



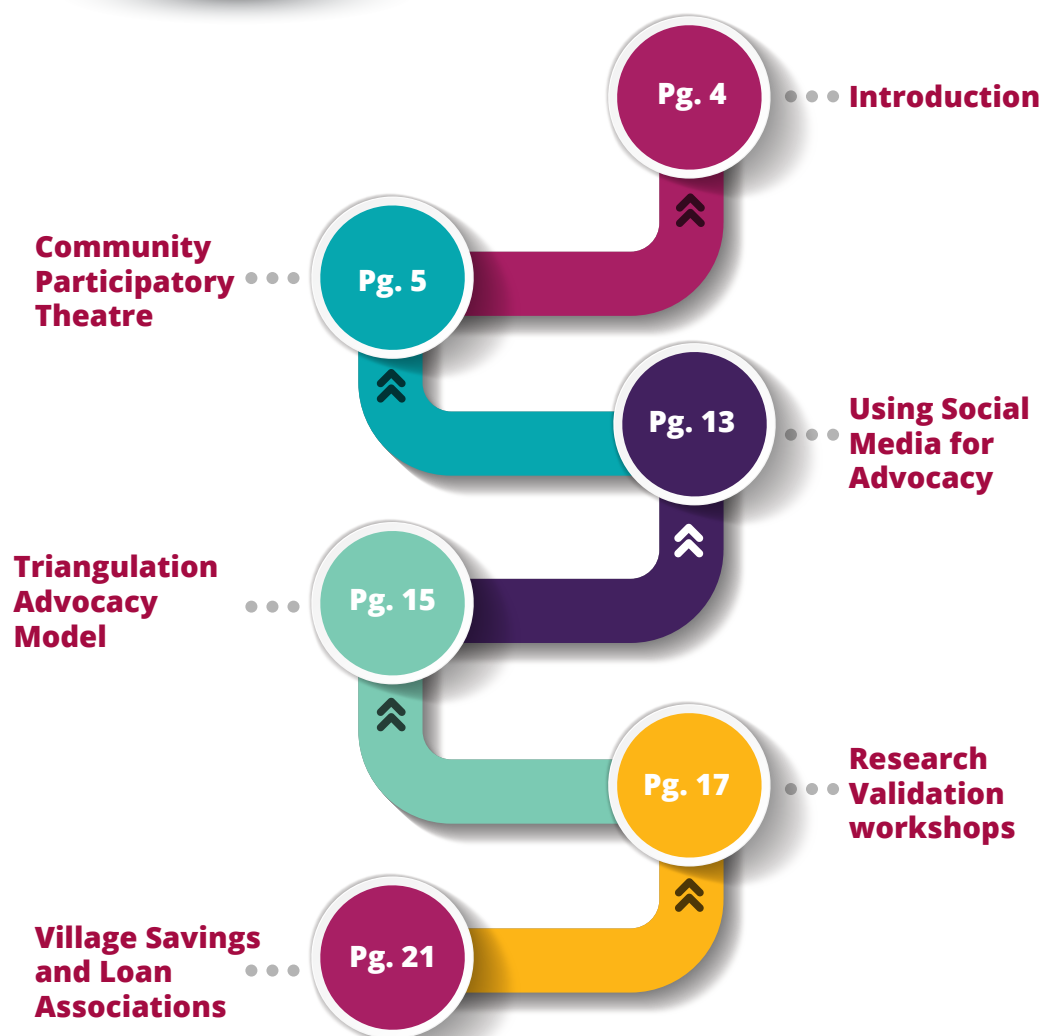
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PROMISING APPROACHES OF WORK AMONG VOICE GRANTEES IN UGANDA

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 rights holders' groups facing extreme marginalization through 32 grantees under the different categories;

