

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



GWED-G
Gulu Women's Economic
Development & Globalization

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2023 FINANCIALS

ABBREVIATIONS

AHF	Aids Healthcare Foundation
ALENU	Action for Livelihood Enhancement in Northern Uganda
ANC	Antenatal care
C&R	Cultural and Religious
CLF	Community Linkage Facilitator
CSOs	Civil Society Organization
DINU	Development initiative for Northern Uganda
EU	European Union
FP	Family Planning
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GEWEP	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GWED-G	Gulu Women Economic Development and Globalization
HRDs	Human Rights Defenders
HRVs	Human Rights Volunteers
HURIFO	Human Rights Focus
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IEC	Information Education and Communication
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
IYCF	Infant young child feeding
JPC	Justice and Peace Commission
KINGFO	Kitgum NGO forum
LC	Local Council
LRDs	Land Rights Defenders
MEI	Male Engaged Initiative
MLAS	Mobile Legal Aid Services
MNCH	Maternal Neonatal Child Health
NUHRP	Northern Uganda Human Rights Partnership
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
PLHIV	People living with HIV
PLW	Pregnant and lactating women
SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WLOs	Womenled Organization
WPHF	Women Peace Humanitarian Fund

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

DEAR FRIENDS,

Setting aside the challenges faced, there is so much to celebrate about 2023. It was a very exciting milestone year for GWED-G with a lot of community engagements and proven experience in implementing the Strategic and Operational plans as a backbone for the Organization. Throughout the year, the Board remained steadfast in its dedication to upholding our institution's values while fostering a dynamic engagement with our Donors, Stakeholders, Partners, and Staff. Despite the prevailing global challenges, GWED-G has demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability, continuing to thrive amidst adversity.

As we look ahead, the Board remains committed to advancing GWED-G's mission and Strategic priorities amid the evolving challenges in the world. We are dedicated to fostering a culture of excellence, innovation, and inclusivity that empowers all members of our community to thrive and succeed. In 2023 it was especially important to show the Secretariate that we have their back when they need us, this is exactly the kind of proactive approach that sets GWED-G apart from any other Organization.

Looking back at 2023, our first imperative is the safety and wellbeing of our Secretariate team, and I am pleased to report that during 2023 our safety performance improved, reflecting the significant focus on employee safety and wellbeing. My fellow Board of Directors and I will continue to support the Executive Director and the Secretariate team to achieve a position of 'Zero Harm' at GWED-G.

At GWED-G, we take the experiences and stories shared with us to heart. That's why, for example, we made it a particular priority in 2023 to work proactively with the Secretariate team, Stakeholders, Partners and in collaboration with Donors to meet the goals of the organization. Overseeing how GWED-G navigates this unprecedented Economic environment while deepening our support and project Implementation to our community is, of course, a key priority for the Board.

Congratulations to all the Secretariate team led by the Executive Director who put in their effort to achieve their personal best to meet the organization's goals! The Board wishes to thank you all for your significant contribution to the organization's achievements in 2023. Every success of the team has no doubt been earned and should be a source of pride to all of us and our families, as it is to the rest of the community that we serve.

The Board also extends our deep gratitude to all our Donors, Partners and Stakeholders for all the support leading to the achievement of unprecedented financial results, strengthening our position as an organization in the Greater North and raising higher GWED-G's profile in Uganda and Internationally.



Sincerely, *Oryem Grace*

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2023

Dear Partners, Friends, and Supporters,

As we reflect on the year 2023, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for the progress and impact that GWED-G has achieved. This year has been one of both challenges and triumphs, as we continued our mission to promote gender equality, peace, and sustainable development in Northern Uganda.

In 2023, GWED-G made significant strides in advancing gender equality and women's rights, strengthening livelihoods and food security, and promoting health and nutrition across our communities. A key highlight of our work has been the increased visibility and influence of women's voices through the Women Arise Platform, which brought together 120 women-led community-based organizations. This platform has been instrumental in amplifying women's voices, fostering leadership, and integrating women's empowerment into policy frameworks.

Through the Women Arise Platform, women gained increased confidence and capability in reporting incidences of sexual and gender-based violence, enhancing the rule of law, and improving access to justice for survivors. We have also strengthened referral networks, ensuring that women have a voice and control in decision-making concerning their lives. Notably, 83% of women leaders interviewed demonstrated that their knowledge of the peace-building agenda had expanded, leading to more meaningful participation. Women are now shaping peace and security, driving governance, and leading advocacy efforts at the grassroots level.



We also established the Women Justice Task Force, whose mandate remains pivotal in promoting access to justice, conducting referrals, and mediating land-based conflicts within communities. This initiative has strengthened the role of women in legal processes, ensuring that justice is accessible and effective at the grassroots level.

Our advocacy efforts extended to the international stage, where we supported women's participation in discussions on the Dominic Ongwen reparation order at the International Criminal Court (ICC). This marked a significant step in promoting women's influence in global justice systems.

In terms of livelihoods and food security, we expanded our efforts by establishing local seed banks and intensifying advocacy for food sovereignty. Our programs have addressed seed poverty and increased seed philanthropy, empowering communities to take control of their agricultural resources. We have witnessed women opening bank accounts in their own names, a critical step toward financial independence and empowerment.



Moreover, we have significantly increased agency among adolescent girls and young women concerning sexual reproductive health rights and bodily integrity. These initiatives have provided young women with the knowledge and confidence to make informed decisions about their health and futures.

In the West Nile region, our focus on promoting malaria-free homes has made substantial progress. Through targeted interventions, we have worked to reduce the incidence of malaria, ensuring healthier communities and protecting the most vulnerable, particularly children and pregnant women. This year was not without its challenges. The socio-economic impacts of prolonged conflict, coupled with environmental and infrastructural limitations, tested our resilience. However, these obstacles also reinforced our commitment to adapt and innovate. Our ability to navigate these challenges, while remaining true to our mission, is a testament to the dedication and hard work of our team and partners.

As we look ahead, our strategic focus will remain on deepening our impact and expanding our reach. We will continue to advocate for the rights of women, children, and marginalized communities, while also building on our successes in promoting health, nutrition, and economic empowerment. Our work in 2023 has positioned us to tackle the challenges of the future with renewed vigor and determination. I want to express my heartfelt thanks to our donors, partners, and supporters who have stood by us throughout this journey. Your trust and collaboration have been the cornerstone of our success. I am also deeply grateful to the GWED-G team, whose unwavering commitment and passion for our cause inspire me every day.

As we move forward, I am confident that together, we will continue to create lasting, positive change in the lives of those we serve. Thank you for being part of this journey.

With sincere gratitude and best wishes

Pamela Judith Angwech - Executive Director

STRATEGIC FOCUS 1 - GENDER EQUALITY & WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Context Analysis of Gender Aspects in Northern Uganda in 2023

Northern Uganda faces unique gender dynamics shaped by its history, cultural norms, and socio-economic conditions. Despite efforts to address gender inequalities, significant challenges remain, affecting education, health, economic participation, and political representation.

The national legal framework, including the Constitution of Uganda (1995), Domestic Violence Act (2010), and Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act (2010), promotes gender equality. However, enforcement is inconsistent, especially in rural and post-conflict areas where traditional norms undermine these laws' effectiveness.

Education disparities are significant. While initiatives promoting girls' education have increased enrollment, dropout rates remain high, particularly in secondary education due to early marriages, teenage pregnancies, and domestic responsibilities. Cultural attitudes and inadequate infrastructure further hinder girls' education.

Women's economic participation is challenged by limited access to land, credit, and markets. Employment opportunities are scarce, often confined to the informal sector.

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains critical, with high levels of domestic violence, sexual violence, and harmful practices like child marriage and FGM. Stigma and limited services deter survivors from seeking help.

Women's political representation faces cultural and resource barriers. Deep-rooted patriarchal norms limit women's autonomy and decision-making power.

The engagement of women-led Organizations (WLOs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) is crucial in addressing gender disparities through awareness campaigns, training, and support for women's empowerment. These organizations play a vital role in promoting gender transformative approaches, which empower and mobilize more men and boys to challenge and change negative social and cultural practices that promote gender stereotypes and discrimination. Additionally, they facilitate improved information exchange, dialogue, and negotiation between users and service providers, enhancing understanding and cooperation. Strengthening women CSOs and supporting Human Rights Defenders in land mediations are also essential for progress.

In 2023, sustained commitment and collaborative efforts were essential for progress towards gender equality in Northern Uganda. The ongoing engagement of various stakeholders, including CSOs, government agencies, and local communities, remains critical in addressing the complex and deeply rooted gender issues in the region.

Donors



PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS & GENDER EQUALITY

CIVSAM PROJECT

PROMOTING THE RIGHTS AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN POST CONFLICT COMMUNITIES OF NORTHERN UGANDA.

Context

Gender based violence and violence against women and girls manifested through sexual violence (rape & defilement), physical violence (beatings or using objects to cause bodily harm), emotional violence (intimate partner violence) and economic violence was very common among communities in Nwoya, Omoro, Gulu and Amuru districts.

