

WOMEN-LED ACTION ORIENTED RESEARCH ON GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AND OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN UGANDA, THE CASE OF HOIMA, KIKUUBE AND BULIISA DISTRICTS



Key community Research team leaders (above) in a reflection meeting after data collection

Submitted to:

National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE)

**NGABIRANO JOHN - LEAD FACILITATOR
JULY, 2022**

**THIS REPORT HAS BEEN PRODUCED WITH FINANCIAL
ASSISTANCE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of NAPE and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union.



EUROPEAN UNION



TABLE OF CONTENTS:

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN UGANDA	5
1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH	5
1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT	6

CHAPTER 2: PROCESS OF CONDUCTING THE ACTION ORIENTED RESEARCH

2.1 INTRODUCTION	7
2.2 RESEARCH APPROACH	7
2.3 SAMPLING	8
2.4 SELECTING AND TRAINING THE RESEARCH TEAM	10
2.5 DATA COLLECTION PROCESS	10

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1 KEY MANIFESTATIONS / ACTIONS OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AND OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AGAINST WOMEN	12
3.2 DRIVERS OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AND OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS	15
3.3 CONSEQUENCES OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE	19
3.4 WHAT WOMEN CAN DO TO REDUCE GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN HOMES AND COMMUNITIES	23
3.5 COLLECTIVE ACTIONS TAKEN BY WOMEN TO DEFEND THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS AGAINST GBV IN THEIR AREAS	25
3.6 INTERVENTIONS BY THE LOCAL LEADERS	26
3.7 KNOWLEDGE ON LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS	27
3.8 ACCESS TO LEGAL AID	28
3.9 PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT TO WOMEN WHO HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY GBV IN THE ERA OF COVID 19 PANDEMIC AND OIL EXTRACTION ACTIVITIES	28
3.10 EXISTENCE AND OPERATION OF SAFE SPACES	30

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 CONCLUSIONS	31
4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS	35
ANNEX 1: REFERENCES	40
ANNEX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE RESEARCH ON GENDER BASED VIOLENCE	41

LIST OF ACRONYMS:

GBV	Gender Based Violence
CSO	Civil Society Organization
HIV	Human Immune Deficiency Virus
NAPE	National Association of Professional Environmentalists
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
FGDs	Focus Group Discussion
KII	Key Informant Interviews
PAPs	Project Affected People
EU	European Union
CEDOVIP	Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention
STDs	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
HIV / AIDS	Human Immune Virus / Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
L.C	Local Council
WC	Women's Council
CDO	Community Development Officer
UNRA	Uganda National Roads Authority
SACCOs	Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations
MPs	Members of Parliament
PS	Primary School
BIRUDO	Buliisa Initiative for Rural Development Organization
CRPD	Centre for Research on Peace and Development

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Action Research team comprised of Women Leaders of selected small groups operating in the oil region from the districts of Hoima, Kikuube and Buliisa. These are representatives of communities from Butimba, Kabaale, Buseruka, Kaiso-Tonya, Kyakatemba, Kikayo, Ngwendo, Kakindo, Avogera, and Kisansya villages.

The research process greatly benefited from experiences, technical knowledge, labour and the leadership of different stakeholders who worked hard to make this research a reality. The Women Research Team owes a debt of gratitude to all who actively participated in various ways in the planning and implementation processes.

For a special mention, we appreciate the European Union for the financial support provided to conduct this action-oriented research and National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE) for coordinating the Research Exercise. We also extend our appreciation to the lead consultant Mr. John Ngabirano for the good guidance.

The Community Research Team would like to acknowledge the efforts added by the Lead Research team at NAPE comprising of Mr. Rajab Bwengye, the project Manager, Ms Atukwatse Peruth and Hoima Field staff for the work well done in providing guidance to the research team.

We also have great pleasure to extend special appreciation to the community research team in their individual capacity for the commitment shown to generate information on gender-based violence in our communities. Without your rich knowledge on this issue on ground, it wouldn't have been easy for this research to come to a successful conclusion.

Lastly and very importantly, we would like to appreciate the NAPE Editorial Board headed by Mr. Frank Muramuzi, the Executive Director of NAPE for the great work done towards editing and providing key insights that enabled this research to come to a successful end.

Key Members of the Research Team

- Ms Beatrice Rukanyanga
- Ms Kemigisa Sylvia
- Ms Lucy Mbuubi
- Ms Annet Kasoro
- Ms Judith Bero-Irwoth
- Ms Alice Kazimura
- Ms Kaahwa Erinah
- Ms Esther Turyahebwa
- Ms Bulandina Tumwebaze

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN UGANDA

Gender Based Violence (GBV) is defined as the harm inflicted on you by a person or group of persons based on your being a woman or a man. In this research, most respondents in Buliisa, Hoima and Kikuube districts in western Uganda said that GBV is common in homes and the most affected are women and out of school young girls and children.

The grass-root research respondents pointed out gender-based responsibilities such as paying school fees by men and cooking by women as well as terrible human rights violations such as fights in homes some of which result in death especially of women.

The study revealed that some women victims of GBV have nowhere to go for redress. They have been intimidated so much against seeking any help thereby “accepting” GBV as a new norm. Worse still, some Local Council Chairpersons are reportedly collaborating with men against women.

Therefore, GBV and its impacts is still a big challenge to the grass-root communities especially the women, girls and children. More engagement of stakeholders such as the local leaders, religious leaders, CSOs, cultural leaders, elders, the men and the women is still paramount in the districts of Hoima, Buliisa and Kikuube in western Uganda in order to ensure gender equality and fairness for all.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

In light of the 2 year project which the National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE) is implementing with financial support from the European Union titled: *“Deepening Grassroots Women Rights, Participation and Economic Livelihood opportunities in the Era of Expanding Oil and Gas Extraction Developments and the Covid 19 Pandemic in Uganda”*, NAPE organized a meeting in March 2022 training women from the districts of Hoima, Buliisa and Kikuube on movement building. It emerged that the major women’s issue is gender-based violence. This was reportedly by many causes such as poverty, alcoholism, oil-

induced land grabbing, and disagreements on the use of money from oil-related compensations, the covid-19 pandemic and so many others.

The above revelation well coincided with the project plan and thus NAPE urgently decided to carry out an Action Oriented / Community based Research to discover the facts in details from the victims themselves and relevant stakeholders such as the local leaders.

It was expected that the research should help to document detailed causes of gender-based violence, its consequences, and recommendations / proposed solutions by the majority victims (women themselves) as well as other critical stakeholders in society within Buliisa, Hoima and Kikuube districts.

The research further aimed to documenting information revealing the villages, which are the most affected so that when NAPE and other stakeholders are planning interventions, they should focus first on the villages, which need more urgent attention.

An action / community participatory research approach was adopted because it is more hands-on and would thus provide mostly firsthand and therefore more reliable data, which the activists' fraternity including NAPE and other interested stakeholders would base on to implement solutions which have been proposed by the communities themselves majority of whom are victims of GBV.

1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This report is divided into Four Chapters. The first chapter is the introduction and covers the definition of GBV, purpose and background of the research. The second chapter focuses on methodology for the research including research approach, sampled communities, training the community based research teams and data collection processes. The third chapter focuses on the findings while the fourth and last chapter provides the conclusions and recommendations to NAPE as well as the entire human rights activists' fraternity and the government of Uganda.

