“...people are beginning to understand that women and men are supposed to help each other...”

ENHANCED AWARENESS ON GENDER EQUALITY IN MASINDI DISTRICT

Masindi is one of the districts in Uganda that has a high prevalence of Gender Based Violence (GBV). This is based on the number of cases reported at the probation office indicating that GBV stands at 17% with the most cases coming from Budongo sub-county. FOWODE trained model men in Budongo and Kimengo sub-counties as change oriented champions to curb this vice. The trained model men organised community outreaches and at the end of each outreach, each model man identified more active model men by obtaining their contact details so as to constantly follow up on their actions. One of the model men champions in Budongo sub-county, Mr. Etyang Francis, during a community outreach said, “If women are to enjoy these rights and live with dignity in our homes and society, we as men are also supposed to take part to ensure that their rights are protected and promote gender equality. This can be done in a number of ways.” These community outreaches enhanced men’s awareness on gender, bringing about a change in the negative mind-set of men towards gender equality. Men became more positive and were eager to equally participate in the development and transformation of their societies. Mr. Etyang Francis explained to the men that gender equality is a prerequisite for family development and therefore called upon the selected men to be exemplary and end GBV in their homes.

On 31st May 2018, during a follow up meeting with participants from Kapeeka Village in Budongo sub-county, the male change agents in the meeting explained that there is a big improvement in the way men were treating their wives. As a result, this has led to reduced quarrels and fights in most homesteads and in the long run promoted the rights of women and girls in the village. Women’s voices are now heard and recognised more. Ezakuru Eric said that in his home, there is no specific work for his wife and him since they share the work together. He said, “When my wife has gone to fetch water and she leaves boiling water for cooking on the stove, I go ahead and cook since hunger affects us all especially our children.” I can’t sit and wait with the claim that it is her role as my wife to cook. These days, my neighbours are slowly starting to borrow these ideas of shared responsibility.”

Reduction in Violation of girls and human rights tendencies at Mpeefu Sub County and Kagadi Sub County.

Following the rigorous engagement of the communities in budget monitoring, corrupt district and sub county leaders have been exposed. A case in point is Mpeefu school, the head teacher was compelled to refund money stolen from the PTA FUNDS following a report made by the VBCs in an interface meeting.

A Student who was married off by the parents to the head teacher of Ave Maria Primary school was recovered and reported back to school. The issue was reported and the investigations are being made to take the head teacher of Ave Maria Primary school to court for defilement.

The VBCs of Mpeefu also reported the case of Chance a pupil of P7 (2018) at Mpeefu Model Primary school who was defiled by the chairperson PTA Mr. Kikanshemeza Bruno. The VBCs reported the matter to police. The field officer took courage to inform the RDC and as a result, they worked together and the girl was recovered from hiding. She was talked to and agreed to attend the P7 exams. Later, after the exams the culprit was brought to book.
“In this sub county, this is our government school. Over 25 years back, in 1997, when this school was constructed by the community, government came and took over the school. At the time, they sent us teachers. We expected to see government improving on our class rooms, which it didn’t do. Many of the parents had lost interest in the school because buildings were almost dilapidated. They needed repair and no one could give us support.” This is how Harriet Nampala Chairperson school management committee expressed her disappointment explicitly on 21st March 2018 during the interface meeting held at Malangaata primary school.

However, not all members in the community are as aware of the resources and services they are entitled to. For some, they heard such information for the first time from the FOWODE Village Budget Clubs (VBCs). Nalumansi Oliver who eventually became a VBC member in Kitayita village said, “When FOWODE came to our village, we were invited for a meeting by our Chairperson LCI who introduced the FOWODE team to us. They taught us about how we need to organize into a group they called Village Budget club.”

According to Nalumansi, after the training to become a VBC member, her first issue to address was the school renovation. “I made sure that whenever monitoring was done, I would be one of the first VBC members to get on the Boda boda. With the monitoring tool from FOWODE, I was able to have the community voice reach the technocrats and political leaders who attended our meetings such as the interface meeting that was held at Malangaata primary school. I submitted the issue of the school as our VBC finding from the monitoring that was carried out.”

