

COLOR OF HAPPINESS

Stories from the 'Make Happiness
Not Violence' campaign



Communication for
Development
Foundation
Uganda

CDFU



Spotlight
Initiative



Sweden
Sverige





INSIDE

01

THE MAKE HAPPINESS NOT VIOLENCE CAMPAIGN

02

THE OPENING

Fighting FGM through drama in Amudat district

03

MENDING FAMILIES

Unusual champion stops alcohol and starts ending violence

05

MINDSET SHIFT

New thoughts on weddings and home ownership
birth harmony

06

CONFRONTING DARKNESS

Deconstructing negative societal patterns for good

07

WHEN 'ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

A Probation Officer Tackles Socio-Cultural Norms

We are happy to share with you our first edition of real-life stories from the intended audience of the *Make Happiness not Violence* campaign whose objective is to prevent violence against women and girls. In trying to answer the rhetoric question: “why can’t we change?”, we shall continually share insightful stories of those who have walked the path to positive social and behaviour change, to show how they did it. This book tells their stories.

In the African indigenous culture, the influence of storytelling on behaviors is extremely important, especially when it comes to social and health issues as it is an effective way of engaging people to self-reflect, to relate and empathize. They can put themselves in that situation and take steps towards making the change. These stories leverage social norms, showing that if others can do it, “I too can”. They demonstrate the small things people can do that are easy, convenient, and show the benefits that have come from changing behaviour hence encouraging them to see themselves in that situation, and to be empowered to change their own story. They recognize that power, if negatively utilized, fuels harmful practices against women and girls.

Implemented by Communication for Development Foundation Uganda, the *Make Happiness not Violence* campaign employs the power of synergy and complementarity by using a multimedia approach, giving the same message in different channels to make repeated media contact. Through the SASA! Together approach, community mobilization is used to encourage communities around the world to personally and collectively use our power to create safe, violence free communities for women. Other channels are information giving, counseling and referral through the CDFU toll-free Hotline, radio talk shows, *Rock Point 256* radio serial drama, music, dance and drama performed at the community.

The intention of the book is three-fold: 1) to help those who have not yet made positive behavioral changes by providing motivation and insight, 2) to assist those who are currently attempting to change behaviour, and 3) to serve as a source of hope and support for those who have tried and have taken the decision to change but are still facing challenges.

We wish to thank the donors and stakeholders; UN Women, the Embassy of Sweden who fund the UN Joint Program for GBV, and the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls. Important stakeholders are the district local governments, the Happiness Community Activists, and all those who allowed us to use their stories, and general audiences who form part of the larger family that we work with to move together from point A to B.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Anne Gamurorwa".

Anne Gamurorwa
Executive Director



A RIGHTS VIOLATION

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Uganda is a critical national problem that involves gross violation of fundamental human rights with long term negative impacts on the physical, mental, and sexual wellbeing of survivors, families, and communities.



More than
1 IN 5
WOMEN
Have reportedly
experienced sexual
violence .

HOPE RISING

Communication for Development Foundation Uganda (CDFU) implemented a re-designed, scaled up, and innovative project, "Make Happiness Not Violence" to end violence against women and girls (VAWG) and promote Sexual Reproductive health and Rights (SRHR). The goal of the project was to promote favourable social norms, attitudes and behaviours at community and individual levels to prevent VAWG and promote SRHR in Uganda.

Key Objectives:

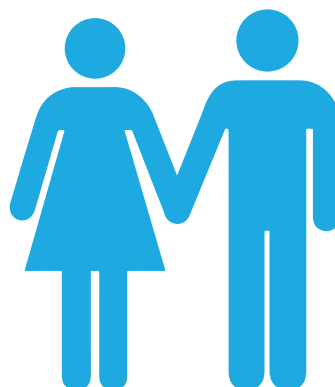
- To mobilise women, girls, men, and boys at community, institution, and individual level in favour of respectful relationships, gender equality, and promote SRHR.
- To improve knowledge of women and girls especially the most at risk of VAWG on their rights, available GBV services, and measures to protect themselves against violence.

