

VOICE IN UGANDA NEWSLETTER

November 2022

**IN COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND THE 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM
AGAINST GBV**

"UNITE! Activism to end violence against women and girls".



STORIES AND EXPERIENCES OF ENDING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN UGANDA

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a major form of human rights violation in Uganda with both reported and unreported effects on the wellbeing of vulnerable girls and women. A national survey on GBV in Uganda reveals that nationally, 56 percent of more than 5,000 women interviewed across the country had experienced both sexual and physical violence from their partners. 54 percent of women said their men insisted on knowing their whereabouts at all times, 46 percent reported being suspected of unfaithfulness and 71 percent of men wanted to control how their wives spent their money.

Many of the survivors of GBV suffer poor health outcomes including injuries, exposure to unwanted pregnancies and HIV/AIDS. The emotional and social effects such as loss of confidence, social isolation and depression are often underestimated particularly since most societies choose not to discuss this issue openly.

The victimisation and stigma towards survivors fuelled by negative traditional practices, social and cultural norms of patriarchy, polygamy and bride price often discourages many survivors from reporting violations and seeking justice. The complex nature of GBV therefore calls on innovative and collective efforts to address the vice.

Voice in Uganda is working in close partnership with several rightsholders and civil society organisations to address GBV among vulnerable girls and women using innovative and inclusive approaches. This year, Voice in Uganda joins the rest of the country and world to commemorate the **International Day Against Violence against women on the 25th November, 2022 and the 16 Days of Activism against GBV.**

This Newsletter seeks to share with you Voice's efforts to fighting GBV, some of the key milestones reached and stories from champions and survivors from across the country.



¹ UBOS November, 2021: National Survey on violence in Uganda: module 1: Violence against Women and Girls

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN MUBENDE DISTRICT

SURVIVORS SHARE THEIR STORIES AND TESTIMONIES

By Muhammad Kyeyune, SORAK Development Agency

"My husband with whom we have 5 children, beat me together with our children and chased us with machetes (locally referred to as pangas) threatening to kill us. He also sold out our house and rented out our farm land. He refused to pay the children's school fees causing them to drop out of school. I tried to approach the Local council one chairman who upon intervention, he abused and warned seriously to stay out of our issues. My 16-year-old son, who is a member in the Teens Up Now project told me about SORAK.

Through the intervention of SORAK, my husband and myself received counselling and were supported to resolve our conflicts. During the session, my husband promised never to beat us, to allow us carry out farming on our land and he agreed to take children back to school. SORAK solved our problems and now we are a happy family." Susan (Not real names) 39 years old from Kibalinga subcounty Mubende District.

"I was raped by our neighbor's son on my way back from school when I was 14 years old. I got pregnant and gave birth to a baby boy whom he neglected. My grandmother was threatened by his family which scared her from reporting the case to the authorities. When the teens up now project was introduced, I was eager to join one of the teens' groups which was successful. During our debate presentation at Nabingoola subcounty hall, my group leader who knew about my case and I approached the Project Manager SORAK and expressed our concern, after the activity, the Manager introduced us to the Female District Councillor who listened to my issues and promised to come meet my chairman LC1. Two days later, she came at our home with the chairman, my group leader, the Project Manager and the boy's father to discuss on the way forward. They resolved that the boy should be taken to Nabingoola police station which was done and was later taken to court where he was charged with rape and defilement. The judge told his family to take care of their grandson until their son completes his punishment which the family agreed to do." Salome from Nabingoola subcounty, Mubende District.

I lost my husband towards the end of last year (2021) with whom we had 3 children. After burial, his family members told me to leave my husband's home and go back to my parents' home. They also destroyed my crops in the garden and my father-in-law gave it to his other son. They threw our belongings outside which forced me to approach SORAK for help. Through SORAK's intervention, I was able to get audience from the LC1 Chairman and the Officer in Charge, Kibalinga Police station. The officer in charge ordered my father-in-law to allow me stay at my home again and also ordered them to vacate my garden. Therefore, the police together with SORAK Development Agency restored hope in me." Belinda (Not real names) Kibalinga subcounty, Mubende District.

