

The Mouthpiece

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Her Majesty (1) & KCCA Executive Director (2) at KHBCA stall



Her Majesty encourages women to be entrepreneurs at KCCA exhibition

Grassroots women of Kawempe Home Based Care Alliance (KHBCA) under UCOBAC's umbrella participated in Kampala City Council Authority (KCCA) exhibition held at KCCA grounds at Lugogo – Kampala.

The highly competitive and well organized exhibition brought together Community Based Organizations (CBOs) from the five divisions of Kampala to showcase as well as sell various products especially crafts.

Amidst ululations and cheers from the excited crowds, Her Majesty, the Queen of Buganda Nagginda Sylvia who was the invited Guest of Honor addressed the crowds and exhibitors. She appreciated the organizers of the exhibition and encouraged Ugandans especially women to continue with the same spirit of entrepreneurship as this is the way to promote and contribute greatly to the development of the economy as well as alleviate poverty from their homes.

Despite the occasion being held on a rainy day, Her Majesty the Queen of Buganda Nagginda Sylvia accompanied by KCCA Executive Director, Mrs. Musisi Jennifer and other officials from Buganda and KCCA took a tour of the different stalls that had been set up and appreciated the great hand work produced.

KHBCA members were able to successfully display and sell their own items such as candles, pastries, crafts bags and jewellery, exercise books and environmental friendly charcoal.

First National Child Rights Convention in Uganda

Uganda Child Rights NGO Network (UCRNN) along with its members organized a three day convention that brought together multiple stakeholders working towards the realization of child rights in Uganda.

Held at Imperial Royale Hotel in Kampala, the convention which was organized under the theme; “Investing in Children and Young People; towards a Uganda Fit for Children” was structured into a series of dialogues between and among child rights actors from the public, private and civil society sectors.

Stella Ayo – Odong, the Executive Director of UCRNN advised fellow child actors to move an extra mile by utilizing the evidence and statistics compiled to create impact on children’s lives and environment.

“We need to think of how the statistics and evidence we have collected through research can be used to improve children’s lives. Many of us have the heart to help children but unfortunately we lack the art to help and create impact,” she said.

Badagawa Gideon, the Executive Director of Private Sector Foundation Uganda (PSFU) which is the umbrella organization for the private sector in Uganda shared the business perspective in relation to children. He emphasized the need for integrating skills in children’s learning as early as kindergarten and nursery to have a productive human resource in future.

“We need to revise the school curriculum and give enough attention to Early Childhood Development (ECD). Children need to understand the rationale of business at an early age to be good entrepreneurs,” he said.

The Convention was used as a platform for brainstorming and bringing new ideas to advance the delivery of child rights by the different actors given the ever evolving political, social economic context of Uganda. It was noted that children are becoming more vulnerable because of the foundation that has

been laid for them by their respective families./communities and therefore the responsibility of proper nurturing of children should start with the guardians then schools.

The Fourth Annual Tumaini awards marked the climax of the convention. Individuals, companies, civil society organizations and members of the media working to promote child rights in the country were recognized and awarded certificates and plaques in appreciation of their efforts.

Emerging issues from the Convention


Emphasis needed on Early Childhood Development; Investment in children’s future should start in the early years of their lives. Guardians, communities and all stakeholders from public and private walks should care about what children are learning, the relevance and applicability of the study content to the daily life.

Collaboration between the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), the academia and Government is urgently needed to share good practices and most importantly to link research to policy.

A call for a collective voice and action among CSOs to limit the on-going duplication of services thus strengthening service delivery and reaching out to more vulnerable children and communities. It was raised that different NGOs tend to offer similar services to the same communities thus leaving out others.

The revival of grassroots systems such as the Local Council (LC) is very vital in the curbing of vices such as child neglect, violence in all forms that affect children in their home environment. The LC structure has been abandoned yet this is normally the first point of contact for handling any grievances in a given society.

Evidence based advocacy is key for making investment decisions concerning the Ugandan child hence a minimum of 15% of the National Budget should be allocated to research.



In Her Name Initiative

In August 2014, In Her Name coalition members went on a week-long fact finding trip to Northern Uganda in Pader district to interact with local officials, clan leaders as well as community members on issues regarding Certificates of Customary Ownership (CCO).

