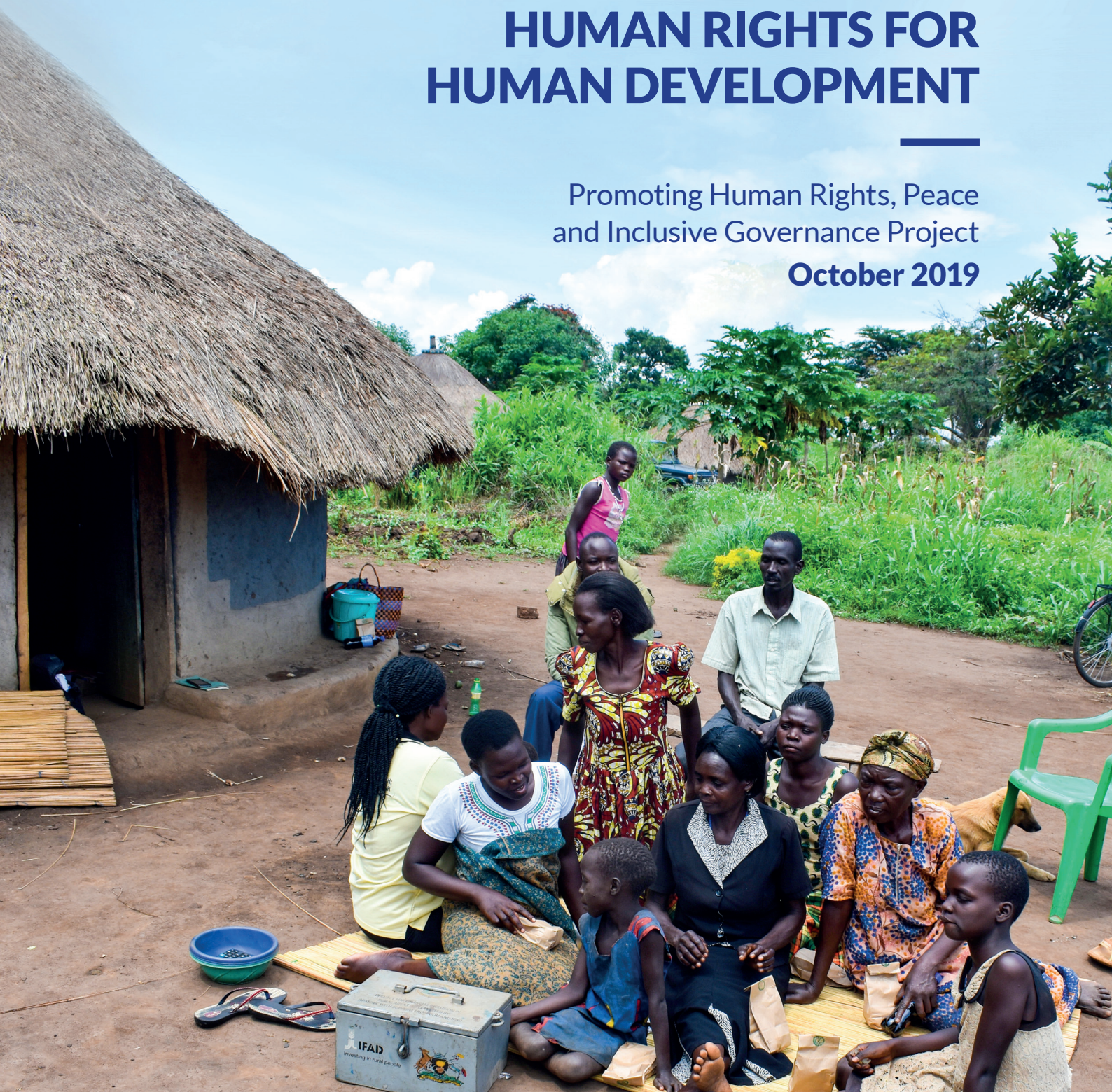


# HUMAN RIGHTS FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Promoting Human Rights, Peace  
and Inclusive Governance Project

**October 2019**



Published by:  
**GWED-G**  
October 2019



**GWED-G**  
Gulu Women's Economic  
Development & Globalization



**DGF**  
Democratic  
Governance Facility



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# Human rights for human development

## GWED-G's work on human rights for human development

**G**ulu Women Economic Development & Globalization (GWED-G) is a women rights organization founded in 2004 by grassroots women in the Acholi region of Northern Uganda with a mission to promote women's human rights, equality, and non-discrimination. GWED-G overarching objective is to enable women to exercise their rights in both the private and public spheres, overcome violations of those rights, and collectively mobilize for political, legal, and social change.

As this report highlights, we are working to advance women's human rights and gender equality, focusing on five priority areas:

- Increasing women's self-determination and agency by enhancing women's socioeconomic empowerment including addressing strategic gender needs notably equal access to decision-making and resources, land and property rights
- Combating violence against women and girls;
- Strengthening and expanding women's civic engagement and political participation at the community level through grassroots leadership development;
- Engaging women in all aspects of peace and security including transitional justice;
- Strengthening the voice, impact, and influence of women by building strong and vibrant women's networks and associations at the community level





# Distinctive characteristics of our work

## Women's Human Rights

### Intersectionality of issues related to gender equality

In recognition of the intersectionality of issues related to gender equality, our approach to women's human rights takes a holistic perspective, and take into consideration and address the interrelations between various issues concerning women in our work (such as political, social and economic rights, legal rights, violence against women, education, sexuality, reproductive rights, rights of the girl child, etc.)

In our efforts to strengthen women's access to economic opportunities, we have prioritized support for women's and young people's livelihoods, through savings, loans, skills, and entrepreneurship training. We are fostering the growth of self-help groups and promoting access to non-formal financial and credit services through Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA). VSLAs increases members' access to affordable loans that they can invest in income-generating activities of their choice. And in so doing, this helps to diversify their sources of income as well as increases their capacity to withstand shocks, meet their day-to-day needs such as education, clothing, food, and health care, thus having a more significant impact on poverty reduction. Our interventions seek not only to enhance women's capacity to provide for themselves and their families but also to help to reduce domestic conflicts that result from poverty and lack of income. Economic empowerment and community peacebuilding are closely linked through all our programming, recognizing that women cannot fully experience one without the other.

In working towards ending violence against women and girls, we are mobilizing entire communities to change gender dynamics, reduce gender-

based violence, and to respect and value the rights of women and girls. Our broader activism, consciousness-raising, and community organizing has sought to openly confront harmful practices as well as transform attitudes, prejudices, and norms amongst communities and households-regarding the status of women, normalizing of violence and gender induced disparities.

In collaboration with our partners, we are working to ensure women have the fundamental right to decide freely on matters related to their reproductive life and that women's reproductive and bodily health and rights are recognized as human rights. We aim to help women prevail over the negative social prejudices around women's sexuality and mechanisms of control and oppression. GWED has also built a network of male advocates and community leaders committed to zero tolerance for violence against women. GWED-G is also empowering community women to take action to combat violence and resolve disputes independently and with the support of community members.

### Real empowerment is political:

A fundamental right in a fully functional democracy is that individuals and social groups have the freedom to initiate personal and social change. In other words, it requires that citizens play an active and transformative role in their relationship with the system's decision-making mechanisms (i.e., the government) and not a subservient and passive one, the prevailing climate is one of respect for rights. Individuals need to internalize and develop a critical understanding of their rights before they can embrace and exercise them. We have also seen that if human rights are to be fulfilled, they also need to be protected by governance systems that respect human rights.



In our work to increase women's leadership and participation in decisions that affect their lives, we seek to reduce political and social exclusion of women and strengthen the participation and representation of women in political decision making at local level- in practice we focus building capacity and raising awareness on human rights in general, and women's rights in particular. Through human rights training, we also provide necessary key information on women's human rights and the legal framework in Uganda in an accessible manner. This places the development of the knowledge and skills required to bring about the realization of women's rights in the context of a broader movement to strengthen the position of human rights with the government at the center.

We have also seen that real empowerment begins when women come together to claim their human rights and challenge social norms that discriminate against them and hold government agencies accountable for service delivery. GWED-G views women's right to organize as a critical issue and invests special effort to support essential movement-building activities like forming strong women's networks and associations; creating safe spaces for women's groups to come together to collaborate, strategize, and build alliances to mobilize for change effectively. We are working to foster the emergence of a core constituency of women based on gender identity to ensure that women's voice is indeed heard and listened to and that women's participation also leads to favorable outcomes for women's agendas and does not end in just more participation for its own sake.

### Peace and security

To support women, peace, and security, GEWD-G takes a broader view of women's security-as not just about the absence of armed conflict but rather, whatever it takes to enable women to live in peace and harmony. It is about women having equal rights, and opportunities to; a voice in decision-making at all levels; a choice over if, when and how many children to have; control over their bodies; health care services including appropriate and affordable

reproductive health services; freedom from the threat of violence; and control over resources and assets which allow them to lift themselves and their families out of poverty.

### Men as allies for Women's Human Rights

Men have a significant role in achieving gender equity. Making women's empowerment and gender-justice goals a reality requires working with women and men. For example, the lives of women and men entwine in social relationships. Men who live and work together with women in a household, the community or workplace need to be sensitized to the challenges women face and the contributions they can and do make. Sensitizing men targets societal structures by challenging norms and behaviors at the household, community, and national levels.

Sensitizing men and other family and community members are crucial to provide women with a supportive environment and to enable them to take up different roles, responsibilities, and leadership positions. Sensitization aims to make local men, support services, and the community more woman-friendly. Our aim is not only to improve the status of women but also address men's concerns to avoid resistance and get the necessary support from men and the community. The sensitization of men is geared to creating an environment that supports the change and to mitigate the adverse effects of interventions aiming at women's empowerment such as conflicts within households. GWED-G deploys a combination of strategies and activities to involve men and increase their awareness and stimulate behavioral change. For example, we train Role Model Men who are committed to gender equity issues as peer trainers in sensitizing their peers about gender issues and challenging gender inequality. Such peer trainers are having a significant influence on the way other men behave. Special attention is also taken to develop an entrepreneurial attitude among women because low productivity often means low income and greater dependence on men's incomes, skewing the balance of power within households and communities in favor of men.



Our capacity-building efforts seek to create the opportunity not only for more economic independence for women but, perhaps, more importantly, more balanced household relationships.

#### **A whole family approach/ Household approach**

Our whole family approach is built on the premise that conditions that affect the family have a direct bearing on the experiences of women. Moreover, what is good for the family is good for society. More recently, we have deepened our engagement with families in recognition of the importance of integrating social support to improve conditions in the family and reduce the incidence of violence against women in the home or family setting.

Creating stability for the family requires a focus on the whole, and in particular, more balanced household relationships and promote men's involvement in families. In a context where gender discrimination is deeply entrenched, whole family approaches, grounded in community values, can contribute to positive outcomes, including a focus on the contributions of women and girls.

GWED-G is investing in creating an enabling environment within families to empower them with the agency to transform existing relationships of unequal power between men and women and explicitly change the position of women. Our work aims to address gender inequities, such as the existing gender division of labor, and alleviate the burden of domestic work. We support practical steps to improve family well-being – in particular, food security, hygiene and disease control, household livelihoods, education, and social networks. We are also supporting households to develop and apply various practical strategies of decision-making at home and to stand up to the violence in their daily lives.

Preventing violence against women in the home or family setting is an explicit goal and, and in particular, we seek to harness the potential for family-strengthening interventions to reduce the incidence of violence against women. Our efforts seek not only to address gendered social norms perpetuate violence, but also the structural conditions that can create 'toxic' levels of stress in families such as unemployment, and grinding poverty and lack of income, alcoholism and drug abuse that lead to violence against women and girls.

The process takes an approach of engaging men as allies for gender equality through the role model approach of working with men as partners, change agents and clients.

#### **Tackling social-cultural norms**

GWED-G's work around social norms is grounded in the acknowledgment of the fact that both formal and informal institutions, such as patriarchy, religion, family, marriage, as well as social norms and cultural practices, play a pivot role in perpetuating gender inequalities in the Acholi sub-region. The lives of many women in the region are still shaped by societal norms and religious customs instead of constitutional rights. Others remain constricted by social and cultural concepts of gender and gender roles that are often biased against women who are regarded as socially inferior to men.

GWED-G is working with locally respected traditional institutions and decision-making processes to reflect on beliefs and practices that may undermine women's rights. To mitigate resistance, we are working to co-opt these institutions as allies to preserve what is valuable in our cultural traditions and confront what reinforces exclusion conflict and inequality as well as to garnish their support towards creating an enabling environment for the fulfillment of women's rights.



