



Isis-Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange  
(Re)creating Peace Internationally

PEER LEARNING & CROSS-CULTURAL  
**EXCHANGE VISIT**  
BETWEEN ACHOLI & TESO SUB-REGION

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**Theme:** Women At The Frontline Of Social Change

...Many of us were born here, lived here, had our little education here,  
this has remained the only world we know...

The Peer Learning & Cross-Cultural Exchange was made possible from project developments and impact of Isis-WICCE's funding partners; and with special contributions from Womankind Worldwide-UK.



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(Re)creating Peace Internationally

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## List of Acronyms

ARVs	Anti Retro Virus
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
EASSI	The Eastern African Sub-regional Support Initiative
ICCO	Inter Church Organization for Development
IDP	Internally Displaced People
Isis-WICCE	Isis-Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange
KIWEPI	Kitgum Women Peace Initiative
NACWOLA	National Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS
NGOs	Non- Governmental Organizations
LC	Local Council
LIPAWA	Lira Palwo Women Association
LRA	Lord Resistance Army
PMTCT	Prevention of Mother To Child Transmission
PRDP	Peace Recovery and Development Plan
PVP	People's Voice for Peace
TASO	The AIDS Support Organisation
TEWPA	Teso Women Peace Activists
UNSCR 1325	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325
UPE	Universal Primary Education
USE	Universal Secondary Education
UWONET	Uganda Women's Network
WORUDET	Women and Rural Development Network
WTF	Women's Task Force

## SECTION I: BACKGROUND

### 1.1 Isis-WICCE: The Engine for Social Change



In the midst of swirl of intense armed conflict in Africa in particular, Isis-WICCE poured its energy, professional skills and passion into peace building and reconstruction. Over the years, Isis-WICCE has emerged as a leader in feminist discourse with specific interventions into the militarized conflict in Liberia, South Sudan and Uganda, thereby creating a vanguard of women with the capacity to participate in processes that influence gender equality and women's empowerment.

Isis-WICCE has restored hope and renewed the spirits of women abused in armed

conflict situations, through its core programs of documenting women's realities, skills building for women leaders, free medical interventions, and advocacy for power holders to redress the spoils of war violence at national and international levels.

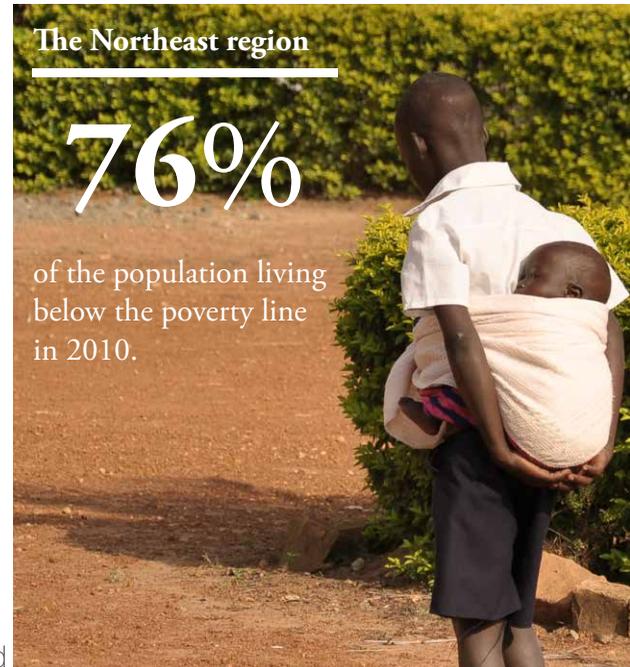
**The Peer Learning and Cross-cultural Exchange was an exchange visit and a training program demanded from within the WTF-PRDP from Acholi to Teso sub-regions.**

Achievements in the past have included; trained women joining public and political leadership and decision making after training; new Community Based Organisations (CBOs) formed to enhance local capacities for peace; healing women who have strengthened their capacity to nurture families, communities and economies; influencing diverse professionals to join the campaign to end militarized violence and trauma. It is upon this strong background and unique strategy of documentation that Isis-WICCE was selected by Ugandan activists to coordinate the Women's Taskforce (WTF) for a gender responsive Peace, Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda (PRDP). The WTF has also had its achievements, pitching its advocacy at national and district level leadership, being the engine of the so-much needed change and changing policy perspectives to peace and security.

The Peer Learning and Cross-cultural Exchange was an exchange visit and a training program demanded from within the WTF-PRDP from Acholi to Teso sub-regions.

## 1.2 History of Violent Conflict in Uganda

Uganda has developed a culture of war violence, on from generation to generation in different of the country. Luwero Triangle, the Rwenzoris northeast Uganda were plagued by violent conflict and in the nineties. Furthermore, pastoralists and tribesmen Karamojong ethno-linguistic group have also raided and their own and neighbouring districts across the northeast for over four decades. The brutal and prolonged war Ugandan government forces and the rebel groups in the has left scars of pain and injustice to the communities. violence has resulted in gross violations of human rights; of infrastructure; economic stagnation; and a general cultural breakdown. Areas struck by violent conflict are poverty. For instance, the northeast region remains the area of Uganda with an estimated 76% of the population below the poverty line in 2010. The struggle to quell the over many years, has delayed the restoration of service Furthermore, armed violence experiences have led increase in domestic violence and insecurity in homes and



The absence of women from formal peace negotiations is all the more astonishing given the unique value that women would bring to these processes. There are countless examples of women who have intervened in conflict non-violently, but their stories have never been recorded, and their efforts not applauded. In Uganda, there have been efforts among women in resolving the conflict related to the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) incursions in various ways. Notably, there were the mediation efforts by Betty Bigombe in 1993/94 and 2004 which laid a firm foundation for the beginning of the peace process in Northern Uganda.

