



September 2019





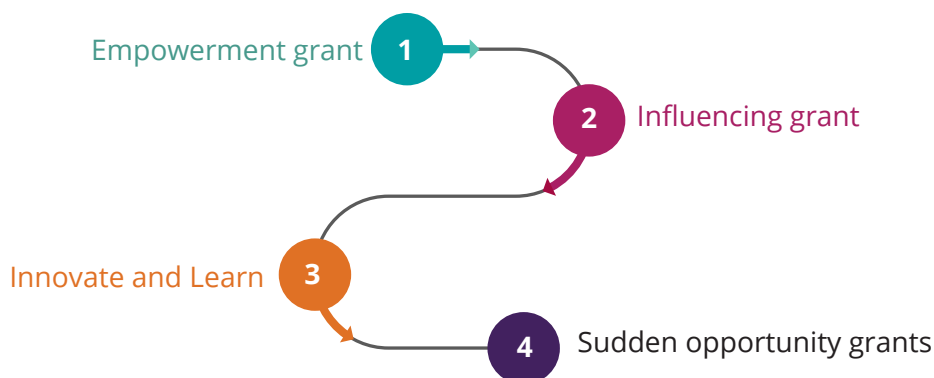
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INTRODUCTION

Voice is an innovative grant facility that supports the most marginalized and discriminated people in ten countries in Africa and Asia. It aims to amplify and connect the unheard voices with a principle of leaving no one behind.

In Uganda, Voice is currently supporting various rightsholder groups facing extreme marginalization through 31 grantees under the following thematic areas:



During the last one year, Voice has through the various grantees implemented a variety of interventions to empower vulnerable individuals and communities across the different right holders' groups.

The Linking and Learning Facilitators have worked with and supported Voice grantees to document success stories arising from their interventions.

This success stories booklet has been compiled to highlight successes and other achievements realized by grantees implementing various Voice-supported projects and interventions during the 2018-2019 period.



A group photo of Participants at the Voice Linking and Learning Annual Event held at Ankrah Foundation, Mukono Municipality; 16th – 17th July, 2019



Visually impaired women
attain self-reliance

Keeping the girl-child in
school in Oyam District



Stephens Odongo Regains
Hope and Employment

Restoring hope on land
rights for vulnerable
women in West Nile
region

5 —● Creating better conditions for vulnerable women
in Nwoya District

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organisations in the budgeting process advances
the needs of persons with disabilities in national
plans and budgets

7 —● Addressing inequalities among vulnerable
women and girls in Oyam District through
Socio-Economic Empowerment

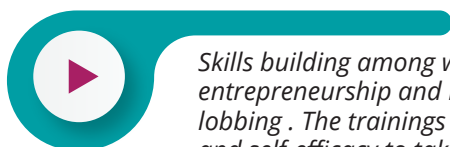


Visually impaired women attain self-reliance

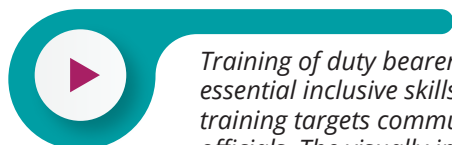
Women with visual impairment in Uganda suffer several challenges including stigma, isolation, discrimination and deprivation of any development opportunities which has led to persistent poverty. The women have for long lacked meaningful sources of income and entrepreneurial skills.

Voice through Arua District Blind Women Association (ADBWA) has empowered visually impaired women and other women with disabilities with appropriate skills to identify and engage in viable self-help initiatives. The organization has also provided platforms for the women to raise their voices as a population with rights for survival benefits in society.

The empowerment interventions implemented by Arua Blind Women Association include;



Skills building among women with visual impairment in entrepreneurship and leadership, reproductive health, advocacy and lobbying. The trainings held for the women build their confidence and self-efficacy to take initiative and leadership in determining their future.