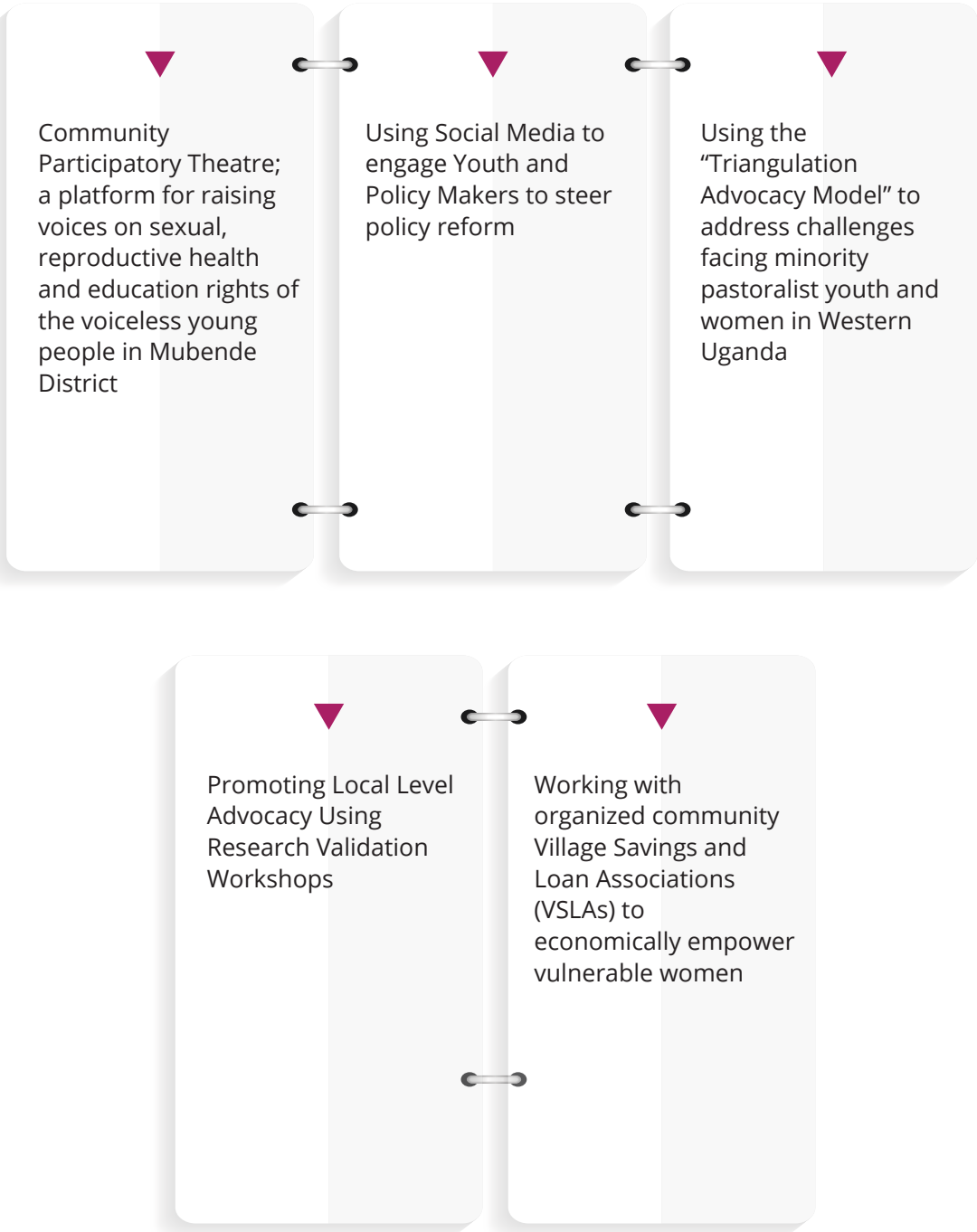


WHY THE PROMISING APPROACHES TO WORK?

During the last one year, Voice has through the various grantees supported implementation of a variety of interventions to empower vulnerable rightsholders (individuals and communities) facing extreme marginalization in different parts of Uganda.

The Linking and Learning Facilitators have worked with and supported Voice grantees to document the most promising approaches and methodologies that the grantees are using to implement their project activities in order to disseminate them and scale them up within their organizations, the Voice family and beyond.

FEATURED PROMISING APPROACHES OF WORK FOR VOICE GRANTEES



Community Participatory Theatre; a platform for raising voices on sexual, reproductive health and education rights of the voiceless young people in Mubende District

Using Social Media to engage Youth and Policy Makers to steer policy reform

Using the "Triangulation Advocacy Model" to address challenges facing minority pastoralist youth and women in Western Uganda

Promoting Local Level Advocacy Using Research Validation Workshops

Working with organized community Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) to economically empower vulnerable women

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATORY THEATRE; A PLATFORM FOR RAISING VOICES ON SEXUAL, REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND EDUCATION RIGHTS OF THE VOICELESS YOUNG PEOPLE IN MUBENDE DISTRICT

Young people particularly girls and young women in Uganda face several challenges that affect their health, education and wellbeing.

According to the 2011-15 District Development Plan, Mubende district has a 2014 estimated population 601,466 persons of which persons with disabilities (PWDs) constitute 7% of the population. Children and young people make up over 65% of the population. Rural girls (97%), boys (90%), Commercial sex workers (98%) and persons with disabilities (98%) in Mubende are not aware that budget priorities for Sexual Reproductive Health education service delivery (SORAK 2017 annual program review report).

They rarely participate in the preparation of plans from priorities derived right from the LC1 (village) up to the district level.