Rampant land conflicts was also a problem that affected most communities. These conflicts resulted to forceful evictions and grabbing of land that belonged to the poor and marginalized persons by the rich, powerful and those in leadership position which caused displacement, loss of means of livelihoods and landless.

GWED-G's intervention (Outputs)

- Community level awareness meetings with religious and cultural leaders on gender equality, dangers of gender based violence and violence against women and girls. This created awareness to communities on their roles in prevention, reponse and management of GBV. Through the awareness meetings community members are now knowlegable about GBV refferal actors , services that they provide to surviours like medical, legal, psychosocial and economic support.
- Land mediation using alternative dispute resolution was used to peacefully mediate land conflicts and ensure that vulnerable women and girls are able to regain access, control and ownership of their land as a prodcutive resource. The mediations where done by the local leaders,cultural leaders and members of the area land committees. The key tool used during the land mediation was Altenative Dispute resolution (ADR).
- Capacity building of stakeholders on gender equality, gender transformative approaches as a strategy to empower and mobilize more men and boys to promote gender equality by challenging and changing negative social and cultural practices that promoted gender sterotypes and discrmination.



Source@GWED-G: Vice chairperson LCIII Koch Goma sub-county during a community sensitisation in wangtangi, Okii Village Coorom parish

IMPACT OF GWED-G'S INTERVENTION (OUTCOMES)

The support given to survivors of gender-based violence led to restoration of emotional, mental and physical wellbeing of gender-based violence survivors. 93 survivors received psychosocial support - PSS from case managers and role model men, 17 survivors were referred to enable them get medical treatment from health facilities, 05 were referred for legal redress while 03 survivors cases were economically supported. Ms. Atim (Not real names) who was supported and received medical support had this to say,

“... I was in a very terrible situation but with GWED-G's support, I am back on my feet and able to carry on with my day to day activities. my mind is clear and thanks to the psychosocial support given to me by GWED-G staffs. The good news is that my husband is no longer a threat, he has apologized to me and I have even forgiven him and we are focused on taking care of our children... thanks to this project.”

As a result of community level awareness meetings with religious and cultural leaders on gender equality, dangers of gender based violence and violence against women and girls, communities are more knowledgeable and aware about the importance of women inclusion and participation in decision making processes at family and community level. Some men agreed to promote feminism in their communities, some men have opened up spaces for women to participate and take up leadership positions in VSLA groups or in local councils, some women have reported that they together with their husbands jointly make decisions regarding their sexual and reproductive health rights. 280 (M:114-F:166) attended the awareness meetings held Omoro, Nowoya and Amuru districts.

Land rights of 15 (F:9 M:6) vulnerable persons including women, elderly/old, persons living with disabilities have been enhanced as a result of using Alternative Dispute Resolution for land mediation. Approximately 150 hectares of land from land grabbers were recovered and rightful owners regained back full access, control and ownership of their land.

Challenges encountered

- Lack of functional social support system to prevent, respond to and manage cases of human rights abuses and violations especially GBV led to lack of justice for survivors while some perpetrators of those abuses were not produced before the court of law.
- Harmful traditional and cultural practices in some communities led to gender discrimination, denial of women and girls to their fundamental rights and freedoms to take up leadership positions and right to own productive resources like land, capital and assets.

Future perspectives

Sustainability: GWED-G will collaborate with community structures like role model men, case managers, and local leaders to maintain GBV prevention and response efforts. These community structures will continue advocating for gender equality and supporting GBV survivors. Stakeholder involvement has built a knowledge base for ongoing gender equality and women's empowerment efforts.

Exit Strategies: An exit meeting with all project stakeholders will be held to share the final report.



150

**HECTARES OF LAND
FROM LAND GRABBERS
WHERE RECOVERED AND
RIGHTFUL OWNERS
REGAINED BACK FULL
ACCESS**

PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS & GENDER EQUALITY

VOICE PROJECT

STRENGTHENING PARTICIPATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY (SPACE) PROJECT

Context

The project Strengthening Participation And Accountability aimed at cultivating an enabling environment to increase women's movements' capabilities to influence citizens' access to social services and strengthen the network of women and women led grassroots activism and advocacy for participation and representation in shaping the regional development agenda, as well as enhancing local government (LG) accountability towards communities in service delivery. SPACE project deployed human rights-based approach by strengthening capacities of women, youth, and PWD leaders and political platform to increase their effectiveness in advocacy, improved leadership skills to influence political and governance processes, and fulfill their decision-making responsibilities

GWED-G's intervention (Outputs)

The project conducted 4 interface meetings with 160 rightsholders and duty bearers, this aimed at introducing and strengthening mechanisms for improved information exchange, dialogue, and negotiation between users and service providers, which not only brought the two actors together but also enhanced the quality, effectiveness, and impact of their interactions.

Through the community score card dissemination of findings, the different institutions have improved on the quality of social service delivery to the different users, who have appreciated the changes in the management and operation systems in schools and health facilities. The project trained 45 community facilitators on community score card approaches, the facilitators later used the skills to mobilize community in their respective sub counties and scored performances of their leaders and services.

Monthly community radio talk shows and outreaches to amplify community voices and concerns on social accountability, governance and service delivery. This is a platform where the right holders demand for their rights from the duty bearers and hold them accountable. Issues that are affecting the community are presented and the women leaders advocate for them.

Continuous engagements and monitoring of service delivery facilities by the women leaders most especially learning institutions and health facilities within their communities, this has led to improvement in social service delivery as the service user are also sensitised and are aware of their rights thus they are held accountable and different measures are undertaken to ensure compliance with the set government standards of those facilities.



IMPACT OF GWED-G'S INTERVENTION (OUTCOMES)

Access to Productive Resources and Employment: The community rejects cultural norms hindering women's access to productive assets. In Unyama Sub County, women advocated for a 30 km road rehabilitation, improving market access and social services. In Bungatira, a Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) group offers low-interest loans, boosting household incomes through income-generating activities. Patiko Sub-county saw women leaders address clean water shortages by partnering with Good Partners, an NGO, to rehabilitate three boreholes, providing safe drinking water and empowering communities to demand better services.

Access to Quality Social Services: Women's empowerment to demand accountability from duty bearers has risen from 55.78% to 68%, thanks to training in leadership, advocacy, and accountability. This has improved their confidence and advocacy skills, enhancing social service delivery. In Bungatira, the women's caucus addressed negligence at a health facility, resulting in staff changes and improved service. Their advocacy efforts have positively impacted health services across the district.

Political Participation: The project has boosted the participation of women, youth, and people with disabilities (PWDs) in decision-making. Women's participation increased from 46% to 97%, youth from 54% to 68%, and PWDs from 47% to 73%, meeting the project's 30% increase target. Husbands now support women in leadership roles, promoting inclusiveness. The project ensured equal representation in various political platforms, enhancing accountability and service delivery.

Transformation of Sociocultural Norms: The project has empowered women to challenge sociocultural norms and structural barriers, allowing marginalized groups to amplify their voices in development efforts in the Acholi sub-region. Engagements with traditional, religious, and government leaders through community dialogues and advocacy have led to improved service delivery. Awareness and response to gender-based violence (GBV) have increased, with women's caucuses actively referring GBV cases to authorities, highlighting the project's role in societal transformation and improved services.



60%

**OF EMPOWERED WOMEN
DEMANDED
ACCOUNTABILITY FROM
DUTY BEARERS THANKS
TO TRAINING IN
LEADERSHIP, ADVOCACY,
AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

Challenges encountered

Perceived discrimination and marginalization of women leaders from other subcounties where the project initially operated during phase 1. The councillors and council members from these areas feel they have been neglected and their issues are not being amplified.

Poor road conditions due to heavy rains affected access to some communities. The project team had to park the vehicles and instead walk on foot to the village meeting venue.

Low-turn and late turn-up of communities during the farming season was a challenge, since most opted to attend to their gardens. Most project activities were therefore planned for late afternoons so as to ensure effective participation especially of women.

Future perspectives

The project leveraged existing community structures to facilitate group activities. Structures like women caucuses, VSLA groups, people living with disabilities, youth, elderly, religious, and traditional leaders received training in leadership, advocacy, accountability, and representation. Trusted by the community, these groups provide ongoing guidance and support. Women caucuses, for example, have voiced local concerns at council meetings, leading to the transfer of a negligent health in-charge. Religious and traditional leaders promote behavioral change and combat harmful practices. Women groups have formed VSLAs for better access to finance. These structures understand their roles and will continue supporting their community post-project.

PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS & GENDER EQUALITY

GIZ PROJECT

WOMEN LEADERS, PEACE BROKERS: BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF WOMEN GRASSROOTS LEADERS IN CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACE BUILDING

Context

GWED-G in partnership with GIZ under Governance and Civil Society strengthening programme is implementing a project with funding from the European Union and German government. The project is being implemented in Kitgum district, subcounties of Labongo Layamo and Kitgum Matidi. In the project locations, women have limited information on local government planning and budgeting, limited commitments to attend to gender and equity issues resulting from inadequate skills, most women hardly attend meetings and not all understand the basic concepts of gender including policy implementation. Women participation and influence in the planning cycle of local government remains poor and less effective especially amongst grassroots women. This is mainly due to low civic capacity and agency in women, lack of deliberate efforts to mobilize and engaged women in the planning cycles, limited interface between women structures, leaders and women population, and gender norms and roles. These factors leave only a few women to participate in available spaces and make minimal inputs in the plans and budgets of sub-counties and districts.