CHAPTER 2: PROCESS OF CONDUCTING THE ACTION ORIENTED RESEARCH

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A participatory community based data collection exercise was conducted in 30 villages across the three districts of Hoima, Buliisa and Kikuube. This followed a training of the research teams by the lead facilitator on methodologies of conducting a community-based action-oriented research with specific focus on GBV. The training was based on the principles of the Sustainability school under NAPE, of building community's capacity to identify problems but also find solutions so that they are primary actors in their own transformation process. Hence, the Action Research could not only identify the causes of GBV and other human rights violations but also made recommendations to guide next steps towards addressing the GBV problem and other human rights abuses especially on the grass root women, girls and children who are reportedly the most affected.

2.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

In this research, the research team adopted a participatory approach to document the GBV issues across the three districts. The team planned to gather a mix of qualitative and quantitative data, using a range of tools including semi structured interviews for respondents from the grass-root communities, focus group discussions and key informant interviews targeting women leaders, village chairpersons, local councilors, elders and religious leaders as a means to obtain firsthand data.

Members of the action research teams were selected from their communities where they were already key mobilizers in their respective villages through their CBOs. This was deliberate because being grass-root based mobilizers, they already have the knowledge advantage of Gender Based issues in their areas and thus useful in determining the approaches to the respondents in a manner that was regarded most appropriate. They also had the local language knowledge advantage to facilitate their effective communication with the respondent grass-root persons.

Aware that some of the women respondents were likely to be afraid of disclosure of their identity especially those who are victims of GBV from their husbands, it was resolved that the researchers should assure such respondents of the highest confidentiality in this research right at the beginning of the interviews. Therefore, mentioning the respondents' names was made optional to cater for such situations so that the respondents could speak freely and honestly.

2.3 SAMPLING

A total of 30 villages participated in the research. The criteria for selecting the sample communities / villages where the study took place Was as follows:

- Communities reportedly most affected by gender based violence;
- Communities where NAPE has a long working relationship with local leaders and communities especially the grass-root women and activists;
- Villages with high incidences of women being displaced from their land and increased poverty caused mainly by oil activities, and destruction of livelihoods by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The List of selected Key Informants to be interviewed included:

- Chairpersons L.C 1 (Village elected leaders)
- Chairperson L.C 2 (Optional)
- The Womens' Village leader (Mukuru wabakyara)
- Councilors
- Local NGOs / CBOs
- Members of the local Women's Council

Table 1: Sampled Communities in the three districts (Kikuube, Hoima and Buliisa)

District	Sub County	Parish	Villages	Area Research Coordinator
Hoima	Buseruka	Buseruka	- Kyakaboga - Buseruka town ship.	Ms Beatrice Rukanyanga
		Nyakabingo	- Buseruka - Bisenyi	
				Ms Annet Kasoro
	Kabaale	Kabaale	- Kabaale - Rugonjo	
		Kigaaga	- Kigaaga A - Kigaaga B - Nyamasoga	
		Mbegu	- Kaiso A - Kaiso B - Mbengu	Ms Sylvia Kemigisa
Buliisa	Ngwedo	Ngwedo	- Ngwedo - Uduk 2	Ms Judith Bero-Irwoth
		Nile	Kasenyi	
	Buliisa Town Council	Eastern Ward	Kizikiya	Ms Kaahwa Erinah
		Western Ward	Kitahurra	
	Buliisa Sub County	Kigoya	Kigoya	
	Kigwera Sub County	Northern Ward	Kakindo	Ms Alice Kazimura
		Northern Ward	Kisimo	
		Kisansia	Kisansia	
Kikuube	Kiziranfumbi	Munteme	- Kigyayo - Muziranduru	Ms Esther Turyahebwa

	Kabwoya	Bubogo	• Kyabataka	
	Kiziranfumbi	Kidoma	• Kyakatemba • Rwamusaga • Kidoma	Ms Bulandina Tumwebaze
	Kiziranfumbi	Kidoma	• Butimba East • Butimba West • Kihohoro	Ms Lucy Mbuubi

As seen in the table above, a sample considered representative enough was selected in order to be time and cost efficient while ensuring adequate data collection as far as scientifically reasonable.

2.4 SELECTING AND TRAINING THE TEAM

Upon communities selection, NAPE chose the data collection team to carry out the research. The Consultant who was responsible for training the team members and supervising the work in the field in order to ensure that the agreed research process was followed led the action research data collection team. The training had been reasonably vigorous including an in-depth learning about the key phases in Action Research namely; Planning, Action / effective implementation of the plans, Observation and Reflection aimed at ensuring a successful research exercise.

2.5 DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

A community meeting was held, as the first activity during data collection in each community / village. Community members were invited to attend with most emphasis put on the women. The meeting was intended to explain the research and confirm agreement to proceed with the research.

After confirming agreement to conduct the research, the facilitator asked community members to identify the areas which are most affected by gender based violence. In total, 30 villages were listed as gender based violence hotspots. Also smaller groups of people were selected at the community meeting to participate in the research activity under the leadership of already trained resident /

local research coordinators to carry out the action research with overall strategic guidance from the Lead Facilitator.

After the training, the team was dispatched to the field to obtain data. Members of the research team were provided with pens, papers, markers and other stationery to facilitate effective data collection. The NAPE research coordinating team together with the consultant stayed in touch with the research team for guidance and support.

2.6 COMPILING RESEARCH FINDINGS

NAPE organized another meeting together with the research team to compile data collected from the field. The exercise involved researchers presenting their own findings including challenges encountered and how they addressed them. The team also had an in-depth reflection on the findings, recommendations including discussing the format of the research publication. Their field research report drafts were filed in one consolidated file to act as future reference during the validation of the compiled research report.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings confirm that gender based violence exists in communities, is widespread and in some cases it is fatal causing extreme fear, frustration, agony and sometimes deaths. The vice is reportedly highest among young couples and needy households and the most affected are women and children. It was emotional listening to the ordeals of GBV victims mostly the women who say have nowhere to go for redress or they fear to report the gender based abuses because they are too intimidated by their abusers. There is no peace in many homes, married couples are conflicting a lot and divorce is rampant.

Furthermore, the findings in this research show that gender based violence is wide and touches aspects of land alienation, assault, property deprivation, increasing poverty and hopelessness. Some GBV victims have settled for gender-based violence and “accepted” it as an inevitable new norm! They are very desperate for any interventions aimed at curbing the GBV problem, which they say is devastating their lives.

3.1 KEY MANIFESTATIONS / ACTIONS OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AND OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AGAINST WOMEN

- **Torture and assault:** Many women reported that they are tortured and beaten. Quite often, the children are also assaulted by either parents especially the men as a result of anger and sometimes leading to their deaths. The children are also mistreated and assaulted by some stepmothers.

Various local leaders including women leaders confirmed the gender based instabilities in many homes. For example; Ms Okekech Rose, the Chairperson Women's Council of Bisenyi Village in Buseruka Sub County, Hoima district said: "Women get misunderstandings with their husbands, they quarrel and sometimes fight. Some women come to me for advice and I always talk to their husbands. Men of today are really difficult,"

- **Oil and Gas related displacements;** according to the communities consulted in the villages of Kyakaboga, Kabaale, Kaiso, Mbegu, Nyamasoga and Bisenyi, Oil and related displacements have perpetuated GBV by creating a must be in camps environment with the subsequent congestion in camps such as Rwamutonga, kijayo and kyagwali. This has worsened poverty levels among the victims and the children have not been spared too especially in regard to abandonment of schools such as Buhimba PS which was affected. The respondents in the aforementioned villages disclosed that oil displacements have immensely contributed to family breakdowns, food insecurity and land insecurity and in effect accelerated GBV issues in the communities.
- **Abandoned women;** some women were reportedly abandoned by their husbands and ran to other women. This problem has been worsened by the increase of prostitutes who migrated to the area hoping to reap from money of oil workers and oil compensation money from residents.