Ms Akello Cathy, the Officer in Charge of Kibalinga Police station confirms that daily, the station registers many GBV cases including rape, defilement, robbery, land grabbing and battering. She confirms that most of the cases are as a result of alcoholism, gender inequalities, poverty, ignorance, negative cultural beliefs among others. The police is trying to curb the problem by;

- Creating community awareness about the dangers of GBV and the rights of freedoms of women and girls through close collaboration with stakeholders and organizations like SORAK Development Agency, the courts of law, district officials and local leaders.
- Reprimanding the perpetrators through imprisonment and using other penalties like paying sums of money to GBV survivors.

At District level, the District Probation and Social welfare officer observed that a total of 103 GBV related cases were recorded with Mubende central police station alone between January to October 2022. 11 cases were committed by juveniles and 92 adults.

There has been a total of 6 defilement cases inclusive of 4 cases of aggravated defilement, with a 1 male child also defiled. A total of 65 cases are before court, 34 under inquiry and 4 cases were closed.

SORAK strongly believes that much more still needs to be done to stem out GBV more especially forced/child marriage in Mubende. The culture of silence coupled with stigma and impunity has allowed violence against women and girls to prevail, in spite of the strong laws and policies put in place by the Government of Uganda.



GBV survivor with the Police officer in Charge at Kibalinga police station, Mityana

It is possible to fight violence against girls and women through;

- Youth empowerment to manage their sexual and reproductive health issues using peer-to-peer approach, comprehensive sexuality education in schools, life skills-based education, and increasing access to youth information centers.
- Strengthening networks, coordination and collaboration of all different stakeholders involved in addressing GBV.
- Work with vigilantes to identify cases of GBV and inform the concerned stakeholders in time.
- Empower adolescents, parents and leaders to change practices that discriminate against girls and to create social, economic, and civic opportunities for girls and young women.
- Providing girls who are already married with options for schooling, employment and livelihood skills, sexual and reproductive health information and services (including HIV prevention), and offering recourse from violence in the home.
- Addressing the root causes of child marriage, including poverty, gender inequality and discrimination, the low value placed on girls and violence against girls.



Muhammad (second left) with other members of the GBV coordination committee in Mubende District

INSTEAD OF FIGHTING EACH OTHER, LET'S FIGHT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

By Rightsholder from Kagote ward Fort portal city and Brenda Komurubuga, ACODEV



Betty Kagira (Not real name) uses her story to fight GBV in Fort portal City

"Since I was a child, I loved the idea of having a happy family, and am still holding on to that dream," says Betty. In 2017, I moved in with my boyfriend, after we had both completed university. Life seemed so enjoyable in our first year of marriage till 2019 when COVID19 hit the country. I witnessed my husband turn into a difficult man who started torturing me. When I became pregnant with our first child during the lockdown, we had a simple argument and the next thing he did was punch me so hard that I almost ended up losing my baby. I felt ashamed, embarrassed, and blamed myself because I thought I triggered him to react that way.

Towards mid-2020, my husband lost his job and this affected him psychologically. He was always thinking of what he was going to feed us. My family was no longer the noble family I used to dream of because things started to fall apart. My man resorted to taking alcohol as a way of relieving his stress. Time went on and I gave birth to our first baby, I thought that this baby would create an atmosphere of peace between me and my husband, or perhaps things would change. To my disappointment, things became worse than I expected in my marriage. He started beating me and

hurts insults at me to diminish my self-image.

I remember a day when he found me feeding our 7months old baby, he pushed me towards the wall, and started beating me saying "what are you good for if? Beating you isn't enough. You don't deserve anything, you're a worthless woman.". I managed to gain the strength of putting my baby to bed and because I was physically bruised and psychologically tormented, I cried myself to sleep and I wanted to end my life."

In a few days that followed, I heard about the community dialogue meeting prepared by ACODEV being announced by our community mobilizer in our village. I was compelled by my neighbor to go and at least listen in to what they were saying. In this dialogue meeting, the main theme was all about the link between GBV, alcohol abuse, and HIV. They taught us about the causes and effects of GBV, the dangers of alcohol abuse and also how HIV is spread, and what to do in case you are infected. To me, the most interesting thing which stood out was how they explained the interlink of these three. During

that session, I remember the facilitator emphasizing that excessive alcohol consumption plays a key role in gender-based violence and sexual risk-taking that exacerbates the spread of HIV.

