

# EMPOWERING LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN WEST NILE

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BASELINE STUDY  
MARCH 2019

**Advance**  
—AFRIKA—  
*Where Dignity Matters*



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AA	Advance Afrika
ELVWC	Empowering Local Communities to Prevent Violence against Women and Children in West Nile
EU	European Union
FG(s)	Focus Group(s)
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
KI(s)	Key Informants(s)
PICOT	Partner in Community Transformation
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
UPS	Ugandan Prisons Service
UWEP	Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Association

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 CONTEXT OF THE BASELINE STUDY

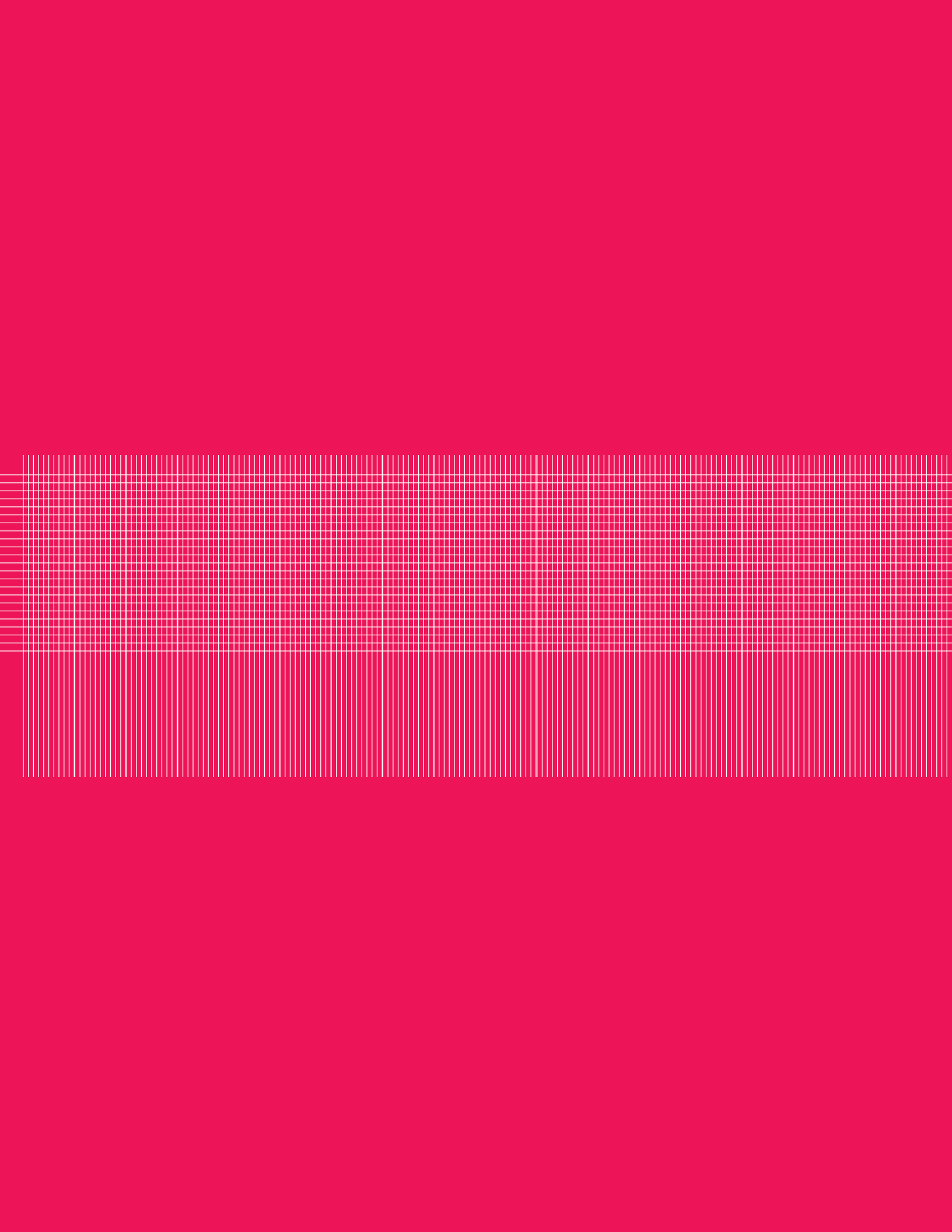
Empowering Local Communities to Prevent Violence against Women and Children in West Nile (ELVWC) is a project planned to run for two and a half years. It is implemented by Partner in Community Transformation (PICOT) and Advance Afrika (AA) in partnership with the Uganda Prisons Service (UPS) and funded by the European Union (EU). The action has identified women and children as particularly vulnerable to domestic violence and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). It seeks to support vulnerable women in and out of prison and in the community at large.

The project focuses on empowering women and children in Koboko and Arua districts in West Nile to lead peaceful and dignified lives. It follows two main objectives: (1) To ensure that female (ex-) inmates have access to improved and impactful rehabilitation and reintegration services; and (2) To ensure that community structures actively engage in changing attitudes, perceptions and practices regarding respect for women and children's rights.