GWED-G's intervention (Outputs)

- Conduct an assessment on the capacity of women CBOs and other structures on levels of participation and influence on planning and budgeting at LG level.
- Trained 40 women structures on the HRBAs to development planning and budgeting, and gender responsive budgeting for rural women communities.
- Supported 45 women to participate in the launch platform for 2023 16-days of activism against gender based violence.
- Prepared and presented a policy brief/position paper to district local government on the 16 days of gender activism.
- Conducted 3 sub-county levels dialogues on the national/international themes for 16 days of activism. A total of 239 participants attended the dialogues.
- Supported 40 selected rural women activist to participate on closure function (international human rights day commemoration) at the district level.



3

DIALOGUES FOR THE 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM. A TOTAL OF 239 PARTICIPANTS ATTENDED THE DIALOGUES.



45

WOMEN TRAINED ON PLANNING AND BUDGETING, AND GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING FOR RURAL WOMEN COMMUNITIES.



40

RURAL WOMEN ACTIVIST PARTICIPATED ON CLOSURE FUNCTION FOR THE INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY COMMEMORATION

IMPACT OF GWED-G'S INTERVENTION (OUTCOMES)

- Women voices were amplified during 16days of activism in Kitgum district, women leaders read a policy brief/position paper during the launch of 16days of activism,which attracted commitments from leaders like the CAO , RDC and LCV who pledge support for women agenda.
- Improved attitude and willingness to participate in district and sub-county level planning and budgeting processes by women .
- Increased level of influence of women in the planning and budgeting processes of district and sub county levels.
- The community members and the local leaders gained knowledge, GBV concepts, solution to GBV and ways of addressing/mediating GBV cases.

Challenges encountered

Most of the community members arrived late at the meeting venue and that was a bit challenging in that the meeting started late and some missed the beginning session of the meeting.

·High expectation of monetary gain by some participants during the sessions, when clarification was made by the project team on their expectations they settled for the sensitization and became more active in the process.

Future perspectives

The project team engaged the District community Development officer and Senior CDO to technically support the project and as the Subcounty level, the CDOs are actively engaged in the project activities. The project is working with government and cultural leaders structures such as the VSLA groups, women council members and women leaders in the event that the project phases out,they will continue to further the goals.

The proposed project will also be sustained through other GWED-G governance and Human rights project by in cooperating some activities such as awareness and policy advocacy as well as the grassroots structures whom GWED-G will fully engage during the planning and implementation of the project.



STRATEGIC FOCUS 2 - PEACEBUILDING & TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

Context Analysis of Peacebuilding and Transitional Justice in Northern Uganda in 2023

Northern Uganda, marked by prolonged conflict involving the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), bears deep socio-economic and psychological scars. Peacebuilding and transitional justice efforts are crucial to address the conflict's legacies and foster sustainable peace.

The LRA insurgency caused widespread atrocities, including abductions, killings, and displacement. Post-conflict recovery has necessitated comprehensive peacebuilding measures to promote healing and reconciliation. Improving access to justice for women survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), such as through strengthening referral pathways, is essential. Reparations and community-based programs have been implemented, but challenges such as limited resources and political will persist. Reparations programs aim to support victims but face financial and bureaucratic hurdles. Community-based reconciliation efforts, including traditional mechanisms like Mato Oput, have helped rebuild trust and social cohesion. Building the capacity of women grassroots leaders in conflict prevention and peacebuilding is also crucial. These women leaders act as peace brokers, fostering dialogue and reconciliation within their communities.

Children born of war, particularly those fathered by LRA combatants, face stigma and marginalization. Targeted interventions are essential to ensure their rights and welfare, alongside support for their mothers who face socio-economic and psychological challenges. Women-led survivors, many of whom were abducted and subjected to sexual violence, are particularly vulnerable, grappling with trauma, stigmatization, and economic hardships. Programs focusing on building the capacity of women-led Organizations (WLOs), economic empowerment, and education for women and girls affected by the conflict are vital for their recovery.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) play a crucial role in peacebuilding by advocating for victims' rights, documenting abuses, and providing essential services. Achieving sustainable peace in Northern Uganda requires a multi-faceted approach involving government commitment, robust legal frameworks, adequate funding, and active participation of all stakeholders.

Donors



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PEACEBUILDING & TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

NED PROJECT

SUPPORTING HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS FOR IMPROVED SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND FIGHTING CORRUPTION

Context

The Supporting Human Rights Defenders for improved Social Accountability project is being implemented by GWED-G in partnership with National Endowment for Democracy (NED). The project targets 4 districts of Lamwo, Nwoya, Gulu and Amuru. The project aims to strengthen the capacity of 70 community based Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) to monitor and report cases of corruption and human rights violations in Northern Uganda and to build capacity of community members to promote social accountability and better service delivery from duty bearers. The project targeted districts are characterised by unresolved land related disputes – Akaa/Lakanag, threats faced by HRDs/risks & safety issues, limited/minimal response to HRDs at threat in rural communities, Land grabbing and increasing land related investments for instance Nyimur/Atiak/Aswa Ranch = environmental destruction/indiscriminate cutting of trees/charcoal burning and corruption/poor service delivery/absence of accountability.



GWED-G's intervention - Outputs

GWED-G's project intervention focused on enhancing the capacity of 70 community-based Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) through comprehensive training in mediation, advocacy, conflict sensitivity, alternative dispute resolution (ADR), mental health, and social accountability.

- Orientation of 70 HRDs on psychotherapy for psychosocial counseling.
- 20 community awareness meetings across various sub-counties were conducted, including local authorities, councilors, chiefs, and leaders of women, youth, and disabled groups.
- Conducted 4 district protection working group meetings in Amuru, Nwoya, Gulu, and Lamwo districts, with 120 participants.
- 199 mediation meetings with HRDs, local councils (LCs), and cultural leaders conducted.
- 2 spot messages produced and aired on 2 radio stations to educate communities about human rights, land rights, and social accountability.
- 5 success stories from land mediation efforts
- 10 schools and 5 health facilities monitored to assess service delivery and functionality.

IMPACT OF GWED-G'S INTERVENTION (OUTCOMES)

HRDs are now able to conduct conflict sensitive mediation through ADR, they have improved self-confidence and continue to participate in advocacy. HRDs have successfully resolved 199 cases of land related disputes in sub counties of Lungulu, Lamogi, Awach, Got Apwoyo, Koch Lii, Lukung and Palabek, Amuru, Anaka, Lamogi and Bungatira.

Improved mental wellbeing of HRDs- HRDs are able to cope with stress and psychosocial issues, able to identify and refer 8 cases of MHPSS issue (psychotherapy manual). Improved reporting of cases of human rights abuse (219), HRDs now have better understanding of referral pathways and local leaders response to demands for better service delivery in health and education sector.

Increased community vigilance on government funds mismanagement, community members are now reporting Cases of mismanagement of fund of the Parish Development Model (PDM) during social accountability and dialogue meetings.

Improved response and support of local government leaders towards the work of HRDs on human rights and advocacy through the district protection working group meeting. HRDs joined the campaign against massive charcoal burning/participated in meetings and sensitization/mobilization for activities.

Community members are able to find spaces through dialogues/sensitization to amplify their voices on issues affecting their communities. Demand for explanations relating to delays in government development assistance, 2 new classroom blocks were constructed - Lamoki P.7 Anaka Sub County-Nwoya district.

Challenges encountered

Some fears in HRDs where there is insecurity, harassment and intimidation of HRDs by state operators and their collaborators still continue especially in areas of Apaa, and bordering sub counties with Southern Sudan and Karamoja in Lamwo.

Threats posed by the influx of cattle keepers commonly known as the Balalu in the region their animals resulting to increased land dispute and destruction of crops in the gardens of community members. Female HRDs sometimes feel frustrated as community leaders especially traditional leaders underestimate their efforts being put to do this work.

Future perspectives

GWED-G involved the local government staff like the district and sub county officials in setting up focal point at district and sub county level that is the District Community Development Officer to take the lead at district level, while Community Development Officers takes the lead at sub county levels with the support of trained HRDs, Both the political and technocrats at district level and sub county levels have been responsible in monitoring the implementation of the project.

While at community levels, cultural and religious leaders have been involved in land mediations activities. Human Rights Defenders have been selected by communities with recommendations from their Local council chairperson and land committees have been working together with HRDs in land mediation and community mobilization.

The project initiatives are being sustained through strengthening the capacity of HRDs in confidence building and having strong grassroot presence. Some subcounties have incorporated HRDs as Land Committees.



3

COMMUNITY AWARENESS
MEETINGS ACROSS
VARIOUS SUB-COUNTIES



70

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS
TRAINED ON PSYCHOTHERAPY
FOR PSYCHOSOCIAL
COUNSELING.



199

MEDIATION MEETINGS WITH
HRDS, LOCAL COUNCILS
(LCS), AND CULTURAL
LEADERS CONDUCTED.

