



**THE HUMANITARIAN
PLATFORM** FOR LOCAL
AND NATIONAL
ORGANISATIONS IN UGANDA

Honoring a Woman in the Humanitarian Arena

*“Women usually don’t start wars, but they
do suffer heavily from the consequences”
-UN Women-*



Special Edition
Humanitarian Platform Newsletter:
Issue 4 - March 2019

Editors Note



Dear Readers
Greetings!

Welcome to the 4th Issue of the Humanitarian Platform for Local and National Organisations quarterly newsletter.

It is with great pleasure that I unveil to you our special Issue of the Platform Newsletter, themed **“Honoring a woman in the humanitarian arena”**. Around the world, women and children undertake perilous journeys in search of safety. The world is currently facing its worst refugee crisis since the Second World War, due to conflicts, persecutions and natural disasters intensified by climate change. As such tens of millions still living in their homes or displaced within their own countries are also in critical need of humanitarian services. While everyone suffers in crises, women and girls experience unique risks. Approximately 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence, and gender-based violence increases in conflict settings. More than 70 per cent of women have experienced gender-based violence in some crisis settings.

While women and girls all over the world face related challenges regarding gender based discrimination, we need to visualize what it's like for a woman that is in the humanitarian crisis; the kind of vulnerability of such a woman is incomparable and unimaginable. In such situations, some women have fought and pulled through and others lost the battle together with their children.

In commemoration of this year's International Women's Day themed **Think equal, build smart, innovate for change**, we as Local and National Organisations in Uganda would like to recognize the unsung heroines, by taking a moment to stand with all the mothers of nations going through rough and tough times; and also convey the desired appreciation to all local and national humanitarian organizations in Uganda; and individuals that have worked so hard to make a difference in these women's (girl child, teenage girls, Widows, Mothers) lives in different capacities .

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Lastly, we would like to recognize the great contributors of this issue i.e. African Women and Youth Action for Development-(AWYAD), Isis-Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE), are Community Empowerment for Rural Development (CEFORD) and Patongo Counseling Community Outreach (PCCO). Your stories are a source of information to someone. Keep telling your stories.

For those who would like to join the platform membership, share stories or provide feedback, contact the focal person on c.kyasiimire@ngoforum.or.ug
Enjoy the read!

Clare Kyasiimire, Focal Person Humanitarian Platform

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Humanitarian Platform

Globally

women and children undertake perilous journeys in search of safety due to conflicts, persecutions and natural disasters intensified by climate change.



Up to
35%

Of women worldwide have experienced physical or sexual violence in conflict settings



More than
70%

of women have experienced gender-based violence in some crisis settings.



In Uganda



By 2017 Women and Children formed

86%

Of the Total refugee population of

1.2 million

Honoring a woman:

“I don’t need to be reminded or triggered in any form, in order to offer assistance. Its within me and I take it as my primary role and a reason why I live...”



Ritah Nansereko is a teacher, a gender and Human Rights advocate. She is the Team Leader of African Women and Youth Action for Development-(AWYAD) a national humanitarian and development organization. “Truly, am doing exactly what I was prepared for during my childhood. Leadership full of service “She added. I am fighting to bring out the untapped potential of vulnerable refugee women and girls, so that they can stand on their own, re-build their communities and be at the forefront of leadership and peace building.

Heavily pregnant, on hearing the news about the refugee influx, I made a field visit to Lamwo district, in the areas of Ngomoromo, Padibe, palabek and Aweno lwiyo and witnessed women and children suffering! Women and children from South Sudan formed over 80% of the total number of refugees who had trekked in Uganda for safety towards the end of 2016. They used to sleep under the trees, shared water with animals, but felt better living in such a condition than joining the refugee settlements in West Nile. They were afraid of the tribal wrangles; facing the situation they were running away from. Sexual Gender Based Violence cases were very rampant and human rights violation was at its uttermost.

“My father was killed during the Luwero triangle war and left me in my mothers’ womb at three months of pregnancy. Being an orphan, my rights were constantly violated and so I was taken to the convent where I grew up from”

“I am fighting to bring out the untapped potential of vulnerable refugee women and girls, so that they can stand on their own, re-build their communities and be at the forefront of leadership and peace building.”