They lack information required to contribute meaningfully to policy dialogue and often experience widespread discrimination and exclusion; their voices are overshadowed by the rich and 'political elites'.

SORAK Development Agency through Voice funding developed and implemented the Teens 2 Teens project that works directly with ordinary residents in villages of the 4 targeted sub

counties of Kibalinga, Kigando, Bagezza, and Nabingoola in Mubende district. The targeted project participants are girls, women and PWDs living in poverty, characterized by poor housing, subsistence farming, and limited access to sexual reproductive and education services which contributes to early marriages, stigma and discrimination particularly for those with disabilities.

The Teens 2 Teens project empowers vulnerable girls and women with advocacy, communication and social mobilization skills to champion Sexual Reproductive Health and Education service delivery in their respective communities by their respective local governments.

The project uses Community Participatory Theatre to raise voices on sexual, reproductive health and education rights of the voiceless young people in Mubende District. This participatory theatre approach is intended to increase the participation of vulnerable teens (in and out of school groups) in education, sexual and reproductive health services and rights through

music, dance, drama and poetry. SORAK has since 2018 successfully worked with 32 primary schools and 22 out of school youth and women groups in the four project targeted sub counties to pass messages through competitive participatory theatre to rural disadvantaged communities of girls, women, youth and parents.

The participatory theatre approach is a capacity building and participatory methodology that uses songs, drama and poetry to relay messages that empower the vulnerable persons and increase awareness among key stakeholders about community challenges driving the vulnerability.

The following were the key steps taken by SORAK to amplify voices of the vulnerable young people using Community Participatory Theatre:

a.

SORAK held Inception meetings with all key stakeholders including; school managers, district officials, women and youth groups, local leaders (technical, political and religious) drawn from targeted communities to share the community challenges affecting access to Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) and education to voiceless rural girls including girls with disability.

b.

Schools and community groups were tasked to compose; 1 song, 1 poem and 1 drama not lasting more than 15 minutes with messages on the SRH challenges in their communities and the key messages for the different stakeholders. They were also informed that performances would be competitive and would come along with prizes to winners. They are given a minimum of 2 weeks to prepare and appear at parish level to compete.

c.

All schools and out of school groups met and competed in parish based participatory theatre. While competing, all community members and leaders at parish level attended as an active audience. During this platform, the rural voiceless girls and women were given the opportunity to voice what they would have never been able to say in formal meetings without using music, dance and drama.



d.

The best school and out of school group were selected to move to sub-county level competition. At sub-county level, SORAK invited sub county leaders both technical and political as key audiences. Here, girls and women were provided with the opportunities to engage leaders at this level. Selected leaders were given the opportunity to speak in response to what the girls and women had presented through participatory theatre and made commitments towards enforcing and or making by-laws to address the plight of the vulnerable girls and women.



e.

Two best schools and one best out of school participatory theatre groups were selected from each of the four project sub counties to advance to district level competition. Here all district leaders ranging from district councilors, technical staff, Resident District Councilors, Members of parliament were invited. Once again the girls and women were provided with the opportunity not only to show case their talents, voice their concerns over SRH and education inadequacy but also interact with the leaders for the first time. At every stage prizes are given to winning groups and outstanding individuals. It's during this session that some key stakeholders made pledges/ commitments towards improving service delivery in the area but also fronting the issue of Girl-Child Education in policy advocacy. The winning out of school group in each of the four project sub-counties then joined SORAK in the community to community/parish to parish/village to village engagements.

As a result of this project interventions, the following outcomes have been realised;

- Voiceless communities can speak out and advance their needs and views better, without fear through music dance and drama. The use of theatre has allowed them to put across their views/concerns to responsible duty bearers
- School communities are now responsive to the girl child schooling needs. Parents in the targeted schools appreciated the project efforts and pledged to support girl child education. Local leaders have conducted informative meetings and warned all parents not to dare keep all children of school going age at home.
- As a result of this project, the community based para-social workers have been provided with avenues such as school based suggestion voice boxes to anonymously gather important information related to sexual abuse and violence.

Prior to this intervention, this could not be easily revealed by girls due to stigma and fear of persecution by the perpetrators of sexual abuse and violence. This has provided widened the opportunity to make community based para-social workers-as champions of change and voice amplifiers for the voiceless.

- Schools have adopted use of participatory theatre informed with SRHRs promotion messages as a key tool in raising awareness among parents. This is yielding positive results towards making parents aware that girls/and or girl with disability education is as important as that of a boy.
- SORAK has shifted from the traditional approach of engaging communities through meetings, workshops and radio talks. The participatory community theatre has enabled such activities to be blended with music, dance and drama.
- There is an Increase in school enrolment especially for the girl child in Kirume Public School which recorded an increment of 100 more pupils especially the girl child at the beginning of term one 2019.
- The project provided an opportunity to create awareness on the 2017 Mubende district education ordinance. The project provided an opportunity to for child-child-parent-responsibility holders engagement. They were able to share critical issues while at the same time drawing plausible actions for accelerated promotion of girls child education access and prevention of early/child marriage.

