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HER VOICE - NEWSLETTER!

MONTHLY NEWS

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TOP NEWS OF THE MONTH

Centering unpaid care work in development agenda

A high-level dialogue on unpaid care and domestic work was hosted by Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) in partnership with the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development.

Enhancing women farmers' skills and knowledge in agro-business

14 women farmers from 18 women farmer groups from the districts of Lamwo and Nwoya were facilitated for an exchange learning visit at NaCRRI.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

RITA HOPE ACIRO-LAKOR

Uganda Women's Network

DEAR READER

As we close this month of implementation, allow me share a few highlights of the work we have done in June. I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for the impactful work we are collectively doing to protect, empower and uplift women and girls in Uganda. Our commitment to fostering positive change shines brightly through the stories and initiatives featured in this edition.

UGANDA WOMEN'S NETWORK

(UWONET) is an advocacy organization that exists to coordinate collective action among women's rights and gender equality stakeholders for the attainment of gender equality and equity in Uganda.

Welcome to the inaugural (Edition 1) issue of the Her Voice Newsletter! We are thrilled to introduce this platform to keep you updated on the latest news, stories, and achievements from our initiatives towards Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.

Her Voice is an UWONET communication tool aimed at providing stakeholders with a digest of the latest updates, news, and content of our interventions to address gender inequalities and empower women and girls in our communities across sectors to reach their full potential and drive positive change. its also our strategy designed to keep the stakeholders engaged, informed, and connected with our work.

Through our various initiatives and programs, we strive to create a supportive environment where women and girls can thrive and lead. In this issue, you will find highlights of our June activities, success stories from empowered women, and upcoming events.

Enjoy the reading !



CENTERING UNPAID CARE WORK IN DEV'T AGENDAS

A high-level dialogue on unpaid care and domestic work was hosted by Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) in partnership with the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development on Tuesday, June 11th, 2024. The event, themed "Accelerating Gender Equality: Reimagining the Future of the Care Economy and Women's Economic Empowerment", brought together a diverse group of stakeholders from various sectors and organizations that included representatives from MDAs, media, advocates for women's rights, gender equality, and economic justice civil society groups, parliamentarians, academia, political leaders, cultural leaders, bankers, the private sector, and other stakeholders committed to advancing care work and gender equality.

ACHIEVEMENTS

"... collectively identified alternative policy proposals for Government in addressing unpaid care work as well as mechanisms for accountability ...".

The dialogue achieved its objective of sharing and reflecting on emerging narratives on unpaid care and domestic work to inform advocacy initiatives. It deepened the understanding and appreciation of the importance of centering women's care work in development agendas for the advancement of gender equality. Thirdly, it collectively identified alternative policy proposals for Government in addressing unpaid care work as well as mechanisms for accountability. Finally, it provided a space for diverse women's rights advocates, economic development enthusiasts, and government stakeholders to network and synergize for advancing gender equality.



HIGHLIGHTS

Time poverty, where women and girls spend more than four hours daily on unpaid care and domestic work, limits their opportunities for education, employment, and personal development. *Ms. Sarah Jesca Agwang Director of Programme UWONET*

Commissioner for Gender and Women Affairs at the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development Ms. Angela Nakafeero highlighted the significant contribution of women in economic development, noting that they spend an average of 3-5 times more time on unpaid care work than men. Her emphasis is that unpaid labor is often undervalued and unrewarded, perpetuating gender inequalities and limiting women's economic empowerment.

She highlighted the need for all sectors to invest in alternatives such as machinery and technologies like biogas, as well as reducing costs for essentials like electricity and cooking gas. These measures would help decrease the time women spend on care work at home. "Given that 90% of Ugandans rely on charcoal fires for cooking, recognizing care work and ensuring the sustainability of our green and forest cover requires investments in technologies that alleviate the burden on our environment".

Ms. Fatuma Nakkazi from Buganda Kingdom highlighted the significance of rethinking development approaches to shifting social narratives on unpaid care and domestic work, with a focus on the role of religion and culture. She emphasized that beliefs play a crucial role in shaping societal norms and values and that religious and cultural institutions have a powerful role in shaping societal attitudes towards unpaid care work. She advocated for the need of policy reforms, investing in care work infrastructure and adopting gender-responsive budgeting to address unpaid care work .



AMPLIFYING VOICE ON UCDW AT NATIONAL & REGIONAL LEVEL

The WE CARE Project is implemented by UWONET in partnership with Mission Uganda in Gulu and GAFI in Kampala with support from Oxfam in Uganda. The project enhanced Recognition, Reduction, Redistribution and Representation of UCDW at all levels.