The Government of Uganda responded to the challenges of the LRA instability by initiating Formal Peace Negotiations in Juba, South Sudan in 2007-8. Later on, the Government of Uganda established and partially resourced the PRDP as part of its stabilization framework. The realization and gender responsiveness of this development framework has been buttressed by existing Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), as well as pressure forums such as the WTF-PRDP coordinated by Isis-WICCE.

Since 2009, the WTF-PRDP has run with over 21 powerful groups from the North, North-Eastern Uganda and national levels. Some of the organisations/ groups have had unique approaches of spreading their activism to lower-level constituencies through peace animators, committees and community watch dogs. They include Women and Rural Development Network (WORUDET), Teso Women Peace Activists (TEWPA), Kitgum Women Peace Initiative (KIWEPI), and People's Voice for Peace (PVP). These groups within the WTF lend best practices of how small groups of committed women engage wider constituencies of grassroots women leaders towards gender-responsive service delivery, and mobilize to end antagonism between warring communities, thereby making a difference.

### 1.3 Bound by the Same History:

The two sub-regions of Acholi and Teso that participated in the Peer Learning and Cross-Cultural Exchange Visit are bound by a similarity in history. They have both experienced armed conflict for over two decades, resulting in dehumanizing atrocities, violation of human rights, massive displacement as well as abduction of women, men and children. The war led to loss of life and opportunities, and near collapse of the economy in the region, hence widespread poverty.

Isis-WICCE identified practical learning methods that are effective to adult experiential learning towards peer learning to improve PRDP work practices and strategies in the two sub-regions. This report will show the different strategies used on the exchange visit, level of outreach and impact and lessons learnt.

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### 1.4 Why the Cross-Cultural Exchange as a Learning Strategy

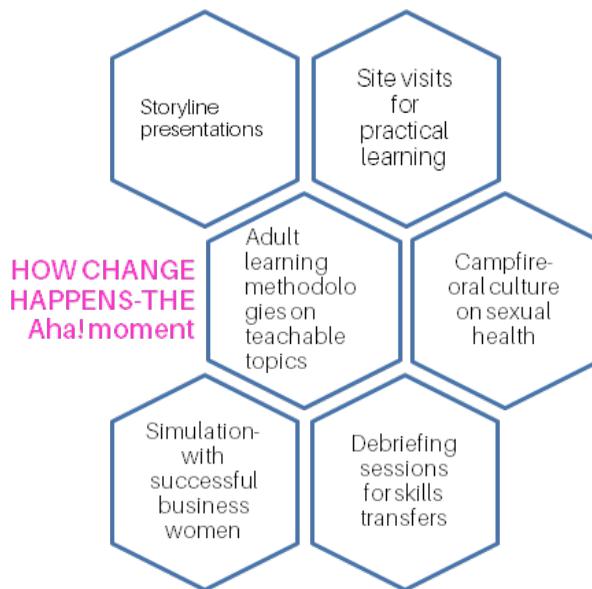
Exchange visits are part of Isis-WICCE's Exchange Programme; a practical, experiential learning process, which opens eyes of adult learners to lives of other communities and of new possibilities; address apathy; enhance dialogues between communities and are a source of new energy and initiatives towards social change. Exchange visits break boundaries and create a new awareness to other realities. Isis-WICCE was compelled to this strategy of cross-cultural exchange, as part of rekindling its innovative and effective practices, but also responding to one of the voices from LIPAWA, which stated that

...Many of us were born here, lived here, had our little education here, this has remained the only world we know...

Different people react to war-related stress, shock and trauma in different ways. Some survivors have chosen-pain, where they constantly regret the past and blame their lived circumstances on their atrocious past,, while others have chosen-glory, where despite their negative experiences; survivors want to have a life of pride and self-reliance. But as learning beings, the transformative processes employed can support individuals to seek change that makes them more useful contributors to development. The exchange visit was crafted with the above realities in mind. This activity was therefore a catalyst for social change, being a space of unlearning, unwinding and making informed choices.

In the past, Isis-WICCE has run 10 exchange visits toBurundi (2004), Eritrea (2005), Kenya (2003), Liberia (2005), Nepal (2011), Tanzania (2003), Somalia (2003), South Sudan (2009), Sudan (2005) and Uganda (2011), which exposed women activists and leaders to new possibilities.Cross-cultural activities for Isis-WICCE include exchanges across language, food, dress, practices, dances and ideologies.

In organizing the 2014 Exchange Visit to Teso sub-region, Isis-WICCE relied on its prior experience, and co-creation of the 2014 planning team to facilitate the process with creative methodologies that would increase learning with others, to underscore the importance of local understanding of communities and social mobilization. The teaching-learning methods used to enable participants to explore, discover and learn from each other, are indicated in the chart below:



## 1.5 Preparation of the Exchange Visit:



TEWPA and LIPAWA are part of the WTF for a gender responsive PRDP. Overtime, there has been admiration for the work of TEWPA by different groups as the organization has annually reported back on its PRDP resource tracking and monitoring, advocacy and community mobilization work in ways that bear change for communities. In 2013, members of LIPAWA requested to have LIPAWA visit TEWPA to learn from them in a way to improve their own work. This gap was reflected in the funding proposal submitted to and funded by Womankind Worldwide in the UK.

Isis-WICCE conceptualised the cross-cultural exchange with a number of creative strategies that could foster learning.

Isis-WICCE called for a Planning Meeting with LIPAWA and TEWPA in May 2014, in which knowledge gaps were identified, responsibilities allocated and activity dates set. Isis-WICCE conceptualised the cross-cultural exchange with a number of creative strategies

that could foster learning. The concerns attended to during the visit were institutional, political, socio-cultural and economic in nature.

