



## CONCERN FOR CHILDREN AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT (COFCAWE)

### 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

#### Introduction

Concern for Children and Women Empowerment (COFCAWE) is a national Non-government Organization established in 2006, and formally registered as an NGO by the NGO Board in February 2007 with permit NO. S.5914/6897. The organization is currently located in Jinja, Busoga sub region and its main work is to empower women and children in rural communities of Uganda.

The vision of COFCAWE is “**healthy and happy children in Uganda enjoying their rights**”.

The mission is **to empower in and out of school children with special focus on teenage mothers with socio-economic skills and health education through participatory methodologies for improved well-being.**

In implementing the five-year strategy, COFCAWE is working with the following values: Participation, Empowerment, Solidarity, Transparency, Dialogue, Gender equality, and Team work.

#### Strategic focus;

1. Gender inequalities which disempower children especially the girl child rendering them vulnerable

to abuse, exploitation and neglect leading to school dropout, child labor, early marriage and teenage pregnancy.

2. High HIV and AIDS prevalence and poor SRH among children (12-18) affecting their health and productivity
3. High levels of poverty that affect the well-being of women, particularly teenage mothers in Busoga sub region

#### The four strategic responses:

Conduct advocacy campaigns against gender inequalities which disempower children especially the girl child making her vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and neglect leading to school dropout, child labor, early marriage and teenage pregnancy.

Equip in and out of school children with knowledge and skills that will reduce their risk and vulnerability to Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) related challenges which include; HIV/AIDS/STDs, family planning, menstrual management and sexuality.

Enhance economic empowerment of teenage mothers through provision of entrepreneurial/vocational skills and Income Generating Activities (IGAs).

Strengthen COFCAWE's capacity to operate effectively and efficiently.

### **Accomplishments during the period under review as per project outputs**

#### **Annual Output 1. Linkages with local authorities have been established and COFCAWE plans have been acknowledged and integrated into the local authority development plan**

- COFCAWE conducted an orientation meeting with 9 (3 female and 6 male) stakeholders of Kamuli District. The objective of the meeting was to introduce COFCAWE's planned intervention in the district supported by All We Can. The activity took place on the 27th/02/2020 and was attended by 9 participants from the departments of education, health, gender, probation, community development and CAO's office. Participants recommended COFCAWE interventions to start from southern division because of the need in the community.
- Respective stakeholders at division level were mobilized and oriented about COFCAWE's intervention on the 28th/02/2020. 19 participants including the LC III Chairperson, town clerk, councillors, Head teachers, religious leaders and local council chairpersons attended the activity. The youth councillor noted that the

program was timely because the problem of teenage pregnancy had negatively affected the community including his sister who had not progressed academically due to the same problem.

#### **Annual Output 2. Improvement in knowledge/attitudes regarding child rights among the local leaders and beneficiaries**

- 36 (10 female & 26 male) participants including religious, local leaders and school heads attended the advocacy workshop on the 10<sup>th</sup>/11/2020 at southern division offices in Kamuli. The meeting discussed issues of child protection in the division and resolved to formulate a bylaw on child neglect and COFCAWE was to follow up with the division council to this effect.
- One training on Gender, Children Rights and Responsibilities out of the 03 initially planned was conducted targeting school children at Butabaala primary school. The training was attended by 47 (38 girls and 9 boys) school children in Kamuli District on the 10<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup>/3/2020. The training focused on themes of gender roles and how they affect the boy and girl child if not properly shared, forms of child abuse and the steps one can take in case it happens. The aim of the training was to empower children with information

on their rights so that they can be able to protect themselves. Funds for the other two trainings was repurposed due to the closure of schools to cater for the emergency response.

- 1,000 posters were developed, printed and distributed in the target communities of Mayuge and Kamuli. The advocacy messages included “please give me a second chance” and “I have made a choice to stay in school until I complete my studies. What about you?”