PEACEBUILDING & TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

FATE PROJECT

ENHANCING ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR WOMEN SURVIVORS OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN GULU CITY, NORTHERN UGANDA

Context

Gender-based violence (GBV) is an everyday threat for Ugandan women and girls. National demographic data from 2020 reveal that 56% of married women aged 15-49 reported having suffered physical and/or sexual violence by a husband (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2021). More than one in three women (36%) had experienced sexual violence, most often from a partner; 28% reported victimization by sexual violence in the past year. Child sexual abuse is also pervasive, with 59% of women reporting sexual abuse in childhood. National data also show that 33% of girls below the age of 15 years were forced at first sex. Among women who said they had experienced GBV, only a minority reported it to police. The Uganda Police crime report 2023 for West Acholi district indicates; 54 rape cases recorded, 115 aggravated defilement, 272 simple defilement, 520 domestic violence, 177 child neglect. In Gulu City and District pressure from parents and the community at large especially on the girl child for example “why are you still in school yet you already have big breasts, you are useless and a liability to the family”. Such statements have discouraged girls from continuing with school but instead choose to enter early marriages. In addition, this has made it difficult for defilers to be apprehended since the defilers do this with “blessings” from the girl’s family and community. In the community forced marriages are a common phenomenon due to poverty. This is mainly due to the perception that girls of adolescent age can marry and reduce the mouths to feed in the household and other responsibilities

GWED-G’s intervention (Outputs)

During the reporting period the following activities were conducted; project inception meeting was done to build allies, strengthen networking with different stakeholders and ensure sustainability of the project, mapped 15 CSO actors and whereby 18 different actors this was to strengthen referral and built coordination. Conducted 2 community sensitizations on basic legal information, access to legal, medical and psychological services for women and girls benefiting 106 community members/participants, the project strengthen capacity of 10 Para social workers on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms, gender-based violence legal frameworks on 6th-8th September 2023. Provided psychosocial and emotional redress to 214 survivors, facilitated quarterly peer to peer support supervision meetings with 10 paralegals to support and mentored them. Conducted 2 radio talk shows on importance of women access to justice and legal aid and provided financial support in form of transport for one survivor was supported.



FATE in figures

Para social workers on Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanisms	10
survivors of GBV (M 79 F 135) served by the Parasocial workers	214
forms to report GBV cases printed and given to police outposts	250
beneficiaries sensitized on access to legal, medical and psychological services	106
cases (F 72 M 18) of Defilement, Physical Child neglect supported	92



IMPACT OF GWED-G'S INTERVENTION (OUTCOMES)

1. Effective referral pathways for GBV survivors in Gulu City have led to increased reporting and support, including legal, medical, and psychological aid. Strengthened referral systems, with 250 police forms distributed to Bardege-Layibi and Laroo-Pece divisions, supported 92 cases of defilement and physical child neglect.
2. Community awareness about GBV has risen through two radio talk shows and community campaigns. These initiatives featured legal experts and police officers, emphasizing alternative dispute resolution and legal aid. The need to engage men and increase media-based sensitization was highlighted.
3. Psychosocial support and basic counseling have been provided to 214 GBV survivors (79 men, 135 women) by para-social workers, health workers, and police, improving their well-being and relationships. Notably, seven men reported GBV incidents, challenging cultural stereotypes and contributing to GBV reduction in society.

Challenges encountered

Low self-esteem among some women hindered their participation in public forums. To address this, the project encouraged them to voice their opinions on their rights, causes of gender-based violence (GBV), and solutions to their challenges, boosting their confidence.

High expectations, overshadowing voluntarism, limited para-social workers' participation. They were oriented on their roles, emphasizing voluntarism.

Alcohol and drug abuse among the youth, with many attending sessions intoxicated, posed a challenge to effective engagement.

A delay in funds transfer affected planned activities for October to December 2023. GWED-G requested a non-cost extension to March 2024, allowing the completion of pending activities.



Future perspectives

From onset of the project implementation, Project team involved the City authority; the City Senior Community development Officer and also political leaders were involved in monitoring the implementation of the project. While at community levels, Para social workers have been selected by City community based services department with recommendations from their Local council chairperson and have been working together with them in handling GBV cases and mediation some case and referring other to police and health centers and they also conducted community mobilization for community activities. Strengthening their capacity through skill trainings gave them confidence in implementation of the project even if the project funding is not there since majority of them are natives of the locality and will continue to used even if the project funding gets over.

PEACEBUILDING & TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

UGANDA PROJECT

WOMEN LEADERS, PEACE BROKERS: BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF WOMEN GRASSROOTS LEADERS IN CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACE BUILDING

Context

Women survivors of sexual violence who are grassroots leaders in Northern Uganda^[1] do not have the complete and required mentorship and skills as well as platform to influence decision-making processes on conflict prevention and peace mediation. Proving that women survivor grassroots leaders can influence conflict prevention and peace mediation is imperative and yet there is no developed training manual and delivered mentorship training sessions for the women. To address the gaps in decision making and participation of women – the project suggested to convene an interface meeting between Ugandan policymakers and women survivor leaders to amplify their voices and enable parliamentarians and Ministry of Gender representatives to improve the implementation of the national Transitional Justice Policy whilst strengthening decision-making advocacy efforts.

[1] The project beneficiaries were 11 women survivor's grassroots Organization leaders from Northern and North Eastern Uganda including; Peoples voice for Peace, RWOFT, War Victims and Children Networking, Karamoja women in mining, Action for Transformation Uganda, Mission Uganda, KISP, KOWUO, Women Advocacy Network, Kero Women Action Forum, Centre for Women and Children's Reintegration.

GWED-G's intervention (Outputs)

The project had three critical intervention areas successfully. These included, the convening of two (02) workshops that trained and mentored 10 women survivors grassroots leaders (WGSL) to become conflict mediators in families and communities who currently lead survivor organisations in conflict prevention and peace building. Successfully implemented was an interface dialogue with the WGSL, local government leaders, activists, local parliamentarians, cultural leaders and focal points from the Ministries of Justice and Gender to discuss how to improve processes to integrate women leaders in peace building and conflict prevention activities to end violence against women; and a field exercise where the women were coached by a facilitator to practically apply Alternative Dispute Resolution /Mediation skills to address real life situations in their communities such as land related disputes and domestic violence.



83%

WOMEN HAVE SEEN THEIR KNOWLEDGE ON PEACE BUILDING EXPANDED



10

WOMEN SURVIVORS GRASSROOTS LEADERS BECAME CONFLICT MEDIATORS IN FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES



100

WOMEN LEADERS AND SURVIVORS ATTENDED THE CONFERENCE

IMPACT OF GWED-G'S INTERVENTION (OUTCOMES)

The project has created significant networking opportunities between policymakers - in particular, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs - and women survivor's grassroots leaders as well as the civil society organizations promoting peacebuilding in Northern Uganda and at national level. Other outcomes includes increased WGSL skills and practical knowledge in peace, transitional justice processes and conflict prevention strategies; effective participation of WGSL in localised peace, TJ and mediation processes that impact women and girls;

“**Victims' voices have been heard and spaces were provided for the victims to express themselves at the highest levels of leadership**”;

increased access of WGSL to decision-making platforms on women, peace and security; and connected the trained WGSL with other peace brokers, local and cultural leaders working on conflict prevention and mitigation. Importantly, the project situated women survivor's grassroots leaders as protagonists in peacebuilding and conflict prevention. It used a localised approach which is a people-based, bottom-up strategy that enhances local participation for more effective implementation of national policies and strategies on violence prevention and peace building.



Future perspectives

The future perspectives is embedded in our partnership approach and working with a network of community resource persons. A Symposium of Women Grassroots Leaders entitled “The Women Leaders Justice Response Taskforce” was formed to bringing together 15 women leaders from 10 conflict-affected districts in Northern Uganda with community leaders, local police and justice sector officials, local parliamentarians and civil society organisations, to continue having conversations on challenges in accessing justice for SGBV survivors and to propose innovative pathways for redressing gaps in the justice framework. The partnership approach also resulted into another similar engagement – “Not without our children: women leaders advocate for multisectoral and multi-level responses to end intergenerational gendered harms against children born of war (CBoW)”. In its concluding phase – known as Uganda 5. An impact survey highlighted the importance of meaningful engagement at both the organizational and national levels. Women have become more involved in aiding fellow women affected by GBV, advocating for enhanced access to justice for women and girls, and taking on leadership roles across all levels. For instance, 83% of the women leaders who were interviewed during the survey reported that their knowledge of peace building agendas has expanded, leading to more meaningful participation on their part.

PEACEBUILDING & TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

ICTJ PROJECT

SUPPORTING AN INCLUSIVE TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE PROCESS IN NORTHERN UGANDA

Context

GWED-G in partnership with International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) with funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Netherlands implemented a project in Pader and Lamwo districts. The “Supporting an Inclusive Transitional Justice” project aims to promote and protect the rights of women and children affected by violent conflict to enjoy sustainable peace, security and justice in Northern Uganda. The project targeted districts are still battling with the effects of the LRA war which exacerbated long-standing gendered inequalities and increased incidences of gender harm, stigmatization and exclusion of survivors/victims and Children Born of War (CBoW) which significantly impacted their social and economic advancement. The project aims to empower victims, communities and other Transitional Justice actors to be able to participate and demand for inclusive approaches to their unaddressed transitional justice and peacebuilding needs. The project anticipates to reach out to 300 war victims from 10 groups whose capacity will be built and advocacy skills enhanced.



