



HER VOICE NEWSLETTER!

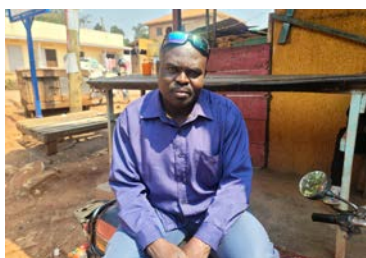
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- Capacity enhancement of staff on gender transformative approach
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- Supporting teenage mothers



Kokono Crib distribution

UWONET distributed Kokono cribs in schools to support the implementation of the Revised Guidelines on Management of Teenage Pregnancy in School Settings.



Championing male engagement in UCDW

Boda boda riders (public motorbike transport in Uganda) stand out not just for their skills on the bike but also for their ground-breaking community advocacy.



Oxfam in Africa Director Fati N'zi-Hassane, visited Uganda

On 25 July 2024, Oxfam in Africa Director Fati N'zi-Hassane, while exploring Oxfam Uganda, had the pleasure of meeting with a team of Boda Boda care champions created by GAFI, an UWONET partner, that champions care work through awareness creation. According to Fati, this was one of the highlights of her visit! "I am truly energized listening to all these experiences," she said.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

RITA HOPE ACIRO-LAKOR

Uganda Women's Network



DEAR READER

As we close this month (July) of implementation, allow me share a few highlights of the work we have done in July. 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 July issue of Her Voice Newsletter! This platform keeps 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. It's 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 July activities, success stories from empowered women, and upcoming events. Enjoy the reading !



STAFF CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT ON GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH

Besides supporting partner organizations and locally led initiatives through finance grant schemes, Horizont3000 facilitates knowledge management for purposes of sharing and learning towards achieving gender equality, climate action and policy dialogue. Horizont3000, an Austrian non-governmental organization based in Vienna, supports sustainable development cooperation across various regions, including East Africa, Central America, Senegal, and Mozambique.

Participants were taken through various facilitation skills on how to conduct community reflection sessions such as the 'Daily Clock', the 'Act like a man - Behave like a woman', and the 'Cash Flow Tree' activities amongst others.

On July 29 2024, Horizont3000 conducted a five-day training program focusing on gender transformative approaches, aimed at enhancing the capacity of its partner organizations to challenge gender norms and integrate gender equality actions into their projects. This training utilized the Social Analysis Action (SAA), an approach designed to catalyse a process of exploration and reflection to facilitate individuals and community's actions that support existing gender/social norms and behaviours. The SAA approach focuses on challenging the communities gender norms and uses probing questions to deepen the reflection process for the community members to understand how the existing norms and gender dynamics negatively affect women, men, families and the entire community. As one of the prerequisites for SAA, staff and partners capacity was built to enable them explore and reflect upon their own biases, social values and assumptions regarding gender and power relations. Other steps of SAA are; plan for action, implementation and evaluation on individual, household and group level.





Ms. Janet Apiyo from Invisible Hope Uganda making her submission during the day



“The training has enhanced my facilitation techniques knowledge on how to organise reflection sessions to foster mutual understanding among community members. These techniques include the ‘Agree – Disagree’ activity and many others and help the participants to understand what the society thinks of men and women, the typical gender roles and how this affects both positively or negatively. The ‘Daily Clock’ reflection helps the community to understand what kind of work is mostly done by men and women from morning 6am to morning 6am of another day, which sex has a higher work load and which work is valued most. The ‘Cash Flow Tree’ opens the participants eyes on the sources of family income in comparison to who makes decisions on the household expenditures”. Pereth Niwahereza **Program Officer at UWONET.**

The reflection enhanced participant's understanding of key gender concepts and the importance of a gender equality framework. Participants were encouraged to focus on three critical components to achieve gender equality that is, building agency (empowering individuals through providing them with knowledge/skills and enhancing self-esteem), changing relations (engaging spouses, social networks and community members), and transforming structures (influencing laws, policies, procedures and services with a focus on current discriminatory social norms and exclusionary practices). Additionally, the training introduced the CARE gender marker, a self-assessment program quality and learning tool which enables us to track, improve on, and support more effective gender integrated programming.

