FOWODE’S VILLAGE BUDGET CLUB MODEL

A successful community led advocacy for equitable service delivery, pro-poor and gender responsive budgets
A GRASSROOTS ACCOUNTABILITY MOVEMENT
THE VILLAGE BUDGET CLUBS

Women in Uganda face the same challenges as other women in most of the developing world. They are not afforded the same rights and opportunities as men, and almost 40% cannot read at all as compared to 60% of men which further disadvantages them.

Uganda is also ranked among the most corrupt nations of the world. Women who comprise the largest percentage of the poor, carry the biggest responsibility for childcare, and who have the greatest need for public services, often suffer the consequences more acutely. Yet, evidence shows that when women are educated and productive, men, their families, children, and entire communities live more productive and healthy lives.

All vulnerable groups especially the poor, women, rural communities, children, and persons with disabilities tend to be voiceless. Where the opinions of the most disadvantaged should matter most they are not well represented. For more than 10 years Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) has been at the forefront of empowering women and men to demand accountability from their leaders on public service delivery; equal opportunities, and challenging decision makers to create gender equitable budgets that favour vulnerable groups.
A successful approach to community led advocacy for pro-poor and gender responsive budgets in Uganda

Village Budget Club (VBC) Formation and Training
- Mobilize and organize community members into VBCs to participate in government budgeting processes
- Build capacity of VBCs into gender responsive budgeting techniques & service delivery monitoring
- Support VBCs to interface and petition their leaders

Village Budget Club Monitoring Exercise
- Develop action plans to monitor service delivery
- Conduct monitoring visits to inspect service delivery in communities e.g. water and sanitation, schools, health
- Document key findings from the monitoring to be discussed with duty bearers in the community

Interface meetings
- Organize interface meetings with duty bearers to present issues that need to be addressed e.g. lack of facilities in health centres, schools
- Duty bearers commit to intervene and address the problems
- VBC records commitments by duty bearers and make follow up plans to ensure commitments are fulfilled

Engaging media for public awareness
- For information sharing and increased lobbying for greater accountability, VBC arrange media dialogues and radio programs to discuss monitoring activities and key findings with the media and public

“Akecha, VBC member, Gulwotoro subcounty

“I am brave. I answer for myself”
FORMING THE VILLAGE BUDGET CLUBS

Since 2010 FOWODE has been equipping groups of women and men in over 15 districts in Uganda to effect change in their communities.

The trainings equip club members with knowledge and skills to understand budgets, question how resources are mobilised and allocated. Village Budget Clubs lead the advocacy effort to ensure budgets address the needs of poor women and men, children and people with disabilities, among others. The clubs work to ensure that their issues are included in local government plans and budgets. Communities through Village Budget Clubs monitor the expenditure of public resources to check corruption among public officials and ensure the delivery of quality services. Village Budget Clubs are modeled to be non-partisan, with each composed of 20 members of whom 12 are women and 8 men. Some of the VBC members are community opinion leaders and others hold positions of responsibility like leaders of faith based organizations (FBOs). The diverse and respectable membership of the VBCs not only increases the quality of their functioning but also enhances the acceptability and legitimacy of FOWODE’s work in the public domain.

Baby N.O 3 gets first class care

Local activism improves maternal and child health care

All the mothers in Koro Sub County had come to terms with their harsh reality, in order to get care from the local government hospital you needed cash to buy birthing items including cotton, plastic sheets and gloves. No cash no care! When Madalena and other women in her village were educated through the village budget clubs, on their rights and how they could follow up where service delivery fell short, they took charge. The women surveyed the health centre, interviewed patients and recorded all the problem issues. The next step was to share their findings with the in-charge and other leaders. The health committee agreed to revisit the budget to ensure that budget allocations were fair. When 32 year old Madalena had baby number 3 things were different at the hospital. She was well attended to and got all the items she needed in her hospital kit including cotton wool, a sanitary birthing sheet and this time the midwives used their own gloves supporting her as she delivered her baby girl.

The VBC has helped women like Madalena Latigirighat advocate for and gain their rights to quality health care. Her new born baby is welcomed by her older son below.
HOW FOWODE EMPOWERS COMMUNITIES TO ACHIEVE EQUITABLE BUDGETS AND SERVICE DELIVERY

We demystify budgeting so that it is a more transparent system that ordinary citizens local leaders can understand and contribute to from the bottom -up.

We strengthen the capacity of communities through, the Village budget clubs, a critical mass of empowered women and men who track budgets and resource allocation and make sure that their district councillors and other leaders are budgeting and effectively implementing programs to benefit the most vulnerable.

We engage in policy and political processes on current and emerging women’s issues in order to promote gender equitable budgets, policies, legislation and programmes.