Training of duty bearers and community and district leaders on essential inclusive skills of uplifting women with disabilities. This training targets community leaders and District local government officials. The visually impaired women use available district platforms to share their personal experiences and lobby for inclusion of their issues into the district development plans.



Molly Dradeyo, selling fish in Oli market

Since the commencement of the entrepreneurship trainings, there is remarkable change among girls and women with disabilities. The self-esteem of majority of the women has greatly improved resulting from their ability to raise their own incomes without begging. The girls and women are always very happy to share testimonies of how the Voice support has impacted their lives;

Molly Drafeyo, a confident and jolly visually impaired girl empowered by Arua Blind women's Association shares her accomplishments;

"I have overcome self-pity and low self-esteem. I run my business well and I challenge the young boys who sell near me in the market'.

Iniki Jessica

A 40-year woman with physical disability who uses a wheel chair for mobility is a participant of the voice project.

"Before joining the saving groups and participating in the business trainings by Arua Blind women association, I was alone, spent most of my time at home and life was difficult. Since then, I have learnt a lot in the areas of reproductive health and keeping my body and surroundings clean. I frequently go to the hospital for checkup, something I learnt from the training".

The entrepreneurship program equipped her with business skills which she has effectively utilized in selling rice in the market. Every profit she gains from the rice sales, she saves for buying land and paying school fees for her sons one of whom is studying in a private school paying at least Uganda shillings 140,000 as school fees termly. She also sells an assortment of fish of which profit she uses for covering the costs of food and housing rent.

Joining a savings group has allowed her to save, borrow and sustain her life which services she was not able to access from the bank.

"Previously, I attempted to acquire a loan from FINCA, (a popular micro-finance institution in the country) and I was turned down claiming they are not confident that persons with disabilities can pay back the loans"

Jessica narrates



Jessica Iniki (Centre) along with other members of Arua District Blind Women Association



The Story of Loise Matiuru and how Arua District Blind Women's Association has supported her



Loise Matiuru from Arua District blind Women

Loise Matiuru, 26 years of age is a project participant from Vura Sub-county, Arua District

Having lost her father at 3 weeks old, Loise was

raised by her grandmother. At 3 years, she was left with her grandmother who took care of her. She turned blind at 3 years of age and at 7 years she started school at Ediofe Primary School which had special needs' inclusive education.

"It was a challenging situation to my life with this new environment, because no much attention was given to me and at school, I was left to find my own way. It was challenging but later I appreciated that it was good training for me to stand on my own. I learnt to help myself out with less support from family and friends. I finally completed primary school in 2005 and scored a super 2nd grade in my Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE)."

Her grandmother died as she joined Mvara Secondary School for O'level studies which opened new challenges. She was left alone with no one to take care of her. She was lucky to be selected for school sponsorship by the Uganda Society for the Disabled together with her classmate (Ezaru Nathalie) who was also a blind student. She successfully completed school and joined Nsamizi Institute which is a special

University Campus for students with special needs) where she studied a Diploma in Social Work and Social Administration.

At Nsamizi, she always made sure she understood information and questions from a personal perspective and to be able to answer and pass course-work, tests and examinations and successfully completed the course with 2nd class upper in 2016.

"When I returned home in Arua, I was identified by Arua District Blind Women's Association with support from Oxfam/Voice. My life changed after joining this organization. I received counseling which opened me up to living a hopeful life. I have since then undertaken a lot of trainings on leadership and entrepreneurship and other areas such as reproductive health and regular mentorship and coaching how to manage my small business. The training has been a great opportunity that has changed my whole life.

I have started a small business of selling fried groundnuts and dealing in second-hand shoes, and I have learned how to manage this small business".

Loise has also learnt to manage her savings and finances with the SACCO which has enabled her to have enough capital to sustain her small business. She hopes to grow it into a bigger enterprise and earn big profits. In addition, she has acquired knowledge and skills about HIV/AIDS prevention and with that she looks forward to a



safe married life.

