



Better HAG Uganda

*‘Strengthening Synergies  
for Improved  
MNCH,  
SRHR, HIV Prevention  
and  
OVC Support’*

*“Leveraging Strategies of Positive Action towards  
Reducing Violence against Women and Girls”*

**PROJECT NARRATIVE REPORT - 2013**



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*In Partnership with:*



**African Women's  
Development Fund**



## **Contact Information**

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**Country:** Uganda

**Type of Report:** Final

## **Grant Information**

### **Project Title**

*"Leveraging Strategies of Positive Action towards Reducing Violence against Women and Girls"*

### **Purpose of Grant as stated in the grant agreement**

To increase awareness on gender based violence (GBV) as well as strengthen capacity for GBV prevention and advocacy in Bubulo East Constituency, Manafwa District of Uganda.

### **Any change to the agreed purpose of grant?**

No

### **Total amount received:**

**USD** 24,980 (**UGX** 64,510,850 – Sixty four million, five hundred and ten thousand, eight hundred and fifty shillings only)

**Dates Received:** November 20<sup>th</sup> 2012 (first installment) and April 29<sup>th</sup> 2013 (second installment)

**Project Start up Date:** November 2012

**Completion Date:** September 2013

### **Project Goals:**

#### **Overall Goal:**

To improve the health and safety of women and girls through combating all forms of gender based violence (VAW/G) and its effects in Bubulo East Constituency, Manafwa district of Uganda.

## **Project Objectives**

1. To increase awareness on gender based violence with specific regard to women and girls' rights in Bubulo East constituency, Manafwa district by September 2013.
2. To strengthen capacity for GBV prevention, response and advocacy in Bubulo East constituency, Manafwa district by September 2013

## **Project out Puts (deliverables)**

- 1 orientation and planning meeting for 20 project stakeholders held
- 1 three day capacity building training for 25 persons conducted. Additional outputs under this activity include;
  - 1 training plan made
  - A Consultant outsourced
  - Knowledge of GBV as a health issue imparted
- One 20-25 stage play script and 1 radio series script made and submitted by the Consultant. Stage play rehearsed and presented live in 7 different communities and 8 schools. Radio series rehearsed, recorded, edited and aired on Open Gate FM
- Procurement made for 1 laptop and accessories, 1 digital camera, 1 video camera as well as 1 mobile phone to facilitate medico-legal team in collection of forensic evidence on abuse of women and girls; and also to facilitate documentation of project activities.
- stage play rehearsals made for 10 days
- 300 t-shirts with printed anti-GBV messages produced and distributed
- 500 calendars with anti-GBV messages produced and distributed
- 600 bandanas with printed anti-GBV messages produced and distributed
- 1 large PVC banner (3 meters) with messages on GBV made
- 200 marathon aprons with anti-GBV printed (as contribution from Better HAG Uganda)
- 10 HCT aprons printed (as contribution from Better HAG Uganda)

- 7 multi-faceted anti-VAWG awareness and education campaigns made in 7 different communities reaching approximately 5,600 people. Sub outputs include 7 live theatre presentations, 7 HCT outreaches, live testimonies made by 8 GBV survivors, 3 health and anti-GBV marathons, 2 bicycle races, 1 soccer event, 2,041 people successfully counseled, tested and given HCT results, public educational talks on GBV done)
- 112 married women, 19 men and 21 girls out of school receive confidential legal assistance and advice during the anti-GBV awareness campaigns
- An estimated 1640 men and boys actively involved in the VAWG response at different levels
- 13 community dialogues conducted reaching over 398 people including among others; elderly, clan leaders, teachers, women, girls, students, religious leaders from sixteen different villages/communities
- 31 women and 11 girls access free confidential legal assistance & advice owing to community dialogues
- 3 community referral and protection (COREP) centers established (amidst operational challenges)
- 8 schools with over 3,200 students reached with awareness and education on GBV (VAW/G) and other SRHR information. 78 girls and 46 boys directly reached with counseling on the different forms of violence and SRHR. 120 students (72 girls) engaged in live debates as panelists/speakers.
- 8 community feedback sessions conducted with 99 respondents in different communities within Bubulo East County.

## **People Reached**

### **Direct (Primary) Beneficiaries**

Women and girls were the primarily targets of the project. Different interventions reached different numbers of these primary beneficiaries as below;



A woman raises issues on violence in one of the community dialogues

Mode / Activity	Number Reached
Awareness campaigns	1800
Community dialogues	160
Confidential legal assistance and advice during anti-VAWG outreach campaigns	177
HIV Counseling and Testing (HCT)	1,287
One-on-one counseling in schools	78
Girl speakers in school debates	72
Estimated of girls reached in schools	1940
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,514</b>

### Indirect (secondary) Beneficiaries

Mode / Activity	Number Reached
Awareness campaigns	1400
Community dialogues	280
Confidential legal assistance and advice during anti-VAWG outreach campaigns	19
HIV Counseling and Testing (HCT)	754
One-on-one counseling in schools	46
Boy speakers in school debates	48
Estimated of boys reached in schools	1020
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3,567</b>

*NOTE: Numbers recorded under awareness campaigns above were people who got in contact with Better HAG Uganda for services. Otherwise multitudes turned up for the events (approximately 800 per outreach)*



Better HAG Uganda present a Certificate of Grant Appreciation to Beatrice & Gifty during an awareness campaign at Bubutu

## Project Background

Like in many other countries across the universe, violence against women and girls in Uganda is one of the most widespread violations of human rights. It includes physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse, and it cuts across boundaries of age, race, culture, wealth and geography. It takes place in the home, on the streets, in schools, the workplace, in farm fields, refugee camps, during conflicts and crises. It has many manifestations — from the most universally prevalent forms of domestic and sexual violence, to harmful practices such as sex-selection or child, widow inheritance, forced and/or early marriages, abuse during pregnancy, dowry related violence; among others. In many



*Through live theatre performances, the project was able to demonstrate the magnitude of VAWG during awareness campaigns and school programs*

Ugandan cultures, deep-rooted cultural norms, customs and traditions continue to constitute serious obstacles to the realization of a violence free environment for especially rural women and girls; yet the lack of knowledge and accurate information on the fundamental human rights among both men (who are largely the perpetrators of VAW) and women in such societies continue to exacerbate gender based violence.

Violence against women and girls has far-reaching consequences; harming families and communities. It not only violates human rights, but also hampers productivity, reduces human capacities and undermines economic growth. As a result of gender discrimination and

their lower socio-economic status, women and girls have fewer options and fewer resources at their disposal to avoid or escape abusive situations and to seek justice. They also suffer SRH consequences, including unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions and resulting maternal and neonatal deaths, traumatic fistula, and higher risks of sexually transmitted infections including HIV.

Against the above background, Better HAG Uganda is implementing a 1 year project titled ***“Leveraging Strategies of Positive Action towards Reducing Violence against Women and Girls”*** with generous financial support from the African

Women's Development Fund (AWDF), Accra-Ghana. Implemented in Bubulo County East, Manafwa district in Eastern Uganda, the project's overall goal is to improve the health and safety of women and girls through increasing awareness on gender based violence with specific regard to women and girls' rights as well as strengthening capacity for GBV prevention, response and advocacy.