## 1.2 OBJECTIVE OF THE BASELINE STUDY

This baseline study aims at providing information about the current status of relevant data regarding the project's objectives. It will serve as a benchmark for measuring and monitoring the progress in the course of the project and at the end of it. This baseline will also serve to design activities and capacity-building interventions as well as identifying relevant policies, guidelines and frameworks for supporting project implementation and advocacy.

The baseline study captures quantitative and qualitative information to illustrate the situation regarding women and children's rights, rehabilitation services for female inmates, communities' perception of female leadership and women's rights as well as advocacy on that matter. Most of the information collected is, however, qualitative, as it captures the mindset regarding the aforementioned topics in the area concerned by the project, as the second objective aims at impacting attitudes and perceptions that can hardly be quantified. When possible, quantitative information is provided, yet it should be treated with caution.



# METHODOLOGY

## 2.1 DATA COLLECTION

In order to capture different points of view, opinions and knowledge, several interviews were conducted between November 2018 and January 2019 in Arua and Koboko districts by AA's and PICOT's staff. Two focus group discussions (FGDs) were held in Arua and Koboko prisons with female and male inmates and individual structured interviews with five female inmates in each prison. Two FGDs were also held with representatives from local communities in both districts. In addition, four semi-structured interviews were conducted with different staff members

of UPS and eight were conducted with key informants (KIs), including religious and political leaders. Table 1 provides detailed information about the interview.

Each questionnaire was specifically designed for the targeted individual providing information. Four main themes were covered: (1) the economic and social rights of women (women in leadership positions and SGBV); (2) in-prison rehabilitation services for female inmates; (3) attitudes and perception of community structures regarding women's rights; and (4) advocacy efforts.

**Table 1: Respondents' details**

Respondents	Description/composition
Key informants (KIs) stakeholders	4 men and 4 women from different institutions related to the work carried on in the project
UPS leadership	3 men and 1 women holding various positions at UPS
FGDs in prisons	5 women in Arua and 5 in Koboko, aged between 20 and 40
FGDs in communities	Arua: 7 women and 6 men aged between 25 and 50 Koboko: 10 men and 6 women aged between 17 and 45
Females inmates	Arua: 5 female inmates Koboko: 5 female inmates

Source: Fieldwork



## 2.2 DATA ANALYSIS

We used the axial coding method in order to break down the information collected in respect of the four main themes mentioned above. The most relevant and commonly shared answers are presented in order to extract trends from the data collection. For quantitative information, we provide numbers based on the knowledge of the KIs, as data is not available otherwise.

## 2.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The main limitation of the baseline study is that some activities had already been implemented. Therefore, the knowledge and opinions of the respondents had already been influenced by the work done in the field, meaning that it would not be possible to use the baseline study to capture the entire change induced through the course of the action. It would, nevertheless, be useful for further implementation of activities and for the final evaluation, keeping in mind that the benchmark is not set at the very beginning of the project.

Another limitation, resulting from the fact that some activities had already been conducted, is that the respondents may have answered what they knew AA and PICOT wanted to hear (social desirability bias). When identified, such answers have not been taken into account. Finally, the number of participants of the study remained low, thus the significance is quite weak. However, the baseline succeeded in capturing the opinions of key players on women's rights in and outside prison, which is crucial to orientate the actions in the right direction to achieve the project's objectives.

# FINDINGS

In this chapter, we present the main findings of the data analysis. As mentioned in the introduction, it follows the main four themes around which the ELWVC project is built, i.e. women and children's rights to live dignified lives; rehabilitation activities for female inmates and day care centres for children; attitudes towards and perception of women; and children's rights and the advocacy effort.

## 3.1 WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO LIVE DIGNIFIED LIVES

This section covers inmates' and non-inmates' women's rights. We start by presenting the findings of one-to-one

interviews with female inmates to illustrate how their life has been impacted by SGBV, before moving on to capture the knowledge and opinions of KI and UPS leadership and staff on women's rights. We will conclude by taking a look at women in leadership and business.

### 3.1.1 Female inmates and violence

According to many studies, female inmates have generally been victims of violence, which often leads them to prison as retaliation on their part becomes the only solution to end suffering. In Table 2, the main findings of 10 individual interviews with female inmates are presented.

**Table 2: Female inmates and violence (N=10)**

Indicator	Result (in number)
Married before 18	5
Forced marriage	2
Victims of GBV before prison	7
Reported the case to police	1
Reported the case to local leaders	2
GBV related to imprisonment	5
Is it justified for a husband to beat his wife?	2
Is it justified for parents to beat their children?	5
Child victims of violence	2

Source: Fieldwork

As shown in Table 2, seven out of 10 inmates were victims of GBV before prison. They reported denial of land ownership, and physical and verbal violence as being the main forms of violence they faced. Only one out of five inmates married before 18, which is illegal in Uganda but remains widely practised, and did not report being a victim of violence herself. Two inmates stated that they could not choose their husbands. We wonder if the three others that were married before 18 really 'chose' their husbands, although they did not mention anything contrary. Out of these seven inmates, five indicated that they were incarcerated because of the violence of which they were victims, four of them killed their husband and the fifth unsuccessfully attempted to do so.

