

THE MOUTHPIECE

UCOBAC's bi-annual Newsletter: 2nd Edition

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EDITORIAL

Dear Reader,

Welcome to our second edition of the Bi-annual Newsletter - ***The MouthPiece***.

Our hearts swell with pride and gratitude for the journey we navigated together in the 2023. This edition is a special dedication to the major highlights of the past year intricately woven with success stories and the profound impact we have had on the lives of women, men and children in communities.

Each success story in this edition demonstrates the transformative power of our project activities implemented in various parts of Uganda from not only empowering communities but also fostering transformative practices which have not only touched lives but also sparked positive change.

Whereas we made great milestones in 2023, we are cognizant of the challenges at hand which are committed to overcome in 2024 to ensure we sail to the desired success we envision.

As we turn the page to a new year, our gaze is fixed on the horizon of possibilities. The lessons learned, the victories celebrated, and the stories shared inspire us to continue our journey with renewed energy.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our partners, government, women, men and children who have been part of our incredible journey last year. Your commitment, cooperation and belief in our mission have been the driving force behind our accomplishments.

We can only hope that the stories within this Newsletter can inspire and fuel our drive to strive to collectively facilitate transformative change in communities.

Enjoy the read!!

NOTE: Please note that consent was sought from all cases herein to share their stories, experiences and pictures with you all.

INSIDE STORIES

- 2 Thriving against all Odds - A Story of Triumph from hopelessness
- 4 POWER OF A WOMAN - Sarah's story from a state of despair to empowerment
- 5 Roots to Riches: Kulabako's story of Empowerment and Resilience
- 6 Inspired to Champion women's rights as a man
- 7 Enterprenual journey of a widow in a refugee settlement in Uganda
- 8 Transformed from a destructive addiction to a productive community member
- 9 Breaking the cycle of HIV/AIDs stigma in Ogom
- 11 How a Grassroots Women's Academy inspired Ajok to own land
- 12 Grassroots Women's leadership - *Championing Women Land Rights across borders*
- 13 Grassroots Women's Academy - A transformative tool for grassroots women's empowerment
- 14 A Male champion's account on empowering communities through tackling harmful social norms

Thriving against all Odds – A Story of Triumph from hopelessness

BY WINNIE BABIRYE » Project Officer - Orphans and Vulnerable Children's program

Ms Joyce Awora aged 45 years, lost her child in darkness because she could not afford paraffin to light a lamp. Her son had been sick for some time and she could not afford to pay for his medication and with each passing day she prayed for a healing miracle from God. However, one unfortunate morning, Ms Awora woke up to find her son dead, he had passed on quietly in his sleep in the night – The deep pain in Joyce's eyes as she narrates this story and flashes back to this unfortunate incident is evident.

Awora is a mother of seven children (three girls and four boys) and grandmother to three grandchildren). She is a farmer as well and a small-scale business woman in Buduma B village, Buluguyi sub-county, Buduma parish in Bugiri district. She is married to a man that is addicted to alcohol which has led to his abdication of his responsibility of taking care of the family, leaving all the care burden to Joyce

Speaking to UCOBAC, Ms Awora said she had only known poverty her entire life, she believes that her family was extremely impoverished to the extent that her children dropped out of school due to lack of school fees. She could not afford to provide the most basic needs for the family like food, clothing, healthcare and lighting energy. In order to survive, Ms Awora started doing casual work on people's

farms in exchange for food to feed her family.

During this time, Ms Awora became pregnant, and at the same time lactating mother.

“My family was the poorest in the community where we lived, I did not have decent clothes, we lived in darkness most of the time and we were forced to enter the house as early as 6:30pm to avoid sleeping with snakes.”



Ms Awora narrates her story to our project officer

She developed breast feeding complications and could barely feed her little baby. She also developed other reproductive health complications that required her to undergo an operation but unfortunately, that required money that she did not have. To make matters even worse, her husband abandoned her and married another woman in neighboring country - Kenya. To add salt to this unending injury, her three-year-old child sustained severe burns after falling into the fire and she could equally not afford taking him for medication.

Devastated and confused, Ms Awora decided to go back to her parent's home where she was fortunately helped by her brother who took them both for better medical treatment at Tororo hospital. Upon recovery, she decided to go back to her marital home. Her husband returned four months later after hearing that she had fully recovered and had returned home.