## **Accomplishments**

### **Planned project activities for the period Nov 2012 – September 2013**

1. Conducting an initial orientation and planning meeting with the key project stakeholders
2. Outsourcing a Consultant to support with the writing of scripts for both stage play and radio series on GBV
3. Conducting rehearsals for the stage play and live presentations of the same in 7 different communities and 8 different schools
4. Procurement of a laptop, phone, cameras (digital and video)-with respective accessories; as well as designing, producing and distributing IEC materials (posters, t-shirts, bandanas)
5. Hiring services of a Consultant to carry out a 3 day GBV (Gender Based Violence) training workshop for CBOs, Police, Religious leaders, e.t.c.
6. Conducting 16 community Dialogue Meetings with primarily cultural and clan leaders.
7. Carrying out 7 multifaceted awareness campaigns in different communities with integrated live theatre presentations, 1 marathon, confidential legal assistance to women and girls, HIV Counseling and Testing (HCT), bicycle races, soccer, public awareness and educational talks on GBV, sharing of live testimonies on violence and HIV, cinema projection.
8. Collection of forensic evidence on victims owing to violence against women and girls
9. Establishment of 3 Community Referral and Protection (COREP) Centre
10. Rolling out to 8 schools to create awareness and education on GBV-specifically the need to end all forms of violence against primarily girls in educational institutions
11. institute, facilitate and operationalize a medico-legal team to collect and process forensic evidence on violence against women and girls

12. Carrying out quarterly monitoring visits

13. Conducting community feedback sessions to unearth beneficiaries' views on the achievement of the project as well as unearth recommendations for future programming

14. Document project activities (come up with a documentary on the project)

## **Details of Activities Implemented, Strategies Employed & Achievements**

### **a) Procurement:**

In appreciation of the need to document all project activities, Better HAG Uganda arranged for procurement of all the necessary equipment and accessories as provided for in the approved budget. 1 laptop (Dell) was procured to facilitate the operations of Better HAG Uganda Manafwa Branch office. Other equipment purchased include; 1 Samsung digital camera, 1 Sony video camera and 1 Samsung Android cell phone. These have aided and still will facilitate staff and the medico-legal team in collection of forensic evidence on all forms of abuse on women and girls; let alone enhancing documentation of all project activities. Plans are underway to have these assets engraved to illuminate AWDF's contribution.

### **b) Initial orientation and planning meeting:**

This was a 1 day meeting for 20 participants including 7 Local council 1 (LC 1) Chairpersons, 2 Local Council II leaders, 1 Police officer from Magale Police station, 2 health workers, 2 students, 3 married women, 1 teacher and 2 representatives from grassroots Community Based Organizations. The meeting which was held at St. John the Baptist Parish Hall, Magale Town on November 5<sup>th</sup> 2012 had key achievements/outputs such as successful orientation for the above stakeholders on project goals and objectives in addition to instilling a sense of project ownership amongst beneficiaries and the entire community at large. This meeting also gave birth to several anti-VAW/G messages in both English and Lugisu; which were eventually printed on various Information, education and communication (IEC) materials. These included;



*Participants during the project orientation and planning meeting*

**For the T-shirts:-** 'Umusaani umutuufu se'apa umukelema tta' (A real man doesn't beat his wife)

**On the calendars:** - 'Ise'ndeesa n'omukelema wase nga abeelewo khuta khufukilisana tta. Neewe?' (I openly discuss with my wife if there are some misunderstandings in our home. How about you?)

**On the Banner:** - 'khekhuwambile atwela khukhuwakamisa bisayumba isi bakelema ne'bekhana'.

**On the bandanas:** - stop marriages for girls below the age of 18 years.

*'Khuwaale bwebabaana bakhana babali asi eki myakha 18 bwaakha bwakamisibwa'*

Participants voted for retention of some anti-GBV messages printed on bandanas during the 16 days of activism 2011 campaign against GBV that was funded by UNFPA through the American Refugee Committee (ARC) International, Uganda Program.

Other outputs/achievements under this activity included participatory enlisting of various communities (subject to revision/change owing to prevailing circumstances) to host multifaceted awareness campaigns including Bumbo, Buwambwa, Matuwa, Bubutu, Lwakhakha, Magale and Tsekululu.

### **c) Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials:**

Having work-shopped anti-violence against women and girls (VAW/G) messages in the initial orientation and planning meeting in a participatory manner, Better HAG Uganda management embarked on outsourcing bids/quotations for the supply of various IEC materials including t-shirts, bandanas, calendars and flags. 3 quotations were obtained from 3 firms namely; Butale Investments Limited, Media Age Uganda and 3M School of Art & Design. After a rigorous bid evaluation process, the joint Evaluations & Contracts Committee awarded the contract



*Young men display their marathon aprons with printed anti-GBV message*

to 3M school of Art & Design which eventually supplied 300 pieces of round-neck t-shirts, 1 PVC banner (3 meters), 500 A2 calendars for the year 2013, 600 bandanas (45 x 50cm) and 560 flags (45 X 60cm); all bearing printed messages consistent with elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls. The supplier was also tasked to come up with an artistic expression of positive communication on GBV using recommendations from **SASA** Communications

Strategy.

Efforts were also made to support printing of 200 pieces of marathon aprons, 1 finishing line ribbon and 10 HCT aprons as contribution from Better HAG Uganda; in the spirit of partnership.

Where as some of these IEC materials were purposefully distributed to active participants during community dialogues, multifaceted awareness campaigns and in-school GBV awareness programs; marathon and HCT aprons were usually reclaimed for use in subsequent activities.

#### **d) Development of GBV Art pieces:**

Services of a Consultant were sought to support the development of two (2) master art pieces that highlight the magnitude of violence against women and girls in the Ugandan society, effects and possible remedial measures. Following logistical and budgetary agreement with the Consultant, Better HAG Uganda management arranged for a meeting with the Consultant to discuss specifications in regard to the content and flow of both the radio series and the stage play.

The Consultant presented the first drafts to Better HAG Uganda management, prompting an adhoc meeting to review, address gaps and input in both scripts. This review and input process guided the Consultant into the development of the final scripts for 20-25 minuted-stage play and 180 minutes of radio series. The latter is titled '*The Good Samaritan*'.



*A live theatre performance at Magale Parents S.S*

The stage play is believed to have reached an estimated 5,200 people (over 54% women and girls) in the 8 schools and 7 different communities visited. Additionally, Better HAG Uganda engaged the Marketing Department of Open Gate FM (stationed in Mbale Town) to discuss modalities of recording the '*Good Samaritan*'. After recording, editing and final production of the series, the radio stationed aired it for 36 consecutive days. The anti-VAWG message in the radio series reached an estimated 150,000 listeners in the districts of Mbale, Manafwa, Bududa, Sironko, Bulambuli, Budaka, Namutumba, Tororo, Butaleja; among others. AWDF's contribution was highlighted at the beginning and end of the episodes.

### e) Capacity Building:

Effective GBV response calls for sufficient knowledge on the legislative framework of dealing with this public health crisis. Different stakeholders including the Police, partner CBOs, Local council 1 Chairpersons, health workers, religious leaders as well as individual men, women and girls need this crucial information if they are to ably and effectively coordinate the response.



*Students give a rousing ovation to the drama group during their live presentation*

Against this background therefore, Better HAG Uganda successfully conducted



*Participants of the GBV training pose for a group photograph with their certificates*

a 3 day anti-GBV legal-knowledge building workshop for 25 people including; 2 Police personnel, 2 religious leaders, 1 teacher, 10 CBO representatives, 2 medical officers, 3 People Living with HIV (PLHIV), 2 LC 1 Chairpersons, 2 students (1 girl and 1 boy) and 1 woman. The purpose was to equip such stakeholders with adequate information on GBV prevention, response and advocacy using a legal platform so as they are in a better position to respond to this pervasive public health evil in their respective communities.

The training was conducted by a woman Consultant at St. John the Baptist hall, Magale Town between December 17<sup>th</sup> and December 19<sup>th</sup> 2012. Trainees were also equipped with knowledge on action planning after which they were encouraged to develop and present action plans that demonstrate integration of issues learnt on elimination of GBV into their respective programs. They would eventually roll out to various communities to support Better HAG Uganda in dissemination of accurate information on VAW/G causes, effects and how to overcome such crises using legal means (among others). Participants were also equipped with knowledge and awareness on the relationship/intersect between HIV/AIDS and VAW/G. Some of the beneficiaries of this training would be called upon to co-facilitate some of the community dialogues.

