

A photograph of a group of women and children sitting on the ground outside a red building. The women are wearing colorful headwraps and traditional patterned clothing. Some are holding infants. A yellow plastic jug is on the ground to the left. The scene is set in a rural area with green foliage in the background.

REALISING GENDER EQUALITY

**Prevention and handling of cases of sexual violence against girls and women,
and enforcement of women's rights in Uganda.**

END OF PROJECT DOCUMENTATION 2012-2015



In partnership with



and



“

...When she looked around her and saw the darkness and thick bushes that surrounded them she knew she had no escape... He must have seen her fear because he immediately pushed her down, tore off her knickers and climbed over her. Within seconds he was panting over her...there was nothing comparable to the excruciating pain she was experiencing.

14 year old Teopista's case has never been resolved, her case file went missing and the 19 year old man who raped her has never been persecuted.

**60%**

of women in Uganda have experienced physical, sexual or psychological violence at some point in their lives.

**50%**

of sexual assaults are perpetuated against girls aged 15 years or younger.

“

One day in Feb' 2013, I was very sick with malaria. I was at home alone when David came to see me. We talked for a while and he asked for sex.

I told him that I was very weak and that it was unfair of him to ask for sex at such a time. I was shocked when he just grabbed me and raped me. I was too weak to fight for myself. So he raped me without much struggle. After 2 months, I was sure I was pregnant; I was only sixteen years old and I knew I was still too young for marriage but with the pregnancy, I had no alternative...

Sexual Violence Survivor, Kisoro district



Prevention and handling of cases of sexual violence against girls and women, and enforcement of women's rights in Uganda.

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FOREWORD



Regina Bafaki
Executive Director

Insert foreword

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ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

ACFODE	Action for Development
CDO	Chief District Officer
CODERASH	Committees Combating all forms of Defilement, Rape, and Sexual Harassment
CSO	Civil Society Organization
GISO	Gombolola Internal Security Officer
HIV/AIDS	Human Immune Virus / Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
EIRENE	International Christian Peace Service
IECs	Information, Education, and Communication Materials
IDF	Independent Development Fund
MPs	Members of Parliament
PLE	Primary Leaving Examinations
RDC	Resident District Commissioner
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
UPE	Universal Primary Education

1. INTRODUCTION



“Women are bearing the brunt of the indiscipline of Men. Everyone is a stakeholder. If CSOs can bring it to the fore, it will help”

Gen. Kale Kayihura - Inspector General of Police



Violence against women

is one of the most widespread of all the human rights abuses affecting women globally. Every day in their homes, communities, workplaces and schools, women and girls are robbed of their choices and control of their lives.

Those living in poverty are even more at risk, limited in their ability to participate and make decisions of their health and wellbeing all as a result of the impact violence has on every aspect of their lives.

In the context of Uganda, the magnitude of SGBV makes for very grim optimism, with some statistics indicating that up to 80% of women in Uganda have experienced physical, sexual or psychological violence at some point in their lives. Kisoro district in South Western Uganda has historically been a hot bed of SGBV. A 2009 baseline survey conducted in Kisoro and Pallisa districts by ACFODE, supported by Independent Development Fund (IDF) and International Christian Peace Service (EIRENE) showed that unwanted sexual advances, defilement and rape ranked highest among forms of SGBV in Kisoro district.



Perpetration of SGBV is deeply entrenched in some cultural practices and social norms that tolerate violence against women mostly resulting from an imbalance of power between men and women. Additionally, in the case of Uganda, mostly poorly implemented policies, inconsistent administration of formal justice in line with existing laws and poor community sanctions makes it easy for a perpetrator to get away with committing an SGBV crime.

“

You see me here smiling but my husband beats me as and when he feels like, which is almost every day. As long as he is drunk, he beats me. And he is drunk almost every day. I have reported him to LCs and to his mother many times but they cannot do anything to him. And our system is not helpful.