We create opportunities and fora for women to engage and influence leaders in creating equitable budgets. This is done through policing every government department to follow the Budget Call Circular Directive in order to achieve gender equity in all their objectives.

We help establish Gender Responsive Budget groups as advocacy partners in Parliament, collaborate with male parliamentarians to champion gender equality in budgets, build the capacity of local and national legislators to create pro-poor gender responsive policies and cater for the needs of marginalised groups.

A space at the table

VBC women lead in democratic accountability

FOWODE works with women leaders to equip them with the tools and confidence they need to advocate for quality services in their community. After local council women leaders of Nyakwae sub-county and their caucus, graduates of FOWODE training on democratic accountability discovered that patients lives were at risk because the health centre ambulance was in disrepair and was never fuelled, they were enraged because the ambulance maintenance funds had been remitted to the centre. Investigations revealed that the local sub-county chief was working without a budget or work plan leading to gaps in revenue accountability. Meetings were held with the district leaders leading to the dismissal of the sub county chief after proof of corruption was presented.

Currently Nyakwae sub-county has a new chief, is operating with a budget and work plan and the health centre ambulance is now working efficiently.

Women in the communities where FOWODE works are taking keen interest in the governance of the local community and allocation of resources as they gain confidence to advocate for their rights.
The VBC members of Pida demonstrated against the sale of land that was meant for a public health centre. After the VBC outcry and several written petitions to policy makers, the LC3 Chairperson investigated the issue and it was resolved that the land be returned to the local government. In FY 2011/12, a health centre III was constructed for the community members.

Due to the advocacy efforts of the Kibaale VBC, construction of latrines at Isunga Health Centre III was approved and the district partnered with the Infectious Diseases Institute to provide Mama kits packages that support safe labour and delivery.

The Obalanga, Sub County VBC petitioned and succeeded in having the authority commit to allocating funds for a bathroom for the female patients, a placenta pit and procurement of solar for the Obalanga health center III before the end of 2013.

The VBC petitioned the CAO to ensure the repair of identified broken-down boreholes which were subsequently fixed in Kasaala Parish.

As a result of the VBC’s intervention, Kagarama Health Centre II now has a fully equipped and operational maternity ward, with solar power where pregnant women can access services. The centre received additional staff, working fulltime unlike before when the health centre used to open for a few hours a day. The VBC’s intervention also exposed the corruption of the health centre management committee, which was later disbanded and new members elected.

VBC clubs meet regularly to discuss service delivery and make plans for advocacy activities aimed at improving service delivery.

VBCs create platforms for dialogue between communities, the rights holders and the duty bearers. Through these platforms communities are able to hold their leaders accountable for planned service delivery. Where district officials fail to monitor their dockets or perform their duties they are summoned by the community to answer for shortfalls in service thus enhancing better leadership.

The clubs advocates for gender responsive budgets, enabling women and men get equal consideration in budgets and development plans. This often involves writing petitions to duty bearers to ensure that issues concerning the most vulnerable especially women, are not ignored.

Members of the community are accountable and responsible for each others wellbeing. In schools, for example, parents are responsible for ensuring that teachers are punctual and present at schools. The parents advocate for teachers’ welfare even if it means their direct support such as contributing towards staff house construction.

Testimonies of transformative advocacy in the community

As a result of the VBC’s intervention, Kagarama Health Centre II now has a fully equipped and operational maternity ward, with solar power where pregnant women can access services. The centre received additional staff, working fulltime unlike before when the health centre used to open for a few hours a day. The VBC’s intervention also exposed the corruption of the health centre management committee, which was later disbanded and new members elected.

The Obalanga, Sub County VBC petitioned and succeeded in having the authority commit to allocating funds for a bathroom for the female patients, a placenta pit and procurement of solar for the Obalanga health center III before the end of 2013.

The VBC petitioned the CAO to ensure the repair of identified broken-down boreholes which were subsequently fixed in Kasaala Parish.

A VBC reported the dilapidation of a major primary school-Kahara P.S. The school was prioritized in the district budget for FY 2012/2013 and has since been improved.
VBCs attract nationwide media

Media coverage on the effectiveness of VBCs

A petition of the Kyewenze VBCs to the Chief Administration Officer about shortage of drugs in Kyewenze Health Centre was highlighted in the news by the Uganda Radio Network. Another article on how the VBC members engaged duty bearers on poor quality banana suckers and how they demanded for better service delivery was also broadcast by the same radio.

