

Gender Transformation & Empowerment

A WOMEN'S ISSUE

Harnessing Women's Rights Advancement

Issue 3, 2012 / 2013

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Dear Reader

Greeting from Uganda Women's Network (UWONET)!

Welcome to the Women's Issue 3 2012. This issue covers interventions by women's organizations contributing to Human Rights, women's empowerment, gender equality and development. Inside this issue is a highlight of the campaign to advance the Marriage and Divorce Bill 2009 among the communities and lawmakers. The issue will highlight the Kitgum Karavan (KK). A campaign led by the women of Uganda aimed at raising awareness on Nodding

Disease and collecting humanitarian support for the children and families affected by Nodding Disease in Northern Uganda. This issue also draws attention to the first ever National Women's Week 2012. The over-arching concept of the week was to create a weeklong celebration of events to honor women's contributions to Uganda since independence, as well as to foster mobilization, participation and unity in the women's movement.

We are grateful to all the members who contributed articles for this edition. We value information sharing and we say, 'Don't be left out in the next issue!' We are grateful and acknowledge the support from the United Nations Joint Programme on Gender Equality (UNJPE) for printing of this issue.

Enjoy your reading

Sandra Komuhiimbo
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MEDIA ADVOCACY:

A strategy for advancing the Marriage and Divorce Bill 2009

Experiences from the Pallisa Coalition on Gender Bills

The Pallisa Coalition on Gender Bills

In a bid to further raise awareness on the provisions of the Marriage and Divorce Bill 2009, the Pallisa Coalition on Gender Bills was established in March 2012. The coalition consists of Forty Five (45) organisations with Woman of Purpose as the Chair of the Coalition. The Pallisa Coalition on Gender Bills consists of individual activists, NGOs, religious and cultural institutions, gender equality and women empowerment actors among others in the district.

The Pallisa Coalition on Gender Bills acknowledged that members of the general public are the

ultimate decision-makers and opinion leaders in our society. Community attitudes, beliefs, norms, and practices are shaped by the dialogues that take place within families and the social networks we experience in our everyday lives. The Coalition members further recognised that manner in which policy makers and the public understand and resolve the challenges faced by communities in today's world, is guided by the quality of information available to them.

Since its inception, the Pallisa Coalition has carried out a number of awareness raising initiatives including: sensitization outreaches, radio talk shows and

workshops. It has been established and reported that the radio talk shows proved the most effective medium to educate the communities on the provisions of the Marriage and Divorce Bill 2009 in the district. The Pallisa Coalition explored the use of media, as a primary source of information.

Media Advocacy

A media awareness campaign was hosted on Challenge FM, a local radio station in Pallisa District. The talk shows attracted community leaders and members such as police officers (Children and Family Protection Unit), Community Social workers, Community Development

officers and members of the Coalition to articulate provisions of the Bill. The media awareness campaign served to fill the information gap among the community members on the Marriage and Divorce Bill 2009.

Listeners from across the district expressed their interest in the Bill by participating in the call in sessions during the talk shows. A higher percentage of the community members who called in expressed interest in clarification on issues such as conjugal rights, recognised marriages, children's rights, Gender based violence, property rights and the law on succession among others.



Below are selected questions and responses recorded during the radio talk shows:

Question from the Public	Response from the panellists
What is the place of children in this law, are they going to be shared as property at dissolution of a marriage?	When a marriage breaks down and all attempts to save it have been made by the parties and the families involved and the religious leaders have also played their part, the spouses may decide to seek for a divorce. The guiding principle is already established under the Children Act which is replicated in the Marriage Bill is to make the interests of the children paramount in any decision made by the Court.
Isn't this law making divorce easy and thus breaking marriages and families?	The Process of divorce and separation as provided for in the Bill is stringent made to protect the institution of marriage and family. The law provides that divorce cannot be pursued before the end of 2 years of a marriage. The Court of law still has to issue a separation order first so that it gives the spouses time to sort out their difference, reconsider their actions and most importantly to reconcile. Even when the divorce is finally announced the final decree (decree absolute) is only issued after six months.
The Bill does not define consent in regard to conjugal rights. Is there going to be an invoice, a receipt or voucher to show proof of consent to sex in marriage?	Consent to conjugal rights and obligation is presumed in all types of marriage that are legally recognized in Uganda. However, this consent pertain where there is love, trust, confidence in each other, faithfulness, good health and good communication between the spouses. When these basic elements that sustain a marriage are violated and respect for the body and dignity of spouse is violated the presumed consent may be withdrawn for some time to provide space for objective consideration, negotiation and reconciliation.
What does the Bill say about marriages across religions for instance Christian and Muslim?	The Marriage Bill clearly states that two consenting adults are free to choose the type of marriage to contract. Once they have made the choice then they have to abide by the rights and obligations that arise from that particular type of marriage.

In a nut shell, the media advocacy campaign played a very powerful role in shaping the public dialogues on the Marriage and Divorce Bill in the district. The Coalition members are now confident that the Pallisa community is in support of enactment of the Bill.

Written by,
Jane Opolot
Coalition Chairperson
Woman of Purpose

Documentation of Pluralism within the Women's Movement in Uganda



Diana Eck—Professor of Comparative Religion at Harvard University in 2006 defined pluralism as the energetic engagement with diversity based on dialogue and encounter, on a give and take basis and allowing room for criticism and self-criticism. She asserts that pluralism reveals both common understanding and real differences and it is not merely tolerating each other but actively seeking to understand the other and having our differences, not in isolation, but in relationship to one another. Emily Drani, et al, 2011, *The Family at the Heart of Managing Cultural Diversity, Pluralism Working Paper No. 8*

Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) in partnership with Cross Cultural Foundation Uganda has undertaken research targeting a number of key women activists and stakeholder on diversity

within the women's movement in the Uganda. The research aimed at understanding the causes of the diversities manifested in the women's movement, which is hindering their collective engagement and strategies for redress.

The research findings were disseminated and validated by students, academicians and the steering committee members on Pluralism and Knowledge program Uganda at Kampala International University on the 9th August 2012. The Committee member on pluralism and knowledge program comprises of; Uganda Women's Network (UWONET), Institute for Peace and Strategic Studies at the University of Gulu, the National NGO Forum, DENIVA, the Gulu NGO Forum, the Mpigi NGO Forum, Human Rights Network (HURINET), Human Rights and Peace Centre at Makerere University (HURIPEC), the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU), Kampala International University and the Islamic University In Uganda.