Various FGDs across the three districts of Hoima, Buliisa and Kikuube, confirmed that land compensation money by oil companies and UNRA for oil roads construction left many women suppressed. Most men used the compensation money to marry more women, turned to prostitutes, became

hostile to their wives, abandoned them and did not want to provide them with anything.

- **Denial of land rights;** some women are not allowed by their husbands to own land let alone participate in decisions on land-use including sometimes the land they have bought with their own meager hard-earned income. This land injustice against women is rooted in the traditional culture in the area where females are not considered a priority in inheriting land from even their own parents.
- **Limited access to oil information;** Women did not access information related to oil as sufficiently as men did because men controlled the use of mass media equipment such as radios at homes. Further still, information related to the oil sector would reach men more easily through interacting in groups in trading centres, which was not the case with women who were largely confined at home. In addition, jobs in the casual labour section of the oil industry, preferred men because of their physical strength and so women got fewer jobs.
- **Existence of Sexual offences;** rape and defilement were reported as the most common forms of sexual offences across the three districts of Buliisa, Hoima and Kikuube but most especially in the villages of Butimba, Kigyayo, Ngwedo, Kisimo, Kaiso, Nyamasoga, Kidoma, Kyabataka and Kisansia. Women are particularly more vulnerable to rape when they go to collect firewood and fetching water in faraway places and when they move alone at night. In homes with step girls who are not produced by the current husband, the temptations are reportedly high for the stepfathers to defile the young girls. Other common instances include relatives, salon operators, fishermen and bodaboda operators defiling young girls including school going children. On a positive note however, both communities and law enforcers take seriously the offences of rape and defilement. Nevertheless, law enforcers are sometimes not helpful to the victims who do not have money to facilitate the process. Some failures to report such sex assault and other GBV evils were a result of lack of information and places where the affected felt safe and secure to open up on these cases and secure help.

- **Connivance against GBV women victims by L.C1s;** Many L.C 1 Chairpersons are men and were reported to be biased in favour of the men's side on who is more affected by GBV. Also, many LC 1 Chairpersons reportedly take bribes from men and collude against women on GBV and other conflicts such as on oil compensation money, selling family land, cases of family negligence and other human rights abuses.

Greed among local leaders was further unearthed during this research exercise whereby some L.C 1 chairpersons boldly said that they have no time to work for free. They asked for money from the research team in order to accept to be interviewed. Definitely, there was no such money on plan and therefore such leaders disallowed the research interviews yet the subject matter of GBV is a very serious problem affecting the people they lead.

- **The impact of covid-19 pandemic;** most respondents in Buliisa, Hoima and Kikuube districts reported that covid 19 lock down and its attendant restrictions in movement caused massive loss of employment, increased poverty in homes where now victims were locked down with their abusers thus perpetuated many GBV evils.

Similarly, the effects of covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown reportedly forced some men to flee their homes after failing to provide basic needs for them. In some instances, the abandoned women were helpless as seen in Kaiso B village in Buseruka Sub County, Hoima district where a man reportedly ran away from his home and left a needy and helpless pregnant woman with children to suffer alone.

3.2 DRIVERS OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE AND OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

- **High levels of poverty;** the inability among many men to provide basic household needs such as soap, sugar, matchbox, salt, clothes, school fees has resulted in domestic conflicts between husband and wife. When women ask for the necessities, the frustrated husbands turn to violence against them. Poverty in homes has become worse due to land grabbing by oil companies followed by poor compensation and the prolonged covid-19 lockdown, which worsened unemployment, killed many business activities, and thus reduced household incomes spiraling gender-based conflicts. In various FGDs, the grassroot women confirmed that homes are breaking due to limited financial abilities to support the families.
- **Alcoholism;** in the wake of oil-compensation money and the outbreak of Covid 19 pandemic, many men turned to prolonged drinking of alcohol often returning home late past midnight from discos, night clubs, bars and watching football matches. A case in point was in Kaiso B Village in Hoima district where one respondent said: “Covid 19 lockdown increased violence in my home. My husband was no longer working and was just taking alcohol every day. Each time he returned home from the bar, he beat me”.
- **Adultery;** gender based violence was reportedly on the increase due to misunderstandings related with adultery blamed on both sides of the men and women. Various respondents reported that the men working in the oil industry including oil roads constructions are using their earnings to seduce married women leading to domestic fights and divorce. In addition, female prostitutes have increased in the trading centres targeting oil workers but have ended up hooking up some married men leading to misunderstandings in some homes. Adultery has sparked-off lots of mutual suspicions to the extent that some men are not allowing their wives to own phones on fears that they will be used to communicate with other men.

- **Forced displacements by corporate companies;** forced displacements mainly by Oil and Sugar companies have reportedly resulted into family breakdown whereby women, girls and children are forced into congested resettlement camps with no shelter, increased lawlessness, lack of food and abject poverty. all these combined create fertile grounds for increased GBV according to findings from respondents in Butiimba, Kigyayo, Kidoma, Ngwedo, Kaiso, Kisimo, Rugonjo, Kigaaga, Kizikiya and Kitegwa villages.
- **Peer influence;** some married young men are part of bad groups fond of gambling practices such as playing cards and thus useless spending of money which would otherwise be used to buy essential household items such as soap, sugar, and paying school fees. Some bad peers encourage beating women during their discussions especially upon intoxication by marijuana, opium and alcohol.
- **Lack of respect among married couples;** personal character and status disparities were pointed out by various respondents as major causes of lack of respect in homes, which quite often lead to gender based violence. Status disparities are especially in levels of education and material possessions, which create pride in some people. It was reported that women who have more money than their husbands are more often disrespectful to their husbands. This is against the culture and norms of society and it causes resentment from the men thus leads to conflict in homes. Similarly, oil compensation placed money in the hands of men some of whom became proud, arrogant and subsequently oppressed their wives.

Some men were reported to be habitually ruthless to their wives and to everyone who tries to help their wives who are suffering because of GBV impacts. Some men are not even listening to elders, parents and community leaders who try to counsel them against GBV. For example, during this research, some of the research interviews especially in Buliisa district were interrupted and suspended indefinitely by husbands who found the interviews on-going and never liked it. Women reported that such cruel men became even worse to their wives when they got oil compensation money.

