



The MouthPiece

UCOBAC's bi-annual newsletter:

July-December, 2019 Edition

Dear Partners,

This end of year Mouthpiece comes to update you on the organization's activities in the last leg of 2019. The team at UCOBAC has continued to serve and transform the vulnerable communities through its core program areas.

In this Piece, we share on the work aimed at empowering children, youth and grassroots women as individuals, their families and communities - read about the amazing work that rural communities are doing in promoting food security and livelihoods, education, end Sexual and Gender Based Violence, promote women's land rights and building resilience to effects of climate change.

Enjoy.

Advocacy and Communications

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Celebrating Rural Women's Contributions to Hunger and Poverty Elimination

"They till the land to ensure food security for communities but we are still grappling with 76% of the extreme poor being women who live in rural areas..."

The statement was made by the State Minister for Gender and Cultural Affairs, Hon. Peace Mutuuzo during her address at the International Day of Rural Women celebrations held at Arapai market in Soroti district this October.

Despite women's critical role in agriculture and food production, they continue to face challenges and systemic barriers to overcome poverty and productively contribute to the nation's development due to the gaps between laws and practice. While women engage in agriculture for sustenance of their families and the economy; existing gender injustices and unfair distribution of natural and productive resources such as land, agricultural inputs, affordable credit and appropriate technologies remain major challenges tying women in poverty and vulnerability.

UCOBAC with support from the African Women Development Fund (AWDF) facilitated women from Mityana district to participate in the national celebrations along with like-minded organizations and women's rights activists.

Through the project, **The Pathway to Economic Justice on Women's Land Rights**, grassroots women of Mityana district are taking community action and policy advocacy to leverage international frameworks such as Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) land indicators, Kilimanjaro Initiative charter of demands, the AU framework and guidelines on land policy to improve their access to and control over land.

The celebrations held under the theme, "Rural women's economic empowerment through savings and affordable credit" provided a platform for all women to raise voices on their land related challenges, achievements and experiences with various stakeholders.

The women marched alongside a lively band from Arapai sub-county headquarters to Arapai market amidst ululations and traditional songs.



Mityana women, at the front setting off to march

Strengthening Security of Tenure for improved food security - Rural Smallholder Farmers in Butaleja district supported to Receive Certificates of Customary Ownership (CCOs)



In a project entitled **Securing Land Tenure for Improved Food Security in Select Areas in Uganda**; supported by UN-HABITAT and the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) and funded by the Kingdom of the Embassy of Netherlands in Uganda, and in collaboration with Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development, Butaleja District Local Government and the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC); UCOBAC has supported families to register their land rights on their customary land. This has been through use of GLTN's affordable, user friendly pro-poor, Fit for Purpose and gender responsive land tools and approaches like the Social Tenure Domain Model (STDM) to map land boundaries and document people-land relationships, the Land Mediation Tool for resolving land conflicts and use of the Gender Evaluation Criteria to ensure women and girls participation and benefit from the land rights registration process.

July 4th 2019, was an unforgettable day for the community members of Butaleja district. The President of Uganda, H.E Yoweri Museveni handed over 500 Certificates of Customary Ownership to land owners amidst joy and jubilation. The farmers could not believe that the nightmares of land grabbing, disinheritance and insecurities were being put to the past.

The President advised rural farmers to improve their agricultural production by limiting land sub-divisions (land fragmentation) and sale of their land and other family assets. The youth were encouraged to end their job searches but rather work along their parents in the farms and gardens as agriculture provides good employment opportunities and incomes.





Hasila Jolofina is an 87-year-old widow who lives with her 9 children and over 73 grandchildren on her 8-acre piece of land in Mutongo village, Naweyo sub-county.

Being a widow, Jolofina has been threatened by her in-laws who seek to

have her relinquish her rights to her late husband's land to them. However, after obtaining the Certificate of Customary Ownership, all this has stopped and she has not received any threats since.

"I am now happy and feel safe because my children and their children will be able to farm on this land without anybody disturbing them"



Jolofina with her family

Grassroots women taking charge of the Sendai Framework for community resilience

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction is a post 2015 development agenda adopted by UN Member states on 18th March 2015 in Japan. The 15 year agreement signed by various nations Uganda inclusive, recognizes the state's primary role in reducing disaster risk while sharing the responsibility with other stakeholders.

Utilizing knowledge from community trainings held by UCOBAC on climate change mitigation and adaptation, the rural women of Bugiri district have taken it upon themselves to lead as climate change agents recognized by their local authorities and community.

The women have in particular held talk shows on SDG 13: Climate Action and actively engaged in national and global spaces to speak about their resilience practices. UCOBAC as a member of the Climate Action Network-Uganda facilitated grassroots women to participate in a Pre-Conference of Parties (COP) 25 held at Fairway Hotel where they advocated for government to prioritize women's contributions to resilience building in the national budgeting processes.