Through these engagements and knowledge acquired from this support, I have become a GBV change agent in our community. I have been exposed to opportunities of talking about GBV on radio talk shows creating awareness and sensitizing the communities about its dangers, I have linked many young girls of my sort to care support organizations in Fortportal city. Through ACODEV empowering me to share my story in community dialogues, I have been able to regain back my self-esteem and encourage fellow young women not to give up on life. I have also been able to identify men experiencing GBV in our same communities because of such platforms and spaces given to me by ACODEV. On top of this, we have been taught on how to develop a saving culture and am doing this with some women group in my village.

For six months now, I have applied the knowledge learned into my marriage and I'm starting to realise some change. Although my husband still drinks, at least we longer have so many fights as we used to have before. I hope that as we continue having these sessions, my husband will also become one of the model men who will talk about GBV because he loves listening to what I teach and the information I get from ACODEV.

“When we fight each other. We defeat each other. When we fight Gender Based Violence. We defeat Gender-Based Violence. Most women fight men and most men fight women, thinking they are fighting Gender Based Violence. Until men and women choose to fight the enemy which is GBV instead of fighting each other, that is when we will defeat Gender-Based Violence.” Says Betty Kagira(Not real names), Rights holder during sensitization meeting on youth rights.



Youth while dialoguing with their leaders about their challenges including GBV in Fortportal city

CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE; THE ROLE OF GBV CHAMPIONS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST GBV



Antony Agaba Project Coordinator, COVOID

GBV Champions is a group of community agents championing the fight against GBV in Kigarama Sub County and Bugongi Town Council in Sheema District where the rate of GBV was at 52% in March 2022. The major causes of these GBV cases included alcoholism, poverty, denial of access to family property among others. The District also suffered from a weak system of identifying, reporting and follow-up of cases in the community which led to non or delayed access to services by survivors.

COVOID, in partnership with Voice worked closely with the community in April, 2022 to select the champions who comprise, GBV survivors, community leaders, VHTs and committed women and men across different disciplines. These volunteers chose to do something about the GBV problem and to join COVOID an effort to end the suffering of vulnerable women in their respective communities. COVOID equipped the champions with basic knowledge and skills, to identify, handle and refer GBV issues in close collaboration with police, health centres and local councils while ensuring confidentiality, actively listening to the survivors and communication hope. The GBV Champions have worked with the community to identify GBV cases and survivors, mediating discussions among couples facing domestic violence, counselling survivors and couples, organizing

community awareness campaigns. COVOID's community-based data collection and reporting has informed the issues tackled by the campaign for instance, cases of domestic violence namely child abuse, sexual abuse and marital rape, elderly mistreatment and land wrangles by grand children have been reported. The campaign is focusing on creating awareness on the misuse of power as the forms and main root cause of gender-based violence, effects of GBV as well as referral pathways for GBV survivors. This awareness campaigns have been extended through community Barazas, radio

talk shows, and other Local Council community engagement sessions organised by GBV champions and through community structures like the VSLAs, church groups and peer groups. The champions also make refer survivors for health, psychosocial support and legal aid to police, health facilities, CDOs office, LCs offices, legal aid clinics respectively. Since their deployment, the champions have reached a total of 536 community members, 420 of whom are female.

126 cases mainly domestic violence, have since been identified by the champions and 96 of these have been handled by champions at the household level through mediation, counselling and psychosocial support, while 30 have been referred to the relevant authorities such as Police, Community Development Office, Health and Probation office depending on the nature of the case.

The community has gained trust in the GBV Champions and they have often called upon them when they are troubled with GBV related issues. ‘

‘The community lately identifies me as GBV counsellor and not Parish Chief, and are always calling me when they are in danger because they know I will fight for them’ said Mrs Aineamani Viola, a GBV Champion in Kigarama Sub County but also Parish Chief Kigarama Parish, in Kigarama Sub County.

GBV Champions are ordinary people in the community doing extra ordinary things to fight Gender Based Violence in their communities and in Sheema District. As COVOID, we also believe they'll help to sustain the fight against GBV even when the project comes to an end” said Mr. Antony Agaba, Project Coordinator - COVOID.