Beya, Kisoro District

“

One time I tried to follow up a case of a 15 year old girl who was defiled by a 16 year old boy. This case was reported to police, but while trying to follow it up, I was approached by some politicians who asked me to stop. I later found out that the parents of the girl had bribed the hospital to forge the immunization card to make sure that she was 18 years of age. Due to the pressure from the politicians, I got scared to continue following up but still pressed on. The case continued and up to now the culprit is still in court. It is therefore our role as community members to help police in following up cases of sexual violence”

Twagirayesu Moses, Project Director
Gisorora Child Development Centre.

Worse still, these inconsistencies at getting justice along with the social prejudice that comes with being a survivor tend to deter women and girls who have been abused to seek and receive the support they need to get the protection and support they need.



In 2012, ACFODE in partnership with International Christian Peace Service (EIRENE) and BMZ -German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development launched a 3 year project with the goal to socially, culturally, and economically empower women and girls in Kisoro district to enforce their rights and suffer less from sexual violence.

The Prevention and Handling of Cases of Sexual Violence against Girls and Women of Rural areas of Kisoro District and Enforcement of Women's Rights at National Level in Uganda project was premised on the three main pillars of Prevention,

Protection and Restitution for girls and women in 4 sub counties of Kisoro district either as survivors or in any way at risk of suffering SGBV.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

28,300 community members reached with SGBV information and services over the project period.

2012 - 2013

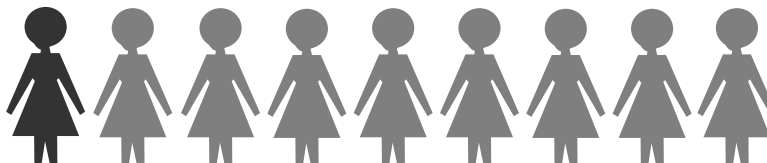
- Field Office with trained counselor and field officer established in Kisoro to reach SGBV affected individuals.
- 6 CODERASH committees formed at parish level.
- 2,164 people reached with SGBV messages and services.
- 40 primary schools identified for implementation of measures to prevent SGBV.
- ACFODE monitors the publicity of sexual violence in the daily news papers.

2013 - 2014

- 7,148 people reached with direct services and SGBV messages.
- 59 community facilitators trained in documentation of SGBV cases
- 41 schools held panel discussions on SGBV.
- Launch of the *"Know your role in the fight against gender based violence"* booklet.
- The peace march with Children as ambassadors of peace,

2014 - 2015

- SGBV commentaries published in daily news papers.
- *"The power of the pen in breaking silence about sexual violence"* booklet published and launched.
- 41 schools hold panel discussions on sexuality and gender roles in the fight against SGBV.
- 3 day training of 33 police and health workers in skills for provision of adequate health and legal services for SGBV survivors.



Over the course of three years, ACFODE with its project partners implemented a number of activities designed to empower the women and girls of Kisoro district to demand and have their rights protected.

2. A WINNING APPROACH



The struggle against SGBV

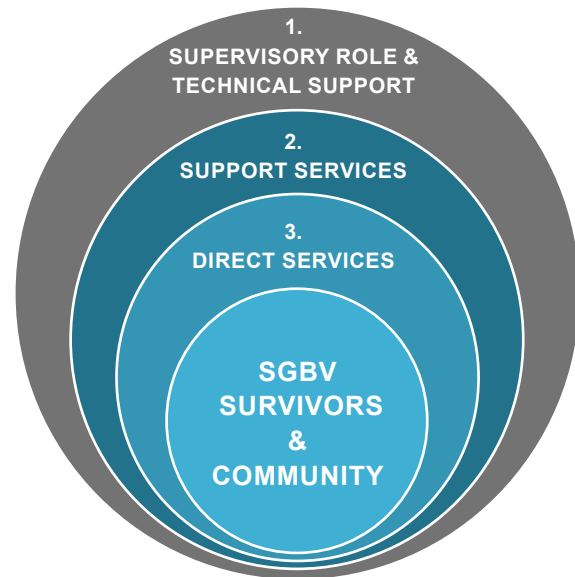
requires empowering communities particularly women and girls with the right information and skills to demand that their voices be heard and their rights protected.

