INFLUENCING THE AGENDA

Advocating for Gender and Reproductive Rights: A FOWODE Project in partnership with UWONET under the UNFPA 7th Country Programme

Stories of change from Women Councillors and Community Action Groups
**Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE)** is a women’s rights national non-partisan organisation established in 1995 to offer a platform for Ugandan women’s learning, networking, sharing experiences and advocating for gender equity and equality in decision making processes. FOWODE’s vision is a just and fair society where women and men equally participate in and benefit from decision making processes.

**Uganda Women’s Network (UWONET)** is an advocacy and lobbying network of national women’s NGO’s and individuals operating in Uganda. It was born out of the East African Women’s Conference held in Kampala in 1993 in preparation for the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing, China in 1995. Under the project, UWONET played the lead coordination role for national level advocacy work focused on building local activism at grassroots level to influence national level programming for GBV prevention and response and reproductive rights.

**United Nations Population Fund Agency, (UNFPA)** has supported the Government of Uganda since 1979. The 7TH country programme (2010-2013) is part of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), which is in line with the Government of Uganda Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) to improve the quality of life of over 33 million Ugandans. The goal of the 7th country programme is to improve the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women, men and the youth, ensuring sustainable population growth with development and enhancing gender equity and equality of women and men.
**Indicator 1:** Targeted districts local governments that have incorporated GBV prevention, response and reproductive rights interventions in the district plans and budgets using own resources.

**Indicator 2:** Councils in the target districts and sub-counties with resolutions, ordinances or by-laws to address GBV (local commitments).
A Facilitative Approach

How a community views equality under the law greatly influences the rights afforded to their citizens. These include access to essential services, protection, inclusion in economic development and representation among others. In many parts of Uganda such as the 8 districts covered by the project, women are still struggling to participate in governance and while the country is a signatory to the Millennium Development Goals, gaps in reproductive health and Gender Based Violence (GBV) issues affect more women than men.

FOWODE in collaboration with UWONET is one of the implementing partners of the UNFPA 7th Country Programme under the gender component: advocating for Gender and Reproductive Rights. Since 2011 FOWODE has implemented the programme in 8 districts of Kitgum, Gulu, Masaka, Mbarara, Pallisa, Nebbi, Lira and Kween.

Under this project FOWODE focused on strengthening the skills of women councillors and Community Advocacy Groups to raise awareness of the injustices that are rooted in gender inequality.

Specifically we empowered Community Advocacy Groups (CAGs) and the councillors to contribute to:

- Gender Responsive Budget and Plans: Get their District Local Governments (DLGs) to incorporate GBV prevention, response and reproductive rights interventions in district plans and budgets
- Legislation: Influence district and sub county councils to pass resolutions, ordinance and bye-laws addressing GBV issues
The Community Advocacy Groups (CAG) are a platform for initiating change in the community and galvanizing local commitments on gender related issues with special emphasis on GBV prevention, equal representation and participatory governance.
LIRA DISTRICT
Empowered to Lead Change

Equipped with knowledge and skills, through FOWODE training and mentoring, councillors in Lira advocated for budgets, legislations and commitment of leadership to Gender responsive budgets, plans and actions.

Honourable Margret, a woman councillor, chairperson of Community Based Services in Lira who benefited from the lobbying and resource mobilization training provided by FOWODE. Budget allocations for addressing gender related issues including Gender Based Violence response, and women’s reproductive health needs were consistently inadequate or non-existent in Lira.

Once the councillors were made aware of the diverse funding opportunities and equipped with the skills to maximize them in the FOWODE class the Lira councillors’ begun to aggressively seek these funds to address shortfalls in their budget.

Hon. Margaret along with the other members of the Lira Women Caucus group successfully secured UGX 20 million from UN-Women through a well-prepared proposal and subsequent discussions indicating the need and how financial support would improve services that cater to women’s reproductive health needs, and their protection under the law.

The funds were obtained in the 2013/14 financial year to train police, local councils, and community health providers on using the amended Police form 3. The amendment of this form was an important milestone for gender equality and women empowerment as it broadened the categories of medical personnel who could examine and testify in court on behalf of a victim of sexual violence. Previously it had only been medical doctors and Police surgeons who could carry out the examination and testify in court. In rural settings with few doctors available to testify, large numbers of victims were left without legal recourse.

