



# UGANDA COMMUNITY BASED ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN WELFARE

*Empowering vulnerable communities*

## UCOBAC NEWSLETTER *The MouthPiece*

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# Editorial

*Welcome to the 2nd issue of UCOBAC bi-annual newsletter, The MouthPiece.*

*Our commitment to keep you abreast of what UCOBAC is undertaking and future plans in our effort to empower the vulnerable communities is still in motion.*

*This July – December issue highlights some of the key activities and interventions undertaken during this period and news about what has been happening in the Organization and the communities that we serve.*

*We share with you the importance of educating the African child through the celebrations of the African Child held in June 2013 - Bugiri district where the theme of the occasion was, "Eliminating of harmful cultural practices affecting children."*

*Looking out for the health of the neighboring communities of Mbuya where UCOBAC secretariat is located, UCOBAC with support from UHMG held a community outreach in Katoogo zone targeting the promotion of healthy living.*

*More on the progress of the Transparency and Accountability Initiative that was launched in Kiboga district to empower the grassroots women and men to participate in the improvement of local health service delivery through monitoring of the local health centers' work plans and budgets.*

*Learn about the Social Norms Theory. Get to know how deep the traditional norms and customs of our fore-fathers greatly influence the kind of people we are today and how they reflect in the decisions we choose to take in our everyday life.*

*Meet Namakula Imelda who managed to save the family land that had almost been sold off by her husband.*

*All this and more is shared in this issue.*

*Happy end of year holidays.*

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## Opinion

### **TBAs, a bridge between formal health care and the community.**

Having acquired their experience and knowledge informally through the traditions and practices of the communities where they originated, Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) since time immemorial in many developing countries have been around giving care to expectant mothers especially those that cannot meet the hospital charges and those in hard to reach areas.

According to Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development MDG report for Uganda 2010, the issue of physical access is related to financial accessibility. Physical delivery is a bottleneck for assisted delivery and emergency obstetric care. The transportation challenges from home to health facility are mainly related to physical barriers such as lakes, rivers and mountains; difficulties of travelling at night; lack of communication; lack of availability of means of transport and transportation costs. The worst regions affected are the West Nile and the Western regions where transportation time is about 90 minutes in the rainy season.

Although there have been situations of increased risk of death for both mother and child and severe maternal and neonatal health complications due to use of semi-skilled community midwives, TBAs have provided most of the primary maternal care.

Research reveals that several mothers opt for TBAs' services because of; customer care, community trust since the TBAs have been around for long, affordability of their services and proximity to their homes.

Rather than phasing out TBAs, they should receive formal education and training in health care provision and thereafter be affiliated to the government health centers in their respective sub-counties/parishes.

Qualified TBAs should further be awarded certificates of practice clearly stating geographical and professional boundaries of operation. They should be equipped with facilities required for practicing because on many occasions TBAs serve as a bridge between the community and the formal health.

# BUGIRI DAY OF THE AFRICAN CHILD

In commemoration of the Day of the African Child in June 2013, UCOBAC along with World Vision Bugiri and Compassion International organized celebrations in Bugiri district to raise awareness for the continued need of protection of the African children's rights.

The celebrations were held under the theme, "**Elimination of harmful cultural practices affecting children.**" Targeted were local leaders at the village, sub-county and district levels, teachers, parents and the community at large being called upon to actively get engaged in the lives of the children.

The Day of the African Child is commemorated every year on June 16th since 1991 by the member states of the Organization of the African Unity. It recognizes the need for improvement of the different socio-economic and political situations affecting children all over the African continent.

The Guest of Honor Mr. Kalibbala Yakub – Assistant Chief Administrative Officer Bugiri district, commended the organizations on having organized a colorful and educative occasion to celebrate the African Child. In his speech, Mr. Kalibbala said that it is a collective responsibility of all stakeholders right from home, community, school and the country to protect children from all sorts of harmful cultural practices because this is the generation of tomorrow. He advised children to always report any case of abuse to the nearest elder or run to the police.

Children sponsored by the host organizations made educative presentations in form of poems, dance and drama to

entertain their guests as well as enlightening other children present. The occasion was attended by Bugiri district officers including; the chief guest Assistant CAO, councilors, the district probation officer, DEO, the LCV and representatives from Child Development Centers.



*Peer educators at UCOBAC Eastern regional office rehearsing before presentation*

or persons to the authorities without hesitation.

Institutions working with children were told to have child protection policies because a good child protection policy creates an environment free from allegation of abuse. It was however recognized that, the best means of protecting children is to empower and equip them to protect themselves.

