

Uganda Refugee Operation



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The Lutheran World Federation is a Communion of 150 churches in the Lutheran faith tradition living and working together for a just, peaceful and reconciled world. The LWF strives to put its Christian faith into action through humanitarian and development work, advocacy, shared witness and dialogue. The LWF covers seven geographic regions, representing 99 countries.

This best practice is a testament to LWF's commitment to ending destructive patterns of gender-based violence, aiming to break the metaphorical "chains" symbolizing cycles of abuse by fostering resilience and positive change within communities.

Uganda Refugee Operation

Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Uganda is implementing the Uganda Refugee Operation in Adjumani, Palorinya and Lamwo Refugee camps in Uganda, with support from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. The project provides protection, legal and community services, prevention, and response to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). The project, which commenced in January 2023 is still ongoing at the time of the publication of this promising practice and is benefitting both refugees and the host community.

The LWF Uganda Refugee Operation is responding to a protracted refugee situation resulting from conflicts within the region. Since 2016, Uganda has faced three parallel refugee emergencies from South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Burundi. As of December 2020, Uganda was hosting about 1.5 million refugees, comprising; 815,831 from South Sudan; 339,476 from DRC 39,647 from Burundi; 29,170 from Somalia; and 32,605 from other countries. About 82% of the total refugee population comprises women and children, with women and girls accounting for about 52% of this demographic. An estimated 95% of the refugees reside in refugee settlements spread across 12 refugee-hosting districts. The Government of Uganda has the primary responsibility for the security and protection of refugees and asylum seekers and as such, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) collaborates with the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), other United Nations agencies and International Non-Governmental Organisations to deliver Protection and Assistance to the refugees.

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is widespread in Uganda among both the refugee as well as the national population and calls for special attention¹. Between 2018 and 2020, an average of 5,000 new incidents of SGBV were reported annually. Between January and September 2023, LWF responded to 560 SGBV cases of rape, sexual assault, physical violence by intimate partners, emotional violence, teenage pregnancy, child marriages, and forced marriages among others. All these are in addition to many other incidences in the community that have not been identified and responded to. The SGBV situation was heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic which saw a significant increase in SGBV incidents. While stakeholders agree that the statistics are not truly representative of the actual situation on the ground, they provide insights into the prevalence of SGBV. The most prevalent forms and types are intimate partner violence, domestic violence, physical violence, early/child marriage, economic violence, rape, defilement, and other types of sexual violence affecting about 90% of women and girls.

The 2022 SGBV Information Management System (SGBVIMS) statistics reported only 740 (21 male, 719 female) SGBV incidents in Palorinya, Adjumani and Lamwo. This did not capture many other incidents in the community that have not been identified and responded to. Many forms of SGBV continue to be perceived as private matters, relatively unimportant, or a normal part of life that goes unreported in the community. Hence, there is a pressing need to enhance integrated service provision to ensure that survivors have access to mental health and psychosocial support, legal remedies, healthcare, and livelihood assistance. An LWF client feedback survey report of 2022 revealed that over half of respondents (54.2%), who are SGBV survivors, believed that aid agencies did not offer assistance appropriate and relevant to their needs.

Currently, support services are inadequate to aid full recovery suggesting the need for better targeting and availability. Strengthening survivor safety including maintaining safehouses remains a priority as some people can no longer stay in their community safely once they report SGBV because of fear of retaliation in some communities. This project has also strengthened referral mechanisms and monitors them for effectiveness. Enhancing male engagement for effective SGBV prevention and response is another critical area that the project seeks to address.

Addressing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) is a critical component in both the challenge being addressed and the implementation of this promising practice. LWF is committed to promoting safety, equality, and the well-being of individuals, particularly women and marginalized populations. Acknowledging SGBV as a prevalent issue with far-reaching consequences within the community or target population is essential in addressing it.

In this promising practice, we are implementing programs specifically designed to prevent SGBV through awareness campaigns, education, and community engagement. There is the integration of protection mechanisms and support services for survivors, including medical care, psychosocial support, and legal assistance. We make great efforts to ensure that our programs are inclusive, addressing the specific vulnerabilities of women, girls, and other marginalized groups who may be disproportionately affected by SGBV. Our program also focuses on the following aspects of SGBV to holistically foster safer, more inclusive, and resilient communities:

- Enhancement of capacity by providing training for community members, leaders, and service providers to recognize, prevent, and respond to SGBV effectively.
- Establishment of confidential reporting mechanisms to encourage survivors to come forward and seek help without fear of reprisal.
- Advocacy for and integration of legal and policy frameworks that address SGBV, promoting accountability and justice for survivors.
- Challenging harmful gender norms and promoting gender equality as a fundamental aspect of preventing and addressing SGBV.
- Regular monitoring and evaluation to assess the effectiveness of interventions in addressing SGBV with a commitment to making necessary adjustments based on evidence.
- Collaborating with local authorities, Nongovernmental Organisations (NGOs), and community leaders to create a comprehensive and coordinated response to SGBV.

OBJECTIVES

The project, Uganda Refugee Operation, aims to reduce the risk of SGBV incidences among forcefully displaced persons in Palorinya, Adjumani, and Palabek refugee settlements by 2028, provide support to survivors as well as strengthen community prevention and response mechanisms. LWF Uganda continuously strives to achieve its objectives through the three outputs below.