- **Low levels of education and awareness.** Women who never went to school were reportedly more badly-off in terms of lack of awareness of their human rights as well as the procedures, institutions and mechanisms by which they can seek redress when their human rights are violated. When for example such women were faced with GBV especially during the covid-19 lockdown, they could not assertively seek for the appropriate remedies under the law nor could they seek for psychosocial support because they did not know where to go and what to do. Such women are taken advantage of by their abusers because they know that they will get away with it. On a positive note however, during this research exercise, uneducated women confessed their low levels of awareness and asked for awareness programmes so that they get to know their rights better and how to defend them. This is commendable because it shows that they are willing to learn.
- **Land ownership;** Most women do not own land; they only have user rights and hence they are at the mercy of their husbands. Some men sell all the harvest in the name of the land being theirs thereby instigating conflict between them and their wives who in most cases are the producers.
- **Infertility / barrenness;** both women and men can biologically contribute to the inability to bear children but according to society norms of the area where this research was conducted, infertile women are more stigmatized and quite often are mistreated by their husbands and husband's family and divorced.
- **Disagreements over family planning;** in some homes, couples have not agreed on the use of family planning and have varied opinions about it. It is believed that some women lose their libido due to family planning. On the other hand, some men believe that family planning is a cover-up for women who have got other men whom they are avoiding to pregnant them.

Religion differences; some women reportedly over-concentrate on religion and abandon their family responsibilities hence creating gender based clashes at home. Some women are accused of giving more respect to their religious leaders than their husbands to the annoyance of the latter. The other point of contention is couples belonging to different religions; some

men want to dictate on which religion the woman should belong. The ensuing disagreements sometimes cause conflicts in such homes.

- **Land shortage and food crisis;** some households are facing acute shortage of land for cultivation hence famine and starvation in their homes. During the Covid 19 lockdown, many men would stay at home demanding for food all the time and yet there was no food. Some men don't want their women to work for money yet they are not providing them with their needs including food. Some men instead steal money from their wives and sell their belongings without their consent such as goats, chicken, produce among others. This has increased GBV prevalence in the area.

On the other hand, the research established that, some men don't want their wives to use their land to grow food for income. They always ask them; "did you come with any land from your father's home?" In instances where land is available, many men do not want to dig yet there are many people to be fed in the home including the school going children, the wife and the man himself. Hence, the woman is overworked but still, the food she produces alone is not enough for the entire family. Some men are refusing to eat food at home that it is not delicious yet they are not providing the money for the required spices.

- **Interference from in-laws;** many mothers and sister in-laws were said to be interfering in marriages especially of young couples and sometimes ruining them. The interference is especially in form of gossip and offering bad advice. The research established that in worst case scenarios, witchcraft is involved when some members get desperate and are trying to seek for solutions or revenge but unfortunately from superstitious sources. Gossip and bad advice even extends to friends and neighbours. This has been tougher in the era of Covid-19 and oil compensation during which adultery and the accompanying gossip and lies were at their highest in many communities. Some self-styled Religious prophets locally known as (abasabizi) make revelations such as claims of witchcraft in some homes, which creates GBV in the affected homes.

- **Impunity;** Lack of strong laws and weak mplementation against GBV was pointed out by various respondents as a cause for impunity, which has escalated GBV in their communities. A case in point was in Kizikyia village in Buliisa district where a respondent revealed that eight years ago, her husband fled the home for a new wife. The old woman was left to take care of the children including school fees yet she does not have reasonable source of income. She went to the CDO and reported the matter, the CDO called the man but he refused to come, and nothing happened. Such examples are believed to have inspired some men who abandoned their wives during covid-19 lockdown upon failing to cater for their basic needs.
- **Bad communication;** Lack of transparency on sources of income was mentioned by many respondents and said it is contributing to the increase of GBV in the three districts. Many couples are reportedly not communicating with each other and hence have failed to mend fences and forgive each other in case of misunderstandings in their relationship. Sometimes, when attempts to communicate are made, they instead turn sour and end in disparaging remarks and insults of one side against the other or on both sides. In the end, quarrels and fights take place in which the women are more affected.

3.3 CONSEQUENCES OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

- **Bodily harm and Deaths;** being largely characterized by physical fights, some GBV have turned some couples into disabled persons. Some respondents reported broken bones and most victims are women. Some fights result into deaths but there are fears that due to corruption and inadequate awareness, some cases go unreported and are thus not captured in any available statistics. Some people have reportedly acquired mental health problems and consequently committed suicide due to frustrations and devastation by the impacts of GBV. Some women reportedly suffered abortions when they were badly beaten by their husbands when pregnant especially during the covid-19 lockdown. the wost cases were reported in the villages of Butimba, Muziranduru, Uduk 2, Ngwedo, Kigyayo, Kyakaboga, Kabaale and Bisenyi.

- **Family breakdown;** as a consequence of GBV, some homes have ended up in divorce and separation. During the covid-19 lockdown, GBV victims especially in Kaiso, Kihohoro, Kizikiya, Kyabataka and Mbegu were unable to reach out to various authorities for counseling and mediation and hence, the only alternative was to quit the violent marriages. Some couples have reportedly had total loss of interest in marriage and are vowing to never marry again.
- **Children are neglected and some drop out of school;** the research established that when the parents are busy fighting, the children bear the brunt of the problem because they lose the parental care. This is in addition to the trauma they go through and hence their mindset changes and many get spoilt. During the covid-19 lockdown when GBV was reportedly at its highest especially in Kabaale, Kisansia, Rwamusaga, Kitahurra and Kyakatemba, many young girls most of whom were students got pregnant and surprisingly, some men blamed mothers for the spoilt girl children who were defiled and made pregnant. During the covid lockdown, many young girls went into early marriages spiraling teenage pregnancies. As a result of failed families, children are often subjected to child labour in order to cater for themselves with basic needs since their parents are busy fighting and can no longer cater for them. The research established that such families are many and have no respect in the communities in which they live disturbing the neighbours with their unending quarrels and fights. The children of GBV-ruined families are as well disrespected and are sometimes innocently tortured by cruel individuals because of belittling their families. In some cases, the neglected children turn into thieves.
- **Increase in the spread of STDs;** the attraction of prostitutes into the area by oil discovery and the subsequent misuse of oil compensation money to commit adultery while some oil workers use their earnings to seduce some married women, have proliferated the spread of Sexually Transmitted Diseases such as HIV/AIDS, gonorrhea, syphilis and hepatitis B in the area.

The research established that unlike in urban centres, people know each other in the rural areas, which creates a challenge to couples indulging in adultery. For example, they fear to buy condoms because they are known to the shopkeepers from whom they would buy them and hence the fear that they

may spread the news in the entire village. As a result, unprotected sex is common in the villages and hence the vulnerability to STDs infections. The cheating couples also fear to go for STDs tests for the same reason of fearing to be known.

According to sources in local health centres in most villages in Hoima, Kikuube and Buliisa districts, HIV/AIDS prevalence rate has increased in the post covid-19 lockdown. It is anticipated that the lockdown did a lot of damage in the HIV/AIDs control efforts because people were idle experiencing a lot of GBV in their homes hence the bad excuse to seek for consolation in unprotected adultery.

- **Famine and starvation;** the research established that families infested with GBV have diverted their energies to conflicting away from producing food to sustain themselves. Sometimes, the fight between the couples extends to the destruction of property and gardens. This has resulted into hunger, food insecurity in the affected homes, poor feeding and the subsequent malnutrition of children hence stunted growth of the children. For communities living in camps such as the Kigyayo camp in Kikuube district, and other oil displaced persons, the lack of enough food is even more severe due to the acute land shortages and unemployment.
- **Poverty;** the research found that there is evident lack of development, stagnation and in some instances retardation in the conflicting families with GBV problem. The time that would be used to work for income generation is instead spent on fighting and quarreling as well as misusing the little resources at hand such as in GBV cases, going to witchdoctors in desperate search for GBV solutions and treatment especially in cases of grievous bodily harm. The research established that such homes are chocking on huge debts which are beyond their means to pay. Most of the reported such cases were in Butimba, Kasenyi, Kabaale and Uduk 2 villages.
- **Fleeing homes;** Some men have fled their homes upon increasing challenges of poverty, which were worsened by the Covid-19 pandemic, and oil related displacements with inadequate compensations. This has left some women troubled by having taken up the responsibilities of looking after the families alone especially in the villages of Kaiso, Bisenyi, Kigyayo and Kigoya. In many

cases as the abandoned women did not have any other source of income apart from depending on the husbands who now were nowhere to be seen.