An end of training workshop evaluation indicated a significant change in the education and awareness on the legislative framework and procedures of dealing with gender based violence (VAW/G) among participants – contrary to the pre-training assessment results. The workshop was able to advance improvement in participants’ legal literacy and knowledge about their human rights through multiple channels, enhance improvement of the informal justice systems through commitment by participants to form Community Referral and Protection (COREP) centers as well as establishing partnerships and programme linkages with participants in responding to violence against women.

**f) Rehearsals for live presentation of stage play:**

Following successful development of stage play by the Consultant, the organization through its Manafwa Branch Office staff embarked on mobilizing artistes (drama group) in consonance with characters described in the script. These were engaged into intensive ten (10) day rehearsals as opposed to the planned and budgeted-for three (3). By the tenth day, artistes had showed understanding of the script and flow of presentation and were therefore ready to perform the skit live.

The stage play was performed live not only during the multifaceted anti-GBV awareness and education campaigns in the 7 communities of Bumbo, Maala, Bubutu, Bwiri, Buwabwala, Matuwa and Tsekululu but also in 8 schools.

Different people from such communities and schools were able to gain understanding of the various remedial measures of dealing with gender based violence as this was demonstrated towards the climax of the stage play.

**g) Community Dialogues:**

During the period under review, Better HAG Uganda conducted 13 dialogues in different communities including Makunya Primary School, Bupoto Sub County Head Quarters, Bwiri P/S, Matuwa Trading center,



*Women were key active participants in the dialogues*



*The project even reached the inadequately served populations in the mountains (Elgon ranges)*

Namunyiri, Nabitsikhi, Buwabwala, Bumwaali, Buwambwa, Maresi, Post-Office-Magale, Situyi P/School and Butinduyi-Matuwa. Mobilization was done by Better HAG Uganda focal point persons, most of whom had participated in either the orientation meeting or capacity building workshop or both. A total of 398 people were reached through dialogues, majority of whom (50%) being traditional and clan leaders/elders. Other participants included Local Council 1 Chairpersons, religious leaders, school going youth, men, boys and selected beneficiaries (women).

The key outcome of these dialogues is a comprehensive positive change in the perception towards women and girls by the holders of customary law and practices (traditional, cultural and clan leaders). The Bamasaba culture/tradition-like many other cultures in Africa has inherent practices, laws, customs, values and norms that are permissive of violence against women and girls. Some of the outstanding VAW/G cases such as wife battering, SGBV, social violence, e.t.c; stem from such cultural beliefs within the Gisu tradition.

In all the 13 dialogues conducted, Better HAG Uganda was glad to note positive statements accruing from participants through post-dialogue interviews with different participants. Holders of the customary law i.e. the clan heads and other traditional leaders; expressed positive change in perception towards, among others; women and girls' inheritance and property rights, educational rights of the girl-child as well as wife beating. *"....we have grown up seeing all these injustices inflicted on our women,....I have personally been an advocate of our culture without forecasting the negatives about it, but now my eyes have been opened.....some of my daughters and granddaughters have been married off at an early age after prematurely pulling out of school and yet we did not envisage that they would be more productive if they had completed school...we only minded about the little money paid as a fine after holding secret meetings with families of perpetrators....and yet eventually the dowry given has all been consumed up....I have learned a lot and I*



*An elderly man talks about the gaps in the Gisu Culture*

hope I can use this knowledge to change some aspects of our culture for the benefit of women and girls..." testified one Kumali Robert during the post dialogue interview at Magale. Such leaders also learnt about the negatives in forced and/or early marriages; prompting their commitment to leading the campaign and playing a cardinal role in sensitizing communities on the need for elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls in their respective communities/clans.

We also used community dialogues as a forum for spearheading establishment of Community Referral and Protection (COREP) centers in various communities.



Religious leaders were key participants in the dialogues



Good Point: Women document legislative procedures of dealing with violence

## h) Multi-faceted Awareness Campaigns:

During this period, seven (7) anti-VAWG multi-faceted awareness and educational outreaches were conducted at Bumbo Primary School and Maala Primary School, Bubutu, Bwiri-Bumwoni S/C, Buwabwala T/C, Matuwa T/C and finally at Tsekululu Trading center reaching an estimated 5,600 people (over 60% of whom women and girls) through multiple channels. The campaigns were furnished with integrated anti-GBV awareness raising and education activities including health talks, confidential legal assistance and advice, live theatre performances on GBV, anti-VAW/G marathons, HIV Counseling and



The E.D, Better HAG Uganda delivers his speech during an awareness campaign



Beatrice, Grants Manager-AWDF, delivers her remarks during her monitoring visit to Better HAG Uganda

Testing (HCT), bicycle races, cinema shows and soccer. The purpose was to create comprehensive awareness on GBV (VAW/G) prevention, response and advocacy in a bid to heighten women and girls' (not limited to) legal literacy consistent with violence against women and girls.

Efforts were made to engage various stakeholders including political leaders (Local Council leaders), Official from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, religious leaders, representatives of the Bamasaba Cultural Trust ('Inzu Ya Masaba'), the Police, representatives of CBOs, TASO, teachers, Health workers, religious and clan leaders; men, boys as well as women and girls.

Details of the sub activities conducted during these awareness campaigns and their respective outcomes can best be described as below:

### **✚ Confidential Legal Assistance and Advice Camp**

Better HAG Uganda engaged different beneficiaries of the GBV capacity building workshop to provide free confidential legal assistance to primarily women and girls during the GBV awareness campaigns. These conducted one-on-one counseling to unearth the nature of cases presented by different women before affording them the relevant legal assistance and advice. Beyond the legal assistance, the team also ensured that service seekers potentially first attempt settling the violence crisis using the framework at the Local Council 1 courts failure of which they should opt for FIDA (or other court means).

177 women and adolescent girls benefited from the free confidential legal assistance and advice services provided during the 7 community awareness campaigns on gender based violence.



*Women get legal assistance and advice on dealing with GBV*

### **✚ Health and anti-VAW/G educational talks**



*Educational talks during awareness campaigns*

Better HAG Uganda engaged most of her grassroots partners in disseminating messages consistent with elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls. At Bumbo Primary School, a representative of the Bagisu/Bamasaba Cultural Board, Mr. John Musila acknowledged the existence of 'some gaps' in the tradition/culture but was quick to note that most of norms,

customs and beliefs have been misinterpreted by a cross section of the elderly, men and boys for selfish gains. "It is a shame that modern men will force their 12, 13, 14 year old daughters into marriage just to get a few goats from them which even wont last for long....this is an era of educating our children indiscriminately...lets engage our women, for these are times of 'rational thinking'.." challenged Mr. Musila. "Love your culture so that you do not lose out on your identity...but also stop using it for your selfish benefits...." Mr. Musila continued to challenge the elderly, men and boys.

Mr. Musila highlighted the conflict resolution levels within the Gisu tradition. He not only encouraged men and boys to exercise restraint in beating and mistreating women and girls but also appealed to the latter to prioritize and uphold traditional methods of responding to violence by men (not limited to) before resorting to other processes.



*Mr. Musila, Rep. of Bamasaba Cultural Board prepares to set off women for marathon*

Other officials present in the campaigns included; LC 111 Women Councilors, religious leaders, leaders of CBOs, an Official from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, TASO, Executive Director-Better HAG Uganda among others, and were very instrumental in calling for stern action against all forms of discrimination against women and girls. "....I now encourage all of you particularly women and girls to say no to beatings, defilement and rape...do not keep quiet either if this happens to you, it is your right to live a healthy and safer life because the constitution of Uganda provides for that ...." noted Watuwa Betty- Women Councilor (LC III), Bubutu Town Board.

Several key questions in line with the campaign were asked and instant responses were made.