### **Output 3. Increased understanding of parental responsibility among parents**

- Three 3 days’ trainings were conducted on gender issues, child and human rights for 94 parents (55 women and 39 men) on the 25th-27th/6/2020, 20th-23rd/08/2020 and 4-6th/11/2020 at Butabaala, Busota and Kananage communities respectively. These trainings were aimed at equipping parents with knowledge and skills on how to nurture children (both boys and girls) which would translate into reduced socialization gender biases. The focus of the training was majorly on SRH, gender roles, access, control and ownership of resources plus child protection. The methodology used was participatory involving group work and role plays to stimulate

participants’ feelings. It came out that the training had helped them to re-examine themselves and they realized that both husband and wife had issues which required addressing for harmony to prevail in the marriages. It came out prominently that men were defiling own daughters in the community. However sometimes these cases were not reported due to fear of enmity and harsh reactions from the perpetrators.

- 3 parental guidance clubs with leadership teams were formed to continue with the activities of peer education in the communities of Butabaala, Busota and Kananage. The clubs were given guidelines which would help them run and manage the activities of the clubs. The club leadership took issues of child protection seriously as COFCAWE staff was contacted by the vice chairperson of Butabaala parental guidance club to intervene in the defilement case which occurred in their community. COFCAWE was however not able to support because the victim was not a program beneficiary. For future planning, COFCAWE will target all children in the community in case of abuse cases. Members of Butabaala parental club have been reaching out

to the community with positive parenting messages through a local radio where airtime was offered by the owner who happens to be a club member. COFCAWE staff have also been **invited to speak to the community through this initiative.**

#### **Output 4. Children making informed SRH choices**

- A 3 days training on Sexual Reproductive Health among 47 (38 girls and 9 boys) in school children was conducted by COFCAWE staff at Butabaala Primary School in Kamuli District on the 13th-15th/3/2020. The focus of the training was on HIV/STDs prevention, adolescence management, sexuality, menstrual management and life planning skills. This was to empower children to know their bodies and changes which occur to them and how to manage challenges of the transition period. The life planning skills would help the children to live with themselves and others without problems thus empowering them with abilities to make life choices. It was realized that children were engaging in sexual activities at an early age and they were always having sex with fellow children in the nearby bush. After analysis of the consequences of early sex, children pledged to abstain from

sex until after they are 18 years and above. It was noted that acts of defilement were very rampant in the area as children noted that one girl had been defiled and killed a few weeks before the training. COFCAWE encouraged girls to always report cases of sexual abuse to the authorities.

- One three day's training was conducted on the 20-22/08/2020 among 38 (33 girls and 5 boys) out of school children including teenage mothers by COFCAWE staff in Bunangwe zone. The focus of the training was on HIV/STDs prevention, adolescence management, sexuality, menstrual management, family planning and life planning skills. This was to empower children to know their bodies and changes which occur to them and how to manage challenges of the transition period. The life planning skills would help the children to live with themselves and others without problems thus empowering them with abilities to make life choices.

#### **Output 6. Increased knowledge on STDs/HIV prevention, among children**

- The issue of HIV/AIDS and STDs prevention was handled during the school training among 47 (38 girls and 9 boys) children conducted by

COFCAWE staff at Butabaala Primary School in Kamuli District on the 13th-15th/3/2020. The methodology used was that of code presentation where pictures showing STDs and a film on STDs were used during the session. Children noted that they had never got a chance to see how STDs affect the reproductive organs if not treated in time. One child confided in one of the trainers and shared that she had sores in the private parts but had never shared with anyone. The trainer encouraged the child to go to the health Centre for treatment.

**Output 7; Increased livelihood skills development among teenage mothers**

- Mobilization of girls out of school was done by the help of local council Chairpersons of the three villages of Kabukye, Butabaala and Busota on the 10th/06/2020 in Kamuli District.
- Screening of girls to get the right beneficiaries was done on the 16th/6/2020 by COFCAWE staff using set standardized criteria. The criteria focussed on age (between 12-18 years) and either pregnant or with a baby. Altogether, 43 girls were registered as beneficiaries. Of these 22 were for hair dressing and 21 were for tailoring.

