

A FAIRER SOCIETY FOR ALL IN UGANDA

Helping women in Uganda to end discrimination and claim their rights

Project period: April 2014 to March 2016

Report period: April 2015 to March 2016

On behalf of everyone at Oxfam, thank you for supporting our work in Uganda which is helping women to claim their rights to land and live free from violence. We are so grateful for your support and are committed to connecting you to the work you are making possible. This report outlines the amazing progress that you've been a part of. If you have any questions, please let us know.

THE ISSUE

In Uganda, women's efforts to escape poverty are blocked by discrimination and inequality. Women routinely face violence and abuse, and are denied opportunities to make decisions. Practices such as child marriages, female genital mutilation, and gender based violence are common. Survivors of violence are often reluctant to obtain justice due to ridicule and hostility from their communities, as well as state inaction in seeking redress. Women are also denied access to land, which limits their ability to access loans, grow food, or earn an income. This holds back the efforts of women, their families, and communities to escape poverty. Ultimately, everyone suffers from the double discrimination of poverty and sexism women face.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The project is enabling women to take on leadership positions and work to secure their basic human rights. Women have been supported to understand and take part in the day-to-day decision making processes affecting their lives, and demand that the government protect their rights to own land and live lives free from violence.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Community activists trained through the project have supported women to obtain justice for violence and land rights violations. For example in Kotido district, a 45 year old widow's land was sold to another person by her brother in law. When she received an eviction notice, she approached activists trained by the project. They alerted the police, and the woman regained her land.
- People in positions of responsibility, such as police officers and clan leaders, have pledged support for women's human rights, and taken actions to protect women's rights in their communities.



Uganda profile

Population: 35.6 million

Development: 164 (of 187) on the HDI¹

Gross national income per capita: \$1,168 (UK: \$32,538)

Percentage of sexual abuse charges brought to police that result in a successful prosecution: 0.19%²

Women who have experienced some form of abuse from their husband: 60%³

Source: 2014 UNDP Human Development report, unless otherwise stated.

¹The United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite measure of three dimensions of human development: life expectancy and health, access to knowledge and standard of living.

²CSO alternative report on Uganda's implementation of CEDAW, Uganda Women's Network, September 2010.

³ Uganda Demographic and Health Survey, 2011.

UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES

Develop strong women leaders at local, district, and national levels

- **Mentor 48 community activists to promote women's rights and support them to share key messages with 9,600 other people in their communities, for example by holding village dialogues. We will also help the activists to support women to report abuse.**

104 community activists were mentored, who reached over 9,600 people with messages on women's basic human rights. In each village, one male and one female activist were trained. This will enable women to drive changes in their communities, whilst also creating male role models who challenge gender inequality, and make it increasingly acceptable for other men to do the same. Activists organised 13 village dialogues, reaching 600 religious, cultural, and clan leader. Additional meetings were held in the run up to Uganda's general election in February 2016. Dialogues discussed the issues which prevent women from accessing land, including: women are often unaware of their legal rights, making it difficult for them to obtain justice when their rights are violated; weak law enforcement mechanisms meaning many women abandon their cases in court; high legal fees making it difficult for women to follow up issues; and widows being left at the mercy of their husband's relatives, who often evict women off their property if they refuse to accept the practice of "widow inheritance", by which women marry a member of their husband's family upon his death.

To combat these issues, dialogues raised awareness of the laws which guarantee women the right to own land. Although clan leaders often make decisions about land allocation, many communities were unaware of existing legislation. Increasing leaders' awareness of the laws, which guarantee women access to land, will enable legislation to be implemented in practice. 9,180 posters and 1,050 t-shirts were distributed containing messages in Akaramojong and Luo on where to report violence and how to file a land complaint. The combination of spoken dialogues and printed materials will help women whose rights have been violated to know where and how to obtain justice.

Following dialogues, community leaders committed to support women to access land and live lives free from violence. An elder from Panyangara parish acknowledged that, when he died, he would leave his wives in charge of his land. Women also testified to the usefulness



A community dialogue held in Kaabong town on the topic of gender based violence. Photo: Oscar Oroma/KIWEPI.

of the sessions. Adokorach Brenda, from Padibe East Sub County, noted: "I appreciate the dialogues that the project organised. My husband was very abusive and I never reported this to anyone because I believed this was ok. After attending the dialogues, I understood that I could seek help from elders; I reported the matter to the elders who convened a family meeting. My husband has since stopped beating me. Last year we got five sacks of sesame. We made

decisions about when to sell the sesame together, and used the money to support our family. I am very happy.”