GWED-G's intervention - Outputs

A mapping exercise was conducted by the project team who identified 6 war victim's/ survivor groups in the 2 districts of Pader and Lamwo where a total of 50 people were reached. Pader district 28 (M=02, F=26) participants and Lamwo district where 22 (M=07, F= 15) participants were reached. The targeted groups in Pader district were from Pader Town Council ; while in Lamwo district, the groups were in Padibe Town Council. A mapping tool was developed and used to assess the group's legal status, capacity, unique challenges in engaging with other actors such as policy makers, financial status, conflict resolution mechanism, capacity to conduct advocacy at the Subcounty and district level. The assessment report informed training of the groups in specific areas as expressed during the capacity assessment by the group members.

Train 60 war victims on group dynamics and advocacy especially the isolated groups in Lamwo and Pader.

A two days training was organized in each of the districts with 30 participants in each training. A total of 62 were trained, 32 (M=02, F=30) in Pader while 30 (M=12, F=18) in Lamwo. A total of 10 groups were trained, 5 groups were trained in pader while in Lamwo the 5 groups. Participants were executive members of the survivor's groups who were trained on group dynamics and advocacy skills by GWED-G staff.



IMPACT OF GWED-G'S INTERVENTION (OUTCOMES)

Safe environment and effective platforms created. 60 war victims were trained on group dynamics and advocacy skills both in Pader and Lamwo districts. This has helped to create safe environments and effective platforms for youth to participate in decision-making processes at household, community and sub county level . The project as well supported the war victims to identify and discuss strategies and approaches to addressing past violations and amplifying their demands and expectations despite feeling that they had long been forgotten.



60

WAR VICTIMS TRAINED
ON GROUP DYNAMICS AND
ADVOCACY

Innovative therapeutic strategy developed A community-based communication strategy was developed by the women war victim's groups in both Pader and Lamwo district. This is being done through songs, music dance and drama kits - ways in which women war survivors and children born of war cope ,this according to them has greatly reduced the level of violence and stigma that was being experienced by both the women war victims and the children born of war.

Establishment of youth-led initiatives Through the project, the trained war victim's groups on group dynamics and advocacy contributed to establishment of youth-led initiatives that helped to bring about social change through art and life skills. Many of these group members have ventured into self-taught life skills such as tailoring, knitting and restaurants businesses among others.

Increased knowledge and skills to advocate for peace building and justice needs The training on advocacy skills helped to build the knowledge and capacity of war victims in understanding of the roles that they can play in the transitional justice processes through learning from each other's experiences, unique challenges and sharing of their perspectives with each other and with the Town council and district, helped them to understand both the relevance of transitional justice and their roles in it thus promoting effective pro-victim advocacy for justice needs.

Challenges encountered

There was participation fatigue by the war victim's groups who were a bit hesitant to participate in the groups assessment claiming many NGOs have asked them questions, conducted research but there was no feedback given to them or any form of support. The project team assured the group that follow on activities will be conducted and they accepted to participate.

There was high expectation for material support from the project by the groups, the project team explained to them how this is a short term project which aims to build their capacity to lobby and advocate for their needs from the relevant authorities which they appreciated

but recommended that consideration be made for both material and software support in future projects.

Future perspectives

The Project team engaged Government Officials including the Resident District Commissioners, Community Development Officers (CDO), Towns Clerks, Town Agents, parish chiefs of Pader Town Council and Padibe Town Council who can sustain the project initiatives. The project participants and groups were also introduced to the community service department and linked for government development projects support.

The project team built the capacity of 10 war victim groups on advocacy and life skills who will continue to continuous conduct victim centered advocacy at community and local level.



STRATEGIC FOCUS 3 - LIVELIHOODS & FOOD SECURITY

Context Analysis of Livelihood and Food Security in Northern Uganda in 2023

In Northern Uganda, women's access to land, farming opportunities, and income from agriculture significantly lag behind those of men. This disparity is rooted in historical, socio-economic, and environmental factors, including the legacy of prolonged conflict with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which has left deep scars on the region's socio-economic fabric (International Crisis Group, 2023).

Agriculture remains the primary source of livelihood, with most households engaged in subsistence farming of crops such as maize, millet, sorghum, and cassava, alongside livestock rearing (FAO, 2023). However, women often face greater challenges than men in accessing quality seeds, fertilizers, and markets, as well as adequate infrastructure. These challenges are exacerbated by climate change, resulting in frequent droughts and floods (UNDP, 2023).

The economic landscape in Northern Uganda also includes small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in trade, services, and agro-processing, which are crucial for diversifying income sources. Women, however, face significant barriers to entry in these sectors due to limited access to credit, training, and market information (UNDP, 2023). High poverty and unemployment rates, particularly among women and youth, underscore the urgent need for vocational training and education tailored to their specific needs (World Bank, 2023).

Programs with NGOs stepping in to provide additional support through skills training and microfinance initiatives targeting women (Oxfam, 2023) are essential but often underfunded. Improving infrastructure—especially roads, electricity, and water—remains critical for enhancing economic opportunities and quality of life, particularly for women who bear the brunt of these deficiencies (World Bank, 2023).

Gender disparities in land ownership and agricultural income necessitate focused projects to promote women's land rights, access, utilization, and ownership. Ensuring women have equal access to land and farming opportunities is vital for enhancing food security and sovereignty at the local level. Such initiatives would not only empower women economically but also contribute significantly to the overall resilience and recovery of Northern Uganda (UN Women, 2023).

Donors



LIVELIHOODS & FOOD SECURITY

CIVFUND PROJECT

PROMOTING WOMEN LAND RIGHTS AND COMMUNITY SEED BANK IN ACHOLI SUB-REGION.

Context

The project promoting women's land rights and community seed banks is designed based on the need to promote women's land rights, access, utilization and ownership to enhance food security and sovereignty at local levels, increase food productions, promote health and nutrition, and eliminate food insecurity within the communities while promoting voices and local advocacy in favor of women land rights. It aims at building capacity and engaging women counselors and district authorities to garner their support in advocating for women land rights and the promotion of community seed banks and provide space, policies and amplify voices that enable leaders reclaim control over local and indigenous food system. It is funded by CivFund and implemented in sub-counties of Unyama and Labora in the districts of Gulu and Omoro.

GWED-G's intervention - Outputs

In Omoro District, two new Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) groups, Anga Konya and Waribu Cinwa, were mapped and profiled, comprising 83 members. These groups were introduced to producing indigenous vegetables and other seeds, enhancing social cohesion and combating household income poverty, domestic violence, and malnutrition. They received indigenous seeds (groundnut, beans, maize, and vegetables) and established two seed banks, boosting production and farmer participation in indigenous farming. This approach, free from chemicals, preserves crop naturalness and reduces environmental contamination.

Visibility materials promoting women's land rights and community seed banks were created, aiding community engagement. Thirty Trainer of Trainee (TOT) women VSLA leaders received training in land conflict mediation, advocacy, and community awareness, empowering them to address local issues. Additionally, 15 women leaders gained skills in traditional value addition, crop production, organic pesticide making, and post-harvest handling, linking with institutions like Gulu University.

A community mapping exercise with 50 cultural leaders identified rare indigenous seeds and traditional preservation methods. Four monitoring visits confirmed the functionality of community seed banks in Koro and Unyama. An interface meeting with private and business entities, local government leaders, and seed companies led to support pledges for indigenous seed production and marketing.



**603**COMMUNITY MEMBERS BORROWED
AND RECEIVED ORGANIC SEEDS**4**SEED BANK ESTABLISHED FOR SEEDS
MULTIPLICATION

IMPACT OF GWED-G'S INTERVENTION (OUTCOMES)

Four seed banks were monitored to evaluate the progress and impact of organic seed multiplication. Between January and December 2023, over 603 community members borrowed and received organic seeds. Increased land access and productive use by women have led to economic empowerment and improved well-being through village savings and production. Four signposts were procured to increase seed bank visibility, resulting in community members inquiring and visiting for seeds.

Thirty community Trainer of Trainees were trained in conflict resolution, mediation, advocacy for women's land rights, and land dispute mechanisms. This training resolved seven GBV cases, mediated six land cases, and referred three cases (including a GBV case and two school dropouts) to relevant authorities.

Fifteen VSLA women leaders received training in value addition, organic pesticide and fertilizer making, agronomic practices, and post-harvest handling. This practical training led to improved vegetable yields and soil health due to the use of organic fertilizers.

A radio talk show on land advocacy and community seed banks promoted women's land rights, food security, and sovereignty. This initiative received positive feedback from multiple districts and attracted farmers to visit and purchase seeds from the seed banks.