The Triumph – Light at end of the Tunnel

One day Ms Awora received an invitation to attend a training but she turned it down and instead requested her husband to attend.

"I lacked the confidence to sit with other members of the community members. I could not afford any decent clothing to look presentable among others, so I decided not to go – I asked my husband to go instead" she said.

Her husband later that evening returned home very excited and advised her to attend the next meeting organized by an organization called UCOBAC. Joyce attended the next meeting and heard about what UCOBAC under the Child Development Project, was planning to do in the community especially with grassroot women in her community. Ms. Awora saw some light at the end of the tunnel and decided to attend all the subsequent meetings and trainings that she was invited to by UCOBAC. She gained a lot of knowledge and skills in women and children' rights, business planning and management, agronomic farming practices, financial literacy through community Loans and saving schemes etc

Thriving against all Odds

After all the capacity building trainings, Joyce was provided with an in-kind grant of goats which has been rearing as an income generating activity. She reveals that when the goats have multiplied and she has sold some and used the money to construct a new house for her family, paid school fees for her children and also bought a solar panel to light her once dark house.

"This was very fulfilling because now I have light in my house and my children can read their books as other children do in my village. We are also safer with the lighting at home as we are not afraid of being attacked by snakes crawling into the house in the dark as we slept in the dark. My family life has been uplifted and the children are

"I am now in a better position to buy body creams and look like other women in the village, I have bought clothes for myself and the children. We are no longer wearing torn clothes. I can afford proper medication for my children; I am so happy for the woman I have become thanks to UCOBAC."

doing very well" she added with a wide smile on her face.

Additionally, Joyce added that when the village was faced with famine, she sold goats to buy food for her household.

Joyce also diversified her income generating activity with the profits gained and opened up a local restaurant in her village. She says this business was slow in beginning as she did not believe the community members would support her owing to her past life. She however says with the knowledge acquired from training sessions, she was had the confidence to convince her customers to support her business and also had financial skills to manage her incomes. From the proceed gained in her restaurant business, Joyce was also able to start saving in village savings and loans association.

"I am now in a better position to take care of myself as well – I can now buy body creams and look like other women in the village, I have bought clothes for myself and the children. We are no longer wearing torn clothes. I can afford proper healthcare for my children, I can also provide a good education for my children as I can now afford to buy needed scholastic materials and other requirements; I am so happy for the woman I have become thanks to UCOBAC."

She hopes to buy a cow and iron sheets to construct a kitchen after getting dividends from the Agali Awamu Farmers saving group where she has been saving.

Challenges

Ms Awora admits that the issue of climate change is becoming her greatest challenge at the moment because they are experiencing prolonged drought which is affecting the growth of crops. She adds that school holidays hugely affect the restaurant business because she majorly depends on school going children for break and lunchtime.

Dreaming Bigger and Better

Despite the challenges, Ms Awora has a dream of expanding her restaurant business to another neighboring town called Muwayo town where she hopes to get more money because of the huge population.

She also hopes to use her experience to empower and inspire other women in her community to thrive out of poverty especially through engaging in income generation activities and adopting a saving culture, as well as adopting suitable agricultural practices that will increase food production and ensure food security in their homes

She sends great thanks to the Canadian Feed The Children (CFTC) and the people of Canada that have supported her and many other children and families through UCOBAC. She advised UCOBAC to carry out periodical monitoring on its project participants so as to track their progress and support them overcome emerging challenges. ■

POWER OF A WOMAN – Sarah's story from a state of despair to empowerment

BY WINNIE BABIRYE » Project Officer - Orphans and Vulnerable Children's program

Sarah Nabagega aged 32 years, is a resident of Buluguyi village, Buluguyi subcounty, Bugiri district, a housewife, mother of four young children and married to a loving husband who worked in another district from where the family lived. Life for Sarah has always been of lack and struggle to take care of the family while the husband was away working at a job that fetched very little salary to meet the needs of the family. She was forced to borrow money to keep up with the necessities of the home like food, education and health needs for herself and the children. As a result, she was always choking on debts and yet still did not have enough money. The children for example had to go without food for the whole day as she could not afford to pack them food from home or to pay for school meals dues, which greatly affected their learning outcomes.