# UCOBAC-UHMG Outreach in Katoogo Zone

Access to quality health care services for many is still a major challenge in many vulnerable communities of Uganda due to poverty. In each day that goes by; men, women and children lose their lives due to lack of proper medical attention.

This year in July, UCOBAC along with Uganda Health Marketing Group (UHMG) organized a community outreach in Kinawataka - Katoogo zone, Mbuya with an objective of offering free quality health services to the surrounding communities of Mbuya.

Over 300 people including children, youth, adults and the elderly were provided with general medical care. Many received treatment for malaria, diarrhea, respiratory tract infections, back aches, body pains, de-worming and family planning services.

In a prior research that was conducted in the community to determine the common health challenges and needs, it was found that many people's wellbeing was deteriorating due to poor nutrition caused by poverty and high levels of unemployment. Because of this many have resorted to use of local herbs and consuming half doses of medicine which is very fatal to their health and lives at large. Self medication is also the order of the day due to high consultation charges by the doctors.

Communities were encouraged to work harder in order to improve their wellbeing; they were sensitized about the importance of good nutrition especially for children to avoid malnourishment and vulnerability to the killer diseases.

Residents were informed of the services available at UCOBAC Health Center located at the UCOBAC Secretariat and the UHMG products and services.

UCOBAC-UHMG partnership for community health service delivery was strengthened as this was an opportunity for sharing skills and resources. The two organizations were able to bring a good life to Ugandans through promoting healthy living.



## Youth of Mbuya receive support to start own pastry project

Youth unemployment is one of the leading challenges the world is facing today. This is not a new phenomenon to the world and Uganda in particular. Uganda's population is estimated at 34 million with a growth rate of 3.2%.

According to State of Uganda Population Report 2012 released in December, Uganda has the youngest population in the world, with over 78% below the age of 30 years. Youth unemployment in Uganda is estimated to be at 83%. Today, Kampala is overwhelmed by a young population which is becoming a threat to the government as joblessness and crime are escalating.

A group of innovative youth approached UCOBAC for assistance to support them in starting a pastry making project. From the meetings and negotiations between the organization management and the young team, an agreement was reached upon which UCOBAC would build the capacity of the group now called Real Foods Mbuya.

Besides providing start-up capital and playing a supervisory role, UCOBAC will be empowering the team with basic business management skills to enable them effectively deliver quality products to their clients and sustain the Income Generating Activity.

Real Foods Mbuya specializes in production of cakes and bread with a hope of introducing new products in due time. Youth willing to join the group are required to pay a membership fee of shs 100,000/= from which they can enjoy benefits such as attending trainings and being part of Real Foods youth venture.



From left:- Program officer for Health and Program Officer OVCs hand over UCOBAC contribution to Real Foods Youth leaders

## UCOBAC and Uganda Land Alliance in partnership for advocacy

In a 3 days' workshop organized by International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) at Metropole Hotel, UCOBAC and ULA were brought together to brainstorm and discuss a joint advocacy strategy for promoting Women's Land and Property Rights (WLPR).

Attended by 6 staff, 3 from each of the respective organizations, the workshop was aimed at identifying a common advocacy objective which is informed by the current political, social and economic landscape and relevant debates around WLP in Uganda.

Each organization provided a brief background of their focus areas along with the advocacy strategies currently in use. This was done for each partner to clearly understand, appreciate and learn from the other's experiences thus establishing a meeting platform.

Among the issues that were discussed were the pros and cons of joint advocacy. For successful joint advocacy, it was emphasized that there should be proper transparency and accountability in all activities, clear assignment of roles and responsibilities and above all a need for teamwork and commitment.

The group talked about the existing gender and land environment in Uganda as well as the desired future of WLPR from the perspective of the legal framework, institutional framework, economic and demographic context. It is true that a small percentage of women have been able to enjoy their land and property rights but despite the massive sensitizations and campaigns that have been run by CSOs on WLPR, the larger percentage is yet to realize their rights.

It is upon this background that the participants discussed the gender related barriers to WLPR from which a joint advocacy objective was identified and agreed upon. Out of the many issues that were listed, the participants voted and ranked the most pressing barriers and these are; lack of knowledge of rights, implementation gap between law and practice, social norms and attitudes and limited access to the existing justice systems.

From the lengthy discussions based on the above, an objective emerged and it goes;

***“With the aim of narrowing the gap between law and practice in the area of WLPR, we will work with men and women to increase knowledge and recognition of women's land rights in relation to the Certificate of Occupancy.”***

Herein, the organizations will endeavor to increase men and women's awareness of the legal provisions for Certificates of Occupancy (COO), increase their knowledge levels and advance recognition of WLPR within COOs.