An interface meeting with farmer groups and businesses strengthened networks, linking farmers to seed companies and enhancing relationships with stakeholders.

Challenges encountered

- A low budget to support quarterly monitoring limits interaction, conversations, and spaces for learning and documentation of successes.
- Little capital, skills, and tools among some groups are affecting the production and multiplication of the indigenous seeds. The inability to manage group dynamics and indifferences among some groups continues to contentions and divide among group members.
- Late return of rain and prolonged dry spell affected the planting period and the dry spell dried the pre-mature crops in the gardens leading to the loss of some indigenous seeds and a decrease in production, especially in the 1st season. This was reported to have affected seed multiplication.



Future perspectives

- The project is still on going however, the project works with community structures who are directly involved.
- The seed banks is community owned and manage by the VSLA farmer groups who are in production yearly. And they are the trainer of the trainee for many VSLA who are willing to become part of the movement in promoting women's land rights.
- The trained TOT women are the community leaders who are responsible in carrying out community out reaches on GBV, mediate on land conflict and they work along with the cultural and elected leaders in promoting peaceful co-existence of the community members.

STRATEGIC FOCUS 4 - HEALTH & NUTRITION

Context Analysis of Health and Nutrition in Northern Uganda in 2023

Northern Uganda faces significant health and nutrition challenges due to its history of conflict, socio-economic disparities, and poor infrastructure. The healthcare system is under-resourced and understaffed, particularly in rural areas, with limited medical supplies and equipment. Prolonged conflict has strained the health infrastructure, hindering adequate service delivery. The region bears a high burden of communicable diseases like malaria, HIV/AIDS, and tuberculosis, along with a rising incidence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes and hypertension.

Malaria remains a major health threat, particularly for children and pregnant women, with control measures inconsistently implemented. Addressing malaria prevention is crucial for improving overall health outcomes in the region. Efforts must be intensified to ensure the consistent distribution of insecticide-treated nets, indoor residual spraying, and access to effective malaria treatment. Additionally, community education on malaria prevention practices is essential.

Maternal and child health outcomes are alarming, with high maternal and under-five mortality rates due to inadequate prenatal and postnatal care, and insufficient skilled birth attendants. Malnutrition exacerbates these health issues, with high rates of stunting, wasting, and micronutrient deficiencies among children under five, driven by food insecurity, poor dietary practices, and inadequate maternal nutrition.

HIV/AIDS prevalence is high, with ongoing efforts to improve access to antiretroviral therapy hampered by stigma and service delivery gaps. The rising burden of NCDs strains a healthcare system primarily focused on communicable diseases.

Underfunded health financing, reliant on donor funding, hampers healthcare quality and accessibility, with high out-of-pocket expenses deterring care-seeking behavior. Health education and promotion programs are essential but need to be more comprehensive and culturally sensitive. Addressing these issues requires government commitment, improved infrastructure, enhanced financing, and collaborative efforts from national and international stakeholders. Malaria prevention, in particular, must be prioritized to reduce the overall disease burden and improve health outcomes in Northern Uganda.

Donors



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HEALTH & NUTRITION

AJWS PROJECT

PROMOTING STAKEHOLDERS' ENGAGEMENT ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN IN NORTHERN UGANDA

Context

According to Uganda's Reproductive health, maternal, newborn child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) sharpened plan 2016/17 – 2019/20, almost 28% of maternal deaths in Uganda occur in young women aged 15 – 24 years.

Teenage pregnancy causes in Acholi is rooted in the social – cultural set-up of the Acholi community. Young girls are socially marginalized with limited decision-making opportunities leaving them vulnerable to violence, HIV, early marriage and low education attainment. Girls are valued as source of wealth as thus are married off early especially after they have reached puberty stage. Girls also are engaged in household, reproductive and economic activity at an early age.



GWED-G's intervention - Outputs

- 1,176 Community members reached with the knowledge on intimate partner Violence [IPV] and GBV
- 6,951 Adolescents reached with the knowledge on teenage pregnancies and child marriages.
- 678 adolescent were mentored on Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) to empower young people with knowledge and skills to manage puberty and menstruation to develop positive coping skills in managing challenges of growth.
- 1,060 Adolescent got knowledge on sexuality education that encouraged adoption of positive behaviour change and placed the burden of self management to ensure sexual health on young people
- 500 Households reached by role model men reaching out to 1,720 directly and 820 indirectly reached



96

NUMBERS OF GBVS CASES REFFERED FOR MEDICAL, PSYCHOSOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, ECONOMIC, AND LEGAL SUPPORT



500

500 HOUSEHOLDS REACHED BY ROLE MODEL MEN



6951

ADOLESCENTS REACHED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE ON TEENAGE PREGNANCIES AND CHILD MARRIAGES.

IMPACT OF GWED-G'S INTERVENTION (OUTCOMES)

- Significant decreases in early marriages, teenage pregnancies, Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) observed in targeted households engaged through household dialogues facilitated by Role Model Men.
- Substantial growth in adolescent girls' enrollment in schools attributed to regular meetings facilitated by Role Model Men, male and female teachers, with numbers rising from 1,120 to 2,314 between 2021 and 2023.
- Increased Stakeholders engagements in advocating sexual reproductive health rights.
- Increased usage of self-made sanitary towels by girls, both within schools and the broader communities.
- Increased ability of in managing puberty and menstruation, leading to positive coping strategies for growth among the targeted girls .
- Improved household income and overall well-being of parents' support groups due to active participation in thire livelihood
- Enhanced capabilities of young girls in making sanitary towels, promoting acquisition of skills and knowledge among the trained girls. This knowledge is actively being shared with other groups of young girls, both within the community and schools, enabling them to stay in school more freely and contributing to a significant reduction in school dropouts.ood

Challenges encountered

Alcohol abuse, GBV, divorce and separation seems to be the leading cause contributing to teenage pregnancies, early marriages, however, GWED -G advocacy strategies, the sub- county have passed a by -law on illicit alcohol abuse of parents and care givers.

Poor enforcement of existing policies and laws on teenage pregnancy by law enforcement officers and local authorities

Sexual exploitation due to vulnerability of young people and extreme poverty negative cultural norms among others

Future perspectives

The project will Strengthen existing trained structures to work independently on thire own, through linkageg with the government structures; the health centres staff like nurses Mid-wives, clinicians, VHTs , RMM will continou work with adolescents through regular meetings discussing issues regarding growth and development, adolescent center corner at all health facilities in communities shall continue functioning to aid free learning. continue linkages with parents, care givers, teachers and stakeholders to promote SRHR and address issues of adolescent girl's protection, combat teenage pregnancies and early marriages through community dialogues /awareness targeting men especially by the RMM on Family Planning to adressed GBV at house hold level. Engaging local leaders like the councilors, LC, youth leaders, sub-county leaders and religious leaders within the community in mobilization and conduct activites will motivate themand make them participate actively to Address social norms and barriers that contribute towards the increase of teenage pregnancies, early marriages and SRHR abuse in community own thire own



HEALTH & NUTRITION

PMI MRA PROJECT

PRESIDENTIAL MALARIA INITIATIVE USAID MALARIA REDUCTION ACTIVITY (MRA)

Context

In June 2023, GWED-G was awarded the PMI USAID MRA sub-grant to combat malaria in Zombo district, West Nile sub-region. This district, with a population of 294,230, faces a significant public health crisis due to high malaria incidence, particularly in five sub-counties: Athuma, Jang-Okoro, Zombo TC, Warr, and Aka. These areas experience alarming Annual Parasite Incidence (API) rates, with Jangokoro Sub County reaching 624.5 and Zombo TC 592.2. The average API of 362 per 1000 people indicates a severe burden. Vulnerable groups include children under five, women of reproductive age, expectant mothers, and infants. Barriers to accessing healthcare, such as poor road conditions and long distances to health facilities, exacerbate the situation. Additionally, unregistered refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) contribute to the health crisis, highlighting the urgent need for targeted malaria prevention and response efforts.

GWED-G's intervention - Outputs

To address high malaria prevalence in Zombo's targeted sub-counties, health facilities identified 49 malaria hotspot villages based on Outpatient and Inpatient Department data. In collaboration with the District Health Team, 98 Village Health Team (VHT) members (67 males, 31 females) were selected from these villages. The VHTs were trained and equipped for the Household Action Against Malaria (HAAM) initiatives by GWED-G, funded by PMI USAID MRA.

Through the combined efforts of health assistants, VHTs, and community stakeholders, 179 community dialogues were conducted in these villages, reaching 7,626 people (3,996 males, 3,630 females). The dialogues promoted malaria prevention via treated mosquito nets, malaria-repellent plants, clean environments, and timely treatment, especially for children and pregnant women.

Using the HAAM tool monthly, project teams, health assistants, VHTs, and household cluster leads assessed 7,160 households from the hotspot villages. Over 12 months, 20,396 households were assessed: 47% had mosquito-repellent plants, 87% knew how to hang nets, and 24% reported malaria cases with high treatment-seeking behavior.

Supervision meetings for 117 VHTs trained in Integrated Community Case Management (ICCM) highlighted supply shortages and the need for ongoing mentorship. Consistent ICCM material supply was crucial for effective service delivery.