- **Provide refresher training and follow-up support to 100 district councillors and 100 women local leaders in policy drafting and lobbying on women's rights, including on violence against women and land ownership.**

Refresher trainings were held for 100 women leaders, who hold positions of responsibility in markets, religious affiliations, and councils. This training was combined with the support given to women leaders reported on below, to enable individuals working on the same issues and in the same areas to work together. Through training, leaders are more aware that violence is a crime, and have supported women in their communities to report injustices and demand their rights to land. During trainings, women shared their experiences, noting they had engaged with officials to demand quality services for women, and also discussed common challenges. For example, health workers continue to disregard a directive which required victims of violence to not be charged to complete form logging sexual attacks. The form is used to obtain medical treatment, and as evidence in court if the victim seeks legal aid support. This issue was identified as a key area for action. As it outlined later in the report, the District Police Commander made a commitment to look into the issue in the hope that people will not be made to pay in future, meaning more women can obtain justice.

- **Support 60 female politicians and 100 female councillors to lead improvements to violence against women and land rights legislation, and broadcast the results on radio.**

Trainings were also attended by 180 women candidates in the run up to Uganda's national election. Meetings provided a space for candidates to share common experiences and challenges, and support one another. Candidates spoke of enormous challenges faced whilst vying for leadership positions, such as a lack of support from their spouses and communities due to a belief that women should be looking after the home. It is commonly perceived that women who engage in politics will become promiscuous. As men are seen as more capable leaders, women also receive less support from political parties. Moreover, most women have fewer economic assets than their male counterparts, so find it extremely difficult to finance their campaigns. Many women, especially those who directly contested seats, faced intimidation and threats based on a belief that political seats rightfully belong to

“Before training, I used to think politics was only for men. I was afraid of speaking in council for fear of making mistakes and receiving rebukes from my colleagues. I was scared of supporting women's rights because, according to the Karamajong culture, women are not allowed to contribute to discussions in meetings. I did not know the order of discussions in the council, or how to present issues concerning women and my electorate.

“Training has given me the boldness to present my issues without fear. I now compete for positions that men previously took up. I became deputy speaker and I have now been elevated to the position of speaker through the support of my fellow women. I now speak with men on women's land rights and encourage them to allow women to own land.”

Natuk Judith, from Kotido District, attended the training for female politicians.

men. To help counter this, candidates suggested taking action to raise awareness of women's political participation, and later ran radio talks on the topic. Sessions built candidates' abilities to run successful campaigns through skills-based workshops on fundraising, budgeting, and public speaking. Training also increased candidate's knowledge and understanding of women's rights and encouraged them to campaign on issues such as violence against women. As a result of the trainings, new leaders have been registered in all districts – 40 per cent of the women leaders in council are first time candidates.

Strengthen national and district coalitions of women's organisations

- **Support members of the national Women First Coalition to identify their priorities and co-ordinate their activities, including running events to raise awareness of key issues such as violence against women and women's land rights.**

Twelve meetings were held with members of the Women First Coalition, a national coalition of women's rights organisations, to monitor progress, discuss challenges, and develop action plans. Members reported many benefits from working as a national team including an enhanced voice and visibility when speaking out on issues of women's rights, and increased leverage and impact during community outreach activities. People noted more women now have land security due to the active role of coalition members in their communities.

Members developed plans to support women's human rights. Press briefings were organised to call on the government to take action, and radio talk shows held to increase awareness of the importance of women's leadership, and decry the violence faced by women candidates. The majority of listeners who called in were men who acknowledged the negative attitudes surrounding women's leadership, and committed to support women leaders. Members also reached 3,000 community members with information on their legal rights, and the services available to them. For example, a recent amendment to the Land Act requires that spouses consent to any dealings on their matrimonial land. This has potential to protect women from having their land sold against their will. Equipping women with knowledge of the law, and the services they can call upon if it is violated, will help them claim their land rights.