Equally as important, is for this empowerment to be complimented by strong principles and guidelines governing the work of all actors dealing with issues of protection and support of SGBV survivors.

In line with implementing this multi-pronged approach, the project embraced four (4) key action steps:

- Provide direct psycho-social and legal support to SGBV survivors at the grass roots.
- Establish and build the capacity of community response structures to take action against all forms of SGBV.
- Empower the youth and their caregivers with skills and knowledge on issues of gender rights and self-awareness.
- Spearhead advocacy and lobbying initiatives at national level specifically on improving access to legal services and support for girls and women across Uganda.

Over the course of three years, ACFODE with its project partners implemented a number of activities designed to empower the women and girls of Kisoro district to demand and have their rights protected.



1. Technical support and project oversight (EIRENE, BMZ and ACFODE).
2. Direct psycho-social counseling and legal support. This includes the project field office and development partners
3. Building community level responses amongst the Police, Local Government, the CODERASH, School Committees, and the field office.

DIRECT PSYCHO-SOCIAL & LEGAL SUPPORT



As a person who was well known to be living in a violent relationship, I asked for help from the facilitators who interceded on my behalf and visited me and my husband at home. They counselled us and reconciled us and now my home is one of the most peaceful homes in my village...As a result of the change in my life, most people came to me for counselling on how to attain peace in their own homes.

Ntawera Evary Funi, Chairperson LC III - Nyakabande Sub County



Field Coordination Office:

Making services accessible to women and girls is a critical step in empowering them to come forward and seek protection and restitution. The Project set up a fully functional support and coordination office in Kisoro district with the mandate to provide psycho-social counseling and legal support to SGBV survivors. A full-time professional counsellor was on hand to provide counseling services, make appropriate referrals and follow ups for survivors within the target communities.

A full time field officer dedicated to providing legal advice and referrals worked in partnership with

local legal aid agencies, law enforcement agencies (Police), local leaders and Kisoro district technical officers to:

- Provide legal representation to survivors who could not afford to represent themselves in court.
- Secondly, represent and assist survivors to participate in prosecutions against the accused;
- Provide general legal information and advice and;
- Offer representation and assistance in alternative dispute resolution through the customary system.



Referrals and Linkages:

Professional legal service providers, health service providers, law enforcement agencies (Police child and family protection unit), and the Kisoro district local government line departments were all formally engaged to provide technical expertise in supporting survivors to access formal justice. Through these strategic partnerships ** SGBV survivors had their cases reported, documented and legally concluded with up to ** perpetrators punished for their crimes.



Capacity Building and Information Management:

Case documentation, reporting and management was coordinated by the field office. This allowed for regular reviews, follow-ups and subsequent evidence-based case management.

Emerging trends, capacity gaps and best practices were quickly identified and appropriate actions taken to mitigate and/or scale up actions.



Direct Community Engagement:

Reaching more women and girls with information they need to 'take action' also required the field office to directly engage and interact with the community members.

Through radio talk shows, the project team was able to do just that with the wider community on issues of SGBV, increasing awareness on their rights, and access to psycho-social and legal support structures. 20 radio talkshows held to increase awareness on SGBV issues in the communities.



STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SUPPORT STRUCTURES



Violence in homes has reduced because people know that there are some community members (CODERASH) who will follow up and report them to the authorities. Women in my community now know that they can report cases of violence by their husbands; they know that ACFODE will follow up their case and this has given them hope. I foresee a violence free society...