ABOUT
56%
of married women

&

44%

of married men have
experienced spousal
violence.



Innovative Approaches

CDFU utilised dynamic community mobilisation approaches such as SASA! to rally and organise individuals, communities, and institutions across the social ecological model to promote positive change social norms, attitudes, and practices based on the human rights standards. We also used participatory approaches such as group dialogues, inter sub-county sporting competitions, music, and cultural activities. CDFU selected, trained, and facilitated community activists.

2

Our Target Audience

CDFU signed a Memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD) at national level towards eliminating violence against women and girls. The primary audience was men, women, girls, and boys between 15 and 49 years of age, while the secondary audience included religious leaders, cultural leaders, duty bearers, and the media.

Key partners involved in implementing the campaign

- Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention (CEDOVIP)
- Uganda Media Women's Association (UMWA)
- District stakeholders such as Community Development Officers (CDOs) and Police's Child and Family Protection Unit (CFPU)
- The media
- Cultural, religious, and education institutions.




THE OPENING

Fighting FGM through drama in
Amudat District

3



Nangi Priscila Nakoljo




NANGIRO PRISCILA NAKOLIO (40YRS)
farmer and member of Natukuman drama
group from kamikithen village, lochengenge
parish Amudat district.

In Lochengenge village, a 43-year-old Nakolio Priscilla Nanagiwo was one of the people who endured the cruelty of the knife before she could be regarded as an adult. Lochengenge village is part of the Lochengenge parish, of Amudat sub-county, in Amudat District. In the past, Priscilla had been a major advocate for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Today, she is an agent of change, championing the end of what she can only describe as a painful and dehumanizing experience.

“Everybody was surprised when I openly started talking to members of the community and calling for an end to FGM; they thought that it was a joke, until I mobilized fellow community members and we started a drama group to educate our people on the dangers of FGM.”

Female genital mutilation is not only a disturbing practice, but it also makes the woman hate herself. She hates herself because FGM often results in challenges such as fistula and difficulties in childbirth. The practice is also associated with the narrowing of the woman's vagina and the surgeons in collaboration with the woman's paternal aunt use a horn to forcefully widen her vagina, as a way to pave way for easy penetration by the man or her husband.

Priscilla is known as a community activist and has been trained by Communication for



Development Foundation Uganda (CDFU). She reached out to fellow women within the community, including a surgeon, who is now reformed and a member of the Natukuman drama group. The group is made up of 14 women and 1 man, and through their skits and dramas, they deliver the message of change to the people in the area, mainly targeting the Pokot community.

One can tell that on a very personal level, Priscilla is enjoying the benefits of being trained because it not only empowered her to do the work in the community, but it also gave her the confidence to approach and engage her husband and speak out about the future of their family. She is very proud that the husband is making efforts to reduce alcoholism, fighting, and returning home late in the night.

The cultural practices in Priscilla's community put women in compromising situations because marriage, in that area, is associated with parting with many cows and men tend to feel powerful once they have paid the bride price, as if they have now earned the right to do as they please with the newly acquired property – the woman. Bride price in the Pokot community ranges between 40-50 heads of cattle and these are paid to the woman's family. This practice reduces women to slaves since a woman must, on arrival at

her new house/home, do all household chores, grow food for the home, brew alcohol for the husband, in addition to providing money for the husband's drinking outside of the home. The situation is made worse by the fact that the woman, going forward, has no say in the decisions made for the home.

In this community, the practice of paying many heads of cattle for dowry has led to many girls dropping out of school at a very early age and forced into marriage by their families, who are in search of dowry. Some of these girls are married off before they even experience their first menstruation.

Priscilla feels that there is more that needs to be done, including holding dialogues with the youth, community elders, and religious leaders so that they too can understand the importance of working together to end violence against women in Pokot.

“Going out to more members of the community through barazas is one of the best ways to reach the people thus creating a great impact on the ground.” Barazas are community dialogues. Priscilla is also focused on raising support to facilitate the drama group's movement throughout the area and community, as well as and having more spot messages on radio to raise awareness.