## Acholi Region in Context



Land disputes at 66% most common cause of conflict/tension in the Acholi sub-region



At 33%, the Acholi sub-region Uganda's second-highest poverty incidence



The incidence rate of GBV stands at 39% compared to the national figure of 39.6% one (1) in four (4) women in the age bracket of 15 and 49, have experienced GBV at some point in their lives, compared to men with less than one (1) in 10



Unmet needs for family planning are much higher at 39.0% compared to the national average of 28.4. 4 out of 10 women in Acholi want to use contraceptives but are unable to access them compared to a national average of two (2) women.



Lowest literacy rates 48.2% - females at 31.4 % compared to 68.5 % for males



Income poverty in Acholi was at 34.7% -three (3) out of ten (10) persons living in the Acholi sub-region are poor (living below the poverty line).



The highest percentage of teenage pregnancy at 26.6 compared the national average of 25%



9 out of 10 (87%) women in the Acholi region mention at least one problem, compared with one (1) in 3 (34%) women in the Kampala region. The most frequent obstacle women mentioned is getting money for treatment (45%)



Youth population's literacy rates for females at 44.1 %, compared to 73.4 % for males

# 49.2%

Close to half of the employed youth (49.2 percent) are "working poor" (do not earn enough to pull themselves above the poverty line).



Wide gender disparity regarding reporting SGBV to the relevant authorities While 61.8 percent of men are likely to report, only 38.2 percent of women are likely to do so, showing that men are more confident than women to report violence.



Public confidence in the state to provide security lowest in Northern region (56%)

Much has been achieved for women, children, and youth in the Acholic region in the subsequent 13 years of post-war reconstruction. Peace has been consolidated, and the social and physical landscape transformed. The Government has embarked on several infrastructural development projects including road and energy infrastructure projects. And most indicators for child survival and access to essential services including education, health, and nutrition interventions, as well as safe drinking water and sanitation have radically improved.

However, today families in the region face many struggles, mainly stemming from the consequences of years of conflict and displacement. The region continues to host a higher proportion of the poor—with the number of poor well above its share of the total population. The herald economic growth has yet to translate into meaningful human development outcomes. Indicators of human development, including education, health, gender equality, and women's sexual and reproductive health remain below those of the rest of the country.

Land-related issues, including use, access, and ownership, remain central concerns in a post-conflict environment. Land reforms that would enhance the security of tenure, while respecting the traditional socio-cultural norms for communal ownership of land are yet to be implemented.

There is also very uneven and patchy access to basic essential services compared to other regions in the country. Basic essential services such as education, health, water, and sanitation play an important part in the realization of people's human rights, especially women's rights. Women are the primary users of services and poor services contribute to maintaining unequal and unjust relations between men and women.

The delivery of essential services, which are critical for human development, lack accountability and responsiveness to the local context.

Currently, accountability by people who are responsible for delivering public services is generally in terms of outputs, such as classrooms built and enrollment rates, functionality of immunization supply chains and ANC services, and supply of health care services; -rather than in terms of outcomes of educational achievement, mortality, and morbidity or the cost and time it takes to acquire minimum health care services.

Long after the war, there are still unaddressed legacies of the conflict, in various dimensions of wellbeing. Many families are grappling with poverty, lack of opportunities to earn a livelihood, and consequent difficulties in meeting basic needs such as food and health care. Others confront a daily reality of violence, whether within the family or in the broader community.

Natural disasters, such as droughts and climate shocks affecting agriculture and livestock, have created an additional dimension of vulnerability. Limited capabilities have aggravated this impact (e.g. lower literacy levels), weak social safety nets, weak local government institutions, poor governance (limited political participation, corruption, and leakages).

Eliminating household poverty and advancing broader human rights and wellbeing calls for significant changes to how public policy, programs, and support services are structured, funded, and implemented.

In terms of realizing rights, women are at a disadvantage when compared with men and often face specific gender-related barriers associated with patriarchal cultural practices. There are very few social services and programs that enable women to translate the legal rights they have gained into everyday life. Many policies and plans still need to be turned into real gains, particularly for girls, and women, who continue to suffer from significant gender inequalities and vulnerabilities across the different social, political and economic capabilities.



The situation of women and girls is worse in the Acholi region, compared to the rest of the country. Fundamental inequalities that continue to exist between men and women in the region include lower literacy rates, higher rates of poverty, persistently high rates of maternal mortality and morbidity, as well as teenage pregnancies, and of low enrollment of females at the post-primary education levels, limited access to, and ownership of, productive resources for women (especially land), as well as increased sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), all of which effectively limit opportunities for women's participation. Even where there are existing substantive protections for women and girls, lack of compliance and lack of enforcement is undermining accountability.

In many respects, gender discrimination and the patriarchal nature of the Acholi society render this situation even more dire for women and girls. Local traditions, culture, and religious customs continue to shape the lives of many women instead of constitutional rights. Prevailing socially-embedded patriarchal norms include control over household assets, incomes and expenditures by husbands; property inheritance and ownership dominated by men; high SGBV especially against women; marrying-off girls at an early age; unwanted pregnancies; and a preference to educate more boys than girls among others. Differing power and status between women and men limits girls' access to education, their ownership and control of property and income, and thereby, predisposes women in the region to poverty.

These detrimental practices also hinder the equality of women and men in the Acholi region, which, in turn, leads to more significant social exclusion by denying women a voice and further marginalizing them. And yet, gender-inclusive political participation, through voice and decision making is fundamental tenets for political and economic development. In essence, gender inequality continues to limit women's power in society and the home and affects human development indicators at the community and national levels.

**Long after the war, there are still unaddressed legacies of the conflict, in various dimensions of wellbeing. Many families are grappling with poverty, lack of opportunities to earn a livelihood, and consequent difficulties in meeting basic needs such as food and health care.**

Harnessing the potential of women in the Acholi region requires confronting these numerous barriers, which continue to reinforce exclusion and inequality by limiting women's full and equal participation in the development processes. Women's voice and representation are an essential means of ensuring the fulfillment of women's rights and a means of ensuring that democracy functions in the name of all people. Also, there is a need to empower women further, so that they can have a stake in household decision-making, to enable them to exercise some control over household assets, incomes, and expenditures. Women's equal participation in governance and decision making is not only a demand for simple justice but a necessity for gender equality.

The DGF funded project targeted both lawmakers and decision-making processes to advocate for action and reform that will enable the government to take up its responsibility of fulfilling women's basic rights; and further sought to help women gain an awareness of their rights and to put these rights into practice.

# Promoting Human Rights, Peace and Inclusive Governance in Acholi Region

## Duration

April 2018 – September 2019

Much has been achieved for women, children, and youth in the Acholic region in the subsequent 13 years of post-war reconstruction. Peace has been consolidated, and the social and physical landscape transformed. Today families in the region face many struggles, mainly stemming from the consequences of years of conflict and displacement. Many families are grappling with poverty, lack of opportunities to earn a livelihood, and consequent difficulties in meeting basic needs such as food and health care. Others confront a daily reality of violence, whether within the family or in the broader community. Natural disasters, such as droughts and climate shocks affecting agriculture and livestock, have created an additional dimension of vulnerability.



## Purpose

To contribute to a peaceful Acholi region where human rights are upheld and community effectively engages in civic actions for post conflict recovery and development.



## Funding

To contribute to a peaceful Acholi region where human rights are upheld and community effectively engages in civic actions for post conflict recovery and development.



## Key Objective

- Objective 1:** To strengthen the protection and promotion of women human rights and gender equality in the post conflict Acholi region.
- Objective 2:** To enhance civic competence in youth and women to effectively participate and influence the post-war recovery processes by 2020.
- Objective 3:** To enhance the land rights of vulnerable groups individuals in the post conflict Acholi region.



## Project Location

- Gulu District** (Paicho, Bungatira and Unyama sub-county)
- Amuru District** (Lamogi, Amuru, Paboo, sub-county)
- Nwoya District** (Koch-goma, Alero, and Anaka sub-county)
- Omoro District** (Koro, Bobi, and Lalogi sub-county)



## Population

| Direct: | Indirect: |
|---------|-----------|
| 40,928  | 246,644   |



## Stakeholders

- Local structures traditional institutions and leaders
- Women Councilors and Women's Council
- Human Rights Volunteers
- Community Activists
- VSLA solidarity groups
- Religious institutions,
- Existing groups of Role Model Men (RMM)
- Voluntary youth and women groups.



## Intended Outputs



1. Enhanced knowledge, exercise, and demand for basic rights
2. Enhanced women's participation in planning and decision making at district and sub-county levels
3. Increased capacity of traditional institutions and other community-based structures in land rights protection and promotion
4. Increased land stakeholders' engagements on resource-based violent conflicts and land rights

## Intended Outcomes

- Improved human rights status in the post-conflict Acholi region
- Inclusion and participation of women in decision-making processes improved
- Increased protection of land rights in the Acholi region

## Major Interventions



- Hold 4 district level stakeholders' platform (of 40 participants) on human rights protection issues in 4 districts
- Recruit and train 60 human rights volunteers on key human rights concept and human rights promotion
- Conduct 60 community awareness and dialogue sessions (platforms) on the rights of women and girls, PWDs, Extremely vulnerable individuals (EVIs).
- Establish 12 Male Action Groups of 20 members each (240 Role Model Men) to act as change agents for sensitizing the communities against GBV
- Facilitate 240 role model men to conduct quarterly household dialogues to promote respect for human rights and reduces on incidences of GBV
- Facilitate development and airing of 5 different radio spot messages on Human Rights and Governance issues
- Conduct 15 radio talk shows on human rights education (1 radio talk show per month)

### Under Output 1

- Conduct 1 training for 80 women leaders on gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive legislation, policy, and budgeting
- Conduct 12 interface meeting between the local grassroots women at sub-county levels with trained women leaders and other women
- Hold 4 women's rights procession duped 'Walk for her Rights' on the annual theme to commemorate international women's day of 2019 (Each District holding 1 procession)

### Under Output 2

### Under Output 3

- Develop, produce and disseminate educative IEC materials on land rights: 20 copies of fact sheets on the national land policy 2013 will be translated, produced and distributed to 25 Acholi traditional chiefs.
- Train 160 Rwodi Kweri (male village level leader) and Okoro (female village-level leaders) on land dispute resolutions.
- Hold 3 reflective platforms with 25 traditional chiefs of Acholi on national land policy and Land Act concerning Customary Land tenure system and land rights.
- Conduct 100 land disputes mediations through traditional leaders/institutions

### Under Output 4

- Hold 1 district-level land stakeholder's platform on the region's specific land rights issues (4 districts, 56 participants per platform)
- Conduct 24 community levels awareness campaigns on women's land governance, ownership and inheritance rights.
- Conduct a study on the impacts of interventions by Land Actors in Addressing Land Rights Problems in Acholi region

## GWED-G's approach to impact assessment

A common challenge in working to make human rights a reality is how to measure change – real change – in the lives of targeted communities. Monitoring data takes us only halfway, and often stops at measuring intermediate results like output and outcomes, such as observed system change (for example, laws, institutions, policy documents, action plans)-valuable and crucial as these are, human rights and equity are essentially, about human development- about people and their well-being. Ensuring that changes in human rights and good governance dynamics lead to changes for citizens requires that more importance be attached to whether more citizens are utilizing and enjoying better livelihoods, health, nutrition, WASH, or education opportunities.

GWED-G's approach to impact assessment takes a holistic view of changes in that it goes beyond system change (laws, institutions, policy documents, action plans) to encompass a more rounded view of human experience and aspirations.

However, measuring the long-term outcomes and impact on people's everyday lives resulting from those system changes requires longer-term monitoring and more sophisticated methodologies (for example, addressing questions of attribution) than project funding usually provides for. Qualitative evaluations, however, offer a valuable additional tool for measuring results and impact. Qualitative assessments allow us to identify the impact and long-lasting changes in the lives of target beneficiaries and to explore how project interventions contributed to those changes. In this way, qualitative evaluations are a way for GWED-G to assess impact-broadly defined as "the systematic analysis of significant or lasting change – positive, negative, intended, unintended – in the lives of our target beneficiaries, brought about or influenced by our program interventions."

To develop a qualitative understanding of some of the changes that have taken place in the lives of beneficiaries as well as understanding how the "Human Rights, Peace, and Inclusive Governance" project interventions contributed to these changes, GWED-G commissioned a qualitative evaluation to document stories of changes. The project evaluation involved the use of the Most Significant Change (MSC) Technique to allow us to understand what changes have taken place, for whom, and under what circumstances. This report presents the findings of the evaluation.

### The most significant change (MSC) technique

The Most Significant Change (MSC) approach involves generating and analyzing personal accounts of change and deciding which of these accounts is the most significant – and why.