Bizere Alice, CODERASH - Kashija Village, Kisoro District



CODERASH Committees:

Combating all forms of Defilement, Rape, and Sexual Harassment (CODERASH) committees; these comprise of respected and trusted members of the community and were set up to engage fellow community members, leaders and institutions in developing local strategies on prevention and support of women's rights.



Over the course of the project, the community facilitators who make up the CODERASH committees were equipped with a range of skills necessary for them to appeal to their peers to take action against all forms of abuse of women and girls including SGBV.



Integration for Sustainability:

Mindful of the fact that many initiatives die off once a project ends, we emphasized local ownership by having community members themselves select CODERASH representatives.

Additionally, we also emphasised integration by supporting CODERASH committees to be integrated into already existing community response

structures such as the Local Council 1 offices at village level, and the Community Development Offices (CDO) at Sub County level.

By having the CODERASH committees recognized and actively involved in the identification, monitoring, reporting and follow up of abuse/ violence cases at community level, they are able to make a sustainable contribution beyond the project life.



Local Skills Development:

Over the project period, CODERASH members along with other local leaders such as LC1 chairpersons were equipped with skills in relevant legislations (i.e. Domestic Violence Act, Land Act and Succession Act), basic counselling skills, advocacy, documentation and reporting. As a result, they have been appreciated as key resource persons in the communities and been co-opted on different decision-making platforms.

This has resulted in more recommendations and actions related to women rights being integrated within local by-laws.



Additionally, with more CODERASH members (up to 18 members) taking up positions of influence in the district, they are able to access information on cases of abuse and violence against women and girls, and then able to use their knowledge and skills to provide the necessary support and follow-up.



Advocacy and Policy Reform:

At local level, CODERASH committees spear-headed several initiatives designed to address infringements on women's and girls' rights.

Several committees led reforms to ensure birth registrations for children as a measure to prevent child marriages, there were also advocacy drives by CODERASH committees to strengthen local level commitment and mechanisms to fast-track cases of sexual violence towards women and girls.

YOUTH-LED DIALOGUES ON RIGHTS & SELF-AWARENESS



The girls and boys have also learnt to fully express themselves whether it is among themselves or among teachers or even community members. They can freely report cases of sexual violence in case there are any.

Barugahare Richard, Deputy Head Teacher of Gitovu Primary - Kisoro District



Inter-Generational Dialogues:

Challenging and changing cross-generational practices and prejudices requires innovative approaches that involve both the young and old. Inter-generational dialogues are one such innovation which allows for both the young and old to openly discuss what would commonly be taboo topics.

The project brought together students, teachers' parents and guardians from 41 partner schools to deliberate freely on critical issues around the rights of women and girls, their roles and responsibilities in ensuring those rights are protected, and how they can support each other to create that enabling environment.



Life Skills:

In collaboration with the partner school administration and parents, youth (both boys and girls) through the youth clubs were equipped with a range of skills on rights and self-awareness, critical thinking, health and wellbeing, and self-assertion.



Through the clubs, the youth were supported by their teachers and parents as adult mentors to reinforce life skills and healthy decision making. This has also been complimented by talking compounds in schools on different topics including; the value of education, HIV/AIDS messages, Sexual and Gender Based Violence.

By having the CODERASH committees recognized and actively involved in the identification, monitoring, reporting and follow up of abuse/ violence cases at community level, they are able to make a sustainable contribution beyond the project life.



Leveraging Existing Youth Structures:

Most schools have the same clubs/groups such as the music, dance and drama, Boys' Scouts and Girls Guide, environmental clubs, debating clubs, SST clubs, Wild Life Clubs, sports and games clubs and religious clubs.



The project invested in supporting all these clubs in the partner schools to integrate dialogues on life skills, rights and self-awareness within their respective work plans and programs. Through this the project was able to build sustainability by leverage traditional and already existing structures that can carry on supporting the youth beyond the project cycle.