A joint monitoring visit was conducted from June 17th to 21st, 2024, aimed to assess project implementation and ensuring the project is aligned to project objectives and outcomes, gather information on successes, challenges, and lessons learned, document best practices and recommendations for future programing. It also aimed at jointly reviewing project progress against its performance indicators, targets, and milestones, and provided technical support and guidance to the project team and implementing partners on best practices.

RESULTS

"... collectively identified alternative policy proposals for Government in addressing unpaid care work as well as mechanisms for accountability ...".

There is amplified voice voice on unpaid care and domestic in Gulu district, community members especially women were empowered to influence, demand and advocate for their rights. Initiatives such as the "Real Fathers" project and role model approach have shown promising results in engaging men as allies in promoting gender equality and in addressing the problem of UCDW. The district has established partnerships with community-based organizations to ensure sustainable programming and community ownership. In addition, religious and cultural leaders are project key stakeholders supporting to change societal attitudes and norms that perpetuate gender inequality.

Unyama sub-county has made a significant stride in recognizing and addressing gender inequality, with a focus on empowering women and girls. The sub county has passed a by-law on kitchen gardening aiming to promote food security and nutrition among households and recognizing the burden of UCDW on women and girls. This initiative has not only reduced the workload of women and girls but also promoted shared responsibilities within families, encouraging boys and girls to share tasks, caring for the sick, and fetching water. The initiative was as a result of engaging women councilors on UCDW.

"The district made significant strides in implementing gender-inclusive budgeting, that ensured women, men, boys, and girls issues are taken care of". This is evident in the district's recent budget approval, political leaders demonstrated a commitment to addressing UCDW. "The district worked on the reduction of the care burden through initiatives such as establishing 7 boreholes in communities, including Unyama sub-county to reduce on the distances and time taken walking to water points. Additionally, the district has conducted road maintenance for some roads to bring public services closer to people. Hon. Ayot, the speaker of Gulu District



ENHANCING WOMEN FARMERS' SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE IN AGRO-BUSINESS

Women constitutes about 80% of population in agriculture sector which is the back bone of the country's economy and yet they continue to face challenges mostly limited land ownership, access, and control and existing gender stereotypes. In most cases where women acquire big land through inheritance, 1/4 of it is being used for subsistence farming because of lack of capital, use of rudimentary tools, limited Labor and lack of entrepreneurial skills. In addition, women lack access to agricultural inputs, financial services among others

14 women farmers from 18 women farmer groups from the districts of Lamwo and Nwoya were facilitated for an exchange learning visit at The National Crops Resources Research Institute (NaCRRI). The learning visit aimed at enhancing farmers' skills and knowledge in sustainable agriculture, climate-resilient farming practices, and entrepreneurship. Participants explored and adopted NaCRRI's research outputs, such as improved crop varieties and post-harvest management techniques, to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their agricultural practices.





The women farmers committed to share knowledge gained with other members in their groups and also establish model farms. Participants actively engaged with facilitators, asking questions, and receiving high-quality information on agro-business and value addition. IEC materials for reference and documentation of the practices learned were also provided to farmers.

The learning visit covered various topics, including ecological requirements, crop varieties and their attributes, best management practices, pest and disease management/control, access to quality seed, post-harvest handling, value addition, and cost-benefit analysis of improved technologies for crops such as cassava, sweet potato, maize, beans, and vegetables.



"I have learned that when beans are planted on time, I get more yield. I also learned different attributes of beans such as nutrients, color, sizes, taste, cooking time, thickness of soup, drought resistance, and maturity period. All these will guide my selection of beans to plant in the coming season that starts in July," said Cony Immaculate from Lamwo.

"I will plant tomatoes on an acre of land that I have already prepared because I have learned that it is easy to manage and yields more income. I will also share this knowledge with my fellow members in Nwoya district," said Janet Apiyo.

STORY OF CHANGE



Oryem's Agri-business Journey

Oryem Vicky, a 45-year-old wife and a mother of four is a member of Paco Mero Women Farmer's Group. Before the training on Agri business by UWONET and her partner ODOWOL, she used to cultivate crops and spend the earnings on non productive things. she said she never used to pay school fees for her children and they were constantly chased from school every term which was affecting their performance. she further said that in her group, the members never used to attend group meetings and had wrangles between group leaders and members. She said that there was no transparency in the group regarding earnings accrued from group investments and there was no harmony whatsoever. She also said that every earning got as a group would be divided among the members to use at a personal level.