The participatory Community Theatre Approach was commended for the following strengths:



It attracts girls and children in general to stay and join school



Attracts wide participation of community including rights holders, parents, leaders and duty bearers.



Provides an opportunity to create awareness on parent-child collaborative approach, out of school youth perform and share challenges of not being at school or marrying early at the same time with in school children. Children are therefore able to see the reality and challenges of not staying in school;



It provides an opportunity for rural disadvantaged girls and women to air their concerns via music, dance and drama which they would not have done in formal meetings.



It provides opportunity to learn as one is entertained;



It is a low cost approach to community mobilization



SORAK merged 2nd runner up at national level inter-school campaign

and communities on a cost sharing basis. In fact SORAK plans to organize a district/regional level participatory theatre competitions where all participating teens/groups will have pay a participation fees. The funds generated that be used to further related activities as well as supporting selected vulnerable girls to access education among others.

Following the success of this project, the district has been encouraged and continues to support SORAK reach out to more other areas not targeted in this project.

The participating out of school groups have been encouraged and motivated to form groups that are eager and ready to use this approach in there day to day awareness raising activities. SORAK continues to link them to possible district support- Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP) grant support, training in entrepreneurship and thus being able to remain relevant even after the end of the Teens 2 Teens project.

Since 2010, SORAK has applied participatory theatre as a means of creating awareness as well as engaging responsibility holders by way of infotainment. SORAK therefore plans to continue applying the same with other partners who might come to support its activities. This will ensure sustainability of this model of intervention in SORAK programming.

The importance of the

SORAK has documented the Participatory Theatre approach to allow for its scale up and replication both within the organization and wider NGO fraternity.

SORAK ensures that both girls and boys, participate on equal footing bearing in mind that boys are agents of change in issues concerning sexual abuse and violence inclusive of early marriage. SORAK plans to work with the district and involve more schools



SORAK best performing school in the competition

participatory theatre approach is further evidenced in the text-box below in the testimony of Ms Jalia Nakitende who is a Head-teacher of one of the schools involved in the implementation of the participatory theatre approach:

Ms. Nakitende Jalia; Head Teacher of Kirume Public Primary School in Mubende District



Ms. Nakitende Jalia is current the Head Teacher of Kirume Public Primary School in Mubende District.

Accoding to Jalia, there is an increment in the student enrolment by over 100 pupils as a result of participating in Music, Dance and Drama Competitions that were organised by SORAK under the Voice Project.

The parents were so impressed by the initiative and became eager to bring their children especially the girls to her school. For that, she could not find a better way to thank SORAK for this Voice-supported intervention; to speak out on the rights of girls and children with disability in the community.

Jalia is also proud to mention that a number of pupils who had dropped out of school came back through the influence of music,dance and drama at the school.

The pupils were motivated to return and participate in the Music, Dance and Drama competitions.

With this intervention of Voice, the Head Teacher (Ms Nakitende Jalia) has been compelled to grant bursaries to children living with disabilities.

Jalia Nakitende – Head Teacher of Kirume Primary School

USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO ENGAGE YOUTH AND POLICY MAKERS TO STEER POLICY REFORM

Youth participation in electoral processes in Uganda has for long been very minimal. Only 1% of youth participated in the 2016 youth elections. (*Citizen's Election Observers Network Report of the 2016 Elections*). The use of electoral college excludes majority of the youth from participating in choosing their leaders. The system allows youth council leaders to vote for 9 National Youth Council Executive Committee members who in turn vote the 5 youth members of parliament that represent the youth at national level. The result has constrained youth voices from being heard and many youth have been excluded from their “would be” programs and services.

Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) through the Citizens Coalition for Electoral Democracy (CCEDU) program to implement the **“My Voice**

Campaign”. The campaign lobbied for the amendment of the National Youth Council Act of the 1995 Constitution through electoral reform proposals/developing a position paper to bridge the gaps in the law governing youth elections in Uganda. The project targeted youth aged 18 – 30 years and had a national scope but focused on six districts of West Nile (Arua, Maracha, Koboko, Yumbe, Moyo and Adjumani) and four districts of Karamoja (Moroto, Napak, Kotido and Kaabong).




The **“My Voice campaign”** used social media to engage youth and policy makers in meaningful dialogue. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter were used in the following ways;



A screenshot from the Voice Twitter page highlighting engagement between Youth of Koboko District and Lydia Namayengo of CCEDU



Tagging in policy makers on twitter & FB like the Ministers, youth MPs, Electoral commission, Parliament, & Youth council leaders who tweeted, retweeted, liked, commented & shared our posts with youth and replied questions and demands from the youth regarding leadership.