1 Refugee women, girls, boys, and men are engaged and empowered to address the root causes of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)

LWF is continuously building the capacity of refugees, and community-based structures including male action groups, community activists, child protection committees, parasocial actors, LWF respondents, among others on various issues. These include root causes, consequences, and impact of SGBV, how to handle disclosure, making referrals, and survivor-centered principles. This knowledge and skills will transform attitudes and create a supportive environment for survivors. Through a localized approach, community-based structures identify key problems and propose solutions. Through this approach, women, girls, boys, and men are inspired to initiate sustainable and suitable solutions. These community structures lead in identifying and linking survivors to available services and raise awareness to positively influence community perceptions.

LWF continuously attends SGBV coordination meetings and fosters conversations to transform harmful attitudes, beliefs, and norms driving SGBV and gender inequality. Strengthening referral systems is known to improve service coordination and accountability. Nevertheless, cross-sectoral referrals continue to be affected by a lack of prioritization by some sectors, limited funding, inaccurate data, and delays in service provision. Through the National and settlement SGBV sector working group, LWF promotes continuous review and update of the referral pathway to increase services to SGBV survivors. Partners are requested to confirm their specific SGBV interventions within the project locations.

The referral pathways are continuously being updated and popularized with posters, community radio, and awareness sessions at schools, market areas, protection desks, churches, and related community gatherings.

2 Community attitudes and behaviors are transformed with enhanced community engagement and awareness

Sexual and gender-based violence is deeply rooted in societal norms and attitudes that condone and normalize violence. Transformation requires a long-term commitment to dismantling these attitudes and behaviors. Through this project, LWF continues to remind the community that SGBV affects the community as a whole and thus ending it is not just the responsibility of women and girls but the entire community, including men and boys and male and female community leaders. LWF uses the tested and approved SASA! approach to engage the community to shift from individual to collective actions to end SGBV. SASA! which translates to "NOW!" in Kiswahili, reflects the urgency of preventing

violence against women. The “Together” aspect underscores the transformative power of collaboration, support, and solidarity in creating change. SASA! Together is dedicated to challenging and changing norms, prompting individuals, communities, and institutions to question what is deemed normal or acceptable behavior. This methodology encourages a reflection on how achieving a balance of power between women and men can enhance overall safety, happiness, and health. The mobilization strategies employed include local activism, leveraging the power of community leaders, and strengthening institutions. By emphasizing these elements, SASA! Together strives to foster a collective effort for positive and sustainable change in attitudes and behaviors related to gender dynamics and violence prevention.

Engaging Men and Boys in Accountable Practices (EMAP) is also used to work with men constructively, examining the gendered impact of conflict and socialization. These are crucial steps in creating a world where women and girls are valued, equal, and free from violence. Community activists, Male Action Groups, Refugee Welfare Councils, and cultural and religious leaders are empowered to take the lead in these conversations to ensure the sustainability of these efforts to end sexual and gender-based violence.

3 Improved access to and documentation of quality and timely gender-based multi-sectoral services for SGBV survivors

Lack of representative statistics and data on the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence impedes effective SGBV programming. Project implementers use proGres v4 and SGBVIMS, the approved platforms for case management services, to appreciate data requirements and the need for information. ProGres V4 is a case management tool utilized in humanitarian and development settings to assist organizations in handling individual cases, particularly those concerning protection issues like sexual and gender-based violence, child protection, and other vulnerable groups. It enables the documentation, tracking, and management of cases from identification to resolution or ongoing support. Key features include case registration, data collection, assessment, service tracking, referrals, and reporting functionalities. The tool aims to boost the efficiency, coordination, and quality of case management services, ensuring timely and effective support for vulnerable individuals. Additionally, ProGres V4 may incorporate features for monitoring and evaluating interventions to enhance service impact and response effectiveness over time.

Due to the complex nature of SGBV, the project collaborates with other partners to identify and sustain risk mitigation interventions in child protection, education, health, WASH, shelter, energy and environment, livelihood, and cash-based interventions. Multi-partner collaboration on key activities includes joint assessments and safety audits so that data is readily available to inform intersectoral programming. Through national and settlement level working group meetings, the project advocates with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) for refugee SGBV information and data to be inclusive of age, gender, and diversity breakdown and reflected in national development plans and systems. Additionally, LWF facilitates survivors’ access to services while adhering to ethical data collection principles. LWF is committed to generating compelling evidence and fostering a culture of continuous learning, so humanitarian partners may work more effectively, efficiently, and responsively.



PROJECTED OUTCOMES

Increased Awareness and Advocacy

LWF anticipates that there would be an increased awareness drive on SGBV at the settlement level, district, national, and global levels resulting in increased advocacy and efforts to address this issue at international, national, and local levels. Advocacy campaigns challenge societal norms, stereotypes, and stigma that perpetuate SGBV. Prevention strategies include educational programs to promote gender equality, challenge harmful attitudes and behaviors, and empower individuals to resist and report incidents of SGBV. Moreover, legal reforms seek to provide better protection for survivors, hold perpetrators accountable, and eliminate legal loopholes that may enable impunity.