“my husband had been forcing me into sex and has been so hurtful little did I know he was violating me. had never thought of reporting such matters to authorities because I would feel ashamed of betraying my culture. I attended an awareness meeting organized by the GBV champion in our area and they told us about different forms of GBV that included marital rape/forced sex and its dangers. That day turned my life. I would ordinarily not have reported but due to engagement with GBV Champions I reported.” Ms. Gloria (not real name) of Kyengiri village, Bugongi town council.

"during the dialogue with the help of a GBV champion at our house, I got to learn how continuous fights with my husband affects our children in the long run. I decided to seek forgiveness from my husband because I realized in marriage it wasn't about who is right or wrong, but understanding one another." GBV survivor in Kigarama Sub County (name withheld)

"I got the knowledge on gender-based violence interventions and response, and right now I know where to report cases of GBV. Am also engaging my fellow friends on the challenges they are facing on gender-based violence." Moses, GBV survivor.

Whereas the champions have rendered a commendable service, they have been met with limitations including; limited facilitation in terms of their stipend, considering the high costs of living, which at times is demoralizing for them because they at times have to incur transport costs, airtime during

coordination, and to move from house to house. The champions also lack branding material such as t-shirts and basic protective gear to enable them do their work deep in the communities easily. However, COVOID has kept them under close monitoring, mentorship and support through regular supervision, and being available when called upon for support for example during their community engagement meetings as a way of motivation.

COVOID has through working with GBV Champions registered some lessons; that GBV prevention needs long term interventions other than short term for example, the awareness campaigns such as Barazas should be continuous and repetitive instead of having one offs. We have also learnt that establishing grassroots structures, training them and putting them at the frontline of prevention of GBV in their communities as we do the guiding role is effective as it facilitates local activism which is sustainable.



Building capacity of GBV Champions about GBV Responsiveness, in Sheema District



Mr. Bedda, a GBV Champion facilitating a community awareness meeting on GBV in Rwakicunduru village, Bugongo Towncouncil, Sheema District

CIVIC SPACE TV, A SPACE FOR AMPLIFYING VOICES AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

By Asiimire Ritah, CCG

Gender Based Violence, especially violence against women and girls is agreeably a pandemic of its own and remains a huge concern, globally. Centre for Constitutional Governance (CCG), a Voice funded Non-Governmental Organization in Uganda is making use of Civic Space TV as an avenue to document, create awareness and amplify voices against Gender Based Violence in both rural and urban areas. (<https://youtube.com/@CIVICSPACE TV>)

Civic Space TV is a free reliable youtube channel that promotes the fundamental right of freedom of speech and association of Ugandans in and out of the country to engage freely in mobilizing, organizing, and expressing themselves in the day-to-day governance of their affairs. Being an objective and neutral platform, it allows all citizens to air out their sentiments that are not permitted on traditional television or would be very expensive in terms of airtime to be hosted on traditional TV.

Civic Space TV, through strategic media advocacy has successfully; acted as a vehicle to drive awareness about the nation's inequities that are persistent in fueling Gender Based Violence. It has also provided a

platform for survivors, activists and citizens to strongly express their opinions and grievances. Furthermore, it has increased engagement from the viewers and its wide reach has increased awareness of GBV nationally.

In Mbale city, CCG through funding from Voice is implementing a project titled –“ Self-led influencing in reclaiming civic space in Mbale City. The project is using the civic space TV to address the GBV challenges in the area. During an interview with Civic Space TV, Lubango Oliver, a women leader from Mbale City, Nabitiri Ward noted that women as mothers of the nation, deserve protection against harmful practices like Domestic Violence and continued harassment from men. She observed that a number of husbands in the area beat their wives and go ahead to bribe police officers to release them from custody or even sabotage women's efforts to access justice. She noted that many cases that have been reported but attention and action by authorities has been in vain. Important to note is that Oliver identifies the alcohol abuse and high rates of poverty as the causes of Gender Based Violence within Nabitiri Ward and calls for intervention in the matter by relevant authorities.



CCG has also worked closely with the police child protection departments in Industrial area and central police stations in Mbale city to undertake continuous interactive radio talk shows on local FM stations such as 93.1 IUIU FM. The shows were motivated by a desire to address the rising incidents of domestic violence, child related crime as a result of neglected families and children who have escaped from homes affected by violence. These children have also been unfortunate victims of rape and forced early marriages. The shows are complementing community engagement sessions with local who have expressed concern over the rising cases of violence against girls and women.