"I have also been trained in leadership and I can even chair meetings, make decisions and supervise others; and, I have got skills to sensitize my blind friends and the public about hard work, and helping them to identify potential opportunities to work instead of begging. However, there are still some challenges we face as blind women such as discrimination in the community, theft of our properties and difficulties in movement. Transport is expensive because we use 'boda-bodas' (motorcycles) for easy movement to our different destinations", she observes.

Loice looks forward to a bright future and looks forward to getting a family with children, acquiring her own piece of land and house, as well as getting opportunities to upgrade her level of education. She feels very confident and can do everything now.

The organization has empowered girls and women with disabilities to stand up and demand for their rights. The Leadership and entrepreneurship training, regular mentorship and coaching have restored hope in women and girls with disabilities. Many are now working hard to grow their businesses and look forward to getting married and having children.

Leaders too have now appreciated the challenges women with visual impairment experience and have employed affirmative action in ensuring equitable access to government programs and services;

The Arua District Chief Administrative Officer wrote a letter to the Production

Departments to ensure that girls and women with disabilities benefit from materials distributed by operation Wealth Creation in Aroi Sub-County. Resultantly, the women have benefited from support to start goat and pig rearing, craft making, maize growing and petty trade.

After training of Social Development workers, the Medical Superintendent of Arua Regional Referral Hospital committed to offering special consideration for women with disabilities, seeking health care services.

To date, 20 women with disabilities have visited the center and have benefited from family planning services and HIV testing and counseling.

Arua District Blind Association is now a member of Arua District NGO Forum. This has provided an additional platform to amplify the Voices of women with disabilities and to lobby for additional support from other implementing organizations.

The organization has supported women to form groups which are in their final stages of registration at subcounty level to benefit from government programs such as; Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Program, Youth Livelihood Program and Disability grant.

Post Bank Arua Branch is now offering friendly banking services to the women and girls with disabilities after engagement and advocacy by the organization.



Keeping the girl child in school in Oyam District



Girl Child Empowerment session in Oyam District

The declining numbers of girls in school in Oyam district caught the attention of Global Forum for Development Uganda (GLOFORD), a non-governmental organisation, in Lango Sub-region. GLOFORD through financial support from the Voice program embarked on a campaign to keep girls in school.

GLOFORD's baseline survey in 21 schools in Loro and Aber sub-counties between April and June 2018, revealed that primary school girls were being forced to marry or coerced into marriages at an early age.

Other findings were; the limited knowledge and skills on menstrual management among adolescent girls. The lack of knowledge, pads and the poor school sanitation and hygiene facilities like water, soap and changing rooms kept many girls away from school during their menstruation periods.

The awareness campaign, by

GLOFORD tasks parents, local leaders and teachers to play an active role in addressing issues of menstrual hygiene management, early marriages and promotion of the girl-child education.

The campaign has engaged several stakeholders including leaders and media personnel to amplify the voices of the vulnerable girls. According to Ms. Anna Ekol, Oyam District secretary for education and health, girls and boys



Participants at a Girl Child Project Event

have been empowered to highlight issues that affect them for action by the responsible duty bearers.

In order to scale-up the success realized in the 21 schools, the Health and Education Ministries have tasked all the 109 primary schools in Oyam to institute emergency sanitary towels, enroll a senior woman teacher to provide counseling to the girls at school and to allocate specific budget to menstrual hygiene management in all the government schools in Oyam.



Gloria Amuge returns to school to secure her future after elopement

On 4th of September 2018, Gloria Amuge 13year student of primary seven of Ayomapwono primary school was declared missing at school and at home which was quickly reported to the reported to the local council leader by her concerned parents. She was later discovered to have eloped to a nearby home with a 16-year-old boy (mate).

The village child protection committee working with GLOFORD opened a case file reporting the defilement case. When the police reached the scene, the entire family of the boy had escaped along with the girl.