TEWPA intensified ground work organizing and enriched the visit with several of its constituency members participating in the Peer learning and Exchange Visit. TEWPA also organized meetings with district and community level leadership in some of the visits, for physical interface of leaders and women over critical social concerns. LIPAWA held meetings within its membership to streamline the purpose of the visit to Teso sub-region, agree on cultural appreciation of sisterhood and their deliverables to TEWPA, and on meaningful participation in the exchange visit. Several materials were developed by Isis-WICCE in consultation with the two organisations, including the conceptualisation worksheet, working paper, Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs), field timetable, memorabilia for Isis-WICCE at 40, activity back drops, and training handout material. Given the regional interface of the visit, the programme run in Acholi and English, while some field exchanges tapped into Ateso language. The facilitation team, including bi-lingual interpreters were identified.



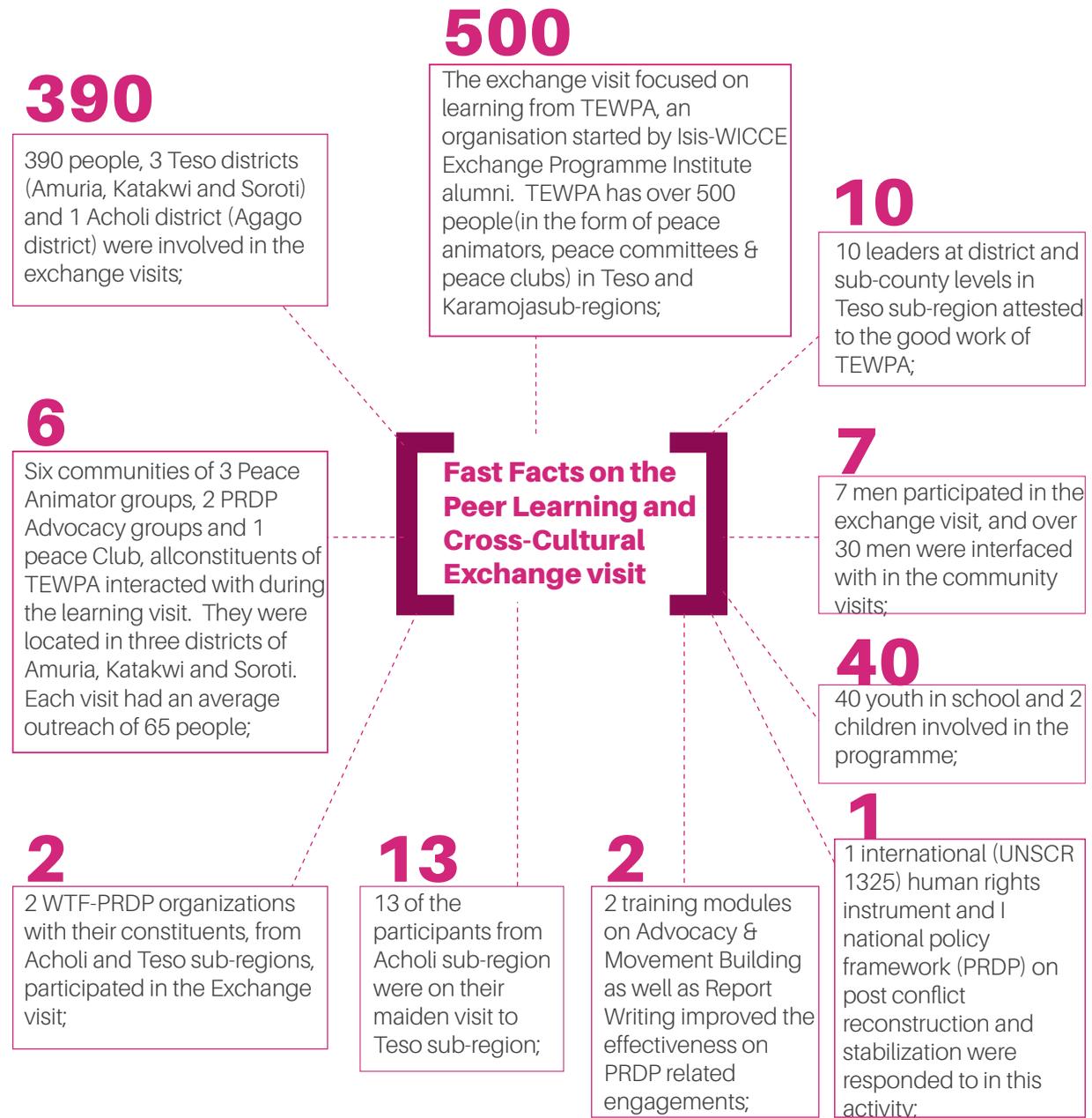
Isis-WICCE also used the opportunity to celebrate forty years of its existence, taking stock of its effectiveness, identify gaps and new challenges in peace and security that it should respond to, from community perspective.

The goal of the visit was to exchange practical lessons, insights and perspectives related to peace and human security activities by women, and how they build into sustainable peace for communities. The objective were to:

- a. Strengthen the capacity of LIPAWA to improve program quality and effectiveness (and change their attitude) to remain committed to the wellbeing of post-conflict Agago district in which they work;
- b. Conduct a peer exchange which stands out as a practical and effective tool to foster learning of members of the WTF-PRDP to build sustainable groups that will contribute to the global women's movement.

The activity responds to UNSCR 1325 which encourages promotion and participation of women in peace building processes. It also responds to the outcomes of Isis-WICCE's research study which emphasizes the need for exchange study visits to enable women leaders learn best practices for policy advocacy effectiveness (Isis-WICCE, 2014; pg 69).

