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# News

ActionAid Uganda's Issue 4, March 2013



## Editorial: 30 years of women empowerment

Last year, ActionAid International Uganda celebrated 30 years' service for human dignity. What really made this anniversary special is that it has been 30 years of women empowerment and struggle for women dignity. Today, we realize that despite progress and the enormous work done towards women dignity, there is still many gaps. The biggest issue is still gender based violence which has increasingly made women susceptible to HIV/AIDS.

In this issue of the ActionAid newsletter, read a piece on the ActionAid women protection centers that are providing legal, medical, psycho-social and material support to the gender based violence survivors. The message is: Don't suffer in silence! Support your mother, daughter, aunt, wife to report any form of gender based violence to the shelters in Kumi, Katakwi, Pallisa, Bwaise, Mubende, Amuru, Nebbi, Kween and Lira.

Enjoy and share Damalie Mulondo's experience as a counselor at the women reception centers. What does it really take to drive to a home and arrest a husband to is battering his wife.

Or, how about the burden of unpaid care work! If you asked my mother in the village if she has a job, she would give you a definite No. My mother doesn't know that the washing, cooking, nurturing, farming and cleaning that she does every day in my father's house is work, which she is never paid for. As ActionAid, we insist that it should be redistributed and shared because it's the reason why most of our families are still bound in poverty. There is one bread winner, and that is the husband. This in most cases has made the women more vulnerable. Learn more on ActionAid's unpaid care work in this issue as well as our insights on the current marriage and divorce bill which should be passed as soon as possible. Policy leaders and legislators, we are counting on you

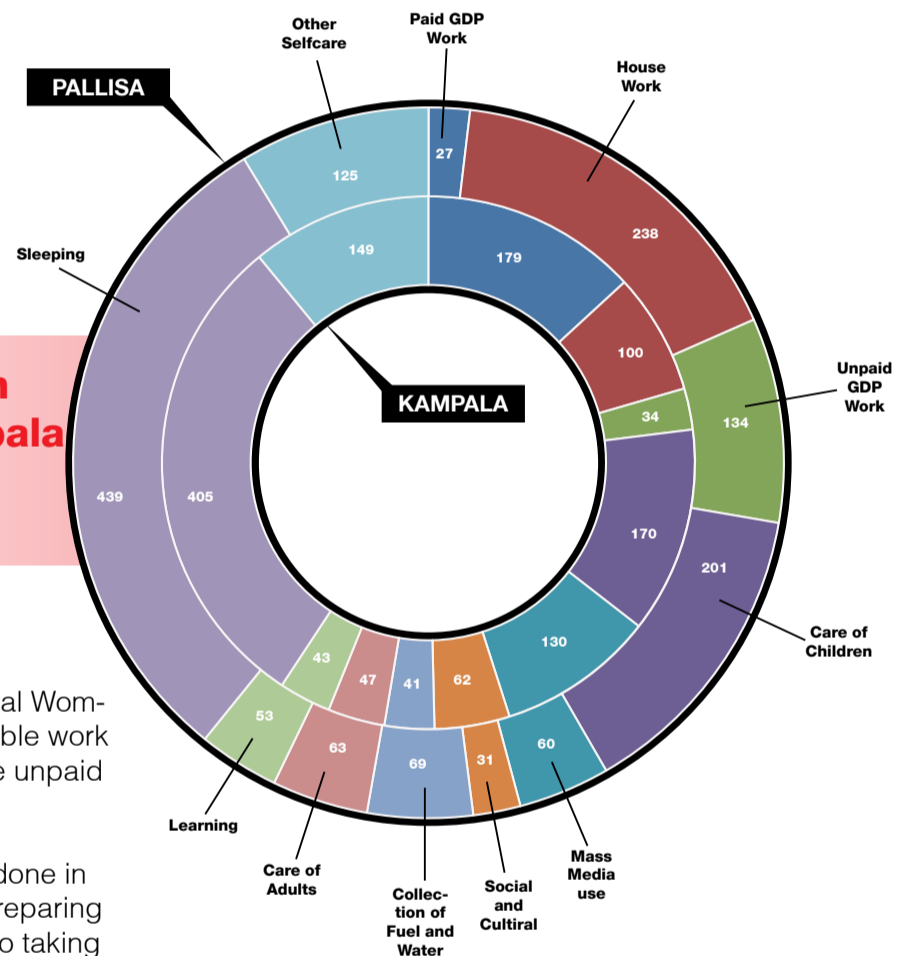
From ActionAid Uganda, it's a happy women's day and the struggle to see every Ugandan woman live up to her full potential Continues. Enjoy your read.