Even if not statistically significant, it is staggering to note that for 50 per cent of our sample, murdering their husband was the only way out of the cycle of violence. An explanation may lie in the low rate of reporting to police and/or local leaders. To explain this, the respondents mentioned fear of retaliation from in-laws and the community, fear of leaving their children, discouragement by family members and economic dependence, as well as a general feeling of distrust towards authorities to protect them adequately. When the victims did report violence, they were not listened to, which justifies the absence of trust in itself.

Another interesting element is the fact that the two inmates who reported forced marriage at the age of 15 were also those who stated that wife beating is justified when a woman disobeys her husband.

This illustrates how deeply rooted the patriarchal system is –

thus convincing women themselves that they deserve to be physically punished. Child marriage has terrible consequences for the mind and the economic situation of women. Owing to lack of support, when they find themselves stuck in a violent situation, the only way out is through using violence themselves, which leads them to prison. Finally, half of the respondents thought that beating children can be justified when they misbehave. Moreover, two reported that their children also suffered from violence from their father, with the long-lasting trauma that is likely to develop in such circumstances.

### **3.1.2 Perception of KI and UPS leadership regarding women and children's rights**

KI and UPS leadership were asked to answer questions regarding women's and children's rights. Their knowledge about laws and their opinions about these rights were investigated and are summarised in Table 3.

When asked about naming laws that protect women in Uganda, all of the respondents could name at least one, usually depending on their own background, yet no one could name them all. On whether or not some of these laws may be discriminatory, only a third agreed, stating mostly that women are legally unfairly treated when it comes to ownership of land and children and inheritance. One respondent also asserted that the Divorce Act favours

men. Five out of 12 believe that the laws in themselves are not sufficient to protect women, whereas all but one who believe that they are sufficient point out the poor implementation of these laws as the main problem. Therefore, 11 out of 12 respondents believe that the laws do not protect women enough, whether because they are in themselves not good enough or because they are not properly enforced. This is linked to the low rate of acts of violence being reported to police, which is mentioned above. Owing to several factors, police force is not able or willing to appropriately implement the laws to protect vulnerable citizens. Lack of means and corruption is likely to contribute to that major issue.

did not justify their answer. Thus, there is no commonly shared perception of the liberty given to women to enjoy their rights. It should be noted that the answers are not correlated with the gender of the respondents. Surprisingly, although half of the respondents believe that women enjoy their rights, they were all able to indicate some of the women's rights that are commonly violated. Ten out of 12 mentioned the right to land/ asset ownership as being the main right taken away from women. Custody of children, the right to education, freedom of speech, self-determination and sexual control were also cited. Paradoxically, the respondents who believe that women fully enjoy their rights also mentioned the

**Table 3: KI and UPS leadership on women's and children's rights (N=12)**

Indicator	Positive answers
Are there laws in Uganda that discriminate against women?	33.3%
Are the laws sufficient to protect women and children?	41.6%
Do you think that women in your community can enjoy their economic rights?	50%
Do you think that women in your community can enjoy their social rights?	50%
Is your community aware of women and children's right?	58.3%

Source: Fieldwork

Half of the respondents also believe that women in their community do not fully enjoy their socioeconomic rights. Male domination, cultural beliefs and lack of ownership and control over assets were mentioned as having a negative impact on women's freedom. The respondents who believe that women do enjoy these rights stated that they do have the freedom to buy land, yet most of them

rights that women are deprived of, which is quite contradictory.

Finally, while almost two-thirds of the respondents stated that their community is aware of women's and children's rights, they recognised that this awareness is probably very limited and that only the most educated people in the community may know about these rights. Moreover, two-thirds of the respondents

also believe that the attitude of their community towards women's right is generally negative. Some stated that this is, however, gradually changing, yet facing much resistance.

### 3.1.3 Women in leadership

In this section, we show the results of the questions asked to KIs and UPS leadership (N=12) regarding women in leadership. First, Table 4 shows the number of women in leadership positions in the institution where each respondent belongs, with comments when available. Indeed, that number was not always clearly indicated in the questionnaire. For purposes of privacy, we do not mention here the names of the institutions except UPS, yet the numbers will be kept for the end-line survey.

While the proportion of females in leadership positions varies across

institutions, a common trend is that they are always outnumbered by men. Women mostly occupy mid- to low-level management positions. One respondent mentioned that 'men tend to hold senior positions and neglect women.'