“We call upon all stakeholders to work with community leaders to protect women and girls against violence and hold perpetrators accountable”- Community Leader.

The 16 Days of Activism has overtime been an opportunity for CCG to amplify voices on GBV using a weekly exclusive women’s show (breaking the bias against non-inclusion of women in media spaces and talk shows) and community shows, where different Civil Society leaders, survivors and donors contribute to discussions about awareness about Gender Based Violence.

The organization also joins other civil society organisations such as Uganda Women’s Network (UWONET, ActionAid International Uganda, Safe Places Uganda and other women’s rights movements to push for better policies for protection of women and girls and accountability/action from leaders in reference to existing laws against GBV because matters related to violence are matters of human rights couched in law, policy at national, regional and International level.



CCG Programs Officer Okadapau Simon (second from Right) at IUIU FM with the OC Child and Family Department

The 16 Days of Activism has overtime been an opportunity for CCG to amplify voices on GBV using a weekly exclusive women's show (breaking the bias against non-inclusion of women in media spaces and talk shows) and community shows, where different Civil Society leaders, survivors and donors contribute to discussions about awareness about Gender Based Violence.

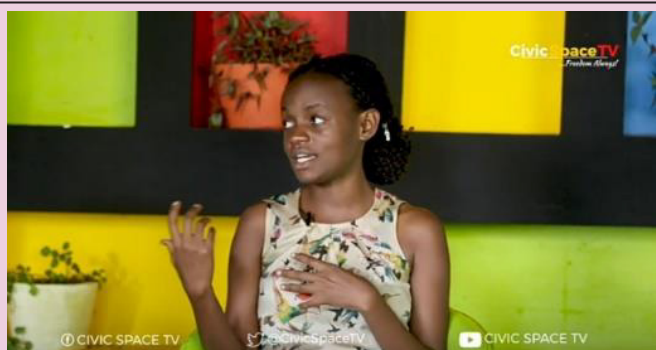
The organization also joins other civil society organisations such as Uganda Women's Network (UWONET, ActionAid International Uganda, Safe Places Uganda and other women's rights movements to push for better policies for protection of women and girls and accountability/action from leaders in reference to existing laws against GBV because matters related to violence are matters of human rights couched in law, policy at national, regional and International level.

Below are some of the voices of the women activists in relation to violence against girls and women;



Susan Achen, Program Manager at Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) during a women's show on Civic Space TV.

"In addition to laws existing in Uganda, there is advocacy under the Domestic Violence Act Coalition in our different spaces, circles of influence, individuals and institutions. They are raising awareness about the need for reforms because that acceptability is what gives the laws their efficacy to convince legislators that these laws are necessary. There is education, petitions and meetings held and everybody is playing a part in it."



Kirabo Marion speaking about safe online spaces to contribute to an end to Violence against women and girls

Kirabo Marion, a student at the Law Development Centre (LDC) noted that the advocacy in an online space, even with its power, needs liberal and democratic society to equally thrive because nature of campaigns needs a political good will. Marion, with reference to CCG's Digital rights campaign said it was key in providing security tips on how individuals can protect themselves on the internet even without depending on the state and acknowledged that social media has been a very important space for activists to share and contribute for campaigns.



Sandra Kwikiriza, Executive Director HER Internet

"It is important that we know the power that the internet accords us because it is a space for structurally marginalized voices to be heard. There is much more to be done to contribute to a feminist internet that is also safe for all users." – Sandra Kwikiriza, Executive Director of HER Internet on Civic Space TV.