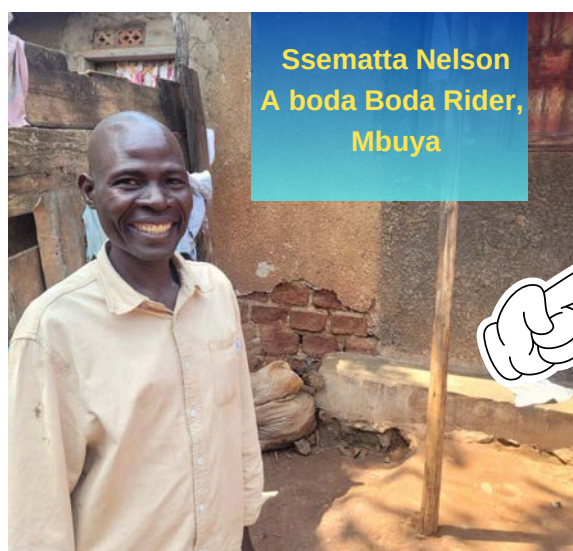
Participants in attendance were horizontal3000 staff, Uganda Women's Network and her 2 implementing partners (Invisible Hope Uganda, Organisation Development for Women in Lamwo District), Catholic Diocese of Rumbek (South Sudan) Caritas Maddo, Caritas Mityana, Caritas Tororo, YARD, AFIRD

-0- GENDER UNAWARE	-1- GENDER NEUTRAL	-2- GENDER SENSITIVE	-3- GENDER RESPONSIVE	-4- GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE
Programming that ignores or is completely unaware of gender norms.	Programming that works with gender norms, which may reinforce these.	Programming that adapts to gender norms.	Programming that challenges inequitable gender norms.	Policies and programs that change inequitable gender norms and relations to promote equality.

CHAMPIONING MALE ENGAGEMENT IN UCDW

On 25 July 2024, Oxfam in Africa Director Fati N'zi-Hassane, while exploring Oxfam Uganda, had the pleasure of meeting with this Boda Boda group, which champions care work. According to Fati, this was one of the highlights of her visit! "I am truly energized listening to all these experiences," she said. (WECARE BULLETIN)

The WE-Care Program works towards a just and inclusive society by recognizing, reducing, and redistributing, representing UCDW. We envision a world where women and girls have more choices at every stage of their lives. UWONET is championing male engagement model as an approach to ensure carers' voices are heard and recognized at all levels to influence decision-making about policies and budgets. UWONET is working with Gals Forum International in Kampala and Mission Uganda in Gulu to create an understanding of unpaid care work in communities and ensure equitable redistribution of care work. One key approach is working with groups of people that are less targeted yet highly patriarchal, like the boda bodas. Through this, the male champions have modeled change agents like Semata and Sempijja.



Ssematta Nelson, a determined and compassionate man, aims to change societal norms and champion male engagement in unpaid care work, a cause close to his heart.

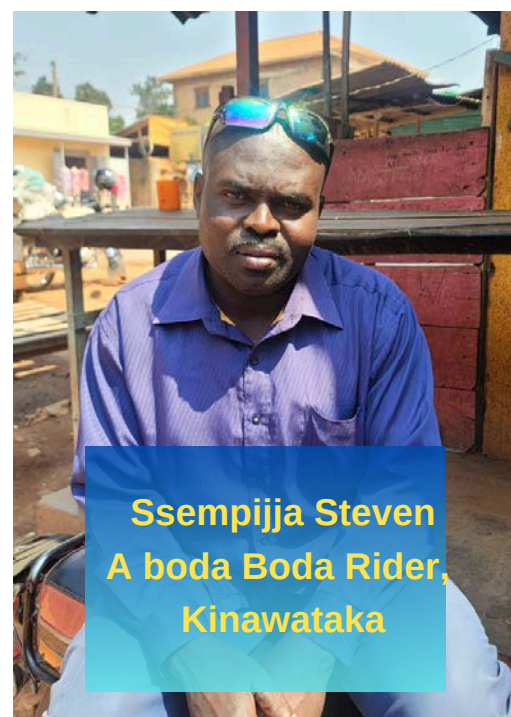
Semata's journey towards this mission began in his childhood. Raised by a single mother, he was introduced to shared responsibilities early on. "There was no difference between a boy's and a girl's role in our home," he recalls. "We took turns cooking, washing, and doing other chores. It was just how we lived." This upbringing instilled in Semata a sense of equality and teamwork, values he carried into adulthood.