Samanya Kyategeka

## Supporting women to recognise, redistribute and reduce their burden of unpaid care, the work women do for nothing

By Hellen Malinga Apila - National programme Coordinator Women Rights and Gender Equality

### Comparison of Women Time Diaries for Kampala and Pallisa Districts Time Spent (Minutes) in a Day



ActionAid celebrations on International Women's Day March 8<sup>th</sup> focus on the invisible work that women are doing for nothing, the unpaid care work.

Unpaid care work refers to the work done in the home and in communities from preparing food, collecting firewood and water, to taking care of children, the ill and the elderly. Women and girls living in poverty sometimes have to forego their basic human rights to an education, healthcare, decent work and leisure time in order to balance all these many activities. This perpetuates gender inequality, reinforces inequitable gender norms and keeps women and girls in poverty.

In order to make visible women's unpaid care work and its importance to the functioning of any society; so that it is valued by women, their communities and governments, ActionAid International Women's Rights team piloted the women's unpaid care work program in collaboration with Local partners namely: Makerere Women development Association (MAWDA) and Buseeta Reflect Development Association (BUREDO) in the period 2011-2012

The project was implemented using the REFLECT approach in four sites, two rural in Buseeta, Pallisa and two urban, Kampala city suburbs Wandegaya and Bwaise. In both Bwaise and Pallisa, an average of 95% of the 140 women regularly attend the REFLECT

meetings, conducted twice a month with the biggest percentage (80%) of members married. In order to improve the literacy (numeracy, reading and writing) skills of participants especially women. Community facilitators were trained in participatory tools for adult learning, community analysis of poverty issues and development of action plans which they implement using locally available resources. In their regular reflect circle meetings, participants used the time diaries as reference resources for their discussions. Participants discuss their burden of care and how their typical day's activities affect their wellbeing as women.

In a Reflect circle women were asked to discuss their contribution to the household and society through their paid and unpaid work. This led women to question their unequal workloads and their inferior status despite their tremendous contribution in time and energy. The women also came to understand the impact women's

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## ...Supporting women to recognise, redistribute and reduce their burden of unpaid care, the work women do for nothing

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workloads have on their well-being and their right to an adequate standard of living, decent work and rest as a problem that could be addressed rather than the unchangeable status quo. The next step of the **Reflect** methodology was for participants to identify their own solutions to the problems they were analysing and develop a plan of action for change.

**Reflect** facilitators began the discussion with women around their workloads by first discussing the numerous activities that women engaged in and identifying the public services and infrastructure they have nearby to support this work. It was only then that the facilitators introduced the time diary tool, which is described below. The time diary tool tracked women's time use and helped women to visualise the time that they spent on multiple responsibilities. Alongside a number of other tools, the time diary tool also helped to enhance participants' literacy and numeracy skills.

The results show that both men and women are benefiting and that they are gaining more income and a more harmonious family life, while the women are relieved from some of their burdens.

### Key asks to Key stakeholders and implications for women's empowerment

**Recognition** of unpaid care work means that the work done by (mainly) women is "seen" and acknowledged. It also means that it is recognised as being "work" and "production". Recognition can take several forms, including provision of compensation for the work, or recognising it when determining other benefits, such as pension payments.

**Reduction** of unpaid care work means that the burden is reduced for individual women and for the society more generally. This can happen through the service being provided in a different way. For example, women's childcare bur-

den would be reduced if government provided accessible and affordable child care services. Similarly, unpaid care work would be reduced if services were provided closer to where people live and work so that less time is spent accessing health care and the like.

**Redistribution** of unpaid care work means that the overall amount of unpaid care work remains the same, but it is more fairly shared among different people. One example of this is where male household members take on a greater share of housework and childcare.

By redefining and redistributing unpaid care work such as child care, health care, fetching firewood and water from the private sphere to the public and appreciate this work as a visible value it can play a significant, economical role for the society. Also, the women will have more time for education, political participation and more opportunities for paid work and income-generating activities – for the benefit of the entire society.

## "Today the husbands in Katanga are helping their wives"

By Samanya R Kyategeka - Communications officer.

For the seven years, 24 year old Kemigisha Irumba Ruth stayed in marriage. She did not at any one time ever dream of getting employed. Married to a staunch Moslem with beliefs that housewives have no business earning, Kemigisha decided to fight the odds. Her background is that of a child who was thrown out of their parental home due to Gender Based Violence (GBV). She grew up in the hands of a sympathizer who took her as his only daughter. It is this kind gesture that drove the mother of two to give back to the community.