-  *Proceedings from lobby meetings and consultations were broadcasted live on Facebook to connect the world with the campaign and amplify youth voices in that district to be heard on the national level and global platform as well.*
-  *Facebook, WhatsApp posts and tweets highlighting the key challenges to youth participation were created with the aim of mobilizing youth to engage in leadership or cautioning the leaders, demanding for accountability and change in the law.*
-  *Bi-weekly twitter chats were held on selected topics in regard to youth engagement in leadership and amendment of the National youth council Act and a selected panel was instituted to discuss different aspects of the topic or position paper or youth participation. The discussions, posts and tweets were shared with the radio and TV talk show hosts, who further held the discussion for the youth and policy makers to follow up and engage.*

The use of social media campaign enhanced youth participation in the campaign. Key discussions during community platforms were amplified using social media platforms hence enlisting even more participation by youth and policy makers. Over 200 local and national key policy makers were able to start following the My Voice campaign pages, some shared and commented on the campaign posts many youths gained confidence and were able to engage their leaders and demand accountability while others were able to stand for several political positions.

"My LC 5 leaders have been suppressing us but through Voice's social media campaign, I have gained confidence to face them – Geoffrey; Arua District Youth Council Chairperson."

"I follow the My Voice" campaign on Facebook and I was motivated to stand for women council elections and I won – Amolo Janet, Arua district".

CCEDU developed a position paper and Policy brief to inform policies on Youth Elections. The position paper containing policy recommendations for improvement of the National Youth Council Act through legislation was a tool used to solicit for support from key policy makers to influence the amendment of the National Youth Council Act. CCEDU drafted the National Youth Council Amendment bill and presented it to the National Youth Council Executive Committee and the youth leaders agreed to push for the amendment of the NYC Act 1995 Cap 319, to increase Youth Participation in the Electoral Processes.

The experience of using social media platforms has been documented by CCEDU as good practice and shared with other Voice grantees during several linking and learning platforms

USING THE “TRIANGULATION ADVOCACY MODEL” TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES FACING MINORITY PASTORALIST YOUTH AND WOMEN IN WESTERN UGANDA

Pastoralist communities are some of the rightsholder groups facing extreme marginalization in Uganda. In the Rwenzori region, the Basongora and Batwa particularly youth and women are greatly affected.

In these communities, women, children and youth are more vulnerable than the males due to the patriarchal nature of their societies. Abuse, exploitation and violence in relation to girl child, school dropout, early marriage, limited access to reproductive health services, limited space for participation in decision making are some of the existing challenges facing youth and women.

A number of development interventions have been implemented in this particular area but have not had a specific focus on women and youth hence leaving them behind. Whereas the voices youth have high chances of being listened to by policy makers, their stories are not documented and there are no platforms for engaging their leaders and policy makers for action.

Voice through Kabarole Research and Resource Centre (KRC) implemented a project entitled - **Amplifying Voices of the Vulnerable Youth and Women among the Pastoral Communities** in 6 sub counties of Kasese and Ntoroko Districts with the aim of;

- a) Facilitating participatory processes for vulnerable youths and women to identify and analyze critical advocacy issues in the health and education sectors,
- b) Creating and promoting spaces and platforms at local, district and national levels for vulnerable women and youths to advocate against abuses, exploitation, violence and discrimination in the delivery of health and education services,
- c) Monitoring and documenting successful advocacy cases by vulnerable women and youth in Rwenzori region.

A baseline study to understand the challenges women and youth face in the area was conducted which revealed that 76% of the women had been victims of domestic violence.

Voice used the “**A triangulation model**”, a three phased advocacy strategy by champions to empower women and youth to speak out on issues affecting them. The collaborative approach with local leaders allowed champions to engage with leaders at different levels;



The citizens were at the fore front of the issues being raised and were able to testify and share their own evidence with the leaders. Through spaces such as face the citizens rallies, community meetings, religious gatherings, interactive radio talk shows, District and national breakfast meetings, review meetings, documentation and follow up of case stories, vulnerable youth and women (champions) shared their stories and challenges with leaders and decision makers for action.



A female local leader addressing the public during a community event organized and facilitated by KRC

The Community advocacy efforts resulted into more responsiveness by leaders to address the prevailing community challenges such as teacher absenteeism at Rwebisingo secondary school, access to the Youth livelihoods program funds by youth groups, health worker absenteeism at Rwebisengo Health centre III, and the formulation of a community ordinance against early child marriages in Ntoroko District.