The discussion generated a lot of critical issues that UWONET wishes to share as food for thought:

- The women's movement in Uganda emerged as a result of 'Women in Development Issues' which is a very problematic fora and this explain the aggressive methodologies used by the women to counterfort issues
 - The movement continues to be a space for older women activists, leaving out the young generation who don't understand the ideologies or relevance
 - The objective of the women's movement today is not clear. No one understands their agenda due to the numerous priorities that arise each day
 - The movement has created some exclusions i.e. the Mother's Union—for only women who are mothers and non-mothers are excluded
 - The movement has always presented itself as a competitive fora, that is through writing of concept notes and proposals which benefits only the target groups in the proposals, leaving many women vulnerable and not reached
 - The component of complementarity is lacking in the movement—the women activists look at men as their enemy rather than partners in development.
 - The movement practices a lot of selective advocacy i.e. the women activists advocate and stand by women who they feel associated with and are of their class. Example given was demonstration against the assault on Ingird Turinawe at the expense of many others affected in different circumstances.
 - The women in the 'movement' are doing what they are not supposed to be doing and leave out what is more relevant to the community i.e. campaigning for gay rights.
- Further discussions at the dialogue advised the movement to bridge the existing gap between the senior and young women activists to guarantee sustainability and relevance. In addition the movement was guided to avoid elitist tendencies and address the challenges affecting both the grassroots and urban women. The discussions also recommended that women activists should try to build men's capacity to speak out on gender issues and attract them to the women's movement.

By Labwot Susan

Programme Assistant

Policy Advocacy, Research and Information

Uganda Women's Network



Dr. Hilda Tadria (ED MEMPROW) and Women's Rights Activist having a discussion on diversities in the women's movement



EMBRACING OUR INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS A CLEANER ENVIRONMENT IN UGANDA



A friend once told me, he was driving behind the latest model of the Harrier car when the traffic lights stopped them (my friend and the person in the harrier) around Centenary Park in Kampala. A hand reached out of the harrier car, to buy sugarcane. Later when the lights turned green, the driver in the harrier car begun to throw the chewed sugar cane refuse periodically out of the beautiful car. When my friend told me this story, I questioned myself, if the up class Ugandan knew what damage he was doing to our environment, how about my fellow Ugandans in Nalukolongo who live

less than a meter from their neighbor and have no space for their waste whatsoever.

Humans are by their very nature careless with trash. It has been discovered that people let trash fall where it may. As the timeline of garbage history suggests, there has been a problem of trash from man's earliest time. Waste has played a tremendous role in history. The Bubonic Plague, cholera and typhoid fever, to mention a few, were diseases that altered the populations of Europe and influenced monarchies. They were perpetuated by filth that harbored rats, and contaminated water supply.

The Ugandan culture and attitude demonstrates carelessness, considering everything disposable. As result waste generation is expected to increase significantly because of industrialization,

urbanization and modernization which will further aggravate the currently-existing capacity constraints in waste management. Everything we buy from supermarkets is wrapped for hygiene or



preservation purposes. This means more plastics and other non-decomposable trash. This trend is expected to continue in future.

Kampala City Council Authority commendably spends millions per month to remove only 30% of the total waste generated. As amounts of solid waste increase, the cost of its removal increases too. Yet KCCA does not have sufficient resources to completely and efficiently carry out this responsibility. The result has been delays in disposing off this garbage. Its also true that an average Ugandan is likely to blame KCCA for the garbage yet KCCA does not litter. The people that live and do business in Kampala litter the city. What is your responsibility as a proud

Ugandan in regard to disposal of trash? Do you know the cost implication of careless waste dumping both in the short and long run. Every Ugandan no matter their level of education knows and or practices body hygiene which includes washing your face and brushing your teeth in the morning. Even my old grandmother in the village knows its vital to brush teeth in the morning. This culture is successful because it was adopted in the education curriculum, a type of awareness that is academic.

Awareness if adopted for solid waste management would be very good for our society. The communities are ignorant of the best way to manage their waste, as there is little



community initiative to undertake collective action. Community awareness plays a vital role in effective management of municipal solid waste. This provides people with a common platform to discuss about effective Municipal Solid Waste Management system. Community solid waste awareness which involves translating the technical language of a natural science or related field into terms and ideas that a non-scientist can readily understand would allow the community to comfortably and sustainably own the responsibility. This would also help bridge the gap between government initiatives on solid waste and the recipients—the people. Just like it is obvious to brush our teeth in the morning so will be our individual responsibility towards disposal of waste.

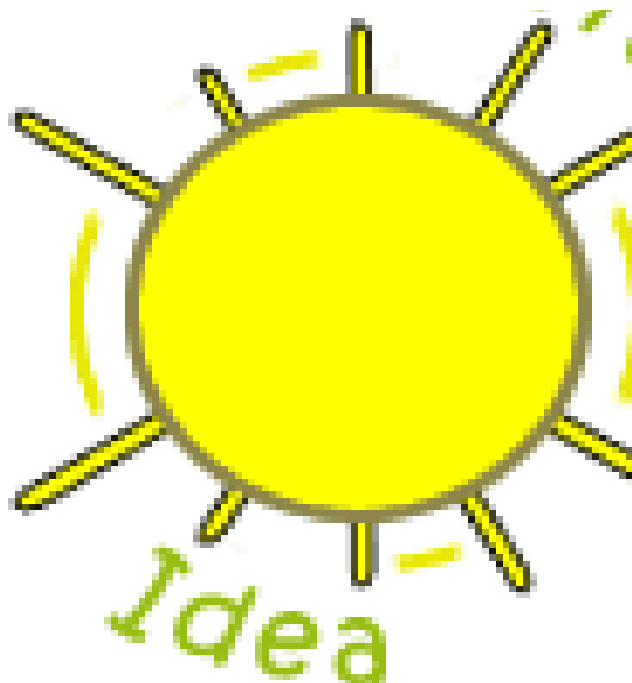
The smallest unit of the community is the centre of all the activities success,

yet it is often ignored by the decision makers. This creates an atmosphere of apathy distancing people from government initiatives. The saying doesn't give me fish but teach me how to fish suggests that awareness can bridge this gap. This way community is able to own and sustain effective solid waste management,

I am Mukasa Victor a member of Envirofriends Uganda, I have embraced the need for my individual responsibility towards issues of solid waste management. Together with my colleagues we seek out to spread awareness on solid waste encouraging individual and community participation in the pursuit for better health and environment.