ADVOCACY COLLABORATION AND ADAPTATION TO IMPROVE NATIONAL LEVEL RESPONSE TO SGBV



There is need to work with government because as women MPs, we have more influence to front proposals to change laws. I urge the Attorney General to speed up the amendment of the Penal Code Act which I assure you we are willing to support, when the time came.

Hon. Nyirabashitsi Sarah, Woman MP-Kisoro District



Public Exhibitions:

Influencing decision making and improving social systems requires public support and social mobilization. To achieve this however, there needs to be a commitment to make access to information and services available both to the decision makers and to the public.

Public exhibitions are a positive and compelling approach in engaging and empowering communities to take action against social ills such as SGBV.

Over the three year project period, ACFODE and its partners held themed Public exhibitions highlighting the impact of Sexual Violence on the

health and wellbeing of women and girls in Kisoro and nationally, challenging local and national leaders to take concrete actions backed by the right legal framework to protect women and girls, and championing behavior change within the public for them to demand and strengthen local systems to protect women's rights and support SGBV survivors to access support and justice.





Women Leaders Inspiring Change:

Women's participation in the political spaces increases understanding of their rights as well as decision making power. In this regard therefore, partnering with women in leadership positions to champion policy reform is a positive step in achieving sustainable solutions to ending SGBV.



In collaboration with Uganda Women Parliamentary Association (UWOPA), the project published media articles, participated in the development of policy briefs, held national consultative dialogues with women leaders, and engaged a cross-section of Members of Parliament to improve and amend the National Sexual Offences bill. We are still committed to having this bill passed by parliament.



Learning and Networking Sessions:

Facilitating collaboration internally and with external stakeholders, adapting new learning, innovations, and translating those learnings into iterative strategic and programmatic adjustments is a sustainable way of scaling up best practices, monitoring progress and evaluating impact.

Over the project period, the team participated in several partnership visits across the country and with partners in neighboring Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo. These visits were intended to facilitate collaborative knowledge sharing and learning on how best to address SGBV and empower women and girls to demand their rights.





...When he finally finished, he gave me 1,000 shillings and told me not to tell anyone. Then he ran away. I did not know the man that had raped me. In March 2013, I gave birth to his son. I had just turned fifteen.” “With the baby, I knew my education had ended. I thought I would never go back to school. But shortly after delivery, Kenneth (project field officer) and another lady from ACFODE visited our home. They counselled me for a long time and made me feel better. It was as if I was back from hell. After their visit, I decided to go back to school and do my Primary Leaving Examinations. My mother supported me through it all by taking care of my child.

SBGV Survivor, Kisoro District

3. MEASURING SUCCESS



Emotional Care and Support for SGBV Survivors:

182 survivors of SGBV were given professional emotional care and support by a full time psycho-social support counsellor.

Through this support, survivors were able to overcome the high levels of depression, re-build their

self-esteem and assertiveness, and of critical importance, take concrete steps to protect themselves from further abuse.

Providing free psycho-social counseling services for women and girls in hard to reach areas also provided a safe environment for them to share their experiences, work through their emotional challenges, and also get the support to develop the resilience to rebuild their lives and actively participate in demanding and accessing justice. with existing laws and poor community sanctions makes it easy for a perpetrator to get away with committing an SGBV crime.



Survivors Accessing Professional Legal Support:

The legal support system registered significant successes in providing needed services for SGBV survivors through applying a community based legal response system.

At community level, CODERASH committees were able to quickly identify and refer cases to the field officer. The field officer was then able to document, categorize the cases, support the survivor to report the offence, and then provide the necessary legal referral to the professional legal aid.

With this elaborate community driven mechanism, 80% of cases reported were documented, investigated and concluded through the proper legal channels. We also noted a steady rise in number of reported cases from 67 in 2012 to over 100 cases in 2015 as a result of increased confidence in the legal system.



Community Structures Strengthened to Fight SGBV:



As a result of the intervention by the community facilitators, a lot has changed in our communities, for instance my right to own my home was restored upon me and my children after my husband deserted us...