MENDING FAMILIES

Unusual champion stops alcohol
and starts ending violence

6

*Akello christine
oryono*



When 27-year-old Christine Akello was selected as a community activist, the residents of Adea trading centre in Adea parish of Morulem sub-county were shocked and mocked her. How could Christine, known for being a major alcoholic be the champion for the campaign to end violence against women and girls? To the locals, this was a recipe for disaster, and they were convinced that she would fail. Christine had changed her life and received training from the Communication for Development Foundation Uganda (CDFU). She was determined to continue in this change and soon became a role model for the people in her village.

Barely months after attending the training and being a changed person, Christine's husband noticed and appreciated the change in his partner and was so moved that he decided to wed her in church. A church wedding in many communities in Uganda is highly valued, and so this was a reward in many ways for Christine.



7

AKELLO CHRISTINE ORYONO (27YRS)
from Ayeye, Morulem S_C Abim district,
farmer married with 4 children, a community
activist CDFU project.

This was the beginning of Christine disapproving her critics who had branded her a good-for-nothing person and whose marriage would fail in a short time. She had previously been a troublemaker in her home and the neighborhood, who was also violent and aggressive to her husband. But Christine changed, and is now a treasured peacemaker not only within the family but the entire community of Adea.

At one point, Christine's husband had resorted to merely visiting home to check on the family very briefly, and then quickly return to his work place in Kotido, but as Christine changed, he too relented and comes home more regularly. As a couple, they have since learned to even share household chores.

In Christine's own words from her learning, "I was touched when I realized that the training focused on ensuring that we choose to make happiness not violence, and I decided to choose happiness at home." After the training, Christine contacted her husband and told him everything she had been learning, and asked his forgiveness, promising a new chapter for their lives as a family.

In Adea Morulem, Christine is recognized as an authoritative peacemaker, and she continues to lead efforts in helping women to turn away from alcoholism, and encourages them to join savings groups and get involved in constructive activities such as composing songs.

Christine is now seen as a hero in her village and is respected by the young and old because of her abilities to reconcile couples and mend families that are on the verge of breaking up.

MINDSET SHIFT

New thoughts on weddings and home ownership birth harmony



Ogwang Moses

OGWANG MOSES (32YRS) Community activist CDFU project, Farmer and married with 5 children, from kakere village Kalaki S_C, kalaki district,

In Kakere village in Kakere parish of Kalaki sub-county, Kalaki district, there is a gentleman called Moses Ogwang. He is 32 years old and a community activist trained by CDFU.

Ogwang used to think that church weddings are a waste of time and money. He also thought that development in terms of building a house is a waste of money. He lived as a man who did not give much thought to putting up a solid home for his family. In fact, for Ogwang, life at home and his community was characterized by daily fights and he did not attach any value to women, including his visually impaired daughter.

One day, Ogwang heard about the Communication for Development Foundation Uganda (CDFU) training through some community development officers and decided to attend the sessions. It was at this training that his thinking was challenged, following which he changed the way he did things. He enrolled his visually impaired daughter in school, and sought joint financial decision making with his wife. He began to see the value of his wife and daughter and welcomed their input in how the home should be run. They learned to resolve matters in the home peacefully. Even more, Ogwang embraced the idea of building a house for the





family. Together with his wife, they are pooling resources to set up a permanent house.

People in the community at first thought that Ogwang had been tricked by the wife and that she had managed to fool him into doing household chores. The people's concern was to the extent that the Local Council 1 (LC1) chairperson paid him a visit and demanded that Ogwang walk with him. As it turned out, Ogwang's community thought that all domestic chores belong to the woman, even if she falls sick, and that women did not have any authority in as far as decision making was concerned, for example, on how money is spent. As if this was not enough, the community also believed that land could only belong to a man or male child.

This way of thinking has led to many failed marriages in Ogwang's village, and rampant domestic violence against women. "I am ashamed that I used to be one of these people, and I used to also get drunk and beat my wife. It was wrong. I was wrong."

The training by Communication for Development Foundation Uganda (CDFU), has taught Ogwang that women and girls play a vital role in society and he now respects them very much.