"I also just didn't know what to do to change my situation, I lacked the motivation, confidence, courage and knowledge and skills to change my life from this state. I always felt defeated in life"

Hope comes knocking

One day officials from UCOBAC visited Nambiya Primary School, a local government aided school in her village where her children studied. UCOBAC was identifying the most vulnerable children to support in their education program and my child was among those identified to benefit from this program. It is at this point that point that my life started to change. The child received scholastic materials and the organization involved the parents of the children in other livelihoods program activities and she received financial literacy skills, climate smart and agronomic farming practices training, business training, and she also received a small grant to start a small business where she sells popcorn. She also joined a village savings and loans Association group started by fellow parents that were participating in the program called "Basseka-Majja saving group" and was able to save 10,000 Uganda shillings (approximately \$10) per week in this savings group.



Ms Sarah Nabagega in her cassava garden

Living the desired fulfilling life

"With the knowledge, skills and resources i have been able to access this program, I am now empowered and in charge of my life. My children have a better life, I can afford to provide for them for their food, education and health needs. I do not have to wait on my husband to provide when he can but we are working together to improve the conditions in my home."

Not all is Gold

Like any business, Ms Nabagega says, business has good and bad times. Sometimes there are profits and sometime not. Also, she faces challenges of pests that affect her cassava plantation. Despite the several challenges at hand, she has dream of becoming a large-scale farmer and has plans of buying more land to grow rice and yams among other cash crops.

Nabagega's Words of Wisdom and Appreciation

Ms Nabagega believes education is key to success and encourages women to believe in their power and work hard and ensure their children stay in school.

"I thank UCOBAC for walking this journey with me. I am now valued and respected by my husband and community members as a partner and not a beneficiary or burden. I also thank Canadian Feed The Children (CFTC) for supporting our communities." ■

Roots to Riches: Kulabako's story of Empowerment and Resilience

BY KUZAIFA MWIMA » Intern – Climate change and Resilient Livelihood's program

Elizabeth Kulabako, a resilient grassroots woman aged 41 years, resides in Nabyunu village, Bugeso parish, Iwemba sub-county, located in Bugiri district in Eastern Uganda. As a joyous mother of six children, affectionately known as Liz among her friends, she wears multiple hats as a farmer, tailor, trader, and a role model in all her endeavours.

Kulabako's journey to empowerment and resilience

In the days before her involvement with UCOBAC programs, Liz's agricultural activities were limited to around 20 cassava plants primarily grown for household consumption. She relied on the generosity of friends for clothing, had no income generating activity, and thus faced financial challenges, struggling to provide for her family's basic needs mainly health and education needs.

"I used to borrow clothes from neighbours every time I had to visit relatives. I had land but I had known how or the money to make it more productive. I always had a dream of being a tailor but, I had no money to learn tailoring skills to fulfil that dream," said Ms Kulabako.

Her journey took a positive turn when she became part of a savings group introduced by Ms Andega Regina, other grassroots women in her village who was participating in a UCOBAC program and was mobilizing women in her village to join the savings group. This was her entry to being involved in a UCOBAC



Elizabeth's workshop in Bugiri

program that was focused on facilitating organized grassroots women groups to scale up their local practice to build resilience to effects of climate change on their livelihoods. Joining this savings group paved way for Liz's participation in UCOBAC program. UCOBAC provided the savings group with trainings on leadership, women's land rights, climate change resilient livelihoods, business planning and management etc.

I have a Dream

Ms Kulabako's dream of becoming an expert tailor in the village continued to linger in her mind and she was determined to realize her dream. Through

the skills and knowledge gained from the trainings as well as the income earned from her small business and savings from the village savings group, she bought one sewing machine from which she practiced her skill, started making an income and expanded the tailoring business where she owns five sewing machines and now runs a tailoring training center with 16 apprentices gaining valuable hands-on skills in training.

Additionally, Ms Kulabako expanded her agricultural pursuits, cultivating quick-maturing and drought-resistant cassava varieties on three acres to combat poverty and ensure food security in her home.

She added that her relationship at home with her husband has also greatly improved. They now work together in managing their growing coffee and cassava farming activities and make joint decisions for the good of the family. They are now involved in value addition for their coffee and cassava crops in order to earn more income from their agricultural produce.

"We have also registered our land" – she adds with a wide smile on her face. "I am a co-owner of the land with my husband".

