



Strengthening Community Participation in Local Governance and Promotion of Women and Girls' Rights



diakonia
PEOPLE CHANGING THE WORLD



Breaking Through, Bridging Up and Binding



SWEDEN

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APPRECIATION

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FOREWORD

In 2016, ACFODE embarked on a project aimed at ensuring that female rights holders, besides enjoying their fundamental human rights, contribute to local governance. The project planned to run from 2016 to 2018 is implemented in the districts of Amolatar and Oyam, in the Lango sub-region of northern Uganda. The rights holders targeted are local citizens, women's groups, child mothers, males and civil society organisations (CSOs). ACFODE targets the newly elected councillors – both male and female as the duty bearers. Included in the interventions are people with disability (PWDs) as well as People living with HIV and AIDs.

ACFODE has employed a number of strategies to deliver this project that include awareness creation about women's rights; stakeholder engagements and dialogue between duty bearers and rights holders, media engagement, partnerships, linkages; and capacity-building.

A lot of success has been registered. A number of rights holders, including CSOs, have been mobilised and trained in gender, advocacy, rights, entitlements and responsibilities. Information, educational and communication (IEC) materials have been produced and distributed to the different recipients. A study on the incidents of violence against women and girls (VAW/G) has been carried out, which fed into a commemoration of 16 days of gender-based violence (GVB) of 2016. Furthermore, a number of males have been mobilized and trained as gender champions, while boys drawn from selected schools in the project districts have been oriented to embrace the gender equality.

In this newsletter rights holders and duty bearers tell their stories that cover a whole gamut of issues. They include stories on girl-child challenges such as sexual and gender based violence including, defilement, forced marriages, school drop out due to negligence of parents or guardians and son preference and other related issues that often lead school abandonment or drop out school, early pregnancy among others.

There are also stories of women leaders in the two districts about the encumbrances to their aspirations, choices they made in life and use of their positions as elected leaders to cause change. Furthermore, there are stories about the successes attained by male gender champions, and how crucial it is to create a critical mass of women's rights and gender activist. Finally, there are stories on social accountability and service delivery.

Despite the setbacks that the efforts undertaken to ensure gender equality and equity face, there is a lot of hope. More than ever before, individuals and communities are beginning to recognise that the advancement, security and prosperity of a nation derive from the realisation of the potential of each individual and the tenor of the relationships within the family and the community.

We are grateful to Diakonia and the Sweden Embassy in Uganda for the technical and financial support towards the implementation of the project and the local government authorities of Amolatar and Oyam for their unwavering support.

Regina Bafaki

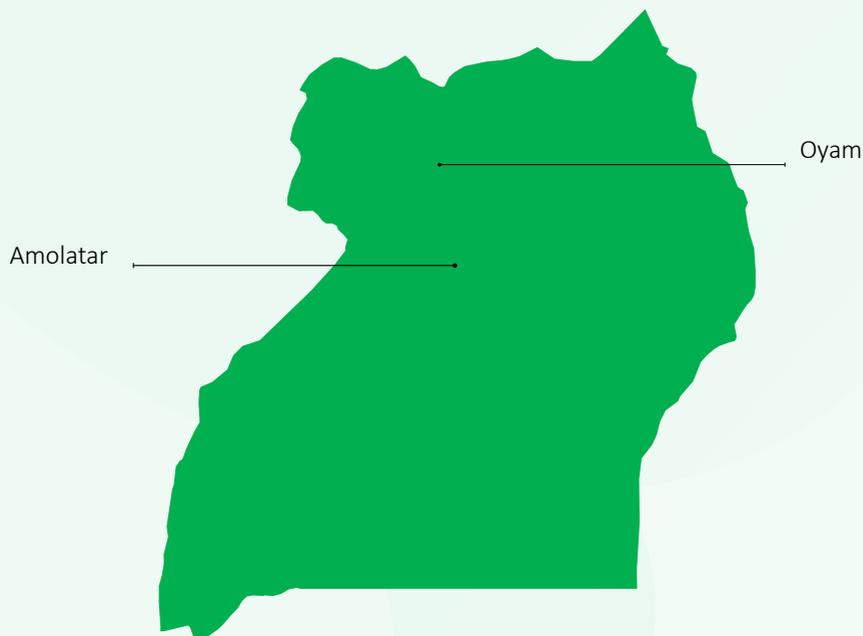


Executive Director ACFODE

Project Overview

Project Duration: 2016 - 2018 (3 years)