Sempijja Steven, is championing male engagement in unpaid care work, illustrating its profound benefits for families and society.

Sempijja grew up with the understanding that a wife's role was to comfort her husband, as prescribed by his religious teachings, and that the man was the head of the household. "Religion and culture are good," he acknowledges, "but they can have negative aspects depending on interpretation." This rigid interpretation initially guided Magala's actions within his marriage.

Initially, Sempijja was firm in his belief that his wife needed to understand who the head of the family was. He recounts a time when, during a misunderstanding, he had his wife arrested to assert his dominance. "To prove my power as a man," he explains, "I did not help out with domestic work, even when I was home."

The turning point came when Sempijja attended a training session organized by the Gals Forum International (GAFI). The training focused on understanding family dynamics and sharing care work to free up time for women to engage in productive jobs. This training prompted deep reflection and self-examination. "I started wondering why my daughter always said that if anyone beat her, she would report to her mother, not to me," he says. "I realized I had no real relationship with her and was seen more as a terrorist than a father when I was home"



INFLUENCING GENDER PRIORITIES IN NDP IV DEVELOPMENT PROCESSS



In May 2024, the Government of Uganda launched the Strategic Direction and roadmap for the National Development Plan IV (NDP IV) development process, which will run from FY 2025/2026 to 2029/2030. The National Development Plan (NDP) is a series of six 5-year plans aimed at achieving Uganda Vision 2040, which envisions transforming Uganda from a peasant society to a modern and prosperous country within 30 years. This landmark policy outlines the development priorities of the country and guides its developmental agenda. The goal of the NDP is to address structural bottlenecks in the economy, accelerate socio-economic transformation, and lift a significant portion of the population out of poverty.

So far, as a country, we have implemented two National Development Plans (NDPs). NDP I (2010/11-2014/15) was implemented under the theme "Growth, Employment, and Socio-Economic Transformation for Prosperity." NDP II (2015/16-2019/20) was implemented under the theme "Strengthening Uganda's Competitiveness for Wealth Creation, Inclusive Growth, and Employment." NDP III (2020/21-2024/25), which is ongoing, has a goal of "Increasing average household incomes and improving the quality of life for Ugandans," with gender equality considered as one of the cross-cutting issues. Its theme is "Sustainable Industrialization for Inclusive Growth, Employment, and Sustainable Wealth Creation."

Importantly, NDP IV is the fourth plan out of the six National Development Plans meant to implement Uganda Vision 2040. It is also the last plan to deliver the global Agenda 2030 of the Sustainable Development Goals and the first within the government's strategy for achieving tenfold growth from USD 49.5 billion in FY 2023/2024 to USD 500 billion in the next 15 years. The plan's goal is to achieve higher household incomes and employment for sustainable socio-economic transformation, with the theme "Sustainable Industrialization for Inclusive Growth, Employment, and Wealth Creation."

In June 2024, UWONET mobilized and coordinated Women's Rights Organizations, activists, and allies to identify gender and equity issues to be considered in the NDP IV. Despite the 18 programs of NDP IV, our advocacy focused on 10 programs that we believe are game-changers for women and directly address the needs of women and girls. These include:

1. *Agro- Industrialization*
2. *Sustainable Mineral Industrialization Development*
3. *Sustainable Energy Development*
4. *Private Sector Development*
5. *Tourism Development*
6. *Natural Resource, Environment, Climate Change, Land and Water Resource Management*
7. *Sustainable Urbanization, Housing and Regional Development*
8. *Digital Transformation*
9. *Human Capital Development*
10. *Governance and Security*
11. *Administration of Justice*

In July 2024, UWONET was invited to a public hearing at the National Planning Authority (NPA). During this hearing, the gender issues paper was presented, highlighting key gender issues, proposed gender and equity interventions, proposed indicators, baseline data, and means of verification. The NPA team, led by the Director of Planning and Development, received the presentation positively. After addressing the comments received, the gender issues paper was officially submitted by UWONET to the NPA as an input to the development process for NDP IV.

Why is this space/ process important for Women's Rights Organizations and the women of Uganda.