On seeing the VBC work, technocrats made a commitment in the interface meeting of the 2nd quarter 2018 to allocate funds for the renovation of Malangaata primary school. As a result of the newly renovated classrooms, enrolment has now increased from 237 to 387 pupils.

In a community dialogue, Nakiyingi Sarah a Village Budget Club member in Namayumba sub-county said, “Now we are sure that all our community needs will be met as you have helped us realise our voices and equipped us to speak up on the budget from sub-county to district headquarters. Previously, this was not easy for us because we never knew that we can request for a service as citizens and it eventually gets done by the technocrats. Thank you Comic relief and FOWODE.”

MITYANA:
VALP TRANSFORMS THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT AT BULERA PRIMARY SCHOOL

In July 2017, the second year of the Voice Accountability and Leadership Project (VALP) implementation, Village Budget Clubs (VBCs) conducted quarterly monitoring visits to the target schools and realised that classes in most of the project schools were lacking manilas with inspirational messages and diagrams to remind pupils about the lessons taught in their syllabus.

VBCs realised that such a classroom environment is not engaging enough and therefore cannot allow pupils to have refreshed minds on what their teachers teach them. We realised that these young pupils can easily forget what is being taught to them.

VBCs made tremendous efforts during their quarterly engagements with the duty bearers in these schools to ensure that teachers make a change on how they arrange classrooms to attract the minds of pupils especially in lower primary. They also discovered that this is one of the factors why private schools have taken away all the pupils leaving such affordable schools neglected.

VBCs engaged the head teachers during the community dialogue and interface meetings to mobilise and supervise the teachers on creating a change in the class learning environment and also support them to acquire the items that could be used to create this change such as manilas, markers and other materials that might be useful. VBCs made regular follow ups on this issue and in the middle of 2018, some schools like Bulera p/s had created a very big change in their classroom environment which is one of factors that have started attracting more pupils to this school.

Before this change, Bulera primary school (Primary School p/s) had 334 pupils and at the end of the year, it is one of the schools with the highest number of enrolment among all target schools in the project with 342 pupils. VBCs have a great hope that enrolment levels in this school will continue to rise in 2019.
After training VBCs on SDGs and their localization, the VBC Mr. Byarugaba Emmanuel attended a church service at Kagina Church of Uganda. While in church service, he requested the religious leader to give him some time towards the end of the church service so that he talks with the community members about the sustainable development goals.

He shared with the masses about SDG 3, 4 and 5. He emphasized SDG 3 where he explained to the people the importance of educating their children therefore stressing that education is the key to success. He noted that, it’s the role of parents to ensure that their children go to school and attain quality education. He emphasized that, SDGs focused on “Not leaving any one behind” and so no child regardless of their sex, family back ground and the economic level of their parents should be left behind in accessing quality education.

It is at that point that community members raised the issue of some children in Nyakabungo village Rwene parish Buhara Sub County Kabale District that were of school going age but were not studying. He picked interest in the matter and visited the grandfather to these two kids (a boy and girl). When approached, Mr. Kasurumbana said that he did not have money to buy scholastic materials and to pay school fees for the two children. The VBC went ahead to explain to him the option of taking the two Kids to a government school where they would access free education under UPE and he would have to pay only development fees which would not exceed 10000/= per pupil per term. The Old man seemed not to respond positively and the VBC saw it important to involve the local leadership in the matter. He informed the chairperson LC1 Nyakabungo village Mr. Akampurira Nicholas who took it up and had the same discussion with Mr. Kasurumbana.

Basing on the two discussions he had with the two people (VBC Mr. Byarugaba Emmanuel and Mr. Akampurira Nicholas the chairperson LC1), Mr. Kasurumbana appreciated the efforts put in by the two and realized the importance of education as explained to him. In term II 2018, he bought scholastic materials for the two children; paid for them development fees and they were able to report at Kagina Primary school for studies. Up to now, the two kids are in school.