But once she got married, life was hard as a housewife, but having been identified by Makerere Women Development Association (MAWDA) Kemigisha was trained as youth trainer and counselor. It is from here that she was identified by ActionAid during the piloting of the "Unpaid care work project". A resident of Kimwanyi-Katanga in Wandegaya, Kemigisha used the skills she learnt from ActionAid to mentor housewives regarding the importance of self-sustenance. "The unpaid care work project helped me to learn the heavy burden that wives face at home. Husbands take us as tools. They can't help with domestic chores at all, they think that their role is to get money," she says.

Kemigisha said she used a simple trick to change the mindset of her husband. "One day I returned and just pinned a time-table of my daily routine chores in a strategic point that he would see," she says. "In that rota, I put my starting duty point at 5.am and end at 11.30pm."

When her husband returned he was curious and asked what the time table was for,

"He got concerned and asked why I had decided to do that. For three days he didn't react," she explains.

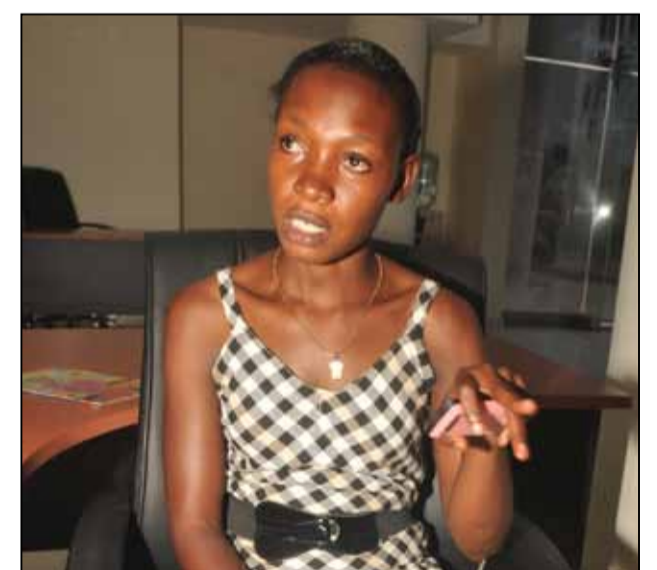
On the fourth day as she cooked, the husband decided to carry the baby that was crying. "I began seeing some change. The second time he washed the clothes, then asked to cook before he mopped the house." Kemigisha says that for the 7 years she was married to her man, she had never seen him bathe the kids. Her husband woke her up early to press his clothes, but he stopped doing this.

"When he began doing this, my fellow women began asking me which witch-doctor I had seen for this to happen. I kept telling them it was a simple trick that I learnt from ActionAid," she says at her new work station in Wandegaya.

With more support from ActionAid, Kemigisha was empowered to spread the gospel across Katanga slum. She went around explaining to husbands that their wives need a helping hand not only money and food.

"Today there is a big impact. Husbands in Katanga are helping their wives, and those who used to think that wives shouldn't work have now allowed their wives to work," she says.

The greatest testimony she has is that, for more than seven years she stayed at home as a



Ruth Irumba at her work place.

housewife, but now she got a job as an office assistant with a new fibre optic firm, Soliton Telmic, located in Wandegaya.

"So far as we talk, over 40 households have changed with many women now allowed to work. The challenge is that most women have children and have n-where to leave them, if only they could get a day care center to leave there their babies then they would be able to seek for employment." she said.

"I appreciate the work of ActionAid and appeal that this project be implemented, today around my home area you can't find women sitting at home waiting for their husbands."

## Women Protection Centres - Changing Women's Lives

By Chizgani Nganzi - Project coordinator, women reception centers.

The women protection centre project is a unique project that seeks to eliminate gender based violence in a holistic manner using a model of a one stop centre where survivors access all the support they need to attain justice. The project is an extension of the pilot phase of women won't wait project that established centres in Pallisa, Nebbi and Mubende. The successes registered in these centres informed the expansion to other 5 new centres in Kween, Kumi, Katakwi, Bwaise, and Amuru with support from UKAID.

The *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* (1993) defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life." In Uganda Gender based violence is a reality that women live with everyday. There is hardly a day that passes by without a case of sexual abuse, wife battering, defilement being featured in the media, yet this is a fraction of the cases that are reported. According to the preliminary DHS 2011 report, six in every ten women have experienced physical violence since the age of 15. The same report says that 28% of women have experienced sexual violence with one in every five women having had a first sexual encounter that was forced. Overall, 60 % of women have ever experienced violence and often at the hand of a husband or an intimate partner. This goes a long way to show that women are not safe in their private spaces.