## 1.6 Fast Facts on the Peer Learning and Cross-Cultural Exchange visit



## SECTION II: WOMEN AT THE FRONTLINE OF SOCIAL CHANGE

### 2.1 Sisterhood and Solidarity across the Region

“In our culture we take gifts to people when we visit as a sign of strong relationship. We gave chicken so that the Teso women will keep them, they will produce and multiply. It is a symbol for them to remember us...” **LIPAWA member**

Through the bad roads from Agago into Lira, twenty onemembers of LIPAWA (women and men) travelled for four hoursto Soroti district. They sang in excitement, of being away from their homes, moving away from what they know, and looked forward tolearning something new. They had conversations about those they had left behind, but also envisioned what the next fewdays would be for them. On arrival at Marcllays Hotel, the visiting group danced with ululation as they received a pleasurable welcome from TEWPA and Isis-WICCE staff. A number of TEWPA members werealso there to receivethe visiting team, it was an exciting moment for all.



On arrival there were gift exchanges between the teams of Acholi and Teso sub-regions. LIPAWA gave chicken to TEWPA. TEWPA gave a goat. Welcome remarks were made by specific dignitaries.



Cecilia Engole, Coordinator,  
TEWPA

We are so pleased to receive visitors to our region. We also express our appreciation to Womankind Worldwide(UK) and Isis-WICCE for making this Exchange Visit possible. I assure you that there is so much to see and learn. We have peace animators, peace committees, women’s task force and peace clubs in schools. It is my hope that you will learn about our cultures and how we build peace. I welcome you to eat our food, sing our songs and learn about our work.



Veronica Ocan, Coordinator,  
LIPAWA

We are happy to be here in Soroti to learn from groups like TEWPA. For some of us, this is the first time we are travelling out of Agago district, so we are excited. Despite the excitement, we know we are here to learn, so our minds are open to learning about the culture of the Ateso and the work that is being done by the women. We thank Isis-WICCE and Womankind Worldwide-UK for bringing us here, and TEWPA for hosting us. We look forward to more exciting days.



Helen Kezie-Nwoha, Programme  
Manager, Isis-WICCE

For the past 20 years Isis-WICCE has documented the experiences of women war survivors in northern Uganda, provided them with healing, knowledge and skills to address their needs. Over the years, we have learnt that women have unique resilience to build peace and support reintegration and resettlement processes that address community needs. TEWPA is our shining star and we are building more stars in post conflict communities, which is why we are here. LIPAWA has already shown its potential as a young organization, and we are glad that this visit will energise them further.



Hon. Margaret Amongi Member of  
Council, Soroti District

I am honored to be here with you. We, the women of Teso are happy to receive you. We have so many things in common, but I would like to share that what we are today is a result of our hard work, pride in our heritage and the in-built nature of helping ourselves. The war made us loose our pride where we became beggars. Now that we are back from the displaced peoples camps, we have pulled together and decided to forge ahead, with or without external assistance. Most of us have had opportunities to interact with Isis-WICCE, they have trained us and today I am a District Councilor, a business woman and I have a group of women whom I also support, I empower them to be economically independent.

## 2.2 We Started Under a Tree

Using the strategy of storyline presentation and life journeys, TEWPA and LIPAWA presented the histories of their organizations, their transitions, challenges, lessons learnt and inspirations. Historically, as a foundational stage of their inception, both organisations were started under a tree. The presentations were made to inspire each other, and particularly energize LIPAWA, the recently founded group, to appreciate foundational stages of groups and the practical issues and challenges they have to contend with. The storylines also provided answers to some of the challenges already being experienced.

### 2.2.1 TEWPA started Under a Tree: Cecilia Engole, Founder Member & Coordinator

TEWPA was started as a replication effect of peace building and conflict transformation skills from Isis-WICCE Exchange Programme Institute by five participants (2000-2002), who volunteered and sought to make change in post-conflict Teso sub-region. TEWPA was formed 13 years ago under a tree, with membership and subscription fee of UGX150,000(One hundred fifty thousand shillings) towards running of the organization. The story of transformation is not as straight forward as it may sound. TEWPA started with volunteers meeting under a tree. Due to the rains, the team could not meet often hence moved to a kitchen, which they also realized was not the right place to be. On realizing this gap, members made personal contributions towards rent for an office. To them getting an office space was the first step to sustaining the organization. Subsequently, they rented a two-room unit and finally a reasonable office space that they currently occupy. Along this path were many sacrifices and lost opportunities, as one funder who found them in the small unit could not trust them with resources.

In utilizing their knowledge, the team began by documenting experiences of conflict in Obalanga IDP camp in Soroti district. With the history of war in Teso sub-region, TEWPA agreed to engage communities in peaceful resolution of conflict. Three hundred and fifty women have so far been trained to engage in peace building.

**TEWPA was formed 13 years ago under a tree, with membership and subscription fee of UGX150,000(One hundred fifty thousand shillings) towards running of the organization.**

Isis-WICCE has further exposed TEWPA to international opportunities through which they gained skills in programme implementation and organization management. What is unique about them is that they always apply the knowledge into their organization, which makes it easy for them to grow into who they are today.



Along the way, TEWPA realized the need to grow and strengthen its capacities to sustain the organization; this led them to writing funding proposals to donors. TEWPA's first financial support came from Isis-WICCE, who in addition linked them to other donors such as KerkinActie, ICCO, Global Fund for Women, African Women Development Fund, Medica Mondiale and Global Fund for Human Rights. With the increase in donor support, TEWPA is currently able to meet

costs of staff salaries and implement peace building activities in its jurisdiction. TEWPA is in addition working in partnership with Soroti Local Government and CSOs like Uganda Women's Network (UWONET), Centre for Women in Governance (CEWIGO) and Human Rights Network (HURINET). This kind of networking has exposed TEWPA staff to international study opportunities, enhancing their capacity to manage and sustain programme activities.