UCOBAC staff (in the middle) and grassroots women representatives at the COPs meeting at Fairway Hotel



A training on nutrition made me realise that I could keep a healthy family on so little....

For many years now, Palabek in Lamwo has been home for me and my family. My name is Jennifer, I live with my [husband] and we have 5 children (1 boy who is dumb and 4 girls). 6 of our children died. We are subsistence farmers relying on small production and petty trading to support the family.

Before the coming of the South Sudanese refugees, we used to have big gardens [commercial agriculture] from which we would sell cassava, simsim, maize and many other things - we used to do this kind of farming using about 50 acres of land. However, this changed when my husband offered the land to the refugees without even consulting me (Jennifer said this with a very sad look). He offered land for schools to be built and burial places for everyone. We were left with a small piece of land.

Profile

Name: Jennifer Acayo

Age: 50

Marital status: Cohabiting

Number of children: 5

Nationality: Ugandan

Location: Palabek Ogili sub-county, Zone 1, Block 1

Main source of livelihood: Subsistence farming and petty trading

Group: A member of Gen Yecu farmer group/VSLA

#Supported by AWO International



Jennifer sun drying vegetables for future use - she received agricultural inputs from UCOBAC and benefitted from a training on food storage and nutrition.

I still engage in petty trading for sardine fish, cooking oil and okra but the profits are really small - not enough to meet all the home needs. UCOBAC's intervention has lessened the burden somewhat - I like being part of the UCOBAC group because they have taught us how to live amidst these hardships.

From the trainings on food security, nutrition and vegetable growing, I realized that it's not hard to maintain a healthy family with so little. I thus started a backyard garden to have a constant supply of greens at home.

I planted the vegetable seeds I received; but from the onions I reaped a full basin part of which I sold off and earned UGx 40,000/= (12 USD) that I invested in my sardines and cooking oil business. I left some that we are using at home. At least we don't have to spend our money on vegetables for the time being. Being a member of Gen Yecu Village Saving and Loan Association (VSLA) has helped low income earners like me to appreciate and engage in saving from the little earned.

All is not lost, I have hope because of the support and knowledge I have gained through being a member of Gen Yecu.

Campaign to End Child Marriage in Uganda.

"This was such an exciting and empowering experience for me - to see all these people in an audience listening to a village girl like me talking about how child marriage affects girls in my community. Am very happy to learn from others so that I can take back the lessons to end child marriage in my community "

an emotional Jane (not real name) shared her experience on participating in the 2nd National Girl Summit held at Hotel Africana in Kampala, this November.

Young people are often given limited opportunities to express their views, concerns and experiences despite the fact that they make up over 70 percent of Uganda's population and are the most affected by Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) issues. They are the future generation that need to shape the world into a more secure place. It's worse for the girl child who is culturally isolated and discriminated against compared to the boys.

The National Girls summit organized by Girls Not Brides Alliance under the theme, "Securing Uganda's Future: Support the Girl Child to Live to Her Full Potential" was a space for reflection on progress made by government and other stakeholders on ending child marriage and teenage pregnancy. Girls and other conveners used the platform to learn and share experiences and best practices.

UCOBAC supported by Canadian Feed The Children facilitated girls from the rural district of Bugiri to participate in this space. The girls are members of in-school girl empowerment safe spaces created under the Child Development Project to support girls to overcome SRH challenges in order to stay in school. The Girls participated in the "Speak Out" session where they shared the causes of child marriage in their communities and possible solutions to end child marriage.



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PEERS

In July 2019, UCOBAC launched a one-year project entitled **PEERS** in Bugiri district. PEERS in full is Prevention, Education, Empowerment and Recovery from Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV). PEERS is holistic community-wide approach to Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR). It takes into consideration both people and spaces that advocate for, support and surround vulnerable girls challenged by SGBV.

In Uganda, gender inequality is one of the main reasons why 20 percent of girls and women aged 15-49 experience SGBV. 10 percent of girls are married off by the age of 15 and 40 percent by 18 years (UNICEF, 2017). Among the risk factors for SGBV identified include; discriminatory social norms, exposure to violence in childhood, alcohol use and poverty among others. Although SGBV prevention and care services and information are available in Uganda, their coverage is limited and is not consistently available.

PEERS as a social change innovation is contributing to the strengthening of community health systems to promote access to timely and quality SRH services and information by young women. PEERS is transforming the way in which SGBV survivors receive care and support in Uganda.

Main interventions through the PEERS project include; use of mobile phone technology to report cases and direct access to integrated SGBV and care services, confidential data collection for advocacy, Village Savings and Loans Association, vocational and business training for women groups to empower women to better prevent SGBV and access SGBV services.



Training of PEER educators

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Access to Education is important for children in rural Uganda and Uganda's development.