With all this in mind the availability of support mechanism is very limited for women who have experienced violence. In the 2011 DHS report , 55% of women who have experienced GBV sought help from a family member, while 30% sought help from in-laws and friends. While the police were also mentioned as an important help, those who said so were a few. The gap in support services for survivors of GBV is very glaring. Therefore the centres offer a holistic support of psychosocial counselling, forensic evidence collection, dispute resolution, and legal support. Survivors who are often girls and women leave these centres having undergone emotional healing, ready to be reintegrated into their communities.

### Breaking the Silence on GBV

The centres have created awareness on gender based violence, its causes and manifestations in the operational district and beyond through radio, community meetings, drama and public debates. The awareness has increased consciousness that gender based violence is a crime and needs not to be eliminated. Engagements with Stakeholders like Police CID, CPFU Judiciary, Community Leaders, Religious Leaders, Coalitions and Women councillors has

### "We no longer quarrel; he supports me like a man, thanks to the women protection Centre project."

Namuyingo is an HIV positive living mother of five. She was diagnosed with AIDS 20 years ago and has never fallen ill because she has always taken her ARVs in time. The husband whom she claims infected her with AIDS started taking drugs once he realized he was sick. He did this in hiding until Aisha discovered some TASSO medical forms in his jacket. She started on drugs but one day the man locked her out of their matrimonial home including denying her access to her drugs. She sought support from ActionAid who tracked her husband, a police officer.

Pain and sorrow was the daily meal in our marriage.

*"For so long my husband tried his best to hide from me that he was infected. I only discovered after I came across ARV drug distribution cards in his pockets. This didn't get well with him; he started mistreating me and torturing me on a daily basis. But towards the end of last year, he did the unthinkable when I returned from my work place and found that he had locked the house including my drugs and disappeared.*

*Looking for him was a nightmare. When I failed to trace him, I reported my case to ActionAid Women's Reception center. I was given a counselor and a vehicle to help find him.. The entire day, we drove from one police station to another. He didn't pick my calls*



Aisha Namuyingo

*anymore. I had to take drugs which were locked in the house, my life was in danger.*

*We eventually bumped on him and took him at the reception center where he was talked too. The arbitration paid off. He was remorseful and allowed me back into the house. We are now happy at home thanks to Actionaid. I live with my three children and grandchildren. We are now both living positively and happily, we no longer quarrel, he supports us like a real man. Thanks to ActionAid women protection Centre project.*

yielded support in ensuring that GBV is reported, addresses and justice attained, although gaps of commitment still exist.

WPC has also continued the efforts previously started in WWW phase of the project, working with cultural leaders in establishing cultural charters that seek to abolish harmful cultural practices perpetuating the scourge of GBV.

The centres have to date supported a total of 832 survivors with psychosocial counselling, emotional counselling, legal redress and alternative dispute resolution. Out of these 120 were offered shelter for safety and rehabilitation as their cases went through the stages of case management. In Pallisa, Nebbi, Mubende and Kween, survivors have continued offering support to one another through forming survivors groups through which they have been supported with business skills and income generating activities.

The centres are now fully equipped and established with items that support provision of temporary shelter to survivors of GBV. Routine evidence collection has taken the form of visits to communities, calling respondents or perpetrators to centres and medical examinations taken on survivors by police doctors or forensic evidence designated medical officers.

### Lessons from the centres

Property grabbing and land disputes are topping the list of the cases that the centres have to deal with everyday. This comes from the background of a culture that promotes male dominance where women are not supposed to own land and property since they are property themselves. Therefore many widows lose their property once their husbands die. For instance in Nebbi, it is very sad that every widow is named "jajook", a witch that has bewitched her husband. This is used as a catch to evict the widow from her property. Women protection

## ...Women protection centres -their contribution

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centres are supporting such women to reclaim their land against a background of having no Act to support cases where one is accused of witchcraft.

Intermarriages and cultural diversity drive the epidemic of GBV in Mubende. Mubende district has different tribes that have settled in and therefore mixed marriages are the order of the day. Due to these mixed marriages, there is a lot of cases of child neglect and lack of maintenance for the families as women and children are often abandoned. The centre has supported such women by tracing their estranged spouses and committing them to give regular support to their children and wives. *I did not know that a day would come when this man would fear the law after disrespecting many pleas from my father for him to assume his responsibilities, now i believe the law actually works even for me who did not go to school or even speak English like him who went to school, may this office of Action Aid and FIDA Uganda last to help women like us who had lost hope"*

There are still cultural practices that entrench gender based violence which the project needs to address through dialogue with relevant stakeholders like community leaders, clan heads, cultural and religious leaders. *For example a woman in Lamogi, Amuru, was restricted from eating goat's meat until she produces 10 children. To date she has 7 children. When will such a woman reach the target for her to eat meat?*

### Challenges that will inform our advocacy or our future engagements

Inconsistent participation of relevant stakeholders like CPFU, Police, and Medical personnel due to lack of facilitation. These stakeholders need facilitation for them to support the process of evidence collection. Police form 3 which is filled as a medical examination report or evidence is not readily available in police posts leading to survivors being asked by police to go and photocopy the form. Threats experienced by the mediation teams as they preside over land and property disputes slow down the efforts of getting justice for survivors.