Through AWYAD, I was able to champion the lobbying and advocacy that led to the establishment of Palabek refugee settlement in Lamwo district. The work involved mobilizing the refugee communities, promotion of social cohesion among the refugees and hosts, conducting dialogues with the district officials to create an environment of refugee-acceptance, and peaceful integration. I later presented a petition to Hon. Minister for Disaster preparedness and refugees in January 2017, highlighting the plight of refugee women and children, and the need for his urgent intervention. Indeed, he responded positively and took immediate actions that in a short time led to the establishment of Palabek refugee settlement on 17th April 2017. However, this great news found me laying on my hospital bed after a C-section, in pain, I couldn't help but smile...Thinking of how God made me create such an impact even when I was heavily expecting and, in a place, where health services and security were not a guarantee.

Much as the situation for the refugees in Palabek somehow improved when humanitarian agencies intervened, I realized that the local government whom we started the struggle with, was left out with no role to play, yet in reality, they play a central role of planning, budgeting and delivering social services to the communities including refugees. I saw this as a big gap that needed to be addressed as well. I therefore started a campaign to bring to the attention of central government and UNHCR of the need to include local governments in planning and management of refugee affairs in Uganda. In this campaign I brought on board ULGA and the parliamentary forum on DRR for joint actions. By the end of this campaign, Local Governments were co-opted onto the CRRF steering committee, which is currently co-chaired by the minister for local government.

My humble work with refugees in Uganda, has opened doors for me to engage in refugee matters across the borders, with the recent invitation that came from the House of Commons-Canada, the high-level

meeting with the Global Affairs' officials in Ottawa, together with the presentation during the International Refugee Rights Conference in Toronto. This has furthered my work of advocating for a gender stand-alone budget during emergencies, and increased resource allocation to local humanitarian actors.

I will continue with the struggle, until the commitments in the Grand Bargain and the Global Compact about the "shared responsibility" and "localization" are realized.

Ritah Nansereko
Team Leader
African Women and
Youth Action for
Development-(AWYAD)

Making Trauma Relief Central for effective Humanitarian Response for Women and Girls in Post Conflict Contexts

“We ran away from the fighting in Malakal in 2013. It took us three days to reach Poloch and from there it took us two hours to reach Juba. From Juba we used a vehicle to reach Uganda. We spent nine days in Elegu and were taken to Nyumazi settlement. I am here with my mother, father, four sisters and three brothers. When we were running away we met people and they stole our food, our water and even clothes. So for the two days

before we reached Poloch we had no food or water. I prefer it here because there is no shooting, you do not see guns or anything related to guns. I miss home but I hate the fighting and killing of people so much. I lost some friends who were shot when they were running away. Sometimes at night I remember the sound of gunshots and I get scared.” Amalia, 16-year-old South Sudanese refugee

Amalia represents many other refugee girls and young women from South Sudan who fled the violent conflict, but continue to deal with the psychological impact, years later. For a large number of women affected by conflict, psychological trauma and its long-term impact when unaddressed, plays a significant role in their lives and on the value of humanitarian response and social protection efforts that target them.

This year, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, focuses on social protection systems, access to public services and infrastructure for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. For us, it presents a critical opportunity to centre conflict-affected women, including young refugee women and girls, in the robust gender and crisis-responsive social protection systems and related programmes. This would mean that post-conflict and particularly humanitarian efforts prioritise not just provision of basic services and critical physical infrastructure but also strengthen their focus on long-term initiatives that boost resilience; as this would contribute to women’s individual and collective ability to withstand shocks and recover from crisis. Through Isis-WICCE’s research and engagements with conflict-affected women and girls, it has become increasingly clear that incorporating trauma relief must be central for social protection

programmes in post-conflict countries if women and girls are to realise better standards of living, capacity and empowerment. While women in conflict-affected contexts have benefited from efforts by the government and development partners including women’s organisations to respond to specific needs and to advance gender equality, it has also become apparent that aside from seeking more inclusion and accountability, a focus on strengthening women and girls’ resilience through trauma relief must be integrated into response plans and development processes such as the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

Having realised this in our over-time experience of work in conflict-affected parts of Uganda, Liberia, South Sudan, and Zimbabwe, Isis-WICCE sought to generate an evidence base on the value of incorporating trauma relief in social protection schemes, by partnering with Tilburg University, Makerere University and Mbarara University to conduct research on The Cost-Benefit of Cash-Transfer Programmes and Post-Trauma Services for Economic Empowerment of Women in Uganda. The research studied the impact of government social protection programmes and trauma counselling on social economic resilience among elderly and

