

COMMUNITY BASED WOMEN AND CHILDREN RIGHTS ADVOCATES PLAN NEW STRATEGY



Women's group Steering Committee meeting

THIS MONTH

Rights Activists meet to plan Strategy.

Sure Start Club Represents MIFUMI at RHU week

New , safe boundaries at MIFUMI Primary School

A girl's account of abuse

The MIFUMI Movement Building block held its first meeting with the chairpersons of the steering committees of 21 Advice centres in Tororo District to reflect, discuss and address issues pertaining their work.

Steering committees are smaller groups of 7 members identified and appointed by the bigger Women's Groups (survivors, women and children rights activists) to govern their activities.

They do this by monitoring and supervising the Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs), overseeing the general functioning and administration of advice centres, identifying and creating partnerships with duty bearers, stakeholders, CBO's and NGOs. The steering committee also manages the women's savings and loans scheme.

Lucy Akello, head of Movement Building Women (MBW) welcomed the members and went ahead to outline the activities, successes, milestones and challenges at the advice centres.

She highlighted recent achievements like the successful resolution of up to 10 cases per month saying this success could only be attributed to the involvement of key duty bearers at the different levels of case handling. She urged the women to involve spiritual ministers, clan

leaders and elders, sub county chiefs, Local Councillors, Police, Activists, among others in accessing justice for survivors of abuse.

Lucy added that with the Match funding from MIFUMI Advice centres, headed by the steering committees are in position to grow into vibrant self sustaining Community Based Organizations (CBOs).

The meeting also offered an opportunity for IDVAs and the Steering Committee to share issues relating to complicated cases; sighting model cases where parties have been uncooperative and instances where bribery of duty bearers interfered with passing of resolutions and justice for survivors.

Abbo Florence, chair, Rubongi Steering Committee requested MIFUMI to continue with the monthly training on domestic violence and Bride Price to Women Groups to keep them abreast with new findings and strategies for community advocacy.

In her closing remarks, Lucy Akello encouraged the women to engage in Income Generating activities to be able to increase on their financial independence. She called upon every committee to identify and build linkages with other government funded programmes like The 2nd Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF II), National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS), AFRICA 2000, among others.

SURE START CLUB REPRESENTS MIFUMI AT RHU WEEK



Karate Club demonstrates at RHU event

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Police Primary School Sure Start Club represented MIFUMI at the launch of Reproductive Health Uganda (RHU) in Tororo recently.

The one week event that kicked off on the 1st August 2011 saw the club engage in various activities targeted towards giving back to the community and keeping Tororo Clean Drive.

Pupils painted zebra crossing, cleaned drainages, visited the main hospital. The youth took on other various activities that were ranging from blood donation, blood testing, counseling, drama acting, dancing, singing, and playing games.

The Sure start club demonstrated its unique karate moves to the participants and guests. Athanasius Oguti, MIFUMI senior manager delivered a speech with statistics on bride price and domestic violence meanwhile relating them to HIV/AIDS.

The guest of honor Mr. Jackson Oboth Oboth the Member of Parliament West Budama South thanked MIFUMI for its tremendous work in combating violence that had eaten up the whole of Tororo. He also urged the youths to take on sports activities while in holidays so as not to engage in dangerous acts that can

claim their lives.

Francis Orono, the Chief Administrative Officer in charge of NGOs encouraged the youths to emulate and embrace the Sure Start clubs. 'I am an old boy of karate'. I am here today because of discipline and hard work. These are key ideas behind Sure Start clubs'.

The Administrators at the Reproductive Health Uganda - Tororo office pledged to offer Tororo youths with all the necessary support towards making them better people of tomorrow.

Currently running in 14 schools in Tororo District, Sure Start is using sport to eliminate gender biases against girls to be able to eliminate discrimination against girls in schools, equip them with knowledge to make determined choices, avoid risky situations that can lead to child abuse and head for healthy relationships with boys based on mutual respect and equality. The Sure Start project is achieving this by tapping on the confidence and determination encompassed in the karate discipline.