- **Document coalition success stories via reports and a video documentary, and share ideas with district and national organisations at an annual learning event.**

A documentary was produced, which records project achievements, lessons learnt, and good practices which could be replicated



A girl holds a placard during a march to increase awareness of violence against women in Kaabong.
Photo: Grace Lou.

elsewhere. It will be used to engage with decision makers, in order to advocate for action to protect women's human rights. 40 people attended an annual learning event including community activists, district leaders, and representatives from police departments who have worked closely with the project. During the event, people identified the challenges which prevent women from obtaining justice, such as: lack of shelters for survivors of violence, lack of transport to follow up on cases, and limited health workers to examine survivors of violence, particularly as many survivors do not want to be examined by male health workers. Districts also shared notable achievements, including:

- Increased access to justice for survivors of violence. For example, in Kaabong district, ten women have been supported to reclaim land which was grabbed by their in-laws;
- Increased support for female survivors of violence, with at least 50 women who experienced violence receiving treatment and counselling; and
- Increased number of women in leadership. For example, a municipality in Kitgum district is now being led by a woman who defeated three male opponents.

Lobby policy makers for increased support to women's rights

- **Broadcast monthly radio shows, hold community events and produce a range of resources, including position papers and annual progress reports to raise awareness of women's rights.**

Two position papers were produced, one on land rights, and one on violence against women and girls. 1,000 copies were distributed to officials, MPs, and women leaders, and 1,000 copies were translated into local languages and given to community members. The papers draw attention to the systemic causes which perpetuate violence against women and deny their land rights, and call upon people to demand that legal protections given to women are fully enforced in practice. A simplified version of the papers has been produced as an advocacy guide, which other campaigners can use to guide their actions in the future.

[Spot messages](#) were aired on radio and television, which are accessible to those with low levels of literacy. Messages spoke out against land injustices, and emphasised that the cultural practices and beliefs which enable injustices are contradictory to the law. The adverts were used to call upon the government, traditional leaders, and communities to support in securing women's land rights and fighting violence. Additionally, six radio shows were broadcast, reaching 5,000 community members. As a result, more men have committed to bequeathing land to their wives and daughters upon their death. A [video documentary](#) was developed to portray the high toll of violence and abuse of land rights on women, their families, and their communities.

- **Engage with 200 key decision makers (including local government leaders, MPs and judges) to influence policy at regional and national levels about violence against women and land ownership.**

The project supported a conference for 250 women leaders, including newly elected MPs, civil society leaders, and media representatives. The conference aimed to: bring newly elected women parliamentarians together, allowing them to network and identify areas where they need support; enable parliamentarians to champion women's basic human rights in their work; and build alliances with other stakeholders, so together they can better advocate for change. Women MPs committed to: ensure adequate funds are allocated to

maternal health; enact policies which encourage girls' education; pass a law which will provide health insurance for all women; and ensure the Marriage and Divorce Bill is passed into law. The bill has a number of provisions on land rights and violence against women, including: clearly defining how land should be shared when a marriage ends, banning practices such as widow inheritance, and requiring a woman to consent to a marriage before it takes place. The bill would go a long way to protect women's rights if it is made law. [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), and a press conference were used to publicise the event. 140,000 people were reached by Twitter alone. During the press conference, women leaders re-affirmed their commitments to women's human rights, creating visibility and momentum around the changes they were seeking to make.

"As a councillor, I will protect women's rights to land. A widow came to me because her in-laws wanted to push her off her land. I spoke to her in-laws, and then referred the case to paralegals from the Human Rights Commission. They appointed a lawyer and supported the woman with her court proceedings. She won the case and has reclaimed her land."

Anonymous sub-councillor.

- **Train 240 district and national decision makers about women's land rights and violence against women policies and laws, and also on their own roles and responsibilities in regard to protecting women from violence.**

Training was held for people with responsibility for protecting women's human rights, such as community officers, police officers, and those in charge of allocating land. Although the project originally planned to train 240 people, this number was reduced to 100 to reflect the number of officials in local areas, which was lower than expected. Holding open conversations with those who handle cases of violence on their responsibilities for protecting women is critical to ensure each case is dealt with professionally and with respect for women's human rights. Participants gained an understanding of how they can use their offices and authority to address violence and land rights injustices. For example, police departments have integrated the knowledge they gained in their community policing programme. This will ensure communities continue to receive information on the justice process and services available to them in the future.

A deeper discussion was held around the cultural practices which lead to violence against women and land injustices. One chief suggested the practice of bequeathing land to boys and men stemmed from a fear that, when a girl marries, her husband will take over her land, meaning land could become the property of a different clan. By the end of training, chiefs acknowledged that historical biases have left women completely dependent on their husbands' families, and attendees pledged to increase raise awareness of women's land rights among their communities.