- **Increased GBV cases in LCs and Police stations;** gender based violence is on the increase since covid-19 lockdown and hence more cases are being reported in the local councils and police stations. Some couples are in the village courts almost every day especially in Buseruka township, Kihohoro, Kyabataka, Kisansia, Mbegu and Muziranduru villages.
- **Mistrust;** according to the FGDs conducted in Kidoma, Kakindo, Kizikya and Butimba, GBV has resulted in increased mistrust between couples thereby each choosing to secretly mind own business as loss of cooperation widens between them.
- **Loss of friendship and cooperation with in-laws;** in cases where in-laws are accused of causing GBV, the affected person usually the woman loses her friendship with the in-laws in question out of the frustration and suffering. Some women are regretting the choice of families in which they got married. In each of the villages where the research was conducted, at least three of the respondents reported this problem.
- **Misery in the homes;** the research established that in some homes, GBV fights are nearly daily. The woman flees to neighbours homes until she feels she has bothered them too much and chooses to be sleeping in the nearby bushes sometimes alone, sometimes with her children. This scenario was most reported in Kidoma, Uduk 2, Mbegu and Kaiso villages.
- **Increase in Street Children;** according to most FGDs across Buliisa, Hoima and Kikuube districts, the unbearable circumstances have evicted some children out of their homes and have ended up on streets in various towns in Uganda since they are still too young to seek for casual jobs to sustain themselves.
- **Fewer children;** some women have resorted to family planning or simply refused to produce with men in whom they do not see their future because of GBV. This problem was mostly reported in Uduk 2, Kasenya, Rwamusaga and Bisenya villages.

3.4 WHAT WOMEN CAN DO TO REDUCE GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN HOMES AND COMMUNITIES

- **Building Mutual understanding;** women should take initiative to study their men and know what they like and what they do not like. This will help the woman to understand how to approach the husband, the things she can do and those she should negotiate and agree about with the husband in order to keep harmony in the home and sustain the marriage.
- **Reporting GBV;** women should report cases of GBV to various relevant authorities such as parents, religious leaders, government leaders, the CDO, clan leaders, the police and Local Council leaders including leaders of the women councils for counseling, arbitration, reconciliation and justice.
- **Listening to educative radio programmes;** gender based issues are among the common programmes on various local radio stations in the sub region. Listening to them would help women to be informed on the relevant laws, policies, institutions, authorities and mechanisms of addressing gender based violence.
- **Addressing poverty;** women should start and sustain income-generating activities in tireless effort to increase household **incomes and food** through such as apiary, poultry keeping and farming. When women have an alternative legitimate source of income, they can reduce pressure on the man by sharing responsibilities with husbands towards the welfare of the homes including contributing to school fees. Reducing the burdens, which the man has been carrying alone, can ease tensions if any and help to prevent conflicts.
- **Transparency and working together;** women should make efforts towards transparency and unity in the home. Being honest has an effect of persuading the man that you mean well and it can restore harmony in the home and begin joint planning and working together with husbands as one family.

- **Respect and obedience;** women should make efforts towards mutual respect and obedience in the home in order to fill the gap that would otherwise be filled with GBV. Mutual respect and obedience would consolidate the togetherness.
- **Sensitization meetings;** women should participate in sensitization meetings against GBV and encourage their husbands to attend as well. The next level would be to ensure that both the man and woman put into action what has been learnt aimed at creating a united, lovely and progressing hope as a common good of all the family members.
- **Counseling and solidarity groups;** women should provide counseling to the victims of GBV and comfort them especially the friends. Similarly, the women should encourage each other to join health clubs, women groups and associations for solidarity during GBV crises and cooperation in development projects, knowledge sharing and empowerment such as SACCOs.
- **Promoting Education of the girl-child,** girls have many challenges, which make them drop out of school including defilement and teenage pregnancies. The research established that school dropout girls who go for early marriages are more vulnerable to GBV than their counterparts who remain at school, graduate, and go into marriage at a mature age. Therefore, encouraging girl-child education through sensitization and provision of their school requirements will reduce GBV in the long run
- **Avoiding bad groups,** peer pressure was listed among the causes of GBV and it is on both sides of the man and woman. On the women side, bad groups are mainly responsible for gossip, which has been blamed on escalating GBV. On the men's side, bad groups are largely associated with drug abuse and drunkenness. Therefore, avoiding the bad groups is partly a solution to GBV in some homes.

3.5 COLLECTIVE ACTIONS TAKEN BY WOMEN TO DEFEND THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS AGAINST GBV IN THEIR AREAS AND NOTED CHALLENGES

The Action Research established a number of actions taken in defence of women's human rights ranging from women groups to individuals such as: Kwataniza Women Farmers' Group, Kabale Women Group, Kaiso Women Group, Kigaga Women Group, Kyakaboga Women Group and Kamukamu Women Group in Hoima district.

Elsewhere, there are Butimba Bakazi Tweyambe Group, Busuka Women Group, Butimba West Market Cell Women Group and Bukadina Women Group in Kikuube district.

In Buliisa District, some of the most influential women groups include Kakindo / Kawida Women Group, Kizikiya Women Group and Ngwedo Centre Women Group.

The research established that the core vehicle used for defence of women human rights against gender-based violence are the women themselves mainly voicing their concerns through their village groups, and local CBOs.

The other channel is the mass media particularly the radios but this is occasionally for a very few who get the opportunity to be hosted on the radio talk-shows. The radio hosting opportunities are very rare if at all for grass-root women given their remote locations where most of them live. There is also a trend that appearances on radio talk-shows are for influential people, a phenomenon which usually cut out the grass-root women.

Whereas the Action Research established that the collective action of the women groups has been fairly good in defending the women rights, they are not without challenges. For example, greater success in working together is tampered by factors such as differences in strategy, mobilization level, information, leadership and sometimes differences in opinion among other factors. This justifies why grassroots movement building for collective action taking is key not only to de – campaign the GBV vice, but to enable grass root women strategize together, unite their voices against the vice but also engage collectively against the vice.

Grassroot women groups also indicated that the lack of resources also seriously hampered their efforts to fight the vice and help the communities get both information, advice and other crucial services. They mentioned that some operate in their homes because they lack offices to officially operate from, lacked furniture and other support equipment, production of information against the vice was expensive and therefore establishment of safe shelters/spaces for victims was not affordable but urgently necessary.

3.6 INTERVENTIONS BY THE LOCAL LEADERS

Various respondents said that apart from women local councils, the other leaders such as Local Council chairpersons have done nothing tangible to address the GBV challenges in their communities. They accuse most of the Chairpersons of conniving with men who are alleged to be GBV perpetrators. Most respondents expressed the need to urgently intervene by the government and other stakeholders such as NGOs to reduce GBV in their communities.