In addition, the Lira Women Caucus group secured fifty million from Plan Uganda to enable them participate in the 16 days of activism campaign to raise awareness on ending Gender Based Violence in their communities. Another partner sought out by the councillors was CEWIGO (Centre for Women in Governance) which supported the development of the district GBV action plan for 2013/14.

Responding to social injustices against women and children

In her own words, for Honourable Betty Akullu, Deputy Speaker, Lira Women Caucus group, the FOWODE training on what women councillors had the power and right to achieve, was ‘an eye opener’. Hon. Akullu was challenged to take action on behalf of her disenfranchised constituents especially women and children.

Following the FOWODE training for women in leadership, Hon. Akullu and the other councillors assessed the status of child rights and protection under the law as well as equal employment opportunity for women in Lira district. Hon. Akullu and the other women councillors started by revisiting by-laws like the Child Labour law which had been passed in 2011, but was not being enforced. The councillor’s efforts aided the law’s revival in 9 sub-counties. As a result of its enforcement, in June 2013, parents of forty five children who were found working at market days instead of attending school as required by the by-law were fined UGX 5,000 each. Children who had chosen to skip school were also punished through...
community service; they were directed to slash the grass compound around the community health centre.

For the first time Hon. Akullu and the other women councillors advocacy efforts for equal work for equal pay for women were effected on road construction sites under government projects by Ministry of Works and Transport. On an individual level, Hon. Akullu took the initiative to learn how to counsel and help couples facing domestic violence. Hon. Akullu discovered that financial constraints were a leading cause of conflict among couples. The resourceful leader now links couples to skill building opportunities through the community based SEEME institute for vocational training in income generating professions such as tailoring and carpentry.

Hon. Betty Akullu
Deputy Speaker, Lira Women Caucus Group

Henry Omoo
District Planner, Lira

Improving reproductive health services and GBV

The results of advocacy for Gender Responsive leadership are inspiring. The district currently uses output-based budgeting to ensure that monies can be tracked for each planned activity, of which a key item is GBV. According to the district planner, Henry Omoo, the district partnered with Action Aid to provide land, resource support including the district engineer to supervise the re-modeling of a building in that location to create a GBV shelter.

For the financial year 2013/14 the district budgeted UGX 43,072,000 for the construction and completion of a maternity ward in Barr Health Centre III funded under the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan as part of the district’s commitment to reduce maternal mortality in Lira. This was a milestone for the Lira Womens’ Caucus which were relentless in providing evidence of the dilapidated maternity ward at the Baar Health Centre. On one visit the caucus found that there were no lights in the delivery room and informed the sectoral committee which responded positively.

The new budget will enable refurbishment of the centre under the supervision of the district engineer. A non-wage conditional grant has also been put in place for the projected operation and maintenance of the centre. Solar lights were also provided for lighting, three twin staff rooms were constructed, and a bicycle allowance of UGX 45,000 per month was also approved for health workers to reduce the rate of staff absenteeism and increase efficiency of the nurses at the health centre.
Voices from Adekekwok: Empowered to resolve conflict

Joan Odwee
Chaplain, Erute prison

Joan Odwee a chaplain from Erute Prison was introduced to FOWODE training in April 2014. She was particularly interested in GBV prevention. Today Joan is using the church as a platform to talk about GBV. At work she is raising awareness among prison warders and counselling prisoners especially those who were jailed because of domestic violence to change their behaviour.

Mr and Mrs Wamala Francis
Residents, Adekekwok Sub County

Wamala Francis a father of three admits he used to fight often. "I even broke my wife’s teeth. In 2013, I joined FOWODE training on causes, effects and prevention of GBV. From them, I realized I had poor communication in my family. I reconciled with my wife and now we save money as a family and we plan what we need. I now have a plan to wed her officially in church. Two of our children now go to Ireda Primary School. FOWODE training was so good that I passed on the same knowledge to my colleagues."

James Odong
Residents, Adekekwok Sub County, CAG member

With the Couple Counselling techniques he learnt through the FOWODE training Pastor James Odongo of Life Ministries Christian Centre is helping couples in his congregation resolve conflict. "One of the couples from my church had almost divorced but now they have a baby and living happily. Before, I had little knowledge of how to handle the many family wrangles. I have also started a program called ‘telephone call counselling’ to help couples”, says Odongo.