Elizabeth's call to Action

Her call to government is to support in the form of access to equipment for coffee, cassava, and rice processing and value addition. Additionally, she calls for opening up space for grassroots women to participate in policy advocacy in order to influence policy frameworks, programming and financial allocation and extension services to support women to be resilient to effects of climate change

Elizabeth's story is one among many stories of how grassroots women are building their resilience to effects of climate change under a program on nurturing leadership of grassroots women's organizations in scaling up community resilience in uncertain in collaboration with Huairou Commission facilitated under a SIDA fund. ■

Inspired to Champion women's rights as a man

BY JENNIFER AYAA » Project officer – Sexual and Reproductive Health and Right's program

UCOBAC's intervention has been nothing short of a transformative account for 72-year-old Alex Odokopira. A retired teacher married to one wife with three children and two grandchildren has been navigating the complexities of retirement and pension challenge as a technical error made on his academic transcript has made it difficult for him to secure his pension benefits. With farming as his primary source of livelihood, it was very difficult for him to make ends meet and provided for this family.

With UCOBAC initiative that aims at strengthening resilience of refugees and vulnerable families from host communities through enhanced food security, livelihoods, and women empowerment, Mr Odokopira saw an opportunity to live a more meaningful life. Through the program, he underwent diverse training sessions on ending gender-based violence, gender equality, nutrition, village savings and loans methodologies, business planning and management, family planning etc. These learnings empowered him to start a small business and he also joined a savings group in his zone which earned him an income to improve the living conditions in his home.

He says the project has influenced positive changes in his own life, altering how he approaches situations, particularly at home. "Conflict resolution now involves family discussions and collaborative decision making. Whenever we have a misunderstanding with my wife, we sit down and discuss as a



UCOBAC Project staff interviewing Alex Odokopira, a male champion in Palabek settlement

“Conflict resolution now involves family discussions and collaborative decision making. Whenever we have a misunderstanding with my wife, we sit down and discuss as a family without me dictating”

family without me dictating,” said Mr Odokopira.

The change in his own life inspired him to contribute to the development of his community. He thus accepted to play a leadership role of secretary in the VSLA group and became a male engagement champion to raise awareness on gender equality and combating gender-based violence in his community. As a champion, he hopes to foster strong relationships between refugees and the host community, enhancing their livelihoods and promote access to sexual and reproductive health services for women and girls. He adds that his work in the community has earned him community trust and respect. ■

Entrepreneurial journey of a widow in a refugee settlement in Uganda

BY SILVANOUS OPIO » Project Officer – Climate Change and Resilient Livelihood's program

In the heart of Palabek refugee settlement, residing in Zone 1, Block 1, is Ms. Akech Sunday, a 51-year-old widow bearing the responsibility of a household comprising her four biological children and three refugee orphans. Her formal education journey paused at Primary three.

To cope with this difficult responsibility, Ms. Akech joined a group called Gen Yesu group in 2019 to join other members of her refugee community that were also struggling to make ends meet and had thus decided to organize themselves into a group where they could collectively discuss their challenges and find solutions to improve their welfare. This marked the beginning of a journey enriched with knowledge and skills through various training sessions, covering aspects such as vegetable cultivation, agronomy, environmental protection, family planning, Income Generating Activities (IGA), Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA), and nutrition as well as farm inputs, all supported under a UCOBAC project that aims at strengthening resilience of refugees and vulnerable families from host communities through enhanced food security, livelihoods, and women empowerment.

Akech's life has transformed and is now running a thriving retail shop in the refugee settlement, stocked with a wide range of products for sale.



Akech heaping soil in preparation to make bricks when rain stops

“Accessing startup money from my savings and loans from the group was the game-changer in my life. I now own land, I bought two plots of land worth 4,000,000 Uganda shillings. I have also built a shop/kiosk where I am running my retail business”

“Accessing startup money from my savings and loans from the group was the game-changer in my life. I now own land, I bought two plots of land worth 4,000,000 Uganda shillings. I have also built a shop/kiosk where I am running my retail business. I have also been able to buy a mobile phone, I can run my business on line as I can communicate with my suppliers and customers with ease. I'm now able to support my children to

have a quality education as well as provide all the basic needs in my home. The tears from my past are dry now. I have dignity, I am a proud mother, I am motivated to provide the best for my children.”