The triangulation advocacy model empowered youth and women to work with leaders at community, district and national level to address their challenges. The local community have greatly appreciated the Voice intervention and will continue to use the model to continue engaging their leaders in addressing other community problems. Voice has documented the approach for wider dissemination and use to advance community empowerment initiatives.

PROMOTING LOCAL LEVEL ADVOCACY USING RESEARCH VALIDATION WORKSHOPS

Uganda's ageing population is tremendously increasing. Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) projections indicate growth from 1,420,400 in 2015 to 1,476,800 to date and estimated to be 2,268,000 by 2030. However, this growing population of older persons continue to suffer discrimination, abuse and injustice as a result of their age. Older persons are excluded from planning and design of policies and programmes that benefit the public, experience unfriendly language, have poor health care and are denied land rights. Further, the lack of legal protection framework, limited information about their rights, low empowerment opportunities, limited engagement platforms and low commitment from duty bearers to address cases of abuse against them are key constraining factors. There has been limited or no data available to bring this to light to the citizenry, key duty bearers and other stakeholders.

Voice through Uganda Reach the Aged Association (URAA) in partnership with Help Age international are implementing a two-year Action Research Project entitled *"Understand and Challenge Ageism Campaign"* in six purposively selected districts of Soroti, Kitgum, Nakapiripirit, Adjumani, Kabale, and Kawempe Division in Kampala. Under this project, a research was conducted to generate data about experiences of ageism among older persons at individual, community, national and international levels.



Research Assistant collecting data from older person from Batwa community in Kabale

Validation of Findings meetings

After data collection from all the six districts, analysis was conducted, and a report drafted to stipulate different manifestations of age-related discrimination and strategies to address them. Stakeholders at community, district and national level were mobilized to participate in research validation meetings to discuss research findings, highlighting the key challenges older persons face in communities. The stakeholders

engaged were; district political and technical teams who included LC V Chairpersons, District Speakers, District Community Development Officers, Chief Administrative Officers, District Health Officers, Operation Wealth Creation Coordinators, District councils for Youth, Women, Persons with Disabilities, Older persons council, older persons from the community and Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.

The research validation meetings were delivered using innovative approaches that allowed for active participation of older persons and stakeholders. The interactive approaches used enhanced older persons' confidence, skills and drew local solutions to the prevailing local challenges revealed during the validation workshops.



The Chairperson LCV in Soroti District engaging stakeholders to involve older persons in district

Some of the innovative approaches used during the validation meetings were;

a)

Innovative stimulation skits by older persons

Using skits, older persons articulated how they experience discrimination and abuse as they seek services and support from service providers, families and community and proposed mechanisms to address these challenges.

After the skit, duty bearers were given a platform to share their experiences guided by questions like; what have you seen? Have you ever seen such things really happening in the communities?, What should be done to address them? These questions stimulated discussion on the findings prior to a presentation of research findings.



Women's group from Kazo present a skit depicting age discrimination faced by older persons.



The Coordinator of OWC Kabale responding to the need for inclusion of older persons in the programme

b)

Presentation of research findings specific to the target districts/ locations

During the presentations, the magnitude of the problem was revealed to stakeholders indicating numbers/percentages of older persons who face discriminatory and abusive practices in the communities, illustrating the attitudes of duty bearers towards older persons and indicating the need to address them. Stakeholders were given platform to react to the quantitative presentation of the research findings, make commitments to address the needs and challenges older persons face in service delivery, policy and including participation at different levels.

During the district dissemination, stakeholders received findings specific to their districts with specific examples of where the challenges were occurring. This allowed for local validation and ownership of the problems.

In Kabale, the older persons among the Batwa face discrimination regarding access to land and shelter.

In Kampala on the other hand, the district validation revealed that the KCCA Act 2010, is a key limitation of participation and benefit of older persons in development programmes in Kawempe Division. The limited involvement of older persons in councils and older persons associations were observed in Soroti and Adjumani Districts.