Martin and Sarah Adenga
Residents, Adekekwok Sub County, CAG member

Sarah Obong says: “Before FOWODE trained us, we did not know how to handle family misunderstandings, we would never agree on proceeds from sale of our produce like simsim and coffee, but now, am happily living with my husband and family. Last year in 2013, after the harvest season, he allowed me to go sell the produce and come back home with the returns. FOWODE has been of great help to us.”
GULU DISTRICT

4 Key Achievements of the Women Councillors

In 2011 the Gulu Women’s Caucus got involved in the FOWODE GBV project and the caucus was trained on topics such as Gender based Violence, Transformational Leadership, Lobbying, Advocacy and Resource Mobilization.

Honourable Betty Atim, first ran for office after the FOWODE leadership training where she realized that with the right preparation and skills she was capable of taking up a leadership position in her community. Hon. Atim became one of the first and few female LC5 Councillors in Gulu district.

Determined to advocate for the needs of the disadvantaged she became Chair of the Gulu Women’s Caucus. In 2013 under Hon. Atim’s leadership, the women councillors in the caucus successfully lobbied government and development partners- Child Fund and Australian Aid to fund the construction of a maternity ward at Angaya Health Centre II. The new maternity ward, opened in June 2013 is ensuring mothers in Gulu are delivering safely under the care of trained professionals at the centre. The centre was also furnished with beds, waste bins, examination and delivery beds, mama kits and sterilization machines.

The caucus advocacy for girl child education to reduce the problem of early and forced marriages resulted in UGX 100 million being allocated by the district to support 14 girls to study at Gulu University. When girls are able to stay in school, and pursue higher education they are protected from early marriages and have the opportunity to become gainfully employed, productive citizens who contribute to the development of their communities.

Honorable Atim’s concern for GBV victims led her to train also in couple counselling which has helped her work with couples to address conflict in the home. Together with the other councilors they were able to work with the district to establish a Counselling Centre in Awach Sub County where the community reports GBV cases and other human rights violations that require counselling support.

“As women leaders, we’re now exposed, we’ve gained skills like couple counseling and women leaders now have a positive image. This has helped reduce quarreling and fighting in households unlike the past when we could do nothing about domestic violence”

Betty Atim, Councillor LC5, Chairperson, Gulu Women’s Caucus
Angaya Maternity Ward Opens: Increased access to reproductive health services
The councilors lobbied government and development partners Child Fund and Australian Aid to support the construction of a maternity ward at Angaya Health Centre III in Unyama Sub County. Previously mothers in the area had to walk long distances to get care. The facility was officially opened in June 2013.

Teachers Reinstated: Enforcing the reproductive health rights of educators
A female teacher from Ogul Primary School was denied maternity leave and taken off the payroll when she took days off after giving birth to her baby. In Lujo Awiny Primary School, another teacher who went for study leave was also taken off the payroll. We demanded the school council reinstate the teacher and recognize the reproductive rights of these teachers. The school council resolved to have all these teachers reinstated.

Legal Commitments: The Gulu Gender based Violence Ordinance
Akumu Christine, Gender officer, Gulu district is excited about the GBV ordinance in the making. The councilors are aligning it to the GBV Act. In an effort to fund the project and secure expertise to develop the ordinance, the councilors worked with other partners including Care International which contributed UGX 34 million while World Vision pledged UGX 11 million. A consultative visit to Dokolo was carried out by the Social Service committee to review the ordinance. The team is currently consulting with the community to ensure a fair representation of their views.

Winning 12 Scholarships: Promoting Girl child education
For the first time since the inception of the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan-project, the women’s caucus in collaboration with other organizations including Greater North Women Voices for Peace Network, Women Initiative for Justice and Peace & Reconciliation lobbied for and won university scholarships - Gulu University for 14 girls. The students were fairly selected from across the 12 sub counties. Girls have often been left out, forced into early marriages. As such getting more women to attend university was a key success.
**Enlightenment on GBV budgeting**

Advocacy for Gender Responsive budgets has paid off. For FY14/15, the Community Based Services department, Gulu district was allocated UGX44 million for gender response programs of which UGX 4 million is from locally raised revenue (district taxes), and UGX20 million funding from UNFPA.

In the previous year a counselling center was established in Awach sub-county to increase access to services in the community and additional centers are scheduled to open in Kworo, Ongango and Unyama. Denis Kibwota, the Gulu district Population Officer admits that the FOWODE project made them realize that addressing GBV at the district level would be both strategic and beneficial to the community.

