

**act:onaid**



# 20 YEARS OF ACTIONAID IN PALLISA

IMPACTFUL WINDS OF CHANGE



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A photo montage of some of Pallisa LRP activities



# Background and implementation of Pallisa LRP activities

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**P**allisa Local Rights Program-LRP started in 1997 with funding from Spain and it is also the time the child sponsorship program was initiated. The LRP has been working to promote women rights, building livelihoods, good governance and gender responsive public services. To promote women rights of girls and other vulnerable groups, ActionAid focused on building the capacity of the women and leaders to challenge the deep rooted patriarchal culture that has disadvantaged them for decades. ActionAid empowered women and other disadvantaged groups to engage in economic activities and contribute to the livelihoods and incomes of their families. ActionAid also carried out several trainings on income generating activities, trained in proper agronomic practices and provided these groups with seeds and inputs to boost food security and incomes.

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At the start of the LRP in 1997 in Pallisa, majority of the people were living below the poverty line, poor livelihoods, poor services and extremely low women empowerment. The poverty index, gave us an indication that this is one of the areas we should be intervening in. During this time, there were also very high cases of Gender Based Violence as women didn't know their rights, could not speak up, they didn't know where to report and those who reported many didn't get justice. Out of every 10 women in Pallisa, 7 had experienced Gender Based Violence. Infrastructure was in tatters the district had very few schools, health facilities and the roads were in a poor state. The entry point for ActionAid was purely service delivery and they started by constructing schools, health facilities, roads and supplying seeds and agricultural inputs to revive livelihoods and improve on services.



Harriet Gimbo, program quality, learning and impact Advisor ActionAid International talks about the genesis of the LRP

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We were working with the local leadership to identify gaps in service delivery and if a school lacked classroom blocks, we would construct one directly and if they lacked water, we would drill a borehole so that people have access to clean and safe water. For sustainability, we trained committees to ensure these projects were sustainable.

However over time government started being actively involved in the provision of direct services which necessitated ActionAid to change its approach. In 2005, ActionAid started using the human rights based approach which aimed at ensuring protection of people's rights by the state. We had to strongly collaborate with government as a partner in service delivery and ensure that they do what is required of them as a state.

ActionAid invests in people knowing and understanding their rights and being able to speak up and demand for their rights and making sure government fulfills these rights. This however did not stop ActionAid from ensuring that there is quality and accountability



Woman speaking during one of the campaigns organized by ActionAid. Many women have been empowered by ActionAid to speak up

in the provision of these services and ensure there is quality and accountability in the provision of these services.

There were low literacy levels in Pallisa district so ActionAid started Reflect action group through empowering communities to come up with their own solutions to the problems they have come up with using participatory methodologies and they are able to demand for their rights like to food, education, medical among others. These groups were also entry points for literacy training because many of the men and women could not read and write so this gave them an opportunity to learn. We introduced literacy within Reflect Action Groups and this enabled women to read and write as part of the empowerment processes. Through Reflect action groups, members with support of different stakeholders are able to identify the different problems affecting them and to come up with solutions to address them after prioritizing.

Women voices started to come up, they started speaking up against injustices like, Gender Based Violence and other ills affecting them

unlike before. They can now speak about land rights, succession and sale of family assets among others issues.

Reflect groups were also supported to establish community seed banks to preserve indigenous seeds and to enable communities produce their own seeds and reduce dependence on the market. We established over six community stores managed by the communities. We supplied these groups with foundation seed which they would multiply over time as they sought to restore their livelihoods. They knew how to recycle seed, quality of seed and where to get quality seed and they also understood that it is not sustainable to use hybrid seed.

These groups have since developed into cooperatives and registered as Savings and Credit Cooperatives and they have bought assets like grinding mills because they are able to bulk their produce. All these came out of literacy and empowerment trainings supported by ActionAid. We also started a women leadership program where we trained over 200 women leaders on how to become better leaders and also mentor other women to join leadership.

Our efforts have ushered in a large number of women who were previously housewives to take up leadership positions and articulate for their issues because those who were illiterate were now able to read and write.

On livelihoods, we gave them animals in two categories, animals to plough to increase on land acreage and animals for livelihood support to diversify income. They would multiply the cows, goats and pigs given to be able to earn income. This broke the cycle from depending only on agriculture to animals as an alternative source of income.

We also did a lot around promotion of children rights in schools, right to a safe school environment, right to quality education, right to sanitary pads for the girl child. We promoted the use of reusable sanitary pads by training hundreds of children to make pads using local materials. We also supported them to have the sanitary facilities like washrooms in place. This reduced on the dropout rate of girls from school and many schools started taking issues of menstrual hygiene seriously. We put up suggestion boxes so that the children could use them to raise issues affecting them and the administration in turn would support them.



The schools we supported in collaboration with government went on to become models for neighboring schools because people got to know that a functional school needed to have enough classrooms, teachers quarters supportive parents and community among others.

Pallisa was one of the districts affected by corruption and nobody could speak out but through the anti-corruption caravans we ran, people became bold and started speaking against corruption and holding their leaders accountable, something that was unheard off. We trained a number of leaders so that they can be accountable to the people in the provision of public services and lead to the expectation of their communities. We trained communities on public expenditure tracking, governance and accountability and on voice and power. They now know their rights as rights holders and what they expect from their leaders as duty bearers.