After several months, Gloria returned home after going through torture, domestic violence and child pregnancy at the boy's village in Katulikire parish in Kiryandongo, a neighboring District.

On Monday 21st January 2019, Gloria was rushed to Atapara Hospital in critical condition, her body was too tender to carry twins, she lost the babies and suffered several complications.

When she recovered, the GLOFORD team followed her up and provided counselling to both her and the mother who by then was willing to support her continue school.

GLOFORD engaged the trained senior male and female teachers of Ayomapwono primary school, to create a friendly and stigma free environment.

Gloria has returned to school and is preparing for her Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE). She dreams of becoming a nurse and is passionately reading to achieve her dreams. At school, she freely shares her story and advises other girls to refrain from premature sexual relations and instead concentrate on their studies.



Restoring hope on land rights for vulnerable women in West Nile Region

Whereas Land is an important factor of production, it is not readily available to majority of women in the West Nile Region whose land tenure system is of communal nature largely owned by men and elders.

Access to land by women is also affected by; polygamy, cultural taboos regarding women confronting elders on land matters and the cultural norms which prohibit women from taking their husbands or men to court even when they violate their land rights.

Those who try to do it are discouraged by the long court processes that are prohibitive and time consuming for the women. The inaccessibility to land is a hindrance to development; women are not able to access resources such as credit facilities for development and to benefit from government programs such as Operation Wealth Creation. This situation has forced many women who are the predominant bread winners in most families into poverty and led to silent deaths of both women and their children.

Other major challenges women face include;

- Land grabbing by in-laws, neighbors and close relatives
- Sale and hiring out of family land by men to third parties without consulting the women who use the land to support

and feed their families

- Men using the rampant witchcraft allegations as an excuse to grab land and evict women (especially widows) from the land left by their husbands; and,
- Lack of knowledge and information on land laws by women and children which has given opportunity to those who grab their land and other properties.

Centre for Governance and Economic Development (CEGED) in partnership with Rural Initiative for Community Empowerment West Nile (RICE), through the Voice Program are implementing the **“Citizens Voice for Economic Rights and Development (CiVoRiDe) Project”** in Arua, Koboko and Nebbi Districts in four sub counties.

The goal of the CiVoRiDe project is to enhance civic activism of poor and marginalized youth and women to meaningfully enjoy their economic rights for sustainable livelihoods by bringing them to the decision-making table and making their voices heard.

One arm of the CiVoRiDe project is to enhance governance and management of land tenure systems and resolution of land conflicts in the project area.

In order to address the land-related challenges faced by women, the following measures were undertaken:

- Identifying the main challenges affecting access to land for women in the communities;
- Identifying the key land stakeholders in the communities, the practice of land management and ownership rights;
- Addressing lack of knowledge on land laws by women.



A female Community member supported to present her land challenges

The CiVoRiDe Project provided platforms for women to have a voice that was intended to resolve conflicts through traditional and cultural institutions and leaders. Such platforms included multi stakeholder's rural radio debates where women could raise land rights issues directly to the elders for redress.

The platform also facilitated additional guidance from legal experts, police, political and technical stakeholders from LC (village) to sub-county and district levels through which women's concerns were resolved.

CiVoRiDe is supporting women groups on land related matters with the aim of strengthening them on land rights, organizing them into land rights

committee (LRCs) and giving them a voice to confront the barriers to land access and utilization.

The CiVoRiDe Project prepares land rights committees composed of 55 women's group leaders to present land issues affecting women to village elders' committees.



A Community radio session on land rights in progress

The village elders' committees either resolves the land issues or refer them further to the Elder's Council at the sub-county level. This platform has allowed the affected women to have land related challenges resolved locally and amicably at low cost.

The CiVoRiDe project has also introduced the West Nile Region Citizens Manifesto with a demand to improve the tenure system to curb the rising incidences of land conflicts and land-related violations as well as seeking reforms in the judicial systems to reduce delays and increase access to justice for citizens.