By Mukasa Victor

Envirofriends Uganda



Women tie themselves to trees over nodding disease

Women activists tied themselves on trees for 30 minutes yesterday to show solidarity with mothers whose children are suffering from nodding disease syndrome. The women expressed concern for their colleagues in Acholi Sub-region, condemning government's failure to quickly address the nodding disease problem. They said mothers in northern Uganda are suffering psychologically because of having to tie their sick children to trees to

save them from injury when they fall. *"It is not acceptable for any parent to think that the only option left to save their children is by tying them to trees when they have a government whose mandate is to ensure that the citizens exercise their right to good health and access to medical attention wherever and whenever necessary,"* said Ms Jackline Asimwe, a women rights activist. With sisal ropes around their bodies, about 50 women helped each other tie themselves to trees at the NGO Forum

offices in Kampala. They observed moment of silence and prayed for the deceased children.

They asked the government to address the issue as a national problem and not a northern Uganda issue. Placards reading: *"Women in the north are also mothers, save the future of Acholi now"*, together with photos of the some of the victims tied to trees were displayed by the women. The Kitgum Woman Member of Parliament, Ms Beatrice

Anywar, said nodding disease is a sign of a failed service delivery. *"When there was a foot and mouth disease outbreak in western Uganda, Parliament was called from recess, a supplementary budget passed and the area declared a disaster, why can't they do the same for people? Unless cows in western Uganda are more important than people in Acholi!"* Ms Anywar said.

By Agatha Ayebazibwe

Originally published in the Daily Monitor



Untie Uganda Symbolic Press Briefing to launch the Uganda Women Speak Out Campaign on Nodding Disease. Hon. Beatrice Anywar joined by other women to symbolise what mothers of nodding disease do to their children



A child donates to keep a fellow child suffering nodding disease warm

Censorship ahead of the IPU assembly in Kampala: On Censorship ahead of the IPU assembly in Kampala: On Nodding Disease

In the next few days Uganda will host the 126th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) assembly. The IPU assembly brings over 3000 delegates to Kampala. This assembly will discuss issues on (good) governance and maternal health among other pressing issues. Apparently some of the delegates have already started arriving in Uganda and some of them are staying at the Serena Hotel in Kampala. One of the key issues in Uganda at the moment is the Nodding Disease. Because the government is not very responsive in terms of supporting the victims of this mysterious disease, the civil society decided to take a very active role not only to lobby the government

but also to support the victims. The women's movement in partnership with the NGO Forum in Uganda has organized two fundraisers for the nodding disease victims over the past 2 weeks. One of the fundraisers was held at Sheraton Hotel on Women's day while the other was at the Kyadondo Rugby Grounds.

Because the fundraisers are for a good cause, Pragmo Jazz Band wanted to contribute to the efforts; to bring relief to the nodding disease children so they invited the women's movement to conduct a fundraiser at their show at Serena hotel tonight (Tuesday, March 27, 2012).

At 7.45pm this evening Emmanuel an Office Assistant at NGO Forum was impounded at Serena Hotel main gate by men in Police uniforms. Before his arrest, Emmanuel had come to Serena Hotel to deliver a banner, pictures of nodding disease victims used for fundraising and an empty fundraising box with writings "Please Donate to Keep a Nodding Child Warm". This is the same material that this women's group uses for the fundraiser.

After searching him (Emmanuel), the police men asked why he had showed up at Serena with pictures of the nodding disease victims. He explained that he was only there to deliver the

material for a fundraiser. Then the policeman asked him whether he didn't know that the IPU delegates had already started arriving in the country and that some of the delegates were actually staying at Serena Hotel. "Let them (the IPU delegates) read from the newspapers if they really want to find them but don't go displaying the picture" the policeman said. Apparently the management of Pregmo Jazz Band informed the manager Serena Hotel of this incident hoping that he could help.

The manager tried to get through to security but there was not much for him to do. Following Emmanuel's arrest the Band

has been prohibited from mentioning anything to do with the Nodding Disease fundraiser during their show. Allen a lawyer from FIDA together with colleagues have tried to talk to the DPC and other officers in charge at Central Police Station but they have refused to release Emmanuel. Upon arrival at the Central Police Station, Emmanuel was charged with “Criminal Trespass”. It is quite funny how things work in the government; this is censorship of the highest degree. But what is left to censor of the nodding disease?

Over 3000 children have been diagnosed with the disease and over

200 deaths have been reported. The syndrome has come to light which is why our government should stop hiding it from the public and rather take a bold step to address it. I know that this disease will be an embarrassment to the government of Uganda in front of the IPU delegates. It is only embarrassing because for over a decade the government of Uganda knew that the disease exists but they did the same thing they are doing now – hiding the disease instead of addressing it. Four hours after the arrest (at 11:45pm) Emmanuel was released following an order from the Inspector General of Police Kale Kayihura.

Even though all the charges have been dropped, the pictures and other fundraising material remains in police custody. “Ok if there was a mistake we are sorry about it. Don’t be political do your work you are civil society organisations” Uganda Police IGP Kale Kayihura told the representatives from the women’s movement who were lobbying for the release of Emmanuel after releasing him.

By Javie Ssozi

Digital Media Consultant

Originally published by the Uganda Speaks Project

Activists mobilize aid for nodding families

Women rights organisations across the country have launched an appeal to Good Samaritans to donate financial and material support to children and families affected by the nodding disease syndrome. The move is meant to console the affected people, especially the women, who are still recovering from the effects of the two-decade LRA war.

Speaking at the launch of the initiative on Friday, the executive director Uganda Women’s Network, Ms Rita Aciro Lakor, said the appeal is not a new thing because it is the method most NGOs use to lobby for support from outside Uganda, but should become a culture to support such disadvantaged communities. “The so-called money we receive from donors is got through such appeals. We want to make a difference to the children

and women of northern Uganda,” Ms Lakor said.