## Home Based Care members undergo training

UCOBAC in the month of June held training under the theme, “Promoting Home Based Care members’ communication skills as a strategy for developing Home Based Care Alliance (HBCA)”. The training targeted the home based care members and the Focal Point Persons (FPP) of the HBCAs under UCOBAC umbrella.

The key objectives of the training were to; build strong grass-roots leadership and to foster effective communication. Both new and old HBC givers received training on the difference between HBC and HBCA, their respective activities and provision, skills of effective public speaking and advocacy, lobbying were as well imparted.

The trained home based care members were granted an opportunity to share success stories and best practices as this is one of the ways through which solutions for common challenges encountered can be overcome.

Ms. Enyogu Florence, Chairperson of the Uganda HBCA urged home based care givers not only to monitor and check government programs and agenda but to also be consistent and transparent in their vocation of providing home based care services.

***“It’s not about pointing fingers at government, we as home based care givers need to be accountable for our actions. We also need to find out whether the resources lobbied for actually reach at the grassroots.”***

Mr. Frank Twinamatsiko, a trainer from Knowledge Management Group, advised the home based care givers to always prepare for presentations thoroughly and with grounded research before approaching their audience as this would always give them the upper hand. He shared with the team, the different approaches of advocacy, and their effectiveness and also facilitated a discussion on the importance of networking and lobbying.

20 Home Based Care givers from 9 HBCAs coordinated by UCOBAC attended the training. The HBCAs represented include; Kawempe, Nakawa, Rubaga, Jinja, Kaboong, Masaka, Busia, Bugiri and Mbuya.

## Social Norms Theory

Throughout our lives there are these customs that we never question but simply find ourselves obediently following and acting upon depending on the situation we find ourselves in. For instance; offering visitors drinks or eats when they come to our homes, saying “hello” when you receive a phone call, eating with your mouth shut, not burping in public, offering of condolences for loss of a relative, friend or loved one, and so many others.

Few recognize that such routine activities as mentioned above come as result of the influence our friends, relatives or the societies in which we live in now or were brought up in. When you think of it, many of the decisions and actions we take in different contexts are driven by what we think others are doing and what we think others are expecting us to be doing.

In a workshop organized by Well Spring Advisors in Kampala at Hotel Africana, UCOBAC along with other partners including CEHURD, Raising Voices, Health Gap Global Access Project and CEDOVIP, discussed at length Social Norms Theory and its implications in their different focus areas.

The objectives of the workshop were; Understanding the building blocks of Social Norms Theory, examining and collectively thinking about how social norms change can be enabled and sustained and introducing ways in which social norms and social norms change may be measured.

Basing on the contexts of land and property rights, violence against women and abortion rights in Uganda, the participants discussed strategies for identifying social norms, tracking their change and how they can be incorporated in their areas of focus to create a better world.

To Cristina Biccheri, a professor, philosopher and mentor of social norms, a social norm is a pattern of behavior that individuals prefer to conform to because most people in their reference network conform to it (empirical expectations) or because most people in their reference network believe that they should conform to it (normative expectations).

In society today, we choose to act in specific ways in specific situations because of our beliefs about others and how they would perceive us in case our actions differ from the expected. This has an impact on the decisions we take some of which maybe negative or positive to the development of our societies.

It was discussed that to effect change leading to development in our communities and countries, we need to bridge the gap between social norms, legal norms and behavioral norms. This can only be achieved by identifying the existing social norms in practice and generating a positive feedback loop between social norms research and the manifold complex actual practices of positive social change.



*Group of Home Based Caregivers who attended the training*

## **CHRW and the Sub county Probation officer save Namakula's Kibanja**

Namakula Imelda aged 47, a resident of Kabuwambo parish, Busimbi sub county, Mityana District, has 6 children (4 girls and 2 boys) and has been married under customary marriage to Mr. Mwanje Stephen for 14 years now. At the time she married Mr. Mwanje, she found him with children born to him by another woman, this did not deter her from accepting to be his wife. All was well in the Mwanje's household until Mr. Mwanje started faulting on their eldest daughter's fees payments and asking his wife to borrow some money from elsewhere with a promise of refunding in a short while.