The general observations of the respondents tend to confirm the observation listed in Table 4. Indeed, all but one reported that women are a minority in leadership and that they do not hold many key positions. It also seems that women are generally overpowered by men once they have contrary opinions. However, two respondents stated that women in their institution are able to voice their opinion and influence decisions. All of them also agreed that the situation of women has positively changed over the years. One said, for instance, that now there is 'at least at each level a women representative.' Government policy to empower women,

**Table 4: Proportion of females in leadership positions**

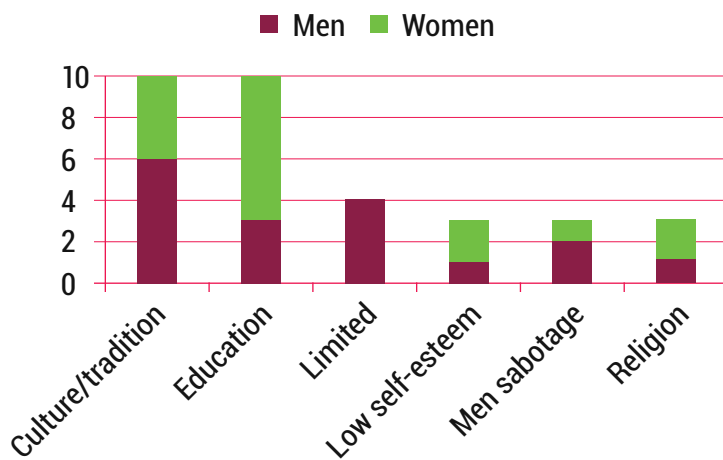
Respondent n°	N° of women in leadership / comments
1	Unknown
2	12 senior, 16 middle, 33 lower
3	Few women, many men
4	2, many men
5	5 middle, 0 senior
6	2, mostly lower positions
7	Mostly men at top level
8	Mostly men at top level
9 (UPS)	1%
10 (UPS)	108 female/358 male (all positions)
11 (UPS)	Outnumbered by men
12 (UPS)	Less than 30%

Source: Fieldwork

education and raising awareness are most frequently quoted as the main causes of such a positive evolution.

For the respondents, this evolution is good, as all but one agreed that women are skilled enough to be good leaders. Two female KIs believe that women are better than men at leadership, because they ‘are more concerned about socioeconomic decisions.’ Another one stated that ‘what a man can do, a woman can do.’ Women are considered peace-builders and the fact that they encourage other women to reach their potential is also welcomed by the KI and UPS leadership. One male respondent described women as mothers and the pillars of society and asserted that they should also have a role to play in decision-making.

**Figure 1: Factors negatively influencing women’s access to leadership (N=12)**



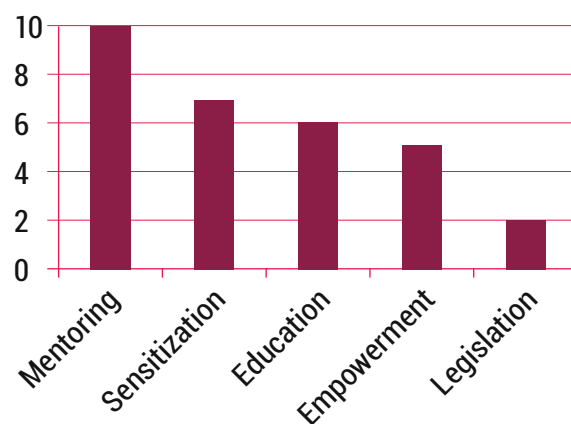
Source: Fieldwork

Nevertheless, there are still many challenges faced by women in order to gain access to leadership positions. As shown in Figure 1, cultural beliefs

and traditions are the most commonly cited factors that impede women from attaining leadership positions. This means that women are generally perceived as less valuable by men and, therefore, are given fewer opportunities to access higher hierarchical positions. Education comes in second place, as poor parents tend to value the education of boys more than that of girls since they do not expect their daughters to have a good job later in life. This could be viewed as a ‘self-fulfilling prophecy.’ The respondents also mentioned limited ownership, low self-esteem and men’s behaviour as well as religion.

According to all the respondents but one, gender norms are a major barrier to women attaining leadership positions. The ideas that ‘men feel that they take better decisions’ and that ‘men think that women are inferior’ were widespread among female respondents. Therefore, women developed an inferiority complex that inhibits them from voicing their opinions. Male respondents also agreed that there are many stereotypes based on gender and that traditional gender roles do not favour women in their quest for leadership positions. Answers of the same kind were given when we asked about the perception of the community regarding women in leadership. Only one female KI said that women are perceived as ‘peace-builders’ and ‘good managers’. According to the other respondents, the communities still consider women as inferior to men and not able to take good decisions. Attachment to their culture and religious beliefs is most frequently cited as the main explanations for such opinions.