In a nutshell, Cecilia used the phrase:

*"A woman conceives through hardship but delivers through happiness" to define TEWPA.*

What she meant is that it has taken TEWPA team a lot of sacrifice, resilience, commitment, patience, determination, passion and tolerance to achieve the successes it has within the communities it serves. TEWPA has a number of achievements, with voice from beneficiaries such as Elizabeth Adongo, TEWPA Peace Committee Member, who stated that:

*"..I would have been dead by now if it was not for TEWPA. I used to spend months without a smile on my face, and my life was controlled by bitterness. As a result I gave birth to a child without limbs. I was 15 years old when my father was shot dead; after my father's death, my brother immediately forced me to get married which I did. During the LRA war, that husband was killed, I lost all hope. I am grateful to TEWPA who approached me, patiently brought healing and meaning to my life and has empowered me to be an agent of change."*

TEWPA's resilience and commitment towards achieving peace for women in Teso sub-region has registered great achievements for the organization. TEWPA has:

- i. Mobilized over 520 women who were trained as peace animators and peace committees, within Teso sub-region. TEWPA has mobilized different constituencies of youth, women, people living with HIV/AIDS and activists to promote peace and security in the region.
- ii. Established a legal aid desk with a lawyer to support women whose rights have been violated to access free legal aid services.
- iii. As a member of the WTF-PRDP, TEWPA is undertaking resource tracking and budget monitoring; advocacy and community sensitisation on the policy framework in Teso sub-region, to ensure women's priority needs are incorporated in the PRDP.
- iv. Trained primary and secondary school teachers as peace agents and human rights activists. The teachers have established over 15 school Peace Clubs.
- v. Provided four hundred cows to women living with HIV/AIDS, as a means of empowering them to live longer and healthier lives.
- vi. Constructed bio gas for selected women leaders to reduce manual labor and the negative effects of using firewood.
- vii. Empowered women to take up leadership positions as district counselors and vice counselors, while others are aspiring for parliamentary positions.

Principles which have contributed to TEWPA's sustainable growth are networking, transparency & accountability, resilience and commitment, tolerance, and has remained with clarity of vision and purpose.

**Founder challenges:** Despite TEWPA's successes, the organization faced challenges during the early stages of establishment. TEWPA started with many members. However, many broke off due to different interests, as they were not genuine towards the cause of building a sustainable peaceful environment for women.



**Lessons learnt from the above narrative:**

- i. There is need for feminist leadership to ensure that we address social and gender inequalities in our communities;
- ii. We are not alone in the struggle for effective post conflict reconstruction;
- iii. We too can do it;
- iv. Need to sacrifice for common good;
- v. Voluntarism is instrumental to social development work;
- vi. Transparency and accountability lead to sustainable growth and development of an organization.

## 2.2.2 LIPAWA Started under a Tree: Veronica Ocan, Founder Member & Coordinator



LIPAWA started in 2012 as a PRDP community watchdog of Women and Rural Development Network (WORUDET), an NGO who is on the WTF-PRDP. As a way to expand its PRDP monitoring and advocacy work in the region, WORUDET supported the setting up of LIPAWA, with a group of 15 volunteers, who are still under a tree.

LIPAWA has been registered at sub-county and district level, and increased its membership with male involvement in gender responsive advocacy work. This emphasises the fact that gender equality work must involve both men and women. The CBO has also involved youth and persons with disability into the organization and has selected an Honourable to act as the advisor.

Isis-WICCE introduced LIPAWA to Womankind Worldwide, who visited them on ground. The donor was impressed with their work and has continued to support their work and with tools for documentation...

With technical support from Isis-WICCE and WORUDET, and having graduated to membership of the WTF-PRDP, LIPAWA has engaged in resource tracking and budget monitoring; advocacy and community sensitisation on the policy framework in Agago district, to ensure women's priority needs are incorporated in the PRDP. Special emphasis has been advocacy around inadequate health facilities

for women (health) and retention of girls in school (education) in Lira Palwo and Lamiyo sub-counties in Agago district. Other CSOs who have some partnership with LIPAWA are EASSI & UWONET.

Isis-WICCE has been very instrumental in the growth and development of LIPAWA. Isis-WICCE introduced LIPAWA to Womankind Worldwide, who visited them on ground. The donor was impressed with their work and has continued to support their work and with tools for documentation of their work and taking stock of gaps in policy implementation.

Despite the fact that LIPAWA is still under a tree, with 2 years down the road, the organization has registered a number of successes, including:

- \* Being a registered member of the WTF-PRDP. Using this space, they have impacted on the health sector service delivery in Agago district, advocating for construction of latrines, a fence and 2 delivery beds at Lira Palwo Health Center;
- \* Under the education sector, LIPAWA has lobbied the district to construct a classroom for children who were attending school under a tree; mobilized girls to stay in school and encouraged girls who get pregnant to resume school. As a result of LIPAWA's advocacy work in schools, teachers' attitude has improved. Teachers who used to report to school late now report in time because of the reporting system as one enters school premises.
- \* Lobbying and realizing the connection of electricity at the sub-county headquarters.
- \* Forming various networks in schools, health centers, at sub county and district level council leadership, to demand for governance and accountability in the health and education sectors.
- \* Enhancing public speaking skills and confidence among members of the group.