MIFUMI PRIMARY SCHOOL DRAWS NEIGHBOURLY BOUNDARIES



The newly erected gate at MIFUMI Primary school

“Good fences make good neighbors” were the first words that came out of the visibly beaming Bernard Onyango, headmaster Mifumi Primary School during an assembly to inform pupils and staff of the latest donation to the school.

Roy and Jenny Carnegie had donated yet again to MIFUMI Primary School; this time around, a chain link fence and gate together with badly needed books

Bernard stated the chain link came at a time when the schools’ pupil population was steadily increasing and thus keeping of pupils within the school boundaries was becoming a challenge.

The fence was not only going to create a conducive environment for the pupils to focus on their studies but was also going to enable the administration to monitor and account for all the pupils who had come to school each day.

With the new fencing Bernard was confident the school would maintain good boundaries that help neighbors respect one another and maintain a strong neighborly relationship.

The school has had small cases to settle with the community in instances where community members have brought their cows to graze on school property and where pupils have invaded neighbors home and raided their mango, guava and orange trees.

Teacher Grace Amito, says ‘we are no longer going to run up and down the school premises searching for pupils. This new fence is going to keep all children from nursery to primary in the closed boundary of the school.

Most importantly, it’s going keep the Mifumi primary school family safe from intruders.’ The pupils themselves first thought of the fence and gate as a punishment to them but now admit that it has made them keep time for school. We have to come to school early not to be locked outside the school premises.

With this new addition, MIFUMI Primary School has some of the Best facilities in Tororo District.

I WON'T BE PUT DOWN BY MY PARENTS' SELFISHNESS AND IRRESPONSIBILITY

Maybe if the suffering and abuse had come from someone else; like a relative or step parent, I would have some form of consolation and hope that at least my parents would have loved and treated us better. But this was not to be. The abuse my siblings and I suffered came from our biological parents.

My mother still young and beautiful separated from our father leaving us with him. Father took it out on us, blaming us for everything that went wrong with his marriage, casting insults, intended for our mother, at us. We lived like strangers in his home - like enemies. Everything about us disgusted him. I was the eldest and my siblings looked up to me for an explanation for everything.

I had to juggle between going to school and taking care of my siblings as my father resigned from any responsibility that even reflected concern for us. He did not care if we went to school or not.

I had to figure out ways of putting food on the table for my siblings as on many days and nights we went without food.

I started digging for people who would give me some food and some little money to buy basic needs like, soap, beddings and books. I was only fifteen and all this overwhelmed me. I was constantly tired, on many occasions I had to stay out of school to take care of my siblings. My report cards that once reflected me as a bright pupil heading for a bright future were reading otherwise.

Pleas from concerned people to my father to start taking care of his children fell on deaf ears. He claimed I was old enough to get married but was wasting time in school when actually the cows from my bride price would be used to take care of himself now that my mother had made him a miserable man.

He threw us out of the house and left us to fend for ourselves; he even took away the cooking pans claiming he bought them with his money.

I had joined the MIFUMI Sure Start club then as a place to relax and get away from my misery. However, I did not share with anyone what I was going through. My absenteeism, frail and tired look soon caught the attention of our trainer who requested me to stay behind after the training.

It was a relief to finally let go of my burden to someone who listened and understood what I was going through. My trainer explained to me that what I was experiencing were various forms of child abuse. She explained to me the forms of abuse that included physical, emotional, psychological, verbal, economic and sexual abuse. She said what my father was doing was wrong and legally we were still his children and partly his responsibility. I also got to learn that as children we had rights too.

The trainer raised my issue with the school administration and a domestic violence advisor with MIFUMI. The meeting with my father did not yield much but that is not going to stop me from realizing my dreams.

I am so grateful to MIFUMI Project and the Sure Start club for all the support that has been extended to me and my siblings.

I was taken up by the scholarship scheme and now am getting a lot of help in terms of fees, scholastic materials and also due to the long distance from home MIFUMI bought me a bicycle that I ride to school.

I have enrolled at a tailoring school in my village and over the weekends, I do some gardening for food. I put the money I raise to good use.

I have also learnt to make friends that are helpful to me and to avoid bad groups; to be very patient and not rush with any decisions. Right now my decision is to stay in school despite the pressure from my father to get married.

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