The members organized to share their findings through a series of opinion pieces titled “Mind the gap” published in the local newspapers as well the social networks. The pieces exclusively contain experiences of women determined to defy all odds to attain and enjoy their land rights.

While some of the women have received trainings on land rights by existing civil society organizations in the region and the government; others are still in the dark and therefore ignorant about the procedures for defending their land and property hence their increased vulnerability.

To learn more about the coalition’s findings and contribute to the conversation, visit In Her Name Initiative face-book page on:

<https://www.facebook.com/InHerNameInitiative?ref=hl>

540 watch dogs trained on human rights

With an objective of strengthening the community support structure to sustainably support women to enjoy their land and property rights; UCOBAC through its Women's Land and Property Rights project (WLPR) recruited and trained 90 community volunteers known as Community Human Rights Workers on land related matters in Mityana district.

The 90 were tasked to identify 6 other group members from their respective communities and parishes to expand the network of land and property rights day workshops at sub-county level; the skills and knowledge for handling land manuals and t-shirts to effectively serve in



volunteers referred to as Watch Dog communities and parishes to expand volunteers to 540. In a series of 2 Watch Dogs were as well equipped with matters and facilitated with reference their communities.

Topics of training included; Land Act and amendments, will marriage, separation and divorce, land management institutions, inheritance and succession laws, human rights and alternative dispute resolution.

writing, women's rights, marriage an property rights,

Release of Kampala Civil Society statement on Post 2015

Representatives of women's rights, faith and community-based, civil society organizations, media and Government from over 14 countries across the continent convened to deliberate on '*Strengthening African Women's Voices in the Post-2015 Processes*' and the Africa We Want and Need. The event was organized by African Women's Development and Communications Network (FEMNET), Akina Mama Wa AfriKa (AMWA), Ipas Africa Alliance (IPA), Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE)

UCOBAC was represented by its own Executive Director- Mrs. Mukisa Solome and the organization's grassroots partners from Kawempe Home Based Care Alliance and Slum Women's Initiative for Development (SWID). To promote gender equality, women's rights, women's empowerment and Africa's structural transformation; representatives at the conference called for support towards the following focus areas:

- A transformative foal on gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment.
- Recognition, reduction and re-distribution of unpaid care work.
- Elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls.
- Universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Access to, control over and ownership of resources and assets.
- Mobilization of domestic resources through innovative financing.
- Ensuring gender parity in decision making, transparent and accountable governance at all levels.
- Addressing peace as a stand-alone goal and ensure mainstreaming throughout all other goals with an emphasis on the principles of good governance and rule of law.

CFTC Partners Meeting in Masindi

This year's Canadian Feed the Children (CFTC) Uganda Partners' forum meeting was hosted by Child Rights Empowerment and Development Organization (CEDO Uganda) in Masindi District. Participating partners included; UCOBAC and Huys Link Community Initiative (HUYSLIN-CI).

Besides sharing best practices and lessons learnt in 2014 mid-year program implementation; partners convened to share highlights in the 2015 partner program plans and harmonize key performance indicators in common activities.

A representative from each of the organizations was given an opportunity to make a presentation about their organization's project of implementation. Suzan Gamwino – UCOBAC Program Officer Bugiri made a presentation about the Community Development Program, its goals, focus areas, achievements and challenges.

The one day meeting was concluded on the note of participating organizations being urged to continue the practice of learning from each other and organizing for the next partner forum's meeting to take place while program activities were on-going to enable partners to visit the projects.

CFTC is supporting UCOBAC, CEDO and Huyslink to implement developmental programs in some of the organizations' districts/ communities of operations to uplift the livelihoods of vulnerable groups through provision of services regarding; education, nutrition, public engagement as well as capacity building.



Partners in a plenary session



Partners at CEDO Secretariat

UCOBAC and Universitas Forum join hands

UCOBAC through its partner the Huairou Commission, is working with Universitas Forum and several other Canadian institutions in a collaborative initiative aimed at documenting experiences and methodologies through which cities (specifically urban settlers) have addressed urban poverty, its underlying issues and promoted development.

Urban poverty is a problem in several countries in a variety of developmental and cultural contexts. The traditional approaches of addressing urban poverty have not been very effective because they have been provided through disparate and fragmented services.