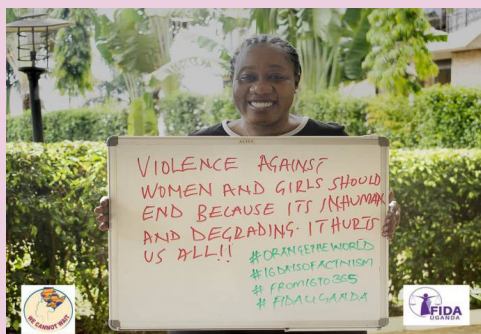
Tricia Gloria Nabaye (Middle) with a feminist lawyer Naima S Isas and Prof. Sarah Ssali of Makerere School of Women and Gender Studies(extreme right) on Civic Space TV

Contributions by different women on Civic Space TV have also pointed out that Police officers often paint a picture of **‘ideal victims’** and ask questions like ‘what were you putting on?’ , ‘where were you going at that time?’ , ‘He is your husband, why are you reporting him?’ , ‘You are a lame person, did they also rape you?’ Such questions and stereotypes about Gender Based Violence continue to discourage women from reporting cases to Police Stations and instill fear and shame among survivors. Tricia Gloria Nabaye insists that there is still more to be done about sensitization of individuals at all levels about Gender Based Violence and negative cultural norms that continue to spread and normalize the vice within our communities.



Janet Kantalama Katana , Executive Director of Safe Places Uganda and Mental Health on Civic Space TV

Mental Health Awareness is also an area that CCG has emphasized during Community Shows and Women’s show as there is need to support survivors of Gender Based Violence emotionally through counselling. Mental health illnesses have been sighted as one of the causes of still and premature births if a mother does not have stable mental health during pregnancy by Janet Kantalama Katana, Executive Director of Safe Places Uganda.



CCG Executive Director, Dr. Sarah Bireete participating in the CSO Leaders’ Photo Challenge during the #OrangeTheWorld campaign against GBV , From 16 days to 365 days by FIDA Uganda



Uganda Women’s Network (UWONET) Programs Manager Susan Achen (L) and Executive Director Rita Aciro (R) on Civic Space TV



Asiimire Ritah, CCG Programs Officer during the #OrangeTheWorld Campaign about Gender Based Violence , especially violence against women and girls.

We believe that with working together, we can create a World free from violence against Women and Girls.

FROM STIGMA TO EMPOWERMENT FOR LIFE; MY JOURNEY WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

By George Sempangi Katumba and Annet Kusiima, HUDIP



Joy Rufunda, lives with visual impairment that she developed as an adult

Joy Rufunda Amooti, a mother of four is a resident of Hoima East Division in Hoima City. Joy lost her sight in 2009 due to illness which affected one eye first and later the second eye which led to her losing sight completely at adult age.

“The loss of my sight came with mistreatment from my husband. He started treating me as a useless person and , did not want me to leave home, not even to visit neighbours, church, friends, burials, let alone her own family because of stigma of being blind. Although I was not working, my husband refused to cater for even the simplest of essential items such as sanitary pads and , knickers and did not provide for the family. He was extremely violent, frequently having out-bursts, and abusing the children and myself emotionally. I was helpless, felt unwanted, unloved, unworthy, less human, psychologically tortured, lonely and to make matters worse, my family also neglected me. I used to cry daily in my house for 8 years and at one time even thought of taking her life.

While at her home, I heard about Hoima Union of Persons with Disabilities sensitizing people about

disabilities. I reached out to the officers then, who agreed to visit me at home. This visit of HUDIP Officers was a life changing moment in my Life, during the visit I met fellow people with disabilities who taught me about visual impairment, my rights, , opportunities availed for PWDs and how I can join groups of PWDs and benefit from available programmes.

As she was healing psychologically, I realized my potential and initiated the formation of Hoima Association for the Blind (HOBWA, an affiliate of HUDIP. I attended a 4-days training in Kampala with my husband as a guide. The training changed my husband into the man I first met.

“I’m proud of him, He’s changed completely. He has stopped the negative the attitude and the stigma he used to attach to my visual impairment, he allows me to attend meetings even outside Uganda and pays the children’s school fees in time”.

Since the commencement of the Voice funded project, Joy was enrolled as one of the champions to amplify the voice of the voiceless particularly women with disabilities who are going through the same situation. Hoima Union of Persons with disabilities (HUDIP) with funding from VOICE is undertaking community sensitization and awareness campaigns about fair treatment of persons with disability.

“Disability is not inability and everyone is prone to disability at whatever age. I want more women with disabilities to be empowered and enjoy their human rights and stop Gender based violence - Joy.