She said so far their efforts have yielded Shs18 million and an assortment of household items, which will be delivered to Kitgum, Lamwo, Pader and Gulu districts this week.

By Stephen Otag & Joseph Miti

Originally published in the Daily Monitor



Women Activist mobilise donations to be given to the children and families suffering from Nodding Disease

Matembe breaks down over nodding disease children

The former minister of ethics and integrity, Miria Matembe shed tears over the plight of children affected by the nodding disease. Matembe broke down when she was making an appeal to all Ugandans to come to the rescue of over 200 children affected by the nodding disease in northern Uganda. "I feel touched about the suffering of these children who some have fallen into the fire and are tied on the trees," Matembe said as tears rolled down her cheeks. Matembe, who

could hardly hold back her tears, implored Ugandans to give money, clothes and food items to support the families taking care of children suffering from the nodding disease.

The impact of the disease has led to a high drop-out of pupils from schools and has hindered mothers from attending to their gardens as they remain home to look after the affected children. Government has staked sh7 billion to address the impact of the disease but sh35b is required to curb

the disease. Matembe appealed to Government to put more efforts to combat the disease which struck northern Uganda early this year. The former minister made the remarks at St. Jude Catholic Church Naguru in Kampala during the launch of a campaign programme to raise funds and any items to support the ill children and their families.

The campaign is spearheaded by women rights activists under the umbrella of Uganda Women's Network.

Jacob Ogeng, a pupil of St. Jude Primary School Naguru called upon all citizens to support the sick children. Well-wishers can channel their assistance or contribution through mobile money +2560775915607. They can also deposit money in Stanbic Bank using account number 0140011214001.

By Francis Emorut

Originally published in the New Vision



Hon. Miria Matembe and pupils of Naguru Primary School pray for the caravan delivering the donated items in the North of Uganda

Families of 300 nodding children receive support



Hundreds of families who turned up to receive the donated items in Kitgum District

Over 300 nodding disease children in northern Uganda have received humanitarian aid to alleviate their plight. Parents of the affected children received the items from health centres where their children have been admitted and at their homes. A caravan of humanitarian aid spearheaded by Uganda Women's Network distributed items in the districts of Gulu, Pader, Lamwo and Kitgum for the suffering families. The items were purchased by women rights activists in support of the affected children with nodding syndrome and their families.

"We were prompted to raise funds for victims of nodding disease since they were mainly children and their mothers taking care of them needed

support," Betty Kugonza, the support officer of human rights unit of Action Aid Uganda said. The items worth sh20m included beans, sugar, posho, soya, clothes and soap. Dr. Francis Okumu a senior medical superintendent of Padibe Health Centre IV said the affected children needed

nutrition supplements and the humanitarian aid came in time. Okumu said families affected by the nodding syndrome can't afford nutrition supplements because they are expensive and the parents don't have any source of income.

Lillian Jane Adeo the in charge of Palbek Kal Health Centre III pointed out that the affected children were in dire need of food supplements because government's ratio doesn't come in time. "The affected families are each given four Kilograms of posho and beans to last two weeks and this is not adequate," Adeo said. Rose Ober a mother to four-year-old affected child thanked women rights

activists for the support. "My child needs soya porridge but I couldn't afford it, but the support brought by women rights activists has come in the right," Ober said.

Mathew Ochen Akiya the LC5 chairman of Lamwo district appealed to other agencies to come to the aid of the affected families. "We are overwhelmed by the epidemic outbreak and scientists should come up with the solution especially its treatment. I call upon all stakeholders to join hands together with Government to curb the disease," Akiya said.

By Francis Emorut

Originally published in the New Vision



Mothers rejoicing after receiving the donated items at Kitgum Hospital

Hope

Hope is what we carried from Kampala to the northern part of Uganda. Hope is what the victims of nodding disease and their families desperately needed. Hope is what we gave to those people who faced the daily struggles and hardship that afflict the Nodding Disease victims. As the caravan organized by UWONET in correspondence with various other women's organizations and individual women activists left the central part of the country, none of the staff knew what we would see while working in the districts of Pader, Lamwo, Gulu, and Kitgum.

Starting our work in these four northern districts, the nodding disease caravan witnessed numerous cases of malnutrition, burns, rape, sexual assault, lack of education, and lack of medical treatment all of which can be directly attributed to the continuing problem of nodding disease that

has wreaked havoc on the village members all along the countryside. To add further complication to the problems already associated with Nodding Disease, the cause of this problem is still only speculated upon by Ministry and government officials all of which had little proof to support their speculations when interviewed by UWONET staff members.

In every clinic, parish meeting, village health screening, and treatment center visited, the caravan arrived to the downtrodden and utterly defeated stares of men, women, and children. All of which are Ugandans who already face the struggle to thrive with minimal assistance from their fellow countrymen and their government, yet are plagued with the added problem of a disease that mentally and often physically cripples their children. A disease that has torn families apart and

driven a wedge between once happily married couples. A disease that has stripped the affected children of their future by leaving them incapable of learning in schools. A disease that has robbed young men and women of their very lives by leaving them unable to nourish their bodies with food that is already scarce in their villages.

It was completely heartwarming watching those faces so devoid of emotion come to life after they realized we brought with us concern for their welfare and assistance gathered by their fellow Ugandans.

Gathering the stories of how this disease is affecting lives of individuals, families, villages, and entire communities helped us form a better understanding of nodding disease. Letting those persons who have faced continual hurt share their stories with us, and in turn

with the rest of Uganda, brought smiles to faces that were once on the verge of desperate tears.

