

SPEECH BY CABINET SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL PROTECTION, HON. AMB. UKUR YATAN, E.G.H., DURING THE PARTNERS' BRIEFING ON THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHILD PROTECTION AT DAYSTAR UNIVERSITY, NAIROBI, ON AUGUST 6TH, 2018

The CAS, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection,
The PS, State Department of Social Protection, Pension & Senior Citizens Affairs,
Representatives of our development partners,
All distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I sincerely wish take this opportunity to welcome you to this important occasion at which my Ministry will brief you about the International Conference on Child Protection which will be held on 8th to 10th, 2018 at this venue. I thank you most abundantly for finding time from your early morning schedule to attend to this briefing.

By holding the International Conference on Child Protection, indeed the first such congregation, the Government and Partners are underscoring the importance of safeguarding the future generation and therefore that of the nation by finding solutions to impediments against child protection.

Indeed, studies have shown that millions of children across the globe are subject of physical and mistreatment ranging from forced prostitution, corporal punishments in schools, rape and mutilation. According to figures previously provided by UN and Save the Children, WHO and others the sad reality is that over 218 children worldwide are labourers, 126 million of whom work in hazardous environment; 1.8million children are involved in prostitution or pornography and 1.2 are trafficked; upto 275 million witness domestic abuse annually and one billion children live in countries where it is legal to beat pupils. Further thousands of children being victims of murder, suffer violence in the guise of medical treatment as well as family sexual harassment.

This grim reality therefore presents us with an opportunity in this conference to re-examine, in a collaborative effort, the specific causes to increased child vulnerability and provide promising solutions for the same. Thus the inescapable relevance of the theme: **From vulnerability to resilience innovation and evidence.**

Ladies and Gentlemen, while this is the sad global outlook in the sector it is not all glum. The Government of Kenya put in place various measures geared towards mitigating vulnerability in the sector.

Through the Inua Jamii Cash Transfer Program, the Government has been supporting Orphans and Vulnerable children to cushion them from the effects of poverty and HIV pandemic. Currently, a total of 353,000 Households are registered and are being supported under this program.

Secondly, The Government through the Department of Children Services is supporting a total of 22,103 Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC's) in boarding secondary schools by paying for them school fees of Ksh 30,000 per year. This is under the Presidential Secondary School Bursary Program in which the government allocates a total of Ksh 400 Million per year.

Further, the Department also runs a Volunteer Children Officer program in which willing applicants are recruited and trained as Volunteer Children Officers to complement the work of the Children Officers both in the Sub County Offices and Statutory Institutions. Currently the Department has recruited a total of 400 VCOS countywide.

In order to ensure children issues remain in focus the Government has been at the forefront in advocating for child participation which is one of the key pillars in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child for which Kenya is a Signatory. To this end the Kenya Children Assembly structures both at the County and Sub County Offices were put in place. This aims at promoting child participation by allowing them to be part of the decisions that affect their welfare. Through the KCA forums, the children have been enlightened on their rights and responsibilities.

In addition, the Government has developed various guidelines; child online protection for children, parents, caregivers and educators; Guidelines for Alternative Family Care for Children; Area Advisory Councils (AAC) guidelines, in line with the Constitution among others.

It is important to note that the Government in collaboration with partners conducted a study on violence against children (VAC) in 2010 and developed a response plan, some efforts have been made to implement the plan though implementation process need to be strengthened and given more focus. Due to new emerging issues of violence against children like radicalization, child online abuse, child trafficking the Department has found it necessary to conduct another study before the end of the year 2018 on the best way to protect children.