For someone who thought weddings were a waste of time

and money, Ogwang proudly wears his wedding ring. He says that on top of the training he received from CDFU, the premarital counseling he received prior to the wedding also strengthened the new change in him; the new character. He now plays the role of mediator between couples especially those who have had disagreements during the COVID-19 Lockdown.

Working closely with the community development officers and the program officer for CDFU, he has been able to reach out to many people in his village and surrounding areas, teaching them that violence cannot bring happiness. He is now at the forefront of mobilizing communities to participate in activities such as cleaning and clearing the boreholes and community access roads.

Ogwang's community remains reluctant to embrace change and male involvement is still low, especially in farming, community work, and household chores. He would like to see more sensitization being rolled out in the community and use of media, especially radio programs to bring awareness to locals. For him, trainings like the one he attended are vital because they equip the participant or individual with firsthand information on how to improve their life.

CONFRONTING DARKNESS

Deconstructing negative societal
patterns for good

12

*Asio mary
Fortunate*




In the southern division of Moroto Municipality, there is “a darkness” and one that has often left 36-year-old Mary Fortunate Asio very unsettled. Asio lives in Kambiizi village in Camp Swahili, Chini Parish. The camp is shrouded by rampant theft, child molestation, child labour, and forced child marriages. It is a dark camp. Asio has always known this about her village and for a long time, desired to do something about it. To bring light to her community. She just did not know where or how to start.

In 2019, Mary attended a training organized by the Communication for Development Foundation Uganda (CDFU). The training equipped her with knowledge and gave her confidence to tackle the challenges in her village. She did not waste time getting to work on the issues plaguing the village, and this is how a new chapter began for the community. The high rates of violence, theft, defilement, and child labour have significantly gone down because of community dialogues and one-on-one engagement.



ASIO MARY FORTUNATE (36yrs) a farmer married with 2 children, a community activist cdfu project from kambiizi village, campswahilli chini parish, south division s_c moroto district.



“It was normal for locals in the area to sit together and solve matters of defilement amongst themselves while denying the victim justice.” According to Mary, men’s egos were what mattered, and they believed that because they were the stronger sex they should rule over women.

The situation in the Karimojong village was such that there were agencies, which would give handouts to people and this kept them in the position of beggars; powerless to dig themselves out of poverty. However, Mary believes that the approach by the CDFU is the best because it empowers the people to find solutions to their own problems. This same approach is the reason that the community has seen a decline in violence and a visible change in behaviour.

During Mary’s childhood, violence was part of life. Women were beaten for anything and everything, including the mistakes made by their children. Her efforts to change the society were met with stiff resistance from men, elders, and even some women who thought that the move was aimed at worsening the already bad situation. But over time, the situation has been turned around. The community is made up of approximately 1700 households and they need to be reached through house to house sensitization, which has proved to be an effective method. Mary’s hope is that activists like herself can find more and more support, especially in terms of mobility or transportation so that that their work is unconstrained.

WHEN 'ENOUGH IS ENOUGH'

A Probation Officer Tackles
Socio-Cultural Norms

15

Longok Micheal



LONGOK MICHEAL (aged 39) district senior probation social welfare officer Amudat district.

Michael Longok is a Senior Probation and Social Welfare officer in Amudat, who is using his position and training from Communication for Development Foundation Uganda (CDFU) to tackle social cultural norms that violate the rights of women and girls.

The 39-year-old father of three has witnessed the suppression and oppression of women and girls in his district. This largely remains the order of the day. Worse still is that men also prioritize the education of boys over girls.

There are also other disturbing practices, such as wife inheritance, control and ownership of resources, Female Genital Mutilation, child marriages, and forced marriages. Many times, young girls are married off to elderly men because they can fetch between 40-50 cows, a sign that they are being sold. In Amudat, many women also believe that if men or their husbands beat them, it is a sign of love.





Using his position, Michael has been able to hold community dialogues and use other platforms to educate people about respecting the rights of women and girls. The women now speak out and take on the challenges that affect them.

