



## COFCAWE 2022 ANNUAL

### OVERVIEW

COFCAWE is addressing the economic needs of out of school teenage mothers through the provision of vocational skills, entrepreneurship skills, provision of start-up equipment for self-employment and income generation. In addition, COFCAWE has also supported teenage mothers and parents in formation and management of saving and credit schemes to facilitate them access finances to boost their businesses. Additionally, two parents groups have been supported with IGAs in poultry and fish farming. Also, COFCAWE has conducted community sensitisation and training of children, parents (as couples) and other stakeholders to respond to the community's need for protection of children from abuse, risky behaviours and moral decay in targeted communities. In this regard, COFCAWE has formed and strengthened capacity of community-based structures like parents and children's clubs plus safeguarding committees to protect children from abuse of their rights through monitoring and reporting of cases of child abuses to duty bearers.

With regard to internal Organizational Development (OD) aspects, COFCAWE has met some of the planned activities as per the OD plan that was developed at the beginning of the Strategic plan implementation. This is particularly in the areas of enhancing governance and leadership capacity (training of some key staff in leadership by EASUN) as well as strengthening of systems, processes and development of policies. COFCAWE has

continued to strengthen working through systems, procedures and processes; this is seen through institutionalisation of organizational procedures for example requisitions and retirement of funds used during activities, procurement processes, a monitoring and evaluation framework, an upgraded accounting system and consistently carrying out annual (institutional and project) financial audits. The construction of COFCAWE administrative block/ Vocational Training Centre has also started and is progressing well.

### Achievements and challenges

Through the safeguarding community structure, COFCAWE has been able to follow-up over 11 child abuse cases and of these two suspects have been remanded in prison.

COFCAWE has supported 4 parents groups with seed grant and testimonies from beneficiaries indicate that the VSLAs have eased access to soft loans which has helped parents start/ boost their businesses and consequently have been able to meet the basic needs of their children.

32 teenage mothers graduated after the six months skills course and were provided with start-up kits. Monitoring reports indicate that most of them are progressing well with individual projects.

3 peer educators clubs were formed in the year and they are reaching out to other peers in the target schools with behaviour change messages.

In relation to sustainability at institutional level, COFCAWE has started on the construction of the multi-purpose building that will provide vocational skills training space to the teenage mothers and other vulnerable girls in the community and also include its office premises and apartments for rental. COFCAWE regards this as a sustainability measure which will lessen its sole dependence on donor funding.

### **The biggest challenges included;**

The skyrocketing prices for fuel close to double of what COFCAWE had budgeted constrained the travels to the community to implement and follow-up of program activities.

The inadequate budget has made it difficult for COFCAWE to provide start-up equipment to all teenage mothers that completed vocational training courses in targeted districts. This has limited the number of trained teenage mothers who have started their businesses, self-employed and generating income to enable them meet their basic needs. This has also caused discomfort in the groups with some members feeling that others are favoured over them. In addition, the skills attained from the training may not be fully utilized as those that are not supported with start-up may lack the capital to start their own enterprises.

The small number of programme staff limited the speed of implementation because they could not concurrently implement and make follow-up on several activities in different places. Furthermore, some of the planned activities require hiring of specialised skills outside COFCAWE staffing. This is not only sustainable but also implementation of

such activities is dependent on the availability of the service providers.

## **REFLECTION ON THE 5-YEAR STRATEGY PERIOD**

### **Contribution to the 5 year strategy**

Mobilisation and sensitisation of parents on children's rights and positive parenting skills. This has contributed to a positive change of attitude of some parents to be supportive of education and to provide basic needs of their children at home and school.

Provision of start-up equipment for use in tailoring and hairdressing businesses to the trained teenage mothers. This start-up equipment has facilitated such teenage mothers to put into practice vocational skills acquired and to start their businesses for purposes of self-employment and income generation.

Formation of teenage mothers' savings groups and boosting these saving groups with seed grants (funds). This has facilitated such trained teenage mothers with access to soft loans which they can borrow to boost and sustain their tailoring and hairdressing businesses.

Formation and training of community-based structures (behaviour change clubs in schools, parents' clubs, child safeguarding committees). This facilitates community mobilisation, sensitisation, monitoring and reporting cases of child abuses to duty bearers.

Working through existing local government and religious structures such as district and sub-county local governments, primary schools, LC leaders and church and mosque leaders. This has facilitated community mobilisation and follow-up of beneficiaries on the progress made in the utilisation of support provided after implementation.

The strategy of sensitising and training both parents has leveraged collective family support in looking after children as well as enabling children to grow up in a healthy environment where parents are working together and treating each other well.

### **Effectiveness of programs**

COFCAWE is effective in implementation of its programme activities because most of the set programme targets have been achieved.