Discussing the need for inclusion older persons in development programs

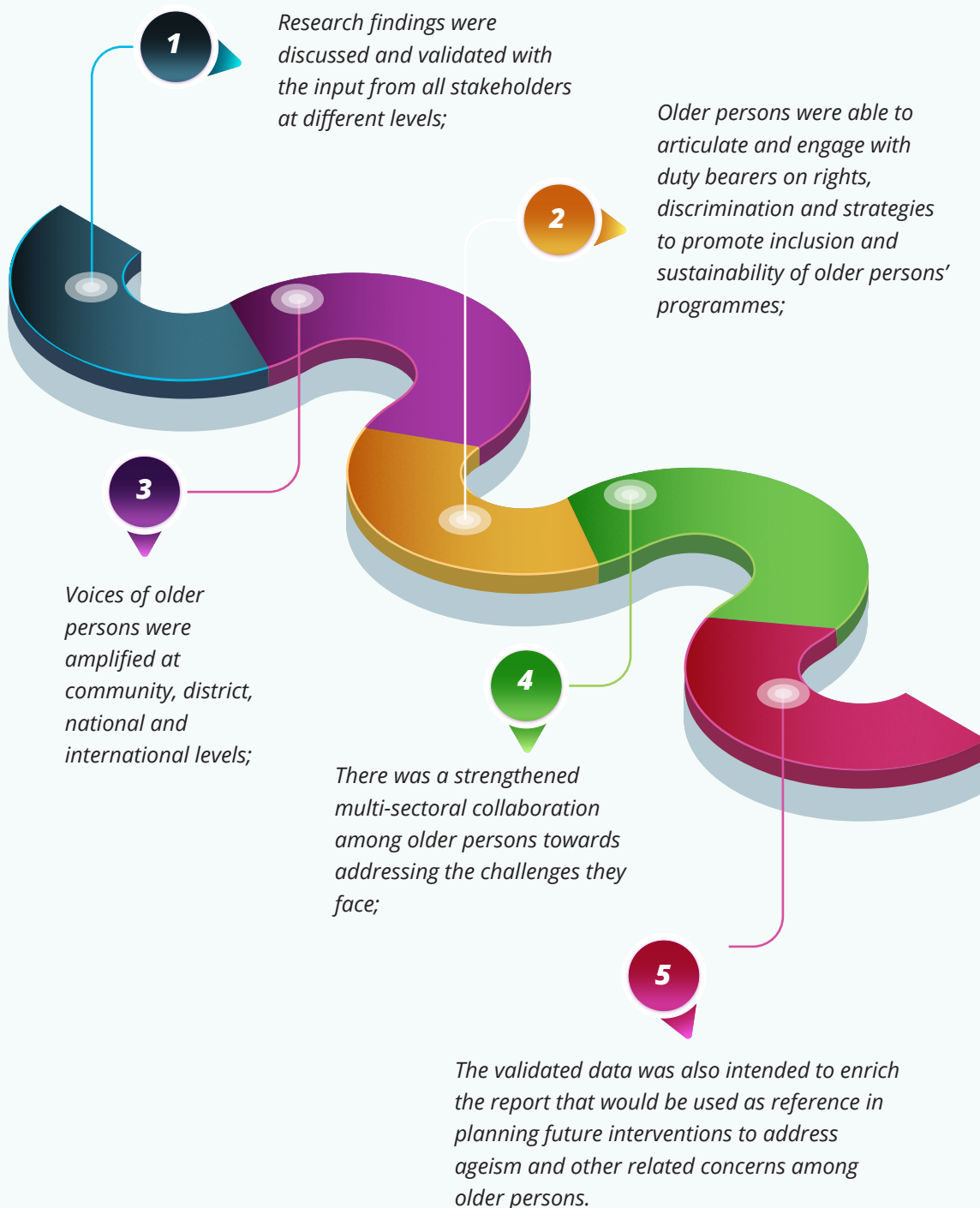
c)

Enlisting local commitment in addressing the emerging challenges facing older persons

Different duty bearers committed to addressing different needs, attitudes, practices, system and structural concerns that cause ageism and discrimination of older persons in policy, programmes and service delivery interventions at all levels. For example, in Kitgum district, duty bearers committed to provide an office to coordinate older persons council work, in Kawempe, involvement of older persons as beneficiaries in government programmes was a key commitment especially in Operation Wealth Creation, a government led economic empowerment program. In Soroti, the chairperson LC V committed to support inclusiveness in service delivery for all.

At national level, the Commissioner for Disability and Elderly under the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development revealed government commitment enact a law for older persons, establishment of a fund for older persons and to support older persons' councils.

The research validation meetings achieved the following;



WORKING WITH ORGANIZED COMMUNITY VILLAGE SAVINGS AND LOAN ASSOCIATIONS (VSLAS) TO ECONOMICALLY EMPOWER VULNERABLE WOMEN

Northern Uganda is slowly recovering from the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) guerilla war that devastated the people and deprived them of their livelihoods, settlements and lives. To this end, the Government of Uganda adopted several recovery programs such as Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) and Peace Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) to enhance sustainable socio-economic development of Northern Uganda through interventions that focus on livelihood improvement and household income enhancement. Such interventions are premised on consolidation of peace, development of the economy and reduction of vulnerability in the region. However, many vulnerable persons including vulnerable women are excluded from these programs.

The women who are the least considered continue to suffer poverty and lack financial capital and security to access financial services to start and or boost their Income Generating Activities (IGAs). Many women in the Community cannot access enough Capital to start up business or exploit their land to grow crops and given the challenge of lack of loan Security they could not access financial credit from banks. Many small IGAs did not have proper management and there was no collective approach to work as a team and harness economies of scale.

