

***Promising Practice Case Study 2:
Inclusion of Women and Girls with Disabilities in Gender-Based Violence services in Bidi Bidi
Refugee Settlement, Uganda***

Key Learnings

- This project focused on identifying and monitoring protection needs and capacities of women and girls with disabilities, strengthening access to protection services, and fostering their participation in prevention and empowerment initiatives, demonstrating the Humanitarian Inclusion Protection Standards¹ in action.
- Women and girls with disabilities demonstrated not only improved knowledge and awareness on GBV and where to access services, but also an interest in sharing this information with others and contributing to the wider empowerment of women and girls in the settlement and host community.
- More work is needed to support GBV and disability actors to identify and respond to the needs of women with disabilities across their life-cycle and with different types of disabilities.
- The inclusion of diverse groups, as well as sustainable and transformative GBV programming, requires longer-term funding and engagement with communities to support the measurement of outcome and impact.

Overview of the Context

In 2016, the United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Working Group established a Task Team to develop IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action.² Ensuring non-discrimination requires that such guidelines be gender-sensitive, as well as relevant and appropriate to gender-based violence (GBV) actors working in humanitarian settings globally. With support from the Women's Refugee Commission and the Government of Australia, a range of organizations piloted the GBV guidance in the Draft IASC Disability Guidelines, providing examples of how humanitarian organizations can practically implement the Guidelines.

Uganda currently hosts 1.2 million refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Sudan and Burundi.³ Many refugees have experienced sexual abuse, torture and separation from family members in their country of origin and while fleeing conflict. Women and girls continue to be at high risk of intimate partner violence, rape and sexual assault and physical assault in Uganda.⁴ Bidi

¹ Age and Disability Consortium (2018) Humanitarian Inclusion Standards for Older People and People with Disabilities.

https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Humanitarian_inclusion_standards_for_older_people_and_people_with_disabi...pdf

² IASC Task Team on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action

<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-task-team-inclusion-persons-disabilities-humanitarian-action>

³ UNHCR Uganda Factsheet – February 2019

<http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20Uganda%20Factsheet%20-%20February%202019.pdf>

⁴ UNHCR Monthly Protection Update Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Uganda September 2018

<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/66524.pdf>

Bidi settlement was established in 2016 to host an influx of South Sudanese refugees and is currently home to over 280,000 people.⁵

The National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda (NUWODU) is a women-led organization of persons with disabilities (DPO) advocating for the rights and inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in all aspects of international development. Recognizing that refugee women and girls with disabilities were largely excluded from their networking and advocacy on the rights of women with disabilities, NUWODU reached out this group, consulting with them on their needs, skills, and capacities, and inviting them to join NUWODU activities. Since 2011, NUWODU has been largely working with urban refugees, conducting assessments, providing education and training on human rights, and linking them to GBV service providers.⁶

In 2015, NUWODU formed a coalition with the National Union of Persons with Disabilities in Uganda (NUDIPU) and Restoration and Hope for Refugees (REHORE) to advance inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action in Uganda. NUWODU and its coalition had demonstrated the capacity to engage service providers, train and support refugee women and girls with disabilities to enjoy their rights and gain access to GBV services in Kampala, Nakivale and Oruchinga settlement camps. It is against this background that the coalition decided to bridge identified gaps, utilise learning and resources from the previous projects and scale up disability inclusion in GBV programming in Bidi Bidi settlement camp.

Project Summary

In 2018, NUWODU, NUDIPU and REHORE worked together to pilot the IASC Disability Guidelines, raise awareness of the protection concerns of women and girls with disabilities, and enhance the capacity of humanitarian actors on disability inclusion in GBV programs in Bidi Bidi refugee settlement. NUWODU started by providing training for coalition staff members on GBV and disability, including the use of rights-based language when referring to persons with disabilities and survivors of violence. The coalition then held a consultative meeting with refugee women and girls with disabilities in Bidi Bidi refugee settlement to identify GBV risks, barriers to accessing GBV services and suggested strategies to make GBV prevention and response activities more accessible to them.

Women and girls with disabilities received training on rights, legal frameworks for GBV and available reporting mechanisms for GBV incidents. Women leaders in the community were also trained in safe identification and referral. Girls with disabilities were well represented in the training (41%) and a quarter of participants were women from the host community in an effort to foster social cohesion and protective peer networks beyond the refugee settlement. The majority of women and girls who received training had physical disabilities (76%) with very few persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities directly participating in these activities.

Concurrently, NUWODU and project partners held a consultative meeting with GBV service providers operating in the settlement to identify their concerns and capacity development needs in reaching and supporting survivors with disabilities. This included exploring ways in which leaders of persons with disabilities could be identified in the refugee community and engaged in GBV prevention

⁵ Uganda Refugee Response Monitoring. Settlement Fact Sheet Bidi Bidi December 2017

<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/64966>

⁶ Women's Refugee Commission & NUWODU (2016) Bridging the Gap Between Development and Humanitarian Action: The Role of Local Women's Organizations.

<https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/populations/disabilities/research-and-resources/1402-case-study-nuwodu-uganda-nov-2016-pdf>

initiatives. They also raised awareness on the attitudes, and methodologies or approaches for involving women and girls with disabilities and their care-givers in GBV programs.

Finally, NUWODU and project partners advocated for adaptations to data collection processes in the settlement, so that information could be disaggregated and analysed according to age, gender and disability in the future. They engaged women and girls with disabilities in monitoring and evaluation, by supporting them to collect “Stories of Change”, highlighting what change matters the most to this group. They participated in and facilitated forums for exchange of information, learning and coordination, including the “Persons with Specific Needs Working Group” and the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development forum GBV actors meeting.