- **Hold six regional forums to support political leaders to improve laws on land rights and violence against women, and to commit to pro-women economic and social programmes.**

Forums brought together 150 people, including women who have been reached by project activities, members of civil society organisations, and people in positions of responsibility. They agreed upon strategies to address violence against women and land rights injustices:

Issue identified	Strategy agreed upon
Partnerships between (different) individuals and agencies seeking to protect women's human rights are not very strong.	Attendees committed to networking and forging partnerships with the justice system. As a result In Lamwo district, a land matter was reported to a coalition member who linked the survivor to the district human rights committee, and the land dispute was resolved.
The Area Land Committees were not active and therefore not adequately playing their roles in resolving land disputes in the communities.	Committee members agreed to share information they had gained with other members, and to emphasise the responsibilities and importance of each role. The Assistant Chief Administrative Officer committed to recruit a Land Officer in Kotido district, a position that has been vacant for the past five years. Land Officers resolve land disputes and raise awareness of land rights.
Lack of knowledge on court proceedings has led to many cases being dismissed in court due to a lack of witnesses, as people are afraid of testifying in court.	Those with a responsibility for protecting and upholding women's rights committed to use their offices and authority to raise awareness on court processes and the importance of witnesses in securing a successful prosecution.
Police often fail to pay health workers who complete police form 3A, which records sexual assault, so costs are passed onto survivors.	The officer in charge of Kotido district central police committed to writing a letter to the police headquarters about this issue. Partners also discussed the possibility of meeting with the Uganda Human Rights commission field officers to request more copies of the form, in order to make it available free of charge.

Following forums, women's rights organisations raised awareness of women's human rights through drama performances, radio shows, marches, and [television spots](#). This has already translated into action on the part of officials. For example, the District Police Commander made a commitment to look into the issue of survivors of domestic violence being forced to pay for police form 3A in the hope that people will not be made to pay in future, meaning more women can obtain justice.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Activity	Full year budget (£)	Spend April 2015 to September 2015 (£)
Develop strong women leaders at local, district, and national levels	61,274	41,693*
Strengthen national and district coalitions of women's organisations	25,358	23,341
Lobby policy makers for increased support to women's rights	53,258	56,568
Core project delivery costs	45,110	40,748
Essential governance, management, and financial control	12,950	12,950
Total	197,950	175,300

*The project was able to make savings on this budget line. Rather than holding separate trainings for women's caucus members and women leaders, the trainings were held together. This was more efficient, and allowed women to network and work together to protect women's human rights.

EMMA'S STORY



Emma speaking at the annual learning event.
Photo: Julius Ceasar/Oxfam.

Emma has just been re-elected as Kaabong district councillor. Emma's leadership is characterised by the fact that she herself has faced many of the problems the women she represents have grappled with. She uses her personal experience to inspire and help other women to surmount their challenges.

"I faced a fierce battle with my in-laws when my husband died following a terrible accident. The in-laws moved swiftly, before his body could become cold, to snatch whatever he had left behind. They started with our seven cows and 27 goats and moved to grab the land too. These people wanted to take everything, with no plans to support my children. I reported the matter to the district land board. The police spoke to my brothers-in-law, and settled the matter.

The land is in my name now. My brothers-in-law kept the cows and goats."

"When I first declared my intention to contest as a district councillor, I was met with stiff resistance with some men angrily asking me why I was contesting for 'seats of men'. This year, Oxfam reached men and women with messages on the importance of supporting women leaders. The project provided training and formed a network of women leaders. I gained knowledge and skills which boosted my confidence during my re-election campaign. I have used my knowledge to win the hearts of the men and women who voted for me when I challenged more than five men to win my seat."

"Through the project, women leaders held community discussions on the problems women face. As a member of the network of women leaders, I spoke out against violence against women and advocated for women's land rights. Because communities saw me speak out passionately condemning these abuses and supporting survivors experiencing abuse, they believed I could continue to be a good leader."

Many women now seek Emma out in her capacity as a district councillor. Emma recalls a particularly challenging case of rape. Emma dragged the man to the police, and later found he was HIV positive. She advised the woman to come for testing every three months, and supported her to start taking medication. The man was eventually imprisoned. Emma has also organised Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLAs), which give women the opportunity to save money and take out loans at low interest rates.

"Borrowing money has given women leverage. In the election, an unprecedented number of women borrowed money to finance their campaigns. Most Local Council chairperson positions are now held by women. This is a sign of great things to come."

THANK YOU. YOUR SUPPORT IS HELPING TO THOUSANDS OF UGANDAN WOMEN TO CLAIM THEIR RIGHT TO A SAFE AND SECURE LIFE, FREE FROM ABUSE AND DISCRIMINATION.