Apart from including GBV in the district plans, the leaders plan to carry out GBV Coordination meetings on GBV response and prevention in both district schools and sub-counties, facilitate multi-sectoral joint monitoring and support supervision for GBV response activities at the 12 sub-counties. A training is also planned to increase effective response to GBV focusing on service providers including the police and cultural leaders.

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**Changes at the district level**

"Every first Wednesday of the month, Gulu district holds a meeting focused on gender issues especially GBV in the community. We also sensitise the community and receive at least one case daily. Between June and December 2013, the gender office received over 200 cases and some have received justice and others are in the court process. Most of the cases happen during harvest period where couples fail to share the proceeds from the harvest sales. We are grateful as a district to have an increase in reported cases; this helps us have a better approach to reducing GBV related cases. It also helps us realize the funding gap and how it can be bridged. We are confident that families will not suffer silently anymore with this approach."
On advocacy for equal representation in Nebbi

Since 2011 the 20 member caucus has been influencing significant changes in district budgeting and planning for more inclusive and gender responsive outcomes.

By-law to prevent alcoholism passed
Like in many areas, alcoholism in Nebbi district is a major factor contributing to GBV. To address this problem, the Women’s Caucus advocated for and gained support for a bye-law to restrict excessive consumption of alcohol. In FY 2013/14 they succeeded, as a bye-law was passed establishing punitive consequences for perpetrators of violence found under the influence of alcohol. Punishments include community service and depending on the magnitude of physical harm, fines and imprisonment apply.

Health and Sanitation Resolutions Passed
When the Nebbi Women Councilors caucus discovered that Alwi Primary School did not have toilets, and that girls did not have separate changing rooms, they quickly reported the matter to the district education officials. It was alarming that many girls had dropped out or would skip school during their menstrual cycle because they lacked privacy and were vulnerable to exploitation. The councilors ably demonstrated to the school administration that the students rights to a safe sanitary environment. While it took more than a year of persistent advocacy, the councilors were successful, a new resolution was also passed for schools to have separate changing rooms for girls in all schools. This year Alwi Primary School constructed a bath shelter and latrine for girls.

Old toilets and bath shelter (left) new toilets and bath shelter right constructed for girls at Alwi Primary School

Through the caucus advocacy, Nebbi district budgets are reflecting more of the needs of the people especially those who have been excluded in the past. The chart below indicates allocations for persons with disabilities, GBV response, and income generating opportunities to empower the poor to improve their livelihoods.

UGX 30 million : Income generating activities (paper bag making, bead making, goat and poultry rearing

UGX15 million : For GBV related issues under the Gender office allocations

UGX3.4 million : For persons with disabilities programmes
Securing Girl Child Education
Keeping girls in school is key to preventing their being forced into early marriages, a violation of their sexual and reproductive health rights. On the 13th of August, 2014 the Nebbi Women Caucus Group therefore celebrated when a motion to ensure that all girls of school going age attend school regularly was passed. Parents who keep their girls at home to attend to house chores would be subjected to a fine. The caucus had been advocating for girl children to be given equal support by their parents as far as school attendance as traditionally they had been kept home to work rather than obtain an education as is their right.

On behalf of the disabled
Hon. Nimungu Doreen Claire is a mother of 2, a prolific entrepreneur and the representative of persons with disabilities in Nebbi district. Hon Nimungu is one of the councillors who participated in FOWODE’s trainings on GBV, lobbying and advocacy. Following the training she successfully lobbied for maternity beds for women with disabilities, training of health workers in sign language to ease communication between workers and patients. When the district awarded UGX 2.9 million for monitoring government programs for the disabled, Hon. Nimungu advocated for improved access to education for children with disabilities especially girls. The councillor’s efforts paid off and the government and other partners agreed to construct ramps to enable easy access to key public service centres for persons with mobility disabilities. Through networking with organisations concerned with persons with disabilities, Hon Nimungu also approached NUWODE for support in raising awareness on sexual and reproductive health rights of children with disabilities. Since October 2013, Hon Nimungu has been awarded UGX15 million per quarter to implement this campaign. In some instances Hon. Nimungu has had to intervene on an individual level for example in the case of the sexual assault of 16 year old Sharon, who has a hearing and speech impediment. Hon Nimungu counselled and linked Sharon to the support services she needed and helped her take legal action against the offender who was jailed in Arua prison.