#### **🚩 GBV stage play**



*This educative theatre performance was enjoyed by a cross section of people in communities and schools*

In recognition of the power and niche in Performing Arts (PA) or music, dance and drama as widely known to many; Better HAG Uganda employed this strategy to disseminate information on GBV (VAW/G) trends, effects and the need for & process in response to the vice at different levels. This approach was employed because it not only has a blend of education and entertainment (edutainment)

and therefore eliminates mental fatigue but also communicates beyond language barriers, reaches larger audiences, has lasting visual impressions in the minds of the audience and fosters on-spot evaluation of an intervention.

In the due course of live presentations of GBV stage play, one could observe the audience's reactions which included expression of anger (*towards the character violating his wife and daughter*), anxiety (*to know what happened next to both the victims and perpetrator*), eagerness (*to learn the means to responding to VAW/G*) and laughter (*to the comic character and phrases within the play*).

This play also drew sharp discussions among the audience, some of whom reflecting on related situations that had happened to themselves or to people familiar to them in their respective communities. This also drew the benchmark for key questions that arose and were instantly responded to thereafter.

End of event evaluation interviews conducted indicated that people had learnt a lot from this play, particularly with regard to women and girls' fundamental rights and freedoms.

A woman probably in her late 30s noted "*the play is reminiscent of what happened to me about 3 weeks ago, my husband plotted to marry off our 14 year old daughter and when I rejected the move, I fell victim for his beatings...the LC Chairperson (in the play) noted that one can go to Police, health worker or proceed to court...I guess I have to try this and see if he (her husband) can change this dreadful idea...*".

This testimony owing to the live theatre performance demonstrates how much influence this approach can have in the VAWG response.

## **Bicycle races**

We planned and conducted only 2 bicycle races in respective communities of the GBV awareness campaigns. Bicycles were decorated with flags with printed anti-VAW/G messages such as 'Stop marriages for girls under the age of 18', 'Your partner isn't your kick-boxing opponent' 'A real man doesn't beat his wife' and their equivalents in Lugisu. These



*Male Involvement in the GBV Response: Young men display flags with printed anti-VAWG messages*

were ridden by both young men and girls through different magnetic/trading centres within the communities where the awareness campaigns were conducted. Bicycles were ridden in a slow and systematic manner, 4 per row – to enable bystanders and onlookers to read messages on the flags. As a result, many were drawn to the main events venues to benefit from other sub events as detailed above and below. This therefore enhanced reaching more people with crucial information on the need to stop violence against women and girls.

## ✚ Anti-GBV Marathons



*We can defeat Violence: Young girls get ready to participate in the race against VAWG*

3 anti-GBV (VAW/G) awareness marathons were conducted at Bumbo Primary School, Bubutu and Bwiri Primary School. Respective area Local Council I Chairpersons did mobilize for marathon participants under the categories/clusters; Young boys (10-14), Young girls (10-15), men and adolescent boys (18-40+) and women and adolescent girls (18-35). Efforts were made to engage the elderly (55+) turned at Bubutu in a short race (100m).

Each cluster/category had own distance-the longest being covered by men and adolescent boys, followed by women and adolescent girls, young boys and finally young girls. Clad in marathon aprons bearing the back-message **“I run to defeat Violence against women and girls”**, respective categories traversed several trading centres, their aprons displaying anti-VAW/G messages for consumption by people of different categories in various villages covered. A finishing line ribbon with the message **“I Have Defeated Violence”** was spread wide awaiting the first 3 contestants per category.

Better HAG Uganda arranged for and gave awards in form of goats, chicken and project t-shirts to the winners, first and second runners-up respectively for



*Eradicating Poverty = Eliminating VAWG: A young girl stands besides her mother as the LC III Woman Councilor hands her a goat after emerging winner in the girls' category.*

all the marathon categories. 16 goats and 16 hens were awarded to women and girls.

The choice of goats and chicken was incumbent upon the need to economically empower women and girls so as to address violence owing to poverty. The awards ceremony was presided over by the Executive Director – Better HAG Uganda in addition to respective guests in the different communities that hosted the awareness campaigns. Efforts are underway to conduct follow-ups to beneficiaries to unearthen management of the goats.

Better HAG Uganda intends to use this platform/strategy to mobilize financial resources for the organization.

However, people first need to get used to and appreciate the idea further before they are encouraged to pay a pocket friendly marathon participation fee.



*HCT Registration and Pre-Test Counseling: The number was overwhelming in most communities*



*HCT Lab in the community*



*Post-Test Counseling*

### **HIV Counseling and Testing (HCT)**

According to the New HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan 2011-15, about 130,000 new HIV infections occur every year i.e. 356 per day. This document also highlights intersects between GBV (VAW/G) and HIV hence the rationale for Better HAG Uganda’s integration of HCT into this GBV program.

Better HAG Uganda mobilized for resources to print aprons with printed messages for the HCT team-still under the spirit of partnership. Wherever we have conducted the anti-GBV awareness campaign, we have made efforts to collaborate with the nearest health facility to provide free HCT services. Additional support in form of HIV test kits and accompanying equipment were sought from the AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF Uganda Cares) through SAIL Uganda (Spread Awareness Information and Learning in Uganda).

A total of 2041 people (1287 women & girls and 754 men and boys) were successfully counseled, tested and given HIV results. 122 people (79 females) were found HIV

positive, representing an area prevalence of about 6%. These were referred to the nearest health facilities including among others; Bumbo HC III, Magale Health Centre IV and Bubutu Health Centre III, Buwabwala HC III for CD4 count, TB diagnosis, Anti Retroviral Therapy (ART) as well as ongoing care and counseling.

**Table showing HCT testing by site and sex**

SN	Name of Outreach	# Tested			# HIV +		
		F	M	T	F	M	T
1.	Bumbo Primary School	288	124	412	17	09	26
2.	Maala P/S	219	138	357	05	07	12
3.	Bubutu Sports Ground	197	141	338	17	14	31
4.	Bwiri P/School	84	75	159	14	05	19
5.	Buwabwala T/Center	192	102	294	07	01	08
6.	Matuwa Trading Center	93	74	167	01	00	01
7.	Tsekululu T/C	214	100	314	18	07	25
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,287</b>	<b>754</b>	<b>2,041</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>122</b>

It has always been incumbent upon Better HAG Uganda management to orient the HCT team we work with on the need to integrate issues consistent with the linkage between HIV and GBV during both pre and post-test counseling sessions. Also integrated were messages in line with maternal, neonatal and child health (MNCH)-particularly encouraging both women and men to embrace antenatal care when pregnant or when their wives got pregnant. This would help to curb preventable maternal and neonatal deaths owing to manageable complications when such cases are



*Post-Test Counseling Camp: The ribbons ensure confidentiality*



*A couple gets post-test counseling*



*Women embraced the exercise*

presented at recognized health units. The intervention also helps prevent maternal and child mortality owing to HIV and AIDS. Up to 71% of all women and girls who went through HCT benefited from this knowledge.

### ✚ **Live Testimonies**



*Our Expert Client, Mary Wekoye who is also the Chairperson of SCAD shares her testimony on living with HIV*

Better HAG Uganda worked with a team of expert clients from Sorry Comes after Danger (SCAD) and Bunambale AIDS Community Initiative (BACI) to conduct live testimonies on HIV and AIDS. Messages in the testimonies were consistent with zero tolerance to stigma and discrimination, elimination of mother-to-child transmission (EMTCT), importance of disclosure and positive living among others. Questions that arose from the public were answered on spot.

### ✚ **Cinema Projection**

Better HAG Uganda projected 2 cinema shows at the 2 venues that hosted the multi-faceted awareness campaigns to an estimated 400 people in total. The 35-minuted '*Silent Epidemic*' elicits the negative outcomes of violating the rights of women. Commentary was done by a Better HAG Uganda staff in the local language-Lugisu; for people to better comprehend the messages.

