

# Promoting Safe Spaces for Children in Uganda



By  
Veronica Babirye

CRANE's vision is that Children are Safe, Secure and Thriving in God's Plan as they fulfil their God-given potential and one of our focus areas is Children enjoying Safe Spaces.

Children are exposed to legal processes as victims of abuse; witnesses of crime, those in conflict with the law and sometimes because their parents have cases in court. In Uganda, the Office of the Directorate of Public Prosecution (ODPP) handles numerous cases, many of them falling in the category of defilement and the majority of victims are children as young as three months old. The perpetrators are well known to the victims and sometimes-even relatives. CRANE has tirelessly advocated for safe spaces for children to express themselves and now 9 child friendly rooms have been

created for them.

CRANE's partnership with the ODPP led to the training of more than 400 public prosecutors to promote child-friendly ways of approaching children so that they are respected and dignified in the process. This led to the launch of the first child-friendly space at the ODPP – a beautiful and fully equipped room that gives children a relaxing and free environment to express themselves. Click [here](#) to see a video about the launch.

The rooms include a wide range of therapeutic books for both children and prosecutors, play materials and a lot to help them relax and tell their story with ease and without intimidation. They are also receptions and holding spaces for child victims, witnesses before their appearance in court, Preparation rooms for victims and witnesses for court by the prosecutors, Interview rooms for child victims and witnesses and support centres for children who are at risk and may be in need of advice and support. In addition, with CRANE's provision of anatomical dolls to support ODPP in handling of gender and sexual offences in court, conviction rates have increased from 50% to 70%.

**“The room is the first of its kind to cater for a very important, vulnerable part of society and our clientele,” says His Lordship Justice Mike Chibita, Director of Public Prosecution in Uganda.**

With nine child-friendly rooms now across the country, we believe that children will have less traumatising traditional court moments, which will lead to good quality evidence and thus more convictions or justice. Crane's safeguarding team has carried on with training prosecutors in child safeguarding, psychology and development to promote the same

cause.