The initiative, “**Innovative practices for inclusive urban development and poverty reduction**” supports the systemization and dissemination of innovative practices and policies. Some of the successful innovative practices include;

- Participatory urban planning processes
- Women’s safety audits
- Community initiatives
- Local economic and social initiatives
- Community housing schemes
- Urban agriculture
- Urban waste management schemes
- Green energy production

Many of the above mentioned experiences are led by energetic grassroots women’s groups, community organizations and local government entities. UCOBAC mobilized and organized the grassroots women of Mbuya Home Based Care Alliance (MHBCA) for this exercise which involves planning

meetings and documentation of the home based caregivers’ experiences through video and case studies.

Universitas Forum is supporting nine other groups besides MHBCA to participate in this process elsewhere in the world. The experiences captured will be used to develop material that can be used in policy forums and as educational material for university teaching and professional development related to urban development and poverty reduction.

About Mbuya HBCA

MHBCA is comprised of a team of home based caregivers both men and women committed to serving their communities as well as boosting their capacities to deal with life challenges and contribute to the economy’s development.

Updates will be available UCOBAC mailing list and organizaion facebook page; <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Uganda-Community-Based-Association-for-Women-and-Children-Welfare/653492568031002?ref=hl>



UCOBAC Program Officer Gary, addressing MHBCA members

Girl child education becomes Alowo's priority after dialogue

From a permanent 2 bed-roomed house surrounded by 3 grass-thatched huts, 32 year old Alowo Margaret, wife to one Alowo Dennis and mother of six comes out to warmly welcome me to her home located in Kidowa village, Buluwe Parish – Bugiri district.

The Alowo family livelihood is mainly derived from subsistence farming. They grow maize, millet, sorghum, beans and soya; these are consumed at home and surplus is sold off to supplement their income to buy other home requirements. Besides farming, Margaret's husband works at the grinding mill located in the nearby trading centre.

Four of Margaret's six children are school going attending Government aided primary schools. These are; Joyce Awori aged 16, Adikin Kiriza 14, Nyafwono Mercy 10 and Asabiti Elizabeth 8. Muwanguzi Joshua 6 and Kimimendo Gideon 2 are yet to start school.

In narrating her experience of having a child sponsored by UCOBAC under the child sponsorship scheme; Margaret expresses her gratitude and shares the impact of being part of the program on the family.

"My second born – Adikini Kiriza is sponsored by UCOBAC. She goes to Buluwe Primary School in primary 5. I am not worried about buying uniform and she can attend school regularly. She also gets books, pens and pencils which she shares with her siblings. The project has been a great relief to us".

Meeting school needs of the four school going children had been a challenge for the Alowos before being identified and selected to benefit from UCOBAC's child sponsorship program through the Community Development Program (CDP).

Margaret wholeheartedly embraced the program because she and her family had a lot to learn and benefit. Besides being actively involved in trainings on modern farming methods, nutrition, health, hygiene and sanitation; she participated in the establishment and maintenance of Buluwe Primary School garden.

"My farming has greatly improved with the trainings that I have got. There is continuous vegetable production in my home and women in my village come and ask for vegetable seeds and skills. There is an increase in my maize harvest now from 200 kilograms to 350 kilograms a season."



Margaret in her maize garden



Adikini (black top) with her siblings



Adikini helping out with home chores

Attending dialogue meetings organized in the community by UCOBAC to discuss issues (such as; early marriage, children's rights and others) affecting their community was an eye opener for Adikini's mother about the relevance of education for a girl child.

"The dialogues especially those concerning the girl child attracted me. I have only two boys and four girls, and my dream is to keep my children more especially the girls in school until they graduate at higher institutions of learning. Before attending these dialogues, I did not consider education of girls as something important but now I know the importance of keeping girls in school".

In her words; Adikini Kiriza who was selected in 2009 to join the CDP program mirrors her mother's conversation saying,

"...life has changed both at home and school. I now sleep under a mosquito net that I got from UCOBAC. I have peaceful nights at home unlike previously when I would scratch myself the whole night because of mosquitoes biting me. My skin had small wounds that caused by the mosquito bites.... We can now afford sugar and soap at home when the sukuma wiki and peas are sold."