Working closely with community activists and CDFU has helped Michael and other stakeholders in the district to take useful steps towards addressing these issues. However, violence against women is a deep-rooted cultural practice in Amudat; it remains a challenge. Every woman and girl deserve and must enjoy their rights to the fullest, and while the work at hand is difficult, it is not impossible.

When asked what should be done to enable every woman and child in his district to enjoy their rights to the fullest, Michael reflectively but confidently says that there ought to be more sensitization efforts and activities rolled out in the villages. The use of change agents who have seen and benefited from the training would be vital. They need to practice what they have been taught, to uproot the deeply rooted cultural practices against women and girls.

THE RIGHT TO DREAM

Restoring futures of hope through girl clubs

18



Awor Esther

Esther Awol Okot is a 34-year-old resident of Rackoko village in Katabok East parish of Morulem sub-county, Abim district. The area has a cultural and traditional value system, and many depend on the leaders in these spheres to guide community decisions. When Esther was a little girl, she witnessed a lot of violence towards women and many children were forced into marriage. Even at a young age, she could see that women were powerless, and often saw decision making being left to men. Activities such as cultivation, thatching the house, and fetching water among other things were left to women and this would leave them overworked and too tired to do anything else for themselves. Eating certain foods, such as fish and chicken, was considered a taboo for women. A woman sitting on a chair or contributing ideas in a meeting where men were in attendance was considered to be a display of indiscipline.

Esther Awol dropped out of school after completing her senior four and subsequently



AWOR ESTHER (34YRS) a farmer, married with 4 children from Katabok east village, Morulem S_C Abim district, a community activist CIDFU project.

got married. Later, she became increasingly dissatisfied with the way things were done in her community. She realized that women who were financially incapacitated, lacking freedom and this made them more vulnerable to abuse. Esther then determined to advocate for the rights of women and girls.

She received training from the Communication for Development Foundation Uganda (CDFU) where she learned that education is vital to freedom and embarked on the path of activism for women and girls. Esther focuses on ensuring that the young girls who are in school stay in school and complete their studies while those who drop out are discouraged from rushing into marriage. She encourages the formation of social clubs based on various interests, be it sports or arts. She then urges young girls to join these community clubs which bring them together to address their challenges.

Awol has become a strong pillar in her community and strives to ensure that women and girls in her village achieve their full potential by fighting violence against them. Seeking to reduce the vulnerability of girls, Awol engages the girls in her community activities and ensures that they do not fall prey to those whose aim is to violate their rights.

"I believe that the way to address this problem is to dig up the roots," she says. To date, Esther has managed to bring together a large group of girls. She has 42 girls who are interested in football, 34 interested in netball, and 15 who are interested in knitting. She holds weekly meetings with the girls, guiding them on how to confront the challenges that they face at home and at school, in addition to putting aside an hour daily to engage in their favorite sport or activity.

What started as a small idea is now expanding and Awol has started organizing the girls to hold friendly sporting activities with other communities. The girls have also gained the confidence to speak out and share their challenges as well as confronting violence since they now know their rights. Esther sometimes feels that she could have saved many girls forced into early marriages had she started her activism earlier. Nonetheless, it is never too late to start, and her work is progressing well.

Esther is convinced that women can do almost anything that men can do. She is proud to see instances of women taking on political positions, men escorting their wives for antenatal care, and men supporting their wives in doing household chores. This is evidence that there is a positive shift in the people's mindset. Her efforts are not in vain.

EMBRACING THE POWER WITHIN

One woman's self-discovery
sparks a community change



Fatuma katikati


FATUMA KATIKATI (43YRS) A shop attendant married with 5 children, a community activist CDFU project from Jumbe village, Jumbe ward, Amudat district.

Power dynamics in many families are a problem in this part of Uganda, often favouring the men. In Amudat district, 43-year-old Fatuma Katikati, a resident of Jumbe village, considers herself lucky to have received training from Communication for Development Foundation Uganda (CDFU), which helped her realise that things could be different in her own home. She realized that there is power within her to change the trajectory of her life. After the training, she took on a community activist role in Jumbe.