Finally the women protection centre project has registered some successes in influencing the policy environment by sharing the lessons learnt from the project since its inception.. The project informed the design of the guidelines that the ministry of gender is using in establishing centres in five districts. We have also contributed lessons that have influenced the revision of police form 3 which aims at easing the forensic evidence collection. Lastly we have engaged districts to commit to the sustainability of the project by providing land and buildings for housing the centres.

## Why Gender Based Violence is still on top of our agenda

By Atusasire Ambrose

*'A woman has been absent from her work for two days. On the third day she reports at her work place with a swollen face covered with a scuff, scratched hands and bandaged knee. Her friends ask her what happened to her and she fumbles to explain how the motorcycle knocked her. To the closest friends she tries to compose herself but finally bursts out into tears as she explains the battering that she endures from her husband..'*

Gender based violence manifests itself in multiple forms and involves a wide variety of perpetrators from intimate partners and family members, to strangers to institutional actors such as police, teachers, soldiers etc. Intimate partner violence is the most pervasive form of gender based violence experienced by women and girls.

### Five million cases a year

Ugandan Demographic and Health Surveys indicate that nationally, at least 60 percent of women aged 15-49 years have experienced gender based violence. According to the study undertaken by Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention (CEDOVIP) in 2012, the total estimated number of domestic violence episodes in

2011 alone was 5,227,779. These were based on cases reported to all structures handling gender based violence cases, i.e. police, local government bodies and Judiciary. Averagely each episode lasts 11.3 days for a woman and 7 days for a man; and estimated total days lost due to domestic violence in 2011 alone was 675,636 for both man and woman. Average daily wage in urban areas was estimated at 6100 and 4270 daily wage in rural areas. This resulted into total estimated individual costs of UGX 15,102,725,101 taking into account money spent in reporting cases, seeking medical care and lost income due to days spent while following up cases.

Apart from the 2010 Domestic Violence Act, Uganda has made tremendous progress in enacting other laws that deals with various aspects of Gender Based Violence. Such laws include the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2009, and the Trafficking in Persons Act. At the same time, the government of Uganda has over the past 5 years considered enacting the Marriage and Divorce bill as well as the Sexual Offenders Bills. At the international stage, Uganda endorsed the Goma Declaration on Eradication

### As a result of the arbitration from the women protection centers,Atii Judith's m

*Before ActionAid intervened in Atii's case, her life was miserable due to the suffering that she witnessed from her husband, a senior police officer in Mid-Eastern Region. Married at a tender age, Atii is just one of the hundreds of women suffering silently in the numerous polygamous marriages across the country. Today Atii, a mother of a six year old girl is happily married as a second wife. She narrates her story.*

For over two years i had serious issues with my husband. Life was horrible. As a second wife, I was considered a second hand object by my husband,co wife and relatives.. I was not getting any necessities from my husband. I wouldn't stand the pain and suffering anymore so I went to the Community Officer and reported a case. They failed to resolve the issue and referred me to the Sub County headquarters. Fearing that my husband was a police officer, nothing much was forthcoming. I was referred to Actionaid who summoned my husband. He was remorseful when he reported at the center. At the center we were counseled as a couple. My husband has ever since changed. He has bought for me a plot of land in Usuk trading center. He has given me my own land for growing food and constructed me a semi- permanent house. We now work

together in harmony. He has taken me to school to learn tailoring. We are happy as a family and life seems to be taking a positive toll. Thanks you for bringing the protection centres to Katakwi.

### What does her husband say!

"I am married to two wives. My first wife has six children while this second one has a six year old girl. I do accept that we had some problems as a family. I think it is because I was just beginning to feel the impact of marrying two wives. But I am so grateful to Actionaid for the counsel and legal advice that they gave us as a family. Since then we are now living happily together. I have plans



da

ing Sexual violence and Ending Impunity in the Great Lakes Region in 2008 and this categorizes sexual violence as a war crime. And the most recent Kampala declaration 2011 on Sexual gender based violence (SGBV) saw government renew its commitment to fight sexual violence and other forms of violence, and promised setting up support centers for women. Nonetheless, despite the presence of some legislations relating to Gender Based Violence, a major challenge remains regarding the ineffective implementation of the laws.