Districts of Focus: Amolatar and Oyam (Lango sub-region)



Project Overall Goal: The project's overall goal is to see rights holders (marginalised girls and women) enjoy their fundamental human rights and contribute to local governance and democratic processes in the Lango sub-region.

Project Target

A. Rights Holders

- A total of **2,000** local citizens (**1,000** women, **120** child mothers, **3,800** girls, **250** boys, **250** men).
- **60** women groups (totalling 200 women).

- **120** child mothers.
- **60** male gender equality champions; **240** boys.
- **10** civil society organisations (CSOs) working at the local government level in the four districts.

B. Duty bearers

- **100** newly elected councillors (**60** women and **40** men).

Envisaged Project Outcomes

1. Rights holders and communities influence local government policies and hold duty bearers accountable for social and democratic accountability.
2. CEDAW committees, social actors, civil society (CS) actors (rights holder groups) and duty bearers (local political leaders, police and local government technocrats) proactively promote and protect women's and girls' rights as well as provide restorative support to survivors of violence against women/girls (VAW/G).
3. Improved socio-economic wellbeing (e.g. increased incomes, access to education, health care etc.) of social enterprise groups (women and girls).
4. A critical mass of male role models actively who advocate for gender-responsive cultural practices.
5. Elected women leaders influence gender-responsive policies and programmes for gender equality.

Strategies Utilised

- Awareness creation on rights.
- Stakeholder engagements and dialogue between duty bearers and rights holders.
- The media.
- Partnerships and linkages.
- Capacity-building.
- Engagement of formal and informal institutions.
- Men's and boys' engagements.

Project Highlights

Summary of 2016 Activity Outcomes

- **Project launch** in Oyam and Amolatar districts. In attendance were rights holders and duty bearers of both formal and informal institutions. These included the district leadership (technical and political), social actors (religious leaders, traditional leaders, opinion leaders, clan leaders), representatives of women's and youth groups, selected citizens (men and women), school administrators, senior female and male teachers, representatives of the private sector, CSO and community-based organisation (CBO) representatives and local journalists. In total **120** people attended. These included **45** females and **75** males, **4** of whom were persons with disabilities (PWDs).
- **240** rights holders (**108** women and **132** men) 10 CSOs mobilised and trained in gender, advocacy, rights, entitlements and responsibilities.
- **1,142** copies of project brochures, 2,000 posters with messages on governance and women's rights, **300** T-shirts and **3** project banners produced and disseminated.
- A study on the incidents of VAW in the Lango sub-region – Amolatar and Oyam districts – conducted.
- **Commemoration of 16 days of Activism against Gender Based Violence (GBV).** Specific interventions undertaken in commemoration of the global campaign against GBV including media campaigns on local radio stations in Amolatar and Oyam districts and also participation in talk shows at national level on 93.3 KFM. A total of **96** spot messages were aired over the **16**-day period with different messages broadcast every day on both local and national radio.
- **120** male gender champions mobilised and trained as agents of change in the districts of Amolatar and Oyam.
- Orientation of **74** boys from selected primary and secondary schools in Amolatar and Oyam districts in support of activities geared towards gender equality.
- **57** elected women leaders and 43 male duty bearers trained on gender and accountability.
- Engagement with **120** female aspirants who lost in the 2016 general elections and documentation of their experiences.
- **2** support engagement sessions for women leaders and their spouses organised.