**Output 8: Increased financial literacy among teenage mothers particularly book keeping.**

- Training on finance management was conducted on the 18th/06/2020 with the aim of equipping teenage mothers with knowledge on basic finance management. 33 teenage mothers in Busakira sub county participated in this activity. The core themes focused on during the training included, saving, budgeting, finance records keeping and the importance of cost benefit analysis when prioritizing what to spend on. The training was conducted in Mayuge by a consultant hired by COFCAWE.
- COFCAWE conducted training to the targeted beneficiaries in group dynamics with the aim of making participants appreciate the importance of working together as a group. One of the outputs of this activity was that a group was formed in the name (Busakira teenage mother empowerment group) with 9 leaders. They also elected a patron who would work with the leadership to guide the operations of the group. The themes focused on during the training included Group formation, Management and leadership roles. 33 beneficiaries were trained. The

- group was formally registered at the sub county
- During the training on financial management, a VSLA management committee was elected to manage the affairs of the VSLA. The committee was equipped with knowledge on VSLA management. The group agreed to be meeting every Tuesday. The aim of forming the group was to enable the vulnerable supported beneficiaries to access loans from the VSLA at manageable interest rates. The group has so far given out loans to 18 members from the seed grant and own group savings.
  - The seed grant amounting to 1,500,000/= was given to the group and by the end of the year it had accumulated to 3,594,000/= which they loaned to 18 members to start own businesses. Two of the members, Naigaga Sofia – got a loan of 200,000/= which she used to start a salon business and had accumulated to 320,000/= by December 2020. Naigaga Sharifa got a loan of 200,000/= which she used to start a salon business and had accumulated to 350,000/= by Dec 2020. The rest were also doing well in their businesses as they noted that they were able to meet their basic needs and those of their babies.

- An assorted set of saving kit was procured and given to the VSLA group for teenage mothers. By the end of the year, the group had saved 2,094,000/= on top of the seed grant. This had been loaned out to 13 VSLA members to boost their businesses around Mayuge and Iganga

### **COVID-19 Emergency response**

With the outbreak of COVID 19, COFCAWE implemented the emergency response in Mayuge district which targeted 700 beneficiaries (teenage mothers, PWDs and the elderly). These received food and sanitation items which included maize flour, beans, booster porridge, sugar, milk and soap

Conducted sensitization sessions for parents and youths in Kamuli on teenage pregnancy prevention, life skills, domestic violence prevention and COVID 19 SOPs and conducted 3 radio talk shows on Busoga one Radio Station to sensitize communities on the same.

### **Successes and Challenges**

#### **Successes**

The Teenage mother group which was formed after training made savings to a tune of 2,094,000/= excluding the seed grant. This money was loaned out to 13 members who are servicing their individual loans effectively

The 16 teen mums who received start up kits are operating their businesses in the

community. One of them Sharifa Naigaga is operating a salon and has recruited another teenage mother for training. In an interview, Sharifa informed that her student was to pay 300,000/= for the six months.

One parental guidance club at Butabaala has been reaching out to the community with positive parenting messages through a local radio. One of the club members is the owner of the local radio and so he offered free airtime to the members to educate the community.

The trained school peer educators were empowered to report abuse to the authorities as one beneficiary reported the uncle who had sexually abused her and COFCAWE supported the legal process for justice to prevail. The suspect was remanded at Kirinya prisons and COFCAWE is following up to ensure that justice prevails.

### **Challenges**

- The challenges of GBV are insurmountable through an isolated approach of working only with girls and women. Engaging men and boys in efforts to prevent and respond to GBV is critical for positively transforming harmful social norms that perpetuate gender inequality and for promoting the health and safety of women and girls. For example, some teen mums were unable to complete their training because they were stopped by their

spouses for fear that other men would see them.