### Lack of awareness

While implementing the women protection center project, it has been observed that there is extremely lack of awareness among the local communities in Uganda and the institutional actors like police, LCs and health workers of the various laws that can help deter perpetration of Gender Based Violence and support survivors to understand and claim their rights. Even those of the implementers who are aware about the existence of the law have no access to the law.

Even more worrying is the fact that some of the implementers of the laws have been registered

at different GBV shelters as perpetrators.

*In one of the ActionAid GBV shelters, a wife of a policeman comes to report him for denying her access to her ARVs by locking them up in their house. With the intervention of the shelter staff the policeman is apprehended and counseled and the woman assisted to access her ARVs. Another case involves a Local Council I chairperson who connives with a resident and wrongfully evicts an 80 year old woman from her piece of land with a two roomed house. One room is meant for raising monthly income to sustain the old woman while she stays in the other room. The old woman has nowhere to go. She has lived her entire life on that land. The ActionAid GBV shelter staff intervenes and this old woman regain her property.*

ActionAid programming is premised on the belief that poverty is perpetrated by violation of human rights and therefore it emphasises the rights based approach. While there are a number of interventions under different focus areas of sustainable livelihoods, democratic governance and women rights and gender, these interventions may not achieve much if Gender

Based Violence is not properly addressed. Women contribute 80% of the agricultural produce in Uganda yet majority of them are denied access to and control of productive resources which is a form of GBV.

*In one of the ActionAid GBV shelters a woman comes to report her husband who sold off all her agricultural produce without leaving for the family enough food to take them through to the next season/harvest. The husband is invited to the shelter and the reason he gives for selling off the produce is because it was grown on his land. With the intervention of the shelter staff, the husband is forced to give the woman part of the money that was realised from the sale of the agricultural produce to enable her take care of her family.*

As an organisation committed to taking sides with the poor and excluded, the onus is on us in ActionAid to stand with women, girls and children to stop Gender Based Violence that perpetrate poverty. This will be a sure way of ensuring that all other interventions designed under other programme focus areas can achieve their objectives.

### Marriage is back on track.

of buying for my new wife a brand new sewing machine to get income. I will also construct for her a block in the plot that I have purchased for her in Usuk Trading center. But above all, next time you come here you will find a permanent house for Atii."



## From A career Woman's heart, "Economic independence, a woman's right"

By Beatrice Ongode

*"Women make good leaders. They should be offered the same platform as men since they have the same abilities,"* says Catherine Tumusiime, Human Resource and Organizational Development Director at ActionAid Uganda.

Often, women tend to shy away from pursuing their careers for fear of fuelling conflicts in their homes. However, Mrs. Tumusiime, a mother of \*\*\*\*\* who works 40 hours a week says that, having financial independence is a woman's right. However, she stresses that it should not be a platform for any violence but a support pillar for the family.

"Working and being a house wife is quite a challenging task. It takes a real woman to manage that without having permanent stress," adds the jolly, charming Human Resource Director.

Despite the fact that she has many responsibilities at ActionAid offices she articulates that having to attend workshops, seminars and meetings with stakeholders, donor partners and International secretariat requires one to balance their time to avoid any conflicts both at work and home.

Though that seems tasky for most women, it can be achieved. Women need to have some little skills with them irrespective of whether they are literate or illiterate. This will help them to be

able to provide for their personal needs and contribute in settling family expenses.

In the ActionAid Human resource policy, Mrs. Tumusiime says that annual leaves, Compassionate leaves, flexible organisation policies where people work half day on Fridays and aligning with online manager to work half day or at home and other are just some of the provisions that enables her balance her time.

"According to the Work-Life Balancing Charter that ActionAid uses, every person is allocated enough time to spend with their loved ones," she says.

Lastly, plans to also revive the Women's forum to create an opportunity for women to share their experiences and what they are going through is underway. Through this, we will be able to help in solving these problems by offering guidance and counselling to these women.

Lastly, I have appreciated the fact that women have proven to be hardworking irrespective of their work load. Their egos are also low and that has made them excel in various areas. I therefore urge women to embrace useful activities that will generate income and enable them balance their housework activities as we work towards our motto of **complete poverty eradication come 2030.**

## Critical analysis of the marriage and divorce bill with real life examples from ActionAid experience over the years.

By Hellen Malinga Apilla - National program coordinator, Women rights and gender equality.