The women protection centre started through an initiative called the Women Won't Wait campaign that was looking at the relationship between Gender Based Violence and HIV/AIDS. Women were being battered in large numbers and discriminated against because of being HIV positive. The Gender Based Violence shelter was set up to cater for victims of Gender Based Violence by providing comprehensive services to aid in the full recovery of these survivors. This enabled us to respond to cases of Gender Based Violence reported by the women. By the end of 2020, they had handled over 5,000 cases of Gender Based Violence. Setting up of the Shelter was collaboration between government which provided the structure, and ActionAid. This structure demonstrated that it was a necessity because of the prevalence of Gender Based Violence. We started with three shelters but by 2020 we had over 17 shelters established in Uganda. There is the infamous case of the woman who was forced by her husband to breastfeed his puppies for hunting. This case highlighted extreme Gender Based Violence cases in Pallisa district. This particular case galvanized support and helped push for the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act that had stagnated in parliament which was passed in 2020.

We worked also closely with the cultural institutions of the Bagwere and the Iteso to try and mitigate cultural practices like bride price,

forced marriages, grabbing of property, that were perpetuating Gender Based Violence and we succeeded in forming a solid collaboration that has been significant in lowering cases of Gender Based Violence in the area. We worked together in documenting the negative practices that became our focus during sensitization campaigns and meetings. These cultural institutions are now playing a leading role in the fight against Gender Based Violence and women rights

Communities that inhabit Pallisa district are very cultural and these cultures are patriarchal in nature which brought the challenge of power dynamics of male dominance. Since overcoming this gradual process, we have to keep sensitizing the people and the men to know that they can co-exist with the women. Women should be supported more to consolidate the gains they have made so far and to keep up the momentum so that they can achieve even more.

The changing dynamics of poverty also present a challenge, given the effects of climate change; Pallisa is also a district still grappling with issues of poor infrastructure and high population. There is more need for increased investment in services delivered to the people.

## Milestones

One critical milestone is raising the voices of women in Pallisa is a very strong thing that has happened in the last 20 years because women were literally silent and in the kitchen. This became a central point in the empowerment of the women in Pallisa.

Another milestone is influencing the policy processes through the Gender Based Violence shelter, like coming up with national guidelines for shelters and helping in the passing of the domestic violence act in 2020.

The growth of reflect Action groups into cooperatives is another milestone we are proud of. We have not left them as individuals but as a block that can fight for their rights, prices, quality of seed and inputs without ActionAid because we gave them the knowledge.

Building the leadership capabilities of young people through Activista movement is another milestone. ActionAid mobilized and trained young people as young leaders so that they are able to speak about their issues.

Promoting girl child education is another milestone because the community now values the education of the girl. You cannot marry off a young girl now because everyone is aware about the rights of girls and women and they will be up in arms.

## Challenges

COVID-19 presents a new challenge to Pallisa and other districts because of the limited resource envelop and yet dealing with this pandemic is very expensive. There is need for other development partners to come in and support such districts if the development agenda is to be met.

The huge number of the youth is also a challenge because most are unemployed, uneducated and they are living below the poverty line. There is need to empower these youth to be able to get involved and be part of the development agenda.

ActionAid is not phasing out of Pallisa but it is one strand of sponsorship (the child sponsorship project) that has come to an end after twenty years. However the organization still has running programs in the district and it is even sourcing for more funding. This also gives an opportunity for other partners to come in and for the community also to step up and try to solve some of their problems.

Going forward, we are likely to focus more on responses to climate change and justice issues. ActionAid will also intervene in the event that a strong issue arises like emergencies.

I extend our appreciation to Spain for the 20 years they have supported our work in Pallisa. I also extend my appreciation to other donors who have supported us on this long journey. **Harriet Gimbo, program quality, learning and impact Advisor ActionAid International**

# Child sponsorship program gives hope to children from vulnerable families



Pupils of Ajepet Primary School reading class materials they received from ActionAid recently

**B**efore ActionAid came, the situation was not good, my parents were very poor and they could not afford basic needs including scholastic materials. Imagine my parents would buy one book, divide it into two books but under the sponsorship programme, we were given enough books and pens for the stipulated time. The sponsorship program supported me from the age of six in primary one until when I turned thirteen and successfully completed primary seven. We were given, books, pens, pencils and sets among others which ensured we didn't lack anything. Because of this support I was able to pass Primary Leaving Examinations and join secondary, where I studied up to senior four.

If it was not for ActionAid I think I would have dropped in primary three. In my family four children have been supported by the child sponsorship project. They supported the first a girl who went on to do a course in tailoring, then me the second born, then the third born

finished senior four did a course in mechanics.

Together with a friend, we have a store stocked with maize and cassava which I hope to sell when prices have increased. We are very grateful for the sponsorship project because it gave me and my siblings a foundation to have a better life.



Ibrahim Wabenga a formerly sponsored child in his food store



ActionAid did not stop at giving me scholastic materials; it also gave me a goat which multiplied, i sold and bought a cow which I later sold to start a business.

Since we are nine children, my plan is to look for money through my business so that I can help my parents educate my other siblings to have a better future. I hope to grow my businesses from 5 bags of cassava, 3 bags and 2 bags of rice into big store of hundreds of bags of these produce so that I can make more money and even go back to school. In a month I make one hundred thousand shillings (USD 27) after removing expenses which is little but better than nothing.