Joy Rufunda making a presentation during a Voice advocacy meeting



Extreme left, empowered Joy during a community dialogue meeting on health

STRENGTHENING GBV NETWORKS; A STRATEGY FOR EFFECTIVE GENDER BASED VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

By Kamusiime Catherine - MEAL Officer and Antony Agaba - Projector Coordinator, COVOID

Gender Based Violence is a complex issue affecting survivors in several ways; physically, emotionally, spiritually, socially and therefore, efforts to address and respond to the varied needs of survivors should be multi-faceted in nature ranging from legal support, health, psychosocial, social protection.

For instance, most of the GBV cases involve medical examination to collect evidence that is admissible by the courts of law. Majority of the GBV actors render siloed interventions that don't address the holistic needs of survivors and mitigate risks to GBV. There is evidence of weak commitment, capacity and linkages with external actors whose services could complete their efforts.

Studies reveal that lack of confidence in the GBV support services is a major barrier to disclosure of GBV.

Voice in partnership with COVOID has therefore prioritised systems strengthening to improve the continuum of care for GBV survivors in Sheema District, South Western Uganda. The area has been experiencing several challenges that have affected the quality of GBV interventions such as limited infrastructure, low capacity, interest and commitment of duty bearers.

COVOID has established a network of GBV duty bearers and rightsholders who improve coordination of GBV efforts and to amplify the voices of rightsholders and fostering linkages to quality services. The GBV network comprises of the police, legal, political leaders, media, health providers, social welfare officers, boda-boda, religious leaders, civil society actors, paralegals, education officers.

On 3rd November 2022, COVOID conducted a training aimed at strengthening the capacity of the GBV network to influence, advocate, and amplify voices

of rightsholders. The training further aimed at empowering the network with knowledge of working with survivors, linking survivors to different service providers and thereafter establish an inclusive and effective GBV coordination system. The GBV network is expected to foster coordination among duty bearers in provision of support services to GBV services such as emotional support and a safe space through which to assimilate into community activities. The network will also facilitate members to connect with other activists, increase momentum for preventing Violence Against Women, create vibrant spaces for learning, solidarity and collective activism, and develop collective solutions to the challenges involved in GBV programming.

Members have demonstrated renewed enthusiasm in preventing and responding to GBV in the District through their different work. Key players within the network (Police and Court) have pledged to prioritize GBV case management and judgement.

Mrs. Kyomuhendo Annet - Senior Probation Officer, Sheema District said, *"There is a problem of uncoordinated GBV service providers in Sheema working in silos and this has caused mistrust by GBV survivors and community. This idea therefore is timely and I am happy that COVOID thought of establishing this network that brings the different service providers together in the fight against GBV."*

Mr. Orisiima Milton Kahindi - Communications and Marketing Officer, Voice of Sheema FM said, *"I now realize that media is a key tool in the fight against GBV because our role is not just information sharing like we have learnt in this platform, but also influencing and amplifying for a good cause. I therefore call upon other media fraternity, to prioritize stories of GBV in their newsrooms"*



Photograph above shows participants for GBV networks strengthening workshop organized by COVOID at Senevin Hotel, Sheema District.



LCV Sheema District Chairperson giving opening remarks at the GBV networks capacity strengthening



Mr. Orisima Milton Kahindi Communications and Marketing Officer-Voice of Sheema Radio called upon all media houses to priotize stories of GBV and service provision in their newsrooms

A SECOND CHANCE AT MARRIAGE AND HAPPINESS

By Proscovia Abalo and Sandra Anena, GWED-G



Barbra while attending to her soap in Payuta village, Awach, Gulu

Like many women in Northern Uganda, for Adongpiny Babra(30), mother of one child, and resident of Payuta village in Awach subcounty, Gulu, life has not been easy.

I have been going through violence in the hands of my husband. I would do all the garden work alone but had no power and authority over the proceeds of the garden, everything realized from the garden would become his and I had no say over the money got from the from the sales. Later, this escalated to regular physical fights that sometimes led to injuries, I reported him several times to Local Council one chairman and police to settle our case , but to no avail , I decided to leave the marriage.

One day I was approached by a women leader who was trained by GWED-G under the voice project. I shared my story with her and she agreed to meet me and my husband privately. She engaged us in several dialogue sessions to mediate and solve issue among us. My husband later on asked for forgiveness and asked me to go back to him to which I agreed.