Apart from improvements in social services for people with disabilities Hon. Nimungu from Gulu utilized her lobbying skills from the FOWODE training to tap into developmental opportunities like the craft making business training by Uganda Action on People with Disabilities. Today she manages a handmade crafts workshop at her home and employs and mentors young girls in this business. The products include exotic beads, jewelry, decorative items which are very popular reaching markets as far as Denmark.
A steering committee headed by the CAO was established by the district, to ensure that GBV cases are effectively managed. Members include the LC 5, police, probation officer and education officer. Since 2012, 963 cases with 132 cases of rape and defilement handled many of which would have been concealed if the community had not been sensitized.

An education ordinance to keep children in school was passed in 2013.

The district carried out 15 trainings across community structures ranging from all local council levels, police and health workers to improve GBV response. 327 people were trained on child protection.

660 Radio spots run to raise awareness on Gender Based Violence.

UGX3 million was budgeted for a GBV shelter management in Masaka Referral Hospital which is managed by MIFUMI.

FY14/15 municipality budget

UGX 5million for GBV activities. The district has been able to re-allocate victims of GBV in need of recovery support and care through programmes like the White Eagle Project in Nyendo.
Kakooza Nyendo Senyange
Masaka, CAG member

“There is now a change since we got involved with FOWODE in August 2013. Families are more involved more in economic activities like farming, this has helped watch GBV since poverty was the major cause of domestic violence”

Musa Lule
Masaka, CAG member, Chairperson
Kasigyagarwa village, Masaka

Musa Lule is proud to be resolving affairs in his district. He was part of the group that led to the arrest and imprisonment of a man who had raped a 4 year old. In the same village, a woman was sentenced to five months with the CAG intervention when she battered her daughter claiming she had attended church without her consent. The village authorities helped place the child in foster care and the mother is required to provide UGX 50,000 for the child’s welfare per month.

Nanyonjo,
Councillor, Senyange Division, Masaka

Hon. Nanyonjo, is one of the women councillors in Masaka who approached Marie Stopes for support with the provision of family Planning services as well as HIV testing and counselling. As a result residents of Nyarugungo ward have been receiving these services free of charge for 6 months. During service provision, couples are also educated about Gender based violence, how to prevent it and where to find help.

Nagawa Maria
Social Welfare and Probation Officer

Nanyonjo, Councillor, Senyange Division, Masaka

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Transformation in Kitgum

How empowered women councillors are ensuring better GBV response and reproductive health care for their community

Significant Change for the Kitgum Women Councillors

Once upon a time in Kitgum, when women leaders were voted for a position in the council they would opt to step down, fearful of leadership positions. Following the FOWODE training, women’s attitudes changed dramatically. Hon. Arachi Concy Pindo, Chairperson of the Women Caucus Group Kitgum Town Council, is particularly proud that more women are taking up leadership positions and the councillors are confidently passing motions they believe in. Using the skills they acquired through the FOWODE training, they gained the courage to address large crowds, openly discuss gender equality, scrutinize budgets, confidently take up leadership positions. For the first time for example, the councillors voted against a male candidate vying for the position of representative, Kitgum Urban Council in Kitgum Service Commission, and chose the more experienced contestant who happened to be a woman.

Community outreaches

After the FOWODE trainings, councillors in Matidi sub county held GBV awareness days across four parishes. During these community gatherings counselling was offered for GBV cases. A widow, Maria, who had been forced off her land by her in-laws received justice when the councillors met with the in-laws and urged them to reflect on the rights of Maria as a wife, mother and widow. The family settled the matter and Maria returned home to cultivate her land.

The trainings helped demystify budgets and enabled councillors to learn how to scrutinize budgets effectively in order to lobby for Gender Responsive plans. Hon. Filder Atuhu and Hon. Concy Pido who sit on the Finance subcommittee were at the helm of the advocacy efforts and deliberations which resulted in reallocation of idle funds amounting to 8,000,000/= from the Mayor’s charity Fund to be utilized for the construction of a maternity ward at Padwong Health Centre II which formerly had a budget of only 200,000/= in FY 2013/1014. The councillors have also lobbied for more land for the construction of a placenta pit, where 12,000,000/= has been allocated to acquisition of land from Bomma Ground to construct the placenta pit for Padwong Health Centre II.
Building capacity among existing community structures

In Kitgum, Town Council, westland parish, a resolution was made; where anyone who experiences violation of their reproductive rights through violence, reports the cases to 9 entrusted GBV change agents for counselling before it is taken to the LC chairperson, since he was formerly overwhelmed with cases. Currently he says the CAG has done a great job through sensitizing and counseling, which is reducing the number of cases reported to his office. This was also evidenced in Lamit Parish where Onye David, the LC1 chairperson told the team that his office had not received any cases of GBV this year as compared to the nine that he received in 2012/2013. This he attributed to the training against GBV that have been carried out in Lamit parish.