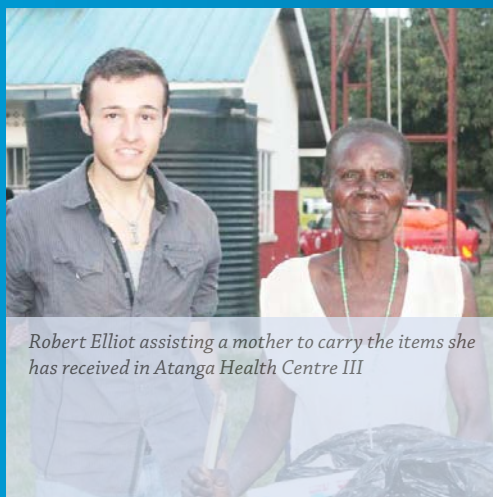
Hope, the one thing we all need to be able to face our hardships and to overcome them. Hope, the only light shining in the darkness of our struggles. Hope, the one part of our humanity that is most crucial to our survival. Hope drives us to work harder. Hope pushes us through the hurt we feel. Hope keeps us alive, for without hope we begin to lose ourselves piece by piece until we are a mere empty shell of what we once were and what we could be. We arrived to see victims without hope. Hope is what we carried from Kampala to the northern part of the country, and hope is what we left with each person we met along this transformative journey.

By

Robert Lorenzo Elliott IV



The Campaign team leaders (Betty Kugonza and Sandra Komuhiimbo) handing over donated items to a father in Odek Sub County



Robert Elliott assisting a mother to carry the items she has received in Atanga Health Centre III



The Campaign team leaders (Betty Kugonza and Sandra Komuhiimbo) together with Nancy Lamwaka (face of the campaign) and her family in Anyagura Sub County

Celebrating the Day of the African Child with a difference

The Women of Uganda who initiated the Unite, Speak Out Campaign are commemorating the 2012 International Day of the African Child in Kitgum District in northern Uganda. The Commemoration of the Day is coinciding with the climax of the 6 days journey of the Kitgum Karavan organized to bring hope and humanitarian assistance to the children and families affected by the Nodding Syndrome in four districts in Northern Uganda.

The Karavan team arrives in Kitgum after traversing the districts of Gulu, Lamwo and Pader where they interacted with families with children affected by the Nodding Syndrome. When the International Day of the African Child was first commemorated on June 16th 1991 it was initiated by the Organization of African Unity then, in recognition and honor of children and adults who participated in the Soweto Uprising on the 16th of June 1976. On that day thousands of children and adults were killed and many injured as they marched in a procession to demonstrate and speak out against the poor education system. The commemoration of the 16th of June every year continues to raise awareness about

the plight of many African Children and the continuing need to improve the quality of their lives so that they realize their full potential.

It is on this premise that the Women of Uganda decided to commemorate the Day of the African Child this year by uniting in purpose and action to contribute to the efforts aiming to alleviate the desperate situation and suffering of children affected by the Nodding Syndrome in Northern Uganda.

We call upon the President of Uganda, members of Cabinet, members of Parliament and all responsible public servants to do everything in their power and in line with international, regional and national commitments and obligations that Uganda has made on behalf of its citizens to address the poor standards in the health care system in Uganda that are making it difficult to establish the cause of the Nodding Syndrome. So far more than 3,500 children in northern Uganda have been affected by the Nodding Syndrome. The Women urge all those concerned to leave no stone unturned to get to the root cause of this condition and keep the public informed on progress

made. This strange disease is placing a very heavy burden on the national budget as well as the health care system.

The Kitgum Karavan Team members have noted that several children receiving the palliative treatment for the condition through the established Nodding disease centres and the outreach efforts have improved in terms of their health. However, with the permanent effects of the condition on the mental and physical health of the children government has to ensure that the special educational needs of these children are catered for in the short and medium term planning and budgeting processes.

The women nursing the children have proposed that government should endeavour to have a designated classroom block in selected schools already established in their communities where special education programs for the children can be provided. Specialized teachers should be posted to provide the appropriate education to the children.

The Women of Uganda also note the urgent need for government to use

the vast public land in the area to establish large scale farms in partnership with Ugandan investors and farmers' groups. Such initiatives will create jobs for the youth in the area that are not fully occupied in gainful employment or work. This is extremely urgent as a strategy to address the food shortage crisis in the region. The Kitgum Karavan Team has so far distributed at least 50 packs in each of the districts of Gulu, Kitgum and Lamwo and will complete the journey of the Karavan with distribution of humanitarian packs to children and families in Kitgum district on the Day of the African Child.

We thank all Ugandans from all walks of life who have supported this initiative with funds we have used to purchase the food items, fuel, vehicles that carried the items from Kampala and the many food stuffs, cloths and beddings. Together we have put a smile on the faces of many children, women, men, health workers, district leaders and fellow Ugandans. Celebrate the Day of the African Child with a difference.

By Norah Matovu Winyi
Member of the Uganda Women Lawyers (FIDA – U)

IMPARTING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TO COMMUNITIES THROUGH DRAMA

Sixty nine kilometres west of Gulu town lies Kicar Ber village, A village established in 2008 by insurgency returnees. It is about 40 minutes' drive to Amuru District Headquarters. A group of 34 women and 16 men are listening keenly and carefully to a young lady, Vanessa Adul barely in her thirties. She is imparting knowledge to these listening souls on causes of conflict and later she drifts to maternal health and nutrition.

Thirty minutes later, she instructs the group to on their own adopt their learning into a drama skit of not more than 30 minutes. A few actors come out. The rest are the audience. The actors are divided into three families. Family one has an elderly lady, Ms. Hellen Alwoch with her drunken son, daughter in law who

is heavily 'pregnant' with a line of other three little souls.

Family two is that of Patrick Obur. It is composed of Patrick himself, a wife and two children; a boy and a girl. The third family is of Ms. Lanyero Agnes, a health worker who has just had a baby girl. Ms. Lanyero is seen breastfeeding her baby.

Other than the faked pregnancy, everything else is real. Watching the skit, it is difficult to tell whether this is drama or real life. The actors drift into reality. It is no surprise seeing Ms. Hellen Alwoch shedding actual tears because of the troubles her daughter in law is causing her son. The daughter in law is so quarrelsome that he shrieking voice is heard across villages as she gives a dress down to her 'good for

nothing' husband whom she hen-pecks. In this family, trouble and conflict is the by-word. There is no peace. It is all chaos. The family barely has anything to eat. Old people and the children fight for morsels of food on the platter. It is only cassava roots that are served. When the son asks why there is no sauce, his wife asks him when he was last in the garden to plant simsim (sesame).