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If it was not for ActionAid I think I would have dropped in primary three. **Ibrahim Wabenga, a formerly sponsored child and now a business man**

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44 year old Sikwana Monica, mother to Ibrahim



**I**thank ActionAid so much for the support it has rendered to my family until where we have reached now. I can now also boast that I have educated children and these children are hopeful of the future. The eldest child is a tailor another one is a teacher and the other one is doing business and the last one still at home helping me with work. **Monica Sikwana, mother to Ibrahim a former sponsored child**

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Wamwoyo Mercy, 50 years been working as a community intermediary (CI)

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**B**efore ActionAid came, we had very many needy families who could not meet the education needs of their children. ActionAid started supporting these most vulnerable families by providing scholastic materials to children and goats to the parents. As a community inter-mediary, I was tasked with identifying these children and ActionAid gave them scholastic materials like pens, sets, books and pencils from primary one to primary seven. We started seeing families taking education seriously.

We support the children to write messages which are sent to ActionAid and also we help during the distribution of the scholastic materials. ActionAid project of giving scholastic materials and providing school feeding has kept hundreds of pupils in school. We also distributed seeds for maize, beans among others to these families to make them food secure.

The child sponsorship program has given a foundation to many impoverished children who have gone on to complete university and other institutions of higher learning and become important members of the community. We have students doing plumbing, catering, tailoring, teaching, construction and many other courses, who were supported by the child sponsorship program. These children

are always grateful for the support because without it they would not have reached where they are now.

The project relieved these parents from the burden of buying scholastic materials to concentrate on providing other basic needs for the family.

As the project comes to an end, naturally the people are disappointed but we are grateful for this project because now people value education and they are ready to take their children to school with or without external support. As a Community Intermediary, I will continue sensitizing the people about the importance of education long after the project has ended because I have become passionate about my work. **Mercy Wamoyo, a community intermediary.**



Pupils of Kachango Primary school receiving books and other scholastic materials from ActionAid

**T**he livelihoods project has transformed the lives of the people because it enabled them buy assets and build better houses from the incomes they got.

As a CI, I am going to continue mobilizing and sensitizing our communities especially the vulnerable groups to continue being in groups and to lobby from the government and NGOs for more support and share our experiences. We shall also continue with the small income generating projects because they have become key in the growth of households.



Sabano Salama, a beneficiary of the sponsorship program with her parents

**I** am in primary seven in Mustard Seed day and boarding primary school. I used not to get scholastic materials but now I get them from ActionAid and this has helped me to use in class. I have been getting scholastic materials from ActionAid since 2017, I get one dozen of books, two pens, two pencils, rubber, colours and a set. I want to study very hard so that I become a nurse and treat people to



Henry Kyanamiro, Community Intermediary ( in the photo below with one of the children under the sponsorship program)

# Skilling the girl child through community training centre's - an initiative of Pallisa LRP

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Some of the beneficiaries of the training during their tailoring lesson

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**I**n 2019 AAU-Pallisa LRP started 5 community training centers hosted at sub-counties and partner organisations and managed by women groups, they included Kasaira town council training Centre, Buseta subcounty training Centre, Naboa subcounty training Centre, Kakule subcounty training Centre and Gogonyo subcounty training Centre. In a period of two years the Centre's have had 3 intakes training 300 girls in tailoring and craft making skills.

“My parents didn't have money for me to continue with school, I was home for 2 years and decided to enroll at this training Centre, I have gained a lot of skills and I 'am now saving some money to buy a machine and start my own business” **Says Nambozo Christine Mary aged 17 years at Gogonyo training Centre.**

**A**ctionAid Pallisa LRP supported each Centre with 8 tailoring machines and start up materials such as beads, cloth and other accessories needed in the training. ActionAid also identified and Paid skilled trainers for an initial period of 6 month.

“We thank ActionAid for this initiative that has helped our girls to gain skills, it has also helped us reduce teenage pregnancies since the girls are fully occupied at the centers. To sustain the Centre, we have started selling the items the students make but also charge an affordable training fee to cater for the trainers and maintenance of the machines” **Says Agwang Margert chairperson Gogonyo training Centre.**

# Good governance ensuring gender responsive public services

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Children fetching water at one of the boreholes drilled with support from ActionAid

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Opolot Samuel Headmaster, Ajepet Primary School says, “twenty years back, the school used not to have any structures and pupils used to study under trees but when ActionAid came, they constructed for us two classroom block and one teachers quarters with a latrine. For the first time pupils were able to sit in a proper classroom and learn from an improved environment. This helped catalyze increased infrastructure developments in the school to what it is today. All children now study inside classrooms.

ActionAid also continued teaching us on how to lobby for services from the sub-county and the district and as a result we got a new five stanza pit latrine from the sub-county. We are also very grateful for the support from ActionAid for enabling the girl child stay at school through training pupils and teachers on how to make

reusable sanitary pads. This has significantly reduced on the number of girls dropping out of school due to menstruation”.



Ajepet primary school had a very old pit latrine but with support from ActionAid they got a new five stanza pit latrine

ActionAid also intervened at community and household levels by improving sanitation, the livelihoods, feeding children in school and fighting for the rights of vulnerable groups especially women and the girl child. To promote access to safe clean drinking water, ActionAid drilled a number of boreholes in Pallisa district including this one in Kituti subcounty. This reduced on water borne diseases and the long distances people used to travel in search of water.