Uwihoreye Ruth, Gitovu Village - Kisoro District

The CODERASH Committees provided a strong community based protection and support system to assist survivors of SGBV access counseling and legal support, and also work to prevent acts of SGBV by engaging women, girls, community leaders and men in understanding and promoting gender equality.

A total of **12 committees with 120 members** were established in the 4 sub counties, and are now equipped to actively identify, document,

report and follow up cases of SGBV. With their capacity built, CODERASH committee members have also been co-opted on different community based decision-making positions and are now able to actively articulate and advocate for better inclusion of gender rights programs in community plans and strategies.

*The CODERASH Committees through the different activities were able to directly reach **28,300 community members** (of which close to **50% were women**) with messages and information on sexual violence during the project period.*



Sexual Violence Referral and Linkages System Strengthened:

Strong referral systems function as a network of protection for those experiencing gender-based abuse and/or neglect.

To build this system, the project partnered with local leaders and law enforcement

agencies to first establish community level structures (CODERASH Committees) as first line responders.

Secondly, engage a range of stakeholders and service providers to identify and document all available services and resources in the district that address gender-based violence.

Lastly through tailored trainings, empower service providers to follow a clear protocol on referring survivors to other providers including supporting them to access and effectively utilize the services.

*As a result of this elaborate system, several local service providers and CBOs were brought on board and trained to provide services; and close to **200 survivors** over the three years were referred, followed up and supported to access quality care and support services.*





Leaders Championing SGBV Fight at Policy, Advocacy and Service Delivery Level:

A key strength of the project model was opening a space for community leaders at all levels to learn, understand, discuss and participate in challenging traditional norms and harmful practices related to SGBV. Women in leadership, national leaders, religious and local leaders were all engaged, resulting in leadership backed recommendations for addressing SGBV.

The Uganda Women Parliamentary Association (UWOPA) was one of our progressive partners in pushing for reforms in the Sexual Offences Bill. Their support as key leaders and advocates for women's rights energized our push for reforms by providing technical analysis, engaging civil society, and publishing articles all with the intention of highlighting the need for women's rights to be better protected.

ACFODE also engaged over 250 women; stakeholders from politics, government, civil society, academia and media in a national

dialogue on “Redefining the Journey of Women in Politics: The Role of Women Politicians in Preventing Sexualized Violence”.



Thank you for the honor and opportunity to make my contribution to this serious campaign. If you are ready, I am ready. We should have a resounding voice that comes out to say enough is enough.

Gen. Kale Kayihura, Inspector General of Police



National Level Advocacy Initiatives:



An essential component of improving access to women's rights is to mobilize civil society, government agencies, community groups, traditional and other local leaders and women themselves to increase volunteerism, raise awareness, engage and hold stakeholders accountable to protecting women and girls against all forms of violence.

Meaningfully engaging stakeholders was a critical step in keeping the SGBV discussion on the agenda in parliament, within the district, at community level, and at national level through the media. As a result of our concerted efforts, the project was able to secure concrete commitments from leaders at all levels. For example, the Inspector General of the Uganda Police force during a public exhibition set up a special investigations unit to probe the handling of SGBV cases in Kisoro district.

Recommendations from this investigation resulted in major reforms within the Kisoro Police - Child and Family Protection Unit including full investigation of 10 cases of defilement in the project area that had gone cold; un-reported cases were recorded, missing and shelved files were recalled from the Police. This resulted in one arrest, several warrants of arrest being issued, and the transfer of the Officer in Charge of the Child and Family Protection Unit, Kisoro Police Station due to mismanagement of cases.

“

I have assigned a team to go and look for the survivors in the power of the pen publication to see how Police can help them access justice. I promise to meet them when I go to Kisoro next month to ensure that the perpetrators, especially the man in the story MAN OF THE HOUSE pay for their crimes, as it is our mandate. I promise to work with our partners to see that justice is served.