Outcomes of the above interventions

- **Rights holders and CS actors are currently monitoring and following up service delivery programmes within their communities and districts.** For instance in Oyam district, **13** monitoring visits have been made by CS actors to **15** health centre IIs and IIIs in the sub-counties of Aber, Myene, Minakulu, Aleka, Otwal and Abok. The major findings from the monitoring visits included the following: presence of few health workers at the health facilities compared to the number of patients; drug stock-outs; availability of limited staff accommodation; and harassment of pregnant women by midwives. The monitoring findings were documented in a report that will inform discussions during the upcoming accountability forums and engagements with duty bearers in 2017.
- **Civil Society (CS) actors trained by ACFODE in Oyam have conducted 30 community meetings** on women's and girls' rights in churches, at burial places and in Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) groups in the sub-counties of Aber, Myene, Minakulu, Aleka, Otwal and Abok. The actors have reached out to **2,113** people (**902** male and **1,211** female), of whom **55** were PWDs.
- **24 Gender Equality Clubs comprising male students and a few female students have been formed in 12 primary and 12 secondary schools.** A total of **8** sensitisation and awareness campaigns on girl-child education and rights have been organised by the male gender equality champions in **6** secondary and **6** primary schools in Oyam district. Through these interventions **2,753** students (**1,554** boys and **1,199** girls), **11** of whom are PWDs, have been reached.
- **Increased confidence among women leaders trained as a result of improving their knowledge and skill set.** The women leaders of Amolatar district successfully lobbied for increased women's representation on the Area Land Committees from one to two women in each sub-county. Through their caucus, the women councillors of Amolatar district also lobbied for a female representative to the District Service Commission, which was male-dominated. A resolution was passed in council and a female representative nominated whose name and credentials have since been sent to the Ministry of Public Service for approval.

Project Impact Stories



Robinah Ejang

The Stories of Change

Robinah blazes the trail: The living inspiration for fellow girls and her community

“I am a Primary Five pupil at Anamido Primary School in Amolatar district. My name is Robinah Ejang. I was fortunate enough to attend one of the trainings organised by ACFODE for gender equality champions within schools. While the training was planned for boys, a few girls were selected and I happened to be one of them.

I found the training very interesting and revealing because the issues discussed pertained to girls and their advancement. While I was a school prefect prior to this training, I was not very active in school. I was dull and not confident enough to speak to my fellow pupils, let alone the teachers.

The training made me discover the potential I had to positively influence others, especially fellow girls as well as boys, in my school and in my community. Since the training, I have been able to address pupils during the school assembly, and encourage fellow girls to concentrate on their education regardless of the challenges they may face along the way.”

The head teacher of Anamido Primary School, Mr Ambrose Okwir, attests to Ejang’s transformation. He says that both boys and girls gather around her during the tea and lunch breaks to consult her on different matters relating to their lives and aspirations.

Robinah’s father, Washington Odongo, too, attests to the change in attitude and energy in his daughter. He testifies: “Since my daughter returned from the ACFODE training, her interest in studies has increased. She even encourages her brothers to value education for girls. Occasionally Robinah also talks to the neighbours’ children about the importance of education for

girls. I was surprised to see my daughter in the company of other girls from the neighbourhood revising past papers at home a number of evenings.”

I am looking forward to a bright future for myself and all the girls in my school,” notes Robinah.

Snatching Fiona back from the brink of disaster



Grace Omunu (Right), former female councillor, Agwingiri sub-county, Amolatar district.