Over time ActionAid realized that it would be more worthwhile to invest in the ability of the people to demand for services, accountability and ensure the governance system for social services is improved in the area. This gave way to the human rights best approach to programming where ActionAid mobilized communities to form Reflect Action groups, community monitoring groups and activists to come together as solidarity groups to demand with one voice the services that they need. This gave them power to be able to get their voices to the duty bearers to be heard and bring about action through the power of numbers.

The masses lobbying and advocating with one voice has led to leaders at subcounty and district being accountable which has led to improved service delivery in education and health among others.



Emuron John Pius, Deputy Head Teacher Akisim II Primary School points to classroom blocks under renovation as a result of lobbying efforts by ActionAid.

This is Akisim II primary school in Gogonyo subcounty, the school classroom blocks were debilitated and in a sorry state. However the combined lobbying efforts of the community, school staff and community monitors caught the attention of the district and the school is undergoing renovations. The school which was started in the 1940s has an enrollment of 1,006 pupils, twenty years ago, it faced several challenges; shortage of classrooms and even the few that were there were unreliable especially during the rainy season, we would close the school as the classrooms would flood. This greatly affected the learning of the children.

Another challenge that has persisted to this day is the shortage of staff; we have only ten teachers teaching over one thousand pupils in lower primary, you can have one teacher teaching a class of 400 pupils.

When ActionAid came to our school, they showed us how to be organized, work together to lobby for improved services from the district and the sub county. Support from the school management committee, community monitors and the mobilized local community has led to certain development changes at the school. We raised our issues as teachers and the community also raised their expectations and

with support from the community monitors we forwarded this to the district. As a result of having one voice, the district is renovating the existing three classrooms blocks and constructed a four stanza pit latrine for the boys. This will improve on the learning environment because children will be studying even when it is raining. The improved infrastructure at the school will see an increase in the enrollment of the children because of the positive attitude of the parents.

We have seen remarkable changes in AKisim Primary School and other schools in Akisim sub-county because of the good work of ActionAid. It raised the consciousness of the people and the duty bearers on the importance of providing quality education services, a sector that was not given the attention it deserved. Without ActionAid support, this school would have collapsed because the children had already started migrating to other better schools. **Emuron John Pius, Deputy Head teacher Akisim II Primary School**

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**A**gule health centre in Agule town council used to experience chronic shortage of drugs and other consumables but support from the community and the monitors enabled to successfully lobby for these products. Having constant supply of drugs has increased the number of patients coming to the facility.



Okurut Samuel, Nursing Officer Agule Health centre III shows off a kitchen built for mothers

The catchment area for this health facility includes Agule subcounty, Agule town council, Akisim subcounty among others. We serve a population of about 33,000 and we see an average of 83 clients every day in the different units of the health facility.

Before ActionAid, we had challenges of low accessibility of health services by the community and the infrastructure was not sufficient to cater for all the units. We did not have a kitchen for our mothers to prepare their meals. We also had shortage of drugs and other consumables.

When ActionAid came, they supported us to come together with other stakeholders, create awareness through sensitization about the availability of health services. There is now increased accessibility because more people are coming to the health centre for treatment and care. Before we would receive between four hundred to six thousand patients a month but now we get up to one thousand patients. Together with different stakeholders we were able to lobby for a kitchen for the mothers, a placenta pit was dug and the buildings were painted.

Before interventions from ActionAid, the attitude of the health workers towards work and the patients was not good but these interactions with the community monitors and the local people through community dialogues has built and fostered good relationships among us. We come together to amplify our voices to the leaders for effective lobbying. The health workers also come on duty on time and provide ideal environment and services.

Some of the challenges we face include not having an immunization shade, low turn up of mothers for deliveries. What we are trying to do is to continue with the dialogues so that we sensitize the people on the importance of delivering at the health facility. We are also carrying out outreaches to reach more people with the services and continue to lobby for more services for the health facility.

# Reflection Action Groups, village savings, catalyst for development

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**R**eflect Action Groups have helped improve literacy levels through promotion of adult learning which has empowered the communities to be able to identify their challenges and come up with their own solutions and holding their leaders accountable.

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Before ActionAid came, women were marginalized, they had no voice, they would just attend meetings but they could not talk and in most meetings they would not even be allowed to attend. They did not know about their rights because they were not empowered. When ActionAid came, it introduced adult learning circles also known as adult learning groups. Through these groups, we were able to identify our own problems and find solutions. ActionAid organized meetings from village, parish Sub County up to the district. Through these groups women were able to rise up because they got to know about their rights and they became firm in demanding for their rights.



Apulasi Kedi, Community leader and Reflect Action group leader



Members of the Reflection Action Group during one of their meetings

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Now we have an empowered group of women including myself who used to be very shy, could not express ourselves but now we are very vocal. My being outspoken made it possible for me to hold elective positions like being a councillor and currently I am one of the few female Local Council one chairpersons in Pallisa district. Women from mainly these groups have come up to take up leadership positions and they not only attend meetings but also contribute meaningfully to the discussions.

Women in my reflect circle have become role models to other women in my area because of their strength in fighting for what rightfully belongs to them.

We are also grateful for ActionAid fight against Gender Based Violence in Gogonyo sub-county. The Gender Based Violence desk set up at the sub county as a reporting point for survivors of Gender Based Violence has been instrumental in reducing cases of Gender Based Violence which used to be rampant in the area. Using dialogues and mediations as a means of conflict resolution has been very

effective. These Gender Based Violence desk supporters have been sensitizing the people about the dangers of Gender Based Violence and the rights of women.