The evaluation procedure involved conducting in-depth interviews with a small number (25) of randomly-selected beneficiaries and key informants to gain a deeper understanding of the perceived changes in target groups' lives (both positive and negative).

More specifically, these Most Significant Change (SC) stories from project beneficiaries, district officials, and field staff directly involved in the project allows GWED-G to achieve the following objectives: Understand not only what changes are taking place, but also the processes leading to these changes and whether any changes plausibly can be attributed to its interventions.

Reveal how interventions and the delivery of those interventions can enhance positive changes and minimize or eliminate any negative externalities. In other words, these interviews try to capture the relationship that may exist between beneficiaries' satisfaction with interventions and the changes in

the beneficiaries' lives. (e.g., target groups can be satisfied with intervention, but the intervention can harm their lives, for example, women and men are entwined in social relationships, but when it comes to access and control over resources, many traditional norms and beliefs are biased against women who are regarded as socially inferior to men. If an intervention aims at changing this (e.g., by "favoring" the women), it is often erroneously perceived to disadvantage men. Some men and communities may resist such interventions and women face the backlash)

In other words, on the one hand, Most Significant Change (SC) stories help identify whether the effect of the intervention is positive and in what areas of their lives targeted communities see these interventions as having the most significant impact. On the other hand, the Most Significant Change (SC) stories go one step farther and allow GWED-G to understand in detail how these changes have come about in targeted communities' lives. This type of information is useful not only for understanding impact pathways but also to find out more about barriers, pain points, and the comprehensive needs of target beneficiaries. Having this broad and in-depth information about their programming puts GWED-G in a better position to develop suitable interventions that are of value to their targeted communities.

GWED-G can also build from and triangulate the results obtained through these qualitative evaluations to get a well-rounded picture of how its interventions affect targeted communities.

In this project evaluation, the stories were collected by asking respondents a few simple questions about how they felt the interventions had affected them and in what ways. The in-depth interviews were based on a set of standardized but open questions that were designed to capture beneficiaries' perceptions and overall experience with the interventions and the way they are delivered.

Respondent received no prompting on how to answer any of these questions. No leading questions were asked, and all responses were open; as expected, the responses were varied.

To capture a diverse range of experiences, and to mitigate against the bias involved with selecting respondents, efforts were made to randomize the selection of beneficiaries and key Informants to be interviewed. Respondents were randomly selected from various sub-groups of the population targeted by the project. The informality and location of the interviews – most often at the respondents' household or villages – put respondents at ease and elicited more and richer information about the effects of the project interventions during the interviews.

#### Findings across various change domains

While the sample interviewed is in no way statistically representative, the review was able to observe common themes. Patterns did emerge that provide some insight into how primary beneficiaries view the outcomes of project activities.

Qualitative data collected from interviews was used to develop domains of change- impact pathways of the effects of project intervention for different beneficiaries based on what most respondents reported during the interviews. Impact pathways distinguish between direct effects (i.e., those that are a direct result of the interventions) and indirect effects (i.e., those that operate through another influence).

The internal logic and consistency in beneficiaries' narratives were utilized to understand impacts and support for the findings.

In the analysis, these domains of change provided a framework for aggregating the views and answers of different stakeholders. They offered themes around which we assessed and presented stories of transformation.



It is worth noting here too that the categorization and groupings of responses only emerged when the data was analyzed.

It is important to note that, while factors external to GWED-G's interventions may well have affected the results presented here, these were not explored during the interviews.

Beneficiary stories herein are significantly skewed toward positive changes, and hardly any beneficiaries reported any adverse effects. Thus, we cannot entirely negate social desirability response bias- a tendency for some people to present themselves more favorably or in more socially acceptable ways. Nevertheless, quite a few respondents were comfortable offering suggestions that would significantly strengthen programming.

Findings on the consolidated impact pathway from the in-depth interviews are presented in more detail across the following eight domains:

- Voice and Representation in local government
- Agency (women's capabilities)
- Structure (women's opportunities)
- Transforming Gender Norms and Gender Relations
- Improved Family Functioning
- Household economy and livelihoods
- Asset Development
- Land rights

In the subsequent section, women and men participating in the project share their remarkable stories of positive change and recount their experiences of the transformative impact of the project on women, men, and their families and communities. This report depicts real-life empowerment stories and, in particular, how women are exercising their human rights in different spheres of their lives.









## Consolidated impact pathway of project interventions across eight domains:

| DIRECT IMPACTS  |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Voice and Representation in local government</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• more women elected as councilors and representatives at local government</li> <li>• strong women's solidarity groups (women's caucuses) at sub-county and district level</li> <li>• women's caucuses prioritizing common agenda for women over party loyalties</li> <li>• strengthened links between female councilors and their female constituents</li> <li>• wielding greater political influence</li> <li>• securing improvements in service provision</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Agency (women's capabilities)</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• women experienced an increase in self-confidence and self-esteem</li> <li>• more knowledgeable and sensitized to women's political, civil, and economic rights</li> <li>• women have gained new speaking and presentation skills</li> <li>• have gained the ability to express themselves much more easily-</li> <li>• learned how to criticize politely and impersonally and negotiate for the best outcomes</li> <li>• are better informed and empowered to organize around their own needs</li> <li>• able to realize when being discriminated against, and have learned to protect their rights.</li> <li>• able to recognize and challenge traditional power dynamics</li> <li>• organizing themselves as a select interest group leading to favorable outcomes for women</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Structure (women's opportunities)<br/>Transforming Gender Norms and Gender Relations</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• widened social network-group cohesion and social support networks</li> <li>• role model men are rejecting violence and propagating a culture of peace</li> <li>• male cultural leaders now appreciate gender issues, primarily equity, as beneficial for their communities</li> <li>• male cultural leaders are mindful of women's needs in their decisions</li> <li>• in matters of land access, acquisition, and ownership</li> <li>• men more accepting of the leadership roles women are taking up.</li> <li>• Men are joining women-run self-help groups and village savings groups and are coming to accept women as leaders.</li> <li>• women have a voice and more prominent role in household decisions including ownership and use of land</li> <li>• men becoming family/community role models</li> <li>• experienced positive changes in their husbands' attitude and behavior- sharing of household tasks and domestic responsibilities</li> <li>• experienced a positive difference in the attitudes of other family members</li> <li>• a better appreciation of sexual and gender exploitation and abuse among men</li> <li>• women more respected in their communities</li> </ul> |

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|--|---|
| <b>Land rights</b>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notable reduction in land wrangles</li> <li>• Increased trust in negotiation, mediation and reconciliation processes</li> <li>• enforcement of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms by cultural leaders</li> <li>• demonstrated use of culturally-sensitive approaches to land access, acquisition, and ownership leading to favorable outcomes for women</li> <li>• Increased land registration including by women</li> </ul>   |
| <b>INDIRECT IMPACTS</b>                  |   |
| <b>Improved Family Functioning</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• more balanced household relationships-with their spouses and families</li> <li>• reduce male-female tensions within households</li> <li>• reduction in the incidence of physical violence</li> <li>• reduction in the incidence of emotional abuse,</li> <li>• reduction in the incidence of economic violence,</li> <li>• women communicating better with their spouses</li> <li>• men experienced a positive attitude change toward their children</li> <li>• children are attending school, and their fathers are paying school fees.</li> <li>• there's been a removal of inhibitions on women's access to health services</li> <li>• families now know about family planning and child spacing</li> <li>• cases of malnutrition have reduced</li> <li>• home hygiene is improved because of the awareness campaign in homes by the RMM</li> </ul> |
| <b>Household economy and livelihoods</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• women have developed an entrepreneurial attitude</li> <li>• improved ability to meet household needs- men and women engage in joint income-generating activities</li> <li>• income diversification- women are involved in market vending with the full support of their spouses</li> <li>• improved farm productivity</li> <li>• increased household incomes</li> <li>• increased savings and household assets</li> <li>• house construction and improvements</li> <li>• improved food consumption (quantitative and quality)</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Asset Development</b>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constructive use of time-reduce alcoholism and idleness</li> <li>• Men actively engaged in farming including household food production</li> <li>• households are prioritizing asset purchases.</li> <li>• Men demonstrate a willingness to heed the advice of role model men</li> </ul>  |

**Measuring the long-term outcomes and impact on people's everyday lives resulting from those system changes requires longer-term monitoring and more sophisticated methodologies (for example, addressing questions of attribution) than project funding usually provides for.**

## Fostering women's agency to act by building women's skills and confidence

**M**y name is Apiyo Winifred. I am 29 years old. I am a resident of (Wanglobo) village, in Lapainet east parish, Koro sub-county. I was recently elected as the new Chairperson for the Labora sub-county. It is one of the newly created sub-counties. I stopped in senior three-lower secondary school. I am married and my husband, and I have three children, but we are taking care of two other children.

Before I was elected, I was a simple peasant farmer. I was also running a small business in my village. I started with low stock, but my business grew, and it's still running today. I was first elected as secretary for finance in the school where I studied in Labora Primary School, and I have recently once again been chosen as the Chairperson of Parent-Teacher Association. I also participated in Operation Wealth Creation- I was selected as a market-oriented farmer.





A market-oriented farmer is a person elected to lead other smallholder farmers. We usually produce for selling, and then some produce for subsistence farming, but we are the ones heading those doing subsistence farming. And that is how I am developing now.

I was involved in many of the GWED-G project activities; I received training and participated in other activities at the GWED-G. The best part of the activities so far has been the training on public speaking, gender-responsive legislation, policy and budgeting, and gender-based violence.

But the GWED-G project provided activities which women councillors can benefit from. The training is practical to ensure we are in a position to influence the leadership and decision-making processes at the local government. Now I can do it. I feel very confident and comfortable speaking in council meetings. I can also move a motion when in council. That's made me so confident. And also, I think I will do better in the coming elections.

Though some of us, as women leaders, are empowered, we need to enable the lower women. We need to take interventions and psychosocial support services for women suffering from violence within their own homes. They should know who they are, and they should be given knowledge first, to open their minds. You know some women are not literate, and others didn't go very far in school. They believe that women are the property of men, everything which men say, they should follow. And that is a big problem. The second thing is polygamy; you find one man having four women or six, and those men cannot cater for their children, and women are suffering down there. As women councilors, we are pushing to address the issue of violence against women. Many of the cases of violence against women are criminal cases and should be referred to police and the perpetrators prosecuted in court, but it is a massive hurdle for victims to come forward.

**Over the past year, I have gained confidence and realised my ability to take on my leadership responsibilities. Before joining the GWED-G project, I could not even speak in public well. Expressing myself, in general, was difficult. I used to be shy and fearful, and I used to find it hard to stand up in front of people. Even during the council meetings, I was not confident enough to speak out or able to present what I wished to say, yet I had good opinions.**

We need to do more to sensitize women and girls in the villages. Many of whom are silent and don't dare to speak out because they are too afraid. Others are scared they feel like they don't have much choice about it and do nothing about the abuse because they rely entirely on men to support them financially. And when the men refuse to provide for the family, women suffer.

Poverty is the root cause of violence against women in homes. Second is the issue of money earned from the sale of farm produce. In my community, we grow soya, during cultivation, women do much work, but benefit little. When the harvest is ready, the husbands sell the crop and decide how the money is used, sometimes leaving women to suffer to look for finances to take care of the household welfare, from food for the family to school fees and necessities for the children.



**To improve access to justice for victims and survivors of GBV in our sub-county, as a women's caucus, we moved a motion in council that a budget be allocated to the CDO office to ensure Police Form 3 required in the collection of medical-legal evidence is readily available and accessible at the Police Station at Koro Headquarters.**

Even if they wanted to do something to change this injustice, they lack the confidence to voice their concerns and say what they need.

When a woman attempts to question the man's, the men harass them.

As a result of our participation in the GWED-G project, we have formed a women's caucus to prioritize a common agenda for women in the sub-county. As a women's caucus, we have joined together to identify women's issues in the sub-county and take them to the council. When we have anything burning as women, we sit down together.

And when we are moving into the council meeting, we proceed as women. Before, people used to see women councilors as being more loyal to their political parties rather than their constituents, but now we move as women. But more needs to be done to empower women so that they can cope better. For example, women in such vulnerable situations can be trained and supported to start small businesses so that they can earn an income, instead of depending on their husbands.

**Making voice and representation work in local government is through consultations**

We do many things as a caucus. We have joined together to monitor health centers and schools throughout the sub-county. Jointly undertaking community monitoring activities is more effective and is helping us do our work as councillors because we combine our limited resources.

We jointly engage communities during monitoring to identify issues and work with them to come up with solutions. For example, last year, we took the initiative to start sensitisation and social mobilisation activities in primary schools. This was one of the issues that came up in our monitoring. The drop-out rates are high, and many, especially girls, are impregnated by fellow pupils and forced to raise families when they should be in school.