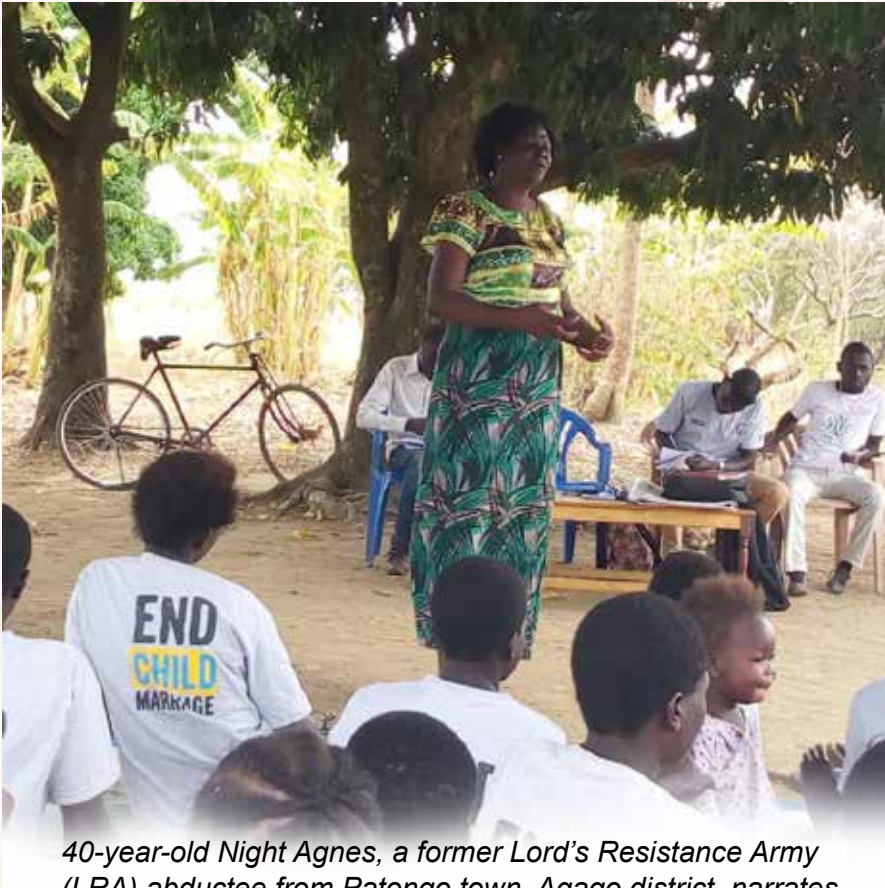
young women in highly traumatised communities in Northern Uganda. This focused on income, social inclusion, perceived financial, information and social capabilities, systems (including access to legal, financial and medical services), experiencing less worry and lastly empowerment (a change in agency and behaviour).

The study found that the effect of support for trauma relief had an independent and higher effect on income and social-economic resilience than the social protection programmes did. It was also found that the combined effect on economic resilience was highest when women received social protection support (in this case cash transfers) as well as trauma relief support (in this case counselling and a self-help low-cost post traumatic stress programme). The conclusion is therefore that trauma relief is cost-beneficial and should be addressed as a high priority in post-conflict recovery along with any social protection schemes and mainstreaming in all humanitarian response efforts.

For women and girls like 16 year old Amalia, access to trauma relief interventions as well as support for independent trauma management, is key to them acquiring sustained value from humanitarian programmes as well as their ability to meaningfully participate in decision-making processes within their settlements.

**By
Isis-Women’s International
Cross-Cultural Exchange
(Isis-WICCE)**

Undying Determination The Heart and Soul of Formerly Abducted Woman Inspires Development!



40-year-old Night Agnes, a former Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) abductee from Patongo town, Agago district, narrates how she has turned her own trauma and pain into an olive branch for many youths and families whose lives were shattered by the 20 yearlong conflict in Northern Uganda

From the earliest days of my life, every day was a wave swam over. My destiny as one who would always suffer seemed sealed. As a young girl, I was lucky to have both my parents and two siblings in our small home in Koch kweyo Gulu District. My father had three wives and he equally rotated in his three households. As the usual practice, whenever he came home we had to shift to our step mother's house because our house was very small to have us all

under one roof. My step mother never loved us but we were helpless, sometimes she would talk ill about our mother in our presence; and whenever we reported her to my mother so that we stop relocating to her house every time our father came, she could not respond. Our mother was helpless too; she was torn in between her dear children and her love for her husband.

To make the situation worse, this was the time of Lord Resistance Army (LRA) insurgencies and abductions were rampant even in broad day light. I and my two

siblings were scared to death. We never wanted walk back to our step mother's house in the evenings. I ran all my life; I could not walk because of fear to meet rebels. Every day I ran to my school Gulu Primary School and sometimes Lacor Hospital t take refuge because those were the only safe places, guarded by the local elders called the Acholi soldiers.