Sunday's elevated economic standing in the community has led to her being entrusted as a community leader, appointed as woman block leader in the refugee settlement representative so that she can use her experience. ■

Transformed from a destructive addiction to a productive community member

BY SILVANOUS OPIO » Project Officer – Climate Change and Resilient Livelihood's program

Onen Charles, is a 36-year-old married man hailing from the host community in Padolo Village Lamwo district. He cares for a household of 8 members. Due to the stress from the hardships in providing for his family, Charles slowly drifted to excessive consumption of alcohol (local brew) which he saw as an escape from all the pain and feelings of shame and ridicule as a man that has failed his family.

One day, Charles decided to join in a Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) group in his community. This decision ended up being the turning point in his

life. His dedication and active participation in group activities led his group members to select him as a Community Extension Volunteer (CEV), entrusting him with coordinating functions and providing valuable advisory services to the community. The group activities and responsibilities led him to abandon his excessive alcohol consumption habits as we too busy doing more productive things.

Through UCOBAC's comprehensive training sessions encompassing VSLA methodologies, nutrition, family planning, and addressing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), Charles's knowledge

expanded exponentially. He has used the information acquired to not only transform himself but also the lives of his children. Utilizing nutrition insights gained from the training, Charles elevated his children's feeding habits, ensuring improved nutrition and overall well-being of his family members.

Onen Charles's story is one example of the profound impacts of UCOBAC interventions in transforming lives and in fostering positive change at the individual and household levels, ultimately contributing to the betterment of the entire community. ■



Mr Charles, in a white t-shirt, shares his story with the UCOBAC project staff - Silvanious Opio

Breaking the cycle of HIV/AIDS stigma in Ogom



Grace Lakica poses for a photo with her newly received goat from the project

BY JOEL OKOT » Project Officer – Sexual and Reproductive Health and Right's program

In the rural landscape of Ogom Sub County, Pader District, persistent negative stereotypes surrounding HIV have resulted in the unjust discrimination faced by women and girls. Some have even fallen victim to violent abuse due to their gender. The stigma associated with HIV/AIDS has pushed many individuals backward, rendering them feeling unworthy and excluded from crucial decision-making processes, political arenas, and equal healthcare services.

Stigmatization is often fueled by discriminatory cultural beliefs, low levels of education, low awareness levels, and inefficient government policies. Addressing this issue necessitates a multifaceted approach involving education, awareness campaigns, and legal safeguards. Notably, pregnant women in rural northern Uganda are particularly susceptible to HIV-related stigma, emphasizing the urgency for healthcare providers to collaborate with HIV-positive women and other stakeholders to fortify coping strategies, as highlighted in the PLO ONE 2022 journal.

The enduring stigma linked to HIV/AIDS arises partly from misconceptions about the disease's prognosis and transmission modes. This stigma not only restricts individuals living with HIV from accessing essential healthcare but also perpetuates false beliefs. However, there is a glimmer of hope on the horizon, marked by the recent success of an initiative breaking down stereotypes and barriers, significantly improving the lives of affected women and girls.

Implemented by the Uganda Community Based Association for Women and Children's Welfare (UCOBAC), the project titled

"Addressing Discriminatory Norms on HIV and GBV against Women and Girls" has ushered in positive changes. Supported by the US Embassy through its PEPFAR program in Uganda, this initiative has established safe spaces in Yitoduny and Telela East. Over the course of a year, eighty girls have received vital HIV education using the Stepping Stone Guide during field visits, empowering them to challenge societal norms.

Empowered by their newfound knowledge, these young women have formed advocacy organizations, serving as a platform to voice their concerns to decision-makers. Leaders within these groups actively raise community awareness through radio talk shows on critical issues like sexual harassment and gender-based violence.

One of UCOBAC's interventions provided all the eighty girls

"Addressing Discriminatory Norms on HIV and GBV against Women and Girls" has ushered in positive changes.

with female goats, enhancing their economic capacity. Grace Lakica, a 28-year-old mother of three from Ogom sub county, Pader district, experienced a transformative change through this initiative. Previously facing immense challenges, including financial struggles and the

aftermath of a divorce due to her HIV status, Grace received a female goat in December 2022. The subsequent births of four more goats have allowed her to join a savings group, support her daughters' education, and plan for the future.