End of cinema show evaluations conducted indicated that men had learnt that beating women and rigging them of their rights has far reaching negative consequences including loss of lives. When asked what he had learnt from the film, one Makalama Stephen at Bumbo had this to say: '*...ise neyikile ndi sesili silayi khubonabonisa umukelema ingo tta...ari bona uyo nga apatska umukhasi paka umukhasi tsena wola nekhukhwiyira amala mbo alekha bafuubi...*' (...I have learnt that it is not good to mistreat women...you could see that the other man-character in the film-used to beat his wife until she decided to commit suicide leaving behind orphans)

### ✚ **Soccer**

Sports and Events (S&E) manifested primarily in soccer and netball has always been an integral approach for Better HAG Uganda in amplifying messages on a given development issue in various communities. Better HAG Uganda had

a soccer event for women and girls conducted at Maala Primary School. The organization continued to organize and conduct commentary commensurate with women and girls human rights and fundamental freedoms. People of different categories turned up overwhelmingly to witness this event and as a result benefited from the live commentary about the need to end all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls with primary focus on wife battering, forced and/or early marriages, sexual violence and economic violence.

**i) COREP centers and Medico-legal operations**

The capacity building workshop and dialogues conducted in various communities were the springboard towards establishing community referral and protection (COREP) centers at Makunya, Bumbo and Matuwa. Amidst operational challenges (such as food, beddings, medi-care and cloths), these centers temporarily host women and girls fleeing from critical forms of violence including threats of or actual battering, rape and defilement among others. These are recruited by a team of volunteers who traverse communities to support victims of violence. For those with physical injuries, they are referred to the nearest health facility and Police station/post for relevant support.

While at the centers, clients access free and confidential legal advice in pursuit of justice commensurate with fundamental freedoms and rights of women and girls. In addition, Better HAG Uganda liaises with custodians of COREP Centers to provide reconciliatory services to perpetrators if the situation deems it necessary. At the time of this reporting, 31 women (12 at Makunya, 9 at Bumbo and 10 at Matuwa) were being housed in the centers. Additionally, 117 women and girls had sought confidential legal assistance and advice from the centers by mid July 2013.

One Suzan Namboko (Makunya COREP center) who had fled her fierce husband was relieved that she was much safer at the center " *....here I rest assured that he wont follow me unlike the neighbor's house....I better stay here as I look for support....*"

**j) Rolling out to 8 schools to create awareness and education on GBV**

Schools have continuously been breeding grounds for different forms of violence against the girl child. Violence here ranges from defilement, rape, indecent touches to demeaning language that undermines the self esteem of the girls



Who Actually Experiences more violence?  
Student panelists challenge one another during the debate

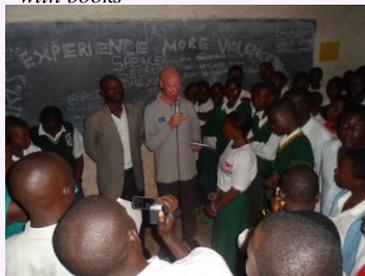
leading to psychological abuse. Another form of violence against girls is manifest in forced/early marriages which sometimes is promoted by their own parents.

Better HAG Uganda rolled out to Makunya P/S, Magale Royal Integrated School, Bumbo SS, Magale Parents' SS, St. John's Magale SS, Riverside SS, Mufutu SS and Namisindwa SS. Magale Royal Integrated School was visited twice. The entry point was debating using the motion '**GIRLS EXPERIENCE MORE VIOLENCE THAN BOYS**'. Several issues came out, both girls and boys were able to demonstrate understanding of the motion and highlighted issues on early/forced marriages, domestic chores, defilement and rape. Other notable issues raised by girls include women and girls' inheritance and property rights.

Whilst to a significant extent debates yielded intended results, Better HAG Uganda was keenly concerned with the perception and attitude of boys (the men and elders of tomorrow) towards women and girls. As demonstrated in their arguments during debates, we noted that boys have grown witnessing wife battering, women and girls denied property and inheritance rights, inability of woman to deny husband sex among others and are therefore in full support of these vices. "*...the motion is 100% wrong because of my following views....girls are better off because they are a source of wealth....if they are married there is no need to claim property from their fathers....*" argued one boy panelist at Bumbo Secondary school. Challenged by a girl panelist on the fact that women are constantly battered in marriage, Peter Nakhaima responded "*...of course women have to be beaten because some of them do not want to listen to their husbands....me for example if I find that my wife is not at home, I have to beat her so that she learns my rules....*" Agonizing is the fact they are growing up thinking that beating a wife is good, women and girls have no right to inheritance and that girls are better off in the kitchen.



Debate participants are awarded with books



There is therefore need to constantly engage these young men so as to change their perceptions of the female sex. 200 branded note books with the message “*My Name is.....I am an empowered Young Activist. I report Sexual harassment & Participate in the HIV/AIDS Prevention Response*” were given to active debate participants

## **k) Monitoring visits**

Better HAG Uganda conducted visits to Sorry Comes After Danger (SCAD) and Magale Women Alliance against HIV and AIDS (MWAA) to ascertain progress with regard to integrating and implementing action plans on fighting violence against women and girls. We had an opportunity to interface with people reached and they showed tremendous knowledge on fighting the vice.

## **l) Community feedback sessions**



Community feedback sessions were idealized as replacement for the initially planned end of project stakeholders’ meeting. The latter’s implementation was met with budgetary constraints. We therefore developed a review plan, randomly selected and rolled out to different communities (Bumbo, Matuwa, Bubutu, Magale, Buwabwala and Buwambwa) to collect feedback from beneficiaries and other stakeholders regarding best practices and recommendations on strategic interventions that could enhance realization of zero tolerance to violence against women and girls. A total of 99 respondents were interviewed and their comments were amazing.



At Matuwa, the LC Chairperson noted “*...I like the way you have made the arrangements, you have a separate tent where women can be counseled about violence, another for pre-test HIV counseling .....I think that is why many women embraced the counseling on violence tent...I hope they were helped with their different problems...*”



Ms. Echeru Brenda, the Nursing Officer at Bumbo H/C III who attended the GBV capacity building workshop commended the training approach and listed the different skills and knowledge consistent with women’s human rights that she had acquired in the workshop. “*The knowledge acquired changed my perspective in regard to VAW/G....I feel more empowered and I am*

*Ms. Brenda Echeru at Bumbo HC III*

*passing on this knowledge to many women and girls at this health center....."* Asked how many she had attended to Brenda answered *"I can't really tell, but on average I talk to 30 women/girls monthly...about 8 or 10 of them will always have peculiar situations regarding to violence and I get pleased to give them some advice..."* Citing the increased teenage pregnancies registered at the health center, Ms. Echeru recommended engaging parents in a home-based approach to educate them and their families on the need to keep girls in school and involve in their daughters' SRH life.

We also visited Bumbo Police Post and Magale Police Station where we interacted with Mr. Emyelai John Francis and Ms. Adetat Veronica. The two hold the profiles of Officer in Charge (OC Station) and Woman Assistant Inspector of Police (Woman AIP)/OC station respectively. They both participated in the capacity building workshop. Both of them acknowledged having heightened knowledge on fighting GBV as well as re-igniting their commitment in fighting the vice. *"the training improved my interaction skills with GBV victims because I acquired additional knowledge...majority (VAW/G victims) end here and I counsel them, escort them back home where I counsel the perpetrator especially when the case does not constitute bodily harm of the victim....about 20 women have been reconciled with their husbands"* noted Mr. Emyelai. On the other hand, Ms. Adetat indicated that she had attended to 46 cases (*Source: Magale Police station Diary Book*) including those on torture, child neglect, property and inheritance, defilement, assault, rape and adultery. They both recommended continuous community sensitization. They encouraged Better HAG Uganda to join them in their community policing campaigns.