**Figure 2: Best ways to increase the number of women in leadership and their influence (N=10)**



Source: Fieldwork

Figure 2 shows the most common answers given by the KIs and UPS leadership when asked about the best tools to promote women’s leadership and increase their influence. Most of them mention mentoring and coaching as the most important tool. Sensitisation and raising awareness in the communities and the institutions about the quality of women and the importance of having them occupying leadership positions are also mentioned several times. Education

of girls, so that they can develop useful skills to reach top management positions, is also cited, as well as general empowerment of women and legislation or rules.

### 3.1.4 Women in business

We explored the situation of women running their own businesses basing on the opinions of the KIs. According to all the KIs (N=8), the majority of the women in the districts of Koboko and Arua are employed in agriculture and petty informal businesses. They quoted lack of capital, poor education and high domestic workload to explain this situation. For ex-inmates, the answers are the same. One KI stated that ‘[ex-inmates] are not employed but they do their own business to earn a living because most ex-inmates are not educated. There are not given any training while in prison.’ The respondents reported that, besides agriculture, women mostly engage in vending and catering activities, tailoring, salon and hairdressing businesses, produce selling and hotel-related activities.

**Table 5: Percentage of females in leadership positions**

Respondent n°	Estimated % of women in business in the district	Estimated % of job created by women running their business
1	40 to 70%	~20%
2	>75%	-
3	70%	10%
4	20%	30%
5	70%	2%
6	85%	30%
7	8%	40%
8	15%	5%

Source: Fieldwork

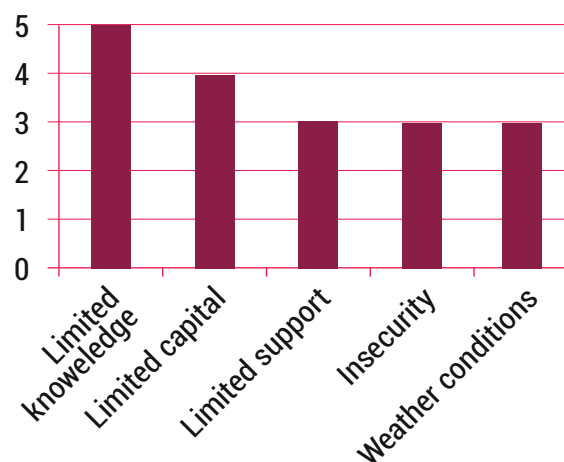
Table 5 shows the estimate by the KI of the percentage of women who are managing their businesses in the district, as well as the percentage of jobs that were created thanks to these businesses. It is important to mention that these numbers are only estimates by individuals and do not rely on any studies. Thus, in order to come up with more accurate figures, a specific quantitative study should be conducted. These numbers are nonetheless interesting for two reasons. First, they vary from one respondent to another, showing that there is a need for clarification, especially concerning the impact of women in business on job creation. Most of them commented that the impact remains relatively small, as most of the women are engaged in petty trade and, therefore, have little impact on the job market, as they cannot afford to employ people. Second, five out of eight KIs estimated the number of women in business at around 70 to 85 per cent, which is relatively high. As mentioned above, a deeper study focusing on women managing their own businesses would be needed to confirm or overturn this perception.

Concerning the attributes that describe women in business, the answers of the KIs also vary from one to another. Three of them mentioned courage, resilience and self-determination. Education was also mentioned as being important, which is surprising considering that these women are mostly involved in petty trade that does not require many skills. Access to credit through village saving and loans association (VSLA) is cited twice. About the general attitude of women in the district towards involvement in running

their own businesses, every KI stated that women show a very positive attitude, which is probably the most important factor needed ex-ante to implement programmes promoting women's ventures.

Training and skills, freedom and support from family and access to loans through VSLAs or family money are cited by the KIs as the most common favourable factors helping women to run their own business. Figure 3 shows the main factors hindering women from starting their own business, or limiting their development. Lack of knowledge of business management is the most commonly mentioned, followed by limited capital and limited support from family. External factors like insecurity, weather conditions or poor road conditions are also cited as common issues faced by women in business (though it should be noted that this is also the case for men).

**Figure 3: Best ways to increase the number of women in leadership and their influence (N=8)**



Source: Fieldwork



Limited capital is a key issue for both men and women. Yet, while men struggle to raise capital for their small businesses, it is even more difficult for women. Indeed, as mentioned by half of the KIs, women lack collateral because they are often not allowed to own anything. Banks, and even microcredit institutions, are reluctant to lend money to women, leaving them with the options of VSLA groups, savings and credit cooperative societies (SACCOs) and their own personal savings to start a business.

Finally, three out of the eight KIs were unable to mention one single training programme that provides women with business skills. The others mostly mentioned the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP) and one was able to cite more programmes, such as ACAV Easy Project, YSECs and other vocational training programmes in the district. The fact that people with responsibilities and in high positions are mostly not aware of such programmes is an important finding. Indeed, if even they do not know about them, one can assume that illiterate women are not necessarily aware of them and will not, therefore, be able to access these training programmes and increase their chances to develop their own businesses.