**The Marriage Bill is a consolidated law on domestic matters that upholds the institution of marriage; offers protection of married people; promoted fairness and achieves social justice.**

### Changing the cultural belief: Women No longer the man's slave"

"There has been a great improvement in my life, I feel so liberated, and within a year!. Today he fetches water for his bath himself, collects firewood and brings it home. He goes to the borehole with the jerry cans on his bike, and if I am doing some cooking, like peeling sweet potatoes, he just comes and helps me," says Maimuna (52) and a beneficiary of the unpaid care work programme in Katiryo village,

Since she got married 30 years ago, Maimuna felt oppressed and overworked; she lived with the feeling that she was working herself to death. Just like so many women in Uganda she is responsible for all the domestic work, the hard struggle to put food on the plate for her family, bringing up the children and serving her husband, Habibu.

She says: "He would just say 'prepare my bath now. It did not matter if I was doing something else or if we were in the middle of a meal. I had to get up, fetch the basin and towel and prepare for him. After the bath he just left everything for me to clean up. I did not dare to raise my voice or do anything but submit out of fear of being kicked or caned".

Maimuna does not even remember if she ever imagined that life could be different, but something has happened after the couple joined the REFLECT circle meetings that discuss Unpaid Care Work. In their circle, members discussed the negative implications of the rural women's enormous work load and bride price which makes women completely submissive to their husbands.

For the couple, the programme was a great help and one year down the road, the lives of the couple have changed completely.

"Women are also human beings, like men. We did not know that, and the women were abused. But we have now learnt new insights, thus we must help the woman in our home' says Habibu.

Maimuna narrates:

"Before, I had to carry his hoe to the garden and back home from the garden if he had been working there with me. That's how it was because he was the one who paid the dowry".

Habibu adds:

"Dowry fortifies the idea that the woman is only an asset in the man's home. A very hard working

asset!!! Unpaid care work has a high price on the women. It causes exhaustion, lack of sleep, too many daily tasks and too little time to rest hence bad family life."

**The Marriage Bill provides for requirements of a valid marriage in line with the constitution. These include age and consent of parties intending to marry**

### Alukin Edisa aged 21 tells her story with tears

"My woes started the moment I got pregnant. My in-laws started hating me and threw me out when I was eight months pregnant. They kept telling me that I am an illiterate and can't get married to their educated son". I had no home to go, thanks to ActionAid and FIDA Gender Based Violence shelter, they accommodated me for several days, provided psychosocial counselling and mediated a family meeting to resolve the dispute. Since then my husband had remained supporting me although he had to relocate me to a rented house in town.

**The Marriage Bill spells out the rights and responsibilities of married people. It provides for the duty of both parents to care for and bring up their children.**

In Mubende Kemari Jenifer reported a case that her and her six children were on several occasions being beaten by the husband who had also threatened to kill her and forced her to leave their home, sold off most of the family property which they worked together to attain without their consent and yet he was not paying school fees for the children. It was only their mother who used to struggle to see that school fees is paid. He had married another wife and mistreated children to the extent that he would force them to drink their own urine. By then her son called Edison Muhairwe in senior four was in prison. He was accused of assaulting his father. With support from ActionAid and FIDA, the mediation meeting managed to reconcile all their issues but the survivor and respondent agreed to separate for the sake of safety and good of the children.

**The Marriage Bill provides for ownership of property - it defines matrimonial property owned in common and allows married people to own property separately:**

**Anyese narrates her story:** "When my husband died in 2002, he left me with 3 children and after his death, my 2 adult sons ran mad. I was left with no one to fend for me and my children. After some time, my health started deteriorating and I was referred to Arua hospital for treatment. I didnt have the money to go to Arua for treat-

ment so i rented out one of my three gradens that my husband had left to raise the transport". When she came back from Arua she found out that her sister in law had grabbed the land and refused the person she had rented the garden to to cultivate or reach that garden. She had also grabbed gardens and an orchard full of oranges. All the elders were not able to help Anyese because they were related to her sister in law and the Area L.C 1 chairperson was also her son. She was left with no option but to report to Actionaid Women Protection Centre upon the advice of the Police at Nebbi Police station. "When I reported to Actionaid Women Protection Centre, I was warmly welcomed by the staff who listened to and registered my story. I was then counselled. They wrote a letter inviting my sister in law for a mediation meeting but she refused to turn up. The Staff of the centre then came to our village and invited the Local Councils, the village elders and the members of the community. They explained to the us the law of succession which provides for division of property of a deceased person in the absence of a will and we were all counselled. My sister in-law then admitted her mistakes and signed an agreement to give me back my land. I thank you very much for getting me out of my problems, I had no say before.