With increased earnings, Grace joined a cooperative, where she learned about financial management, sustainable farming practices, and community development. Now a source of inspiration in her community, Grace and her cooperative successfully applied for a parish development model grant, receiving one million shillings to initiate a business. Her determination is evident as she plans to build a small animal house and expand her goat herd, embodying the transformative impact of breaking chains and building futures. ■



Grace Lakica and fellow project beneficiaries pose for a photo with their newly received goats

How a Grassroots Women's Academy inspired Ajok to own land

BY RITAH KEMIGISA » Associate – Stand for Her Campaign - Uganda

Isabella Dilish Ajok, a dedicated land rights defender with the Land and Equity Movement in Uganda (LEMU), shares a transformative journey sparked by the Grassroots Women Leaders Training conducted by UCOBAC under the Stand for Her Land campaign at Margarita Palace Hotel Lira.

She says the training proved to be a pivotal moment, reshaping her perspective on women's land ownership. Initially subscribing to the notion that women should avoid registering land in their names, she now champions the idea that it's not only safe but crucial for women to own and register land in their own right.

Inspired by this newfound understanding, Dilish envisions securing her own piece of land, registering it under her own particulars, breaking away from the traditional belief she held.

Taking the initiative further, she has extended this empowering knowledge to grassroots women in Amolatar district through a community sensitization meeting organized by LEMU under the RGIL project.

Dilish who is also a passionate journalist at Hot FM radio Amolatar is using the broadcast platform to advocate for change adding that she successfully secured free airtime to discuss women's land rights.

This strategic move she says has resulted in a significant shift in grassroots women's perspectives empowered by the broadcasted information, grassroots women have started reporting cases of abuse and land grabbing previously ignored, challenging the belief that women are voiceless in land-related matters.



Ms Dilish poses for a photo in the middle of the land she intends to purchase

Dilish's dedication and advocacy become catalysts for positive change, fostering a community where women's voices in land rights are not only heard but respected.

"I thank UCOBAC for the peer learning and exchange platform, it has been life changing and I hope they can reach out to more grassroots women. The women out there need to be sensitized to know their rights, many fear to even speak out." ■

"The women out there need to be sensitized to know their rights, many fear to even speak out."

Grassroots Women's leadership – Championing Women Land Rights across borders

BY RITAH KEMIGISA » Associate – Stand for Her Campaign - Uganda

Ms Florence Tumuheirwe, the Executive Director of Kigezi Women in Development (KWID), stands as a testament to the transformative power of the S4HL Campaign, a journey that has not only elevated her voice but has also become a source of inspiration for women's land rights globally.

She says the campaign has become a defining chapter in her life and career. According to Ms Tumuheirwe, the S4HL campaign has served as a catalyst, propelling her into national and international spheres and refining her advocacy skills.

Actively participating in the S4HL campaign's strategy development was a pivotal moment for Florence. It not only honed her advocacy skills but deepened her understanding of the campaign's strategic focus and purpose, enabling her to effectively convey key advocacy messages that drive positive change in regard to strengthening women's land rights.

A significant milestone unfolded during the 6th National Land Awareness Week in Kigezi, where Florence played a key role in popularizing the campaign's goal which is to close the implementation gap on women's land rights.

"I was Inspired by UCOBAC staff, Ms. Carol Kayanja, to compose the S4HL campaign song. This song has taken me to places. I have become a recognized delegate in national and international conferences because of this song," said Ms Tumuheirwe.

Florence's role as a grassroots woman leader in the S4HL Campaign has further solidified her impact. She was part of the campaign launch in Uganda and this event provided her a platform to share perspectives on grassroots women's land rights, leaving a lasting imprint in the campaign's narrative. The pinnacle of Florence's journey was representing Uganda's rural women at the International Rural Women's Day in Maputo, Mozambique. This global platform allowed her to articulate the WLRs demands uniquely and opened doors for her to engage with international delegates on advancing gender equality through secure women's land rights.

"...I will live to remember this event, I thank UCOBAC for facilitating me to represent the rural women in Mozambique. It was a great opportunity for me to be part of the women who made demands in a different style," added Ms Tumuheirwe.

She adds that the Women Deliver Conference 2023 marked another significant chapter in her life. Speaking to an international group of delegates, she discussed the crucial role secure women's land rights play in advancing gender equality and sustainable development. This platform not only exposed her to funders and delegates but also provided an opportunity to share her experiences, challenges, and suggest strategies for attaining women's empowerment and gender equality.