One fateful Wednesday night in March 1983, as we were asleep in my stepmother's house, the LRA rebels raided our home-stead and they abducted me among others. This marked the beginning of a long, life changing and traumatizing experience that I had never imagined I would encounter. My fears came to reality. I was facing my nightmares. I was not dreaming, no! I was awake. With the LRA tight security, we walked for days with no food. We depended on stolen raw cassava and sweet potatoes from people's gardens. Nothing was new anymore, the mutilation of body parts, raping and buttering among others became our daily expectation; but I was determined not to die, I hang on.

The long journey was before us to take. Many got wiry and killed and never made it to where we had got. As we neared the South Sudan border, war broke out. The air was filled with smoke, exchange of gunshots between us the rebels and the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF). As our leaders retreated, a few of us surrendered and we were rescued by the UPDF and taken back to Gulu Army barracks where were detained as investigations were being carried out. We didn't know whether we were to celebrate after getting back home; every day in detention was hell. As the army carried out the investigations, we were buttered until my former primary school head



teacher was told that I was detained; and he requested for my release. I was set free at last.

After 22 years of war in the northern part of Uganda, here I was determined to bring about change in my community. My age did not matter, in 2000 I went back to school and completed my Ordinary and Advanced Secondary levels. Under the statehouse scholarships for the disadvantaged/ war victims in Northern Uganda, I went to Makerere University Kampala and graduated in 2006.

While at the university, I and a few friends began a campaign; it was geared towards supporting children, youth, former abductees, child mothers as a result of the insurgencies. We offered psychosocial support, shared the love of God, went to the Internally Displaced Persons' camps and offered door to door counseling, did general cleanliness in the IDP camps to promote sanitation and hygiene among others. We also distributed used clothes, shoes and bed sheets donated by university students, churches and other well wishers.

Our missionary team of 350 students from across the university faculties and of different academic years formed an

association to support this cause and I was the vice chair person /the Mama of Gulu, Kitgum, Pader (GKP) Students Association for two years.

Changing a life pattern, still at university I met my Mr. Right who shared the same vision; and a victim of war too. We wedded in 2008 and started life together, a life of giving back to the community. We continued the work we were doing while at university, once in a while we invited our influential university alumni, friends, local leaders and other church leaders to support our vision of restoring hope in the land and everyone was interested and supportive.

The youth and many other community members volunteered to lay bricks to build a rehabilitation center and in 2009 Passion for Community Patongo Youth Center was established and registered in 2010 with a good administration block and many class rooms. The facility offered both formal education and vocational skills training in tailoring, saloon, brick laying, Agriculture. Today more than 4000 vulnerable children, youth and other war victims have been supported at the center. The organization has sponsored 13 child mothers to different schools across the country such as Mary land High school, Nile College Mukono, Ekitangala transformation school Nakasongola. Others

enrolled for Diploma at Kyambogo University, Uganda Christian University Mukono, Nsamizi Mpigi. Today, young mother who have been empowered by this initiative are advocating for "every girl child/woman's life counts in development" at Patongo Youth Centre.

Due to the overwhelming increase of trauma among other community members as result of high HIV prevalence among the elderly, children, widows, widowers, orphans (People living with HIV/AIDS -PHAs), Mental ill-health persons, Land mine survivors, Patongo Counseling Community Outreach (PCCO) was established and I am the Executive Director. Patongo Counseling Community Outreach (PCCO) provides psychosocial support; creates awareness on HIV/AIDS; Adolescent Sexual Reproduction Health Rights Education (ASRHRE); Mental ill Health program under Health, Humanitarian response and preparedness; Environmental management; Emergency food security and Livelihoods among others.

Submitted by;
The Executive
Director, Patongo
Counseling
Community Outreach
(PCCO)
Agnes Night.



Appropriate Post Harvest Handling Helping Me To Be Food Secure!

My name is Beatrice Tabu, I'm 37 Years old-female, a South Sudanese refugee, married with 8 children (1 girl, 7 boys), living in Eden village in Rhino Camp Settlement, Arua District. "On arrival at Eden 6, I had challenges especially poor nutrition, low income. UNHCR received us however the food was not provided on time; I could not easily change the diet because I had no money what I wanted. The only food aid given was beans and posho without vegetables which greatly affected both my health and the children's. Amidst all these challenges, I could have meals twice a day but the training and support given by CEFORD came timely.

Using the Participatory Agro Enterprise Development (PAED) approach, CEFORD trained me and provided vegetable seeds like simsim, potato vines, maize seed, cassava stalks and fruit tree seedlings. Due to this, my life style has changed completely. I can now harvest vegetables from my garden for meals at home and sell some to buy other basic needs.