1. According to the recently concluded census, women make up 51.9% of Uganda's population. As the majority demographic, women are crucial stakeholders in the country's development. Their active participation and representation in the NDP IV are essential to ensure that their specific needs and perspectives are addressed in national policies and programs.
2. NDP IV will guide national planning for the next five years, making it critical to integrate the concerns of women and girls. Women and girls face unique challenges related to health, education, economic opportunities, and social protection. By incorporating their needs into NDP IV, the government can develop more inclusive and effective strategies that promote gender equality and women's empowerment.
3. The National Development Plan not only directs government priorities but also guides interventions by development partners. Ensuring that women's rights and gender equality are central to NDP IV will align international support and resources with national priorities. This alignment can lead to more coordinated and impactful interventions, enhancing the overall effectiveness of development efforts in Uganda.
4. The NDP IV provides a comprehensive framework for policies and programs aimed at addressing gender inequalities, promoting women's economic participation and benefits, enhancing access to education and health, fostering women's leadership, and ensuring their protection.

In summary, the development process of NDP IV is a critical opportunity to ensure that women's rights and gender equality are central to Uganda's national development agenda. By addressing the specific needs and concerns of women and girls, NDP IV can promote inclusive and sustainable development that benefits all citizens.

SUPPORTING TEENAGE MOTHERS

As part of the holistic package under the scale up project, teenage survivors of SGBV were provided with services such as psychosocial support, shelter support, legal support and referrals for further case management. It is always crucial to follow up to ascertain survivor well-being after case handling and resettlement. This has helped to assess the wellbeing of survivors for a complete healing. The follow up visits are conducted by the project officer, shelter matron and the social worker. A total of 20 survivors were supported in both Bugiri and Namutumba districts under the scale up project.

The satisfactory survey and follow-ups indicated that survivors were satisfied with the services offered that included the provision of mama kits, kokono cribs, sheltering that gives them an opportunity to interface with fellow survivors and learn from each other.

Notably among these was Aisha (Not real names) who was quoted saying

“

Boys had started to confuse me and I was possessed with giving my father headache in chasing me when he finds me with boys but after coming to the shelter and seeing how teenage mothers are brought in a sorry state ,I want to concentrate on my studies and I become a teacher.

”



All the 20 supported are willing to return to school after weaning off the babies. However, most of the girls families were found in a dire state of need even hardly affording one meal a day. In most instances teen mothers have the willingness to resume school but the parents/guardians cant afford the scholastic materials ranging from books, uniforms, posho and beans that the other school requirements including examination fees among others. This is basically because some of these teenagers are orphans and or because they are being supported by a single parent in situations where the second parent either re-married or disappeared from the district.

Some teenagers express fear of returning back to school as they would be mocked by their fellow pupils and hence have resorted to embracing skilling supported by the project.

Some two teenage mothers in Buyange village and Kasale village expressed gratitude to UWONET's support and counselling offered to them and their single mothers who previously were biased about the girls condition/situation. After counselling session of both the girls and the parents, the girls were enrolled for tailoring and hairdressing.

Safiat was happy to say her mother had purchased her a sewing machine and soon would be able to raise some money to support herself and her child.

Also during the follow up visits or resettlement, items such as teenager and baby clothes, baby bedsheets and blankets, mama kits are provided to expectant teenage mothers to support their preparation for delivery and baby care. These were given after assessments during the pre-visits before resettlement to ascertain teen well being in the possible home of resettlement.



Clothing, bedsheets and mama kits to support safe delivery and well being of the new borns.

These items were specifically distributed to expectant teenage mothers during resettlement to support the prepare for delivery and baby care. These were given after assessments during the pre-visits before resettlement to ascertain well being of the possible home of resettlement.



KOKONO CRIB DISTRIBUTION

The Education department of Namutumba district embraced the Kokono cribs distribution in schools 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 as a step towards supporting school administrations to create conducive childcare space for learners with babies while they attend classes. This was embraced by the DEO who also requested the 2 cribs to be given to Namutumba SEED secondary school located in Namutumba S/C. This was because the school had had 4 incidences of teenage mothers continuing with school in the previous years, 3 of which were senior six students and 1 senior four student.