However, when local government leaders including the chairpersons L.C 1s were interviewed, they defended themselves and said they have been doing the following:

- Have carried out sensitization on GBV to some community members
- Some GBV cases have been reported by L.C 1 to police and worked on
- Some GBV cases were taken before courts of law and conclusively handled while others are still undergoing the court litigation process
- Some counseling and guidance has been done by local council leaders including the women's councils
- The women's council has encouraged women to form groups and they are now saving some small money
- The women's council has encouraged women to start up some income generating activities such as food vending in the local market, fish smoking and trading to help sustain their homes.
- Local Council leaders have been witnesses in GBV court cases at different levels

- Have made some follow-ups to monitor progress on the mediated families
- Sometimes the local leaders meet parents of both the husband and wife for joint counseling and mediation of the couples
- Sometimes, the local leaders send the GBV infested families to church elders
- In Mbegu A and B Villages, local leaders reportedly put a fine for GBV perpetrators
- Local leaders are advising people to work and men to give startup capital to their wives in order to reduce the GBV in their homes
- Have advised women victims of GBV to take shelter at the L.C 1 Chairperson's place especially in instances of physical fights as reconciliation is taking place

3.7 KNOWLEDGE ON LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

The research established that women are aware that they have rights but they say they do not have enough voice due to a patriarchy system of society in which they live. The research further established that grass-root women have no knowledge of the exact laws that would guide them to fight for their rights.

Being technical, women find challenges interpreting the laws and policies regulating their human rights. This is irrespective of the various trainings and awareness campaigns educating the masses and sometimes targeting primarily the women on human rights by CSOs, development partners and the government.

Most research respondents made emphasis that human rights in relation to GBV are highly jeopardized by the patriarchal system, which undermines for example, the right of women to own land. According to the customary law, there is a belief that all girls will get married and stay in their marriages for the rest of their life. Therefore, the girls do not need land in their homes of birth!! This is a grossly misleading assumption that has made many in society think that customs & African traditions disallow women to own land. This is just one of the many gender based false beliefs, which are marginalizing women in Hoima, Buliisa and Kikuube just like in most other areas in Uganda.

3.8 ACCESS TO LEGAL AID

The research established that access to legal aid is still a big challenge to most women victims of gender-based violence in Buliisa, Kikuube and Hoima districts. The contributing factors include high costs of seeking justice, long legal processes and procedures and sheer lack of basic knowledge on what to do, where and when seeking legal redress.

The research further established that there have been repeated pleas by several stakeholders including the women themselves and CSOs calling upon the government to ease access to justice for women within the policy and legal frameworks established and principles to access legal aid in the criminal justice systems in Uganda. The calls have been clearly specific that vulnerable communities especially the grass-root women should be provided with legal aid services by the government. These calls intensified in the wake of land evictions by oil giants in Bunyoro oil region with primary focus on Buliisa, Hoima and Kikuube being the oil activities most impacted districts in the region.

3.9 PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT TO WOMEN WHO HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY GBV IN THE ERA OF COVID 19 PANDEMIC AND OIL EXTRACTION ACTIVITIES

The research established that religious leaders have been the most instrumental in offering mediation and counseling services to the victims of gender-based violence. The study discovered that confronted with the unending GBV problem to which many women have not found a solution; some women have reached an extent of blaming GBV on the Devil. This probably partly explains why the religious leaders have been sought after by many GBV women victims to intercede for them because they have resigned for earthly solutions and believe that only God's intervention will address the GBV problem.

Whereas many women still seek for mediation and counseling from Local council leaders, the research established that there is increasing frustration among women accusing the Local Council leaders who are mostly men of bias in favour of fellow men and corruption. This probably explains why most GBV victims are running to religious leaders because they have lost trust in their own elected local leaders.

The research further noted that older women in community are also playing some role in offering counseling services especially to younger women. This practice however is said to be declining compared to the past. Today, fewer younger women seek for or accept counseling by older women compared to the past. This is because some younger women today prefer sharing their GBV challenges with their peers than it was many years ago.

The system of the 'Bataka' whereby neighbours meet to mediate and offer counseling on GBV affairs is also common across villages in all the three districts of Hoima, Buliisa and Kikuube. When for example a man assaults his wife, it's common for a woman to seek refuge in a neighbour's home for that one night and then the following day, the neighbours meet to hear both sides; the man and the woman and then try to counsel and reconcile them.

Under the 'Bataka' system, usually penalties of buying local drinks such as alcohol and soft drinks are imposed on the person who has been found guilty. The main goal however is always to reconcile and offer counseling services to the couples.

In other instances, a woman may flee to her parents' home upon being assaulted by her husband or any serious domestic misunderstanding. Here, the man is expected to go there and then the parents invite neighbours and or family members and intervene in the matter. Again, the goal is to offer counseling services and reconciling the couples. A penalty can be imposed on one of the two who has been found guilty most especially the man. In some cases, the penalty can take the form of drinks, chicken or even a goat depending on the family and the nature of the offence.

The grass-root women also mentioned getting support from Gender officers of NAPE. They pointed out that NAPE had in the past run Mobile Legal Aid Clinics supporting women in Hoima, Kikuube and Buliisa. The women recalled that NAPE has previously under its sustainability school program sub-granted some women groups in various oil villages to set up small operational offices and communities where women were getting some counseling from those CBOs. Other NGOs which were mentioned as having played a role in offering counseling services to the communities include the Advocates San Frontiers (ASF), NAWAD, Solidarity Uganda, NAVODA, and Justice Centres Uganda.

However, some women disclosed that reporting certain cases on the gender based abuses they face is a challenge because of the shame one receives from other sections of the community. Hence, many GBV cases go unreported.

3.10 EXISTENCE AND OPERATION OF SAFE SPACES

The research found that there were no officially established safe spaces where women victims of gender based violence could go for support including counseling. To this end, establishment of safe spaces / shelters within selected villages in all the three districts of Hoima, Kikuube and Buliisa was found urgently paramount.

During one of the reflection meetings among the research coordinators chaired by the Lead Facilitator, areas which were found having many cases of gender-based violence were selected to host the safe spaces in order to attend to the urgent need of psychosocial and other support to the victims.

As a sustainability strategy, the already established local CBOs were identified for collaboration in the establishment of the safe spaces / shelters within the selected villages as follows:

a. Hoima district

- Kwataniza Women Farmers' Group
- Kabaale Women's Group
- Kaiso Women's Group
- Kigaaga Korecwoda Women's Group
- Kyakaboga Women's Group
- Kamukamu Women's Group
- One safe space at NAPE Hoima Field office

b. Kikuube District

- Butimba Bakazi Tweyambe Group
- BUSUCA Women's Group
- Butimba West Market Cell Women Group
- Kyakatemba Tweekambe Women's Group
- Kyigyayo Women's Group
- Kyabataka Women's Group
- Rwamusaaga Tukolerehamu Women's Group

c. Buliisa District

- Kakindo / Kawida Women's Group
- Kizikiya Women's Group
- Ngwedo Centre Women's Group
- Buliisa Town Council Women's Group
- Ajigo Village Women's Group.
- Kisansya village Women's Group

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 CONCLUSIONS

The government has not done enough to mitigate gender-based violence and has largely left the financing towards reducing the vice to development partners. Most of the efforts on ground have been attempted by NGOs while on the government side, services are difficult to access. For example, even the most vulnerable and needy woman victim of GBV will be required by law enforcers to foot the bill of the process to access justice such as transport costs which she cannot afford.