“Most of the trainings I have attended under ACFODE emphasise the rights of the girl-child, especially the right to education. This inspired me to develop a soft spot for this particular issue. As a result, I was able to reach out and help Fiona Alaba, a 16-year-old girl in my village who was considering getting married after being lured with financial gifts from

an elderly man. During one of the counselling sessions, Fiona opened up about the reasons that were pushing her to this. The major one was lack of finances and moral support from her parents to cater for her school fees and other basic necessities. I used my personal savings to buy Fiona books and a uniform and thereafter approached the school administration to allow her to study as the issues to do with her schools fees were being sorted out. Fortunately, they agreed. In addition to this, I have done a lot in reconciling families and settling disputes among partners. My social work as a gender equality champion is now renowned as community members come to me to settle matters of domestic violence as and when they arise, as opposed to going to LC chairpersons who are fond of asking for money.” **Grace Omuu, former female councillor, Agwingiri sub-county, Amolatar district.**



The Hon. Joseph Ekwan, deputy speaker of Agwingiri sub-county at the sub-county headquarters of Agwingiri, Amolatar district.

To speak or not to speak – the great dilemma at council meetings

“I am a councillor representing Alemere parish in Agwingiri sub-county, Amolatar district,” announces Joseph Ekwan. “I also double as the deputy speaker for Agwingiri sub-county. Before participating in the ACFODE capacity-building training sessions, we used to conduct council meetings with a lot of sternness; especially when it came to the use of English as the official language. This left out many councillors, especially women who could not speak fluent English, as they would keep quiet right through the proceedings.

However, after participating in some of ACFODE’s training sessions, I realised that a little flexibility would not hurt, and also came to appreciate the importance of freedom of expression.

Hence, my team and I agreed to allow members to express themselves in both English and the local language, as long as we understood one another. Where necessary, an interpreter would be engaged.

This move has revived our council meetings as each and every one of us – regardless of whether one can speak English or not – is given a chance to express themselves.

Our meetings are now more interesting to attend, as a lot of information is shared.”

Legal books and training: A shot in the arm for local council women leaders



The Hon. Anna Agang, PWD female councillor, Oyam district council.

“I am a female councillor for persons with disability in Oyam district council. As elected leaders, we used to fear technocrats since most of us did not have high qualifications in education. The action plans we developed during a training organised by **ACFODE** with support from **Diakonia** committed us to equip ourselves with as much information as possible for better and informed lobbying and advocacy for women’s rights and inclusive participation in development processes. This guidance and firm stance have greatly contributed to our confident leadership style and moving of ‘things’ within and outside council. We now work closely with the technical leaders such as heads of departments, officers in charge of health centres and Community Development Officers to have information made available. This information is used to influence decision-making. Team spirit has

also been strengthened between the elected and appointed leaders in Oyam district. In the past, whenever we advocated for women’s voice in planning, budgeting and the implementation of development programmes, it was not seriously considered. Today however, most of the technical leaders involve women in their activities. Special consideration is also regularly given by the district speaker for women councillors to deliberate in council. A cross-section of female councillors have gone back to school for further studies and they are all equipped with legal documents like the Standard Rules of Procedure, the Local Government Act and the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda. All these have been brought about by experience-sharing sessions during the training and commitments to create a difference in council deliberations.

Finally, the 3 secretaries in executive positions (the Hon. Alyek Anna Ekol – Secretary Health and Education Committee, the Hon. Aguti Betty Okullu – Secretary Works and Technical Services, the Hon. Milly Molly Among – Secretary Production, Marketing and Natural Resources and the Hon. Stella Anyango – Chairperson Finance, Planning and Administration, are committed to ensuring that they engage the district speaker and the clerk to council to organise council meetings in time. For example, we have been following the planning cycle and ensuring that the district budget is approved by the district council in time.” **Hon. Anna Agang, PWD female councillor, Oyam district council.**

To marry or not to marry him: that is your biggest career decision



The Hon. Roseline Auma with her husband Mr Dominic Otieno during the dialogue for female leaders and their partners in Oyam district.

“I joined politics in 2016 as a youth councillor for Oyam district. Though I made it, it was not easy because it was my first time to go into politics. Luckily, I had previously attended training on leadership organised by ACFODE and this enhanced my knowledge and ability to solicit votes from my fellow youth.