Gen. Kale Kayihura, Inspector General of Police



Young People Better Prepared For Life:



“

We have been able to teach children about their gender roles, their rights and how they can report cases of sexual violence. This is done through drama and health education that we incorporate in our Friday school assemblies. As a result cases of sexual violence in the school have reduced. Before this project, girls used to get pregnant in school, I actually remember one girl that gave birth in class, but since the introduction of this project, we have not had any cases of pregnancy in school. The rate of drop outs especially for girls has greatly reduced over the project period.

Barugahare Richard, Deputy Head Teacher
Gitovu Primary School, Busanza Sub County

Recognizing that young people require specialized interventions, the project designed school-based programs focusing on equipping school pupils and their guardians with life skills, including prevention and protection against sexual violence.

The project also engaged adult caregivers and role models to help pupils develop self-confidence, make informed decisions, and

examine issues of gender and violence to help them make better long-term life choices.

The project worked with a total of 41 primary schools, and over 1000 pupils, teachers and parents to empower the future generation as champions against SGBV.

Up to 384 pupils from 10 primary schools were involved in the world peace day sensitizations on non-violent conflict resolution in regard to SGBV.

“

“The boys no longer touch our breasts or buttocks and they do not use bad language to us these days. Before that they used to call us “left-overs”, meaning that we have already been used” said a girl in Nyakabande Primary School.

“We can now borrow pens and books from the boys without fear because they are like brothers to us,” a pupil at Rubuguri Primary school.

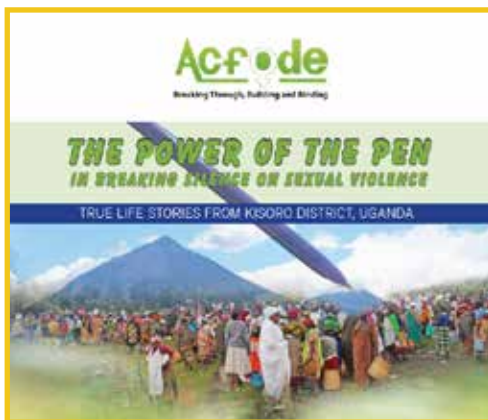




Documenting the Fight Against SGBV:

The power of human collaboration is best appreciated through tales of transformation. Capturing, documenting and sharing personal and community experiences stirs public conversations and encourages fresh, innovative and action oriented approaches to addressing social injustices.

Stories are effective because they are able to communicate different ideas about the consequences of a particular situation on everyday life, and explain different perspectives and attitudes in a detailed and specific way.



Power of the Pen in Breaking Silence on Sexual Violence:

A collection of 21 stories narrated by SGBV survivors from target communities in Kisoro, celebrates the resilience of the human spirit, the power of human collaboration, but also brings to the fore the grim realities for women and girls who have to survive in a broken system which if not built on a strong human rights and legal foundation can kill dreams and ruin futures.

Through this book, we have given ordinary women and girls a voice to demand and inspire innovations and bold new ideas to tackling SGBV with a 'no holds barred' evidence based approach.

The story book was launched at national level by the Inspector General of Police- 800 copies were produced and strategically disseminated to key stakeholders at national level.

A Video Documentary:

True life stories of 2 girls in Kisoro who experienced sexual violence including commitment statements from key stakeholders about the fight against SGBV was also produced.

Material for Behaviour Change Communication:

Produced and disseminated to different audiences to take the message of SGBV further into the local communities and relevant



authorities; the materials included: 2,000 Brochures, 1,300 Trainers Manuals, 650 Analysis Reports, 2,000 Posters, 1,000 Stickers, 1,000 Fact Sheets, 50 Case Management Form Books, 550 Branded Writing Pads, 120 T-Shirts, 60 Badges and 2 Pull Up Banners

Learning and Networking sessions:

Facilitating collaboration internally and with external stakeholders, adapting new learning, innovations, and translating those learnings into iterative strategic and programmatic adjustments is a sustainable way of scaling up best practices, monitoring progress and evaluating impact. Over the project period, the team participated in several partnership visits across the country and with partners in neighboring Rwanda. These visits were intentioned to facilitate collaborative knowledge sharing and learning on how best to address SGBV and empower women and girls to demand their rights.