Protection Mechanisms

LWF expects that the various protection mechanisms being implemented will ensure the safety of individuals at risk of or affected by SGBV, including the establishment of protection houses, safe spaces, shelters, and toll-free lines. Efforts are made to integrate protection measures into broader humanitarian responses and recognize the vulnerability of displaced populations to SGBV. Access to healthcare services, including medical treatment and psychosocial support, is a crucial aspect of the response to SGBV. One-stop centers have been established at some health facilities to facilitate safe and dignified services to survivors with limited exposure.

LWF hopes that routine SGBV safety audits, asset mapping, transect walks, and assessments will help in enhancing understanding of the prevalence and nature of SGBV, contributing to evidence-based policymaking and program development. Additionally, assessments and surveys are conducted to identify risk factors, effective interventions, and gaps in existing responses. It is important to note that progress in addressing SGBV is an ongoing activity and evolving process, and challenges persist. For that reason, local context, cultural factors, and political will are all critical considerations in the success of prevention, protection, and response initiatives.

CORE ACTIVITIES

Capacity enhancement

Over time LWF has built the capacity of staff and community structures to implement community-based programs to raise awareness about SGBV, its consequences, and available support services. Community structures like SASA! Activists and faith leaders spearhead the community-led awareness sessions and community dialogues to challenge harmful gender norms and promote positive behavior. Community leaders, staff, law enforcement personnel, and healthcare providers have been trained on how to prevent and respond to SGBV and offer medical and psychosocial support to survivors.

Establishment of safe spaces

LWF has established safe spaces for women and girls where they can access support services, like medical care, legal assistance counseling, and participate in empowerment activities to enhance resilience, share experiences, and strengthen referral services for survivors. Collaborating with local authorities to address legal aspects and ensure justice for survivors is key as it has contributed to a more accurate understanding of the prevalence of SGBV and allows for targeted interventions.

Advocating for policy change

Advocating for and supporting the development and enforcement of legal and policy frameworks that address SGBV and protect the rights of survivors is a key part of this project. Collaborating with local authorities to integrate SGBV prevention and response into broader community development plans, as well as engaging men and boys in SGBV prevention efforts, challenging traditional gender norms, and promoting positive masculinities, respectful relationships, and highlighting the role of men as allies in creating safer communities and reducing SGBV has been essential. LWF, being a multi-sectoral organization, offers a range of support services, psychosocial support, legal assistance for survivors of SGBV, and needs-based support. These services contribute to the overall well-being and recovery of survivors.

Strengthened partnerships

This includes collaborating with local NGOs, international organizations, and government agencies to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive response to SGBV. Improved coordination among diverse institutions, including government bodies, NGOs, and community organizations, fosters enhanced collaboration and a more integrated and effective approach to community development. The success of these initiatives hinges on factors like local context, community engagement, sustainability, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation, ensuring that positive changes are enduring and contribute to the overall well-being of the community.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

LWF conducts regular monitoring and evaluation of SGBV prevention and response activities that help assess the effectiveness of the interventions. This data-driven approach enables the organisation to make adjustments and improvements over time. Efforts to address SGBV are often integrated into broader humanitarian projects, such as health, education, or livelihood programs. This integration ensures a holistic approach to addressing the needs of the population and contributes to the overall success of the project.

APPROACHES TO PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Effectively addressing SGBV requires a dual approach of changing social norms and behaviors, and building gender-responsive institutions, particularly justice systems, which support survivors and end impunity for perpetrators. LWF adopted the following approaches for this promising practice:

Survivor-centered approach

This is an approach where survivor's rights, needs, wishes, safety and interest are prioritized above all other considerations whilst observing the 4 key principles of *confidentiality, safety, respect, and non-discrimination*. The focus is on doing no further harm and empowering survivors to be in control of the helping process so that they develop the resilience to positively cope and implement the decisions reached. All programs take into account the specific needs and intersecting vulnerabilities of women and girls, and men and boys and tailor interventions accordingly. LWF promotes programming design based on priorities set by women and girls as well as other groups at heightened risks of SGBV. Women and girls' leadership as well as gender equity are central to this approach.

"I finally feel heard and supported. For the first time, I feel like my needs and experiences are truly at the center of the support I'm receiving."

The Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) serves as a foundational methodology for LWF interventions, centering efforts on international human rights standards and principles. This approach is enacted through methods and processes such as legal advocacy, which involves championing legal reforms and policies aligned with human rights frameworks. Additionally, awareness campaigns on human rights aim to educate communities about their fundamental rights and freedoms. A crucial aspect involves promoting survivors' access to justice, and ensuring their legal rights are upheld. Tools integral to the HRBA include human rights impact assessments to evaluate the effects of interventions on rights, the development and application of legal frameworks aligned with human rights principles, and the implementation of human rights training programs to enhance awareness and understanding within communities. This comprehensive approach strives to create a foundation where interventions are not only effective in addressing immediate concerns but also contribute to the broader goal of fostering a rights-based and just society.

"I feel empowered and respected. It's like I've regained a sense of dignity and agency in my own life."

The Participatory Gender and Social Inclusive Approach

Processes embody a methodology focused on involving communities and diverse stakeholders in decision-making processes to challenge prevailing gender norms. The project ensures active participation from diverse community members, including women, men, and marginalized groups, in decision-making processes and project activities. By incorporating their perspectives and voices, LWF tailors interventions that address the specific needs and priorities of all community members, fostering inclusivity and gender equality throughout the implementation process.