Married for over 12 years, Fatuma and her husband Mark Nangiro Katikati did not make decisions together. Mark was the sole decision maker and as per custom for Pokot women, Fatuma never questioned her husband's decisions. In their culture men are superior to women. But after the training, she realized that she had power within to contribute to the family's wellbeing and development.

The training instilled confidence in Fatuma. Using the skills she learned she spoke with her husband and convinced him to shift the family kraal from a distant area and put it under her care, and closer to home. The husband, won over by his wife's confidence and wise contribution, also gave Fatuma a house in Amudat





town council where she now runs a shop. Fatuma is now able to raise income from the animals at home and earn some money from the retail shop she runs in Amudat town.

“We no longer wait for him to come in case we run out of sugar or salt,” Fatuma says.

Being chosen by the community development officer to attend the training was the best thing that could happen to Fatuma because it gave her a voice and empowered her in the community. In fact, even the known stubborn men of Amudat listen to Fatuma and actively seek her counsel on many matters in their homes and community. Being a polygamous family, Fatuma’s husband has also changed his attitude towards his other wives, extending to them the same opportunities for financial empowerment as he did with Fatuma.

As Fatuma embraced the power within herself to cause change in her community, her husband continued to notice this and became her biggest supporters. Their wider family has recognized the change in her, and her husband has declared in support of his wife, that women in their family will not be subjected to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

In the community, the effect of Fatuma’s efforts is such that

women can now contribute ideas in public meetings, and more community activists continue to engage locals and leaders.

Fatuma’s grocery shop now also acts as her office, with women from the area finding it a convenient location to go and consult with her about their challenges. She in turn advises them on the steps to take and uses the space for planning various positive courses of actions.

Using her own example, Fatuma helps women to learn how to embark on income generating projects thus making them less reliant on men’s handouts, which usually put them in vulnerable positions.

There are some disturbing issues that prevail and that require tackling. For example, some men still batter their wives, and in some instances even inviting other men to join in the battering; a kind of mob battering of one woman. The work is great, and these practices need to be wiped out. While many other practices are on the decline, the training of traditional and religious leaders would go a long way to improve the situation. Once women realise the power within themselves to actively liberate themselves and other people, so much good can happen in this village.

ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE

Registering an unprecedented Decline in Defilement Cases

24




Edward Micheal

The child and family protection unit of Amudat district has registered a decline in the number of defilement cases recorded over a period of six months. In the past, the district registered many cases of defilement, but the Make Happiness and Not Violence Campaign championed by Communication for Development Foundation Uganda (CDFU) has played a key role in seeing the case reduce.

Micheal Ewadu is the officer in charge of the child and family protection unit at Amudat police station, which also doubles as the district police headquarters. Michael, together with the community activists and police officers were trained by CDFU to sensitize locals on the need to end violence against women and girls. Their work has since paid off with the district recording a downward trend in the year 2020. The statistics show nine cases of defilement in January, six in February, six in March, four in April, two in May, three in June, two in July, and two in August. There is a clear reduction, but the goal is a complete erasure of this practice from the community.