In this political journey, my husband openly had reservations about my new role as a woman leader and public figure. He rarely gave me time to participate fully in meetings whenever I was invited regardless of their significance to my leadership role. My husband never engaged in home chores and would say that domestic work is for the women and the children. This situation forced me to adjust my domestic work to fit into my new role. Whenever I had meetings to attend and visits to make in my constituency, I had to ensure that I had done everything possible to keep the home and family running. This however left me too exhausted to engage in constructive discussions most of the time.

It was after the dialogue for women leaders with their spouses organised by ACFODE that my husband recognised the need to support me in leadership. Through the discussion on rights and gender roles, my husband appreciated the need to share roles and understood that women, too, had rights to participate in leadership.

I can now proudly say that he has transformed and is currently a role model. He helps with domestic work and also encourages other men in the neighbourhood and at social gatherings to support their wives.

I am pleased to say today, that even on the committee of council where I sit, I have ample time to scrutinise issues with a stable mind. As a leader, I have learnt that change cannot take place in a day but it is a gradual process and requires perseverance, commitment, sacrifice, determination and devotion towards it.”

Women leaders seek greater clout in decision-making and development programmes



The Hon. Emmanuel Apil, male youth councillor, Oyam district council.

"I'm Emmanuel Apil, a male youth councillor, Oyam district council. I'm one of the people who have benefited from ACFODE interventions in the district. I commend ACFODE for her regular training of district leadership and other community members to ensure that there is improved service delivery and the rights of women and girls are protected and promoted. Through these interventions ACFODE is bridging the wider gap of inequality that exists among women and men in most communities and in positions of influence in Oyam district. For example, for long the District Service Commission in Oyam district was not functional; the members of the commission were brought from neighbouring districts like Kole and Lira to recruit staff in the district.

In the training organised by ACFODE that we attended in September 2016, we realised that for us to accomplish improved service delivery, we needed to have a functional District Service Commission and a functional District Land Board. As the district council, we nominated five people (two women and three men) to be on the District Service Commission. I am glad that today we have three members – although they are all men – whose names have been approved by the Public Service Commission and who have been sworn in and oriented to perform their duties.

This came about as a result of the commitments we engaged in as district councillors at the time we attended the ACFODE training.

In relation to the commission that we have, we want, as the district council, to have two women representatives so that it is much easier for us to advocate for women's empowerment and girl-child education. The women appointed to the commission will be role models as they will always be referred to when we empower our women and girls.

I am also glad that the training imparted to us the skills and knowledge required to deliberate in council and to pass lawful resolutions. Our female and male councillors have been empowered with regard to their roles and responsibilities relating to mobilising the beneficiaries of different programmes and monitoring them as well.

As a result, the rural women, together with the youth, have been supported by women councillors to form themselves into groups so as to benefit from the different government programmes like Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP) and Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP). Under UWEP 52 group files have been forwarded to the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) for funding (US\$ 244 million); while under YLP, 71 files have forwarded to MGLSD for funding (US\$ 562 million). In regards to NUSAF3, 15 sub-projects have already been approved and await funding.”

Tackling male violence in the interests of women and children

Daniel Oyat Obong is a councillor at Abok sub-county and also doubles as the sub-county speaker. He is one of the male gender equality champions that were trained by ACFODE. In the case story below, he narrates how he has been able to promote women and girls’ rights in his community.

“Despite being an elected leader and council speaker, I was not fully aware of my functions and had limited knowledge of women and girls’ rights. Consequently, I rarely participated in monitoring service delivery in my sub-county; nor did I report or follow up cases of rights violation against women and girls, as well as men and boys in my community. I did not support the Child Protection Committees and rights holders whenever they reported to my office on various issues such as early

and forced marriages; especially among girls.



Above: Daniel Oyat Obong

It was not until I attended training for male gender equality champions organised by ACFODE that the realities of what it means to be a leader unfolded. The session on transformational leadership and advocacy greatly changed my mindset and attitude towards transforming my community for the better.