*Mr. Emyelai at Bumbo Police Post*



*Ms. Adetat highlighting key achievement at Magale Police Station*

Other people reached expressed the need to continuously conduct community dialogues and engage more clan leaders and the elderly. Students recommended establishing anti-Violence clubs in schools as well as regularly visiting them and conducting more debates.

## Face-to-face with VAW/G Victims



For the period under review, we were able to get in touch with 31 victims and 2 potential victims of violence. We noted the magnitude of different forms of violence including physical violence, widow expulsion from deceased husband's property, forced marriage, early marriage, rape/defilement, gross domestic maltreatment of wife, bigamy, total neglect of responsibility towards wife and children.



Where as in certain instances, Better HAG Uganda was in position to counsel family members (including husbands-the perpetrators); in others we gave legal assistance to women to seek legal redress prompting majority of them to demand for their fundamental rights from the 'rights holders'. We have continuously exchanged telephone talks with such beneficiaries to

ascertain progress let alone responding to certain issues and queries consistent with GBV legal redress as raised by the women from time to time.

## Other Strategies Adopted

During this project, Better HAG Uganda employed a variety of other strategies including:

- Participatory learning: In this strategy, we encouraged people to raise different issues, experiences and questions in line with VAW/G (Violence against Women and Girls). On receipt of those issues and questions, we encouraged people to try to respond to them. At the end of it all, the Better HAG Uganda team and a few invited technical people threw more light on issues raised.
- Testimonies: We encouraged people to share their experiences of violence either as victims or witnessed. The purpose was to learn especially on how such cases were handled and by whom.
- We employed dialogue and Focus Group discussions on women and girls' rights on the fight against VAW/G
- We also used sports like marathons for all ages and bicycle races. This strategy attracted a lot of people who got VAW/G messages from the commentary.
- Question and answer

## **Main challenges Faced and Key Actions Taken.**

- ❖ We have shortages in IEC materials. The few t-shirts, bandanas and calendars produced have almost been exhaustively distributed. Plans are underway to visit agencies doing similar work in the country; like UNFPA, CARE, e.t.c for provision of IEC materials in the spirit of partnership.
- ❖ Huge financial expectations from the community during dialogues and awareness campaigns. We were particularly stunned by the LC III Chairperson of a certain sub county who asked for money just because the dialogue was being conducted at the headquarters yet he initially hadn't expressed interest.

We were also constrained with funds for mobilizing communities especially for awareness raising campaigns. These require a lot of personnel who expect and actually request for financial motivation at the end of the events.

- ❖ Abrupt abrogation of contract. Better HAG Uganda management contemplated calling off an awareness campaign at Bumbo Primary School following a sudden breach of contract from suppliers of the public address system (PAS) and tent services. The M&E Officer who had been tasked to ensure that the PAS and tents were stationed at the venue before 8am on January 28<sup>th</sup> 2013 almost ran mad on calling the service providers only to learn that they had decided to switch their services towards the burial ceremony of one of the residents in the community without giving us prior notice to enable us look for alternative sources for the services. The event which was scheduled to start by 9AM started later at 1PM prompting some of the invited guests and beneficiaries to depart for other personal chores.

Similarly, the Woman Member of Parliament, Manafwa district rescinded her commitment to officiate at the Bumbo GBV campaign on the eve of the event upon a follow-up telephone call by the Director. Whereas we appreciate the huge responsibilities such people have, it is disappointing that they do not inform of us of their change of program in advance so that we look for alternative means.

- ❖ There is need to upgrade COREP centres to accommodate VAW/G victims. Victims of especially intimate partner violence (IPV) who face atrocities such as frequent beatings, threats of death, widow expulsion, victims pursuing justice in the courts of law; e.t.c, need to be housed at this centres where they can be provided with shelter, food, clothing and medical needs; as opposed to solely giving them legal assistance and advice and let them return to the 'den of lions'. Attempts to do this turned futile as there is a gigantic logistical gap.

- ❖ Inflation which grossly affects our static budgets. At times we are forced to scale down on certain activities due to high prices of goods and services.
- ❖ Lack of an organizational 4x4 vehicle continues to be a menace and as a result hampers our smooth operations not only in the rainy season but also due to the bad road network characterized by extremely large potholes. The organization has always depended on the Director's saloon car which can only work in a dry season. At times we are forced to hire at not only exorbitant daily rates but also have to cater for the driver's per diem.  
Any contribution from AWDF in form of recommending us to any agency that awards vehicle grants is welcome, although we would also appreciate a vehicle donation (even if it is conditioned).
- ❖ Bad weather characterized by heavy rainfall and too much sunshine.
- ❖ It has increasingly been difficult to diffuse our programs into some Government aided school timetables.
- ❖ Lack of core funding. We have inadequate remuneration for our staffs. The organization therefore still survives on voluntarism which is risky since staffs can look for greener pastures elsewhere at any time. This also impacts on organizational operational costs including but not limited to staff meals, stationery, utilities, internet, rent and fuel.

### **Project Sustainability**

As part of the sustainability plan, Better HAG Uganda is going to continue collaboratively working with different stakeholders especially those that were engaged in the GBV capacity building workshop. These include the Police stations of Magale and Bumbo, religious institutions, CBOs (SCAD, MWAA, Bumwoni HIV/AIDS Group, Bunambale HIV/AIDS Association, Bumatanda Development Women Association and Matuwa AIDS Project) as well as health facilities in fighting violence against women and girls. CBOs, the Police and health facilities are already doing commendable work amidst logistical challenges related to follow up

We are also working with the COREP centers at Makunya, Bumbo and Matuwa. These centers do offer confidential legal assistance to victims and potential victims of GBV. Although they are also facing logistical challenges related to food, cloths and medi-care, COREP centers are doing commendable work and we shall continuously support women through them.

A significant number of clan leaders who participated in the community dialogues pledged and are actually sensitizing their subjects on zero tolerance to violence.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

In the period under review, lessons were learned and opportunities for improvement were discovered. As part of a continuous improvement process, we documented lessons learned to help us discover the root causes of gaps that manifested so as to avoid them in subsequent project stages. The following issues need to be worked upon in the next phase of implementation.

- 1.** There is need to support/supply Police stations with copies of Police Form 3 (PF3). The form was recently amended to authorize not only doctors, but also medical assistants, clinical officers and midwives to fill it and potentially testify in court. Note that formerly, only Police surgeons and medical doctors were authorized to fill in the form and testify in court. We were concerned by prolonged stock-outs of the forms at most of the stations and police posts as this makes it hard for women victims of physical and sexual violence to get the necessary and immediate support. Usually, they are referred to either Manafwa or Mbale Central Police stations making it hard for victims as they do not have the money to facilitate their travel.
- 2.** There is need to strengthen community tribunals by training more paralegals. This calls for a special intensive training for clan heads, LC I Chairpersons, women as well as selected men on basic legal knowledge consistent with fighting GBV. After the training, community paralegals need to be availed with memory books where they record details of GBV cases attended to. They can thereafter receive a monthly allowance of about \$8 each to motivate them in their work. This way, we can be able to reach more women and girls (not limited to).
- 3.** Whilst achievements owing to the community dialogues conducted in the period under review are indicative of the strengths of the approach, we are confident that further success can be scored if especially dialogue participants (clan heads, LC 1 Chairpersons, religious leaders) who commit to engaging their people on issues of fighting GBV were followed up to gauge whether they discharge their pledges. We intend to take this up in the next phase of the project. This will be another measure of people directly reached by the project.