Paving it forward

In Westland Parish Hon. Achola and the other leaders organized community “barazas” (meetings) reaching 280 people on Gender Based Violence prevention focusing on the roles and responsibilities of the community. Hon. Achola passed on the skills she acquired through the training to a committee of 9 women leaders at the community level to support Local Councils in addressing GBV among couples. Hon. Achola meets the committee every 4 months to review progress made in ensuring GBV issues are addressed.

New maternity ward in Gandyang Health Centre II

New maternity ward in Gandyang Health Centre II in Padyong Parish a result of the advocacy and lobbying of the Kitgum Womens Councillors will enable many mothers access quality reproductive services right in their community.

In May 2014 the council granted the reallocation of UGX 8 million from the Mayor’s Charity Fund to contribute towards the construction of a maternity ward in Gandyang Health Centre II in Padwong Parish. As it is the first maternity center, facility has reduced the distance that mothers have to walk to get care. Additionally the council advocated for the expansion of the Health Center and plans are underway to expand onto Boma grounds where a placenta pit for the new maternity ward will be constructed. The council managed to secure an additional UGX 12 million in FY15 towards this project.

(An infant weighing scale outside the new maternity centre)
“Tam Pi Ber Bedo Pardo”

As a result of the success in addressing Gender Based Violence, the group has been able to approach other actors such as PA Africa which focuses on poverty relief to support 24 girls from Westland and Padur parishes with all the scholastic supplies they needed to stay in school.

Agnes Ageno, middle with baby is the chairperson of the group
Breaking the cycle of violence

The Community Action Group’s name Tam Pi Ber Bedo Pa dano (For the well being of humanity) goes before them—they are committed to promoting the wellbeing of all women and men. Agnes Ageno who doubles as chairperson of the group and as parish chief has watched her community break the cycle of domestic violence which was accepted as a norm in the culture. Couples who were once known for fighting have turned into peace-mongers teaching others to break the pattern of violence in their family so that their children do not perpetuate it in the future. On Sundays the group takes advantage of church gatherings to denounce domestic violence.

Joe and Rose Otto
CAG members, Lamit sub-county

“An atmosphere where people build you up rather than tear you down”

The GBV counseling Joe and his two wives received from the CAG has led to a more peaceful family. “The group gave us counsel as a couple. We had two years of a violent marriage fighting, quarrelling bitterly until we were taken for couple counseling with my two wives. I had never sat down to plan finances with my wives, not even planning family issues ranging from the children’s education, to proceeds from produce. Because of the outreach, all that has changed.”

David Okane
Chairperson, Bajera Village, Kitgum

Standing up for the most vulnerable victims

When an LC1 chairperson raped a 15 year old girl suffering from nodding syndrome, he threatened to harm the family if they ever reported. The CAGs unimimidated, reported the case to the police and the perpetrator was apprehended. This was something they would not have dared to address but the training empowered them to acknowledge their responsibility in ending violence such as rape in their community.

GBV cases reported at community meetings have been reducing since the FOWODE project started. In 2012 9 cases were reported to the local council but in the last seven meetings from January to September there haven’t been any reports. According to Okane David, Chairperson Bajera village, it can be attributed to the increased sensitization in the community.

Local Commitments

Francisca Odake points out that L.Cs have come up with agreements that any couple got fighting would be subject to community work, such as slashing at health centers, community schools. This agreement was reached at a seating of 70 L.C members from 7 villages some of which included Adyee, Labomo, Bajere, Liba and Pem in August 2013.
Perspectives from Kween

“The number of children who were dropping out of school and getting into early marriages was staggering.”

Hellen Cheptagei
Woman Councillor, Kitawoi Sub County

“I have realised my leadership potential and I aspire for Member of Parliament, I have embarked on further studies so that I can meet the requirements. We had challenges forming by-laws but we had a peer to peer visit to Serere district where we learnt council procedures. As a result of our efforts is in FY14/15, there has been an increased allocation for the Women council to UGX1 million from UGX 500,000 for GBV and FGM sensitization activities”. The 40 member CAG of Kween district reached 12 parishes in its effort to address GBV and provide counselling services. The group found that home visits and small group discussions are a safe and effective way of engaging communities. They also set up GBV clubs to act as information and support resources.

