



Gender Transformation
& Empowerment

STRENGTHENING CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT FOR DEMOCRACY, QUALITY SERVICE DELIVERY AND GENDER EQUALITY IN NORTHERN UGANDA

A Documentation of Local Actions for Quality and Gender Sensitive Service Delivery

Issue No:1/2014

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INTRODUCTION

This newsletter is a documentation of success stories based on the achievements realized in the district of Nwoya, Lamwo and Agago under the project on Strengthening Civic Participation and Engagement for Democracy, Quality Service Delivery and Gender Equality in Northern Uganda implemented with support from Governance Accountability Participation and Performance Programme (GAPP)/ USAID. The documentation highlights lessons learnt and recommendations.

Background

Today's northern Uganda is dramatically different than it was in 2006, peace has returned which aided the return of the IDPs back home, and the elected local governments and civil servants are in place. Government huge recovery programmes such as the PRDP are being implemented to rehabilitate the region recovering from long conflict. Nonetheless, despite this remarkable progress, northern Uganda still lags behind the rest of the country in health, education, and security infrastructure.

What lies ahead for the region is conceiving strategies for strengthening local governance and service delivery capacity, especially at the sub-county level to the district, to ensure that services are accessible, available and usable.

Project description

In a bid to respond to the governance challenges in northern Uganda after the LRA war and in particular the gap between the demand and supply side of governance, which had led to broken systems and structures, apathy among communities, lawlessness, corruption and poor access, delivery and usability of services, UWONET initiated a two year project. The project on Strengthening Civic Participation and Engagement for Democracy, Quality Service Delivery and Gender Equality in Northern Uganda is implemented in the districts of Nwoya, Lamwo and Agago. The goal of the action is increased equity, equality and accountability in governance processes in Uganda.

Its overall objective is to enhance capacities for participation; engagement and influence of *women leaders and citizens* for quality and gender responsive service delivery in northern Uganda.

The specific objectives include:

1. *To enhance participation and influence of women councilors in council for quality and gender responsive health and education service delivery.*
2. *To strengthen capacity of Civil Society Organizations to influence and demand accountability for quality and gender responsiveness in service*



Figure 1: Nwoya district councilors in a group discussion



Figure 2: Vice chairperson Agago district caucus making her presentation during the shared learning fora



Figure 3: Participants from Lamwo district in a group discussion



Figure 4: Male champion from Agago district made the women's issues relevant.

delivery in the health and education sectors

3. To enhance citizens' oversight capacity for quality and gender responsive service delivery in health and education.

At the district, UWONET worked in close partnership with district women networks which include: Forum for Kalongo Women Parish Association (FOKAPAWA) in Agago district, Organization for the Development of Women in Lamwo (ODOWOL) in Lamwo district and CSO coalition in Nwoya district. They have taken lead in coordination of district based activities through mobilization, documentation, monitoring and reporting.

The approaches used during this action included: partnership building, networking, advocacy, capacity building, mentorship and coaching.

This action is implemented in the districts of Nwoya, Lamwo and Agago and in two sub counties per district¹.

Overall the project aimed at:

- ⇒ Building knowledge and skills set of women councilors in the target districts to effectively participate in council enhanced;
- ⇒ Enhancing development of women's legislative agendas to influence district council resolutions on gender responsive health and education service delivery;
- ⇒ Enhancing CSOs' knowledge and skills to demand for quality and gender responsive service delivery;
- ⇒ Increasing CSO collective action and platforms for dialogue with duty bearers on quality service delivery;
- ⇒ Improving responsiveness of duty bearers towards citizen's action on quality service delivery and;
- ⇒ Increasing citizen led actions to influence quality service delivery.

¹ Sub counties include: Lamwo (Padibe East and Padibe West), Agago (Patongo and Laponi) and Nwoya (Kochgoma and Purongo).

SUCCESS STORIES OF LOCAL ACTIONS

Story 1: Mentorship of district women caucuses critical to achieving gender equality.

Women leaders (councilors) have a critical role they play in advancement of gender equality and women's rights and voicing community concerns.

To enhance their capacity, effectiveness and influence in council, UWONET embarked on a capacity building and mentoring for the women councilors in the districts of Lamwo, Nwoya and Agago with support from GAPP/USAID. This was based on a baseline capacity needs assessment conducted in May 2014, which revealed that the participation of the women councilors was very low in council with majority unable to engage in council debates and take up leadership positions.

The assessment also revealed that the women councilors in all the districts did not have a platform to meet and strategize as women. This had brought a lot of division and conflicts among the women hence they were disunited with disjointed efforts.

We recognize that the councilors must have had very inadequate orientation when they assumed office in 2011, because the capacity challenges were not only unique to the female councilors but also the male.

ACODE had engaged the councilors in scorecards where they distributed council dairies to them, while FOWODE had engaged those (Nwoya councilors) in gender budgeting, but the critical areas mentioned had not been tackled which affected the effectiveness and influence of the women councilors.

UWONET developed a tailored training manual and handbook for the women councilors and took them through capacity building on areas among which included: gender, public speaking, council rules of procedures, development and presentation of a motion, benefits of caucusing to equip them with knowledge and skills to engage more effectively in council.

At the end of the training the women in all the districts expressed the need to form women caucuses and the leadership was elected.

Testimonies from the councilor's show that coming into a caucus has reduced conflict among the women councilors, they put aside their political differences to work together to champion gender equality and women's rights.