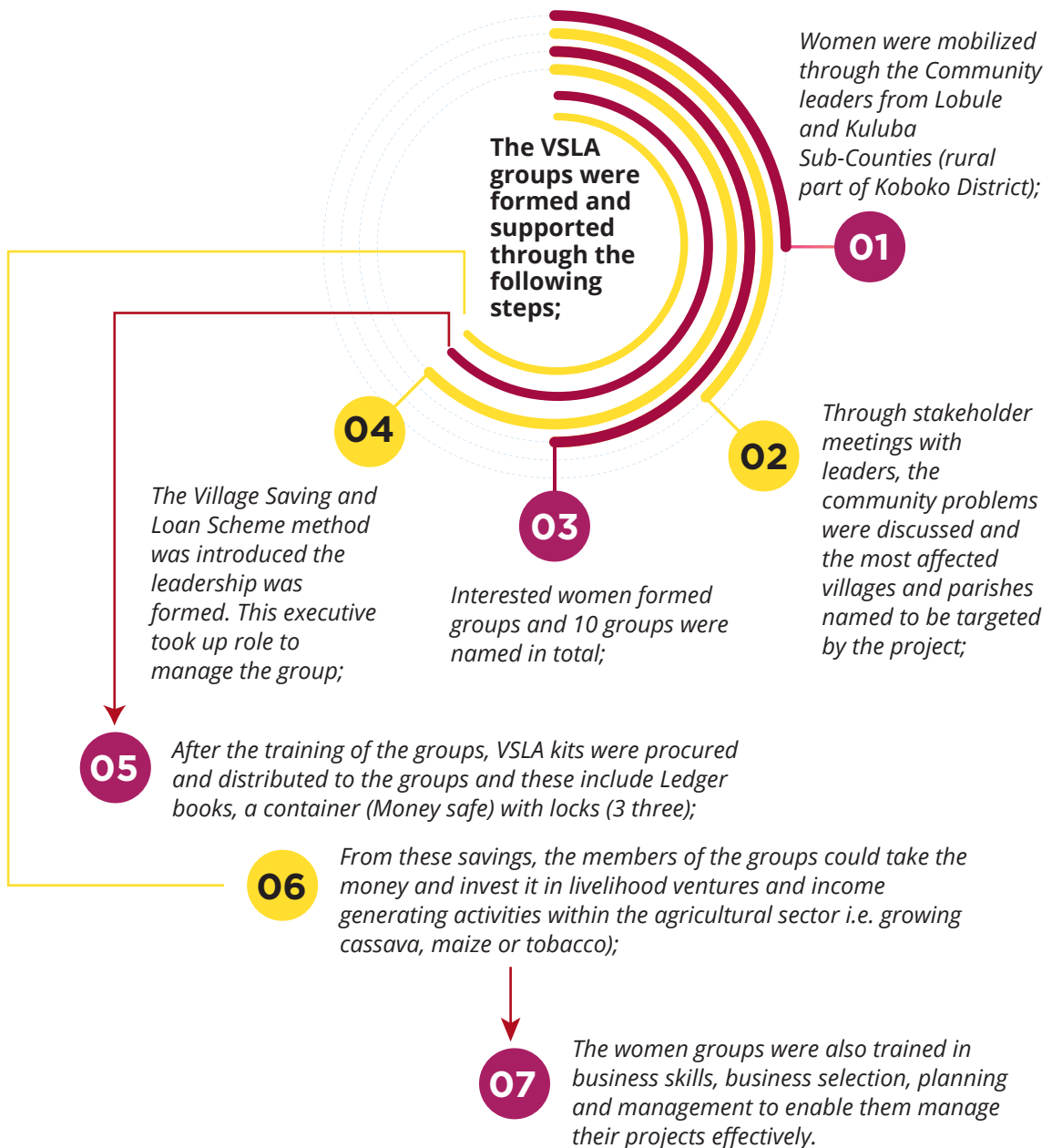
CERID with support from Voice formed village saving groups to allow like-minded women to work together with a unified goal. These groups of women had a better ability to mobilize own savings and attract affordable loan facilities from financial institutions.

CERID integrated economic empowerment with sensitization and support on Water, sanitation and hygiene and environment protection by promotion of energy saving.



Members of a CERID-supported VSLA group during one their routine savings meetings in Lobule Sub-County, Koboko District

The VSLA groups were formed and supported through the following steps;



The VSLA groups have provided opportunities for women to work together in groups and learn from each other. Most of these groups have become self reliant and the members are now able to borrow and start new ventures or grow the existing income generating activities (IGAs).



For more Information please visit; www.voice.global