The above interventions of the CiVoRiDe Project led to the following achievements/successes:

- The radio debates provided the affected marginalized women opportunities to access free information and legal services which enhanced their confidence to speak up. This offered the women space to air their issues directly and to seek for redress.



Elderly woman presenting during the community radio session

cases were successfully handled and more than 36 cases are being followed up to conclusion;

- Land Rights Committees (LRCs) set up from the women groups helped in sensitizing the women and general public on the new land conflict resolution approach i.e. the mechanism of reporting to elders and land courts; 47 cases of land conflicts were reported to elders, 15 of

- The land conflict resolution processes have involved district dialogues as well. This is a combined effort to settle the land issues affecting women;
- Self-help women groups have been identified to build a strong base for a collective voice in sensitizing other community members on land rights' issues.

One of the groups formed is Goal Keeper Women's Group - an agricultural produce (farming) group in Odupe Sub-county whose objective is basically mobilizing group members for self-help, economic empowerment and increasing household incomes. The group is registered at district level and this qualifies it as recognized institution. This group and others are working together with CEGED and RICE to advocate for women land rights and sensitizing the community about the same.

As a way forward, there is need to engage Government through the relevant ministries such as Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development (MoGLSD) to initiate laws that can be used to manage the land tenure system in West Nile region.

Also, there are still traditional and cultural barriers existing in this area which are an impediment to rights of women on land. More sensitization and building of platforms to reach out to all key stakeholders (men, women, youth, elders and leaders) should be undertaken in the West Nile region to bring everyone on board.



Stephens Odongo Regains Hope and Employment



Odongo Stephen Owori, a 34 year-old father of twins is one of the Cheshire

Services Uganda rightsholders in Tororo District under the Voice Project. He has physical disability and both his lower limbs cannot move without support hence he uses a tricycle.

Since 2014 Stephen Owori failed to access any employment opportunities despite his qualification in business studies particularly in the field of accounting. Employers always had negative attitude towards him due to his disability.

Stephen finished school like any other person in 2009 from Makerere University Business School with a diploma in business studies majoring in accounting. After 5 years of searching for a job in vain, he was fortunate to get a job at Sule Integrated Development Organization as Finance and Administration Assistant where he worked for 6 months until the contract ended in December 2014. Since then he tried looking for jobs but failed due to the negative attitude employers had about his disability.

"I looked for jobs and some employers said am a curse, I can't do anything because am a disabled person yet I had a working experience as a finance and administration assistant at Sule Intergrated Development Organization, this demoralized me psychologically. I felt the

world had ceased yet I have a family that needed support from me" – Stephen Narrates

Towards the end of 2018 he heard about a new organization called Cheshire Services Uganda that had come to work in Tororo through **"Advocating for the access to gainful employment for youth with disabilities within Tororo District"**.

He reached out to the organization's office to inquire about the new project and was later selected to participate in the project. Later, he was called to attend a capacity building workshop for youth with disability on advocacy and policy which was held at Linkway Business College in the month of June 2019. During this workshop he met very many youths with disability that shared the same experience.

After the workshop, he came to the Cheshire Services Uganda Offices located in Tororo District where he was helped and guided on how to write a CV and through that guidance, he got confidence to start dropping applications.

He applied at justice center as a community based advocate volunteer in the community where he was successful. Stephen is happy that through the voice supported initiative, he has gained his hope back.

"I am very happy now that I have a job and with this job I will be able to advocate for the rights of the marginalized in the community including persons with disability. I have a salary that will help me put food on table and pay fees for my children, am happy all thanks to the Voice support through Cheshire Services Uganda, you came at the right time"



Creating better conditions for vulnerable women in Nwoya District



Rose while attending a VSLA group meeting

Adong Rose is a member of the Yub Pa Lacwech Women Group in Koch Goma Nwoya District, located in one of the poorest parts of Uganda. The aftermath of the bloody civil war waged by the Lord's Resistance

Army left the Northern part of Uganda poorer and more fragile than the rest of the country. Several challenges facing the region such as land conflicts, poverty, poor health and low employment opportunities, refugee influx have adversely affected women, children, persons with disabilities who are the most often less powerful and less-knowledgeable in the community.