So, we bring pupils together and talk to them about the importance of finishing primary school; and avoiding high-risk behaviour, including premature sexual activity that often leads to early childbearing and dropping out of school. We started with Angaba Primary School (in Labwoch parish) and Laminadera Primary School (Laminadera parish).



## Empowerment: Getting Women Voice heard through electoral processes

Providing women with skills, mentoring, access to networks leading to greater involvement in political and decision making processes.

**M**y name is Akera Jackeline. Women councilor for Oding Sub Ward, Unyama Sub County. I am 35 years old. I have 4 children.

Over the past year, the most important thing that's happened to me is that I've built my own two-bedroom house. I laid bricks for two consecutive seasons, and now it's in the final stages of completion. It came as a surprise to many who cannot believe that I can build my own house.

But I was able to achieve this because of this project, the sensitisation, and training that we received as women councillors encouraged me to work harder to mobilise the resources to build my own home. Being able to build my own house has been a real eye-opener for women in my community. My fellow women councillors feel motivated and are pushing to start building their own homes. We have now come together as a women's caucus to help each other build homes.

When we first came together as women councillors to form a women's caucus, it was to work together to promote issues of concern to women. To strengthen women's voice in the council, we decided that whenever there was anything to pass on women and children, we should speak with one voice. But the benefits of the women's caucus are way beyond that. Because we know poverty and lack of income can affect our ability and confidence to take on leadership responsibilities in the community, as a women's caucus, we introduced "kalulu," which means a revolving fund. As a group, we accumulate savings, and we meet every two weeks, where we purchase cement, iron sheets, and timbers for one member at a time. Presently, about four (4) other members will have their house built in this coming dry season. We started on a small scale-we saved mainly to buy household items such as tables, chairs, and beds. But we have grown up, and we are confident that by the end of 2025, all caucus members will have their homes built.



**I have learned many things over the past year, but the biggest lesson I have learned is that education is not necessary for leadership; it just comes naturally; it is inborn. I have not gone to school, but I am offering myself to lead my community. I encourage women to overcome their lack of literacy and get as involved as they can in political and decision making processes in their communities.**

We had been working closely with GWED G on women's land rights and to empower and facilitate the participation of women in decision-making within the sub-county. We've done much work to sensitize not only women but also men and especially cultural leaders who have an influence on matters of customary land about women's land rights and raising awareness and appreciation of the benefits of securing Certificates of Customary Ownership under customary land.

As I talk now, efforts are paying off, women have started registering their land by securing Certificates of Customary Ownership. The certificates protect the interests and ownership and occupancy rights of women on customary land. Before it was difficult to try to help women who want to be leaders in my community, many women are poor, illiterate, and lack confidence, and skills make it tough for them. Their husbands also try to bring them down and discourage them from taking up leadership positions because men did not like the idea of their wives spending time in meetings and doing work outside the home.

I want to share with my personal experience in 2010 – 2011 the first time I made the decision to stand to contest as an electoral candidate, I was beaten up by my husband only because he's thinking was that when a woman goes for politics, she will be looking for men, but that's not true. But I stood on my ground and went ahead to pick nomination form regardless of my husbands' negative attitude. I was voted based on my competencies, not in line with party affiliation.

As part of the project, we were doing mass sensitization through the women's caucus. This sensitization has brought awareness, and women are finding their voice, and the confidence to speak up. Women's mindset has changed.

I am now seeing changes here in Unyama, we have about 60 women, and from time to time, we bring them together to identifying real, pressing challenges facing women. They now voice their opinions and issues that affect them without any hesitation. Women in communities where they work have started organising together on their own. In my personal opinion, women are ready to pick nomination forms to stand up for an elective position together with men because they are not scared anymore. Many women have shown an interest in stepping up to lead in the Local Council One (LC1) leadership.

Women are now aware of their rights, and when their husbands are abusing them, they know where they can report and go to seek treatment at health centers. Those are the changes I am talking about as a result of awareness training organised by GWED G. There's a long way to go, and the project may not have removed all the barriers we face as women councillors. The hurdles we face as women in elective politics remain as challenging as they were before. But participation in the project has given me a different perspective that is helping me to face these challenges more effectively.

## Delivering informal social support to families door-to-door:

Okello Jimmy and Abalo Vicky's story

GWED-G Case Manager strengthening families and promoting men's involvement in families. Over the past year, the most important thing that has happened is that the project helped me realize that farming is much better than working as a casual laborer loading and unloading trucks.



The photo on the left shows Okello Jimmy with his wife Abalo Vicky during life change story documentation from Amilobo village, Lamogi Sub County in Amuru District.



**M**y name is Okello Jimmy. My name Okello means a child born following the birth of twins. I am 28 years old. I am from Amilobo Villiage Amuru Lamogi. My wife Abalo Vicky is 23 years and is from Oduu Village, Amuru Lamogi. I appreciate this project so much; like some two years back, my life was not good; I was doing badly off totally. I had just married my wife, but most of the time, I was not even with her, she would stay at home alone.

**I can proudly say that I have accumulated many things from farming. My wife and I bought a set of Roko chairs; we purchased a mattress; we purchased saucepans and other household items for our home.**

I moved to Gulu town to do loading and unloading trucks, and I did not bother me that I had someone at home. I didn't think about her, nor did I support her in any way. My life was going like that.

It was in July last year that the GWED-G case manager Olweny Chris first reached out to me. I received a call from Olweny Chris. He asked where I was, and I said to him I'm in Gulu town, and he asked if we could meet. I asked him what he wanted to speak to me about because I had some work I was doing. Olwen Chris insisted that he wanted to talk to me. That Friday, I traveled back from Gulu, and Olweny Chris and I met at the center. We sat down, and Chris bought me a drink (soda). The first question he asked me is where I was staying. I informed I was living in Gulu. He then asked me what I was doing? I told him I had a job as a casual laborer-loading and unloading trucks. He asked me if I was seeing another woman in Gulu, but I said no.

Then he asked me to reflect on my family life and especially how I was treating my wife. At first, I suspected that it is my wife who had gone to Chris complaining about me. But it was my father who approached Chris to intervene and help our family. I'm an only son to my father, and there were times I would run into my father-he would be seated under a

tree like this one but many times my father looking at the life I was leading a sadness would overcome him and he would just start crying because he didn't know what to do for me.

Chris told me that the reason why he wanted to contact me was that he noticed I was taking the wrong path. My wife and I, despite being a family, we were not living together. I have two children, but I was not taking them to school. He pointed out that times were changing, and children have to go for

school and that I have a responsibility to my child. But I was not doing all those things. Chris begged me to agree to visit another of his friends called Ojoko. We went to visit Ojoko to see how he was living. Ojoko I turned out was a Role Model Man and when Ojoko invited us into his home. I saw the property he had-things that make a home- he had a set of chairs, he had beans which the family had planted and harvested together. But for my home was the opposite of Ojoko's, my madam was going to the garden by herself. I was in Gulu working, but even when I got paid, I did not support the family.

I don't give her any support even when the baby would fall sick, and I didn't bother to take the baby to the hospital. It was my just her moving with the children to the hospital. During her pregnancy for the firstborn, she just insisted we go to the hospital together. And then for the second one, the secondborn, I didn't go. Chris discussed this issue with me too. That I had to know my status very well, and I have to keep myself safe. We had the discussions in our home, right here. After discussing with Chris, he encouraged me to come back to the village to start farming. It was a turning point in my life. For the first time last year, during the dry season, because we have a wetland, my wife and I just dug the marsh then planted one and a half acres of okra.

Okra is marketable nowadays for us here, especially people in Sudan come, and they buy it. I returned home in October last year, so during that period, timing is everything; if you don't plant the Okras, cabbage in the wetland, they cannot grow, it was the season that's why we planted Okra. When we harvested, we made good money, and this has encouraged me to do more. I found out that I can make or more money from farming. I said you know what? I'm going to take farming real seriously. I can proudly say that I have accumulated many things from farming. My wife and I bought a set of Roko chairs; we purchased a mattress; we purchased saucepans and other household items for our home. From there on, my life started changing. Olweny Chris later encouraged me not to drink alcohol, and that way, you see my body nowadays just coming back. I am stronger, healthier, and happier because I don't drink nowadays, and as I talk now, I value my family we share work together with my madam.

We are working together to keep our children safe and to make sure they have opportunities to learn and to be healthy. Even if cooking at times I also cook, like this scar I got it when I was frying, even when we go to the garden we work together, even if during the weeding time we go along and do it at the same time.

This year we are planning to farm together with my wife. We are planning to plant watermelon this season because our place is fertile, and it is perfect and. Especially this season this dry season, it's coming to February next year we begin harvesting if possible. Changing my life has earned me the respect of both my father and my community. Ahh, ahh, my father is pleased now, especially when he meets with Chris; you see the happiness just coming to them. The two are very happy, and they have their nickname for me.

**They call me Okoya, Okoya. Okoya means the "prodigal son returns!"**





## Tackling violence in the home and family setting

Fostering more equal and satisfactory relations with their husbands: Apolo Evelyn's story

**M**y name is Evelyn, and I'm 44 years old. I'm from Kulo Otiti Paidwe Parish in Bobi sub-county Omoro district. My husband Awar Robert and I have been together for 25 years. We have 6 children.

My husband would waste time and family resources drinking alcohol. He was also physically abusive to me when he would drink. Many times, he would beat me and chase me out of our home. Whenever he would come home drunk, even the children would run away due to fear. On such nights, the children and I would sleep in the bush. But the abuse started after I had the family planning injector plan implant on one of my arms. The violence just escalated from there and got worse. That was one of the main reasons he was so angry. One day he chased me with a spear. At the time, I was pregnant with my daughter Akello Blessing. I would walk for four hours on foot to Bobi health center, and yet I was pregnant. At the health center, I would be told next time, bring your husband, but my husband would not accompany me. I couldn't talk about it. When I finally gathered the courage to ask for help, my few attempts ended in tears.

The dispute was resolved, but the mediation went through many steps. The first step was through the family members, but it failed, then it was forwarded to the LCI, but he also failed. All our relatives and LC1 had given up on helping me.

I had no idea that Francis Oweka, the case manager, would get involved or that anybody else would care. Francis Oweka is a case manager trained under the GWED-G project and paid a visit to our home. During the home visit, we talked through my problems and worries. He listened to me and started advising my husband. He asked us to think about what we wanted to do to change our lives and what we wanted our relationships to look like in the future, and to plan out the changes we were going to make to improve our family.

I now celebrate where I am at in life, I've accomplished many things that I wanted to. I can use Boda-boda whenever I want to go anywhere. I am now chairman of a savings group called "Boli cup." I'm very proud of my children and our family. Now I am glad to share my story with others, to talk in front of people to make sure that my experience is heard.

I feel I must reach out to other women. I am now a counsellor to the other women because of my changed lifestyle, and people wonder how and what changes my life from very bad to a good one.

The workers of GWED-G should not give up but continue training people. Let the project not get tired of the people for they need training. Training should be given to the youth to spread the message of leaving violence and leaving drinking. Many young girls and young boys can be trained to do this work for gender equality so that all communities benefit.





Apart from training, the project should endeavor to expand the message to local villages rather than gather the people at the sub-county. One on one interaction with each family would work better. This is because when men are invited to attend meetings at the sub-county, most men give excuses and fail to turn up. When the approach targets the home, men have no option but to listen, and the benefits also reach the children as well. Physical contact with the family is made more possible this way.

Other areas like Patek have not yet received the support from the project. In our group of thirty (30) people, we were able to move to reach out to more people deep in the villages.

**My husband was also invited to many group trainings organized by the GWED-G project. After the group training and with the support of Oweka, my husband reformed**

## Rejecting violence Against Women and propagating a culture of peace.

Equipping men with the skills to behave and to think differently about Violence Against Women-Awar Robert's story

**M**y name is Awar Robert. I am 50 yrs old, and I'm from Kulo Otit Paidwe Parish in Bobi sub-county Gulu district. Before I joined the GWED-G project, I was a drunkard and was feared by my wife and children.

It was Oweka Francis, a case manager with GWED-G, who helped me to understand that my heavy drinking was causing problems and needed to change. One day I was visited by Oweka Francis, and together with Olum Samuel, we gathered under a tree, and they talked to me about the need to change the way that I was behaving. When I was later approached by Samuel Olum to attend group training at the sub-county, I was afraid. I feared that it was a ploy to arrest me since my drinking was leading to fights and I was getting into trouble with other people. Later on, I attended the training at sub-county. After the talk at the sub-county, I decided to change.