Essential tools in this process include gender analysis tools, which help assess the impact of interventions on different genders, community mapping to identify key influencers and resources, and participatory action research to engage communities in active problem-solving and decision-making. By emphasizing inclusivity and participation, this approach seeks to dismantle gender stereotypes, promote equitable decision-making, and ensure the diverse voices of communities are heard and considered in the development and implementation of interventions.

SASA! Faith

SASA! Faith is a notable initiative designed to mobilize leaders, members, and allies of a specific religious community in the collective effort to prevent violence against women and address HIV. This LWF initiative follows a community mobilization process that encourages active engagement with the faith-based values of justice, peace, and dignity². SASA! Faith recognizes the influential role that religious communities can play in fostering positive social change and aims to harness this influence to create a more just and peaceful environment. By uniting individuals under the shared commitment to these values, SASA! Faith seeks to address and mitigate the issues of violence against women and the spread of HIV within the context of faith communities. LWF conducts workshops and training sessions with religious leaders to raise awareness about sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and challenge harmful social norms and attitudes. These sessions encourage religious leaders to use their influence and platforms to promote positive masculinity, respect for women's rights, and non-violent conflict resolution strategies. By incorporating SASA! Faith, the project aims to mobilize faith communities as agents of change in addressing SGBV and promoting gender equality.

SASA! Together methodology

The SASA! Together methodology, where "SASA!" translates to "NOW!" in Kiswahili, reflects the urgency of preventing violence against women. The "Together" aspect underscores the transformative power of collaboration, support, and solidarity in creating change. SASA! Together is dedicated to challenging and changing norms, prompting individuals, communities, and institutions to question what is deemed normal or acceptable behavior. This methodology encourages a reflection on how achieving a balance of power between women and men can enhance overall safety, happiness, and health. The mobilization strategies employed include local activism, leveraging the power of community leaders, and strengthening institutions. By emphasizing these elements, SASA! Together strives to foster a collective effort for positive and sustainable change in attitudes and behaviors related to gender dynamics and violence prevention.

Male Engagement

LWF utilizes this approach by actively involving men in efforts to advance gender equality and end sexual and gender-based violence. Recognizing that men often play a significant role as both contributors to and potential mitigators of gender-based inequality, this promising practice positions men as change agents. By acknowledging that men can be the main perpetrators of gender inequalities, the male engagement strategy seeks to transform harmful norms and behaviors. This approach involves mobilizing men to be active advocates for gender equality, encouraging positive changes in attitudes, behaviors, and societal norms.

"Through the male engagement approach, I've learned the importance of actively involving men in conversations about gender equality and violence prevention. As a participant, I now feel empowered to challenge harmful stereotypes and behaviors within my community, and I'm committed to promoting respectful and equitable relationships between men and women."

² As part of the project, SASA! Faith principles are integrated to promote gender equality and prevent violence against women and girls within faith-based communities. For instance, workshops and training sessions are conducted with religious leaders to raise awareness about sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and challenge harmful social norms and attitudes.

IMPACTS

Women have been empowered through facilitation of access to economic opportunities such as cash grants and skilling, leadership roles, and education which lead to improved self-esteem, decision-making power, and overall well-being. In Adjumani settlement, women constitute 59% of the Refugee Welfare Council leadership positions due to the capacity enhancement and leadership empowerment programs.

This promising practice fosters community building and social cohesion by promoting inclusivity and cooperation leading to stronger and more resilient communities. Practices that prioritize the inclusion of women and persons with disabilities aim to reduce barriers to participation and ensure equal access to services, education, and employment.

Beneficiaries' agency and resilience is improved. Empowerment initiatives, including vocational training and economic opportunities, play a crucial role in enhancing the agency of individuals, particularly in spaces dedicated to women and girls. By equipping them with basic vocational skills for income-generating activities, these initiatives contribute to improved economic prospects, fostering a sense of autonomy and control over their financial well-being. Additionally, the provision of psychosocial support post-crisis aided individuals in coping with trauma, building emotional resilience, and regaining a sense of control, fostering a more resilient and empowered mindset. Involving beneficiaries in project planning and implementation ensures their voices are heard, increasing community participation and empowering individuals to actively contribute to decision-making processes. Moreover, LWF initiatives have focused on improving access to resources, such as land, credit, and healthcare, empowering individuals and communities to withstand shocks and stressors, and establishing a foundation for economic stability and resilience while reducing vulnerabilities to external challenges.

However, the success of these efforts is always contingent on factors such as local context, community engagement, sustainability of interventions, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Assessing long-term impacts on agency, resilience, and institutional capacity requires sustained efforts and periodic evaluations to ensure that positive changes are durable and contribute to the overall well-being of the community.

COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS' ENHANCED CAPACITY

Capacity-building programs for community leaders and government officials that focus on enhancing skills in project management, governance, and service delivery continue to yield impactful results. Strengthened skills enable effective community leadership and governance, enhancing the capacity to address diverse community needs. Additionally, institutional strengthening through support for the development and fortification of local institutions has positioned them to respond effectively to challenges and provide essential services, thereby improving overall resilience and responsiveness. Knowledge sharing and best practices is facilitated through coordination and feedback meetings enhancing the capacity of institutions to implement evidence-based solutions, thereby leading to more effective interventions.

