

REPORT ON NAWAD LAUNCH OF 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN NWOYA DISTRICT

November 2019



1. Introduction

NAWAD with support from WomanKind Worldwide planned and organized for the 16 days of activism launch in Nwoya District under the theme; “Stop Wildlife Attacks Now (SWAN)”. The theme came forth as a result of wildlife attacks on people’s gardens and farms which are the basic places of work that the women in Nwoya district depend on for livelihoods. The animal attacks come as a result of the oil mining activities that take place in Murchison falls National Park where the light emissions and vibrations scare away animals from their places of habitant. The launch targeted grassroots women affected by the human wildlife conflict and district officials to have an engagement and discuss possible solutions to the problem.

2. Background to 16 days of activism

16 days of Activism against gender based violence is an international campaign to challenge violence against women and girls. The campaign runs every year from 25 November, the international day for the elimination of violence against women to 10 December, the human rights day. It was started at the inaugural Women’s Global Leadership Institute in 1991 and continues to be coordinated each year by the Center for Women’s Global Leadership. It is used and organiz around the world to call for the prevention of violence against women and girls. This year’s international theme is Orange the World, Generation Equality Stands against Rape

In Uganda this year, the National Launch of the 16 days of Activism by the Ministry Gender, Labour and Social Development together with UN Women was held at Imperial Royale Hotel in Kampala under the theme; “End Violence Against Women and Girls” in the place of work, #OrangeTheWorld and #HearMeToo an event that NAWAD attended. It is against this background that NAWAD developed a theme “Stop Wildlife Attack Now (SWAN)” considering that women’s gardens/farms are their workplaces.

3. Activities

The activities that were carried out include a March and Community Dialogue. Members gathered at Purongo Local Council III Headquarters for the March which was flagged off by the Senior Assistant Secretary of the Local Council who briefed participants of the March about the 16 days of Activism and flagged off the March after singing of the national anthem

3.1 March

Participants included women, men and girls, local council and district officials, media personnel from radio Rupiny and Mega FM in Gulu and the police. During the March, participants carried Manila paper with messages reading;

- End Violence Against Women and Girls
- Stop Wildlife Attacks Now (SWAN)
- Stop Sexual Harassment
- Women are not sex objects
- Elephants are stopping our children from accessing education

- Early marriages, defilement and drop out at an increase and this must stop
- Poverty is striking us as a result of wildlife destruction in our community
- End Gender based violence in the place of work; our gardens are our place of work.
- We are now slaves in our land because of elephants, who is there to help us? No garden, no work, no food, etc.

The March kicked off from Purongo Local Council III Headquarters. Members then Marched around 5km around Purongo Trading Center and back to the headquarters for a community dialogue.



Figure 1 Community members in Purongo marching to create awareness on gender based violence against women and girls

3.2 Community Dialogue

The community dialogue was attended local council and district officials including the Resident District Commissioner (RDC), the Office of the District chairperson represented by the secretary for social services, the officer in charge of child and family protection unit-Nwoya Central police station and one in-charge of Purongo police station, the District Community Development Officer (DCDO), the Senior probation & welfare officer, the Senior Assistant Secretary-, the Community Development Officer (CDO) Purongo Local Council III and the office of the LCIII chairperson Purongo represented by the vice chairperson.



Figure 2: Women and girls listening closely during the community dialogue

Together with the community members, victims of gender based violence shared stories of their experience as they amplified their voices to the Uganda Wildlife Society, the big oil company investors, the district and government officials, practitioners of the law and to whom it may concern for justice.

Mrs. Atim Pauline from Lagaji women's group shared her experience of wildlife attack,

My problem is my husband has three women and since we mostly depend on the garden produce, usually what I plant, he gets the harvest and shares it among the other three women and also some of my produce is destroyed by elephants. I am sometimes forced to move out in the night to the garden to chase away the animals. Many times I get very little harvest from the garden and this has forced me to go out and look for "lejjalejja" casual work on people's farms for some money to buy and prepare some food for my children and also to take them to school. In terms of payment, I earn UGX 2500 for every piece of land (10×40 meters) and other times, I get food in exchange for work. The other problem that I get is that I work from morning to evening without any food.



Figure 3 : Jessica Okello sharing her experience about wildlife attack on her farms

In addition to Atim Pauline experience, Jessica Okello shared her experience

Elephants destroyed my crops in the gardens bringing food insecurity and no money in the family since agriculture is our main source of income. The animals have denied us access to our gardens which has led to my two daughters' dropping out of school. One of them got pregnant in her teenage years and got married. Even in the community this has led to increased number of school dropouts and early pregnancies and marriages. We also sleep in the gardens to chase away the animals at night and male counterparts blame us for our daughters' teenage pregnancy and early marriage. However this has increased the levels of mistrust in marriages, and raising cases of sicknesses due to mosquito bites and night coldness.

4. Outcomes

The event, increased awareness among women, girls and men concerning the 16 days of Activism, the different forms of gender based violence against women and girls and on what actions women and girls can take to address issues of violence.

Community women and girls' voices were amplified to a broader platform first they communicated to the duty bearers within the district and they also gave consent NAWAD to

share some of the pictures and videos that were captured during the event on its social media platforms including Facebook and Twitter and is also planning to have them used on the organizational website. This will help to raise awareness on gender based violence against women and girls in Nwoya district as a result of the human wildlife conflict.

5. Challenges

The team that implemented the activities got a challenge of network connection and therefore, they were unable to perform a facebook live stream of the event as earlier planned.

6. Recommendation

NAWAD would like to recommend that whenever such campaigns like the one at hand are run, all involved stakeholders should participate for direct engagement as a way of advocating for zero tolerance of gender based violence against women and girls.

In addition, CSOs should focus on carrying out such activities in the grass root communities since occasionally, the women and girls in such communities are the ones that stand to be victims of the acts of violence.

In the perspective of the women and girls in Nwoya district we would like to caution the government to advocate for the effective implementation of policies around gender based violence.

Women and girls are scared of coming out and speaking up whenever they experience different forms of violence in fear of being attacked by the violators. Therefore we would like to challenge the legal framework to protect the victims of gender based violence.

The Uganda wildlife authority together with the big oil mining company investors should generate solutions against wildlife migrations or they should fairly compensate the displaced families.

7. Conclusion

The event was a success given the numbers that participated and the attitude community women and girls exhibited during the March and community dialogue. By sharing and writing the messages communicating their issues on the manila and also holding them out while marching was motivational and proof that once strengthened these women can actually work in solidarity to fight for their rights by themselves. The engagement of both local leaders and government officials in the activities, based on their communications proved that they were going to stand as ambassadors of the community women and girls that would amplify their voices for their issues to be solved.