and structures enhance effectiveness and sustainability.
- Capacity building and involvement of frontline service providers enhances campaign delivery, post-campaign engagement and strengthens child protection systems.
- Consistently and prominently featuring child helpline numbers (e.g. 116) and reporting channels increases visibility, trust and use of child helpline services.
- Multi-sectoral collaboration and partnerships with state and non-state actors enhance the campaign credibility, impact and sustainability.



## Recommendations for Future Campaigns – Awareness Raising

- Sustain and expand children and caregiver-focused sensitization, integrating digital literacy into school curricula, and scale peer-led initiatives.
- Develop culturally and linguistically adaptable toolkits and materials, and ensure inclusive participation, including children with disabilities and minority groups.
- Invest in child-friendly, age-appropriate digital content, and interactive, localized tools.
- Embed campaigns and OCSEA messaging into existing community, school and faith-based structures, and child protection forums for long-term impact.
- Strengthen partnerships with government, law enforcement, tech industry, media and civil society.
- Expand capacity building for frontline workers i.e. police, social workers, teachers and community leaders, and equip parents and caregivers with tools for child protection.
- Promote accessibility of reporting mechanisms (e.g. child helpline 116), and offer multiple reporting channels for contacts.
- Leverage youth-led advocacy and use of local influencers and public figures.
- Monitor and evaluate campaigns to track impact and adapt strategies. Document and disseminate learnings and best practices.

## Effective Strategies and Practices in Stakeholder Engagement

- Cross-sector coordination and partnerships involving government agencies, law enforcement, tech industry, media, civil society and academia ensure ownership, sustainability and overall effectiveness.
- Government leadership and support strengthens legitimacy and scale of awareness initiatives.
- Alignment with national child protection frameworks and systems, sustains reforms and ensures scalability.
- Role-specific capacity building for frontline service providers and targeted stakeholders and investing in Training-of-Trainers (ToT) models improves relevance, engagement and uptake, and helps to scale knowledge and impact.
- Integrating OCSEA content and awareness into professional training institutions is an effective strategy as it promotes long-term systemic change.
- Data-driven advocacy using child helpline insights is critical for influencing child protection policy and frameworks and evidence-based programming.
- Meaningful child participation in awareness and policymaking improves relevance, credibility and encourages accountability.
- Leveraging traditional and digital media relations and engagements with local leaders expands reach and visibility of awareness-raising initiatives.
- Regional and cross-country learning fosters innovation and adaptation of proven approaches.

## Recommendations for Future Initiatives – Stakeholder Engagement

- Strengthen cross-sector collaboration and coordination with state and non-state actors through formal coordination structures.
- Anchor OCSEA initiatives on national policies, plans and child protection systems.
- Foster government-led coordination and institutional ownership.



- Use child helpline data to inform policy reforms and advocate for integration of OCSEA into national child protection legal and policy frameworks and strategic plans.
- Invest in targeted OCSEA training for frontline service providers and awareness across sectors and disseminate simplified OCSEA protocols and guidelines for stakeholders.
- Use Training-of-Trainers models and peer-learning for scale and sustainability.
- Promote the embedding of OCSEA content into professional training curricula.
- Leverage traditional and digital media to amplify messaging and explore innovative tools like Artificial Intelligence for monitoring and reporting OCSEA cases.
- Strengthen data systems and research for improved tracking, analysis and reporting of OCSEA cases to inform policy and interventions.
- Prioritize inclusive, child-centred approaches with active involvement of children and youth in the co-creation of materials and policy development.

### Conclusion and next steps

The Voice Up Africa! project experience and insights demonstrates that combining community-driven awareness with coordinated, policy-aligned stakeholder engagement significantly strengthens child protection systems. Across the seven countries, results show increased OCSEA reporting and referrals, improved inter-agency coordination, stronger policies and frameworks, and greater trust in child helplines.

As the project moves into its next phase, the following steps are recommended:

- Developing country-specific campaign plans using the documented best practices.
- Sustaining stakeholder engagement with government, law enforcement, judiciary, media, industry and civil society.
- Championing the integration of OCSEA training within professional development curricula, resource materials and institutional frameworks.
- Strengthening OCSEA monitoring and reporting systems for greater visibility and responsiveness.
- Expanding platforms for meaningful child and youth participation and empowerment.
- Promoting cross-country peer learning to share innovations and solutions on OCSEA prevention and response.
- Strengthen media partnerships to amplify messaging and visibility of child helpline services in a cost-effective way and foster sensitive and accurate reporting on OCSEA.