I now live together with my husband and like is getting back to normal although I'm still afraid of him. He has promised not to fight any more. We now resolve our issues through dialogue. My husband now loves me so much that he started for me a business and we spend most times selling in the shop which makes an average of UGX 50,000 daily. We decide on household finances together without any conflicts.

I have joined the women caucus group and am helping fellow women. I am a GBV advocate in my community. Thanks to the voice project for supporting women to realize their potentials.

In Gulu District, Northern Uganda, GWED-G in partnership with Voice has built capacity of women leaders who form women caucus groups. These women come together to advocate for women agenda and influence government, public and private sector to improve delivery of health, education and other services in thier communities. The women also work to prevent and respond to Violence Against women and girls through creating community awareness on the dangers of GBV, harmful traditional practices, teenage pregnancies and child marriages. They also offer psychosocial support and refer GBV survivors for appropriate care and legal support.



Barbra with her husband outside their shop premises

HOW VOICE LINKING & LEARNING HAS EQUIPPED COVOID TO TACKLE THE GBV CHALLENGES

By Catherine Kamusiime, MEAL Officer, COVOID



to participate in the Voice Project Inception & Linking and Learning Kick off Meeting from February 14-15th February 2022, was received with a lot of enthusiasm.

During the meeting, COVOID identified its Linking and Learning needs namely knowledge and skills in Legal aid, Community engagement, documentation and using digital platforms for amplification all of which were critical to the project strategy. The linking and learning facilitators visited COVOID from the 11th and 13th May 2022 for a mentorship session to share experiences and support the team on community engagement, documentation and development of knowledge products, use of digital platforms and more importantly legal aid service provision with emphasis

on alignment with existing laws. The legal aid support has greatly enhanced our skills in handling GBV cases and has opened us to explore more networks for collaboration to ensure survivors obtain justice and are linked to other critical services such as health care and psychosocial support.

We are able to engage the community using several approaches and tools such as the use of community barazas which we have developed with the skills acquired from the community engagement mentorship. We have also been able to amplify the GBV work using digital platforms such as twitter and WhatsApp and have documented stories and blogs on GBV that have been amplified on Voice global platform (refer to the link <https://voice.global/blog/raising-community-awareness-on-gender-based-violence-in-bugongi-town-council-sheema-district-uganda/>)

"To be honest, ever since I joined COVOID team on the VOICE project, I have been puzzled of how we were going to achieve the project needs without a background and basic information on legal aid services in line with GBV. But now am very confident to share different information about legal aid services to GBV survivors during the community awareness meetings, especially

on domestic violence act, succession act, marriage act among other laws. My worries are all gone and am confident we shall implement this project to its success.

Ms. Catherine Kamusiime, MEAL Officer, COVOID.

We are now able to upload our work and also learn from what other grantees are doing on the different social media platforms namely the Grantees WhatsApp platform, twitter, Instagram etc. **Mr. Antony Agaba, Project Coordinator, COVOID.**



COVOID VOICE project team and Linking and Learning Facilitators during Onsite mentorship, training and support to COVOID at Senevin Hotel, Kabwohe Sheema district.

ANNUAL VOICE LINKING AND LEARNING FEST, A PLATFORM FOR SHARING STORIES AND EXPERIENCES OF GBV WORK

29th - 30th November, 2022



APPRECIATION

The Linking and Learning Facilitators (SL Consult and LASPNET) appreciate the following grantees and rightsholders for sharing their stories and experiences in ending GBV in Uganda.

 GWED-G www.gwedg.org	Gulu Women's Economic Development and Globalisation
	Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum
	Centre for Constitutional Governance
 ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS	Strategic Organization for Real Action -Kampala
 ACODEV Transforming Communities	Action for Development
	Hoima District Union of Persons with Disabilities
 Community Volunteer Initiative for Development (COVID)	Community Volunteer Initiative for Development
 LASPNET LEGAL AID SERVICE PROVIDERS' NETWORK	Legal AID Service Providers Network
	Strategic Link, Uganda



Do you need a Lawyer or any Legal Advice ?



Toll Free Line :

0800100155

Monday - Saturday

8:00am - 5:00pm



www.laspnet.org



Legal Aid Service Providers Network

For more Information please visit; www.voice.global