Previously men used to treat women like property and the women could not fight back because they believed this lie. Women felt trapped after the payment of bride price and would remain in abusive relationships for a long time. You could not accuse your husband in front of clan leaders because you could be demonized as many felt women were supposed to be seen not heard. Men are now respectful of their women and for these I am very thankful to ActionAid for having supported us the women –a big marginalized group. **Apulus Kedi, Community Intermediary and member of the Reflect Action Group**

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We don't fear, we are now demanding for better quality gender responsive public services as women from the duty bearers. I can go to the subcounty, the district and knock on doors of leaders and ask to know what is happening and I expect an answer. We also ask the leaders what women can do so that implementation of government programs is a success.

This has enabled us succeed in getting Uganda Women Empowerment Programme money which is going to enable us start small businesses. Women are not only living but we are thriving because we are exploiting our full potential.

Before setting up these reflect action groups, ActionAid first trained one person from each village who then became reflect action facilitators. I got the chance of being selected to go for the train and after I came back and mobilized members to form groups and I facilitated them. As a reflect action group, we sat down and identified challenges affecting us and we prioritized them and after we came up with ways of how to tackle this challenges.

In 2004, we started saving money in small

amounts among ourselves as members of the group and in 2012 ActionAid gave us financial and literacy trainings so that we could sustain our Village Savings and Loan Association. We started with savings of 300 shillings every week in 2004 to 5,000 shillings in 2012. By this time members could borrow from the group and pay back with a small interest. Currently the group has 48 strong members comprising of only one man and so far we have saved 7,700,000 shillings (about USD 2,000).

The successes of the group members have encouraged more people to join the group.



This is a savings box where the women in the group keep their money.

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The lives of the members have changed because they are able to save and borrow to engage in small businesses. They are able to meet fees and other basic needs at home. The homes of the members are largely peaceful because they know how to solve their differences amicably. When the tensions increase, we use the group leadership to try and work things out. Group members using their financial muscle have been able to assets like land, cows and household items.

Adult learning has made it possible for the women to read and write local language letters and this has made communication easy especially in running small businesses which requires ability to balance books.



My group managed to pressurize the Community Development Officer until we were put on list and now we have received Uganda Women Empowerment Programme funding which is going to boost our businesses. We were also able to lobby for a new pit latrine to be constructed the school and it was done by the subcounty. We have kept on sensitizing the people to own services brought to them and promote accountability incase shoddy work is being done.

Long live ActionAid thank you ActionAid.

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Nakanka Sharifa addressing her other Village Savings and Loan Associations group members

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**B**efore ActionAid came women were just there not knowing what was going on and we didn't know that we could actually improve our lives instead of gossiping. We were just doing unpaid routine work every day which perpetuated poverty. We were just producing not taking our children to school and we could not move to other place and we didn't know the value of being in a group.

When ActionAid came, they organized us into groups and trained us on the Village Savings and Loan Associations methodology. We learnt the importance of saving through financial literacy trainings. These empowered us to get out of our comfort zones and work to better our lives. For the first time, village

women like us became organized and pooled resources together to improve our lives.

Through Village Savings and Loan Associations, we have been able to access low interest loans with very flexible terms and this has enabled us buy assets, construct houses and meet other household needs.

This group of ours has produced a number of women leaders who went through the just concluded elections because of the empowerment from ActionAid. They are now going to participate as our voice in planning and making decisions that affect us the women. Members of the group are no longer experiencing Gender Based Violence in their homes because their husbands respect them. We have also become a voice for other women especially to survivors of Gender Based Violence because we keep speaking out against this evil.

We save once a week and each member saves a minimum of five thousand shillings. The money you borrow as a loan is depended on how much savings you have because you can't borrow more than you have saved. Majority of the women in our group have small businesses from, selling rice, fish, tomatoes, second hand clothes. For the first time women have been able to earn money they call they own and determine how it is spent. Now these women don't have to depend on their husbands entirely because they are also earning income.

We want to keep sensitizing the community and especially other women on the importance of being in groups and saving. We want also to keep saving to accumulate enough money to buy our own oxen and farm inputs so that we can engage in commercial farming. We are very organized so even if ActionAid pulls out, we shall continue with our activities because we have seen that it is beneficial. **Nakanka Sharifa, member of the Reflect Action Group**

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# Livelihoods and community empowerment

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Under livelihoods and community empowerment, ActionAid supported the people to select enterprises to diversify their incomes sources to fight poverty. Vulnerable households were given foundation seed of different crops to ensure food security and animals like goats, cows and pigs as alternative enterprises.

I have nine children and 25 grand children. Before ActionAid came to our area, life was hard for housewives like me, we had no sources of income and we did not access or own land as a factor of production. We would contribute most of the labor during farming but when the produce was harvested the men would take all the proceeds. ActionAid trained us on good agronomic practices and provided us with quality seed of different crops like maize and ground nuts. In planting these seeds, it gave us a sense of ownership of the proceeds and our voices counted on what happens to the produce after harvest.

Proceeds from these helped us to meet basic needs for the family like housing, clothing, medical care, food and education needs. ActionAid also supported us to form groups and start Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA). Village Savings and Loan Associations became game changers because as housewives, we were now accessing credit at very low interest rates and more importantly requiring no security. Members are now engaging in small businesses and earning income to take care of their families.

Also before ActionAid came, we did not know how to read and write but through the adult literacy programme, we can now read and write which has empowered us and made us successful in carrying out businesses.