### **Challenges:**

- \* LIPAWA has no office and is still under a tree. This has cost the group loss of important documents as there is no provision of proper storage facilities.
- \* Lack of facilities and skills in use of computer, which delays report writing and submission as well as response to emails. The group has to go to a public internet café in order to read and respond to emails as well as type, edit and submit reports. This has been very costly for them.
- \* There is disunity among some group members who have different interests. This is due to lack of economic sustenance for members.

### 2.3 Site Visits for Practical Learning: This is How we do it....



**Background:** It is always important to learn from others; how they do their work and the impact their work creates in order to adjust our own. In the case of LIPAWA, they have employed the strategy of monitoring and advocacy on PRDP in sectoral areas of health and education. TEWPA undertakes PRDP advocacy, alongside other initiatives that enrich its work and reaches out to communities in a unique way. The exchange visits to TEWPA's peace clubs and peace animators offered practical learning opportunities with its groups that undertake community and development work, on a voluntary basis.

Voluntarism and resilience are increasingly gaining traction as conflict and risk reduction have progressively moved away from “predict and prevent” paradigm to building the capacity of communities who face a wide range of rapid onset shocks and slow onset stresses. Voluntarism and resilience are achieved within a system (economic, infrastructure, ecological, social) that includes multiple activities, interactions and relationships.

Isis-WICCE works with post-conflict communities, putting local people, especially women, who are able to act within their sphere of influence in the center of the peace building and post-conflict reconstruction process.

#### Why build Voluntarism and Resilience during the Exchange Visit

As part of the exchange visit, the group visited four selected Peace Animators and one Peace Club, to hear and learn from the commitment of different empowerment strategies that TEWPA has built among its constituency on a voluntary basis. The visits were also meant to enhance voluntarism to go beyond the perceived economic benefit of being members of community groups such as LIPAWA. The TEWPA peace animators, committees and clubs shared best practices, lessons learnt, their successes and challenges.

### 2.3.1 Usuk Women Living with HIV/AIDS: Peace Animators - Katakwi District

Sweet voices were heard at a distance as the visiting team approached the site, at which a group of very enthusiastic community of women living with HIV/AIDS welcomed them.

The group started in 2008 as a small savings group with fifty members, four of who have passed on. With some support from Isis-WICCE and in partnership with Urgent Action Fund, the group purchased 25 (twenty five) heifers which have multiplied to 60 (sixty), and goats which were distributed to individual members and have accumulated to 100 (one hundred). The women are using proceeds from the heifer and goat project to get milk for sell, with reserves for household consumption for healthy feeding. Some proceeds from the sale of animals has been used to acquire treatment for HIV opportunistic infections, buy scholastic materials and education fees for their school going children. The group also carries out small scale vending to increase household incomes.



The women are amazingly living a happy and hopeful life; are open about their HIV status and conduct advocacy sessions through music, dance and drama to create awareness on HIV in Katakwi District. Ms. Kongai, the group treasurer shared how the group has empowered her as a young woman living with HIV.

My father was killed when I was young and my mother was imprisoned, we were left to fend for ourselves as children. In 1987, I got married at an early age, during this time, there was a lot of insurgency by the Karamojongs who arrested us, took away my husband and gang raped me. I later got married to a policeman, he had multiple relationships and diagnosed with tuberculosis before his death. I also started falling sick often and this is when I went to TASO and tested positive for HIV. I was so traumatized. Through training with NACWOLA, I formed this group with 13 members at the onset. TEWPA has immensely supported and linked us to other partners.

## Successes of the group

- a. Usuk women were counseled to live positively with HIV. The women are open about their status and have overcome stigma. The group is a space of solace for many others who get positive results for HIV tests;
- b. The group conducts awareness sessions through drama. This strategy has encouraged more women and men to test for HIV.
- c. One of the group members was elected a sub-county Counselor, and is able to engage in leadership and decision making.
- d. Another group member was elected to mobilize community members to fight against domestic violence and sensitize them on sanitation. As a result, she lobbied the sub-county to construct for her community a pit latrine, which they did.
- e. Mr. Simon Peter, the sub-county counselor for Usuk, appreciated the work of the group. He remarked that: "...When I was young, my mother was always in the kitchen, but now I can see change among women", He appreciated TEWPA for empowering the women of Usuk.

## Poem on HIV/AIDS: Recited by Akiror Florence

AIDS, AIDS, AIDS

Where did you come from!

AIDS, AIDS, AIDS

What is your origin!

AIDS if there is a way I could catch you, you would see,

You have killed, killed and killed,

Destroyed our homes and nation at large,

Killing the young, old, rich, poor and the educated,

What a deadly disease you are!

## Lessons learnt

- i. There is an inter-sectionality between violence against women, armed conflict and HIV/ AIDs. Efforts should be made to protect women from these vulnerabilities.
- ii. Post conflict communities need economic resilient models that ensure that money is put in women's/ survivors hands, for them to pre-determine their priorities. The group had been able to engage in cow and goat rearing for reasons in their best interest. Their project had had results.
- iii. The group had undertaken work in communities on a voluntary basis, and this had sustained their gains in the community that was now more aware of the scourge of HIV.

## Admiration of the work of Usuk Women Living with HIV/AIDS



"I appreciate Usuk Women for the warm welcome. Thank you for living positively, healthy and for the openness on your status. Our group of women living positively in Agagois not as powerful as you are. We as women of LIPAWA rose up to advocate for education and better health services and we are going back to implement what we have learnt from you. I encourage you to continue shining for the women of Usuk".