Beyond conferences, Florence's involvement in grassroots academies in Kigezi showcased her commitment to collective advocacy for women's land rights. She envisions the S4HL Campaign's success as a catalyst for more impactful campaigns, ultimately leading to greater strides in achieving gender equality. ■



Florence Tumuheirwe making her submission during the development of the campaign strategy

Grassroots Women's Academy – A transformative tool for grassroots women's empowerment

BY RITAH KEMIGISA » Associate – Stand for Her Campaign - Uganda



Ms Janet Lapat sensitising community members in Pader district after the UCOBAC training

In a tale of empowerment, Janet Lapat found herself at the heart of transformation through a call to participate in a grassroots women's academy under the Stand for Her Land Campaign in Lira. Fuelled by an unwavering passion for grassroots women's empowerment and her role as a fierce advocate for women's rights, she embraced the opportunity with enthusiasm. The grassroots women's academy is a tool for grassroots women's peer learning and strategizing for collective advocacy.

Returning to her home in Pader district, Janet emerged not just as a workshop attendee but as an empowered leader. The newfound knowledge and skills became a catalyst, propelling her into the intricate realm of land governance.

Armed with confidence, she set out to actively shape and influence processes that had previously seemed distant and unattainable.

Putting theory into practice, Janet took to the airwaves, orchestrating dialogues within grassroots communities. Her mission: to cultivate awareness and champion equal rights to land ownership for women. What ensued was beyond her wildest expectations – a collaborative effort that brought together members from cultural and religious institutions, local leaders, women, and men. The result? Unbiased and enriching discussions that transcended societal norms.

In the midst of this transformative journey, Janet discovered a profound lesson, "Community can take the lead in a solution to their

problems." This realization became the beating heart of her endeavours, acknowledging the inherent power within communities to address and solve their challenges.

Expressing gratitude to UCOBAC, Janet's words echo a deep appreciation for the impact on women's rights and a hopeful vision for the prosperity of future generations. Her impassioned plea extends to a flourishing Uganda, where government projects become the support lifting women from poverty to prosperity.

Janet's story is a symphony of change, illustrating that a single training call can orchestrate a movement, proving that one individual's passion can spark transformative change for an entire community. ■

A Male champion's account on empowering communities through tackling harmful social norms

BY GLORIA KALINAKI » Advocacy and Communications Officer

Peter Abura, hails from Makok Village, Kodike Parish, Nabwal subcounty in Napak District. He proudly serves as a Community Champion with UCOBAC, contributing to the project focused on "Strengthening Women's Access to Decision-Making on Communal Lands and Natural Resources."

"My journey with UCOBAC began in May 2023, a period when I had limited knowledge about land laws. However, a pivotal training session at Lavender Inn in Moroto opened my eyes to critical land legislation that emphasizing equal land access for both men and women".

Abura shared that the common belief in his community is that that only men can own land. It is also

believed that inheritance should be along the male lineage. Additionally, cases of widows losing their land rights is distressingly common in his community. After the training, he realized that these practices were deeply rooted in cultural norms.

Armed with newfound knowledge from UCOBAC, Abura and his fellow community women's land rights champions set out to challenge these discriminatory norms.

"I started trekking my entire village educating the community about the land laws and how to promote equitable ownership and inheritance rights for women and girls"

Abura further stated that during the community training sessions held, the champions emphasized

among other topic, the importance of equitable will writing. Other community conversations were around joint decision making, joint land registration, women's participation in land governance, gender and social norms etc

These community conversations are transforming gender relations in regard to land access, ownership and decision making at household and community level. The process is allowing the community to interrogate existing social norms and identify those that are discriminatory to women and girls and harmful to individuals, families and communities. The communities are also adopting practices that will lead to lasting positive change in their homes and community at large. ■



Peter Abura conducting a training

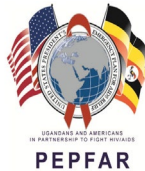
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FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE



COALITIONS

INTERNATIONAL
**LAND
COALITION**

STAND FOR HER LAND
HER RIGHTS. HER LAND. A BETTER FUTURE FOR ALL.

NLC/UG
National Land Coalition Uganda
"For People Centred Land Governance"

WLM
WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS MOVEMENT



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