**The Marriage Bill provides for conjugal rights of both parties. It recognises the sexual needs of partners. However forced sexual acts are unacceptable:**

It proposes five years in jail. This comes with mixed reactions from the public for instance: **both men and women ask this question:** "you people is there marital rape: how will the courts prove what is happening in the privacy of the bedrooms, will they install cameras in peoples bedrooms? Others feel that the five years in jail will deter women from reporting their husbands; "this will be long period for the men to be out of home and yet they are the sole providers, it will be the women to suffer. It is likely that the women will be compromised to go back and ask for their husbands to be released."

**The Marriage Bill prohibits widow inheritance as a customary practice that undermines the dignity of women.**

In Katakwi, **78 year old Anyodi narrates her story with high emotions.** My husband died in 1984. He had four wives most of whom produced boys. I didn't produce any boy but only girls. This scenario put me at a logger heads with my in-laws, co-wives and step children. The biggest headache was my step-son Opele Gerando who grabbed all my land. To make matters worse, even my daughter was chased away from her marital home when her husband was jailed. The land became so small that we had no where to grow food. With support from ActionAid, Anyodi is now happy that she has retained her land and will have some where to be buried when God calls her.

**The Marriage Bill outlaws the demand of return of marriage gifts in case of breakdown of marriage and stipulates that payment of bride price will be optional**

**Goretti's case is that of gross domestic violence:** "I have been married with my husband for the last six years. Problems began when my husband befriended another woman and began beating me on

a daily basis. He also demanded that his dowry be returned so that he can marry the other woman. The worst day came when he beat me breaking and shattering both hands rendering me useless. I returned to my parents' home and demanded through local authorities that he takes care of the children-(aged 5-3- and two), but he didn't heed. I was later referred to ActionAid reception centre where the counsellor gave me financial and psychosocial and social sup-

port. The Legal officer supported me to file a case and my husband was arrested by the police. He was taken to court where he was remanded at Kamuge prison. He was later released on court bail as we wait the hearing process. Ever since he broke my hand, I can't do heavy work. I live because my mum can still support me. I want him punished for breaking my hands. Justice must prevail, that is when I will rest."



**“ActionAid empowered women over the years.”**

## A day in the life of a women rights counsellor

By Samanya Kyategeka

"My name is Damalie Mulondo. I am a counsellor at the ActionAid Women's Reception Center in Bwaise (Kampala). My day starts around 7.30am when I arrive at the center. I am the first contact person at the center to handle clients' matters. Each client comes with different cases but the most frequent cases here include those of maintenance (child & family neglect) and domestic violence. Sometimes I work until 8pm and during weekends when client's cases become enormous.

When clients come, I make sure their cases are handled individually to ensure confidentiality. But just like any other job, counseling comes with some challenges. Some of the clients' experiences are so breath-taking. Some clients, especially the older ones feel shy to share their experiences with me.

Often when they do this, tears roll down their face and they meet stiff resistance of opening up mainly because of our traditions that deem some of the issues they face as normal and part of marriage life.. But I always encourage them to cry because crying helps to off-load emotions.

As cases come, some are settled immediately, while the more complex ones take some time including legal advice from our legal officer.

I then with advice from the legal officer summon the perpetrators who range from husbands to wives to clan leaders for arbitration. Where perpetrators fail to heed to our summons, we take legal action.

In the course of conducting my work, I find out that some women are severely bartered and need medical treatment. In such cases I

refer them to Kawempe Health Center IV and where they can't walk, I mobilize transport and take them.

The clients with severe violence inflicted upon them are admitted at the center until a time when they are ready for discharge. Often time clients fear to take letters summoning perpetrators, fearing more beatings from their husbands. I take them personally when such scenario arises.

Some of my job hazards include persistent threats from perpetrators. I one time nearly missed being splashed with acid after the husband to one of our clients saw me as a threat to his survival. I also had an encounter with a taxi driver who kept telling me that he will drive over me for trying to pursue the case of maintenance for his children.

Others come here, we agree and soon as they get out of the gate, you here scream of their wives being beaten. Once they reach home the beating becomes severe, and they report back the following day with bruises.

But above all, I feel relieved when I put a smile on the face of my clients. That, to me is the greatest salary that I can ever be paid.

One of the funniest cases was that of a man who reported his wife for beating him for denying her sex. The daily beatings were so severe that they affected the man's sexual Prowse. It took me some time to convince this perpetrator to come over for arbitration. The other was of a middle aged woman who came and duped me that she was thrown out of the house by her husband and wanted transport to Zombo district. She came along with some four street children but when I went out for evidence gathering, I discovered it was a hoax.



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