There has been increased number of women in leadership positions e.g. in Agago district, the women caucus has been able to influence and support two female councilors to be elected as chairpersons of the committees on education and works).

Women have also been inspired, 60% of the women councilors have gone back to school at different levels of education, this is envisaged to further enhance their leadership potential and ability to read and understand key policy documents provided in council to generate well informed and researched debates. The needs assessment carried out for the women councilors in May 2014 revealed that the educational level for the women councilors was very low especially in Nwoya and Lamwo where 0% of the women councilor's had completed Ordinary Level of secondary education.



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strict: their support has
en caucus stronger and



Figure 5: Patients Waiting at Ogakolachan Health Center II



Figure 6: Mr. Ogom Noel Headmaster of Abilnino primary school



Figure 7: Pupils of Abilnino primary school

FOR QUALITY AND GENDER SENSITIVE SERVICE DELIVERY

The councilors attributed their achievements to; Support from the male champions within council

- ⇒ Support from UWONET through capacity enhancement and facilitation of the caucus reviews
- ⇒ Speakers' positive attitude towards the women councilors and gender equality
- ⇒ Local councilors Score Card initiative by ACODE
- ⇒ Unity in diversity through the caucus.

The women caucuses formed at the district level have become formidable advocacy platform for the women councilors to jointly advance gender and women rights concerns in council. But they need to be supported through mentorship and technical coaching to ensure that they remain relevant.

Story 2: Enhancing quality and gender responsive social service delivery through localized community actions.

In a bid to strengthen civic participation and engagement for quality and gender responsiveness in education and health sectors, UWONET embarked on capacity building of the communities in Nwoya, Lamwo and Agago on;

- ⇒ Knowing their rights and obligations in ensuring delivery of better social services
- ⇒ Gender and gender responsive service delivery
- ⇒ Advocacy and demand for their rights
- ⇒ Government development processes and their participation

This was based on the findings of an initial project capacity assessment for communities which revealed that there were very weak community initiatives aimed at enhancing accountability for delivery of quality services coupled with limited knowledge and skills.

UWONET enhanced the monitoring of service delivery by providing a gender sensitive monitoring tool and oriented them to ensure proper usage.

In Lamwo district, the routine community monitoring was spearheaded by Organization for the Development of Women in Lamwo (ODOWOL), a CBO that UWONET has nurtured, the monitoring aimed to reach far to reach areas like Ongakolachan to assess the accessibility, availability and usability of the services. In September 2014, a visit was made to Ongakolachan Health Centre II, where the monitors found it closed and patients waiting outside with no one to attend to them. This health center had been closed for nearly two weeks the waiting patients alerted the group through an interaction with them. This was because the nurse in-charge of the health center had gone on study leave without notifying her immediate supervisors. On returning back, the monitors met Dr. Ocula the Lamwo district doctor who was shocked with the findings. He immediately relocated one nurse from Padibbe Health center IV to Ongakolachan Health center II to rescue the situation. There after the health center resumed its routine operations.

Communities need to be supported with the right information and knowledge to support their participation in governance.

Story 3: Gender mainstreaming a tool for improving service delivery in education.

In Nwoya district, the head teacher Aparanga Primary school introduced reforms meant to enhance performance and gender responsive service delivery in the school after a training conducted by UWONET on gender and roles and responsibilities of duty bearers in health and education sectors. This was aimed at engendering primary school education services for gender equality and better delivery of services. An earlier interaction with the duty bearers under the education sectors including the teachers revealed that teachers had very little knowledge hence little appreciation of gender and the need of mainstreaming.

After the training the head teacher;

- ⇒ Held awareness raising session for the SMC and PTA members on gender and how to mainstream in school management and planning
- ⇒ The head teacher resolved to increase the participation of girls in school activities.
- ⇒ He reshuffled the school prefect leaders to ensure equal participation of boys and girls (10 girls and 10 boys).
- ⇒ He also revived debating club with more inclusion of girls. As a result violence has reduced among the pupils due to continued sensitization.

The head teacher plans to budget for the construction of a changing room for girls in 2015.

Story 4: Community dialogue a strategy for resolving community concerns.

In September 2014, a community dialogue was held at Abilnino primary school Lapono sub county, Agago district, the dialogue was informed by a community led monitoring to the school led by Lapono United to work a CBO based at the sub county. The monitoring revealed the challenges the school had which were hampering better performance, among which included; lack of a water source, very limited staffs, no school budget,. Others were very limited accommodation for the staff, limited desks.

During the dialogue attended by the school leadership, sub county and district

officials and the general community, the findings of the monitoring were being confirmed by the community. The duty bearers present pledged to support the school in resolving the challenges. At the dialogue the parents raised a hot issue of a missing solar panel which was alleged to have been stolen by the parent's teachers. In response the head teacher pledged to recover the solar panel.

In November 2014, a monitoring visit to the school by the monitoring team established the following positive changes in the school; the solar panel was recovered, the SMC had a meeting and they drew a school budget 2014 and the school was earmarked to benefit from a water project.

MOVING FORWARD: LESSONS LEARNT

During year one of the project implementation the following lesson were documented moving forward;

Very critical is the need for continued support to the communities through knowledge and information to enhance their vigilance in monitoring service delivery.

Community led initiatives need to be groomed and support with local resources for sustainability of the action.

The district women caucuses are a platform for advancing gender quality and women's rights issues in council. Therefore they need to be mentored.

Platforms for interface between the duty bearers and rights holders are a very significant tool in enhancing accountability and transparency.

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