I realized I was inviting poverty into my home. I used to waste away all the hard-earned money we got from working on the farm together as a family. I would sell the produce and drink all the money without paying school fees for my children. Whenever I would drink, my wife and the children would run away from me and sleep in the bush because I was very aggressive to them. Quarreling and fighting were affecting my family.

One time at a training held at Gulu town, the preacher taught us to live in harmony, and Mr. Oyat taught us about behavior change my drinking behavior. I developed more in-depth knowledge to change my life. Through training, I have now decided in my mind to stop drinking altogether.

I stopped drinking and I am now working together with my wife, Apolo Evelyn, and together we are able to provide better care for my children. My wife now keeps the money we earn when the crop is harvested. I'm closer to my wife and family.

On this project we have also successfully organized our households in groups of 10 people to jointly saving and so that members can borrow in their time of need. As my life changed, my friends and family still cannot believe that I turned my life around. Even my neighbors are amazed and continuously ask what happened. Changing my life was gradual and not very easy. After GWED-G training, I stopped drinking, violence reduced, and became happy and a humble man. I now pay school fees for my children. I have bricklaying as an economic activity. We were advised to work together in groups. I can now plan for my family. GWED-G should expand the project to Paidwe and Palenga Parish to benefit the people that are there as well.

**Though some people spoke negatively about the project because it encourages men to work together with their wives and some see this as undermining men's manhood. I was not discouraged and kept the training messages as key to my life and family.**



## Role Model Men as mediators in securing women's land rights

Mrs. Onyee Akech Hellen, 78yr old widow from Ywaya Village, Anaka Sub-county, Nwoya District

**M**y name is Akech Hellen Onyee. I am a 78-year-old and from Ywaya Village, Anaka Sub-county in Nwoya district. I am a widow and have seven children, four boys, and three girls.

During the war, we took refuge in a camp in Anaka for displaced persons. I lost my husband to the war; he was killed by Lord's Resistance Army rebels in 1999. Because I was married into the family, and because of the children, I had the right to use the land, and I retained the land ownership. After the war, when we returned to the land, many people didn't recognise anything. This is the reason I had a land dispute with my neighbour Odong Camilio.

During the war, Odong Camilio took refuge in Karuma and only returned home in 2013, and since he did not know well the boundary of his father's land, he started farming our land-land that didn't belong to him. My family members and I tried to speak to Odong Camilio, but we failed- our words fell on deaf ears, and he insisted that the piece of land had previously belonged to his father. The LC1 had a meeting to advise Odong Camilio accordingly and traditionally, and the case was settled in favour of my family as the rightful owners.

But unfortunately, Mr. Odong Camilio rejected the decision and appealed to the LC3 of Anaka, Mr. Opobo Geoffrey, to intervene. The LC3 requested Mr. Camilio to bring a report from the LC1 regarding that land mediation. After going through the ruling, he referred him back to appeal before LC1 since he believed that the LCI level would better manage the case.

From July-September 2018, Odong Camilio continued using the land even after the mediation, and ruling favored me as the rightful owner. I decided to approach the Role Model Man Okello Albrito once again to intervene. He approached Mr. Odong Camilio once managed to convince Camilio to participate in the third mediation with the rwot kweri.

The Okello Albrito and the Kweri, together with a few other Area Land committee members, acted as mediators and managed to resolve the conflict with out any further dispute. Mr. Odong Camilio acknowledged that he was in the wrong, and right now, as we speak, he has handed over the piece of land back to me, and we are farming the area peacefully. Meanwhile, we also discovered that the land that Mr. Camilio had a rightfully owned had been sold by a gentleman called Okello Alex, to Mr. Ojok Jacob. Therefore an agreement was reached, and Mr. Okello Alex was tasked to hand over the piece of land back to Mr. Camilio and find another land to give to Mr. Ojok Jacob, and all this was done.

Although the mediation went through many stages, the conflict is finished, and the situation has improved for the better. We were satisfied with the ruling, and are now living peacefully.

**I approached Mr. Okello Albrito, the Role Model Man, after learning that he could be of great help.**



## Human Right Volunteers mediate in land dispute in Bwobonam Parish

My name is Ocaya Richard. I am 42 years old and a resident of Station A village, Bwobonam Parish Alero Sub-county.



Ocen David, a 35-year-old, was encroaching on our customary land measuring three acres without our permission, which led to the dispute between his family and mine. The land in question belonged to my father, the late Mzee Amao. As a family, we tried to resolve the disagreement. We informed the family of Ocen that they were occupying and using our land illegally, but they insisted that our late father, Mzee Amao, had given them the land in dispute.

We approached the elders of the clan for help in settling the dispute, but after several attempts, they referred our case to the LCI Court. But five years on nothing had come of it. Relations between my family and our neighbors worsened.

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What is very important to me is that the GWED-G activities have helped my family to resolve five years of misunderstanding over the land boundary with a neighbor-Ocen David.



However, last year, when I heard of the Human Rights Volunteers working with GWED-G that do land mediation, I felt like there was an opportunity for us to look at better ways to end the conflict. We approached the Human Rights Volunteers to see if they could advise us on how to deal with the matter.

It was a turning point in our case. Our case was handled by the Human Rights Volunteers of Bwobonam Parish Alero Sub-county. The Human Right Volunteers took a keen interest in the case and came to my home to visit my family, and also visited Ocen's family. We, as family members, were allowed to tell our stories. We assessed our situation and agreed that it is better to resolve our disagreement outside the court because it was already stressful and time-consuming.

We recognized as a family that mediation was the wisest approach, and Human Rights Volunteers then notified Mr Odongpiny Mathew a Rwot Kweri trained by GWED-G that we had agreed to try and resolve our differences through negotiation. The Rwot Kweri supported us to identify and demarcate our boundaries to avoid future disputes. We are living harmoniously now.

One of the most important things is that it would have been impossible to change our situation without the support of the Human Rights Volunteers.







## Role Model Man Mediates in Family Land Conflict

My name is Ochola Moses. I am 45 years old and a resident of Omoro District. I have seven children.

**M**y brother Geoffrey Kaunda and I became involved in a long-standing land conflict. Kaunda was forcefully trying to take over family land, including my own and yet we rely on farming for income and for our livelihoods. My brother continuously threatened me over the land. His desire was to sell the land, and he went as far as bringing many potential buyers to inspect the land to sell it off.

My brother reported the matter to the local council chairperson – the first level of dispute resolution in villages. He decided that injunction be placed on the use of the land, which denied us access to the land, not considering what will the family eat as they wait for the case to be settled. Without land, to the farm, I was not able to feed my family or even sell the crop for income. The local council chairperson later proposed referring the conflict to the next level – the Sub County court.

We are still living on and farming the land. We grow potatoes and cassava on the land, which is reducing the risk of hunger in our households.

The mediation secured peace in the home. The outcome and the process helped my brother and me to reconcile our differences and have allowed our children and wives to put aside the disputes between the two of us and move on with their family relationships. My family and my brother's family are now relating freely; unlike before were my children would not cross my brother's compound, and his children would also not reach my place. It was such a shame. We owe a debt of gratitude to Olum Christopher, the Role Model Man.



I was opposed to the idea of selling the land because part of the land still belonged to me. This conflict over land burdened the relationship between our two families. We were not visiting each other anymore. Our children and wives would not even talk to each other because of the conflict between us.

# Rwot Kweri as strategic, culturally grounded players in land mediation:

Obina Jackson's story

**M**y name is Obina Jackson. I am Rwot Kweri (village chief) from Amar in Koch Goma Sub County, Nwoya District.

I participated in the community-based mediation training offered by GWED-G under the DGF fund project "Promoting Human Rights, Peace, and inclusive Governance" in the Acholi Sub-region. The training aimed to strengthen our skills in helping resolve land-related disputes in the community.

The case was referred to me by Area local council I (LCI) of Agonga A Village. Mr. Lakony Robert. The L.C I said that Okot Simon, along with his family members, reported to him in writing on 31st August 2018 that Ojok Kitara has "encroached on their land." Ojok Kitara, the accused, is married Ms, Apiyo Lilly and they have six (6) children and was continuing to use the land as his. I was appointed to mediate between the two families, and I agreed.

I chaired the mediation on 8th September 2018. Mr. Ojok Kitara had been occupying a portion of the land for long and started claiming that the land belonged to him. He claims to ownership was that the land had been given to him by his grandfather. His claims were refuted by the complainant, who said that Ojok Kitara has nothing that attaches him to that land. After endless counter-arguments and threats. But I was able to cope with this case, and I suggested that we tour the land in dispute to gain a better understanding of the cause and nature of the conflict. While on the ground, we quickly realized that Ojok Kitara had cut down some trees for charcoal burning and had planted one hector of Simsim. Aside from this, the accused had no substantial evidence to prove ownership.

**I have had the opportunity to put into practice what I've learned; for example, I have been able to use the skills to resolve a land dispute case in Amar in Koch Goma Sub County.**

We discovered that Okot Simon and his family had a case. Ojok Kitara was encroaching on Okot Simon's land just as claimed. Mr. Ojok Kitara agreed to leave the land to its rightful owners but requested that they should allow him to harvest his crops (simsim) and burn the charcoal.

To resolve matters, Mr. Okot Simon was willing to compromise and agreed to his request, and that was the landmark to the mediation. After the agreement, the two families hugged and afterward ate and drank together as a sign of peace and understanding. As a Rwot Kweri, I plan to expand my work and a better leader for my community.









# Targeting lawmakers and decision-making processes:

Making Space for More Women's Rights Activists:  
Rose Abili's story.

**M**y name is Rose Abili. I'm a councillor representing the people of Bungatira Sub County in Gulu district. I'm also the minister for social services on appointment by the chairman district council. I oversee three departments- education and sports, health and community-based department. Still, during the recent council meeting, the chairman reappointed me to serve in the department of production, marketing and personal resources.

## Education about legal rights and political participation

I want to appreciate GWED-G so much because I gained the confidence that I now have because of the training I got through GWED-G. We received a lot of training and participated in many activities. The first training we received as district councilors were on building our capacity and self-confidence. It inspired me. We learnt that if you don't have confidence in yourself, then how can you expect other people to have confidence in you? It's built me into the person I am today because I learnt that I must have faith in what I do. So that is one thing I picked from GWED-G.

From the training we gained knowledge about the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); what the constitution of Uganda says; how to use the local government act; how to push the women's agenda in the council, how to lobby and campaign.

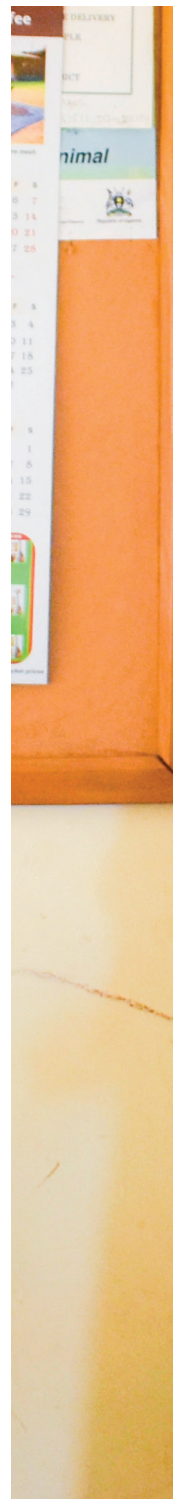
The GWED-G project built our capacities as leaders, and we are here working and serving. That is why some of us now feel that we are confident enough to go and contest in 2021 parliamentary seat.

If you don't have that capacity, or if we don't have this kind of thinking, if you are not well prepared, I don't think you can even decide to contest for parliamentary elections.

## Women Bridging Divisions through Coalition Building

During the training, we also formed a women caucus. We have our district women caucus where all the women in the council are members. I am the vice-chairperson women caucus. We caucus when deliberating in the council. For example, when we were selecting the cabinet or the ministers, stood together as women and pushed through two female candidates to become ministers in the executive of the district. We now have two ministers, that is me as the minister for social, and then there was one who was the minister for production, marketing and natural resources.

Secondly, as the women's caucus, we've done a lot with GWED-G, especially in reaching to the grass root people. The project supported us to reach the community we want to achieve. Because sometimes it is not easy for us with the meagre resources we have in the district. We face challenges because communities expect a lot from the councilors or leaders, of which sometimes we use our partners to support us to reach them. The GWED-G project helped us to reach our community. We did a lot of community engagement.





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All the training and capacity development we got has woken us up as leaders. And now when you compare other district leaders from other districts with the district leaders from Acholi sub-region, you will see a difference. We are different, and the level of debate we have is that of parliament. Although sometimes we get into heated debates during council meetings, that's how a councilor has to be because a counselor who cannot debate is not a counselor. All these techniques we got from GWED-G.