20 396

HOUSEHOLDS REACHED
THROUGH MALARIA
PREVENTION



49

MALARIA HOTSPOT
VILLAGES TARGETED



117

VILLAGE HEALTH TEAM
TRAINED ON MALARIA
INITIATIVES.

IMPACT OF GWED-G'S INTERVENTION (OUTCOMES)

The intervention to combat malaria in Zombo's sub-counties showed significant positive outcomes. The strategy involved identifying 49 malaria hotspot villages using data from local health facilities' Outpatient and Inpatient Departments. Subsequently, 98 Village Health Team (VHT) members (67 males, 31 females) were mobilized, trained, and equipped to implement the Household Action Against Malaria (HAAM) initiatives.

The intervention actively engaged the community through 179 dialogues in the identified villages, reaching 7,626 individuals (3,996 males, 3,630 females). These dialogues focused on malaria prevention strategies such as using treated mosquito nets, planting malaria-repellent plants, maintaining clean environments, and seeking timely treatment for malaria cases. This comprehensive community education led to a substantial increase in awareness and the adoption of preventative measures.

The project used the HAAM tool for monthly assessments and follow-ups with 7,160 households from the hotspot villages, expanding to 20,396 households over 12 months. Assessments revealed that 47% of these households had planted mosquito-repellent plants, and 87% were knowledgeable about proper net hanging. Additionally, 24% of households reported malaria cases but showed a high rate of treatment-seeking behavior, reflecting improved health outcomes.

Regular supervision meetings for the 117 VHTs trained in Integrated Community Case Management (ICCM) identified challenges such as supply shortages. However, these meetings also emphasized the importance of continuous mentorship and the consistent provision of ICCM materials, crucial for sustained success.

Overall, the intervention's holistic approach—combining community education, household assessments, and support for health workers—effectively addressed malaria prevalence. It led to increased awareness, timely treatment, and improved community health, illustrating a tangible reduction in malaria incidences and enhanced community resilience, significantly improving the beneficiaries' quality of life.



Challenges encountered

The project faced numerous challenges impacting its health and community intervention outcomes. Insecurity in Aka sub-county led to displacement and omitted key villages from malaria mapping. Heavy rains and inaccessible roads disrupted activities. The dry season hindered lemongrass growth, affecting mosquito prevention, and insufficient mosquito nets and repellents increased malaria risk. Additionally, Village Health Teams (VHTs) experienced a shortage of essential ICCM commodities.

Future perspectives

The PMI USAID–GWED-G partnership under this project aims to use the Household Action Against Malaria (HAAM) social behavior approach to build strong community health systems for the prevention and response to malaria. This approach is owned and managed at the household level in collaboration with the formal health system, with Village Health Teams (VHTs) and health assistants serving as frontline health workers to ensure the success of the approach.

STRATEGIC FOCUS 5 - ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND CIVIC RIGHTS

Context Analysis of Economic Empowerment and Civic Rights in Northern Uganda in 2023

Northern Uganda, a region scarred by decades of conflict, particularly the brutal insurgency led by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), continues its arduous journey toward recovery and development. As of 2023, the landscape of economic empowerment and civic rights in Northern Uganda is marked by both progress and persistent challenges.

Efforts to rebuild infrastructure have been slow, yet agriculture remains the backbone of the region's economy. Employment opportunities, especially for the youth, are crucial. Vocational training and entrepreneurship support programs like the Youth Livelihood Programme and the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme have made strides in empowering women and young people, though they need expansion. Poverty remains a significant issue, with market access challenges, inadequate infrastructure, and low education levels affecting economic growth. Investing in education and vocational training is essential.

Governance and political participation have improved, but corruption, limited local government capacity, and political interference persist. Civil society organizations (CSOs) are vital in promoting civic rights and community development. Political engagement is increasing, but concerns about the fairness of the process highlight the need for continuous efforts to ensure free and fair elections. Strengthening the judiciary and law enforcement is imperative to protect civic rights.

The narrative of Northern Uganda in 2023 is one of resilience and gradual progress amid enduring challenges. The region's people demonstrate remarkable determination, striving for a brighter and more equitable future.

Donors

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ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND CIVIC RIGHTS

EMPOWER YOU PROJECT EMPOWERING YOUTH ORGANISATIONS IN UGANDA

Context

Youth in Gulu and Lira cities, located in the Acholi and Lango sub-regions, face numerous challenges that hinder their effective participation in socio-economic processes. They lack awareness of policies and programs, essential skills, and access to civic and political platforms. Youth governance structures are often perceived as politicized and corrupt, with insufficient investment in representative youth bodies.

Moreover, young entrepreneurs, especially women, struggle with market awareness, technical skills, and access to professional networks and vocational training. Institutional training is often disconnected from the private sector, and policy frameworks alongside commercial registration processes are cumbersome. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these issues, disproportionately impacting young women.

GWED-G's intervention - Outputs

GWED-G addressed the problem of youth participation in policy and development processes through a comprehensive intervention strategy that focused on training, mentorship, and advocacy. The initiative improved youth knowledge and skills in relevant frameworks and processes via a mix of non-residential training sessions. These sessions, held for youth representatives from Lira and Gulu, covered legal and political frameworks, soft skills like public speaking and advocacy, and council business. Post-training, the trained youth provided mentorship and coaching to their constituencies, ensuring the broader dissemination of these skills.

Additionally, GWED-G facilitated the development of youth advocacy plans and supported the election of youth caucuses to represent youth interests in decision-making platforms. Advocacy meetings with policymakers and social accountability sessions were conducted to ensure ongoing dialogue and follow-up on youth-related policy issues. To increase visibility, youth activities and policy demands were communicated through radio talk shows and social media. This multi-faceted approach effectively empowered youth to participate confidently and actively in socio-economic policy processes at local, regional, and national levels.



IMPACT OF GWED-G'S INTERVENTION (OUTCOMES)

GWED-G's intervention significantly impacted the youth in Gulu and Lira by enhancing their participation in socio-economic and political processes. Initially, youth faced challenges like limited policy awareness, insufficient skills, and restricted civic and political access. GWED-G's targeted activities improved their skills, knowledge, and advocacy capabilities, training youth representatives on legal frameworks, soft skills, and council business. This led to better understanding of policies and active involvement in decision-making.

The Youth Advocacy Plan (2023-2026) engaged 71 stakeholders, including youth leaders and persons with disabilities, addressing issues like inadequate youth participation and limited access to opportunities. The "Youth Without Colors" caucus, with 37 diverse members, ensured inclusive representation. Advocacy meetings with policymakers led to action points for youth orientation on planning, budgeting, and government programs.

GWED-G also strengthened GLOFORD, a local NGO in Lira, with organizational assessments and financial training, including 7 staff in Certified Professional Accountancy courses. The intervention reached numerous beneficiaries, including 60 youth in orientation workshops and 91 participants in soft skills training, ultimately creating a more empowered and inclusive youth community.

Challenges encountered

Ensuring full participation of youth with disabilities in project activities was a significant challenge. Despite efforts, effective engagement remained a concern. GWED-G collaborated with city focal persons and disability rights organizations to enhance representation in decision-making processes like youth caucus elections, integrating their voices and needs into project initiatives.

National elections posed potential threats to the project's youth empowerment focus due to partisan dynamics. To mitigate risks, GWED-G maintained non-partisan neutrality and strengthened partnerships with the youth caucus, emphasizing inclusivity across political affiliations. This approach aimed to safeguard project objectives, ensuring political considerations did not overshadow efforts for youth empowerment and inclusive development.

Future perspectives

The activities under the "Empower You" project are designed with a strong focus on sustainability and a clear exit strategy to ensure continuity beyond the project's duration.

Institutional sustainability has been assured by collaborating with existing city structures

and youth councils, ensuring that capacity-building efforts are integrated and maintained. Policy-level sustainability aligns with national frameworks, promoting coherence in youth employment and socio-economic development policies. Additionally, the project's dissemination of diverse policy frameworks, laws, program and advocacy efforts aim to amplify learning and encourage replication, ensuring long-term benefits for youth and their continued participation in socio-political processes. Thus, even after the project concludes, the established structures, skills, and policies will support beneficiaries in sustaining and expanding their socio-economic activities.