ActionAid supported me to start up a turkey rearing project and through this project I have been able to construct a kitchen. Through the turkey project I have also started a goat rearing project. This has been able to enable me meet the fees for my children and also other family needs.



61 year old Atengei Anna attending to her goats

I am very grateful for what ActionAid has done for me; I have been able to make my family stand because of the empowerment and support it rendered to us. **Anna Atinge, beneficiary**

Life for local women like me was not easy before ActionAid came; we depended entirely on our husbands as we did not have a voice or power to effect nor change anything. Life was hard we could not get money but ActionAid empowered us with knowledge and inputs to engage in vegetable growing. We were also given knowledge on how to make local pesticides and organic manure. I started with a kitchen garden of with different vegetables using seed given to us by ActionAid. When I sold the vegetables, I started a poultry project which is now thriving. For the first time I started owning projects that are entirely mine and so I did not have to depend on my husband.

This has changed our lives because we no longer wait for men for anything; we are comfortably taking care of ourselves and families.



Rose Segat feeding some of her chicken that she keeps at her home

This empowerment has been a great benefit to me being a widow because now I don't have beg well-wishers to feed my family. **Rose Sagat, beneficiary from Gogonyo subcounty**

ActionAid gave us groundnut seeds which I planted and got sixteen bags which I sold and bought iron sheets and I participated in making bricks. With these, I started construction of my house of twenty iron sheets. I have also shared the knowledge I got from ActionAid with women in my area because we all want to develop and improve our homes. I tell them that they should find something productive to do even if it means leaving the comfort of their homes to do business. I make sure that I lead by example by engaging in successful business and having an organized home.



Mwogesa Zaina Parish councilor

I have also taken my children to good private schools so that they get a good education and I have been able to buy several assets.

We had been ignored as women and as a result we missed out on many things but coming together as women and using one voice we are able to make leaders account for our issues. We want more women to take up leadership positions so that our voice becomes even louder. I thank ActionAid for the knowledge it gave me because it is what has made me develop my family and impact on my community, thank you very much.

**Mwogesa Zaina Parish councilor**

# Climate Resilient Agriculture practices restore hope among communities in Kibuku District

ActionAid Uganda through Kibuku Organic Farmers Association (KIDOFA) trained 46 KIDOFA member groups (each with an average of 40 members) in climate resilient sustainable agriculture (CRSA) practices and support them with resistant vegetable seed of egg plants and tomatoes, KIDOFA was also supported to provide on farm hands on support to the farmers to use soil and water management practices such as mulching, simple irrigation and use of organic manure.

“I never imagined I can do farming even in a dry season but the training I received from ActionAid has enabled me to harvest tomatoes plants even in this dry season of January on which my family feeds, I also sale some for money to buy other household items like soap and salt” Proudly says Nagobi Betty.



While Aziza Mpindi says she earns an average of between 30,000 to 40,000shs (about USD 10) per week from the sale of eggplants, we found Aziza in her garden with vegetable vendors who had come to buy eggplants from her.

“it’s a dry season, people don’t have food, they just buy my eggplants from the garden, I don’t

have to look for buyers and some even want to buy immature ones because of the demand” Narrates Aziza.



Betty and Aziza are among the 1,140 SHFs who benefited from AAU trainings and seed capital and have used the CRSA skills gained from the trainings to produce food in the dry seasons. AAU also supported KIDOFA to start a seed capital fund in which every farmer contributes 10,000= towards the fund at every harvest season. The fund will then be used to purchase good quality seed and farm inputs in bulk at a cheaper cost and distributed to farmers in the planting season.



Teachers and pupils of Gongonyo Primary School in their garden promoted by ActionAid



Empowered women during one of their group meetings

## Empowered women take the lead

ActionAid has also put women at the forefront of all its programming because they are the most vulnerable to exclusion in planning and decision making. ActionAid has fronted women and youth as critical groups of people to be at the forefront of demanding for services. The youth are supported because they are a large part of the population that has been left out but ActionAid has empowered them to be able to play a key role in influencing the development agenda. The areas that ActionAid focused on span from the child sponsorship program as a delivery model and also as empowerment initiative.

I was a very shy primary three drop out housewife with very limited options to influence anything in my area. I was poor and unable to even get school fees for my children but this changed when ActionAid came. We were taught adult literacy, how to speak up and defend our rights as women. I realized that I had potential to lead because this empowerment ignited a passion in me I didn't know existed.

ActionAid showed us that we should not be shy when we are fighting for our rights as women.

We learnt that we should not only remain in the kitchen but also come to the decision table and be assertive. This is when I made a decision to stand and champion the rights and needs of my fellow women. I stood and campaigned vigorously to be elected as the area councilor and because of being empowered and articulate, I won re-election. As a councilor, I am going to ensure that women have a voice and that this voice is respected and to ensure our decisions have an impact. For example I have ensured that services like water, roads and health services are extended my area. If ActionAid had not come I would just be a simple housewife stuck in the kitchen.



Baluku Mariam, Area councilor Kamugo, Buseta sub-county and also a housewife

# Community monitors –the link between community and leaders

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Before ActionAid came to Akisim Subcounty, we were disorganized, not concerned and didn't know the approach and procedures on how to handle some of the situations in our communities, schools and health centers. Approaching the administrators and staff of these institutions was very hard as the gap between duty bearers and rights holders was very wide. **John Julius Okaki, a community Monitor—Akisim sub-county**

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This all changed when ActionAid recruited and trained us as community monitors. We gained knowledge on how to approach the leaders who are the duty bearers and the people who are the rights holders as I want on with my role of monitoring public services like health and education to promote accountability. I have been monitoring Akisim Primary School, three other primary schools and one health centre.