Gender-based violence is a very big problem in the districts of Buliisa, Hoima and Kikuube amidst financing shortfalls. According to CEDOVIP, Uganda spends over sh77b responding and treating victims of gender-based violence every year. This explains that the problem of GBV is a huge burden in the country. With proper funding, institutions such as Police and health facilities would be enhanced to help victims get both treatment and justice.

Defilement and rape as reported in the findings lead to teenage pregnancies and dropping out of school. Therefore, Gender-based violence is hurting Uganda's education and health sectors, while families are falling apart. Without addressing the GBV problem, the country will not achieve Vision 2040 of becoming a middle-income status.

According to the research findings, sexual violence is one of the commonest forms of gender-based violence ravaging women's lives and future in the districts of Buliisa, Hoima and Kikuube. In earlier reports, for example, Uganda's Demographic and Health Survey of 2016 revealed that up to 22% of women aged 15 to 49 in the country had experienced some form of sexual violence.

The above report also revealed that annually, 13% of women aged 15 to 49 reports experiencing sexual violence, which translates to more than one million women exposed to sexual violence every year in Uganda. The findings in this research covering Hoima, Buliisa and Kikuube appear to validate the above data by revealing that sexual violence is widespread in the area.

Access, control and ownership of land lies at the heart of power relationships within Hoima, Buliisa and Kikuube districts. Thus, it is prudent to think that the struggle for land is deeply intertwined with the struggle for women's rights in the area. Women's access to and control over land as a primary factor of production is fundamental to the achievement of their rights. Despite some progress registered over a couple of decades, inequality between women and men in ownership and control of land remains severe in the three districts.

It is worth concluding that economic strategies around investment and the commodification of natural resources including oil and gas in the Albertine rift interact with discriminatory norms to further disadvantage the women. Thus, it is commendable that the women should be further sensitized and mobilized to collectively put up a robust resistance through well-established women's movements against gender-based violence in Hoima, Buliisa and Kikuube districts.

According to the findings, one can say that many Village chairpersons at local council 1 are contributors to the suffering of women. Some chairpersons did not moreover cooperate with our research team. This implies that there is need to engage the local leaders so that they can see the value in defending rights for all including the women against gender-based violence.

The members of parliament were not mentioned in the chain of authorities to whom the GBV victims run to for assistance. This could be partly because, the MPs work station is in Kampala at Parliament and may not oftenly be physically accessible in the constituency. However, this should be an eye-opener that MPs offices in the constituencies should be strengthened so as to be able to respond in real time to the challenges of gender-based violence in their constituencies.

The research finding that NGO trainings and sensitization workshops on GBV target only the women is to some extent true. There has been a tendency that women issues should be discussed with women alone yet men are critical partners in addressing women issues because in any case, they are the accused. If the

men can change their attitude towards gender, some of the gender-based problems could be overcome. Therefore, the suggestion that there should be GBV sensitizations exclusively targeting the men in order to hear their side of the story and counsel them against GBV should be considered.

The research established that many women have not been reached yet in the women trainings and movement building to address gender based challenges. This implies that there is still a huge awareness gap among women regarding gender issues and how they should be addressed. Attempts should be made to fill the awareness gap hence more sensitization campaigns of the women should be done as far as possible by stakeholders especially the civil society and the government.

It was discovered that in the areas where the research was conducted, all Local Council 1 Chairpersons are men. These are key grassroot leaders who should be the first point of call by gender-based victims in the villages. However, the reports by many respondents that some Local Council Chairpersons take sides in favour of fellow men against women in arbitration of gender-based conflicts is unfortunate. Going forward, women should be encouraged and empowered to occupy such sensitive leadership positions while the existing male chairpersons should be sensitized on gender equality and fairness for all.

In the face of the challenge of biased Local Council Chairpersons while in some villages, the entire Executive Committees of the Local Government are occupied by young people with inadequate maturity to address GBV issues, it is key that safe spaces also known as shelters be established especially in villages with more cases of gender based violence. The 20 safe spaces which have been earmarked to be established under this project are just not enough in the huge three districts of Hoima, Kikuube and Buliisa with hundreds of villages where GBV is taking place on daily basis.

Since the research established that poverty is one of the key drivers of gender-based violence, it implies that addressing GBV cannot be complete without packages aimed at improving the incomes of households. Therefore, promoting sustainable sources of livelihoods such as agro ecology should be encouraged in all the three districts of Hoima, Buliisa and Kikuube.

Being primary accelerators of poverty in the rural areas of Buliisa, Hoima and Kikuube districts, efforts should be made to address the impacts of oil induced land grabs and the covid pandemic so that the affected persons can be restored to their livelihood as they were before the outbreak of the two pandemics of oil activities and covid-19.

The fact that some of the women who were known to be victims of GBV in their homes tended to be reserved on the issue during Focus Group Discussions in this research shows that some GBV issues are considered very confidential by the victims. This implies that the safe spaces established under this project should ensure that the people are convinced of the impeccable confidentiality among the people assigned to operate them so that the GBV victims can bring to them their issues for assistance without fear.

In other words, integrity of the volunteers operating the safe spaces is key in determining whether the gender-based victims will bring their issues to the safe spaces. For example, if a person operating or leading a safe space is known by the community as a person fond of releasing people's secrets, then GBV victims will think twice about surrendering their secrets to such people.

The trend of the women being the ones mostly digging for food implies that the responsibility of 'putting food on the table' is shifting from the man who is head of the family to the women. This is putting a heavy burden on the women who in addition to digging to feed the family, she must look after the children, breast feed them, collect firewood, cook for the family, fetch water among other family chores sometimes alone.

The research shows that the power relations in the household are tilted against women in favour of the men regarding income generation, food security and land rights. This is confirmed in the finding that many women must if they earn some money report it to their husbands for spending. In some cases, men reportedly steal the women's produce and sell it out in order to get money to drink alcohol with friends or looking after concubines and other lovers.

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Establishment of safe spaces;** Beyond the planned 20 safe spaces, NAPE should create more safe spaces at the grassroot to work as village-based platforms addressing the challenge of gender-based violence. The 20 safe spaces are good as a starting point but as already indicated, the area of coverage of the three districts of Hoima, Kikuube and Buliisa is too huge with high prevalence of GBV hence need for more safe spaces as soon as possible.
- **Monitoring the established safe spaces;** In light of the reported GBV challenges, NAPE should come up with a monitoring mechanism to ensure that the 20 safe spaces which NAPE is going to establish are working well and thus fulfilling the intended objectives. There should be a feedback mechanism to NAPE on how the safe spaces are operating so that in case of challenges, a solution is found in the right time.
- **Increase of government financing of GBV control programmes;** The government should increase its financing towards reducing GBV in grass-root communities. The financing should largely target sensitization of communities against GBV, and institutions such as Police and health facilities to enhance their capacities to help victims get both treatment and justice.
- **Addressing the impacts of oil activities and the covid-19 pandemic;** the government and NGOs should come up with intervention packages aimed to address the impacts of oil induced land grabs and the covid-19 pandemic so that the affected persons can be restored to their livelihood as they were before the outbreak of the two pandemics of oil activities and covid-19. Such packages could include startup capital, free seeds, piggery, making beehives and poultry projects with affirmative action to the women so that they earn some income to be able to contribute to home welfare and reduce the financial burden on the men.