### **Helping women gain an awareness of their rights and to put these rights into practice**

We even trained community members, especially women, to know their rights and responsibilities because we, as women, sometimes misuse our rights. Women can exploit rights as an excuse to be disrespectful to their husbands, which is not the right thing. We managed to go to the community, to talk to our women to know their rights and responsibilities.

Thirdly, women face a lot of challenges when it comes to the issue of land. We don't own land, whether at our original home where you are born, even where you are married. So with this GWED-G project, we wanted to see that women wake up. We should not be treated that way. There must be a way of also giving us the opportunity as women because we are the mother; we are the people who always raise the family. So we also need to empower our women to know that we are not slaves to work on those lands, we need to own the land as women. So we also went and talked to our women about land matters, and they should not be used as slaves in that family, whether in your home or in your husband's family, where you are born. So women were trained on land issues, on how they should go about it when they are facing challenges. All this was done with the support from GWED-G.

In our women's caucus, we managed to mediate in a land grabbing case in Gwengdiya parish in Awach Sub County where a man wanted to grab land from a woman. This woman upon losing her husband and came back to her native home but the brother denied her access to any land and was chasing her away until we intervened. We brought the issue to the attention of LC1, but the man was intimidating everyone, so we forwarded the case to the LC2. But here again, the man was untouchable because he worked as a police officer and he would intimidate everyone. The final thing we did, we brought the issue to the chairman LC5, and the chairman LC5 intervened. He called for a community meeting whereby all community are invited, and everyone got a chance to talk about the land and what they think should be done, until

the man was defeated. As we speak, the woman is cultivating the land in peace.

There is also another one in my sub-county, Bungatira, whereby the issue became so bad, one man who also worked as an army officer went and grabbed land from the community, not from an individual but an entire community. They invited us, we went and talked with my counterpart the councilor for men without bringing in the women caucus, because some of these we go direct. In our sub-county, we try. If you find that it is beyond, then you bring in the women caucus. So we decided it was impossible. We then brought the issue to the LC5; it was impossible. The chairman advised us to go to the RDC because he is now the resident and our elder; we respect how he handles matters. We took the issue to the RDC, and the problems were handled, and the land was given back to the community who were there, who were affected. We tried. Much as you cannot do it 100% but we are trying, as leaders.

As a women's caucus, we tabled issues about the very deplorable state of health facilities, we tabled problems of school dropouts, the absenteeism problem at the health facilities, issues of maternity wings at the sub-county level that was badly in need of repairs, and all these were worked upon. For example, Rwotobilo health centre II in Bungatira Sub County has also been worked upon, and it was a petition. There was also one Omel health centre II in Omel sub-county- the former Paicho. One of it was maternity wing at Omel health centre II which was brought as a petition from the community. The district took it over, and it has been renovated very well. A petition brought from Omel Sub County about a rotten bug-infested maternity ward was tabled before the council. Right now, as I speak, it has been renovated, thoroughly, with all the equipment, including beds and mattresses. The district was responsive because the issue was submitted; it was acted upon. If it not acted upon, immediately it is put in the plan. There's also Lapeta health centre II. These were very bad maternity wards unsafe for mothers should go and deliver in. But right now it is changed because we pushed for it.



The project uses role model men. We call them 'Iacor ma kwiri' in our language. We identify and training men for them to be exemplary to others so that they talk to other men who are torturing women, who are always battering women, who are taking women as slaves, all the time fighting them, beating women. Role model men speak to their fellow men so that the issue of GBV is minimized. So all this engagement came because GWED-G looked into that. They brought it up as an idea, they shared it, and we picked it up. We found that GBV is rooted in issue of empowering women and leaving men behind, so we found the best way to be done is to bring men on board so that men also talk to their fellow men so that the issue of GBV is minimized in our families, in our community, in schools,

### Working with Role Model Men to shift gender norms and practices of all community members

We've also managed to address the issue of GBV in the community. You cannot do away entirely with GBV, but it has to be reduced. So this is one of the achievements we got. When you move around, GBV is there but at least not like before. At least it is minimized much as it is there. It is not entirely done away with yet, but at least we have done something.

Even when men who are finding difficulties with their women, they come to consult us; they don't fight. We always tell them that instead of fighting, seek help from someone who can go and talk to your wife if maybe your wife is misbehaving. Even for women, if your husband is in the misbehaving, try reaching out to family members, the elders who are there at home. So before you go to the police, come to us leaders, we share, we see how we can mediate. If you feel the mediation is not working and the man has become a severe threat to your life that is when the police will come in. Because when you take a man to police when the issue is not yet beyond, even the family members turn against you. So these are all that we have done with GWED-G.

### Skills training for economic empowerment

Above all, our men and women are engaged in economic activities within their community. We always go and talk to all the Village Savings and Loan Associations about the issue of human rights, and we even talk about child protection which is also very crucial. Because when you engage yourself in economic activities, you tend to forget the child there, and you find the children are being defiled. A girl 5-6 years comes back from school, the mother is not there, she goes to the neighbors, and there she is raped. You find that our children are getting involved in all these kinds of things. So we also bring in the component of child protection. Much as you do your activities outside the home; you have gone to the garden, you are even sitting in the market because we don't need to beg, that is the situation we are in now. We told our women when you sit at home and ask your husband; you become an enemy to your husband, you will even be abused. Get up and find something to do. So all our community members, most of our community members are now engaged in something to earn a living. We also tell them that when you are going out to do those things to look for an income, remember to ensure the children that they are working for is safe. All these interventions, we were supported by GWED-G.

But there are also challenges which we face the council or as the caucus. Much as we are also pushing for women to be in certain positions, we also need to see the capability of someone to be in that position.

We were given lists of policies; the CEDAW, the constitution, the local government act, domestic act, there are many policies. We pile them, but we often don't read. We should encourage women in leadership to get a reading culture.

Even these documents we always get when we go for training you come and throw it there, you don't read because of many reasons.

I also think when doing sensitisation and advocacy, let's go directly to the community than calling councillors or the women council for a meeting in the district. We call them to be part of the community at the grass-root level if we want to see the impact. So that whatever we are going to discuss will be at the grass-root level.





## Local people as programme agents

Human Rights Volunteers as Trusted Community Advisors:  
Olweny Chris's story



**M**y name is Olweny Chris, and I'm from Amuru district, Lamogi Sub County. I participated in the project as Human right volunteer for Lamogi sub-county. My role in this project, first of all, has been to sensitize the people. Then I also follow up with some cases of domestic violence and human rights violations in our sub-county. But GWED-G has also empowered me with knowledge because now I train people about agronomy, about climate change, Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) and on many things.

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I stopped in senior one (1), but if I compare the work I am doing in the community, what I am doing now is beyond where I stopped.



That is why I am very proud of GWED-G. To be sincere, I have to pray for the GWED-G teams; if any project can come, my prayer is that the organisation gets the support.

Before the project, the situation was not okay; people didn't know their rights, and people were violating the rights of other people. For example, the defilement cases were rampant in our community, violation of the rights of women, like some parents don't send their girls to school. But the project came, we started sensitizing people, telling their rights, everyone has equal rights to go to school. And we have been talking about the defilement and land issues.

**Before the project, the situation was not okay; people didn't know their rights, and people were violating the rights of other people. For example, the defilement cases were rampant in our community, violation of the rights of women, like some parents don't send their girls to school**

The many land issues problems affecting the community, you know Some people think that widows don't have the right to own their land and that if a woman loses her husband, she has no right to remain in that area. To some extent, the intention is to chase widow away. But the orphans also, the way they are treating the orphans, it is not fair. For example, there is a widow called Atimango; she lost her husband, then the brother-in-law wanted to sell that land which the husband of Atimango left for the children. So, we went and sat those children down, we discussed with them and other elders, with the help of GWED-G and this project. That land grabber understood, and we brought back the land to the widow. Up to now, the lady is staying in that land.

Now the project is going on, and people now understand that women have the right to own land. You know GBV comes on the period of harvesting crops from the gardens. During the time of planting in the garden, you find that the place is very peaceful.

But when it comes to the harvesting period, the men take what's harvested to sell, and it is the men who collect payment. For example, in my community, it is the men who take that groundnuts and rice to Gulu. The man sells rice and peanuts and controls the income. So, you find women do a lot of the work but benefit little. Some men sell and collect the proceeds from the harvest, you find that they avoid going home, and they instead get another woman to cohabit within the town center. They only return home once they have wasted all the money. Women do not get a fair share of the proceeds. And you find that their children are all at home unable to go to school.

That is when problems arise-If the women try to complain about the money, that is when the quarreling and fighting starts. Now this project is bringing a lot of change. If you go to the community, first of all, at least we see reduced GBV problems in the community. We targeted GBV affected households- with violent men. We have been working together with these men-training them to change them to become role models. They have now changed.

Some men were taking marijuana, but now with the help of this project, they are changed. They are currently staying together with their families. At least if they have some money, they share with their wife and children. We also went up to schools to sensitize, because if a school is not a safe environment free from sexual exploitation, girls will continue to lose out. And if you go to schools also, at least the cases of defilement have reduced. Perpetrators in the defilement of school girls include men in business.

You know many of these young girls come from a place where they cannot even afford necessities like buying sanitary towels. So when the man offers a young girl in this situation gifts in exchange for different favors, they can allow the men to take advantage of them.

Some teachers are also perpetrators, like last week, there is a primary teacher who used his power to defile a girl of P6 from Musalaba primary school. I got a report from Musalaba Primary School and contacted the chairman of the PTA and the school management. We then discussed to report the case to the police. The police came in and arrested that teacher, and is now on remand in Amuru.

Not only that, last Sunday, there is a boy who takes marijuana and alcohol, he defiled his sister. So that case also was reported to me, so I forwarded the matter to the police. So with the support of the police, I took the girl to the health center, Kaladima, where the girl was treated and got the medicine-PEP. The culprit was also arrested and taken to Amuru police station, where he is remanded in custody awaiting trial in court.

Defilement is still there, but it is not as rampant as before this project. At least it is reduced. But I cannot say it is entirely not there. Although some of them are still doing, because you cannot stop at once, but if you compare before this project and as this project is now ongoing, at least people are soon coming up, they are now understanding.

Most GBV cases are from parishes, where these role model men are not reaching all parishes. Some of the parishes don't have role model men, and these communities are missing out on getting the services of role model men. You know this project targets one area, and in the areas where those model men are working, these parishes are okay. Although the cases are there, but we do not receive as many instances. Like for me, as a case manager, I work with Lamogi Sub County, but for the role model men, they can work within their parishes.

Like in Lamogi, we have eight (8) parishes; however, this project covered only three (3) parishes meaning that five (5) parishes stay without role model men, and these are the areas getting a lot of problems.

That is the difference, and it is in areas not covered by the project where we are receiving many cases. In these communities, men are still violent, and in others, families are not sending their daughters to school. The girls stay at home to learn household chores and may go on to marry and have children at a young age, and do not have the opportunity to explore and develop their full potential. That is where we are getting the problems.

The communities who are now changing their minds; these are the people who are getting clear information; these are the people who were benefitting for having the project in their parish. But in communities not receiving the message every day, those people for whom the project is not in their parishes, those are the communities from which we are registering where we are receiving many cases of violence.

### Why do I do this work?

First of all, you cannot believe I am in the position I am now. I have my wife, and I have three children. Before, I do not know how things would have turned out with my family if it were not for the intervention of GWED-G. You know, back then, before I started working with GWED-G, I was also doing somethings that were not okay. After GWED-G enrolled me in their system, I changed. In all the communities, I am often an example to other people. A few years back, you know me, I was in this position. Now I have changed from that position, and I am here now. So if you change also, it means you are going to be like me.

I now find that it is crucial to change other people because when they change, they will see the light. They can come from the darkness and come in the light when we work together so that we can fight those things which are not okay in the community, and it's going to be good.

That's why I am working with the police, elders, and sub-county officials. We have been doing community policing with the police, moving in the community talking to the people. I am the one who is now organizing, saying, please let us go and talk to these people in this place and this place. You know we were in a war for a long time, and people think the work of the police is to arrest people, and they don't see the work of the police. Being a case manager, at least I work to build the relationship between the community and the police officers so that when they can see the police, they do not run away. They can listen to what the police have to say to them.

I am happy because, in some areas, men can accompany women to go to the hospital for family planning, and they can take their children also to get this medication and whatever. I am very proud of it because I have changed the lives of other people.

Even if I change the life of one person, that person is going to be the right person that is my one achievement. Like there is a girl from Paka who the father denied not to continue with school, I am the one who went and talked to the father last year, but one and that child went and sat for the Primary Living Examination (PLE). She was the best in the entire Amuru district. So I was very proud, then I treat that girl as my daughter now. When I go home, that person is going to help me in the future.