### **3.2 REHABILITATION ACTIVITIES FOR FEMALE INMATES AND DAY CARE**

This section shows the opinions of male and female inmates (through FGDs) and UPS leadership on rehabilitative activities for female inmates compared to male inmates, day care centres for female

inmates' children as well as the impact of the performing arts on inmates.

#### **3.2.1 Rehabilitation activities**

The respondents did not agree whether or not male inmates have access to better rehabilitation activities than female inmates. Only the focus group (FG) of Arua seemed to believe so and it looks evident that it was indeed the case in Arua Prison. The FG in Koboko did not share that point of view. That can probably be explained by the fact that Koboko Prison is a smaller unit; therefore men benefit from less rehabilitation and the feeling of any difference in the number of activities is much reduced. Not all KIs agreed or disagreed with that statement. Yet, according to all of them (FGDs and KIs but one), there is not enough activities in prison.

All of the respondents agreed that rehabilitation activities prepare inmates for their release and ease their reintegration in society. They also all noticed the difference in terms of change between inmates who participate in these activities and those who do not. The respondents reported that female inmates 'take responsibility for their action', 'are more positive in life' and 'are more calm in prison' after participating in rehabilitation activities. They also all believe that it reduces the recidivism rate, yet there is no data available to confirm that perception. Indeed, it is very likely that rehabilitation activities positively affect the re-offence rate; however no quantitative study can properly show the size of the correlation.

Concerning the types of activities undertaken in prison, a more significant number were reported in Arua than in the Koboko unit. In Arua, inmates reported being exposed to tailoring, running salons, knitting, livestock rearing and crop farming as well as games, drama and basket and mat making. In Koboko, the FG reported knitting, basket and mat making and counselling. In general, both FGs agreed that more vocational training should be provided in prison. The UPS leadership KI share the idea that more economic training should be provided, which can be viewed as teaching both business and vocational skills to inmates.

Finally, the attendance of rehabilitation activities within prison seems to be affected by the low literacy rate. Programmes provided in English are less interesting to inmates who do not understand the language and may, therefore, feel left out. An easy solution to that problem would be to make sure that each activity is translated into the local language. The lack of confidence among women in general influences their participation in such activities, as well as the fact that they worry about their homes and children and, therefore, cannot concentrate. This contradicts the claim by both FGDs and UPS leadership that all females participate in rehabilitation activities. An FG also states that the selection process is not really fair as inmates have basically to follow orders from above and participate in activities even if they do not want to do so, which is not the best way to motivate someone to be fully involved in rehabilitation training and/or entertainment. It was also impossible to obtain trustworthy numbers

of female inmates who participate in such activities.

### **3.2.2 Day Care Centre**

Numbers provided by the respondents about the numbers of children in prison are very different from one another. The numbers also vary continuously as kids stay with their mother up to the age of two and then leave prison. In March 2019, there were eight toddlers in Arua Prison and four in Koboko Prison. From the inmates' perspective, Arua Prison provides more for children than Koboko Prison, without providing much either. In Arua, the FGD reported that there are milk, soya porridge and diapers for the children. In Koboko, there is milk, on condition that the cow produces enough of it. In Arua, mothers with babies are placed in a separate ward. In both prisons, there is no special rule about who takes care of the children when their mothers are involved in an activity. Children basically play in the compound without constant supervision.

Of the three KIs from UPS who answered questions related to day care, all stated that UPS makes provision for the children, besides offering support/special programmes for mothers and/or children. Two of them reported having a policy for children in prison. The last said that children are provided for despite the lack of a policy.

### **3.2.3 Performing arts**

According to the FG and UPS leadership, the performing arts in prison have a positive impact on female inmates. The

most important point seems to be that it relieves stress and ‘makes the life in prison more bearable’. The arts are indeed a great form of entertainment and help inmates not to think too much about their homes and their children, which is one of the main challenges faced by female inmates. In addition, inmates also acquire skills, do physical exercise and get to understand their culture better through drama, dance groups and forum theatre performances.

### **3.3 PERCEPTION OF COMMUNITY STRUCTURES REGARDING WOMEN’S AND CHILDREN’S RIGHTS**

This section presents the attitudes of communities in Arua and Koboko towards women in leadership and women’s and children’s rights. Two FGDs were held with the communities and the details are completed with observations of the KIs on their own community.

#### **3.3.1 Women in leadership**

In section 3.1, we presented the opinions of KIs and UPS leadership on women in leadership. We now introduce the perception of community members, captured through FGDs. Both groups acknowledged that some women indeed have influential positions in their community, although they are still outnumbered by men. In Arua, the FG believes that the religion factor plays an important role in discriminating against women as the community is dominated by Muslims. However, it is commonly known that violence and discrimination against women happen in all settings.

In Koboko, the community believes that a lower level of education, cultural and social norms and the negative attitudes of men towards women are some of the challenges that women face. In addition, both FGs believe that women tend to be shyer and suffer from an inferiority complex. Overall, communities believe that men are superior to women and that women do not make good leaders as they are not good decision-makers.