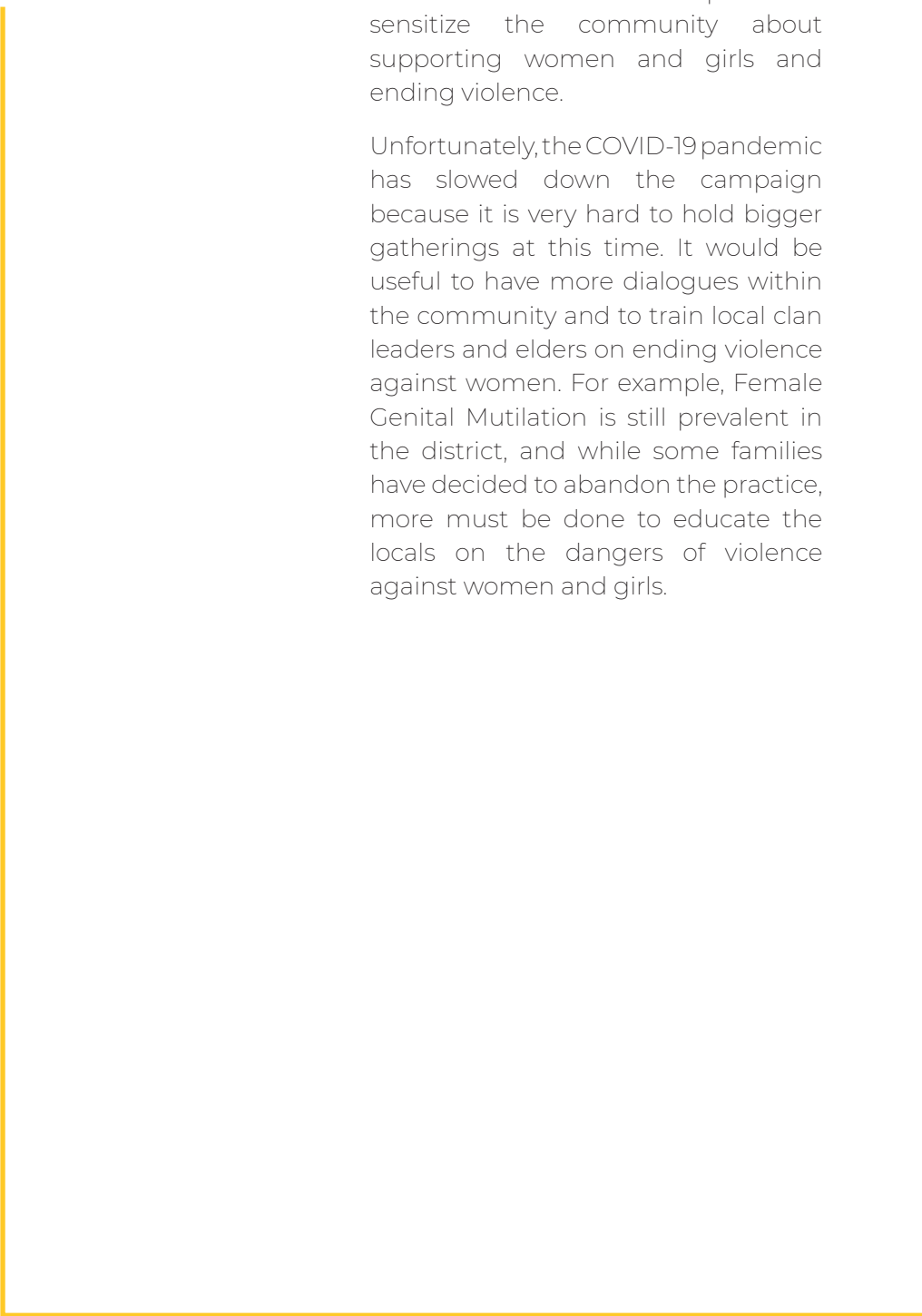


EDWARD MICHEAL
O.C CFPU Amudat district



Michael attributes the decline to continued sensitization through the media, community meetings, and community activists who continue to mediate between couples and sensitize the community about supporting women and girls and ending violence.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed down the campaign because it is very hard to hold bigger gatherings at this time. It would be useful to have more dialogues within the community and to train local clan leaders and elders on ending violence against women. For example, Female Genital Mutilation is still prevalent in the district, and while some families have decided to abandon the practice, more must be done to educate the locals on the dangers of violence against women and girls.



SHARED UNDERSTANDING

A New Way for Couples in Gulu
to make happiness not violence

27



Ocitti Jimmy

OCITTI JIMMY (33YRS) Business man and community activist from Gulu5

28

Jimmy Ociti is one of the community activists that were trained by Communication for Development Foundation Uganda (CDFU). He resides in Goan's Quarters village, Kasubi Parish, in Bardege division, Gulu district. The 33-year-old who also doubles as member of the Village Health Team (VHT) in the area is using a two pronged approach to address Gender Based Violence in his community. Jimmy has always helped women to access family planning services, but after being trained by CDFU, Jimmy realized that he had to encourage men to get closer to their wives and seek family planning services together. This move has helped to create peace between couples because men and women are now choosing to spend more time together and get to appreciate the challenges that affect them. They develop a shared understanding as couples, and this has reduced the cases of violence against women and girls.