The classrooms of Akisim were dusty because the floors were not cemented, no desks and roof tops were very low making them very hot during dry season.

There were also no windows which made it a poor environment for learning.

We lobbied the district with support from ActionAid and our voices were heard and responded too by the district as Akisim was considered as one of the schools to be helped. That's why you see that the three classroom blocks have been renovated, with two already roofed, remaining one which will be completed this month. Children are now willing to come to school because the floors were cemented and classrooms are clean with desks.

During monitoring, the administrators of this school are always cooperative and they give us the information we need.

I thank ActionAid because it is the base that enabled us achieve this changes in schools and health facilities. ActionAid empowered us to be able to knock doors of several offices as we demanded for better services. It brought together the different stakeholder made them work in harmony and this has led to development.



Mr. John Julius Okaki (left), a community monitor talking to a health worker at Agule Health centre III



One of the survivors of Gender Based Violence at the Women Protection Shelter in Pallisa

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## Women protection centre offers sanctuary to survivors of Gender Based Violence

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The patriarchal nature of communities in Pallisa for many years perpetuated Gender Based Violence against women for decades. Women were subjected to some of the worst forms of Gender Based Violence including one particular case that caught international attention where a woman was forced by her husband to breastfeed puppies.

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**T**he shelter was setup with collaboration with government that provided the facility. ActionAid ensured that the shelter provided comprehensive services to victims and survivors of Gender Based Violence. The shelter has been able to support over 5,000 women overcome Gender Based Violence.

Before the establishment of the shelter, there were different types of Gender Based Violence meted out mainly to the women. There was physical (there was a lot of battering of the women leading to pain and sometimes death), psychosocial violence (emotional abuse of the women) and economic violence (denying women access, use and ownership of resources). There is one infamous incident that captured national attention, a man made his wife to breastfeed puppies so that they would become better hunting dogs. He showed that he valued his puppies more than his woman as he looked at dogs as a resource for hunting. Imagine the woman had to breastfeed the puppies together with her little baby. This particular incident and many others attracted funding for the establishment of the shelter in 2012.

The district provided the building but ActionAid equipped and staffed it to provide different Gender Based Violence services to the community. ActionAid sensitized the communities about the dangers of Gender Based Violence, where survivors can get support and action against the perpetrators. The shelter became a refuge for the women running away from all forms of abuse and we offered them the help they needed.



Grace Nyaguti, Psycho-social Support Officer— Gender Based Violence shelter counseling a Gender Based Violence survivor at the shelter.

**D**eep-rooted culture and widespread poverty are the main causes of Gender Based Violence in Pallisa district.

Men believe that since they paid bride price, the women are part of their properties and they have the right to do anything they deem fit. Any attempts to change the status-quo are resisted vehemently by the men.

The Gender Based Violence shelter first started offering temporary shelter for the survivors for women assessed and found to be at risk if they go back to the community. We offer psychosocial support like counseling to such victims to overcome trauma and we would also give them basic needs like bedding, food, clothing and medical care during their stay here.

After assessing the situation and finding a safe and conducive environment for her, we resettle her temporarily or permanently. To try and resolve these conflicts, we carry out mediations between the two parties affected parties to come to amicable position. We also do referral as we work with different stakeholders like the LC structures, cultural leaders, religious leaders, the police and the judiciary. The referral system we have ensures that the services these different stakeholders are providing are complementary to avoid duplication. For example we work with police to effect arrests of perpetrators and judiciary to handle cases after mediations have failed.

We also do a lot of community sensitization especially about the negative aspects of the cultural practices that perpetrate Gender Based Violence. One of the issues we have been sensitizing the people is women owning land. Culturally women have not been allowed to own land but we have been talking to the people about the law and the rights of women to access use and own land. We also sensitize communities that women and girls have equal rights in inheriting property from their parents.

Culturally girls have been denied education but we have been sensitizing them that all girls have a right to education just like the boys.

One of the achievements is that a number of women have gotten to know their rights and now they are holding men accountable in case they perpetrate violent acts against them.

Another achievement is that more women now own assets like land, cows and other household assets in their names. Their voices now matter in family matters today more than ever. Men today cannot sell family property without the consent of their wives and children. This is a very big milestone that has helped women to safeguard family property.

Women now know where they can report or seek for help in case they experience Gender Based Violence instead of dying in silence.

**Grace Nyaguti, Psycho-social Support Officer— GBV Shelter**



# Survivors share their experiences

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I got married but because I could not bear a child, my husband chased me and I came back to my parents' home. I bought a small piece of land from my brother to settle on and cultivate to sustain myself. However one day my brother tried to grab the land from me and even refused to refund the money I had paid him. I reported to the local leaders but I was not helped. When I visited ActionAid, they called my brother for a mediation meeting and ordered him to pay back my money and to give a piece of my father's land because I am entitled to inherit. He agreed to pay part of the money and to give me a share of my father's land.

I was given a portion which I am cultivating and I have planted cassava and I also plan to construct a house on it.

Before ActionAid came, women who experienced Gender Based Violence like me had nowhere to report and no one to support them; instead they would run to towns to roam. **80 year old, Apulusi Mary Achom, GBV Survivor**



My husband died leaving me with six children so life was very hard. To survive I accepted to be inherited by one of my brothers in-law as he promised to take care of me and the children.