I now work very closely with the police and clan leaders in handling cases of sexual violence such as defilement and rape. I am also glad to report that Abok sub-county

council, in Oyam district has passed a byelaw that promotes the education of our children. It states in part that any parent with a school-age child found at home during school days will be liable to pay a fine of US\$ 50,000. The council emphasises in the byelaw that all pupils in P.5, P.6 and P.7 in all primary schools in Abok sub-county will be provided with lunch at school with support from the parents. I have also been participating in monitoring schools, health centres and different groups benefiting from different government programmes. I am at the forefront of encouraging women to form groups and register at the sub-county to benefit from the different development government programmes like restocking, the Women's Fund, the special grant for disability, and the Youth Livelihood Fund."

Where are they? Bringing the men into the loop in Amolatar district

"I am the Senior Community Development Officer in charge of gender in Amolatar district," announces Ms Catherine Awor. "I am also the officer in charge of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP), an initiative by the Government of Uganda to not only improve women's access to financial services but also equip them with skills for enterprise growth, value addition and marketing of their products and services. The women are given interest-free credit to initiate and/or strengthen their enterprises. Upon payback, the money is extended to other women and the sequence continues in that revolving manner.

I attended ACFODE's training on gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting for elected leaders and technocrats in September 2016 at Amolatar. Even if the nature of my job supports women's rights and women empowerment, the training I attended added more vigour to my line of duty.

As the officer in charge of UWEP therefore, I have since continuously sensitised men to get involved in UWEP by supporting their women (wives). This I have done one-on-one, in small groups as well



The Senior Community Development Officer in charge gender, Ms Cathy Awor

as with established groups within the community. On the Technical Planning Committee of the district, there is now gender equity that has been taken into consideration through my guidance. I have also advised the district management about Operation Wealth Creation in relation to the advantages of having both men and women involved as opposed to men's dominance, which led to the failure of Entandikwa. As you know, the Entandikwa Programme was dominated by men, leaving the women, who form the bigger portion of the population, out in the cold.

All these efforts have resulted in an increase in the number of funded women's projects. A good example is the Peace Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP); initially women and men's groups received basket funding of a tune of 5 million Ugandan Shs only. Today however, women groups are funded separately with more or less the same amount of money."

Empowering women is smart economics – Peter Okello Epila, Deputy CAO, Amolatar



Above: The Deputy CAO, Amolatar district, Mr Peter Okello Epila in his office.

"I have been involved in a number of training and capacity-building programmes under ACFODE, including attending the National Women's Conference in Gulu in November 2016. These spaces have not left me the same," reveals Peter Okello Epila, the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of Amolatar.

On the Technical Planning Committee (TPC) of the district that I head for example, we have agreed in the context of the Third Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF3) on affirmative action to promote the equalisation

of disparities in the poverty level and the inclusion of the poor and vulnerable. We have also decided that, at a minimum, women constitute 50% of the total membership of a group for it to be considered for funding.

So, during the second stage of recruitment for mosquito spraying (IRS), 40% of those recruited as direct spraying operators were women and 100% of those recruited to work in stores and to wash utensils were also women. This is unlike during the first round of spraying, where men took up close to 90% of all spraying operator jobs. This initiative increased the income levels of the women who participated; who, in turn, used their income to improve their standard of living and that of their families. We are glad we contributed to efforts aimed at empowering women economically. It was a smart move because, unlike most men, women generally spend their money on things that benefit not only themselves, but their children and spouses as well.”

It’s a two-way street – Young men need to learn about women and girls’ rights as much as women and girls are encouraged to do

“I was among those trained by ACFODE as a male gender champion,” announces Daniel Ojok, the Assistant Community Development Officer (ACDO) for Muntu sub-county in Amolatar district. “Before the training I used to carry out my duties strictly as assigned to me with little regard for empowering women and girls, and yet it was obvious that they needed to be supported in order to improve their lives. During the ACFODE training, we were advised to always support women and girls as we carry out our respective duties in the community because of their disadvantaged position. The training also increased our knowledge of gender-based violence and the Domestic Violence Act.