When the son prods further and says; "How come Obur's wife serves food with sauce?" his wife tells him to go and marry her. They fight, they stomp the food, the children cry. Food is kicked, poured and abandoned. Hellen picks a stick and begins to beat the daughter in law. The daughter in law is seen shielding the pregnancy from harm. She faints. She

is taken to the healthy centre. While she is about seven months pregnant, this is the first time she is visiting the health centre. The tests reveal she is HIV+. There is more chaos. "I knew you were bent on killing my only son" Her mother in law says as she weeps again. She is widowed.

Meanwhile, in Obur's home, it is bliss. The family is seen dining in peace, conversing, laughing and having a sumptuous meal made of sweet potatoes, pasted gobe (green leaves vegetables with pasted groundnuts), okra and juicy mango fruits are on the side. Later, the dad is seen with the daughter doing carried home school work. Obur's wife is busy with her son preparing the next meal; the family supper. The boy is doing the dishes, chopping firewood and overseeing the beans boiling steadily on a Lorena stove (an energy saving stove).

Next day, Obur and wife and children are seen in the garden and later in the day. Obur and family go to the health centre for routine checkup. They are tested for HIV/AIDS. They are found to be negative. Obur and wife kiss as children hug their parents. Of course this bit of kissing is borrowed. Typical Acholi do not kiss; at least in public!





Obur's home is very clean, they have dish rack, vegetable gardens around the home, they have various gardens of okra, sesame, onions, beans, maize, sweet potatoes, ground nuts and cassava among others. They have a huge mango tree that is laden with ripe fruits. They have two zebu cows and a few chicken; some of them giving them eggs.

The family is shown having 'sofa sets', 'side board', 'beds' all made out of clay. The Obur's are innovative. They also have a transistor radio playing Acholi music and a bicycle is seen leaning on the mango tree. The family has a phone. The Obur's have assets. They are healthy. In Acholi drama, there is little improvisation. It is all real and physically shown not told. Meanwhile, there is an audience watching all this. The audience is the group members. They are all laughing, faces cringing, annoyance written on their faces and others are heard teething.

When the show is over, hugs and more hugs for the 'actors' follow. The health

worker happens to be the chairperson of Kica Ber Womens Group. The baby in the drama is hers. That is the only truth. The rest of the family members in the skit are not related at all.

Ms. Adul says that there is no better delivery of the message other than the beneficiaries dramatizing it. It is one of those key tools she uses to bring to life knowledge and skills she is imparting in the community. Kicar Ber is one of the ten women groups that Send a Cow Uganda is working with in Amuru District with the support of Oxfam Novib and Self Help Africa. Each group is made of 50 households.

Send a Cow Uganda implements a three strand model of Social Development, which entails gender, sanitation and hygiene, land, conflict management, nutrition and HIV/AIDs among others. The second strand is Sustainable Organic Agriculture and the third is Livestock development. These strands are interdependent and

interrelated. They feed into each other.

Kicar Ber is a purely HIV/AIDS positive group. The group came together during the time of insurgency. According to the chairperson, they were seen as the plague of the community and indeed they are the true faces of the insurgency. They were abandoned by the community; they were jeered at and laughed at. They were called all sorts of names including 'walking dead bodies.' They were denied food. One of the members, Angee Concy was denied food by her own sister who said; "Why should we give you food when you are already dead?" Today, Angee is alive, her sister dead. She is not happy her sister is dead. Angee forgave her dead sister. She wishes that sister was alive and witness how she now she lives positively, hopefully, with a lot of food in her own house and with bumper harvest. Angee has just harvested 13 bags of groundnuts.

Today, members of Kica Ber village are the stars of the community. They are healthy. Many of them ask you, 'Do I look like I have AIDS?' There are no physical signs of sickness from the disease. They eat well, they save, they work, they market their produce, they have hope. In fact, since the group started several years ago, they have lost only one member. The group members say, with the mindset change, they are no longer stigmatized by what others say. They have attracted support for including Send a Cow Uganda. They are a recognized CBO and two years from now when they are graduated from the Send a Cow programme, they will be handed over to the Sub County as a powerful community resource.

Story & photos by

Aggrey Nshekanabo,

Communication & Marketing Officer,

Send a Cow Uganda

Changing the future



In May 2012 Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) launched the project on 'Promoting Civic Engagement and Social Accountability in Post Conflict and Recovery Communities in Northern Uganda' with support from Austrian Development Co-operation (ADC) in Kitgum, Lamwo, Pader and Agago districts. The purpose of the launch was to introduce the project in the districts, to lobby for support from stakeholders (district officials and district partners) and to jointly agree on the sub counties for the project implementation. Three Sub Counties were selected in each district of Kitgum district (Lagoro, Akwang, Kitgum Town Council), Lamwo district (Paloga, Lukung, Lamwo Town Council), Agago district (Lira Palwo, Omia Pacwa and Agago town council) and Pader district (Pajule, Laguti, Pader Town Council) and the stakeholders pledged to support the project implementation.

UWONET conducted a baseline survey among the communities to establish their level of understanding of Government programmes,

policies and financing processes as well as an Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) for Civil Society Organizations to facilitate processes that will foster transparency and accountability of Public Institutions. The baseline survey established that most community members were not aware of the Government programmes, policies and financing processes. It was also established that their capacities needed to be built to enable them participate in Government programmes and demand for improved service delivery.

As a result, UWONET conducted trainings to build capacities of community members and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) on Government programmes, policies and financing processes. The trainings were conducted at district and sub county levels and aimed at equipping communities with information and skills to enable them participate, benefit and monitor Government programmes to foster quality service delivery for improved livelihood.

By Anyagurat Miria

Intern

Uganda Women's Network

UNITED WOMEN

Celebrating 50 Years of Women's Struggle



Opening Ceremony at the National Women's Week.

Captured is Hon. Margaret Nantongo Zziwa, Hon. Miria Matembe, Rita Aciro Lakor (ED UWONET) and Women Activists



Grass roots Women Activists present at the Opening Ceremony of the National Women's Week

WOMEN CAN:

Women's Contribution to Uganda's Development



Rita Aciro Lakor (ED UWONET) and Richard Makumbi (CEDOVIP) participate in an assignment during a session at the Women's Week

The purpose of the week was to honour 50 years of Uganda's independence by hosting a week dedicated to the contributions of women; provide a platform for reflection towards building a strong women's movement and voice; create opportunity for networking, information-sharing, shared learning and peer review; bridge the gap between the grassroots and national women's initiatives and develop a campaign that reaches all women.