The breakdown of the cultural systems that protected the vulnerable and ensured their access to land rights has further aggravated the condition. Women's struggle to access land for production has often attracted violence from spouses, in-laws and other community members.

Voice through **Lutino Adunu** is financing a two-year project to build financial literacy and skill women groups on the Village Saving and Loan Association (VSLA) targeting 20 women groups in Alero and Koch Goma sub-counties in Nwoya District. Voice is using the VSLA to transform the lives of household rural women groups through building their capacities on financial planning and management; enhancing women decision making at household level on financial matters.

In addition, the project has supported women groups to select viable income generating projects and has used meetings, communication materials and monitoring visits to



build their capacities and mentor them to successfully run their IGAs. Start-up initiatives in terms of livestock (goats and pigs) were also given to the 20 groups. Rose testifies that the training on financial literacy and VSLA concept is helping her in decision making and to address the problem of domestic violence in her family in addition to improving her income.

“The knowledge and skills I have received from the support of Lutino Adunu is helping me to have more family dialogue and address domestic violence. Family members listen to me and respect me”, she narrates.

Her ambition is to stand for local leadership in the next election and she is a strong advocate for women to speak out on issues that affect their lives at family and community level; This change is reflected among the other 20 targeted women's groups where several testimonies have been documented.

*“The VSLA is reducing domestic violence in my family. My husband does not quarrel and fight as he used to do. This is because there is always food at home and our business is helping us get some money that is supporting the family needs. He also supports me with some money which he might have worked for somewhere, Women participant, **Concy from Yub Pa Lacwech group***

*“We are rearing pigs as an IGA and one of the pigs has produced seven piglets. These piglets will be raised and distributed to the group members. Each piglet cost 50,000 Uganda Shillings. We have resolved not to sell them but rather distribute them among the members” women participant, **Yub pa Lacwech women group***

The women have also reported improved self-esteem and being able to raise up their voices on issues that affect them at household level and community levels. Women feel that their voices are being respected by men in the community and at household level. By men allowing their women to go and participate in the VSLA activity is a sign of freedom being granted to women by men.

The VSLA groups and the members are recognized by District leaders especially the District Community Service Department, the Youth and Probation department, the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer and local and district council leaders which is likely to increase their chances for consideration in other government led empowerment initiatives such as Uganda women's Empowerment program(UWEPE) and Operation Wealth Creation(OWC)





Increased participation in the budgeting process advances inclusion of persons with disabilities needs in national plans and budgets



From Left to Right: Edson ngirabakunzi, Executive Director, NUDIPU; Isabella Tugume, NBS Breakfast show host and Richard Anguyo, Uganda Federation of the Blind during the talkshow on 24th January 2018

Participation of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in the budget process continues to be curtailed by limited understanding of the budget process as well as the highly technical nature of Government budget documents.

According to National Union of Persons with Disabilities Uganda (NUDIPU) study on Disability budgeting in Uganda 2014, it was evident that though PWDs have an opportunity to participate in the budget formulation process, their influence on the budget allocation is very minimal and that their participation in planning and budget processes is very low.

NUDIPU is currently implementing a project: **“Amplifying the Voices of Persons with Disability in National Plans and Budgets in Uganda”** with the view to enhance the capacity for Disabled People’s Organizations (DPOs) and Persons with Disabilities to influence disability inclusion and responsiveness in Government planning and budgeting processes. This project has provided various platforms for Disabled People’s Organizations (DPOs) and Persons with Disabilities to engage in the budget process.