The human interest stories below highlight the impact that program is already having within the communities served by Uganda Refugee Operation.

Human Interest Story 1

"My name is Jane Poni (not real names) and I am a 37 year old resident of Maaji II block C4 Adjumani refugee settlement. I was selected as a SGBV survivor and trained for 3 days in entrepreneurship, business and financial management and supported with conditional cash grant of 300,000 shillings. I selected tailoring and garment cutting enterprise which was pre-existing and the money came timely for boosting it, I used part of it for procuring materials. On average I earn 70,000 shillings per week, customers come to my home so I don't incur cost of transport and rentals to the market and because of that I entirely saved my income and used it for acquiring another sewing machine and training school drop outs in the area. Today I live a happy life with my family because I can afford to buy sugar and pan cakes for my son's family who abandoned his responsibilities."

Human Interest Story 2

"My name is Baatiyo Scola Faruk(not real names) a 32 year old resident of Maaji II Adjumani refugee settlement. I was selected as a SGBV survivor and trained for 5 days in business skills, enterprise selection and financial management and supported with conditional cash grant for boosting or starting an enterprise of my choice which is restaurant management. This enterprise has been pre-existing so it needs boosting as such the cash grant from LWF improved my source of livelihood and the family with food, saving due to the fact that it helped to change the family. On average I earn 400,000/= per week in hotel management. I sell my food stuff to the market vendors, implementing partner staff and the community around. Today I live a happy life with my family because I can afford to buy the basic needs like sugar and pay son's school fee and avoid dependence syndrome thus reducing incidences of SGBV in my relationship due to shared responsibilities."

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

One critical consideration is the potential reinforcement of gender stereotypes or the inadvertent exclusion of certain groups, both of which can have adverse effects. For example, economic programs, if not designed with sensitivity, could perpetuate existing gender norms or exclude specific demographics, such as widows. However, on a negative note, unintended consequences might include reinforcing gender stereotypes if not adequately addressed in educational or economic empowerment programs. Economic interventions, if not carefully designed, may inadvertently exacerbate existing inequalities, emphasizing the importance of a nuanced and context-specific approach to avoid unintentional negative outcomes. It is crucial for interventions to consistently evaluate and adapt their strategies to minimize unintended consequences and ensure that positive impacts are maximized.

Addressing marginalized populations requires a thoughtful and nuanced approach to avoid inadvertently reinforcing social stigma because there is some targeted support for survivors and PWD. Initiatives that single out specific groups, such as survivors of gender-based violence (SGBV) and persons with disabilities (PWDs), may unintentionally perpetuate discrimination if not designed and implemented carefully.

The community misunderstood the support offered to survivors of SGBV resulting in a troubling perception that it may encourage more instances of SGBV. In this context, the misconception arose from the fact that approximately 95% of survivors were women. Consequently, some men in the community interpreted this support as a reason to continue inflicting harm on women, believing that they, too, would benefit from the assistance provided to survivors. This situation underscored the importance of carefully designing and monitoring promising practices to mitigate unintended negative consequences.

Cultural sensitivity was paramount in designing programs to address sensitive issues such as sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Failure to take cultural context into account resulted in negative impacts on traditional norms and values, potentially leading to resistance or backlash within the community. An illustrative example comes from some South Sudanese tribes where it is not culturally acceptable to conduct open dialogue meetings on SGBV that involve both men and women. In these contexts, cultural norms dictate that discussing such issues openly is not appropriate, and women as such may feel uncomfortable or shy away from participating due to societal restrictions.

The dependency on humanitarian workers/staff for the implementation of community-led initiatives on awareness creation highlights a dynamic that warrants careful consideration. While it's positive that there is support for community structures to carry out awareness activities, during program implementation, there seemed to be an overreliance on external assistance for the actual implementation. This impacted the sustainability and true "community-led" nature of the initiatives.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION

- Case worker ratio and access to survivor-centered case SGBV response services, remain inadequate due to limited resources.
- A limited number of trained case workers attending to SGBV survivors due to high turnover.
- Inadequate women and girls centers that allow for confidential counseling and women empowerment.
- Limited funding is the main impediment to roll-out and implementing comprehensive prevention programs in all settlements, including SASA! Together. Additional programmatic gaps include inadequate resources for menstrual hygiene kits, a limited number of specialized mental health and psychosocial support partners to address advanced psychological needs, as well as late reporting of cases arising from negative cultural beliefs.
- Limited livelihood assistance for single women and teenage mothers.
- Security concerns among some isolated tribes who are negative about reporting and follow-up of SGBV cases because they feel that SGBV is a private matter. Oftentimes, community members who report the case and caseworkers managing the cases are threatened by the perpetrators.
- Limited women and girls' safe spaces for women to get vocational skills, share experiences, and get counseling services.
- Proximity of some settlements to the border and cross-border movement making it challenging to maintain consistent engagement with beneficiaries.

Mitigating challenges faced by women and men, boys and girls in crisis situations

Women and girls are often disproportionately affected by SGBV during crises. Crises can disrupt education, particularly affecting girls. Strategies include establishing temporary learning spaces, providing catch-up classes, and addressing barriers like safety concerns. Women and children face barriers to accessing healthcare. Mitigation involves mobile health clinics, community health workers, and awareness campaigns. Men's and women's livelihoods have been severely affected. Livelihood support programs and vocational training can help mitigate economic challenges. Boys and girls face increased risks, including child labor, forced marriage, and teenage pregnancy. Child protection programs and community-based child protection committees are vital.