The week began with a charity drive to Gulu and Kitgum districts in support of the victims of nodding disease and to the Uganda Cancer Institute to visit female patients. In both instances donated items were delivered to the patients and their families. This was in response to the dire need and in recognition that advocacy actions must sometimes be complimented with an effort to address the basic needs of the most vulnerable.

An exhibition was organised alongside a 3 day Conference during the week. The exhibition space was a hive of activity with professional services offered including cancer screening and blood donation; organizations sharing their work and publications; and individuals and organizations in the pursuit of economic empowerment

selling natural products including honey, jewellery and eco-friendly cooking stoves in a drive for sustainable development.

The conference was a celebration of the achievements of the Ugandan woman. 28 thought-provoking workshops were held each spurring active engagement

on the trajectory of Uganda's development and the past, present and future of the women's movement in light of political, economic, social, cultural and religious considerations. Inspiration emanated from special talk sessions; individual, organizational and collective achievements and lessons learnt; faith; music, dance and drama;

and the ability to connect or re-connect with each other.

The outcome of the week included visioning on women's rights and gender equality; and, commitments to strengthen the women's movement including practical actions for collaboration to realize social change.



Hon. Miria Matembe poses with young activists at the Women's Week



Participants during a session at the Women's Week led by Dr. Thelma Awori



Participants consulting with Dr. Thelma Awori after a session at the Women's Week



A gentleman donates blood during the Women's Week

Health care in Uganda: Fair, Free and for Everyone?

It is evident that in emergency, the biggest percentage of those who bear the burden caused by war, conflict and disaster are women and children, yet they are the key stakeholders in promoting good health and building stable and self-reliant communities.

According to the 2010 Millennium Development Goals progress report for Uganda, maternal health indicators for Uganda have generally remained poor in the last two decades. Over the period of 1995–2000 maternal mortality stagnated about 505 deaths per 100,000 live births. The Uganda demographic and health survey of 2006 estimated Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) at 435 deaths per

100,000 live births, making a total reduction of only 70 deaths per 100,000 live births in half a decade. The 2007 ministry of health expenditure survey in Uganda clearly indicates that the main causes of maternal morbidity and mortality in Uganda have overtime been considered preventable and/or treatable. These common causes include but are not limited to abortion, haemorrhage, sepsis and obstructed labour.

During a session by Uganda Alliance at the Women's week 5–7th October 2012 organized by UWONET, Dr. Mugasa an advisor of reproductive Health in Uganda mentioned that the number of women dying from child related

complications has risen from 16–20 in Uganda.

In a similar session organized by Reproductive Health Uganda and UNFPA on reproductive health hurdles in Uganda, it was noted that more than 4 out of every 10 women wish to access modern contraception to plan their family but cannot. They have an unmet need for Family Planning. Family Planning alone would reduce the country's maternal mortality ratio by 33%. Uganda also has one of the highest teenage pregnancies in Africa. According to the UDHS 2006, one of every four pregnancies occurs in a teenager. By 15 years of age, 24% of girls and 10% of boys are sexually active (debut 16.6 for girls and

18.1 for boys). Yet only 11% of sexually active young people are using contraception. Uganda also continues to have one of the highest birth rates in Africa and one of the fastest growing populations in the world. This no doubt poses new challenges – more so in areas such as education and health care delivery given the youthful population of – 70% under the age of 24, 56% under 15 years.

Dr. Ismail Ndifuna who represented the Country representative of UNFPA mentioned that as Uganda celebrates 50 years of independence, every pregnancy must be wanted, every birth must be safe and every young person's potential must be fulfilled.

GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH RADIO:

MAMA FM 101.7 Making Voices Of Women Heard In Uganda

Radio is an important tool in reducing poverty, improving education and healthcare, enhancing political participation and empowerment, and promoting sustainable development. One of the most important valuable advantages of radio is its potential to strength and expand links, networks and networking initiatives.

Social movements including the women's movement have used radio tools to expand links and connections outside their physical and geographical reach. Many advocacy campaigns are directed at generating policy changes in government, institutional and other policymaking bodies. Radios are increasingly used as tools in most advocacy undertakings because of their effectiveness in

group communication and interactivity.

According to the farm Radio International 2011 report, Radio is the most widely used medium for disseminating information to rural audiences across Africa. Radio can reach communities at the end of the development road – people who live in areas without phones or electricity. Radio reaches people who cannot read or write. Even in very poor communities, radio penetration is vast. It is estimated there are over 800 million radios in sub-Saharan Africa. <http://www.farmradio.org/pubs/farmradio-ictreport2011.pdf> Just like many other ICTs, Radio has one major limitation. It has been a one-way medium that reaches women in their homes/

fields and on its own, radio has had limited means of interacting with listeners because of the one way flow of information. And even if it's true that radio is the most widely used medium, its ownership, control and greatest percentage of listenership is limited to mainly the men.

During a session led by UMWA at the Women's Week in Kampala 5-7th Oct 2012, they shared their experience in using MAMA fm a community radio with a frequency 101.7 fm to address issues of Gender based Violence. Dr. Patricia Litho from UMWA said that the issues of concern to women under media include achieving gender equality, having more women in decision making positions, changing the media stereotype

of women as victims and sexual objects as well as tackling issues of violence against female journalist.

UMWA provides social support to communities and has a special publication known as "THE OTHER VOICE" whose focus is sharing different stories of women. The greatest challenges that exist are absence of gender responsive policies for women in media as well as limited effective networking among women organisations.

UMWA called upon different women organisations to take advantage of Mama fm radio to discuss issues that are pertinent to women, engage more youth as well as work with and support female journalists.

By Maureen Agena

COMMUNITY DIALOGUES:

A STRATEGY FOR RAISING AWARENESS ON THE PENDING GENDER BILLS

Experiences from the Gulu Coalition on Gender Bills



A Community Dialogue led by the GWED–D Executive Director in Gulu District

There is a general consensus that community participation in law making holds not only the promise of more inclusive democracy but also more responsive and effective law. Participation also helps to build an informed and responsible citizenry with a sense of ownership of national laws.