Patricia Mwanga
Youth Councillor

Patricia Mwanga the youth councillor, Kaptum Sub County, Kween says women and men have been educated on gender based violence, child abuse – the dangers and how it can be prevented. As a result cases of neglect and conflict have reduced, couples now work hand in hand to improve their families. In addition the district is supporting efforts to curb child abuse. On 20th July 2014, during a district committee meeting, a by-law was passed on child labor with serious consequences including jail for parents who refuse to comply.
By-law passed in 2013 to keep children in school.

By-law passed in 2013 to keep children in school.

51%

Increase in girl child enrolment in 8 primary schools and in 14 secondary schools.

Supporting communities to address Gender Based Violence

The 40 member CAG of Kween District reached 12 parishes in its effort to address GBV and provide counselling services. The group found that home visits and small group discussions are a safe and effective way of engaging communities. They also set up GBV clubs to act as information and support resources. During the sessions the group allows testimonies from former perpetrators of GBV such as Chebet Martin on how they have been supported to change.

Chebet Martin shared his experience during the CAG outreaches to encourage others to transform their lives.

“I was not the same as you see me today. I was a drunkard, drinking local brew called “kimofe” (drink as you die slowly) and putting on rags as clothes. There was regular violence at my home. I would sell everything from land, produce and our dogs which money I drank. I thank FOWODE for they counselled our family as a whole. Five of my children attend UPE School because I now save some money that I would have drank instead. In fact it's my wife who organised my tie when I told her I was coming over.”

Councillors successfully lobbied for funds to monitor implementation of the Anti FGM Act, resulting in an increase in the budget allocation from UGX 500,000 in 2012/13 to UGX 1,000,000 in FY 2013/14 and FY 2014/15. Since 2014 is an even year per cultural calendars FGM prevalence was anticipated to increase. The councillors were granted this money to monitor their constituents to ensure that FGM is not practiced this year.

In Kitawoi sub-county the councillors lobbied for an increase in funds allocated for sensitization on gender mainstreaming from UGX100,000 in FY 2013/14 to UGX 200,000 in FY 2014/15.

In Binyiyi sub-county the councillors lobbied for an increase of the money for sensitization on GBV from UGX100,000 in FY 2013/14 to UGX150,000 in FY 2014/15.

Government commitment to GBV response

According to the district Planner of Kween, Chelangat Francis, the Ministry of Local Government has appointed a focal person to deal with GBV issues in every sub county. In addition the Ministry’s assessment system was revised to include the number of cases deposed in local courts and addressed in the referral and coordination mechanisms like Police, Judiciary and Civil Society Organizations. Councilors also supported the formation of women groups to save money to provide scholastic materials for the children.
Gaining momentum in Mbarara

Through networking and partnerships the councillors and CAGs are working towards the change they want to see.

Deterring school absenteeism

As a result of the women councillors’ advocacy efforts, a by-law was passed on education requiring all school-going children to attend and stay in school. Any parent breaking the law is liable for punishment. Since pool tables were observed as a notorious pastime of children who skip school, the by-law set 5pm as the opening time for pool table centres. Fines were set for all bar owners not adhering to the new directive.

Kakyika Women’s Caucus

Networking: The Group sought out working relationships with actors such as MIFUMI to better help them in proceedings that required police intervention.

Budget Advocacy: While a small increase from UGX100,000 to UGX120,000 in the budget for Women’s Day Celebration may seem small, the women leaders celebrate it as an important indication that their Local Government is paying attention to their efforts to get women’s issues on the political agenda.

Reproductive Health: The group lobbied and secured a full-time midwife to attend to mothers at Lubaya Health Centre.

Led by Angella Mwesigwa, the Kamukuzi Women’s Caucus lobbied for the construction of a new market toilet, fitted with a water tank, in Kamukuzi through the urban fund. As a result, the council approved an amount of UGX19 million for the construction works.

Frobia Akankwasa
Woman councillor, Nyakaisho Women’s Caucus

Angella Mwesigwa
CAG, Kamukuzi Women’s Caucus
When Nasonko, a CAG member heard that a mother in her neighbourhood had battered their 3 year old for making a mistake about a market item he had been sent off, she took action. Nasonko worked with the police to get her imprisoned and took the child to the hospital for emergency attention.