Namakula did as she was told. At the time this happened, their eldest daughter was in her senior 6. Namakula borrowed money from her brother to clear the child's fees for the first term and did the same for the following term. When Namakula's brother requested to be paid back in the third term, Namakula had to ask for the money from her husband. Mr. Mwanje simply told her that he did not have the money but suggested that they should sell off a piece of their family land in order to pay back Namakula's brother, pay for their daughter's remaining fees and use the rest for sustaining their home.

The said piece of the land is the source of livelihood for this family and so Namakula greatly opposed the idea of selling and pleaded with her husband to drop the idea saying this would leave the family with nothing since a piece had already been sold off in the past.



*UCOBAC Field Officer in the centre interviewing Imelda. On the left is the CHRW*

Mr. Mwanje however did not listen to his wife's pleas but went ahead to secretly solicit for buyers of the Kibanja. The moment he had identified a buyer, he made an agreement with him and sent the buyer to his wife so that she could sign off for the deal to be sealed. Namakula stood her ground and refused to give her consent for the sale of land. This was the genesis of misunderstandings in their home.

The misunderstandings went on and on, the situation got more bitter with each passing day until Namakula was tipped off by a friend to visit Lovincer Bulago, a Community Human Rights Worker (CHRW) who advised her about how to handle the whole case and later referred her to the Sub-county Probation Office.

At the probation office, Mr. Mwanje was summoned to respond to his wife's allegations. He was later asked not to sell off the Kibanja without his wife's consent. A written agreement was made not to sell off the land and it was signed by the two parties with the probation officer as a witness. Mr. Mwanje was instructed to hand over the family land title to his wife for safe custody.



***We welcome opinion articles and letters in the fields of Orphans and Vulnerable Children, Health, Governance and Human Rights and Economic Empowerment. They will be published in the MouthPiece.***

***The above are the focus areas of UCOBAC.***

***Send letters to;***

***ucobac@ucobac.co.ug  
or  
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## **UCOBAC and IDF to enhance Women's Land and Property Rights.**

Research holds that, control and ownership of assets can be critical to increasing productivity especially in agriculture, and enabling people to climb out of the valleys of poverty.

In all societies, asset ownership is based on legal and social norms. Often, property ownership rights are assigned to individuals through marriage and inheritance.

In Uganda, despite the fact that women have access to and own land, many are still deprived of this privilege because of the existing patriarchal customs and existing bottlenecks in the justice system.

To further understand women's vulnerabilities and opportunities for controlling and owning land, UCOBAC with support from Independent Development Fund (IDF) are partnering on a project, Women's Land and Property Rights (WLPR) with an aim of enabling women to have increased access and ownership of and control over land and property.

For two years starting June 2013, WLPR will be implemented in Kiboga district in the sub-counties of Dwaniro and Bukomero. Numerous activities are underway to enhance the capacity of women to demand for and protect their land and property rights. The activities include; organizing trainings for selected community paralegals and duty bearers, local to local dialogues, community awareness sessions and provision of literature concerning laws governing land and property ownership.

Through a baseline survey that was conducted in Kiboga, it was found that not only the natives in particular women are unaware of their rights to own land and property but the duty bearers meant to defend and provide legal assistance lack the appropriate technical knowledge and expertise required to effectively help the women enjoy their rights.

In this struggle, men were as well brought on board as they wield power, authority and control that are crucial in the search for equality. Teams of community paralegals comprising of grassroots men and women were identified, mobilized and trained on human rights, women's land and property rights, succession and inheritance laws. These are meant to engage in advocacy, community sensitizations and dialogues aimed at balancing power relations and influencing change in attitudes towards women's access, control and ownership of land.

Reference material in form of a Luganda translated training manual for the trained paralegals was developed by UCOBAC to ease their work.

## **Grassroots women of Kiboga district empowered to combat corruption**

Countries like Uganda in the Global South have been greatly affected by the epidemic of Corruption in the social, economic, and political circles. Corruption is a key deterrent of development and access to public services in the grassroots communities.

Based on the findings from the participatory study that was carried out by UCOBAC in Kiboga district, to collect and document the perspectives of grassroots women on corruption and anti-corruption, 63% of the grassroots reported having experienced corruption as part of their daily life.

In order to combat corruption, UCOBAC with support from Huairou Commission mobilized and organized 12 grassroots leaders in two sub-counties (Bukomero and Dwaniro) of Kiboga district to carry out a one year pilot study of the Transparency and Accountability Initiative (T and AI).

The grassroots leaders will promote Transparency and Accountability in the public health care system using anti-corruption strategies with special focus on improving local health service delivery in particular maternal health.

T and AI aims at contributing to the development of a global strategy for fighting corruption that is gender sensitive and grassroots oriented thus creating circumstances for resilient and sustainable governance practices.