---

**PROMOTING GOOD HYGIENE AND SANITATION WITHIN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY**

Ssese primary School is a government aided school located in Kagadi Sub County, Kagadi district. It’s a mixed school with both boys and girls, it has got a population of 200 with 138 girls and 62 boys. It has been in existence for over 25 years.

For a long time they have had a very poorly constructed and located toilet that would be used by the girls and the boys only with a suck like curtain acting as a door to create the area space for girls and the other side for the boys. It had cracks all over the walls top and down to the ground/ floor that also had different holes and cracks within and in the corners of this structure. This would make it hard for these little children or pupils to access this area yet it’s a necessity for everyone to be in a safe environment. Not forgetting that there was no access to clean water for washing hands. This made it so different for the pupils while at school and those who came from nearby would rush back home to ease themselves and return to class. This was hard for some pupils especially girls of the classes of primary 4 to 7 who would have started experiencing menstruation hence it all led to low school turn up for the girls.

In 2017, we embarked on a project to make sure that this school gets a better toilet structure with the assistance of the district, we carried out monitoring of which we discovered it was a sensitive issue that needed immediate attention, we therefore reached out for a dialogue with community members and we agreed that we should present it to the district officials when we go for the interface meeting. The sub county Chief Mr. Byaruhanga Valence helped in tabling this issue at the district, since he was always with us in the community dialogue and monitoring engagements.

In February 2018, the construction of this structure commenced and it can accommodate both boys and girls with disabilities with a stand to hold water for washing hands after use. In May 2018, this building was commissioned.
INSTALLED SOLAR PANEL AT PABWO HCIII IN BUNGATIRA SUB COUNTY BY DISTRICT WOMEN CAUCUS GULU DISTRICT

Over time, there has been issues on drug stock out, absenteeism and poor administration in most of the government facilities in Gulu district that resulted in a failure to provide quality service delivery.

The district women caucus presented the issues in the full council meeting where a committee was formed and tasked to investigate especially the loss of drugs issue at the facility level.

Later, the committee tracked and discovered stolen drugs in Awach Sub County, 2 Health center bosses attached to Apera HCII, and Pukony Health center in Pukony Unyama sub counties in Gulu district were detained in Gulu Central Police Station for allegedly stealing 6 boxes of Coathem drugs.

The two suspects were identified as Odong Lot the in charge of Pukony health center II, and Jacob Bongomin the assistant in charge of Apera health center II in Pukony and Unyama Sub counties. LC5 councilor for Awach sub county Christopher Opio Ateke said “the suspects were caught red-handed by youth activists with 6 boxes of Coathem drugs and handed them over to the LC1 Chairperson of Laban Village.

Mr. Jimmy Patrick who later paraded the suspects to Awach Police Post where case file No. Ref; 08/02/01/19 was opened against them on theft of government property. Gulu Chief Administrative Officer, Mr. Milton Kato, condemned the acts of the officers, adding that the district sat and resolved that Police should do their work and justice should prevail.

WABUSANA VBC MARKET STARTED IN LUWERO

VBCS have gone a head beyond FOWODE support in sustaining their activities beyond service delivery monitoring.

In February 2018, Wabusana VBCs with support and supervision from FOWODE, Luwerro registered their VBC group as a CBO (Community Based Organisation) called Wabusana VBC Market Vendors Association to continue meeting and monitoring service delivery in their areas as a way to sustain VBC work in Kikyusa sub-county. After, they started a market in Wabusana TC where Women sell their food stuffs to earn an income to meet their basic needs. So far 48 women have stalls selling agricultural products. This has attracted the sub-county leadership to come in and support them by constructing a pit latrine.

STEPS TAKEN IN REPAIRING THE BOREHOLE AT PABWO HCIII

The VBC report was presented to the sub county water source committee that is headed by the LCIII bungatira sub county.

The committee later had a budget of repairing around 5 boreholes in the sub county where Pabwo HCIII borehole was among. After 1 month of follow-up, the bore hole was repaired by the SWSC.

A repaired borehole at pabwo HCIII in bungatira sub county in Gulu district