With regard to internal Organizational Development (OD) aspects, COFCAWE has met some of the planned activities as per the OD plan that was developed at the beginning of the Strategic plan implementation. For instance, COFCAWE has strengthened working through systems, procedures and processes; this is seen through institutionalisation of organizational procedures for example requisitions and retirement of funds used during activities, procurement processes, a monitoring and evaluation framework that has been reviewed and updated with support of a consultant during the MTR exercise, milestones for the next 10 years were developed and these have guided the organisational planning processes, an upgraded accounting system and consistently carrying out annual institutional and project financial audit.

The effectiveness of COFCAWE programmes is enhanced by addressing a major contextual issue of poverty which has the potential to undermine COFCAWE's efforts in supporting children who belong to the Behaviour Change groups. In this regard, COFCAWE has contributed to the economic empowerment of parents of children who belong to these groups through providing seed grants to the formed parents VSLAs which gives them an

Prioritising implementation of certain aspects of the OD plan (particularly those critical to governance, leadership and program implementation) has enabled COFCAWE to operate effectively.

opportunity to access low interest loans to enable them generate income to support their children in school and at.

### **Sustainability of programs**

Most results delivered so far by COFCAWE in targeted communities have the potential to continue in the community even after implementation. Some parents and children beneficiaries sensitised will continue to use knowledge acquired to enhance positive parenting, protection of children's rights, adoption of acceptable behaviours and prevention of sexually transmitted infections. There is a high likelihood that supported vulnerable teenage mothers will continue to use vocational and entrepreneurship knowledge and skills acquired to set up and operate their tailoring and hairdressing businesses and saving and credit schemes. It is because some teenage mothers have already set up these enterprises and saving groups which are facilitating them to boost their businesses. Some community-based structures especially the behaviour change clubs in targeted schools have a chance to continue after implementation because they are part of the school system and have teachers who can continue to guide leaders of these clubs in school after implementation.

COFCAWE has further put in place several strategies to ensure the sustainability of its programme results after implementation like provision of knowledge to parents and their children (children's rights, SRH, life skills and positive parenting); formation

and strengthening capacity of community-based structures which it can continue to use in sensitisation, monitoring, reporting and engaging duty-bearers on child protection issues during and after implementation. COFCAWE is also providing training to vulnerable teenage mothers with vocational and entrepreneurship skills, provision of start-up capital equipment to enable them set up and operate own businesses for self-employment and income generation purposes. COFCAWE in addition supports vulnerable teenage mothers and parents to establish and operate saving and credit schemes that can continue providing them with access to cheap finances during and after implementation. COFCAWE has established good cooperation with district and sub-county local government officials especially CDOs that can continue to monitor and provide follow-up support to beneficiaries during and after implementation.

At institutional level, COFCAWE has started the construction of a multi-purpose building that will provide space for vocational skills training, rentals and also include its office premises. COFCAWE regards this as a sustainability measure which will lessen its sole dependence on donor funding.

### **Involvement of vulnerable groups**

The direct beneficiaries are in five categories: children-in and out of school,

### **Factors that enabled the organisation to achieve its objectives**

- Timely disbursement of funds from All We Can is a factor that has helped COFCAWE implement the planned activities according to schedule. Availability of these

teenage mothers, local and religious leaders, and parents. COFCAWE has a well-established presence in the districts, and is a trusted stakeholder in the community. COFCAWE leverages these relationships and works together with teachers, community and religious leaders in the selection of beneficiaries. This ensures that the most vulnerable are identified as beneficiaries. COFCAWE goes into these engagements with specific criteria based on own learning which is discussed and agreed with key stakeholders: for in-school children, a key criterion based on COFCAWE's own learning is to ensure that children who are able and willing to pass on the messages from trainings to other boys and girls is important for the sustainability and scaling up of awareness interventions at school level. Girls and boys both in and out of school-focused interventions targets those from poor households – those living below the international poverty line. The girls from these households are especially vulnerable to exploitation due to gender norms and beliefs, poverty and lack of education, which in turn puts them at risk of forced early marriage, contracting HIV and early pregnancy. For teen girls who are already pregnant or have given birth, they are often ostracized and even more vulnerable as they are unable to finish school and lack vocational skills to earn an income. For every category of direct beneficiaries, consideration is given to People with Disabilities.

resources also helps COFCAWE to hire trainers with expertise in the area of VSLA management through networking with other likeminded organisations.

- The commitment of program staff towards the organisational mission and the support from the board

members in providing supervision helps in implementing activities as planned.

- The relevancy of the program activities in meeting the priority needs of the communities motivated participants to willingly attend each of the planned activities. This is further strengthened by the good working relationship with existing community structures such as the local councils, CDOs and school heads who are very cooperative in working with COFCAWE to mobilise participants for the planned activities.

**Some of the factors that prevented the implementation of activities according to schedule included;**

- The crash catch-up school programme to compensate for the lost time after closure for close to two years due to Covid 19 reduced the speed and timely implementation of some planned activities particularly in school training as schools would give limited time to spend with the children for the trainings.
- The inadequate budget coupled with high rates of inflation also made it difficult for COFCAWE to provide start-up equipment to all teenage mothers that completed vocational training courses in targeted districts. This has limited the number of trained teenage mothers who have started their businesses, self-employed and generating income to enable them to meet their basic needs. This has also caused discomfort in the group

with some members feeling that others are favoured over them.