**Veronica, LIPAWA.**

"I am dancing because I remember the start phase with this group on the project titled Restoring Hope, that was piloted in 2009. I can't believe what I am hearing. As part of Isis-WICCE's work, I took this group to Nairobi and am so humbled by the stories

of change that I am hearing. These stories encourage us to continue our work as Isis-WICCE. We continue to appreciate your work and I say thank you, on behalf of Isis-WICCE." **Helen, Programme Manager - Isis-WICCE.**

### 2.3.2 St. Peters Secondary School Peace & Human Rights Club: Acowa Sub-county, Amuria District

**Background:** Education in every sense is one of the fundamental factors of development. No country can achieve sustainable economic development without substantial investment in human capital. Education enriches people's understanding of themselves and the world. It improves the quality of their lives and leads to broad social benefits to individuals and society. Education raises people's productivity and creativity and promotes entrepreneurship and technological advances. In addition, it plays a very crucial role in securing sustainable peace and security.

Education is important for a successful post-conflict transition in Northern Uganda, as it develops peoples' abilities to break free of circles of violence and suffering. Uganda's Universal Primary Education (UPE) has resulted in high enrolment rates in North and North-Eastern Uganda. Furthermore, Government has introduced Universal Secondary Education (USE) as there is some evidence to suggest completion of secondary school is necessary to provide an individual with a proper chance to escape poverty, as employment and income levels for those who completed primary schools are similar to those who did not attend at all.



The involvement of youth in peace building and rehabilitation processes has been largely applauded. Many were abducted as child soldiers during the war, yet majority were not reintegrated into their communities.

In this respect, TEWPA is engaging groups of youths from over sixteen schools as peace builders. St. Peters Peace Club has thirty five members and has emerged the best in performance, growth and development, with students as direct beneficiaries and the surrounding communities as indirect

beneficiaries. During the Peace Week in 2012, the school club participated in the campaigns on both the Peace Policy and Land Policy in Uganda. The students engaged parliamentarians on issues of peace. Today we have a land policy because of the group's contribution and the peace policy is underway. Mr. Ochole, a student and chairperson of the peace club appreciated the school's involvement and commitment towards supporting the club. His hope through the club is that they will be leaders of different institutions in future and will continue preaching the gospel of peace.

## Activities of the Club

- i. The club promotes peace through dramas, songs, debates, sports and talk shows;
- ii. Cleaning up the school;
- iii. Sensitizing the school prefect body on how to resolve conflict;
- iv. Praying for peace and uniting families within neighbouring communities;
- v. Planting trees and flowers around the school;

## Lessons learnt

- i. TEWPA trained teachers on activities of promoting peace in schools and communities. The teachers rolled out the school peace clubs, thereby involving youth in peace building activities. Peace clubs have enabled students, to acquire leadership skills and make friends with neighboring schools.
- ii. School clubs promote human rights by reaching out to parents and encouraging them to enroll their children in school.
- iii. The club activities have impacted on students' behavior and promoted unity among them. Students come from different backgrounds with different beliefs and attitude.
- iv. The club has held exchange visits in which members have gained experience and insight in relating with others.
- v. Through tree planting, students mind sets have changed towards loving and caring for their environment.
- vi. Taking part in music, dance, drama and sports, the esteem and self-confidence of members has been built.

"LIPAWA is impressed by the passion that young people like you have for peace work. LIPAWA mobilizes parents and students who have dropped out of schools, most especially girls; we lobby for their return to school.

I encourage you students to persist with education. I dropped out of school because of early marriage and have failed to go back as I have no school fees. I cannot return home because of fear of my father who got so disappointed with my refusal to continue with school and disowned me. I however have opened up a bookshop to finance my studies which I am determined to finalize. I advise you girls to concentrate on your studies and resist being lured by the opposite sex. **Susan, LIPAWA.**

### **2.3.3 Acowa Women's Initiative for Peace, Peace Animators, Acowa Sub-county in Amuria district**

It is increasingly acknowledged that investing in women's economic wellbeing becomes even more important in the context of the current global financial/economic and food crises. Evidence indicates that women's economic empowerment and women as agents of change, together with increased gender equality, are elements of the solution to the crises. The thinking about economic empowerment for women and especially those in activism needs to be revised as crucial to the realization of substantive political participation. There are several dimensions of empowerment. Economic empowerment can be used to enable other kinds of empowerment (social, political, cultural), as well as the other way around.

Acowa Women's Initiative for Peace (AWIfP) is one of TEWPA's peace animators, who have combined smart economics in their community development work. Along with a group-savings and business model, AWIfP mobilises communities on girl-child education and ending GBV using platforms such as the church pulpits.

The group was formed in 2005 with 25 (twenty five) members, after being trained by TEWPA as peace animators. The group has embraced developing self-first before developing the community, as their model of empowerment. In 2009, some group members dropped out for failure to meet group norms. Currently the group has 15 (fifteen) active members. The group developed strict criteria for membership which ensures that:

- \* Payment of membership fees of UGX20,000 (twenty thousand shillings).
- \* The individual must be interested in running business;
- \* Should seek written consent of the spouse to join and engage in the group's activities; The group realizes that they make constant travels out of the homes, and that their spouses should not be an impediment to their business and community development advocacy work;
- \* Abide by the group constitution.
- \* Must be interested and willing to promote gender equality through advocacy on end of GBV and promoting girl-child education.

The group received training and mentorship from TEWPA in areas of PRDP, peace building, advocacy, violence against women, business management and proposal writing. Along with the knowledge and

skills acquired, the group received UGX500,000(Five hundred thousand) from TEWPA, with which they purchased 11 (eleven) goats. These goats were kept as a group income activity, where they have been sold across the region and borders into South Sudan. More support to the group was received from Uganda Women’s Network (UWONET) who provided one motorcycle and UGX 3,600,000 (three million six hundred thousand shillings). They also received maize and 250 organise seedlings from the sub-county for their farming. The five finger concept on managing business by TEWPA, that has helped the group are:





## Successes:

- i. The group membership of both women and men sensitise and mobilise communities on girl-child education and ending GBV using platforms such as the church pulpits.
- ii. Using the knowledge and skills provided by TEWPA, the group wrote a proposal to the sub-county and received 250 (two hundred and fifty) seedlings of maize, cowpeas and ground nuts. They distributed these among members for farming purposes;
- iii. Having started with only UGX210,000 (two hundred and ten thousand shillings), the group's savings have accumulated to UGX3,000,000 (three million shillings).
- iv. Have been able to attract new partners, including UWONET who donated two bulls for ploughing and some seed grants.
- v. Group members have improved their family livelihoods.