“

Men have changed their ways and practices, they involve their wives in decision making in the home, during land agreements and ownership of properties. Men have also embraced girl child education and the girls no longer drop out of school at free will as was the case before this project. After p.7 girls continue to secondary school with the support of their parents especially their fathers. They are no longer seen as a quick way to attain wealth.

Blasio Byibesho Byandusya,

CODERASH Coordinator and
the Gombolola Internal Security Officer (GISO) of
Kirundo Sub-County

4. LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY



With the phase out of the ACFODE project in our sub-county, we have already put in place some measures to ensure the project sustainability. We have introduced parents' evening forums that we conduct every first Sunday of the month at trading centres, involving the five villages of Buhozi, Kagezi, Nyagatanda, Busanani and Nyamabuye. I donated a room for us to use as our office and this is where we meet and talk among other things about the challenges parents in this area face, health and nutrition. The reverend supports us in sharing the word of God and also talks about history. This is a practice that I learnt from the Rwanda Exchange Visit that I had with ACFODE and we hope to extend these forums to other villages. We even involve youth in this programme.

Ndinumukiza Charles, CODERASH Committee Member



Evidence Based Advocacy and Meaningful Engagement

of all stakeholders is required to support a lasting friendly environment and to ensure communities appreciate and take concrete steps to protect the rights of women and girls. Approaches such as public exhibitions, community dialogues, skills development opportunities, use of media can educate communities about these issues and also engage them in action at local levels.



School Youth Clubs

These have proven to be highly successful platforms for equipping children with critical knowledge, tools and skills on Sexual and Gender Based Violence, and life skills.

The clubs offer interactive sessions that build awareness of rights and responsibilities, and provide knowledge about how and where to report abuse, engage schools, teachers and

parents to advocate for women's rights; and encourage young people to make healthy choices. The field officer was then able to document, categorize the cases, support the survivor to report the offence, and then provide the necessary legal referral to the professional legal aid.



Trained and equipped community structures

These help strengthen local capacity to coordinate, plan, and advocate for improved approaches to fighting SGBV. Once CODERASH committees were trained to identify, prioritize, and follow-up on services related to prevention and protection against SGBV, they were able to work well with existing structures to identify, report and monitor SGBV cases.



Strengthening referrals and linkages systems

with social protection service providers is critical so that community members and in particular

survivors of SGBV know where they can turn for assistance when cases arise. Additionally, a functioning referral system improves the handling of cases, as more stakeholders are aware of the correct procedures for different types of cases.



Economic Empowerment

of the survivors and promoting self-reliance through participation in income generating activities is crucial for complete recovery and reducing violence re-occurrence.



Legal aid services for victims of SGBV

There is need for funding to be channelled to bridging the gap of legal aid services for victims and survivors of SGBV.

Closing Statement:

In 3 years, the project reached over **28,000 people** with SGBV services in 4 Sub counties of the South western district of Kisoro. Despite all these efforts, there is still great need for more support to contribute to the elimination of Sexual and Gender based Violence against women and girls.



If am to rate the achievement of the project, I would rate it very high especially with awareness creation and empowerment of women and girls.

District Community Development Officer - Kisoro District



ACFODE, you have done a great job in educating us. It is now time that we transfer the ideas into reality. I hope we shall continue to score the same goal.

Geoffrey Nvuyekure - Vice Chairperson Local Council III Kirundo Sub County

Our Commitment:

ACFODE will continue lobbying for legislations and measures to improve the status of women and prevention of and response to sexual violence at the national level.



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