Being in a group further helped me create good relationships with nationals in the hosting community. They gave me land to plant my simsim. I currently harvest my simsim using the right post harvest handling practices that I learnt from the PAED trainings.

Currently, I'm also involved in weekly savings with the income I have obtained from the sales of vegetables. This has helped me to save and easily access loans, which enables me to meet my domestic demands as a mother of eight. Out of the savings, I want to obtain more land from nationals and also start engaging in commercial farming.

Special thanks to CEFORD for the support extended to us through the Support Programme for Refugee Settlements (SPRS) Project which was timely for the improvement of my household livelihood; it provided a suitable environment for savings, increased income and generally improved food security in my home.

**By Eyokia
Donna Juliet
CEFORD**



Beatrice Tabu is drying her simsim using recommended post-harvest practice"

Super girl:

Annet is a hygiene ambassador



My school had Health club was not very active and I didn't know why. Most of the sanitary facilities like rubbish pits, hand washing facilities, dust bins were missing; even the pit latrines were not adequate, the few we had were very smelly and would be very dirty. The school compound would be busy and littered with papers and leaves. We also did not know the dangers of defecating in the open space as we had a bush right behind our school where some pupils would go since the school latrines were dirty and smelly. I actually did not know why and how to wash my hands. The hygiene situation was not good

My name is Amanduru Annet, I am 15 years old in primary six (6), in Vurra Bileafe primary school. I have been in this school for the past 5 years and I knew of many different clubs, including health club but I didn't join any.

generally. I did not know anything about my personal health, something to do with keeping myself clean, apart from daily bathing or just washing legs at times. It was a Monday afternoon at the beginning of the second term that the health club patron was selecting Health club members, and

one of the qualities was someone who is always smart. My name was nominated to be a member of the health club. Shyly I agreed but I didn't know what it meant to be in the health club.

A week later, a team from CEFORD came to our school to meet the Health Club Patron and Matron, with them they



Annet (M) with her hygiene ambassador school mates

brought some items which included books, pens and a big envelop with pictures and we were asked to carry them to Head teacher's office. I was left imagining what they were for since I was a new person in the club, however the health club teacher in a briefing said we would have a training any time the following week.

Later we were trained in June 2018 by our 2 health club facilitators, this training was for 3 days and a staff from CEFORD kept on visiting during those days. We trained on many things; among others were management of sanitary facilities, water and sanitation related diseases, food hygiene, personal hygiene, safe water chain. Some of the topics were familiar from science class but were more detailed compared to how we were taught before. It was a participatory training, we were divided in groups to discuss topics, and this made me more confident since it was also competitive.

We made our work plan for the term to have health parades once in a week, to ensure thorough cleanliness in the school and ensuring every class is clean and wash Latrines every day. Pupils no longer see this as a punishment as I and many had perceived.

I am a national, but we share our hygiene stories with friends who live in the settlement, unlike us, they are given some of the hygiene promotion items like tippy taps. But as I talk we have one at home, though we use ash and not soap since we were told it can be used in the absence of soap.

Even though our lives are perceived to be better as



HAND WASHING PRACTICE

I now know all the critical times of hand washing, unlike before I joined the health club. I didn't know how to properly wash hands and when to wash hands; in fact hand washing was optional. Today my young ones join me in promoting hygiene at home, am happy that my mother was positive each time I would correct her on where she was going astray as far as hygiene is concerned

nationals, we are still struggling with some of the household latrine construction materials at home. At school there's water trucking tank since the bore-hole got a problem which I can't explain. Sometimes the truck doesn't bring water so the school runs out of water to use. Sanitary pads are lacking for girls in the school and it becomes uncomfortable to go to school. I am appealing to our supporters to empower us with more water sources, routine distribution of sanitary materials and soap in the school.

**Compiled by:
Abiko Celesta
Betty
CEFORD**



THE HUMANITARIAN PLATFORM FOR LOCAL AND NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN UGANDA

Vision

Strong Local and National Organizations, that are well coordinated, informed and have the ability to influence the humanitarian agenda.

Specific Objectives

To promote information sharing, learning and knowledge management for better humanitarian preparedness and response.

Strengthen the institutional and technical capacities of local and national organizations to influence the humanitarian agenda.

Strengthen coordination within local and national organizations and enhance engagement with other humanitarian actors.

To act as a collective voice for local and national organizations to influence the humanitarian agenda at national, regional and global levels.

To promote partnerships and collaborations between the platform members and other humanitarian stakeholders

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