- 4.** There is need to select a few pilot schools and concentrate our anti-GBV efforts there. In these schools we can have intensive and routine programs consistent with SRHR and ending violence against the girl child. This will allow us follow up on peculiar violence cases whether in school or at respective homes of the girl victims.
- 5.** Another lesson learned is in line with engaging magistrates and court clerks in meetings to facilitate their understanding of the goals and objectives of the project we are undertaking as well as instill a sense of commitment and collaboration. Through this intervention, Better HAG Uganda can be afforded telephone and email contacts of such stakeholders so as to ease referrals for primarily women victims of violence. There will be also be need for designing and printing of referral forms to aid the exercise.
- 6.** There is also need to procure additional tents specifically for counseling on violence during community awareness and education campaigns. We have observed that this can be the opportune moment for victims and potential victims to get initial legal assistance and advice after-which referrals can be made.
- 7.** Poverty is a huge facilitator for VAWG. There is therefore need to plan feasible diversified income generating projects for women and girls. Victims at COREP centers can be an asset in managing these projects in liaison with Better HAG Uganda management. Proceeds from these ventures can not only support logistical demands for victims and potential victims but also improve the income levels of other women and girls hence reduced incidence of VAW/G. This can also help sustain office rent and other operating expenses so that we do entirely rely on AWDF.
- 8.** Following the overwhelming demand for HCT services, Better HAG Uganda management has identified the need for static testing at our Manafwa Branch Office. We therefore need budget allocations for a lab technician and counselor to man this project. These will also ensure that messages consistent with fighting all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, SRHR as well as maternal and child health are accessed by HCT clients.
- 9.** There is sufficient cause for routine monitoring visits especially to beneficiaries of trainings conducted by Better HAG Uganda. This will enhance their commitment to fight VAWG as well as other health issues. At times, we may require such stakeholders to mobilize communities so that we witness what transpires and give backup where there are gaps.
- 10.** Project staffs require capacity building retreats. Key areas of concern include monitoring and evaluation, accounting for non-finance managers and the general project/program planning and management.

**11.** Hiring visa vis Procuring: In the period under review, we hired the public address system, chairs and tents. However, according to the accounts analysis, cumulative funds spent on hiring each service is sufficient enough to purchase basic components of the PAS, chairs and tents. Equipment purchased remain the property of the organization and should be engraved to illuminate AWDF's support.

## **FUTURE PLANS**

- Scaling up our anti-VAWG efforts by rolling out to other districts (operate in every region). We are soliciting for additional support for this and we hope AWDF can continue to generously support our efforts towards the cause of women and girls' fundamental freedoms and rights. We wish to shift from projects to programs
- Conducting a thorough training on the legislative framework for fighting violence against women and girls for key stakeholders in the GBV response such as the District Police Commander and the Officers in Charge of Child and Family Protection Units, the Magistrates and Resident state attorneys, health workers from Health center IIIs and VIs, the Local Council leaders. The purpose is to create awareness and education about the existence of the laws and other relevant documents that can facilitate them in their work of helping survivors of GBV access justice and medical treatment. This will enhance harmonization of our work, collaboration between Better HAG Uganda and these stakeholders will be strengthened hence creating a springboard for lasting impact.
- Continue to track and follow up women victims and potential victims of GBV with support to access justice.
- Setting up income generating projects for primarily women and girls so as to counter violence and other SRHR risks owing to poverty
- Develop a strategic plan for the organization (pending acquisition of financial resources)
- Integrate in all our interventions, activities consistent with sustainable environment and natural resources management as contribution to the global call for climate change mitigation and/or adaptation.

## **KEY PROJECT OUTCOMES/CHANGES REALIZED**

Better HAG Uganda is pleased to report that the project was largely a success. For it recorded several outcomes anticipated at the start of the project. The project impact was felt at individual, community, organizational level as below;

## Project Impact at Individual (women) and Community level

- ✦ We are proud to report a significant improvement in women's legal literacy and knowledge about their human rights. This is manifest in the different communities where multi-faceted anti-VAWG awareness campaigns, community dialogues and school programs were conducted. About 90% of women (and girls) in such communities will spell out the right processes of pursuing justice in the event of any form of violence/abuse.
- ✦ According to Mr. Emyelai John Francis (OC Station-Bumbo Police Post), Ms. Adetat Veronica (OC station-Magale Police Station), the number of women reporting cases to Police has significantly increased. This is indicative of increased demand for women and girls' rights in the GBV lens owing to the sensitization and education done by the project in such communities. increase
- ✦ Owing to community dialogues, there is now increased support from village and community elders, religious and traditional opinion leaders and "holders" of customary law towards the GBV response. Many of these are doing commendable sensitization work on women and girl's rights in their respective communities. This is indicative of improved community perception of women and girls in the GBV spectrum by a section of people who prior to the project were in support of the cultural values, norms and customs which are permissive of VAWG. It also demonstrates community engagement in addressing violence against women and girls.
- ✦ Although there are gaps as highlighted in the above lessons, there now strengthened capacity for GBV prevention, response and advocacy following the GBV capacity building workshop on women and girls rights and fundamental freedoms. Trainees have not only been instrumental in providing legal assistance and advice to both victims and potential victims of this pervasive public health evil but are also conducting numerous referrals to the Police, health facilities and magistrate courts for further support of the victims.
- ✦ Further still, amidst a few challenges as highlighted above, the project has enhanced community-managed systems of protection to reduce the incidence of GBV and mitigate its impacts. This is being facilitated by community referral and protection (COREP) centers established at Makunya, Bumbo and Matuwa.
- ✦ In general, the "*Leveraging Strategies of Positive Action towards reducing Violence against women and girls*" has heightened community awareness of women and girls' human rights. As a result, the proportion of domestic violence victims who make contact with Better HAG Uganda and other stakeholders including the Police, CBOs and health facilities has significantly increased. This has also paved way for improved and therefore well coordinated anti VAW efforts at village, community, district levels.
- ✦ The perception and attitudes of men and boys towards women and girls' rights has improved. The ones we have come in contact with appreciate the positives of respecting the fundamental freedoms of women as this spurs development in the community.

## **At Organizational Level**

Better HAG Uganda continued to record the AWDF supported project in different ways. At project management level, the *“Leveraging Strategies of Positive Action towards reducing Violence against women and girls”* has heightened knowledge and skills of GBV response among a section of staffs. The interactions, networking and collaborations made in the course of project implementation have widened our network of stakeholders. The Police, CBOs, health facilities, religious and clan leaders among others have not only expanded the Better HAG Uganda fraternity but are also key stakeholders on GBV and other health response in their respective communities.

## **General views of Community about issues covered in Project**

A lot of people were appreciative of the project as a whole-its objective of stamping out violence against women and girls. Comments from community members during awareness campaigns, dialogues and in-school visits all pointed to the fact Better HAG Uganda had taken the right direction of fighting the right problem (women’s rights). During the Bubutu awareness campaign, one ageing Matanda Deus (retired teacher) echoed other speakers’ appreciation of the project, *“...this intervention has been long overdue, I wish to thank the ‘Engineers’ of the project...as I have grown up to witness abuse against women, beatings, rape, defilement, among others. I call upon all of you to honor this project and end wife battering...keep your girl children in school...”* he said.

## **Participation of women in Project development, management and implementation**

Better HAG Uganda’s primary beneficiaries are women, youth and orphans and other vulnerable children (OVC). Women therefore were there when the project were being idealized. Most of the project activities were recommendations by women and girls during commemoration of 16 days of activism against GBV 2011 campaign funded by UNFPA through ARC. Better HAG Uganda now has 5 female staffs who have been at the center of project management and implementation. In dialogues, we have always worked with women trainees of the GBV capacity building workshop.

### SUCCESS STORY 1

## Ageing Clan Leader sets up Clan Committee to tackle Violence



*Mzee Wabweni Lekoboam stressing the importance of addressing gaps within the Bagisu/Bamasaba Culture.*



*Lekoboam unveils the Bunyoro Clan Committee to fight Violence.*

It is indisputable that the patriarchal culture in this Elgon region has inherent traditions, customs and norms which are permissive of violence against women and girls. Wife battering (intimate partner violence-IPV), early marriages, sexual violence; among others stem from such cultural beliefs and have exacerbated several SRH consequences including HIV/AIDS and death.