Both community FGs agreed that women in leadership are a great source of inspiration for other women and girls. The FGs believe that this has a positive influence on society because it involves a part of the population in decision-making process. According to the FG in Arua, the number of child neglect and child abuse cases will also reduce as women take on leadership positions. Overall, communities in Arua and Koboko are exposed to female leadership and can see some advantages, but it remains small in comparison with men and the cultural norms and beliefs make it harder for women to be in such positions as they are considered inferior.

#### **3.3.2 Women’s and children’s rights**

On the attitudes of the community towards women and children’s rights, the KIs hold different points of view. According to one of them, there is ‘total respect’ for women’s and children’s rights. The others either think that the attitude of the community is purely negative or point out a difference among age groups, with elders holding usually more negative positions. For both FGs in Arua and Koboko, the attitude of the communities is generally positive.

As shown in Table 6, the same inconsistency can be found in answers about how knowledgeable the communities are about women's and children's rights. According to 50 per cent of the KIs, communities are well aware of these rights. The others believe that awareness is limited to general knowledge or only among educated people. With regard to the FG in Koboko, only educated members are aware of these rights; in Arua, they believe that the community is well aware. However, when we asked them to list which laws protect women and children, both FGs were able to name only rights like the right to own assets and land or the right to education, which shows very little knowledge of the actual laws. It must be noted that illiterate and/or poorly educated people in the communities probably have a poor understanding of the legal system as a whole, thus they should not be expected to have a better understanding of women's and children's rights.

The FG in Koboko believes that the laws to protect women are sufficient, as women are free to start their own businesses and can gain access to leadership positions, and since gender-based violence is now prosecuted and punished. For the FG in Arua, the laws used to be insufficient but are now improving. Both FGs agreed that women are able to enjoy their economic and social rights to a certain extent, while recognising that the community feels that they cannot be led by women (FGD Koboko) and that some women are highly restricted by their husbands and cultural norms.

Finally, all the KIs as well as FGs agreed that despite the progress made, change is needed in the communities to increase women's and children's rights. The fact that women cannot own land in practice as well as cultural beliefs that hold that women are inferior are cited by the respondents. As shown in Figure 4, the KIs and the FGs agreed that continued sensitisation, education and dialogues are

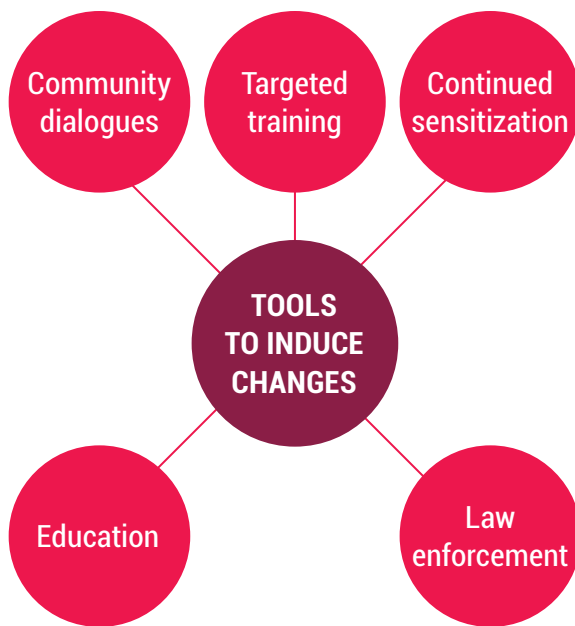
**Table 6: Community awareness of women's and children's rights**

Respondent n°	Comments on community awareness
1	Limited knowledge
2	To some degree
3	Only educated people know
4	Aware, but not put into practice
5	To some degree
6	Aware
7	Aware
8	Aware
FGD Arua	Aware
FGD Koboko	Only educated people

Source: Fieldwork

necessary to bring about awareness of these rights and women’s empowerment. Law enforcement is also a key point in order to properly implement the rules and laws. Indeed, it does not matter how well aware communities are about women’s and children’s rights and how good the laws are if they are not implemented by the police force and the legal system.

**Figure 4: Tools to induce changes in the community according to the respondents**



Source: Fieldwork

Figure 5 indicates who should be involved in the process of working with the community to induce positive changes in terms of awareness creation and respect of women and children’s right. All the KIs and both FGs agreed that local leaders and representatives of the legal system should take part in the implementation of activities.

**Figure 5: Key actors to engage in changing attitudes**



Source: Fieldwork

### 3.4 ADVOCACY

In this last section on the main findings, we present the results for the questions related to advocacy for women and children’s rights in and outside prison. The respondents taken into consideration are the eight KIs and three people from the UPS leadership.

First, all the respondents agreed that conducting advocacy for women and children in prison is important in order to avoid discrimination, mistreatment and stereotypes and, more broadly, to increase awareness of communities and duty bearers. Six of the KIs and UPS leadership also stated that their institution had already been carrying out workshops to raise awareness about

these rights. Those who had not yet done this invoked lack of funding. As shown in Table 6, the numbers of activities organised vary from one respondent to another.