After the training on agri business, she and the group members understood the power of financial planning and farming techniques. She planned and planted groundnuts on an acre of land in August 2023 and she harvested 8 bags, she said she sold only 6 bags at UGX.600,000 and kept the 2 bags for home consumption and replanting in the next season. On the earning got, she said she bought 2 goats that will multiple and give her more earnings in the future but also, she was able to pay school fees for her children so as they can concentrate while in class. She spoke on behalf of her group and noted that the mode of group's operation has changed for the better. After the training, the group requested for free land from the clan leader for cultivation and the land equivalent to 2 acres was given. In the same season, they planted simsim and harvested 4 bags, sold each kilo at UGX.4000. the total earnings were saved in the group to be the capital for members so as they can borrow money with an interest on it hence making more money for the group.

Oryem says that as group, they now have money making and investment plans and they are working together in harmony as a group to benefit everyone. The group is led by a chairperson, treasure and secretary. Oryem is part of the 30 women in that group.

AWARENESS CREATION ON MARRIAGE, RIGHTS, TEENAGE PREGNANCIES, GBV AND THE JUSTICE REFERALL PATHWAY

In June, UWONET conducted community outreaches in Kamuli, specifically targeting St. Paul Secondary School in Mbulamuti, St. Theresa Primary School, and Namusita Trading Center in Balawoli Sub-County. These outreach initiatives were strategically planned to address critical issues affecting children in Kamuli district including gender-based violence (GBV), teenage pregnancy, early marriages, and defilement. The activities aimed to raise awareness, provide education, and effectively empower the community to tackle pressing concerns.





Engaging the CFPU was crucial to clearly articulate the role of police in child-related matters, while the involvement of a national consultant brought a personal touch to the discussions. Ms. Asiimwe, who became a teenage mother at 14 and successfully returned to school and is now a human rights advocate, shared her story to inspire girls to stay in school and encourage those who had dropped out to return.

The outreach initiatives stem from a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by children in these regions. As a result of UWONET work, activism and shelter, data and reports indicate that GBV, teenage pregnancy, early marriages, and defilement disproportionately impact children, posing immediate threats to their well-being and hindering their long-term development. The activities conducted were designed to address the root causes through targeted education and awareness-raising efforts. By disseminating accurate information about legal frameworks, referral pathways, and rights related to sexual and reproductive health (SRHR), the outreach aimed to equip children and community members with the knowledge and resources necessary to recognize, report, and address instances of abuse effectively.



> *"I sometimes feel too small to fit in class. My uniform is always dirty, and my father doesn't give me soap to wash. Whenever I ask, he tells me to go and work for others. Even when I earn money, he takes it away from me," said Grace, P6.*

> *"When I have my periods, my father doesn't provide me with sanitary towels, so I end up staying at home," shared Hellen, P6.*



These testimonies illustrate the difficult realities faced by students, reflecting the broader issues of neglect and lack of support in their homes, particularly concerning basic needs and menstrual hygiene.

A significant outcome of these initiatives was the formation of UWONET gender clubs in each school. These clubs, composed of both boys and girls with teachers as patrons, serve as forums for sharing information, addressing challenges, and acting as referral centers. By promoting participation in leadership roles such as chairperson and treasurer within the clubs, the initiative fostered leadership skills and encouraged active involvement in gender advocacy. These clubs play a crucial role in legally empowering girls to demand justice by providing them with the knowledge and confidence to advocate for their rights and seek justice.

Addressing these observations is crucial for achieving the FATE objective of empowering girls and women to legally demand justice. By enhancing awareness and understanding of legal frameworks and rights, the sensitizations aimed to equip girls and women with the knowledge and confidence to assert their rights effectively. The sessions underscored the need for ongoing community engagement and education to dismantle misconceptions and empower community members to support vulnerable individuals, particularly teenage mothers and victims of GBV. Moreover, the insights gained emphasize the importance of integrating SRHR education into school curricula and community programs to foster a supportive environment for girls' education and well-being.

PERSISTENT ISSUES/CHALLENGES IN SCHOOLS



- Lack of Changing rooms for girls to manage their menstrual hygiene, many miss school during their periods or drop out altogether. This directly impacts their right to education, which is fundamental for empowerment and accessing justice. Education plays a crucial role in understanding rights, including legal rights related to gender equality and protection from violence.

- The shortage of teachers, particularly senior women teachers who could provide mentorship and guidance on Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR), limits comprehensive education on these critical topics. This knowledge gap can lead to misinformation or lack of awareness about legal protections related to SRHR, such as reproductive rights and protection from gender-based violence.

- The scarcity of educational materials on vital topics like law, rights, and justice pathways means students and community members lack essential information as Access to legal knowledge and resources is crucial for individuals to understand their rights, navigate legal systems, and seek justice effectively.