These platforms include: radio and TV talk shows, advocacy meetings with Parliamentary Committees for health and education, lobby meetings with the Education and Health Ministries and interfaces of the public with Government to influence disability inclusive budgeting. These spaces have been critical in



advancing the challenges faced by Persons with Disabilities in accessing public services and the corresponding recommendations.

Furthermore, NUDIPU conducted capacity building of its members including Uganda National Association of the Blind (UNAB), Mental Health Uganda (MHU), Uganda National Association of the Deaf (UNAD), among others on budget analysis and advocacy to effectively equip these participants with skills to effectively review Government budgets and then engage Government technocrats on the need to prioritize the needs of Persons with Disabilities in the health and education sectors.

Below is a voice from one of the project participants who attended the training:

Voice of a Project Participant:

“This training has been critical in opening my eyes to the importance of, and the tenets for effective engagement in the budget process at the right time. NUDIPU should continue this capacity building to make DPOs and Persons with Disabilities effective in the budget process” **Richard Anguyo; Executive Director Disability Empowerment Centre**

As a result of utilizing these spaces and empowering Disabled Peoples Organizations, the concerns of Persons with Disabilities are increasingly being prioritized. For example, the presentation of PWD concerns such as the call for fast tracking the enactment of the Mental Health Bill, 2014 by Parliament has resulted in the consultations of stakeholders including DPOs on the Bill by the Parliamentary Committee on the Health sector and the subsequent enactment of the Bill in 2018. Persons with Disabilities await the gazettelement of the Bill in 2019. We envisage that this continued pressure will result into incorporation of the needs of Persons with Disabilities in the two sectors.

NUDIPU intends to continue availing spaces for DPOs and PWDs to engage in the budget process and raise more awareness about the needs of Persons with Disabilities for Government action.

Also, as indicated in the box below; NUDIPU is engaged in conducting sustainable advocacy for inclusive health services delivery for Disabled Peoples Organizations and Persons with Disabilities. As highlighted in the box below, the advocacy efforts by NUDIPU in partnership with the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) have advocated for the fast-tracking of the National Health Insurance Scheme Bill which is aimed at providing affordable health services for all Ugandans.





Sustained Advocacy for Inclusive Health Services Delivery Yields Results

NUDIPU is currently implementing “Amplifying the Voices of Persons with Disability in National Plans and Budgets in Uganda” project with the view to enhance the capacity for Disabled People’s Organizations (DPOs) and Persons with Disabilities to influence disability inclusion and responsiveness in Government planning and budgeting processes. This project has therefore sought to provide various platforms for Disabled People’s Organizations (DPOs) and Persons with Disabilities to engage in the budget process.


One of the key issues that NUDIPU has advocated for since the inception of the project has been the need for affordable health care for all people in Uganda, particularly Persons with Disabilities. According to the Uganda National Health Accounts FY 2014/15 and FY 2015/16, individual Out of Pocket expenditure as a proportion of Current Health Expenditure increased from 39.6% in FY2014/2015 to 41% in to FY2015/2016.

At the start of the project, NUDIPU in collaboration with Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group advocated for fast-tracking of the National Health Insurance Scheme Bill that will provide for affordable services for all Ugandan citizens. The Bill seeks to establish a health insurance scheme that is expected to enable all Ugandans, whether rich or poor salaried jobs to receive health care in public facilities. It also seeks to establish an Insurance Fund that will enable the investment of all funds collected.

Following sustained advocacy since 2018, NUDIPU and CSBAG members under the CSBAG are pleased to report that the National Health Insurance Scheme 2019 was tabled on Thursday 22nd August 2019 before Parliament. NUDIPU will continue to, singularly, and in partnership with CSBAG members and other coalitions continue to demand for the institution of an insurance scheme that provides affordable services for all citizens. In addition, NUDIPU will continue to advocate for Government consideration of contributions by the informal sector to pool adequate resources for the successful implementation of this scheme.