Risk reduction and crisis management for resilience

Implementing gender-sensitive early warning systems ensures that the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women, men, boys, and girls are considered in crisis preparedness. The inclusion of diverse voices, including those of women, in decision-making processes enhances community resilience and ensures that interventions are contextually relevant. Designing assistance programs that consider the distinct needs of different groups, such as providing specific support for pregnant women or single-headed households, contributes to effective crisis response. Empowering women to take on leadership roles in crisis management enhances the effectiveness of response efforts and contributes to community resilience. Implementing protection measures, such as ensuring the safety of women and girls in the settlement is essential for risk reduction and promoting resilience. Addressing the psychosocial needs of all groups, particularly children, contributes to resilience by strengthening coping mechanisms and mental well-being. Providing legal support to address gender-based violence and protect the rights of marginalized groups contributes to reducing risks and building resilience. Ensuring continued access to education for boys and girls during crises promotes resilience by providing a sense of normalcy, stability, and hope for the future. In summary, a gender and inclusion approach in crisis contexts recognizes and addresses the unique challenges faced by different groups, contributing to more effective risk reduction, crisis management, and community resilience.



LESSONS LEARNED

Holistic Interventions

Recognition that addressing SGBV requires a multifaceted, holistic approach that encompasses community awareness, legal advocacy, and psychosocial support to comprehensively tackle the complex issue.

Reaching and Engaging Survivors

LWF Uganda incorporates survivor-centered approaches to reach and engage survivors effectively. Additionally, confidentiality and dedicated support services are prioritized. Establishing safe spaces that prioritize the well-being and privacy of survivors is key to fostering an environment conducive to trust and healing. Involving survivors directly in the design and planning of programs not only ensures that interventions align with their needs but also empowers them by acknowledging their agency and perspectives. This approach recognizes the unique experiences of survivors and seeks to build partnerships that prioritize their autonomy and well-being throughout the engagement process.

Faith Actors as Change Agents

Effectively engaging faith actors in the prevention and response to gender-based violence involves recognizing the influential role of faith leaders and leveraging their impact on community attitudes and behaviors. Implementing awareness campaigns and fostering community dialogues in collaboration with faith leaders is a powerful strategy to address cultural norms and promote positive behavior change. In the realm of community-based protection, faith-based institutions serve as crucial gatekeepers, offering avenues to prevent and respond to SGBV cases within communities. The organized networks of people within religious institutions, spanning both urban and rural areas, present valuable opportunities for intervention. Faith-based activities such as homilies or sermons, prayer groups, and regular gatherings provide consistent platforms to shape people's attitudes and behaviors over time.

Community Engagement is Key

Engaging the community in all stages of program design and implementation, ensures cultural relevance, ownership, and sustainability. Hence community buy-in is crucial for success.

Governmental Actors

Collaborating with governmental actors is a pivotal strategy for ensuring the sustainability and scalability of interventions aimed at addressing gender-based violence. By forging partnerships with government agencies, interventions can be integrated into existing structures and systems, enhancing the potential for long-term impact. Engaging government actors in training and capacity-building programs is crucial to bolstering their ability to address SGBV effectively. This not only contributes to the development of a skilled and informed workforce within government agencies but also facilitates the institutionalization of SGBV prevention and response measures. Through collaboration with governmental actors, interventions can align with national policies and frameworks, fostering a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to combatting SGBV at both local and systemic levels.

Other Stakeholders

Engaging with various stakeholders beyond faith, survivors, and governmental actors is crucial for the comprehensive success of programs addressing gender-based violence (SGBV). Building partnerships with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations, and international agencies significantly enhances the reach and impact of interventions. These collaborations tap into diverse expertise, resources, and networks, enriching the program's effectiveness. Inclusive and participatory approaches, emphasizing the involvement of all stakeholders, ensure that interventions reflect the needs and perspectives of the communities they serve. By fostering collaboration among a wide array of stakeholders, programs can leverage collective strengths, promote knowledge exchange, and create a more holistic and sustainable response to SGBV that addresses the complexities of this pervasive issue.

Documentation and Learning

Encouraging continuous documentation of lessons learned and best practices to inform future programming and contribute to the broader field of SGBV prevention and response is key to fostering a culture of learning and improvement.

Gender Sensitivity

Emphasizing the need for gender-sensitive programming that considers the specific vulnerabilities and strengths of different genders and marginalized groups, recognizing the importance of tailored approaches is vital.

Advocacy and Policy Change

Recognizing the role of advocacy in influencing policy change and institutionalizing effective strategies for SGBV prevention and survivor support, emphasizing the importance of systemic change for long-term impact.

Adaptability

Acknowledging the importance of flexibility and adaptability in program design to respond to the evolving needs of the community and address unintended consequences, ensuring interventions remain effective and contextually relevant.

Monitoring and Evaluation and Learning

Stressing the significance of robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of interventions, identify challenges, and make data-driven adjustments for continual improvement.