In 2012, The Daily monitor, a national newspaper in Uganda commissioned an investigative journalism project on the work of the village budget clubs. Wrote one journalist: “The VBC is the essence of community empowerment. When people take responsibility for their welfare, instead of having crooked government operators do it to them, we are all better off. Now let us take it to the national level.” - Sokatola Kangasay kolongo

“Village clubs have the power to demand for quality services in schools.” - Edisa Nakazi

Witnesses of lasting change

“I am surprised and very happy that they can now listen to my views as a woman. Now that I am aware of my rights as a citizen, I feel so brave. I make sure I attend all the meetings in my community and contribute to the issues being discussed. Because of FOWODE I lead the TEMGUMI Women’s Village Savings Group, Concern Parents’ Savings Group with 22 women and 8 men and the DRC ox-ploughing group which has 30 members. These leadership role were because of FOWODE’s teaching that opened up my eyes and showed me that my views are required in the development of my community.”

Evelyn Abar

IN NUMBERS

- Number of Groups formed: 15
- Number of men: 345
- Number of women: 600
- Number of PWD members: 15
- Total Number of VBCs: 960

15

60%

Districts where FOWODE has worked since 2010 to mobilize communities to form GRB village clubs

KEY CHALLENGES

- The Village clubs are not enough to attract nationwide media attention.
- What is needed is a successful approach to community led advocacy for pro-poor and gender responsive budgets in Uganda. The Village Budget Clubs (VBCs) are one such initiative that works at the grassroots level and empowers local people to stand for their rights.
- With grand corruption being the order of the day at the national level, rural people, who are normally the victims of such deep-rooted practices, are not just watching passively.
- “It wasn’t easy in the beginning,” said Mr Narcis Kabaghire, the VBC Secretary in Kyabuhangwe, Kabale District. “We weren’t sure about they meant. Some said we were good for nothing peasants, others thought we are idlers and others even labeled us opposition supporters. But that didn’t stop us from demanding accountability - because we knew we were doing something that benefits our entire community.”
- The Gulu District Speaker, Mr Douglas Okello also disputes that only the elite should be in charge of monitoring performance of community public facilities and bringing to book the officials entrusted with managing public funds.
- “Anything that empowers local people to stand for their rights I will support it. The VBC is one such initiative that changes the attitude of the local people, people who didn’t know that their collective responsibility can move mountains,” Mr Okiello added.
- What is not in dispute though is that, specifically where these community groups are functional, people, especially women are actively involved and more informed about developments related to resource allocation and utilisation and there is a reported improvement in service delivery.
- With most of the health facilities lacking adequate personnel and medical equipment, a group of about 20 men and women, belonging to a Village Budget Club in Kabale determined to change the usual way to the right way of things. The district leadership has since promised to turn around the face of Kyogo health care centre, including fixing a broken down bridge leading to the health centre that had broken down months ago.

With grand corruption being the order of the day at the national level, rural people, who are normally the victims of such deep-rooted practices, are not just watching passively.

With grand corruption being the order of the day at the national level, rural people, who are normally the victims of such deep-rooted practices, are not just watching passively.

With grand corruption being the order of the day at the national level, rural people, who are normally the victims of such deep-rooted practices, are not just watching passively.

With grand corruption being the order of the day at the national level, rural people, who are normally the victims of such deep-rooted practices, are not just watching passively.
They entrusted their leaders for social welfare and order in the community but Kibaale residents were let down so many times they lost count. When they made a decision, it was to appoint community prefects that would ensure the public good. The 20-member team, all peasants, say they decided teacher and his staff to refund the money and they did,” Mr Ngabirano said. The 20-member VBC has also since drastically minimised what used to be the rampant teachers and pupil absenteeism. They have since ensured that the school has adequate number of teachers.

“Many district officials do not like attending our interface meetings because we press them to account for their actions. Some of us are also being intimidated by those officials, but the good news is that we know we are on the right side.”

Mr Lawrence Ngabirano, a member of Kisiita Community Monitoring Group in Kibaale told the Saturday Monitor.

Through the monitoring group called the Village Budget Clubs (VBC), Ngabirano who is also the treasurer of the Kisiita VBC said they have been able to cause change within a short period of time. In one case the VBC compelled the teaching staff of Kisiita Primary School to refund the Shs7,000 they collected from each pupil after it emerged that there was no accountability for the money. “We thought that was irregular. So we called a meeting and told the head teacher and his staff to refund the money and they did,” Mr Ngabirano said. The 20-member VBC has also since drastically minimised what used to be the rampant teachers and pupil absenteeism. They have since ensured that the school has adequate number of teachers.

“Many district officials do not like attending our interface meetings because we press them to account for their actions. Some of us are also being intimidated by those officials, but the good news is that we know we are on the right side.”

Ms Ruth Katahikire, a VBC member of Nyamirami, Buhonda parish in Kibaale, said as a result of their monitoring efforts, teachers are more disciplined than ever before. “Those teachers did not want to be brought to order. Many of them tried to intimidate us but we stuck to our guns—monitoring and accountability roles, and now we are beginning to reap the fruits of our tireless engagements,” Ms Katahikire said.