EMPOWER YOU in numbers

Stakeholders engaged on the Youth Advocacy Plan (2023-26)	71
Youths engaged in government planning and development	151
staff certified Professional Accountants	7
"Youth Without Colors" caucus, with 37 diverse members	1

STRATEGIC FOCUS 6 - SOCIAL RESEARCHES AND ADVOCACY

Context Analysis of Social Research and Advocacy in Northern Uganda in 2023

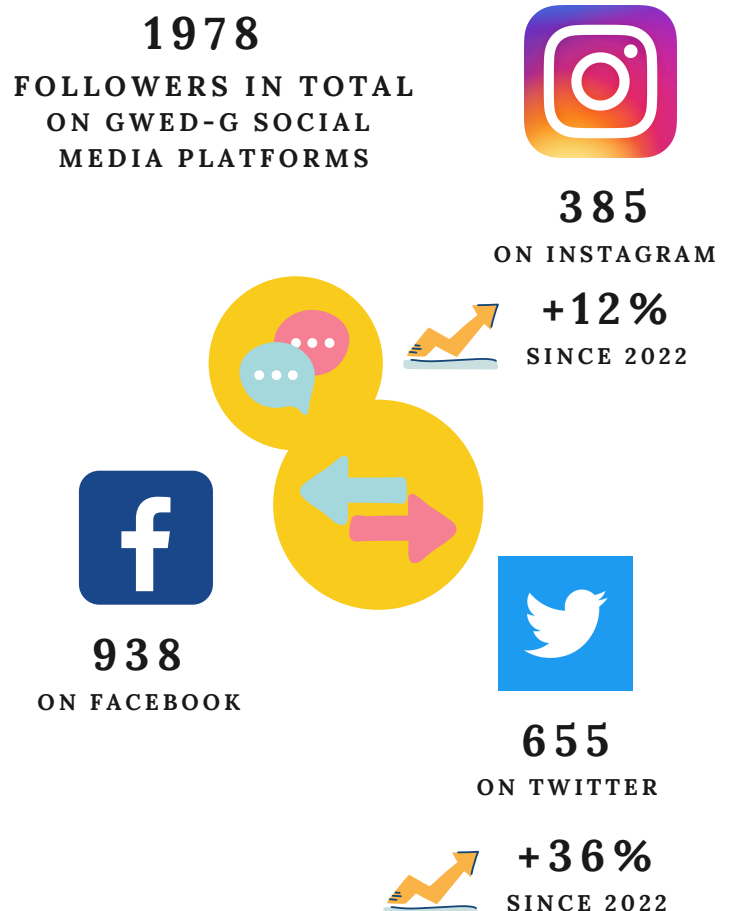
In 2023, advocacy for women's rights in Uganda is shaped by a robust and dynamic effort to address various legislative and socio-economic challenges. National-level advocacy is particularly focused on advancing several key bills that have significant implications for the protection and empowerment of women. These include the Transitional Justice Bill, the Sexual Offences Bill, the Legal Aid Bill, and the Human Rights Defenders Protection Bill. These legislative efforts are crucial in a country where women's rights continue to be compromised by legal, cultural, and socio-economic barriers.

The **Transitional Justice Bill** is a cornerstone of the national advocacy agenda, addressing the needs of women affected by Uganda's long history of conflict. This bill aims to provide a comprehensive framework for addressing past human rights abuses and promoting reconciliation and justice. For women, this bill is especially significant as it seeks to address gender-specific harms experienced during conflicts, such as sexual violence and exploitation. Advocacy efforts around this bill emphasize the importance of including women's voices in transitional justice processes and ensuring that reparations and support services are gender-sensitive (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2023).

Another critical piece of legislation is the **Sexual Offences Bill**. This bill aims to consolidate and strengthen laws against sexual violence, providing clearer definitions and harsher penalties for offenses such as rape, defilement, and sexual harassment.

The advocacy around this bill highlights the pervasive issue of sexual violence in Uganda and the need for stronger legal protections for survivors. Women's rights organizations have been instrumental in pushing for the bill's passage, conducting awareness campaigns, and engaging in policy dialogues to ensure that the legislation effectively addresses the realities of sexual violence in Uganda (Human Rights Watch, 2023).

The **Legal Aid Bill** is also a focal point of national advocacy for women's rights. Access to justice is a significant barrier for many women in Uganda, particularly those in rural areas and those facing poverty. The Legal Aid Bill seeks to establish a framework for providing free legal assistance to those who cannot afford it, ensuring that women can access legal support in cases of domestic violence, property disputes, and other issues.



Advocacy efforts emphasize the importance of legal aid in empowering women to claim their rights and seek justice. This includes advocating for adequate funding and resources to implement the bill effectively once passed (Legal Aid Service Providers Network, 2023).

Additionally, the **Human Rights Defenders Protection Bill** is critical in safeguarding those who advocate for women's rights. Women human rights defenders (WHRDs) in Uganda often face threats, intimidation, and violence due to their work. This bill aims to provide legal protections and support for WHRDs, ensuring they can operate safely and effectively. Advocacy around this bill involves raising awareness of the challenges faced by WHRDs and pushing for comprehensive measures to protect them, including legal safeguards and mechanisms for reporting and responding to threats (Amnesty International, 2023).

National advocacy for women's rights in Uganda is supported by a diverse coalition of civil society organizations, international partners, and grassroots movements. These groups work together to conduct research, raise public awareness, and engage with policymakers. Research plays a crucial role in these advocacy efforts, providing evidence-based insights into the challenges faced by women and the effectiveness of proposed legislative solutions. For instance, studies on the prevalence of sexual violence and the barriers to accessing justice are used to inform advocacy strategies and policy recommendations (UN Women, 2023).

Public awareness campaigns are another key component of advocacy efforts. These campaigns aim to educate the public about women's rights and the importance of the proposed bills. By changing public attitudes and increasing support for women's rights, these campaigns help to create a conducive environment for legislative change. Advocacy organizations also engage directly with policymakers through lobbying, policy dialogues, and stakeholder consultations, ensuring that the voices of women are heard in the legislative process (CIVICUS, 2023).

The impact of these advocacy efforts is evident in the progress made towards the passage of these bills and the broader national conversation on women's rights. While challenges remain, including resistance from conservative and traditionalist groups, the momentum generated by advocacy efforts provides hope for significant advances in women's rights in Uganda.

In conclusion, advocacy for women's rights at the national level in Uganda in 2023 is focused on advancing key legislative initiatives that address critical issues such as transitional justice, sexual violence, access to legal aid, and the protection of human rights defenders. These efforts are supported by robust research, public awareness campaigns, and direct engagement with policymakers. Through sustained and coordinated advocacy, there is potential for significant progress in the protection and empowerment of women in Uganda.

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STRATEGIC FOCUS 7 - GWED-G INSTITUTIONAL & ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2023, GWED-G (Gulu Women Economic Development and Globalization) stands as a beacon of empowerment and progress in Northern Uganda, focusing its efforts on transforming the lives of women and promoting socio-economic development in the region. Established with a mission to empower women through various initiatives, GWED-G has strategically evolved its institutional and organizational capacities to address the unique challenges faced by women in post-conflict Northern Uganda.

Programmatic Initiatives

Central to GWED-G's approach is its commitment to capacity building and program expansion. Through targeted training sessions in project management, gender mainstreaming, and financial literacy, the organization equips its staff and local partners with the skills needed to effectively implement and sustain development projects. This investment in human capital ensures that GWED-G's initiatives are impactful and responsive to the needs of the community.

The organization's programs span various sectors critical to women's empowerment, including agriculture, microfinance, and vocational training. By providing women with access to resources, skills, and market opportunities, GWED-G enables them to enhance their economic independence and contribute actively to household and community well-being.

Challenges and Strategic Responses

Despite its successes, GWED-G faces challenges typical of non-profit organizations, including financial sustainability and community engagement. The organization navigates these obstacles by diversifying funding sources and forging strategic partnerships with international donors, local businesses, and government agencies. Notably, GWED-G benefits from the presence of international experts through the Eirene Suisse program, which provides valuable expertise and enhances the organization's capacity to implement effective programs.

Additionally, NGOs such as USAID and CARITAS have dedicated programs aimed at strengthening GWED-G. These collaborations bring in essential resources and knowledge, further empowering the organization to address the complex needs of women in the region. GWED-G places a strong emphasis on fostering meaningful community participation and ownership of projects, ensuring sustainability and long-term impact.

Name of partners

CARITAS Schweiz
Suisse
Svizzera
Svizra



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

eirene
Suisse



2023 FINANCIALS

INCOME

	2023	2022
Programme Costs		
ALENU- From Caritas	181,464,650	1,192,164,550
AJWS	97,216,500	72,274,000
CivFund	244,627,000	51,987,700
Diakonia	266,045,812	430,700,067
DGF	--	359,510,753
EMPOWER-YOU	395,171,790	--
GIZ	54,239,500	--
ICTJ	22,250,000	--
NED	171,954,526	86,691,372
PELARD - N	--	14,214,673
RHITES URC Sub contract	--	389,802,046
USAID/PMI/JSI	76,812,700	--
VOICE	240,283,375	277,163,838
Subtotal Program Costs	1,750,065,853	2,874,453,999
Interest income	136,210	1,477,337
Total income	1,750,202,063	2,875,931,336

EXPENDITURES

	2023	2022
Expenses		
Salaries	708,935,718	1,119,948,903
Benefits	66,716,180	101,889,419
Travel	78,637,046	3,000,000
Office supplies	77,774,329	118,684,254
Program costs	716,573,085	1,392,976,028
Admin costs	123,117,095	229,653,906
Vehicle and Motorcycle repairs	27,164,694	10,507,057
Communication costs	23,889,225	465,000
Board Costs	16,685,250	4,200,000
Total Expenditures	1,839,492,622	2,981,324,567
Surplus/deficit for the year	-89,290,559	- 105,393,231



GWED-G
Gulu Women's Economic
Development & Globalization

**Gulu Women Economic Development & Globalization
(GWED-G)**

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