Ms. Nasonko
CAG member

Kyomugisha Amisi from Nyarubanga CAG, Kiyiki Division is grateful for the FOWODE intervention: “Before, in my family, my husband used to fight using pangas, he never used to buy food. Today, after the counselling we got in the group, we can now discuss our family affairs. I even took on my stepchild”.

Kiconco Halima
Community Development Officer

Kiconco Halima, Community Development Officer, Mbarara Municipality works with the municipality to identify opportunities for women such as training in charcoal making (brickets) and handcrafts. Results of the groups’ lobbying efforts include: an allocation in FY14/15 of a UGX38 million government grant to groups to get involved in income generating activities, for Community Driven Development. The district also plans to locally raise revenue of UGX 3 million to fund Functional Adult literacy in writing, math and reading.

“The couple counselling has helped families, there are now less fights and parents now embrace sending their children to school both girls and boys”.

Kiconco Halima
Community Development Officer
Insights from Pallisa

“Before these trainings, we as leaders were not aware about GBV or how to handle any related case. Women didn’t know where to go for social justice.”

An Outreach Strategy

After the FOWODE training, the Pallisa Community Advocacy Group chose to use outreaches and radio talk shows to reach their communities. The first outreach brought together more than 100 people, which encouraged the group to organize these sensitization meetings in other communities. Funerals, church gatherings and Local Council meetings have also been strategic opportunities to sensitize about GBV response.

New Budget Allocations

For the first time the district allocated UGX 2million for FY14/15 GBV activities, after the women council members insisted on attending budget proceedings as was their right. The councillors ensured that an allocation of UGX1.4 million was also made for participatory planning to ensure all council members are able to attend and contribute to the budgeting process. UGX2.6 million was budgeted for vocational training tool kits like tailoring to provide economic opportunities for women and youth.

By-laws to protect the Girl Child

The Pallisa women caucus successfully lobbied for the enactment of a by-law promoting girl child education, preventing early child marriage and penalties for culprits. They also secured office space through engaging the LC3 chairman.

Freedom to work

“Before FOWODE’s intervention, my husband never allowed me to do any business, or even attend church, but after we were both invited and counselled about our individual rights, he now allows me to work and I was appointed vice chairperson of this group where we both attend”.

Samalie Okuma
Kameke CAG Chairperson

Grace Achola
Kameke CAG Chairperson
Bringing safe water closer to homes and increasing women’s safety

Women in Pallisa district, who walk far to fetch waters are at a high risk of sexual violation. The Pallisa Women Councillors Caucus took action and lobbied the district to provide safe water points to every family within a space of less than 2.5km and in budget FY 2014/2015, 10,000,000/= was set aside for this project. Making water accessible, closer to households will go along way in reducing opportunities for predators to violate women on water ways.

Budget allocation for integrated services

The councillors also managed to lobby the district to allocate UGX 2 million in FY 2014/15 for the integration of HIV/AIDS, Gender mainstreaming, environment and poverty analysis. The previous year there had been no budget. The district has also included UGX 2 million for gender awareness training.

By-law established to restrict early marriages and promote education

In Pallisa, a by-law on early marriages and compulsory education for both girls and boys was passed in May 2014. This was lobbied by the committee of community based services that deals with women, youth and disabled. The bye law states that any parents who force their children into early marriage (usually girls) will both be arrested, as well as the groom( usually older man) and the LC1 of a village where this happens.

Towards equal property rights and representation

The Community Advocacy Groups in Kameke Sub County, Pallisa district drafted a bye-law to define equal ownership of property by married couples at household level. The bye-law also calls for equal representation of women in local development groups like farmers groups. The LC3 chair person has approved this and forwarded it to the district for discussion.
In picture: Kevin and Apollot from Paliisa are set to wed on 30th October 2014. Previously Kevin never allowed their daughter Apesse, to attend school insisting that she would get pregnant. Kevin’s reasoning was that in school Apesse would get pregnant. This caused significant disagreement and fighting between Kevin and Apollot. The couple was referred for counselling by Community Advocacy Group members in their neighbourhood. Through the counseling sessions and discussions on GBV and the rights of all children to education. Kevin realized he was wrong to keep Apesse away from school and she returned to school. The couple reconciled, and decided to make their marriage official. They became C.A.G members and are supporting other couples to address violence in their homes, their daughter is attending school. “He now pays for apesse!” Apollot beams as she shares how happy she is that her daughter will have a chance at an education and a successful career.