SUSTAINABILITY

Through the integration of these components and successful strategies, this promising approach can bolster its longevity, guaranteeing that the positive impacts benefit survivors, faith and governmental entities, and the wider community well beyond the initial funding phase

Community Ownership and Engagement | Ensuring that the community actively participates in and takes ownership of the program by establishing community committees or groups to oversee and contribute to program activities.

Building local capacities to continue the initiative independently by developing strong partnerships with local organizations and building their capacity to sustain program activities. This can further be achieved by collaborating with local NGOs and community-based organisations, and providing training and resources to enhance the skills of local partners.

Government Integration and Institutionalization through integrating the promising practice into existing government structures and policies by advocating for the adoption of effective strategies at the government level and collaborating with relevant government departments to ensure institutionalization.

Financial Sustainability | Developing financial mechanisms to ensure ongoing funding beyond the initial project period exploring alternative funding sources, such as partnerships, grants, or revenue-generating activities, and building income-generating components within the program.

Capacity Development for Faith Actors | Building the capacity of faith actors to continue and expand program activities by providing training on SGBV prevention and response to faith leaders and incorporating faith-based perspectives into community-based initiatives.

Empowering Survivors for Long-Term Resilience | Ensuring survivors are empowered to sustain positive outcomes beyond the program period by providing vocational training and economic opportunities for survivors and establishing survivor-led support networks for ongoing mutual assistance.

Advocacy for Policy Change | Advocating for policy changes to support and sustain program initiatives by engaging in policy dialogues at local, regional, and national levels and providing evidence-based recommendations for effective SGBV prevention and response policies.

Monitoring and Evaluation for Continuous Improvement | Establishing robust monitoring and evaluation systems to assess program impact and inform ongoing improvements by regularly collecting and analyzing data on program outcomes and utilizing feedback mechanisms to adapt strategies based on lessons learned.

Documentation and Knowledge Management | Systematically documenting best practices and lessons learned for future reference by creating a knowledge repository to store program documentation and sharing experiences and insights within the organization and with other stakeholders.

Cultural Sensitivity and Contextual Adaptation | Ensuring the program is culturally sensitive and adaptable to the local context for sustained relevance by regularly engaging with the community to understand evolving needs and adapting program strategies based on cultural insights and changing circumstances.

Education and Awareness for Behavioral Change | Embedding education and awareness components that contribute to long-term behavioral change by conducting continuous awareness campaigns on gender equality and SGBV prevention and integrating educational modules into school curricula to promote a culture of respect.

Partnerships

Partners and Collaborators play a crucial role in the success and impact of a project or activity. Their contributions span various areas, including financial support, expertise, resources, and networks. Here's how partners and collaborators, including private-sector engagement, contributed to the impact of a project:

Expertise and Skills | Non-governmental organizations and civil society groups bring specialized knowledge and skills related to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) prevention, survivor support, and community engagement. Private Sector Companies can contribute expertise in areas such as marketing, technology, or supply chain management, enhancing the project's efficiency and effectiveness.

Networking and Outreach | Collaboration with government agencies has helped in accessing broader networks, reaching a larger audience, and ensuring alignment with national policies and strategies. Private companies like media often have extensive networks that can be leveraged for outreach, awareness campaigns, and community engagement, maximizing the impact of the project.

Resource Mobilization | Collaborative efforts with non-profit organizations lead to joint resource mobilization efforts, tapping into a wider pool of resources for project implementation. Private-sector partners can mobilize resources and services including in-kind donations during advocacy events, or facilities, contributing to the project's overall sustainability.

Advocacy and Policy Influence | Non-governmental partners often play a crucial role in advocacy, influencing policies, and promoting systemic change for the prevention and response to SGBV. Private companies are engaged in advocacy efforts, using their influence to promote policies and practices that align with the goals of the project.

Monitoring and Evaluation | Collaborating with research institutions enhances the project's monitoring and evaluation processes, ensuring a robust assessment of impact and effectiveness. Private companies with expertise in data analytics and evaluation methodologies can contribute to refining monitoring and evaluation strategies.



SGBV INNOVATION, REPLICABILITY, VALIDATION AND ADAPTATION

INNOVATION

Community-Centered Design | The approach involves a community-centered design, ensuring that interventions are tailored to the specific needs, cultural context, and aspirations of the community. This approach fosters a sense of ownership and active participation, contributing to increased agency and resilience among individuals.

Intersectionality and Inclusivity | The approach recognizes and addresses the intersectionality of identities, considering the unique challenges faced by men, women, girls, boys, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and other marginalized groups. By being inclusive, the approach promotes social norm change and challenges discriminatory practices, fostering a more equitable and resilient community.

Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration | The approach involves collaboration with diverse stakeholders, including government institutions, NGOs, faith actors, and private-sector partners. This collaboration contributes to system change by creating a network of support, influencing policies, and enhancing the sustainability of interventions.

Technology Integration | Integration of new technologies, such as online case management using ProGres V4, mobile applications for reporting or data analytics for monitoring and evaluation. Technological innovations enhance the efficiency of interventions, improve data-driven decision-making, and contribute to the scalability of the approach.

Behavioral Change Communication | The approach employs innovative behavioral change communication strategies tailored to the local context, utilizing culturally sensitive messaging. Effective communication contributes to social norm change by challenging harmful behaviors and promoting positive attitudes toward gender equality and the prevention of violence.