Margaret's greatest wish is for her children to study and graduate to be teachers and nurses in the future. This is not far from what young Adikini hopes to achieve as well. *"My favorite subject is science because I dream of becoming a doctor when I grow up."*

A one-on-one with Mr. Ofwono Valentine, a primary 7 class teacher who has been working in Buluwe primary school for more than 10 years revealed that although the school is supported by UCOBAC with various facilities such as; desks, seeds to start up a school garden, a school feeding program and several scholastic materials; they still encounter several challenges in providing up-to-standard education to the large population of pupils. He says,



Mr. Ofwono supervising the serving of porridge. The school feeding program benefits all the children in school



Adikini (centre) with classmates at Buluwe Primary School

Buluwe Primary School is located in Buluwe parish, Bulesa sub county in Bugiri district. It has primary one to seven with a population of 986 pupils; 514 girls 472 boys it has eight classrooms. 116 pupils are sponsored by UCOBAC in the school.

“The school has some text books and learning aids that have been provided by the Government of Uganda but these are not enough for the children for example seven children share a text book, this makes teaching and learning quite hard. Sometimes, I am forced to write out the exercise on the black board so that everyone has the chance to copy the exercise in her book. This consumes a lot of time which could have been used to evaluate the learners. The classroom space is inadequate especially in the lower classes. One class that should occupy 60 pupils occupies 120 pupils. Teaching such a class is quite tedious and difficult”.

Such is the case in many of Uganda’s rural based primary schools yet these young people have to compete with their counterparts in the private urban schools in exams and later for job opportunities.

UCOBAC attains new media relations skills

2 UCOBAC staff attended a 3 day training workshop concerning media relations organized by African Center for Media Excellence (ACME) in Bunga at ACME offices. Besides UCOBAC, 6 other human rights organizations were represented including; Uganda National Action of Physical Disability (UN-APD), Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF), Uganda Network on Law, Ethics and HIV/AIDS (UGANET), Support Initiative for People a typical sex Development (SIPD), Uganda National AIDS Defensive Organization (UNADO) and Association for Cooperative Operations Research and Development (ACORD).

The overarching goal of the training was to equip the selected human rights NGOs with effective advocacy skills as well as supporting them to lay proper and effective strategies for engaging and utilizing the media.

Key trainers emphasized the need for organizations to study and understand media houses’ interests as this would come in handy in creating working and result oriented relationships with different journalists and reporters.

“Rather than lamenting on the media, let’s focus on how we can effectively utilize the media by strategically planning for it and being pro-active”,

advised Peter Mwesige – ACME Executive Director

as he conducted a session about the overview of media in Uganda and East Africa and since the 90’s to date.

Gwada Ogot – a Managing partner with SWID consultants urged the organization representatives to abandon the conventional practices and approaches to work but rather embrace the culture of reading to richly and knowledgeably contribute to advocacy.

“While it’s important to know your audience, it’s equally very useful to be innovative, consistent and precise in your message packaging to maximumly gain from communication”.

He emphasized the need for all employees of an organization; cooks and cleaners inclusive to be brought on board and equipped with up-to-date information about their respective organizations since they are all representatives who can be contacted by media or any interested party at any point for organization information.

“You are all public relations officers for your organizations; forget communication, advocacy and organization spokespersons as the key information disseminators”.

By posing one simple question, “Is the way we are working really working?”; Sheila Muwanga – Deputy Director Programmes at Foundation for Human Rights Initiative while making her presentation requested the organizations to check and evaluate the effectiveness of their organization operations and strategic plans as regards lobbying and advocacy. She continued to say that if CSOs are to influence decision makers to create impact and cause structural change; they have to focus their advocacy strategies by clearly defining them in the organization strategic planning and identifying key stakeholders relevant to the cause.

Richard Kavuma, the Editor - Observer newspaper, cautioned participants on the public relations era in which they find themselves in and the relevance of strategic communication given the changing times and trends. Richard shared vital tips for successful media – civil society relations as well as ways for navigating media pitfalls.

Besides gaining advanced advocacy and lobbying skills, improved writing skills; participating organizations networked amongst themselves and learnt from each other’s working experiences.

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