Betty Akiteng, Gender Based Violence Survivor at the women protection shelter

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He razed my home to the ground and took me and the children to go and live with him. However, when I got pregnant with my seventh child, he brought another woman and chased me and my children despite the fact that most of the household things were mine and he owed me some money. I don't have anything now, the home and household things are gone and he is even restricting me from using the gardens left to me by my late husband. Right from when I got pregnant, he has never supported me or even taken me for antenatal services. I have come to ActionAid despite being 9 month pregnant to get justice. I don't care even if I deliver now, I will not stop until I get justice. I was referred to this place by a male champion after failing to get help from the Local Councils and the police. My expectation is that he is summoned and compelled to support me.

I am very grateful to ActionAid because without them, I would have fallen into a lake to end my misery but now I am full of life thank you ActionAid. My future plan is to have a business like selling fish to earn some income. I also hope to construct a better house than the one I am living in. **Betty Akiteng, GBV Survivor**

# ActionAid working with partners bears fruits

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Wamire Dawson (in picture below) District Community Development Officer, Pallisa district talks about the benefits of the partnership with ActionAid.



**B**efore ActionAid came, we were providing services to the people as government but it was not adequate but when ActionAid came, they addressed the gaps and one of the things it did was to fight against Gender Based Violence and ensuring that the girl child stays at school. They opened the eyes of many people especially the women and the girls by empowering them. They also provided legal services for the women and these services were unaffordable for the vulnerable woman. Supporting the women protection center for a number of years now has been the game changer in the fight against Gender Based Violence. This place now acts as a refuge for survivors and victims of Gender Based Violence where they get the help they need.

They have also been building our capacity as district leaders in the areas of governance, gender, democracy and accountability among others.

They have also played a big role in empowering women economically and teaching them to

know their rights which have helped reduced on incidences of Gender Based Violence. Promoting male champions to sensitize fellow men about the dangers of Gender Based Violence and the rights of women is very commendable because it brought men on board in the fight against Gender Based Violence.

We are now seeing women rising up to talk, take up leadership positions because of empowerment from ActionAid. They are now participating in making decisions at different levels up to even at the district council.



Members of the Pallisa district during one of engagement meetings with ActionAid

The Gender Based Violence shelter is one of the best innovations the district will undertake to support because of the critical services it is providing the women. However it is very expensive to run so we will need other partners to come on board. We will also continue with the sixteen days of activism against Gender Based Violence in sensitizing more people against Gender Based Violence. We will also continue using male champions and dialogues to promote accountability as demanded by the people. **Wamire Dawson Community Development Officer, Pallisa district.**

# Sustainability

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Despite challenges posed by climate change, poor service delivery and poor infrastructure, we can confidently say progress has been made. There is need to build on this momentum if effective service delivery is to be achieved.

Our human right approach of programming ensures that ActionAid phase out of Pallisa LRP is seamless because it guarantees sustainability of our work. We brought on board all the stakeholders so everyone is part of the transformation. We focused on building community structures and empowered the people to fight for their rights. Community structures and the people are now playing a prominent role in the fight for accountability and better service delivery. These have taken the lead because ActionAid has been playing a facilitative role. We have Gender Based Violence desks manned by the sub counties themselves and local leadership, small holder farmers have become Savings and Credit Cooperatives and Cooperatives. Members of these groups are now able to access credit from their Savings and Credit Cooperatives and cooperatives have helped in bulking produce and better marketing because of having a stronger voice for bargaining.

When our funding affiliate communicated that they were pulling out, we immediately

started putting in place an exit strategy. We made sure that we communicated to the different stakeholders including the district and different community structures. We held many engagement meetings with them and we put in place start up fund for them and link groups to the government programs and made sure district adopted some of the good practices. We have shifted responsibility from ActionAid to communities and the district. We expect the district to oversee these interventions and also scale them up to other areas because it has been proven they work. The reflect action groups is one of the strong structures we live behind and they will continue being vital in demanding for better services.



Emmanuel Wafula, ActionAid Pallisa cluster coordinator



Apopong Health centre III supported by ActionAid to get electricity



Pupils of Kachango Primary School learning how to make re-usable sanitary pads.



New classroom block constructed in Omulatu Primary School with lobbying efforts by ActionAid



A pupil at Akuoro Primary school using a suggestion box to raise her issues



A beneficiary with her grand children



Women discuss with the police officer at one of the campaign meetings organised by ActionAid



Pupils of Kachango primary school. There has been increased enrolment in schools because of conducive learning environment





ActionAid is a global movement of people working together to achieve greater human rights for all and defeat poverty. We believe people in poverty have the power within them to create change for themselves, their families and communities. ActionAid is a catalyst for that change.

Website: [www.uganda.actionaid.org](http://www.uganda.actionaid.org)

Telephone: +256 (039) 222 0002

P.O Box 676, Kampala

Email: [info.uganda@actionaid.org](mailto:info.uganda@actionaid.org)

Plot 2514/2517 Kansanga Ggaba Road  
Kampala Uganda.

FRONT COVER:  
A GROUP OF EMPOWERED  
WOMEN FROM PALLISA  
DISTRICT

PHOTO:  
SAB HORIZONS MEDIA

BACK COVER:  
ILLUSTRATION:  
HARRY MALT



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