In an attempt to make sure that government addresses the real needs of communities in the most appropriate way, Gulu Women Economic Development and Globalization (GWED–G) with support from Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) facilitated community dialogues on the pending Gender Bills. The pending Gender Bills include: the Marriage and Divorce Bill 2009, the Sexual Offences Bill and the Administration of the

Muslim Personal Law Bill. The community dialogues were held in the districts of Gulu and Amuru in Acholi Region of Uganda.

The community dialogues conducted aimed at domesticating the Gender Bills and also inform communities of progress being made regarding discussions by Parliament on the Bills. The community dialogues further sought to find out communities' views on the appropriateness of the bills before they are passed into acts/laws by Parliament.

Two community dialogues brought together 800 participants who comprised of community members (youth, women and men), NGOs, local leaders, the police, health workers and main actors in Human rights promotion and protection. The community dialogues were structured

in a way that guest speakers / experts would present provisions in the Bills and room was given to the audience to seek clarity where gaps were identified.

Interactions with the community members indicated the limited knowledge and understanding they have on the pending Gender Bills. However, after further clarification on the provisions in the Bills majority of the community members in attendance approved on the Bills to be passed into law.

Impact realized from the community dialogues includes:

- Increased community knowledge and understanding of the bills
- Change in community attitudes toward supporting mechanism to end violence in

community especially against women

- Reduced family conflicts especially quarreling
- Increased communities initiative to take action on cases of violence

In conclusion, community dialogues cannot simply be a series of once-off events. A key part of the law making process should be how to communicate all the provisions to the people and how to involve them in decisions or as partners. The targeted community members recommend public participation as a way of empowerment and as vital part of democratic governance.

Written by

Venis Omona Frobisa

Gulu Women Economic Development and Globalization (GWED–G)

HOW CAN THE PRESIDENT DISOWN A GOVERNMENT BILL?



Ms Sheila Kawamara-Mishambi

Chairperson, Uganda Women's Network

The Marriage and Divorce Bill, 2009 has been demonized and so brutally bashed by some of our respectable civic, religious and traditional leaders. Those calling for its demise are not willing to face the blunt reality that the institution of the family is under threat and needs to be legally protected by the State and religious institutions.

We all need to sober up and debate the Bill objectively and from an informed point of view. For the past 18 years, I have worked with various stakeholders during the drafting of this Bill, some of whom are now feigning ignorance of its content and are asking the public how it has got to the floor of Parliament for debate. I'm totally disappointed with the deliberate public distortion of the Bill.

This Bill dates back to 1957 as a human rights concern and not a women only affair. While both men and women are abused in many marriages, the reality is that women take a bigger portion of abuse. The on-going consultations on the Bill have exposed the true colours of some of our leaders who despise and continue to exploit women. I will restrict

myself to the issue of property rights in marriage, which seems to be the biggest scare to those opposed to the Bill.

There is ample evidence that President Museveni has been at the forefront of bashing the Bill since it was first brought by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, during Mr Museveni's first term 1996 – 2001, second term 2001 – 2006, third term 2006 – 2011 and now in his fourth term 2011 – 2016. Each time the Bill comes up on the floor of Parliament, Mr Museveni is very quick to disown it, defend the property rights of his family and call for further public consultations and yet he chairs the Cabinet and sanctions all the government Bills that are tabled before Parliament.

So, Mr President, as your voter and since I do not have 'an appropriate forum' to ask: "Who is in charge of your government?" I get confused when the NRM government brings a Bill to Parliament and then disowns it. Is the President being honest with Ugandans whose interest he is purporting to represent and consult them on a marriage law and not on the oil and

gas debate, the Finance Bill, Public Order Management Bill or even the re-instatement of the presidential term limits in the Constitution?

I have my reservations about the government's commitment to defend the rights of women. In the NRM's 10 Point Programme, there is no single mention of women and this is further amplified in the President's recent address to the NRM Caucus on March 15, where he said "nationally, the NRM has pushed a minimum programme of emancipating women". This NRM "minimum programme" is in no way intended to pull women from their traditional submissive positions lest they rock the cultural boat.

I know there are many men who would wish to hail Museveni for such a "manly" stand, not knowing that he has abundantly catered for his wife and daughters. In a recent speech to his cheering NRM Caucus, he said he helped his three daughters into marriage after educating them. Museveni disclosed that he was never given bride price, but "on the contrary, we gave them (read daughters) scores of cattle to go with as

well as means of wealth we were able to afford.

Besides, they all retained shares in our family properties...Fortunately, also my wife has got her own property. It would be despicable on my part to impose myself on her properties just because we are married."

Now, that is Museveni the wonderful father and husband that has so abundantly provided for his daughters and wife, Ms Janet Museveni, a Cabinet minister and parliamentarian. What actually perturbs me is why President Museveni, who has provided property

for his family, finds it unacceptable that Ugandan women and men who have struggled to get some property, should not be given an opportunity to empower their wives and daughters.

Mr Museveni claims those pushing for the Bill are trying to "impose middle class values on a traditional society". Would I be correct to assert that he is applying double standards? Is it fair for Museveni to ensure that his wife and daughters are secure in their marriages and have got even a fallback position and the rest of our children and mothers are denied the right to property, even the one that they have

struggled to work for with their husbands.

When such views are expressed by a highly exposed personality like Mr. Museveni, I wonder what our less exposed brothers are going to do while debating the Marriage and Divorce Bill. The President should be called to order.

With all due respect to our leaders, let us come to a consensus that we all need a consolidated Marriage and Divorce law. A State without a law governing the family institution is creating anarchy in that very delicate arena. I'm very sure if President Museveni is comfortable with securing

his family relations then all Ugandans have a similar desire, which the Marriage and Divorce law intends to do.

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ABOUT UWONET

Uganda Women's Network (UWONET), is an advocacy and lobby network comprising of national women's organizations, institutions and individuals. UWONET was established to provide space for collective engagement of women and women's organizations advocating for women's rights especially the eradication of gender based discrimination.

VISION

A Ugandan society free of all forms of gender based discrimination.

MISSION

To coordinate collective action among members and other stakeholders through networking, capacity building, resource mobilization, policy research and advocacy for the attainment of gender equality in Uganda.



Gender Transformation & Empowerment

With support from



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UN JOINT PROGRAMME ON GENDER EQUALITY

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