- **Review of the existing laws and policies on GBV;** The government should enact stringent laws and policies against GBV and impose deterrent punishments on GBV perpetrators. The local government should also come up with by-laws against GBV specific to the GBV situation in their local communities.
- **NGOs mitigation campaign against GBV in communities;** NGOs should increase their budget of sensitization against GBV, analyze the gaps in GBV control laws and policies and make appropriate recommendations to the government for review and implementation.
- **Advocacy for women rights against GBV;** The Civil Society in Uganda should advocate for further integration of gender issues in development, security processes and equal participation of women as equal members of society.
- **More capacity building for grass-root women groups;** NAPE, other CSOs and the government should offer more training and financial support to the women grass-root groups which are struggling to pay rent for their operation spaces such as offices. This would enhance the functionality of the socio-economic women groups so that they are in position to address poverty-related causes of gender-based violence in their respective communities.
- **Women share of land and property compensation money;** NAPE and other NGOs should advocate for a policy of giving compensation money for land and property to the man only in presence of the wife. The government should offer prior sensitization to the couples on proper joint planning and budgeting for the money in the interest of the common good of the family.
- **Grass-root Women economic empowerment;** NGOs should engage the government officials in the districts to ensure that grass-root women are the priority in the beneficiary chain of government empowerment programmes such as the parish development model.

- **Involving men in GBV sensitization campaigns;** NAPE and other stakeholders should in addition to the women involve men in the campaign against GBV prevalence in the communities. This is because; men are a crucial party to GBV in the communities.
- **Training Local Leaders on GBV interventions;** NAPE, other CSOs and the government should carry out capacity training for local leaders to enhance their abilities and the will to address the problem of GBV in their communities based on gender equality and fairness for all. They should also learn to live by example to other men by not practicing GBV in their own families.
- **More sensitization of women on GBV;** stakeholders such as NAPE and the government should conduct more sensitization of the women on gender-based issues in order to fill the lack of awareness gaps, which were identified in this action research.
- **Counseling and rehabilitation centres;** the government should introduce counseling and guidance centres and establish rehabilitation homes for the GBV victims.
- **Intervention by religious leaders;** Religious leaders should preach unity, love, forgiveness, harmony in homes, the fear of God, mutual respect among couples, condemn GBV in the strongest terms possible and reconcile the conflicting couples.
- **Eradication of corruption;** The government and political leaders should fight corruption out of conflict resolution institutions especially in the Local Councils, the police and courts of law.
- **Free legal services to GBV victims;** NGOs and the government should provide free legal services to help suppressed women victims of GBV including on land issues.
- **Empowering young girls;** NGOs should empower the girls with some income earning skills such as making sanitary towels to prevent them from men's manipulation in disguise of provision of such basic needs.

- **Extension services to women farmers;** The government should provide extension services to women in areas such as agro-ecological farming, beekeeping and livestock keeping in order to boost their income levels.
- **Regulation of alcohol drinking;** the government should consider banning sachet waragi (alcohol) and regulate drinking of alcohol in general. For example, bars should open at certain hours when people have come from work.
- **Compulsory education;** the government should declare dropping out of school a crime and punish parents who refuse to take their children to school especially the girl-child.
- **Encouraging hard work and food production to fight poverty in homes and increase food security;** Government should promote agro ecological farming through funding and training, monitor household gardens, enact regulations, and impose punishments against laziness and failure or refusal to work for one's livelihood such as food production.
- **Media programmes;** NGOs and leaders should carry out radio talkshows aimed at stopping GBV in families and communities.
- **Women leadership empowerment;** NGOs should empower women especially through leadership training projects to participate in elective leadership positions and become leaders so as to easily address issues of gender based violence because they understand them firsthand and have the passion to get solutions.
- **Establishment of grass-root women support platforms;** NGOs should establish platforms at the grass-root for the women such as radio listeners clubs and local CBOs, for giving communities especially the women a voice to air out their concerns and engage stakeholders against the Vice of GBV.
- **Uniting community voices,** the civil society and development partners should help to unite community voices through building grass root-based movements so that the women and communities can challenge GBV through one united voice.



Women and the Facilitator in a Planning Meeting (above) on Conducting the Action Oriented Research on Gender Based Violence in Buliisa, Hoima and Kikuube districts in early May 2022 at Glory Summit Hotel in Hoima Town

ANNEX 1; REFERENCES

- Tackling Gender Based Violence Report by CEDOVIP, 2019.
- Digging deep report on the impact of Uganda's land rush on women's rights by NAPE and Woman Kind UK – 2018.
- Report on Gender based Violence amidst Covid-19 outbreak by Buliisa Initiative for Rural Development Organization (BIRUDO) – 2020.
- Assessing the relationship between Gender based Violence and Covid-19 pandemic in Uganda, April 2020 by Kabonesa and Fredrick.
- Avocats Sans Frontiers (2019), Digging for Power: Women empowerment and justice amidst Extractive Industry Development in the Albertine and Karamoja, Uganda.
- Byakagaba. P & Twesigye. B (2015), Securing communal land and Resource Rights in the Albertine Region of Uganda: Case study of Hoima and Buliisa districts.
- Rent-Seeking Practices, Local Resource Curse, and Social Conflict in Uganda's Emerging Oil Economy, 2019.
- <https://www.albertinewatchdog.org/2019/03/29/the-500-households-evicted-by-hoima-sugar-company-limited-are-helpless/>.
- Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No.7 (1997) on the right to adequate housing: forced evictions.
- International Alert (2014), what's in for us? Gender issues in the oil and Gas sector.
- The social impacts of land acquisition for oil and gas developments in Uganda –July 2019, Tom Ogwang and Frank Van Clay, 8th July 2019.
- Muriisa R.K (2018), Land Grabbing and Oil Industry, Implications for Women's Land Rights and Oil in Uganda, CRPD Working Paper No.57.
- ESIA- Tilenga Oil and Gas Project.
- ESIA-Kingfisher Oil and gas Project.
- Republic of Uganda (1998), The Land Amendment Act.
- Republic of Uganda, (2013), the Uganda National Land Policy
- Republic of Uganda, the 1995, Constitution.

ANNEX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE RESEARCH ON GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

GENERAL INFORMATION OF THE RESPONDENT:

- 1.1 Name of the respondent (optional)
- 1.2 Village:
- 1.3 Parish:
- 1.4 Sub county:
- 1.5 District:
- 1.6 Sex: M/F.....
- 1.7 Age:Years.
- 1.8 Marital status:

Question 1: What is your understanding of Gender Based Violence (GBV)
.....
.....

Question 2: What are the causes of Gender Based Violence in the era of Covid 19 pandemic and oil developments in your area?
.....
.....

Question 3: Whom do you think is more affected by Gender Based Violence in your area i.e. Women, Men or Children?
.....
.....

Question 4: What are the consequences / effects of Gender Based Violence in your area?
.....
.....

Question 5 (a): As women what can we do to reduce / eradicate Gender Based Violence in our homes and communities?
.....
.....

Question 5 (b): What do you think stakeholders such as local leaders, the central government, NGOs, cultural institutions, religious leaders should do to address the challenge of Gender Based Violence in your area?

.....

.....

Thank you for your time.