What makes this work challenging, some of the leaders where this project is not, they think that if you go to help other people from their places, and they may feel that you are taking their roles or you are chasing them away from their work, because we are working for free. But for our leaders, once you table a case before them, they can demand you pay us this per month. But for us, we do not require anything.

But another thing which can make our work difficult, you know we don't have suitable transport means. We have been given the bicycle since last time. You see, the bicycles of these days are very weak.

Sometimes we experience challenges. If you get a phone call, please come and help us in this area, you find that it is very far was, like the cases of defilement and rape, one must respond immediately- you do not have to take extended time because you have to seek help for the victim within 72 hours to get treatment. So it means that if I have to transport the victim sometimes as far as Gulu. Remember this is voluntary work, and sometimes, victims seek help when I don't have money to get a bodaboda, and yet bicycle cannot make the journey, That one can become a challenge to support the victim.

Now for the government, as I gave you the example of defilement and rape. If the government can put some funds for such cases, it is going to be good. Because sometimes, if you report such incidents to the CDO, they will say for us we don't have money in the sub-county for this matter, look for the NGOs where they can help this person. So if the government can plan, they put some funds for that emergency in the sub-county, it will be good so that they can help other NGOs which can be supporting those people. And you find that the government leaves all that work to the NGOs, and you see the NGOs have the period where their projects work and when the projects end. It means that things that happened when the project is not there, victims of abuse have nowhere to be taken. When you go to police, police charges you for picking the police form to pay 5000, but in the villages, we have vulnerable people who cannot afford to get this 5000/= to get this police form.

The police are not supposed to demand any money, but they do. Whether the perpetrator is 15 meters away, they will ask you to give them transport of 15000 to go and arrest that perpetrator. And where are people expected to get that 15,000/= or they can charge you 20,000/= Which discourages victims from seeking help.

And sometimes even when you pay, if the police go there and find that the perpetrator has run away, it means that the money spent is wasted.



The victim has to get additional money so that they can try and locate the whereabouts of the perpetrator that means you pay twice. That is why some people decide not to report the cases to the police officers. That is why I thank GWED-G. GWED-G now printed many police forms and has given to many police stations where we are working so that if any case happens, which needs police forms. We tell them you give this one free for our community.

But I thank GWED-G because there has been some change for cases that come across to their desk, the police and medical workers now respond very fast. That is why they are helping many people in the community.

The government also has to talk to medical workers at the health center, because when you take any client for medical examination, they can charge that person 30000 for examining that person. Then if you call them for the meeting, they can deny, they can say "aah for us we do that thing freely".

But if you take that thing there personally like me, they can charge you, if you don't have that 30000 we are not going to examine that person. If you ask that health worker, what is that 30000 you want for? Health workers say they need that 30000 for transportation because if the perpetrator is to be taken to court, the health worker has to use their transport to go to present the evidence. The government needs to talk to the police and medical workers so that they can be fair to our community.

GWED-G should expand this project to all the parishes. There are other parishes where we have not reached families facing GBV. GWED-G can also give us more training so that they can build our capacity so that we can continue with our work. We received training, but still, there is a gap. The training I am looking at is on climate change, you know we are farmers, people are destroying the forest so if they can continue training us on climate change. Not only that If they can still build our capacity on human rights, how to document, and the way how we can mediate in land issues, that would be good.





## Communities now have many positive role models:

“First they changed themselves, and are now inspiring change in those around them”- **Aber Hellen Uma**

**M**y name is Aber Hellen Uma, the woman councillor representing the people of Paicho and Unyama Sub County in Gulu district local government. In the district, I am on the committee of social services. The committee covers health, education, sports, and the welfare of the community. Being on this committee has helped me achieve a lot with the knowledge and skills GWED-G has been teaching us. With the knowledge and skills given to us by GWED-G, we went out, and we tried to make it ourselves. Now we are the pioneers from the GWED-G.

Leadership wise, our women are overcoming their lack of literacy and getting as involved in any way they can in community leadership; they are role models in the community. Before when it came to leadership, women believed that once a woman is married, her work is in the kitchen, the garden, and bearing children.

That's all. But on the project, we sensitised these women, to let them know their rights, what they should be doing or what they could do; some of them have now taken up leadership positions.



Because of the project, we see more women taking up posts as VSLA chairpersons and secretaries. And we also have women who have come up as Local Council One (LC1s). We also have one of our Local Council Three (LC3) Chairperson who is also in the caucus, the LC3 of Padeko, and she's a woman. GWED-G has helped us a lot.

#### **Monitoring of public services at the local level**

The project has helped us create structures because we have now gone as far as having the sub-county women caucuses. From the district, we have gone to the sub-county women caucus. Now from there we are going to the village, and from the village, everyone will be on board, then everything will run smoothly.

As women caucus, we monitor health centers and even schools. In health, we have found a lot of challenges in maternal health. When we go to health centers, we find bedding and other material that mothers use in the labor ward are not enough. We even discovered a lot of bedbugs in some health centers and even in the maternity rooms. For example, the Lapera health center in Oyam Sub County had no maternity ward. Because GWED-G has also taught us and given us skills to find women's issues and try to solve them or at least do something about the women issue, we brought together the community, and we petitioned the district as the women's caucus. As we speak now, this financial year 2019/2020, Lapera has been given Seventy (70,000,000) Million for the construction of a maternal ward. We even went as far as Omel in Paicho Sub County here, we also got together as the women's caucus and lobbied a development partner, and a maternity ward has been constructed for the women.

Now when we are monitoring schools, we look at the dropouts. We have 55 primary schools in the district, and the dropout rates for girls are high in all schools. Both boys and girls are dropping out of school, but that of the girls is massive.

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The most important outcome for me is that the project has given rise to positive role models- people that others in the community can look up to and copy. We have both female and male role models.

Family wise, we also have men, husbands who are doing very well; they are also role models in the community and they are influencing and motivating their community members to strive to uncover their true potential and overcome challenges to improve their lives. When the community sees these role models, they compare themselves with them, and they also try to push themselves up; “I would also like to be like this one, I would like my child to be like this one's daughter who got an education and has done something useful for the community. “I would like to be like wife or husband because the family is living in peacefully and there is no quarrelling and fighting in that home.”



In P1, P2, P3, most kids are in school, but children start dropping from P4, P5 when it comes to P7 completion rates fall to below 20-30%. Looking into these problems, we have come to notice that the guardians and parents often look at this girl child in the form of money when they grow up; they feel like they should get married and bring them wealth. When you have a lot of girls, that is the number of cows or cattle you will have. So when a girl reaches P6, P7- 14, 15, she is considered ready, and so the unfortunate child is married off at a young age.

You also find that when it comes to the time of uprooting the crop from the field girls are being kept away from school. Now that we are in August, September, October, the girls miss out on attending school to help out in the garden. We also have the discos during market days. The market days held once a month on weekdays in villages always end with a disco dance and this is where our girls get into a lot of trouble because some get impregnated and drop out of school. Some fail to attend school. Now, what have we done for these girls? As the women's caucus, we have been going to the villages to sensitize the community on why supporting education for girls is essential.

I remember going to Te-got Atoo primary school in Paicho, and there we talked to parents during the annual general meeting. We mainly focused on maternal health and drop out of girls in schools; these are the key issues we have been working as the women's caucus.

Now we also went as far as sensitising women that they have the rights to the land. Now, which land? One is their place of origin- motherland. Where a girl child is born, she has the right, a percentage of that land. And woman also has the right to the land in their marital homes. But some of our women are not aware that a woman has the right of the land from both their motherland and matrimonial homes. They believe that once a woman is married, then land belonging to your husband is all one has.

As a result, even when a woman is suffering, even when the man's relatives want to kill her, a woman stays and bears this mistreatment because she feels she has no land from her place of origin.

**Mainly the village women's caucuses are comprised of VSLA group members. When the groups sit for the VSLA, they include women's issues on the agenda and see what can be done.**

Now we have established a women's caucus starts at the sub-county level, and they can identify issues at the sub-county and escalate them to the district level. Mainly the village women's caucuses are comprised of VSLA group members. When the groups sit for the VSLA, they include women's issues on the agenda and see what can be done. Because sometimes you find some women drink more than men, you see them falling along the road, especially on auction days. So, in our VSLA groups we discuss and approach these individuals and dialogue with them and see what they can do to change their ways.

#### Access to collective savings and credit

As a women's caucus we have also started "Kalulu" where we collect money together as a women's caucus and take turns to receive the lump sum payment. We started this because, as leaders and as women in the caucus, we should be exemplary by having at least something or doing something that brings you an income. We are about 15, and each of us contributes 200,000/= per month. The first person receives the first payment and then the next person in line. We also contribute to an emergency fund, so when someone has a problem, we pick from there and assist them.

### Education about legal rights and political participation

As a women's caucus the project supported us to do a lot of sensitization and create awareness so that people understand women's rights. But more community sensitization is needed. Even with all this sensitization that's ongoing to the community, it is just a drop in the ocean- only a few people that have gotten this information. Those who are in the VSLA are those who have gained and benefitted from sensitization efforts. The rest have not got anything we are doing. So by making them know what is there, I think they can come up, even in leadership when they know their rights, understand the law, they can protect themselves.

### Advocacy with regard to issues of sexual and gender-based violence and property rights.

You see, in creating awareness to the community, the government has left it entirely to the development partners. If they could also join hands with the development partners, and then all the stakeholders starting from the leaders, the technocrats, like the CDOs, and likes to help the community, I think the community will do better.

Role Model Men have led to a drop in Gender-Based Violence; it's not as bad as it used to be. The GBV rate has gone down, it's not so much. But then there is now this problem of the raping of the girls, we tried, but the police are not very helpful.

The police know they should not demand payment from victims, but they still do it anyway. We have attempted to talk to the police in vain. You speak to the police officers now, and we agree that victims should not be charged, but as soon as you turn around, they will do the complete opposite.

Because you find a poor woman who has no money, the child has been raped, and you still have to pull out something for your girl child to be examined and see if they can give the PEP. In such a scenario, you find the poor woman who has nothing altogether leaves the case, and there the child goes.

Even with these land rights and land disputes, a rich man will go and close up the case, and that's the end of it. If you are a poor woman, they rub you off, and your land goes. That is the problem nowhere in the community. You try and try; they look at you as an enemy. But we are not giving up.

Now that GWED-G has come through the district, now it has expanded and gone down to the sub-counties if it could expand more to the villages, I think that would be better. Expand those programs to the villages, let them know who they are, know their rights, know the laws, and know what they can do for them that will be better.

## Gender as an asset: Running “as women” Akidi Molly’s story

Akidi Molly during documenting her life change  
on the September 2019





**M**y name is Akidi Molly, and I am 44 years old. Previously I served as woman counsellor Aromo Sub County, but I am currently the interim chairperson LC III of Aremo Sub County. I took office on the 30th/07/2019.

The sensitisation training that I got through GWEDG prepared me for this elective position- as women councillors were trained to ensure that we can carry out successful campaigns. We received training on how to make good speeches and present them with confidence. We learned about our mandate in the council, and it helped me understand what I am supposed to do. It's good because if I can do my job correctly, I can contribute more to my community and win the respect of my constituents.

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I gained the confidence to lobby my fellow counsellors to vote for me, basing on my capabilities. I was determined that I would make it through after convincing my fellow counsellors to nominate me among competing councillors. When I was nominated and seconded, I emerged the winner.

### Cultivating a core constituency of women on the basis of gender identity

Through the training that I got from GWEDG, I have been able to meet with women in my constituency to understand specific challenges women in the sub-county are facing, and I've been able to table to their concerns during council meetings. We have started seriously allowing our constituents to raise issues, present evidence or information, debate, and discuss and participate.

In Aremo Sub County, we formed a women's caucus. We are using this platform to organise ourselves and voice our concerns without being tied up in party ideology. Although we have not passed any by-laws yet since Aremo is a new sub-county, usually when there are council meetings, we sit down as caucus. We identified our problems, prioritised it, and we pick one person among us to table the motion before the council, and the rest of us second the motion. But many women have not been in leadership due to lack of education. Lack of literacy is putting most women down; even getting a woman with an Ordinary Certificate is hard to find in this village.

Secondly, the mindset of men towards women has continued to be a challenge. The primary fear among men is that once a woman is in a leadership position and has money, she becomes big-headed. Lack of understanding between the husbands and wives results in a lack of communication and coordination of ideas and plans, which leaves men too insecure, and they look for other ways to assert themselves. But even as women, we are not supportive of each other, and this has continued to hinder our progress.