This development signifies that continuous advocacy for the needs of citizens with Government, in collaboration with other stakeholders, increases the likelihood of Government responsiveness to citizens’ demands and needs.





Addressing inequalities among vulnerable women and girls in Oyam District through Socio-Economic Empowerment

Women and girls in Oyam District are victims of marginalization in their households and communities which is largely characterized by moral decadence and break down of the social support system. Women perform the bulk of work on farms and yet have no decision-making powers when it comes to marketing and selling of the produce. Women also suffer marginalization when faced with life challenges such as loss of spouse, not marrying and acquisition of HIV/AIDS. The prevailing challenges



Members of Oryem-Can women group

above lead to low incomes among women and poor nutrition at home which greatly affect children and other family members.

The Women's Nutrition and Sanitation (WNSP) project is addressing the inequalities through socio-economic empowerment interventions. These serve to reduce violence and discrimination against women and girls through strengthened social systems, educational or financial

empowerment. The program supported girls and women to form groups that allow for joint saving and borrowing and equipped them with skills to undertake various Income Generating Activities (IGAs) such as making cakes, baggie, doughnut and pancake using locally available tools and resources.

As a result of the interventions, 30 women belonging to Oryem-can Women's group of Oyam Town council have started business on bread making.

Dorcus Apio said *"using skills I acquired from WNSP, I started a small business of baggie. This business is very good since it does not require expensive materials."*

She added that she can now earn 5,000/ per day and can buy household requirements and is still able to save part of the money.

A total of 150 women belonging to 5 groups are now benefiting from the project of which 90 are young newly married women.

There is improved livelihood due to increased income at household and improved saving because of the IGA businesses being carried out by the young women of Oryem-can in Oyam town council resulting from the project interventions. The improvement in incomes has enhanced women's decision-making abilities at home and their abilities to care for their own and family needs.



Below are short testimonies shared by selected women participants reflecting their empowerment experiences

Awor Jacky Alol

"Before VSLA, life was hard because I had no money to cater for my two children and being a single mother, I totally depended on well-wishers. When we needed money for something from the father of my children, he would say he had no money. I was always frustrated but thanks to those who discovered VSLA and to WNSP and her partners (Voice) in particular"

"Since I joined WNSP VSLA, I have been able to save and take loans several times, which have helped me to revive my business which was at the verge of collapsing. With the income from my business, I'm able to buy food, and pay fees for my two daughters. I was also able to buy piece of land on which I'm planning to build my home"

"WNSP VSLA has helped me to change my view about myself. I now believe in myself. I believe that I can achieve anything. I am full of confidence and no longer fear standing in front of people to provide my opinion on an issue. I can take loans because I do not fear that I will be unable to repay. Even if I face difficulties, I will pay the money back. "My gratitude goes to those who started the VSLA because it has helped us a lot."

Mama Grace Odia

Being a member of the VSLA on the Women Nutrition and Sanitation project (WNSP), has really changed my life. I now have hope to live again after being diagnosed with cervical cancer. I had feared for my life and the only hospital where I could get help from was Mulago National Referral Hospital in Kampala but I did not have money and this was bad news for me and my children. However, because of being a member of WNSP VSLA I was able to borrow 1,000,000 (One Million shilling) and went to Mulago Hospital for treatment and now I am strong and healthy.

After recovering from cancer, I came back and continued saving. I paid my loan and took another loan of 700,000 (Seven Hundred Uganda Shillings Only) and started my small business of selling second hand clothes. I cannot describe wholesomely how important the VSLA is to me as it has had an impact on almost all aspects of my life. I borrowed another loan of 500,000 (five hundred thousand shillings) and purchased chairs for my house. Through the VSLA I have learnt to focus on my business, contribute to VSLA and save up money every week.

The Women Nutrition and Sanitation Project is continuing to build capacity of the women and girls through their groups in group management skills, financial management of their savings and book keeping and management of their IGA for future sustainability of the groups.





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