Most of the respondents used media (mainly radio) and community sensitisation to carry out their advocacy activities. Despite creating awareness, none of the respondents were, however, able to name a positive impact on the life of female inmates. Two of them stated that the wellbeing of inmates had improved since, yet this seems to be more like personal opinions than something observed and documented from the field.

rights, working with UPS to support them in the process and direct community outreach. They also suggested that all the stakeholders should be involved in this process, from key stakeholders at the community level to high-ranking politicians. One respondent also suggested that successful ex-inmates should be used as role models to promote inmates' rights and bring hope inside prison. The KIs also believe that social media campaigns would be a great tool to reach out to as many people as possible.

Finally, only the UPS leadership was able to provide numbers about the duty bearers involved with issues of women and children in prison. One stated that

**Table 7: Number of awareness sessions**

Respondent n°	Number of community awareness sessions in 2018
1	Unknown
2	8
3	None
4	None
5	1 programme
6	3
7	5
8	Unknown
UPS 1	2
UPS 2	6

Source: Fieldwork

The respondents were also asked about the best way to advocate the rights of women inmates and their children basing on their own experience. They recommended increasing resources, compelling duty bearers to enforce these

all of them were involved at the prison level, and another mentioned 30 regional prison commanders and officers in charge who work in the female section. The KIs mentioned community leaders, NGOs etc. without giving numbers.



# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 4.1 CONCLUSION

This baseline study provides interesting and useful information about the current status of women's and children's rights in Arua and Koboko districts from different perspectives. Female inmates are often victims of SGBV and mostly do not report it because they do not trust the system to protect them efficiently or are discouraged by relatives from doing so. As a consequence, they sometimes end up committing crimes to end the violence, which leads them to prison. Prison staff are usually not prepared to deal with victims of violence; therefore, the care that should be provided to female inmates is not adequate. An important finding is that the laws that protect women are poorly implemented. The police force does not have adequate knowledge to deal with SGBV victims and, therefore, the issue cannot be properly tackled. It seems that without effective implementation of the laws, the issue is going to remain unsolved. The issue is connected to child marriage, officially banned yet still very common in West Nile.

Land and, more generally, asset ownership restrictions are one of the most

frequently cited problems that women face. They, therefore, find it difficult to, for example, start a business as they cannot access loans without collateral or to gain credibility and access to leadership positions. Cultural norms and a negative mindset among men regarding women also hinder the achievement of gender equality. Women in leadership positions are still outnumbered by men and generally hold lower positions. Communities have very limited knowledge of women's and children's rights. There are differences among age groups and related to level of education, yet the overall knowledge level remains low.

Women who manage their own businesses tend to be mostly engaged in petty trade or tailoring. Lack of education, lack of access to capital and household workload are often cited as the main reasons why women are not involved in bigger businesses. One should not forget the economic situation of northern Uganda, which plays a major role in the low number of work opportunities.

The respondents in this baseline study all agreed on the importance of rehabilitation activities. In Arua Prison, it is obvious that female inmates get fewer



opportunities than men in that respect. In both prisons, everybody agreed that there should be more opportunities for rehabilitation as it seems to effectively help female inmates to manage their stress and reintegrate in society once released. The need for more vocational training has been pointed out several times. The performing arts activities are also widely appreciated.

Finally, we need to mention that despite what seems to be a poor understanding of women's and children's rights and a lower regard for women in general, the community members interviewed during FGDs showed enthusiasm at the idea of empowering women. They wished to see more sensitisation, education and dialogues happening as this could lead to more equality between men and women.

## 4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this baseline study, the following recommendations should be taken into consideration in the implementation of the project:

- The awareness of SGBV and the specific needs of female inmates among UPS staff and leadership should be enhanced by applying gender-specific rules.
- The police force needs to be trained and provided with sufficient resources to better handle SGBV cases and help to prevent situations from escalating until crimes are committed.
- Advocacy for reforms and implementation of rules favouring land ownership by women.
- Advocacy and police training for the implementation of anti-child marriage laws. This baseline study and many studies show that girls married before 18 are likely to fall into violence and full dependency traps.
- Female inmates and ex-inmates should be supported to acquire leadership skills.
- Ex-inmates who have succeeded in business and/or reintegration should be used as role models for inmates as well as advocacy agents for the promotion of female inmates' rights,
- Advocacy for an increase in the share of women holding management positions in governmental agencies.
- Favouring access to capital for women, including ex-inmates who wish to start and manage their own businesses (creation of VSLA groups etc.).
- More vocational training in prison should be provided to both male and female inmates.
- Ensuring that rehabilitation activities are translated into the local language to ensure that everyone has the same opportunity to benefit from it.
- Enactment of a policy on childcare at the prison level. Ideally, day care centres should be set up, yet the costs are high.



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