From the past studies carried out in Kiboga district to establish the knowledge levels of the communities about their health system, it was found that absence of structures for monitoring and checking government processes and programs in the communities is one of the key reasons that contributes to grassroots women and men's failure to demand for good health service delivery. Due to limited access to information, 70% of the grassroots women and men interviewed were not aware of the services available to them in their nearest health centers. This is a major concern.

Other emerging issues from the studies include; long distances covered to get to some of the health centers 20 KMs, inadequate provision of drugs at the centers leading to never ending referrals, absenteeism of health workers from work, closure of health centers over the weekend, request for bribes by health workers from the patients and high charges for fuel to use the health center ambulance.

In preparation for Transparency and Accountability Initiative, UCOBAC trained 12 grassroots leaders on human rights, maternal health and the national budget process. This was to enable the leaders to effectively participate in the monitoring of the health budget, ensure its implementation and to identify gaps that need to be filled in the health care system thus improving health service delivery.

Four health centers were identified as study cases for the duration of the pilot study and these include; Bukomero Health Center IV, Mwezi Health Center II, Katwe Health Center III and Muyenje



## Health Center II.

The Transparency and Accountability Initiative has added value to the communities in which it is being implemented as it is increasing knowledge levels about their rights to health care, creating a forum for grassroots women and men to share their experiences for accessing health care with their local leaders through local to local dialogues and creating linkages between UCOBAC and the health centers that are being used as study specimens.

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*I gladly welcome this initiative because it will greatly contribute to the growth of the health sector and also help us to patch up the gaps in our health system. I believe the Government should join hands with NGOs to revive the failing health system. All along we have been accused of stealing and selling off medicine provided in the government health centers but this time round it shall be proven that this is not what we (health workers)*

”

do ,

as said by Mr. Nkugwa James, the In-charge of one of the health centers used as a case study.

### **Mityana and Mubende Community paralegals receive training on human rights**

75 community paralegals comprising of men and women participated in refresher trainings held by UCOBAC in the districts of Mityana and Mubende respectively. The trainees' were equipped with skills for effectively promoting human rights in their communities and those surrounding.

The paralegals were trained on their role as community human rights workers, human rights, gender analysis, women's rights, domestic relations and women's property rights, succession law in regard to women's land and property rights and the various mechanisms for conflict resolution.

Mr. Mwebe John, a trainer and property rights activist, said that the skills that the paralegals are equipped with would greatly cause positive impact if they would smoothly be merged with the cultural beliefs of people to promote development.

Mr. Mwebe also advised the community paralegals to create opportunity for fellow women to participate in voluntary work with UCOBAC or other organizations with openings as

this would be a good strategy for bringing them on board to participate in collective community development.

*“...Leave some slots for your friends back in your villages to also engage in community work. Call upon them and involve them. Do not think that work cannot move forward without your contribution. We can never tell how much potential others have until we give them a chance to serve. Development is not only about you but the whole community and district...”* said by Mr. Mwebe John.

Ms. Ndagire Maria, the District Community Development Officer, appreciated UCOBAC for all its work invested in Mubende district and for keeping the district as a priority by maintaining its support structures for as long as 12 years. She recommended the need to recruit and engage the female youth especially from schools to help them learn more about human rights. She also said that the drama groups should organize for school visits because she had noticed that they are quite popular in the communities and they are an effective means of delivering advocacy.

*“The knowledge and skills gained will amount to nothing if they are not shared and used in your communities. Remember change starts with you then spreads to all concerned so it's up to you to utilize the resources at hand”*, said Frances Birungi, Senior Program Officer – UCOBAC, at one of the trainings.



*Senior Program Officer - UCOBAC in one of the trainings held at Mubende*

### **Upcoming in 2014**

- 1. Report from the Transparency and Accountability Initiative**
- 2. Sensitization of grassroots about the Certificate of Customary Ownership**
- 3. Progress of Women' Land and Property Rights by UCOBAC and IDF**
- 4. Launch of the new re-designed UCOBAC website**

**All this and much more**

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# PICTORIAL

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1. A group of grassroots women in Kiboga discussing ways of overcoming challenges encountered while accessing health services

2. Josephine Namayanja, UCOBAC Research Assistant on the right collects respondent's views about the Transparency and Accountability Initiative

3. Peer educators entertaining guests on the Day of the African Child 2013

4. Geoffrey Kavuma, UCOBAC Program Officer in one of the sessions for training Mubende Community Paralegals

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