Approaches & Promising Practices

This project is aligned with current standards, such as the Humanitarian Inclusion Standards, by identifying and monitoring protection needs and capacities of women and girls with disabilities, strengthening access to protection services, and fostering their participation in prevention and empowerment initiatives ⁷

The main approaches to inclusion utilised were consulting directly with women and girls with disabilities to identify their specific needs and capacities, raising awareness and strengthening capacity of GBV service providers, and engaging in coordination and networking on GBV-related issues in the refugee settlement.

Establishing a common understanding of GBV and disability among project partners is a critical step in ensuring that the principles and approaches required to “do no harm” are upheld when consulting with and engaging community members in GBV initiatives. NUWODU and the project partners also consulted directly with women and girls with disabilities not only on their risks, but also on the perceived opportunities to strengthen GBV programming in the settlement.

A commitment to inclusion of girls with disabilities not only in consultations, but also in training activities, demonstrates a positive approach to non-discrimination and empowerment, which is both gender- and age-sensitive. Girls with disabilities highlighted specific concerns relating to confidentiality, as they may be refused services when presenting independently to service providers.

“The officers at the complaints desk do not understand disability. If you come without another person you will not be helped but sometimes you do not want others to know ... Some leaders should be trained on confidentiality because this will help girls to always come to report.” Girls with disabilities group discussion

Mobilising GBV actors through consultative meetings and raising disability issues in existing GBV forums ensured that findings from field assessments were fed into the wider refugee programs and plans. Furthermore, NUWODU and the project partners targeted decision-making mechanisms in the settlement for inclusion, providing training to women leaders and calling on GBV actors to recruit persons with disabilities as community activists.

Finally, NUWDOU reports having a strong relationship with the Community-Based Services Department in the Office of the Prime Minister (the government body responsible for refugee

⁷Age and Disability Consortium (2018) Humanitarian Inclusion Standards for Older People and People with Disabilities.

https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Humanitarian_inclusion_standards_for_older_people_and_people_with_disabi....pdf

protection and coordination). This government counterpart granted permission for International Day of Persons with Disabilities celebrations to be held in the settlement and accompanied refugees with disabilities in these activities, in turn acting as a disability champion for other stakeholders in the settlement.

Photo Descriptor: Two NUWODU staff members standing in front of a sign and holding up awareness raising materials. There is a table in front of them with more materials.



Outcomes / Impact

In this short (3-month) project, NUWODU and the project partners demonstrated the following outcomes:

- GBV actors demonstrated improved understanding of the diverse needs and capacities of women and girls with different types of disabilities.

“Many women and girls with disabilities encounter challenges in accessing services. This is more so for those with epilepsy because they are always hiding for fear of getting an attack in public.” GBV Social Worker.

- Some GBV actors demonstrated change in their attitudes and assumptions that relate to persons with disabilities, reflecting on the linkage with their personal lives as well as work in communities.
- GBV actors made commitments to start analysing GBV Information Management System data by disability providing more information for program planning and monitoring.
- GBV actors committed to recruiting refugees with disabilities as GBV activists, demonstrating greater recognition of the skills and capacities of this group and their ability to contribute to GBV programming,
- Finally, women and girls with disabilities demonstrated not only improved knowledge and awareness on GBV and where to access services, but also an interest in sharing this information with others and contributing to the wider empowerment of women and girls in the settlement and host community.

“When I got trained on GBV. I got the power to support my fellow women with disabilities. I need to be trained as a paralegal so that the community can recognise me.” Woman with disabilities, Bidi Bidi refugee settlement

“After the training on GBV, I went and shared with my husband and my in-laws. When there is a community meeting on GBV, they now attend and talk about issues of women with disabilities.”
Woman with disabilities, host community

Ongoing gaps

This project demonstrates a strong understanding of importance of age analysis and age-sensitive programming for adolescent girls with disabilities – a principle that is too often not translated into practice in GBV programs and projects. However, **more work is needed to support GBV and disability actors to identify and respond to the needs of women with disabilities across their life-cycle, with a particular gap in understanding and addressing the needs of older women with disabilities.**

While training and awareness raising addressed the needs of women and girls from more marginalized groups, such as those with albinism and epilepsy, **gaps persists, in this project and across the GBV sector more broadly, in fostering the meaningful participation of women and girls with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities who are oftentimes most at risk of GBV.**

As NUWODU and partners highlighted, **the inclusion of diverse groups, as well as sustainable and transformative GBV programming, requires longer-term funding and engagement with communities to support the measurement of outcome and impact.**

Story of Change

“I am Betty. I live with my grandmother, parents and siblings ... NUWODU’s training on GBV, rights and GBV referral system was the first of its kind to me and the first training I was attending in life. I realized that more women suffer from GBV than men and most importantly, that people with disabilities are more at greater risk of GBV. The training enabled me to know that people with disabilities are important because they have rights just like any other abled bodied persons.

The journey to Nakaseke district was thrilling. I was motivated and encouraged when I noticed that there are other women with different disabilities. From that moment, I realized that I belong – I belong to a family that I can identify with – a family of women with different disabilities – I feel part of the community and no amount of words, insults, mockery can shake me! I am confident I am human.

My parents encouraged me to attend the training and provided my transport to the venue. I want to learn more about people with disabilities generally and women with disabilities specifically. The training venue was made accessible and transport refund was provided. I did not find any challenges in attending the training.

I would love to see women with disabilities given livelihood projects, like liquid soap making, tailoring and affordable income generating activities so that they are financially and economically empowered to be able to meet their basic necessities in life. I also encourage NUWODU to organize more trainings for girls with disabilities at village level on specific areas and stakeholders should always plan specific trainings for persons with disabilities.”

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