The DEO Namutumba district closely watching what the kokono crib looks like when well assembled and right the Head Teacher Namutumba seed school Ms. Ariokot Imelda and the school students leadership receiving the kokono cribs



The cribs also continued to be distributed to expectant teenage mothers and teenage mothers with new borns during follow ups within the two district.

PROVISION OF GBV SUPPORT SERVICES

To ensure women and girls' Access to Justice, UWONET provides shelter services to GBV survivors in Namutumba and Kamuli districts. The model provides temporary shelter, medical support, food, clothing, counselling, economic empowerment/skills development and legal support to GBV survivors. It is used as a mechanism in the protection, prevention and response to GBV.

For the month of July, UWONET sheltered 10 survivors of which 3 were adults and 7 were children. Upon arriving at the shelter, they are warmly welcomed by a dedicated team of shelter matrons who navigate them through the registration process. The shelter matrons also ensure that these survivors are taken through the shelter guidelines to ensure maximum discipline during their stay.



Survivor Dormitories

The nature of cases received included domestic violence, failure to provide, physical assault, eviction, child neglect, defilement and economic violence. Women face a lot of challenges depending on seasons. During the rainy seasons, men are friendly to their spouses targeting the free labour for cultivation. For dry seasons, the cases are high as a result of the harvest where men want to take/sell all including that belongs to their wives. At this point, men start chasing their wives to remain in full control of the harvest with hopes of getting another woman. Such women have reported cases to UWONET advisory centers.

Women report cases but fear harm from perpetrators and or their husbands. These are referred to the shelter for protection. After solving the problem, a survivor is then resettled. We worked closely with different partners including the probation officer, CAO, RDC, Court, Police, CDO's, LC's, Implementing partners like IOWA, AEGY, ZENA Uganda and Hospitals. UWONET Paralegals and survivor support groups also act as our referrals in the different communities.

STAFF WELLBEING

UWONET GBV advisory and shelter staff face various challenges as they work with and support GBV survivors. These challenges include; emotional burnout, secondary traumatic stress, high workload, less self-care time, inadequate support systems, work-life balance struggles, and feelings of isolation. To support staff well-being, a two (2) days retreat was organized.

A retreat targeting 33 staff including those based at the GBV shelters and advisory centers was organized with support from GIZ. The retreat provided an opportunity for staff to step away from everyday tasks and focus on self-care, team bonding, and strategic reflection. This platform created a supportive environment where staff relaxed. In addition, it addressed burnout issues.

Understanding and addressing individual emotional needs was emphasized as crucial for self-awareness and effective interpersonal relationships. Seeking support from accountability partners and engaging in community activities, such as attending church, were highlighted as valuable sources of connection and stress management. It was emphasized as important to tune into ourselves and prioritize self-care to better navigate life's challenges and promote overall well-being.



Key areas by facilitators were insights on mental health, emphasizing how it pertains to the wellness of the mind and extends beyond extremes to encompass the multitude of factors that affect our mental well-being, even in seemingly small ways. He discussed preventative measures for mental well-being within various groups, including personal measures, workplace measures, and environmental measures, highlighting the importance of addressing specific stressors within our organization. In addition, it was noted that individuals may age faster due to their coping mechanisms, and bodily changes can exacerbate stress and contribute to unhealthy dynamics. Awareness of these factors was noted as crucial for effectively managing and addressing mental health challenges

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A LEGAL AID LAWYER

MRS. JUSTINE NABWIRE

I am a mother, a wife and an advocate of the High Court of Uganda and a legal officer/Coordinator of UWONET GBV Advisory Centre and Shelter in Namutumba District. I'm the secretary of the DCC of Namutumba District in charge of tracking women and girls issues of Access to Justice. I have been a human rights advocate for social justice for 10 years with emphasis on women and girls. I'm passionate about it. I'm a trainer in domestic relations law. I have worked with UWONET since 2016 up to date.



Busoga Sub-region where I'm working is so much faced with high levels of poverty and illiteracy more so to the women and girls who are married off at a very young age. The deep-rooted cultural norms and patriarchal values portrays the idea that men are superior to women hence legitimizing violence against women and girls and exacerbate GBV, as economic dependence can trap women in abusive relationships and limit their ability to seek help. Women face Physical and Sexual Violence, Early and child Marriages: This was escalated during the covid 19 lockdown where the district registered over 3000 teenage mothers as per the district statistician. Many girls are forced into early marriages, often with older men, which limits their education and economic opportunities and exposes them to further abuse; Limited Access to Justice, Economic Dependence: Many women and girls are economically dependent on their abusers, making it difficult for them to leave abusive situations, Stigmatization and Social Isolation: Survivors often face stigmatization and social isolation from their communities and families, which can deter them from seeking help. This is common in domestic related cases where a woman is accused of reporting her husband to relevant authorities.