**The project has encouraged women councillors that it is possible to push and run as women and encourages us to persevere ahead, despite difficulties.**

## Peer support is making all the difference in boosting women's representation

Promoting women to be elected or appointed into leadership positions



**M**y name is Lalam My name is Lalam Betty Kilama. I am 35 years old and a resident of Ongako Sub County in Omoro district. I am a teacher by profession and businesswoman; and the Chairperson Women Council Ongako Sub-county.

I spent the first years of my political career working as “agent” to promote women candidates in election campaigns and to influence people to vote for them during elections for local government. I picked interest in assisting women in the running for, and so I became an agent. Agents are essential in many ways. First, they are the candidate’s messengers and foot soldiers. Because as a candidate, you are only one, but you have many areas to cover, you have many meetings, and you have many activities to be done. So sometimes you use agents to represent and speak on your behalf. Sometimes you need to get agents who are morale boosters only, but then you also have to get those who will be tough to protect your interests.

Secondly, agents support you in monitoring the election process. Sometimes as a candidate, you are not allowed to move, but your agents are free to move on your behalf. They check the ballot papers, and they guard the ballot box. I supported the incumbent in Gulu; I participated as her agent. But in 2016, When the Omoro district created as a district. I saw it as an opportunity for me to contest since this is my home area. I started politics by joining the by-election of Omoro for the Woman Member of Parliament.

It is discouraging and causes some potential women shy away from the candidature for elective posts. Some women respond to such kind of intimidation. They fear insults; they look at their marital status and look at their background. These women will say, ‘we are not able. Where are we going to start? We do not even own anything.’

Women question everything- Do I own land? Do I own assets? Am I educated? Politics here is, therefore, a reserve for the well-off women. It is tough for an ordinary woman to get into politics. During election campaigns, it is the candidate who has money and who can spend more and promise more carry the highest votes - they sit back and send people on the ground, “go and give this one 5000/=”, you are just there verbally. Women who often participate in the leadership process are women who are able in so many ways.

Today’s politics, you need to have plenty of money to run, you need money to campaign and reach out to the communities. Sometimes rich men ask you to sleep with them when you approach for support so that they can give you money for your campaign. When you refuse, they run to support your opponent. I could not. I thought of having a good reputation and spoiling my name. So sometimes we lose because of such kinds of things happening. It sounds funny when you hear men making such offers, but this is affecting us.

**It is tough for a woman to contest. Many times, our electoral process oppresses women starting at the party level, we begin judging women who want to be selected as political party candidates and bringing them down. At the party level, they look at your background; whom are you married to? Which family have you come from? How many assets do you have? Do you have enough money? Those are the kinds of things they first look at, not what vision or an issue that a candidate wants to struggle for and achieve.**



Two, loyalty in the political parties around us is not fixed in mind. For instance, we can agree that I am the flag bearer of DP. But without your knowledge the top party officials in DP can sit and agree Betty is not the right person. Let us rally behind the candidate of FDC. Have you seen that? Even within the party itself there is no loyalty. Other times the woman candidate, the party, chooses may, if elected, be more loyal and accountable to the party and sometimes they add no value to the status of women because they are at the mercy of top party officials which prevents them from delivering results that will benefit the women, who voted for her.

Even choosing agents is not easy. You need to pay your campaign agent and keep them motivated. A woman candidate must have sufficient money to transport potential agents to rallies, feed them, print tee shirts, fliers and on top of that give them money to buy their time. Agents need money, or they can move from your camp to your opponent's camp if you have not given them enough money. They will weigh, 'how am I going to benefit during this campaign? Before ending the election, I must have much money in my pocket as an agent. So I have realised that poverty is a key devil in this politics today.

So this is where I was so impressed with the project that GWED-G came out with it. A year ago, GWED-G convened us a local women council to work together, and we started talking to the community, we would sit down, discuss and share to get an idea of what the most serious challenges women face which make it difficult for them to participate; whether in cultural leadership, political leadership. So women gave us much information. Fear is the most common barrier.

**We sat down again and thought, what can we do?** That is where we came together and began to advocate to let women know precisely what is required to be leaders, and then we gave them leadership skills- about campaigning, public speaking, and self-assertion. Are you able to talk to the people? How do you speak to the people?

We encouraged women to take part in meetings and made sure that the women had a chance to talk so they can get used to speaking in public. We also supported them to prepare issues to present so that they knew what they wanted to say before they had to say it in public. Speaking and knowing that my fellow women will support you if I get nervous has given many women confidence and strength to speak up in front of people. We started from there. Now Women have become community leaders and lobbyists.

We did not end there. Fortunately, around that time, the opportunity presented itself- six new sub-counties were created in Omoro District. So, we said no, this time, let's push these women and see if some of them can join in with all the skills we have given them. This is impressive even male candidates conceded and could be heard complaining. This issue of GWED-G coming to Omoro- teaching and training women to beat us severely in elections. But we made it. By influencing the women slowly, they too gained courage.

Even us, like women of my level, sometimes we don't also encourage fellow women, we want them to remain there. As an agent you don't even want to promote them, you don't want to groom them, so in case anyone wants to come up with the leadership mind, you find us knocking them down, do not come, you are not able, I am going to give you this.

The project gave us information on women's land rights. Women used to think if you don't have money to buy your land, then you have to struggle to get a share from your late husband. But it is not that easy. We have come to realize that many women deep in the village there have lived more than 30 years with their husbands without marrying them. But now you see women's confidentiality stand up and say 'I have a right from my parents, even from my husband, even my clan. Without this project, we would also not be able to it.

As a woman caucus, the project supported us to begin dialogues with clan leaders on can help women acquire assets and to develop ideas to realize women's land rights. We said to them, you know women always get married without going with assets, but we are part of the clan. How can the clan help women so that there is equality- if men are allocated land, how about women? Why should a woman not have the same right to own land as her brother? This one has given some percentage for us women to have some share equally with men, and the men are understanding by the way. It is only the approaches used by women in the past that were not strategic; we always go when we are shading tears when things have fallen apart.

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We have also realised that the project has contributed a lot. Women now know their rights. I have a right to this; I have a right to say this, I have a right even to visit any government office, I have a right to express my heart. But they also emphasised that before you think that, you have a right, we should think about the best approach. How do you approach government offices for help? The methods to use to ensure success and processes of reaching the offices were also made clear to us.

But we've been telling women to start talking to their husbands, approach their families and clan leaders for help when things have not come to the worst situation. And they've understood. At least we have experienced some equality.

So the team GWED-G came to us and advised us to come together and to form a women caucus. Now we can address our issues minus party differences. So even if I am in NRM, also if you don't have a party, when we sit in one room, we look at ourselves as women. So what affects me, if it's not affecting you right now may affect your daughter? So there is more solidarity in dealing with our issues

GWED-G has done activities that have allowed us to get to know about government initiatives set up, which women can benefit from. You find that this project called UWEP offers an economic opportunity for women to step out of poverty, but we didn't know how to get it, but GWED\_G called every woman leader around, then we had a dialogue. It opened our eyes, and we did not see that we had so many projects in the sub-county which would have benefited us! It is only when this project has come. We would hear people have got the UWEP project, and they are going with it to do their own business; the rest of the women sit there, not knowing when to apply or how to apply. But now, as we talk, women are writing projects by themselves to get funds for economic activities. What women need is an opportunity to change things in their life, and they have gladly made use of this opportunity.

Because of the project, the relationship between the women's caucus and people in our constituency has grown. As a women's caucus us we don't sit there in sub-counties; we have to identify villages which have problems, which need our words. So we are able to meet and dialogue with the local communities, some groups like VSLA. We teaching them on leadership skills. That is what we always tell them- even if you are not holding a leadership position, in your home, you have to behave like a leader.

Every time we are saying to, then don't be beggars; generate your plan of action for you won family. We are also encouraging the groups to have their projects. To think about how to get money, not every time you should be running for a loan, struggle from unknown to unknown. So that is what the caucus is doing right now. Like in my area in Ongako, we came up with an idea; since the government wants to support women, they should not help women only from 18 and above, we also have young girls growing up. And when you see the processes of education, it mostly affects young girls more. When you don't help a child of P1 to P7 to study well, you don't support the education, and there is none scholastic, the road is also impassable, the school is not running effectively, what do we do as women in caucus?

**I have seen and learned that we must not only look at the issue of money. What we have realised is that the training that we had has given us a lot of knowledge. We can deal with our problems without getting money. Sometimes it is just a matter of talking, sharing.**

What we have identified under education since the government is paying under UPE, If the government is giving 30% of UPE money to every child, we have to say the 30% should be for boys, for girls, it should be 45%. At least this is going to encourage young girls to complete their school and become successful.

We realized that because of the effects of the war, we have many girls dropping out of school, young girls, and they are getting married before reaching the age of 18. And when you look at them, some are even older than me because of neglect.

And as I speak right now, there is a girl who is in prison right now; she gave birth when she was 15. The husband has been even slaughtered during a robbery at left to die by the roadside. She is an orphan. The uncle, who is supposed to take care of her, is mentally disturbed. So they got some disagreement between her and the uncle. With that young baby, the girl decided to move to Gulu, but she

struggled and failed to find a way to survive.

One day her child was crying too much, she has picked one drug from home, and that drug was for the mental people, she gave to the child, and the child died. When we followed up on her story, and we realize many people like the young girl are under high levels of stress, with nobody to help them cope. Then we thought, what can women in caucus do? So we have also formed another team, counseling team, out of the caucuses, we counsel such kinds of girls in the community. Not only girls, but we have also started receiving males coming for counseling. So you see how this project has benefitted in the community.

We can solve our issues minus going to the police, minus going to political leaders. So it has reduced crime in the community. Even within the family, we can sit with families going through stress and say, let us see how best we can handle this before it gets out of hand. We don't want any person to lose a life here. Even land issues, we can address it with this of women caucus.

You have talked of the most significant change, this for me is the most significant change. Go anywhere in our sub county, ask about GWED-G, out of all the projects that GWED-G had, you will still hear that women's voices have been heard. It is a success, a significant achievement for the people of Omoro.

You know gender-based violence is affecting women seriously, you realize men have left everything to women. And when you sit down with these women they say 'only me what do I have in this world?' and they always say "I am a mere woman."



But we tell the women not to be discouraged when men neglect their primary role of looking after their families. Even if a man ignores the children, do something! Support your own children. Look at me, look at her, we were giving examples of ourselves, are we not able to support our children? It's not that you should be having a husband and then you support your family.

First of all, the majority of women in the village are farmers. Now, if you do not have access to land, where will you cultivate? It has affected their production process; if a woman may wish to plant two acres of cassava, but if she doesn't have land, she ends up planting a quarter of an acre. Won't it affect her livelihood? So the level of production has reduced. Farming is the way women earn a living, and it has brought them much poverty. Women do not own land, they don't have a voice because they don't have land, and since you don't have land, you cannot plant. If you cannot plant, where will you get the money?

### **How does a caucus work?**

We looked at each position we have in the community then we picked one from the cultural sector, the religious sector we also picked one because we have issues in the church; when they are sitting down as mothers union in the church, they also have problems that can be brought straight from church that are affecting women. We also brought in councilors, local councilors, women representatives because they sit in the council. Because when we have a council meeting according to the government setting, not every person who sits in the counseling room should speak. So it is though the chairperson of the women caucus, we are able to table the agenda and pass it through to this women's council.

When it is time for the council meeting, the women council presents it to a broader audience as an issue to be addressed that affects the women in the community. So we have looked in all these sectors, areas of leadership.

So that is how we can know issues affecting the wider community. Because when you talk to cultural leaders what happens in our cultural setting, do they allow women to talk?

Do they give women a chance also to take part in leadership if it is not there? Who is there? What can you say? Talk to Rwot, tell Rwot, you see these women are quiet there, they have many issues, they have gender-based violence them, men have left everything on women. So we want the clan leaders to raise our concerns in every session. Women's voices must be heard.

So that is what caucus do; we start from the community, we put it as one problem, then we pass it through the local council meeting, then it goes up to parliament. But right now, we have stopped at the level of district level. So we formed a caucus from the village level, we came up, we established another caucus to parish level, and then another one to the sub-county level, from sub-county to district level, hoping that the district people will send it to the woman member of parliament. That is how our voices are reaching. It is better than waiting for the Member of Parliament (MP) to come and get issues and concerns from the constituents.

If I could tell the GWED-G team one thing, it would be to remember the people in the rural villages, who can't easily tune into radio programs. Because when you talked over the radio not everyone is able to hear it and may not have enough time to share the issue over the radio. Better than coming to the community. We should not use only one method of disseminating information. If you can, dramatize it, you can form a group and say you know have a play on this theme, so some people who are just concert lovers, they love concerts, will also go to attend that.

I would love to see GWED-G use some of the women who are directly affected by the way, so that they talk to fellow women. Pick them, empower them and move with them as role models of society- like you have done with role model men.