Jubilee Matovu of Luweero District explains why such a community monitoring and accountability group is important. “The VBC unearthed a corruption scandal where UPE funds given to Kasala Church of Uganda Primary School were being stolen. The VBC then forced the school to issue an accountability report. It was at that point that we discovered that instead of the Shs720,000 of UPE funds allocated to the school, only Shs470,000 had been declared.”

According to the Kibaale District Town Planner, Mr George Willy Tusabomu, VBCs have excelled in ensuring that the community health centres are well managed to organise themselves particularly when demanding for value for money. He said this has made every village want to adopt the monitoring model. However the VBCs do face some challenges. The capacity of the VBCs needs to be enhanced further as proving corruption cases, even at the community level, demands more than mere observation skills. There is also need for more training especially in honing the VBCs ability to not just ask the right questions but also engage the officials without necessarily appearing to be implicating them or violating the rule of innocent until proven guilty.

Jubilee Matovu of Luweero District explains why such a community monitoring and accountability group is important. “The VBC unearthed a corruption scandal where UPE funds given to Kasala Church of Uganda Primary School were being stolen. The VBC then forced the school to issue an accountability report. It was at that point that we discovered that instead of the Shs720,000 of UPE funds allocated to the school, only Shs470,000 had been declared.”

According to the Kibaale District Town Planner, Mr George Willy Tusabomu, VBCs have excelled in ensuring that the community health centres are well managed to organise themselves particularly when demanding for value for money. He said this has made every village want to adopt the monitoring model. However the VBCs do face some challenges. The capacity of the VBCs needs to be enhanced further as proving corruption cases, even at the community level, demands more than mere observation skills. There is also need for more training especially in honing the VBCs ability to not just ask the right questions but also engage the officials without necessarily appearing to be implicating them or violating the rule of innocent until proven guilty.

Ms Ruth Katahikire, a VBC member of Nyamirami, Buhonda parish in Kibaale, said as a result of their monitoring efforts, teachers are more disciplined than ever before. “Those teachers did not want to be brought to order. Many of them tried to intimidate us but we stuck to our guns—monitoring and accountability roles, and now we are beginning to reap the fruits of our tireless engagements,” Ms Katahikire said.

Jubilee Matovu of Luweero District explains why such a community monitoring and accountability group is important. “The VBC unearthed a corruption scandal where UPE funds given to Kasala Church of Uganda Primary School were being stolen. The VBC then forced the school to issue an accountability report. It was at that point that we discovered that instead of the Shs720,000 of UPE funds allocated to the school, only Shs470,000 had been declared.”

According to the Kibaale District Town Planner, Mr George Willy Tusabomu, VBCs have excelled in ensuring that the community health centres are well managed to organise themselves particularly when demanding for value for money. He said this has made every village want to adopt the monitoring model. However the VBCs do face some challenges. The capacity of the VBCs needs to be enhanced further as proving corruption cases, even at the community level, demands more than mere observation skills. There is also need for more training especially in honing the VBCs ability to not just ask the right questions but also engage the officials without necessarily appearing to be implicating them or violating the rule of innocent until proven guilty.

When peasants become prefects to monitor community projects

Jubilee Matovu of Luweero District explains why such a community monitoring and accountability group is important. “The VBC unearthed a corruption scandal where UPE funds given to Kasala Church of Uganda Primary School were being stolen. The VBC then forced the school to issue an accountability report. It was at that point that we discovered that instead of the Shs720,000 of UPE funds allocated to the school, only Shs470,000 had been declared.”

According to the Kibaale District Town Planner, Mr George Willy Tusabomu, VBCs have excelled in ensuring that the community health centres are well managed to organise themselves particularly when demanding for value for money. He said this has made every village want to adopt the monitoring model. However the VBCs do face some challenges. The capacity of the VBCs needs to be enhanced further as proving corruption cases, even at the community level, demands more than mere observation skills. There is also need for more training especially in honing the VBCs ability to not just ask the right questions but also engage the officials without necessarily appearing to be implicating them or violating the rule of innocent until proven guilty.

Jessica Nakyibumba, the Vice Chairperson of one of the Luweero VBCs.

Many district officials do not like attending our interface meetings because we press them to account for their actions. Some of us are also being intimidated by those officials, but the good news is that we know we are on the right side.
Vision
A society where women and benefit from decision making processes

Mission:
To promote gender equality in all areas of decision making through capacity development, community empowerment, policy engagement and strategic Partnerships

Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE)

Contacts us
Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE)
Plot 15, Vubya Close, Nakawa Ntinda Stretcher Road
P.O. Box 7176, Kampala
Tel: +256-41-286063
E-mail: fowode@fowode.org
Web www.fowode.org