This has given me a deep sense of empathy and compassion for my work since 2016. I have seen over 100 women walk out of my office with joy and a smile have changed lives. In particular during the month of July, 41 cases (37 women and 4 men) were received and handled. 7 were sheltered, 4 cases were referred to Police and to the Clan leaders, 26 cases were resolved through Alternative Dispute resolution both at the advisory center and at community level. 11 cases are pending for the month of August. The advisory centre receives mostly child neglect, Land wrangles among family members, land grabbing and denial of access and control over land by women, assault cases/physical violence, defilement cases among others.

What drives you to continue doing this work

The working environment of UWONET that advocates for gender transformation and empowerment in communities and the values which support social justice initiatives for women and girls motivates my working. Working with UWONET has helped me have a deeper understanding of gender responsive service delivery. This is something not taught in the law school, but I'm glad that I got all these skills out of experience. It is also attributed to my personal experience that I grew up watching and hearing people in my community saying my parents were so unlucky with life because they had only one child and a girl which they called a loss since girl children were considered a misfortune and useless with no value.



I work with many stakeholders at both district and national level. When you ask for UWONET in Namutumba, the response will be "... an organization for women", when you have a case at police being followed up, it will be referred to as an UWONET case and no one will tamper with it. That is how UWONET has grounded its self at district level. Police gave us a desk at the Child and Family Protection Unit, the district probation and welfare officer practically gave us his office. All offices at the district have supported us so much in our work, the district local government gave us free space for office and this has made our work very easy. We have also supported more especially police with logistics such as stationary, fuel for investigations, treating of survivors.

Driving Factors for all these problems are Cultural Norms and Gender Inequality. In Busoga region, a girl child/woman is not supposed to inherit any property of her late parent or husband. This has left women not considered on both sides; at her home as daughter and her home as a widow;

Lack of Education, Limited access to education for girls and women limits their awareness of rights and available services, and contributes to the perpetuation of harmful practices like child marriage. According to our statistics, 95% of our clients have attained only primary level.



STORY OF CHANGE

Zam, a widow aged 55 years, a resident of Namato Village Namutumba Subcounty Namutumba District and a mother of 9 children, reported a case of land grabbing by her brothers in law who claimed that she had no share of land and neither her children. her brothers even denied the paternity of those children claiming that they did not belong to the late husband who passed on in 2007. Trying to follow the traditional systems, she first approached the clan leaders who asked her for money and chicken. She narrated to have gave out all they asked but later they refused to give her her share.

She heard about UWONET from a community person who had earlier attended UWONETs community sensitization in the same area.

We received her at the GBV Advisory centre, a file was opened and legal advice was given to her about her rights under the intestate succession. (dying without making a will). UWONET scheduled an office mediation and the respondents were invited. during the mediations, responds/the husband's family finally agreed to give land back to the widow and her children. A community meeting was further scheduled to have this land handed over to Zam. UWONET jointly with the officer in charge of Community Liason at Police, the family of the late husband, the clan leaders and community members, the local leaders and residents were present during that meeting and the land was demarcated on that day. Zams son was made the customary heir of his late father's estate. Zam is very grateful to UWONET. In her words she said



Zam (light blue sharia dress) sitted during the community mediation in Namato where the family and clan leaders agreed to give her land and her children.



Legal officer witnessing the land demarcation and boundary mark with help the community members and the police the following day.

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"Iam very happy that I finally got my land back, those people now fear me because of UWONET, they used to despise me saying that I was a Malaya who wanted to grab their brother's land yet I was a married woman to the late under the moslem faith. Thank you so much you people, I now believe that there are people who are still honesty in their work and who offer free services to us the weak."

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THANK YOU

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, ADC, Kvinna Till Kvinna, 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.

**Crossing Barriers,
Building Bridges:
Unleashing Collective Power**

Compiled by: Roland Musasizi, MEAL Officer