Nelson Mandela from South Africa once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world....". Very true, but how many children in Africa have the opportunity to enjoy this right! In Uganda, nearly one out of every five children is uneducated. The problem is particularly serious among young girls living in rural areas (Humanium).

The inequality in access to education and quality received between the urban and rural areas of Uganda is significant. Children in rural areas are unable to enroll or stay in school due to lack of basic scholastic materials such as books, pens, uniforms, shoes, to mention but a few. This affects their education outcomes and quality of life today and in the future.

In response to this plight of Ugandan children, UCOBAC in partnership with Brandstock Services AG this year embarked on an education sponsorship pilot project in Malangala, Mityana district. 20 children including 14 girls and 6 boys in 2 government-aided schools of Magezi and Kiwawu Primary are sponsored and the sole purpose of the project is to support children especially girls to stay in school to attain adequate education for a meaningful life in future.

The pilot has been successfully completed in 2019 with all children still in school. The guardians and the children report feeling encouraged to prioritize education. Parents committed to work with UCOBAC to ensure their children's stay in school rather than marrying them off young and keeping them busy in family businesses and chores.

Equitable access to education is essential to ending poverty and boosting socio-economic development of the country.



Celebrating 10 years of advancing Women's Land and Property Rights

UCOBAC conducted a retrospective study to evaluate its Women's Land and Property Rights project in Mityana and Mubende districts which has been on-going since 2008. The main objective of the evaluation was to guide UCOBAC's future women's land rights programming and design. It also provided an opportunity to determine the relevance and impact of the project interventions on the communities specifically in relation to ability to exercise their land rights. Key findings from the evaluation were disseminated to various stakeholders from the district, sub-county and village levels. Study findings, lessons learnt and project impact;

The Community Empowerment model employed in the project is an efficient, sustainable and cost effective approach for social transformation development and ownership – Empowerment of community own resource persons including community human rights workers (CHRWs)/community paralegals/community volunteers/change agents as leaders of change in their communities is critical for project success.

Engagement of men as promoters of gender equality and defenders of women's land rights is vital for influencing existing social norms that discriminate against women to own and inherit land.

Need to integrate social norm transformation programming in the future project design in order to transform behaviors and power relations at individual and household levels.

Project has empowered women to participate in leadership and decision making spaces in their community. 30% of the CHRWs have been elected or appointed into positions of leadership in their communities because of the trust they have earned serving as community paralegals.

Project has led to increased awareness on women's land and property rights in the community which has empowered women to assert their rights at household and community level. Over 40 percent women report violations of their rights to existing justice institutions and get justice, have registered their land rights individually or jointly with their spouses and they reported making joint decision on land with their spouses .

In celebration of 10 years of advancing Women's Land Rights, UCOBAC recognized and appreciated 180 most active CHRWs that have dedicated their services to voluntarily advance women's land rights over the years.



Some of the dissemination meetings. Above - Mubende and below is a meeting in Mityana



180 (99 females and 81 males) volunteers received Certificates of Recognition for their hardwork and committment to the cause of women's land rights

Kick-off of Stand for Land campaign (S4HL)- Uganda

The Stand for Her Land campaign (S4HL) is a global campaign to strengthen the land rights of millions of women through collective advocacy that aims to close the implementation gap between law and practice.

S4HL is an inclusive, collaborative effort among a diverse group of allies including representatives of civil society, development organizations, women's rights and empowerment groups, land rights advocates, land mapping and technical specialists all over the world. Its steering committee member organizations include; Landesa (Secretariat), Global Land Tool Network Partners, Habitat for Humanity, the Huairou Commission, and the World Bank. The campaign was officially launched in March 2018 at the World Bank Land & Poverty Conference.

At the heart of the campaign's vision is the formation of multiple Stand for Her Land country level campaigns comprised of civil society, grassroots and other non-governmental organizations (and potentially private sector). These country campaign coalitions are the real change-makers, driving their own S4HL strategies, including identifying key barriers to women accessing their land rights in their daily lives, and develop advocacy initiatives to overcome these barriers.

The global campaign aims to work in support of in-country partners in their efforts to:

- Increase awareness and understanding of women's legal rights.
- Strengthen government policies, capacity and commitment to effectively implement women's land rights as enshrined in the law.
- Improve access to legal services.
- Address discriminatory social norms and practices.

In Uganda, -one-day CSO strategic scoping convening was coordinated by UCOBAC and LANDESA and hosted by the World Bank. The convening brought together different CSO actors to analyze the potential impact of the campaign in the country, identify objectives, targets, anticipated outcomes and other strategic priorities.



MEDIATION COMMITTEE SOLVES DISPUTE BETWEEN A LANDLORD AND 110 TENANTS OVER DENIAL TO HAVE LAND MAPPED, FAILURE TO PAY GROUND RENT AND THREAT OF EVICTION.