Mr Ojok Daniel, the ACDO, Muntu sub-county.

After the training, I made a commitment to promote the rights of the girl child and to support women empowerment in my sub-county. I, therefore, create time every month to talk about women’s empowerment, including the rights of both women and men, as well as boys and girls in the community during my official visits. I have also sensitised the community on gender-based violence, its consequences and various referral pathways to be followed in case one is abused.

The communities have appreciated my current approach and more cases are

now reported to my office than ever before. I can only pray that a culture of gender equality is inculcated into more young men, like myself, as this will make them more considerate and appreciative of women and girls' rights. Personally, I owe this knowledge, which I consider a great resource, to ACFODE. I don't see myself, for instance, abusing a spouse, a female work colleague, a neighbour or a relative emotionally, physically, financially and psychologically because I am in the know about the side effects that this has on the individual, the perpetrator, and the community at large."

Who said that women need land and property? Challenging the negative cultural norms



Richard Acili, the chairperson, Myene local council (LC) court.

"The majority of men in Myene sub-county in Oyam district do not allow women, especially widows, and at times orphans, to own land," reveals Richard Acili, the chairperson Myene local council (LC) court. "I am grateful that I was among the people selected to be trained by ACFODE on women and girls' rights. This training enabled me to reflect on the rights violations girls and women face in my sub-county of Myene, such as the denial to decision-making and the deprivation of their rights to own land and other property.

At the end of the training, I committed to conducting an awareness campaign on women and girls' rights in my community and also vowed to fight for their right to own land and other property. I have currently undertaken over five sessions on girls and women's rights to own property and to education in my village and the people are gradually beginning to understand and appreciate them. For instance, there is this widow in my village who had been mistreated by her in-laws upon the death of her husband. She had been tortured since 2010, abused, branded a prostitute and chased away from her matrimonial home. However, upon the advice of a clan leader who attended the one of my community sensitisation meetings, she reported the matter to the sub-county chief who, together with the local council court, resolved the matter in her favour. She has regained her property and a home in which she is raising her children.

As a member of Myene council court, I would like to thank ACFODE for empowering us with the knowledge and skills to handle such cases as well as other cases of human rights violations. We are constantly speaking to men to treat their wives with dignity because stable families are supported by women."

Bridging the gap between rights holders and duty bearers for improved service delivery



Brian Owiny an active citizen in Bedigen village, Aleka parish, Aleka sub-county, Oyam district

“I am an active citizen in Bedigen village, Aleka parish, Aleka sub-county, Oyam district,” says Brian Owiny. “For a very long time, it had been very difficult for us citizens to interact with our leaders at the parish and the sub-county. Thus, it had become very common for our leaders at the sub-county not to make information on different programmes available to the citizens. These included government development programmes and related initiatives by the private sector and other development partners. Furthermore, the local community at the parish feared to report to the leaders at the sub-county headquarters the problems they were experiencing in service delivery.

However, because of the engagement with ACFODE during which a cross-section of active citizens and CSO representatives were trained to, among other things, monitor service delivery, the situation is changing. We can now freely engage with our leaders without fear. As a result of such engagements, for instance, the citizens of Aleka parish were able to task the sub-county leaders to open up a three-kilometre road connecting Aleka trading centre to Barwot village in Aleka sub-county. The opening of this road has increased business opportunities and eased the transportation of goods, services as well as residents.”

Joint monitoring for improved service delivery bears fruit

“There had been capacity gaps coupled with poor relationship among technical and elected leaders in Oyam district,” begins Ogwal A. Cox. “Before the training organised by ACFODE with financial support from Diakonia, the role of monitoring and supervision was mixed up. The situation is different now because elected leaders know they are expected to mobilise and monitor service delivery. Also, the heads of departments together with the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) now work together to implement council resolutions.