- The absence of safe spaces for students to discuss sensitive issues, exacerbated by strict parenting, prevents them from seeking guidance on legal matters or reporting instances of injustice or abuse. Open dialogue and support systems are critical for individuals to feel empowered to seek justice and address violations of their rights.

- Addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts to improve infrastructure, enhance educational resources, and create supportive environments where individuals, especially women and girls, can access information, discuss issues openly, and assert their rights effectively.
  Maintain ongoing engagement through gender clubs formed in the respective schools to provide continuous education and support on SRHR, legal rights, and child protection and advocate for improved infrastructure and educational resources while collaborating with local authorities, schools, and community members to address challenges and promote gender equality.

HOLISTIC SUPPORT FOR TEENAGE MOTHERS

As part of the holistic package of care and support to teenage mothers, 750 Kokono cribs were procured to support the well-being of babies born to teenage mothers in Namutumba and Bugiri in regards to comfort and protection from malaria. These cribs come fitted with a mattress and a mosquito net which allows mothers to have a safe place for infants to sleep. A crib can be used until a child is 18 months old. 446 cribs have been distributed to expectant teenage survivors of SGBV and those with newborns in Namutumba (Sub counties of Magada, Namutumba,Bulange,Kagulu) and Bugiri (Sub counties of Iwemba, Budhaya, Kapyanga and Bulesa). Priority was given to teenage survivors from the project sub-counties whose cases were registered at the GBV Advisory Center and Shelter, or those that were in anyway attended to by UWONET or her partners under the project (community structures, i.e. Male Peer Educators, Community Facilitators, or Nsinze Sub-county HIV/AIDS Workers Association – NSHAWA).



The Kokono cribs were also distributed in the identified 20 schools under the scale-up project in the two districts to support the implementation of the Revised Guidelines on Management of Teenage Pregnancy in School Settings. These Guidelines provide for the continuance of school attendance by teenage mothers with small babies. UWONET provided two (2) cribs to the schools participating in project interventions, and also to those that supported the re-entry of learners with small infants. This was a discussion that was held with the District Education Office as a step towards supporting school administrations to create conducive childcare spaces for learners with babies while they attend classes.

UWIONET also distributed cribs to teenage mothers through health facilities, particularly in the the project sub-counties, as part of a Mama Kit delivery package. UWONET trained a total of eighty (80) Health Care Workers (HCW) on the provision of adolescent-friendly services and this is one way to improve service delivery to teenagers. HCW reported that some adolescent mothers come from extremely vulnerable backgrounds and cannot afford an appropriate sleeping place for their children. This initiative also enhanced teenage mothers to attend antenatal care and receive appropriate medical attention and accurate information on SRH.

FURTHER SUPPORT FOR ADOLESCENT MOTHERS

UWONET also provided cribs to adolescent mothers that were not within the scope of the project but were assessed by different stakeholders and found to be eligible because of their vulnerability. While the project interventions are confined to eight (8) sub-counties, some cases emanate from those that are not directly benefiting. For instance, some sub-counties only have HCIIs and therefore refer health users to other higher-level facilities outside the sub-county.

Distribution precedes meeting with the technical district leaders in the departments of Health, Education and Community Based Services. This is to obtain their appreciation, endorsement and support for the intervention and support for the required support supervision.



> *In Kagulu S/C Najuwa a 17 year old teen mother was quoted saying "Thank you UWONET for this initiative, my baby will now sleep comfortably as opposed to the papyrus mat where she has been sleeping with discomfort and continuous malaria"*





THANK YOU

DEAR DONORS, MEMBERS, PARTNERS & ALLIES

In a very special way, we thank all the district local governments in which UWONET directly worked. Sincere appreciation to development partners of the Embassy of Kingdom of Netherlands, Oxfam Uganda (HEWLETT FOUNDATION), United States Agency International Development/Civil Society Strengthening Activity, EU, Horizont3000 and Dan Church Aid for supporting this process that refines the network's mandate in the ever changing context of operations for Women's Rights and Gender Equality. This work wouldn't be complete without you.

We take this opportunity to deeply thank all our members, partners, allies and stakeholders who contribute immensely to the achievements of UWONET.

Special thanks to our target groups at different levels we enjoy working with you and hope that our work will continue to make difference in your lives.

We are cognizant of UWONET's role as the leader in efforts towards collective action among women's rights and gender equality stakeholders for the attainment of gender equality and equity in Uganda. Strategies in our strategic plan are anchored in the broader goal to improve gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in Uganda.

We continue to be glad to serve and look forward in working with each and every one to achieve UWONET's mission.

Crossing Barriers,
Building Bridges:
Unleashing Collective Power