UN WOMEN



Many times, violence in this community stemmed from alcoholism, ignorance, poor parenting, and moral decadence. In the instance of ignorance, for example, the men in this village had been of the mind that family planning methods led to infertility and at best resulted in children with disabilities. In the training the Jimmy received, he learned that men could take an active role in reproductive health services, which is often left to the women. When men join their wives or women in seeking family planning services, it enables them to appreciate the challenges that women encounter, and this has caused many of them to give more of their time to their families.

Jimmy started mobilizing women and men for dialogues and focused

on consent, spacing their children, and having a number that can be fed, schooled, and taken care of in their families. Sharing information concerning sexual and reproductive health rights, in particular the benefits of family planning enabled the people in Jimmy's community to change their mindsets and practices.

"As a result of my interventions in community, men now know the benefits of family planning and appreciate it since most of their wives are still in the youth bracket."

If one visits Jimmy's village, they will see men accompanying their spouses to the health centers/hospitals to seek family planning services. This is a positive change in the thinking of what is generally a Ugandan mentality.

BEHOLD THE OVERCOMERS

A transformed activist
promotes peace in her village

30

Loyollo martha

A portrait of a young Black woman with short, dark hair, looking slightly to the right with a serious expression. She is wearing a green and black plaid sleeveless top and a black necklace with red and yellow beads. The background is a blurred natural setting with green foliage. A yellow circular graphic element is on the left side of the page, and a yellow outline frames the woman's head and shoulders.

Marita Loyollo, a 25-year-old woman from Lomeri village, is one of the women who had lost hope and thought that violence against women was normal and could not be eradicated. Once known as a prominent drunkard, Marita now bears the testimony that change is possible.

Lomeri Village is part of Lolelia sub-county in Kaabong district, and it is here that Marita's curiosity led her to the training by Communication for Development Foundation Uganda (CDFU). She has become one of the best performing community activists.

Marita was introduced to drinking at an early age, and as a young girl, she grew up knowing it was normal for one to drink "ekweete" (local brew). As if things could not get worse, she fell pregnant and had to drop out of school in primary six. Throughout her pregnancy, she drunk "ekweete" and another popular local gin called "etule". Marita's drinking reached its peak at a time when the country was also flooded with cheap sachet waragi.



LOYOLLO MARTHA (30YRS)
Peasant married with 3 children, a
community activist from Lolelia centre,
Loleria parish Kabong district

She would quarrel with her husband and abandon the home and her children, and pitch camp in the nearby trading centre, sometimes spending the night there in a drunken stupor. Her family and neighbours disapproved but what could they do? Today, Marita has visible scars on her body which she sustained from regular fights with her husband. She says that the neighbors and in-laws were fed up of her. But one day, that changed. She was chosen as a member of the village health team, which in a way meant that it would keep her busy and prevent her from spending much of her time drinking alcohol.

The beginning was not easy as people in the village shunned her services saying that she was irresponsible given her history. Her situation remained challenging until September 2019 when she was selected as a community activist by CDFU. She was trained and taken through change sessions that completely transformed her life. Marita learned

that change begins within oneself before reaching out to others. With this, she turned her life around.

Over a period of two months, Marita's husband noticed the change in her; there were no more fights, and to show his appreciation, he opened a general merchandise shop for her. Marita, whose marriage was on the verge of collapsing, is now invited by couples to give them wise counsel and she attributes this welcome from the community to the training she received from CDFU.

"I believe every person can change. Many women are let down by their husbands but in my case, it was me causing confusion in my family." She regrets her past behaviour and feels she has received a new lease on life.

Marita's desire is to see more trainings rolled out to capture a wider area, knowing that some people do wrong not because that they take pride in it but because they are ignorant. They need information and guidance.

COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT UGANDA

Pot 2142 Kanakulya Road, Kyebando; P.O. Box 8734
Kampala Uganda

Telephone: +256 392 263941/2

Email: cdfu@cdfu.or.ug

Website: www.cdfuug.co.ug

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/cdfuug>