Capacity Building and Training | The approach includes capacity-building components for various stakeholders, including community members, government officials, and faith leaders. Building capacities contribute to system change by creating a cadre of individuals who can sustain and replicate successful practices.

Adaptive Management | The approach incorporates adaptive management principles, allowing for continuous learning and adjustments based on monitoring and evaluation data. Adaptive management ensures that interventions remain relevant, effective, and responsive to evolving community needs, contributing to long-term success.

Validation of impact

The impact of the Promising Practice approach is consistently validated through regular data collection, analysis, and evaluation processes to ensure that the approach's impact is measured against predefined indicators and goals. Establishing feedback mechanisms allows for continuous engagement with the community, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders, ensuring that their experiences and perspectives contribute to ongoing improvements. Rigorous assessments of program outcomes, such as changes in behavior, attitudes, and community dynamics, provide tangible evidence of the approach's impact. The approach's focus on sustainability, including community ownership, capacity building, and integration into existing systems, reinforces its long-term impact beyond the initial project period.

Possibilities for replication

Contextual Adaptation | Successful replication requires an understanding of the local context, including social, cultural, economic, and environmental factors therefore identifying and adapting the intervention to suit the specific conditions and needs of the new context is crucial.

Community Engagement and Ownership | The presence of a strong community engagement model and mechanisms for community ownership by ensuring that the community actively participates in the design and implementation of the intervention fosters sustainability.

Government and Institutional Support | Support and collaboration from government institutions and local authorities by encouraging alignment with existing policies and government priorities enhance the likelihood of successful replication and scaling.

Financial Sustainability | Identification of sustainable funding mechanisms beyond initial project funding by exploring avenues for financial support, including partnerships, grants, and income-generating activities.

Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity | Availability of monitoring and evaluation capacities, including data collection and analysis by building local capacities for effective monitoring and evaluation ensures ongoing learning and improvement.



Adaptation

Digital Solutions | Exploring new technologies or digital platforms to enhance the reach and impact of interventions by ensuring accessibility, inclusivity, and data privacy in the adoption of digital solutions.

Economic Empowerment Variations | Adapting economic empowerment components to suit the local economic landscape by identifying viable income-generating opportunities and ensuring they align with the skills and aspirations of the target population.

Mobile Applications for Reporting | Implementing or enhancing mobile applications for reporting incidents of gender-based violence by ensuring user-friendly interfaces, confidentiality, and accessibility for diverse user groups.

Data Analytics for Decision-Making | Leveraging data analytics tools for evidence-based decision-making and program optimization by building organizational capacities for data analysis and interpretation.

Online Platforms for Education and Support | Utilizing online platforms for educational campaigns, support services, and community engagement by addressing digital literacy, connectivity, and inclusivity issues to ensure broad accessibility.

In summary, the innovation and success factors of the approach lie in its adaptability, community-centered design, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and incorporation of technology. The possibilities of extending the promising practice depend on contextual adaptation, strong community engagement, government support, financial sustainability, and the integration of new models or technological solutions.



Conclusion

The Promising Practice approach has demonstrated significant impact and usefulness in addressing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and fostering community resilience. Its community-centered design, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and adaptability contribute to its effectiveness. The approach not only addresses immediate challenges but also seeks to create sustainable, positive changes in individual agency, community dynamics, and institutional systems. The approach has positively impacted the agency and resilience of individuals, including men, women, girls, boys, and persons with disabilities. Through targeted interventions such as education, economic empowerment, and psychosocial support, individuals have gained the skills and confidence to navigate and overcome challenges.

By incorporating behavioural change communication strategies, the approach has contributed to positive shifts in social norms. It challenges harmful stereotypes, promotes gender equality, and fosters a community culture that rejects violence. Collaborative efforts with various stakeholders, including government bodies, NGOs, faith actors, and the private sector, have contributed to systemic change. Advocacy, policy influence, and capacity-building initiatives aim to create an environment that supports SGBV prevention and survivor support.

The integration of new technologies, such as mobile applications and data analytics, has enhanced the scalability of the approach. These innovations improve data-driven decision-making, reporting mechanisms, and the overall efficiency of program delivery. The approach's emphasis on community engagement and ownership ensures that interventions are culturally relevant and sustainable. Communities actively participate in the design, implementation, and monitoring of programs, fostering a sense of ownership and commitment.

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms have consistently validated the impact of the approach. Data-driven insights, feedback loops, and adaptive management principles ensure that interventions remain effective and responsive to evolving community needs.

Tools and Related Resources

What training manuals, guidelines, technical write-ups, posters, pictures, video and audio documents, have been created and developed that are relevant for this Promising Practice?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for GBV in Emergencies | GBV Information Management System | GBV Case Management GBV AoR Media Guidelines |
| WHO Guidance on Ethical and Safety | IASC Guidelines for Integrating GBV Interventions in Humanitarian | |

Additional Information

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Include URL of the practice: Add where one can find the Promising practice online or elsewhere | Also link to Communications URLs with videos and human interest stories. | Include contact details of project manager/directors/ backstops for more information on the Promising practice. |
|--|--|---|

UN Women's Frameworks and implementation package for preventing violence against women and girls

Preventing violence against women implementation package
A framework to underpin action to prevent violence against women

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