**Reflection and learning activities**

We conducted two staff reflection meetings during which staff and other volunteers shared what went well, what did not go well, what needs to be improved in their different departments. Similarly, we have been conducting follow-up meetings with the formed clubs for children, parents and the teen mothers. During such activities we have reflection exercises in which club members respond to questions such as what did they learn during the training, how has it helped their life/family? what was not clear during the training? what have you been doing as an individual/club about what you learnt? What challenges have you been facing in reaching out to others? How would you want COFCAWE to support you to do better? What recommendations do you have for COFCAWE to improve in her programming?

The Community safeguarding committees also serve as a feedback structure for COFCAWE at community level. These have a responsibility of reporting safeguarding issues to the police and COFCAWE so that cases are followed up to the end to ensure that justice prevails. We have conducted feedback meetings with the safeguarding committees to get information on Safeguarding issues in the community and the

challenges faced in dealing with these issues.

### **Safeguarding**

COFCAWE developed a safeguarding Handbook as a first reference point for all stakeholders in handling and managing cases of child abuse, neglect and exploitation. The handbook enables the Community Safeguarding Committees (CSCs) and other society stakeholders to standardize child protection management. It provides easy to read information on child protection management and takes the practitioner through the various stages of case management from case identification to case closure. Additionally, the SGCs were trained on their roles and equipped with reference material which they are using to guide them as they execute their child protection role in the community. The idea of having a local Council leader on the SGC is proving very helpful as they keep disseminating advocacy messages during community events like burial and weddings. The communities are now aware and committed to reporting abuse cases to police authorities.

COFCAWE's strategy of constituting safeguarding committees in the communities where it works, that are charged with the responsibility of handling and reporting child abuse cases committed in the communities has contributed to an increase in the number of child abuse cases reported to the various duty bearers.

### **Networking and partnerships**

COFCAWE is a member of the network of CSOs working in Mayuge district and through this network, COFCAWE was identified to participate in the review of the child rights violation tracking tool designed by UGANET.

COFCAWE is a member of the Women Human Rights Defenders Network. This network gives support in all forms to the members who are the human rights defenders in case they face challenges while doing their work.

COFCAWE involves the Community Development Officers (CDOs) of targeted sub-counties in the implementation of some activities such as selection of beneficiary teenage mothers, training and sensitisation activities and monitoring, reporting and follow-up cases of child rights abuse reported to the police. The CDOs are aware of COFCAWE's activities and have indicated a willingness to continue monitoring, reporting and follow-up of cases of child abuse. These stakeholders have further showed a willingness to continue supporting teenage mothers above 18 years to register their groups at the sub-county, and during the process of their applications to access available youth funding opportunities at the sub-county and district local government level.

## **Case study**

### CaseStudy1.

Aidha Nandago, a resident of Bugoye village, Mayuge District is one of the parents who benefited from the VSLA initiative.

'I came to know about COFCAWE after I received a letter inviting me and my husband for a parents' training. After the three days' training, we were supported to start a savings group where we were routinely visited for support and given a seed grant.'

Before we started saving, I and my husband struggled to pay school fees and other school requirements for our children. During school time, some of them spent most of the time at home because we were not able to meet the school requirements and at one point one of the girls nearly dropped out.

Worse still, I always struggled with other basics like children's clothing, medical care, among others because all responsibility was left to my husband being the family head, little did I know the beauty of working together.

Aidha revealed that she got a loan of 350,000/= from the group and paid fees for her children including the one who was in senior four. Am very confident that when schools open, my children will report back during the first week.

Relatedly, with the accumulated savings at the end of the year, she managed to buy 3 goats. 'I used my money to get goats, my farm is enlarging because one of them produced and I now have a total of 5 goats.' Aidha revealed that she hopes to use the proceeds from sell of kids to meet the immediate basic needs in the home including paying schools for her children, she further hopes that the farm will expand and in future she will sell some of the goats to get a cow which will generate daily income from the sell of milk.

Aidha thanked COFCAWE for the support and contribution towards individual and community development.

### Case study 2

The chairperson Mabirizi village, Mr. Kisambira Saadi praised COFCAWE for their endless support to the people of their community.

'I came to know about COFCAWE during mobilization for parents' training. After the training, we mobilized amongst ourselves to start a saving group as one activity that would keep us together but also to ease provision of basic needs at homes.'

'Being a father of 10 children, I struggled to efficiently fend for my family especially when it came to clothing, school fees and requirements. Sometimes my children went to school in turns and many times they did not get their progress reports at the end of the term due to failure to clear school dues.

During an interview, Kisambira opened up that the VSLA initiative through the soft loans accessed has supported him take his children to school, bought five local chicken and 2 goats.' I have children at secondary and primary level. and I can proudly share that I will be able to pay their school dues.'