In partnership with the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), Better HAG Uganda implemented a project titled "***Leveraging Strategies of Positive Action towards Reducing Violence against Women and Girls***" in Bubulo County East of Manafwa district. While aiming at enhancing awareness and education on the fundamental freedoms and rights of women and girls in the GBV spectrum, the organization used several approaches including community dialogues. The purpose was to engage the holders of the customary law i.e. clan leaders and elders with a motive of changing their negative perspectives and attitudes about women and girls' rights.

Better HAG Uganda is pleased to share a success story on a clan leader whose eyes were opened in the course of the discussions that followed in one of the dialogues. Mzee (Old) Wabweni Lekoboam, a clan leader of Bunyoro participated in a dialogue held at Bukhabusi S/county. When a question was posed to all participants about the traditional beliefs and customs in the area, ageing Lekoboam was vocal enough to air out almost all. All in all, Mzee Wabweni looked very vibrant through out the dialogue, challenging fellow participants on a number of issues and looked more than ready to take on every topic at hand.

The most interesting of all was when the elderly man openly committed to establishing a committee within his Bunyoro Clan to respond to different forms of violence which according to him were "*...very many...men are beating wives frequently, girls are getting married at a tender age and nothing has been done to stop this...*" He noted "*...I did not know that there are laws which we can use to stop this, but now that I have the knowledge, I am going to establish a committee in my clan to respond to this problem*"

We did not believe until one week after the dialogue, Old Wabweni invited our Manafwa district staff to witness a function where he was assigning roles to a team of 11 people (5 women) from different zones of the clan. To this Committee, he emphasized "*Your role is to ensure that all women and girls, even men (he joked, putting smiles on everybody's face) report violence- especially beating wives, parents who conspire to marry off young girls and men who steal from their wives....*"

Like many others, Better HAG Uganda is very proud of Mzee Wabweni, for he challenged other participants in the dialogue. We are confident that his anti-violence Committee will deliver. We shall be in touch to provide any assistance should such an arrangement and many others from other dialogues need it.

## SUCCESS STORY 2

### Better HAG Uganda Halts an Impending Forced Marriage



16 yr old Mary Khainza\* who was on the brink of being forced into marriage

\*Names have been changed for confidentiality

Forced and/or early marriages are not only synonymous with rural Uganda but undoubtedly Africa at large. As a form of wealth generation, this vice is rooted within the traditions, customs and norms of many African cultures and the Bamasaba/Bagisu Culture found in the Elgon region of Eastern Uganda is no exception. It is quite apparent of the increasing child motherhood with victims in the age bracket 13-16 in rural Uganda. To many people's dismay, most of these girls are withdrawn from school and turned into 'merchandise' by their parents or care takers with impunity.

Mary Khainza\*, a 16 year old Senior two (S.2) student at Magale Royal Integrated School wishes to become a Doctor in the near future upon completion of her studies. She lives approximately 6km away from school with her parents whose occupation is farming. Mary\* approached us in the post-debate sessions for counseling-and this is when we got to learn of the acute situation she was entangled in. According to Mary, her father started welcoming 'bids' of dowry from potential sons-in-law when she was in S.1. "...last year, it was difficult for him (her father) to pay for my tuition, so he started telling me that I was ready for marriage and that many men were willing to give him the dowry he wanted...." Mary\* says that if it hadn't been for her mother who was constantly opposed to the husband's move, she would already have been given away. Citing what the stage play had demonstrated, Mary noted; "*The play is reminiscent of my situation, it looks like I am Nandutu (13 yr old girl forced into marriage in play) and my mother is Nambozo (Nandutu's mother in the stage play who was constantly abused by her husband for refusing to allow the daughter to be given away into marriage at a tender age)...*" When asked how she wanted Better HAG Uganda to help her, Mary\* said she wanted us to 'talk' to her father. She also noted that she was buoyed by the knowledge attained from the debate, stage play and the speeches that followed and that she was ready to reject her father's move out rightly and if need be seek legal redress.

The weekend that followed the visit to Mary's school saw Better HAG Uganda pay a visit to her home in a bid to lure her father into supporting his daughter's studies and reap better when she eventually realizes her dream in future. Mary's father who did not let us take any pictures through out the meeting (*we always seek consent before making any audio-visual recordings*), was at first mad at his daughter for 'reporting' him. The Better HAG Uganda team engaged him in an intensified counseling session where it not only emphasized the legislative implications of forcing his daughter into marriage but also showed him just how much he would reap if the daughter finished school. "...it's poverty bringing about all this, but I will try as much as possible to support her in school...I have learned a lot..." were some of her father's words in response to our counseling.

Better HAG Uganda made efforts to follow up her father with phone calls to ascertain the post-intervention atmosphere which was judged against the daughter's. We were pleased to confirm from Mary that her father's perception had significantly changed, "...now he only tells me to work very hard in school and also to always spare some time and join them (parents) on the farm so that we look for my tuition as a family..." Mary also noted that her father refers to Better HAG Uganda as her 'friends' "...he usually asks jokingly; how are your friends?, have you met again..." something we are very proud of.

We hope that we can continue to be 'friends' to many other young girls facing related problems.

This success would never be without the generous support of African Women's Development Fund (AWDF)!

## SUCCESS STORY 3

### Better HAG Uganda Supports Widow to Access Justice



*Sarah\* and her 3 children at her mother's place where she had sought refuge following threats of death.*



*The Executive Director highlights on some of the legislative framework of dealing with such a case.*



*Better HAG Uganda team poses with Sarah\* and her children.*

\*Names have been changed for confidentiality

Better HAG Uganda is currently implementing a project titled “*Leveraging Strategies of Positive Action towards Reducing Violence against Women and Girls*” in Bubulo County East of Manafwa district. The project aims at enhancing awareness and education on the fundamental freedoms and rights of women and girls in the GBV spectrum.

Cases of widow expulsion from the property of the deceased are common scenarios in rural Uganda. Sarah\* aged 31, lost her husband in June 2011 and instead of getting married again decided to stay and take care of 8 children (5 of whom older step children whose mother had been separated with their father long before his death). Sarah\* experienced loads of challenges after the demise of the husband, including struggling to get enough food from the small plot of land to sustain the big family. Worst of all was the rampant theft of the little food-stuffs she had both in the garden and in the house; by people she later learnt were her brothers-in-law. She revealed; “Sam\* (one of the in-laws) once told me I didn’t come here with a plot of land and therefore they were free to enjoy everything I cultivated...” Sarah notes that all these were happening to her because she rejected their proposals to ‘inherit’ her.

Seeing that Sarah\* didn’t move an inch from her marital home in spite of the abuse being inflicted on her, the 2 brothers in-law connived with their 18 year-old nephew and 17 year old niece (Sarah\*’s oldest step children), inciting them to expel their step mother from ‘their father’s house and property’. By this time, these step children had also started stealing from her and efforts to reprimand them by Sarah\* turned futile.

Better HAG Uganda management learnt about Sarah\* through one of the beneficiaries of the GBV training workshop and grieved by the story, decided to pay her a visit at her mother’s home where she had sought refuge with her 3 children following threats of death from her older step children and brothers in-law. Sarah\* benefited from the confidential advice and legal assistance from her visitors, prompting her to record a statement at Bumbo Police Post. In 3 days, the brothers in-law were arrested and incarcerated for a week, her matter forwarded to the LC III Court from where the court ruled in her favour-illustrating her right to occupy her late husband’s house and also cultivate the land until such a time when the children come off-age and the property is distributed in consonance with the guidelines of the Succession Act.

Sarah\* was pleased with the Court ruling although still doubted her security. We advised her to apply for a protection order from the magistrate court.

We, at Better HAG Uganda, are very pleased with our confidential legal assistance beneficiary. With the generous support of AWDF, we have played a salient role in the life of this widow. We are glad that she now has sufficient legal knowledge to respond to any form of abuse and that thanks to AWDF, she will live to provide for her children at their late father’s home.