"They should not stay on my land - I do not know them!"

– Landlord Ssebiddo Bonny from Kyabayanja village, Kaki-gando parish in Kiyuuni sub-county, Mubende district.

This is the response that welcomed UCOBAC's trained Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee (ADRC) at the first attempt to invite a disgruntled landlord, Mr. Sebiddo, a retired military personnel for a mediation meeting with his 110 tenants occupying 416 acres of land in Kiyuuni sub county, Mubende District.

After participating in a community sensitization facilitated under UCOBAC and GIZ's "Improvement of Land Governance in Uganda (ILGU) to productivity of small-scale farmers on private mailo land" project; tenants of Kyabayanja village were more than ready to have their parcels of land mapped to clearly mark their land boundaries and end their long term conflicts of over whose-land-is-situated-where.

Unfortunately this was not to be as their landlord; Mr. Sebiddo did not wish to give his consent for them to have their land mapped. He instead wanted to engage the tenants in land sharing where each tenant would surrender one acre to him [the landlord] and they [tenants] would in turn get his consent to have their land mapped. The tenants were given an alternative of buying themselves out although the landlord had a consideration of selling off the land to an interested buyer.

The landlord was displeased with the tenants for not having paid their ground rent (*busuulu*) since 2010. The conditions brought tension between the two parties which eventually became an intense conflict with the tenants claiming to be threatened with eviction by their landlord when he issued what they called a strange document labeled with, "Land Act". Matters were not helped when the fact finding mission by UCOBAC mediation team revealed that majority of the tenants did not possess any legal documents to prove their tenancy rights on Mr. Sebiddo's land.

Attempts to organize the first mediation meeting between the disputed parties were unsuccessful as the landlord did not turn up but instead sent a spy who revealed himself to the community members towards the closure of the meeting and informed them of the landlord's intentions of selling his land to the government.

Conflict resolved.

"This land you are fighting for was given to us by your grandfather at no cost so we do not have to have any documents to prove our rights."

"You have given us an eviction order yet we have nowhere to go yet some of us cannot afford to buy ourselves out!!!"

Those were some of the angry voices of the tenants in the mediation meeting attended by the landlord. The accusations went on and on until a truce was called by the mediation committee for a fair agreement to be reached. The landlord was given an opportunity to explain his action of issuing the "Land Act" extract which was mainly about the obligations of the tenants towards their landlord. He did and later apologized for intimidating his tenants. The committee sensitized both parties about their roles and obligations respectively. The tenants apologized for defaulting on payments of their rent fees and their behavior towards the landlord.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed between the landlord and his tenants with the present local leaders signing as witnesses.

The parties came to a conclusion of fulfilling their respective responsibilities; the land lord consented to the mapping of his tenants *bibanja*.



One of the mediation meetings held

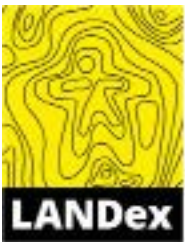


Peer learning exchange visit in the Philippines

Organizations implementing the BMZ funded (Secure Access to Land and Resources) SALaR project came together in Philippines to share experiences and best practices on registering customary/communal/rural land from their various working contexts. UCOBAC and Makerere University shared about the registration process of customary land rights in Uganda particularly Pader, Kisoro and Kabale districts.

Discussion with the people at MILALITTRA

The partners engaged in practical learning where they visited the project site of Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC), Xavier Science Foundation Inc (XSF) and People’s Federation Philippines Inc.



GLOBAL LAND GOVERNANCE INDEX

Introducing LANDex

UCOBAC and LandNet Uganda represented the members of National Engagement Strategy (NES) Uganda in an introductory training on LANDex held in South Africa this year. LANDex (Land Governance Index) is an open source tool developed to facilitate the provision of information on the most under represented land sector issues and to promote country level, regional as well as global level conversations about them and taking of informed action. The participatory training entailed learning about the levels through which LANDex eases monitoring of land governance. These include i) Capturing of information on a country’s existing legal framework ii) progress of implementing the framework and iii) outcomes or impact of respective country’s laws on the people and the country at large.

Revamping of Women’s Land Link Africa

Ntengwe for Community Development in partnership with Huairou Commission and the African Women’s Development Fund convened a Joint Regional Assembly to strategize on ways of reviving Women’s Land Link Africa (WLLA). Member organizations, UCOBAC inclusive; from Africa met in Zimbabwe this December to brainstorm and find working approaches of re-building and strengthening the grassroots women- led consortium.

Key discussions revolved around the grassroots women roles and contributions to the growth of the land sector in their respective countries, and at regional and global levels, mapping of existing opportunities of engagement, mobilization and planning for the regionalization and identity of WLLA in Africa. Members identified three pillars which will be the focus of WLLA; these include Land, Climate Change and Social Protection.

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