- During the emergency of COVID 19, the risk of GBV, exploitation and abuse was heightened, and pre-existing gender inequalities was exacerbated. Women and adolescent girls were particularly at risk of sexual violence, exploitation and abuse, forced or early marriage and teenage pregnancies. In addition, national systems and community and social support networks such as those available in schools were weakened and some perpetrators were not held to account.
- Child abuse cases in the community sometimes do not proceed to the final stages due to limitations in the support system. During implementation, COFCAWE encountered child protection cases which required her intervention but the organization was not prepared for it. For instance, there was no clear reporting mechanism for the community to follow in notifying COFCAWE (no designated staff to handle safeguarding issues). Secondly there was no budget to support the victim with transport and medical fees. This meant that abuse cases were brought to the attention of COFCAWE by chance.

- The socio-economic impacts of Covid-19 have disproportionately affected the poorest and marginalised sections of society. The lockdown in a bid to reduce the spread of COVID-19 affected livelihoods and created income insecurity. Although this is perceived as a general problem among poor and low-income households, the situation is difficult for young people especially school children, out of school youths and teenage mothers who depend on the informal market economy and small enterprises such as artisans, tailors, hairdressers, and vendors of food and second-hand clothes. For instance; Ever since schools were closed, so many girls and boys are idle and in one place, confined to one environment, they can no longer participate in social networks like sports galas, community dialogues and religious activities. So, to keep themselves busy they get involved in behaviour which could lead to unwanted pregnancies and child marriage. NBS TV- a national television station ran a story about the increasing rates of teenage pregnancies in Busoga sub-region. In particular, the bulletin indicated that over 60 learners between the age of 14-15 years in Luuka and Kaliro districts were pregnant and likely to miss school when 2nd term re-opens. As such, the unwanted pregnancies will lead to increased rates of school drop out there by affecting their ability to complete formal education that would guarantee them to have skills to earn a living in future, while child marriages will make the girls economically dependent on their husbands in their new homes which affects their decision making.
- In addition, during the lock down, all informal and small-scale businesses were closed by the government since these were considered to be non-essential. This made those involved in small scale business particularly young people to lose their source of livelihood as most of them used the capital for survival during the lock down and some young girls resorted to prostitution since they did not have start-up capital to restart their businesses when the lock down was lifted.
- Furthermore, the restrictions in movement confined married couples in their homes and the high stress levels due to loss of livelihoods fuelled quarrels and fights between husband and wife, parents and children leading to increased gender-based violence which led to loss of lives and separation of parents, leaving the children's welfare at stake. The most affected of gender-based violence are women and children as their exposure to violence increases as perpetrators might lash-out due to the economic strain caused by the pandemic, while their chances of leaving or resisting abusive relationships diminishes.



- Although COFCAWE has been able to do something during the lockdown, some planned field activities especially those that required bringing a large number of people together were not implemented as planned due to the strict SOPs instituted by Government. Secondly,

the problems that COFCAWE seeks to address have been exacerbated as gender-based violence has increased, young people have continuously lost their livelihoods and teenage pregnancies are on the rise in the target area as explained above.

**Beneficiaries**

<b>People benefitting <u>directly</u> from partners' development activities <i>supported by All We Can</i></b>	<b>Age group</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>Men</b>	<b>18yrs +</b>	<b>234</b>
<b>Women</b>	<b>18yrs +</b>	<b>212</b>
<b>Girls</b>	<b>0 - 17yrs</b>	<b>621</b>
<b>Boys</b>	<b>0 - 17yrs</b>	<b>268</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>1335</b>

## Stories of change



***Naigaga Sharifa a beneficiary from the start-up kit borrowed 200,000/= from the VSLA to start her salon shop and she is currently training others to get the skill at a fee of 300,000/= per month***



***Sandra at her shop which she started with a capital of 100,000/= from the VSLA group.***



***Deborah a beneficiary of a start-up kit at her workshop where she earned at least 100,000/= per month during Christmas***



***Busakira teenage mother group on a day of their saving and COCAWE M&E officer during a support visit to the group***