The District Technical Planning Committee meetings are held every Monday to ensure that the gaps



Ogwal A. Cox, District Production and Marketing Officer, Oyam district local government.

in service delivery are addressed in all the departments and that the relationships between all leaders are cordial.

I attended a meeting of the Production, Marketing and Natural Resources Committee and the women councillors were very concerned about the plight of women in the rural community, especially the number of women groups supported under the production department with agricultural inputs, and the number of those women groups ready to be supported.

Because of this outcry, and the advocacy and lobbying skills exhibited by the women councillors, the production department agreed to supported two groups with a cassava processing machine.

The department has also been undertaking joint monitoring and support supervision of 12 sub-counties in Oyam district, with special focus being given to health centres, schools, and other on going government programs, resulting in improved service delivery. This never used to happen due to poor relationships among us.”

CS actors and rights holders join forces to fight corruption

“As a CSO actor from Aleka sub-county, Oyam district,” declares Gilbert Okello, “I am pleased to have participated in training organised by ACFODE for civil society actors and active citizens on having rights holders actively involved in local governance issues within their areas. Immediately after the training, I and a couple of other CSO actors held a community dialogue in Aweikwo trading centre, Ajul parish, Aleka sub-county during which the responsibilities of rights holders in improving service delivery were discussed.

As a result, the parents and community members of Baromo Primary School in Aleka sub-county got concerned about how the school was being mismanaged. Universal Primary Education (UPE) funds were being mishandled and the performance of the pupils left a lot to be desired. The citizens organised a community meeting at the school to follow up on the use



Above: Gilbert Okullo, CSO actor, Aleka sub-county, Oyam district.

of funds in the school.

The active citizens trained by ACFODE, in collaboration with independent budget monitors (IBMs) trained by the Apac Anti-Corruption Coalition (TAACC) then carried out investigations into how the school funds were utilised. It was discovered that the head teacher of Baromo Primary School had distributed 80,000 shillings to each of the members of the School Management Committee, an act they characterised as a form of corruption.

Thereafter, the police officers at Aleka Police Outpost intervened and arrested eight people, including the head teacher of the school and some members of the School Management Committee. After establishing that they were guilty, each member was made to pay back the money they had received, totalling 80,000 shillings plus a fine of 50,000 thousand shillings.

I am glad that our community members are now empowered to monitor service delivery. Even the parents have taken up the initiative of supporting girls' education and are now able to contribute generously towards supporting their children in school."



Above: Pamela Angom

Supporting fellow women to make headway

“It was after the training by ACFODE in October 2016 that I recognised the need to support my fellow women and girls to attain their rights. Thus, I sensitised two women groups in my home area in Aco kara parish, Otwal sub-county on the importance of economic empowerment and financial health. Accordingly, they were able to form Village Savings and Loans Association groups. I also made use of the opportunity to inform them about government programmes that benefit women so they could tap into them to further improve their livelihood.

These groups have now registered at the sub-county and applied to benefit from Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP).

In addition to the above, we have also had discussions in these groups on the importance of girl-child education. Our goal is to reach out to those that have dropped out of school for various reasons. We usually encourage them to enrol back in school or pursue vocational education.

A case in point is one of the young girls, Oyella Beatrice, aged 17 years old, who reached out to us after hearing about the work we do in the community. She had sat her Primary Leaving Examinations in 2016 at Ader Primary School in Otwal Sub County but was being forced to get married by her parents.

The father claimed that the girl hadn't got good grades as he had expected of her and since she was 17 years old, she could now get married. We took a bold step and visited the father and advised him to take the girl to a vocational skills training centre, instead of marrying her off at such a tender age, as this would derail her future. I am glad he finally agreed.

I therefore thank ACFODE for the great initiative of empowering us with knowledge about women's rights. As a result, we are using it to spur change in our communities.”

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