I am a single mother and participation in the group has transformed my life. I benefited from the five fingers training, which knowledge I replicated. I borrowed 200,000shs from the group which I used to start up a restaurant, with proceeds from the restaurant, I have been able to purchase 3 acres of land and have constructed a permanent house". **Katine Mary, group member.**

I am a widow; my husband was killed during the Karamojong raids. After joining the group, I borrowed 200,000shs which I used to start up a brick making business, I have used proceeds from my business to construct a house and educate my children to University level."

## Group challenges:

- \* Lack of transport to carry out sensitizations
- \* Lack of improved knowledge for agriculture.

## Lessons learnt

- i. In most cases, TEWPA built the capacities (knowledge and skills) of groups before engaging them into practical work of advocacy, income generation, caring for communities. This created a unique movement building strategy of working with knowledgeable people who are committed to the community issues.
- ii. There is need for constant monitoring and supervision as shown by TEWPA with this group, to address challenges of growing groups;
- iii. Sustaining advocacy and social movements has to be buttressed by responding to practical needs and wellbeing of families, to promote peace and ongoing advocacy.
- iv. On the effective of the community groups in economic resilience and policy advocacy, the Sub-county Chief, Egawu Michael, remarked that:
- v. Women have been undermined for long and yet they are the eye opener of the community. The English call you grassroot women, which means you live within the grass, you must fight to come out of the grass, and the only way is to be empowered and bring as many women on board. As Acowa women have shown through their work, women play a great role in nurturing families and should therefore fight against poverty, because a poor mind always causes war.

### 2.3.4 Smart Economics: We do not Eat Peace

Women have the potential to change their own economic status, as well as that of the communities and countries in which they live, as part of the peace and human security architecture. Yet more often than not, women's economic contributions go unrecognized, their work undervalued and their promise unnourished. Women's economic empowerment that is, their capacity to bring about economic change for themselves is increasingly viewed as the most important contributing factor to achieving sustainable growth and development. But economically strengthening women who are half the world's workforce is not only a means by which to spur economic growth, but also a matter of advancing women's human rights and security. When government, businesses and communities invest in women, and when they work to eliminate inequalities, developing countries are less likely to be plagued by poverty. Economic development efforts to combat poverty can only succeed if women are part of the solution. Doing so yields a double dividend: When women are economically empowered, they raise healthier, better educated families. Their countries are more economically prosperous because of it, too.

When women are economically empowered, they raise healthier, better educated families. Their countries are more economically prosperous because of it, too.



Isis- WICCE work has expanded understanding of women's economic contributions as well as the hurdles that prevent them from being successful. Our efforts focus on how post-conflict poverty affects economic development efforts. Isis-WICCE strives to empower women as economic agents and better their ability to access markets on competitive and equitable terms. And with our partners (TEWPA and LIPAWA), Isis-WICCE aims to integrate economic empowerment activities into program and institution activities. We believe such an approach improves the likelihood that efforts to strengthen women economically and to achieve sustainable post-conflict recovery and development are successful.

**a. Exchange Visit to Successful Business Women: Ms. Cecilia Engole, (Ongongoja Sub-county, Katakwi District**

Sustainability of NGOs after donor exit has been questioned. Are there examples that have worked for women that other activists in post-conflict can relate with! Isis-WICCE over time has affirmed the significance and benefits of building grass roots women's movements; basically we know that we have to build a movement of women at the grass root. The challenge has been having to sustain the organizations in the midst of dwindling donor funding.



Women leaders such as Cecilia Engole, the coordinator of TEWPA and a woman from a war background has shown that alternative means of sustaining organizations is possible. The visit to Cecilia's farm enabled the visiting team of 45 people to internalise other possibilities and ways that one can build on voluntarism, resilience, and sustainability of organisations and the individuals.

During the visit, participants traversed the 5-acre of farm, which has ground nuts, over 450 orange trees, 40 bee hives, 30 goats, 10 cows, quails and 80 turkeys.

Cecilia informed the visiting team of the unique and varied benefits of quail eggs to the human system. Quail eggs sustain human lives as they reduce onset and impact of diseases such as diabetes and heart-related diseases. They control clot formation and slow down the aging of vital body organs. They are also said to improve fertility and reduce onset of opportunistic diseases such as asthma, whooping cough and tuberculosis in adults.

As part of the chain management and processing, she processes and packages the ground nuts into peanut butter, and nectar into honey that she supplies to retailers in Teso and Karamoja regions. A good harvest season brings Cecilia over 60 bags of oranges that she sells at UGX40,000 (forty thousand shillings) per bag. There is also high demand for quill eggs which are medicinal and their meat which is used to treat early cancer.

The use of firewood has overtime been advocated against as negatively promoting cutting down of trees and having a negative effect on the environment. Smoke from the

firewood is harmful to women, who without choice, have to cook with it all their lives. As an alternative to using firewood, Cecilia processes human and animal waste into biogas, to light her farm and for domestic cooking. The use of bio-gas is recommendable, most especially for rural areas. Its production is cheap where installation of the entire system costs about four million Uganda shillings, but lasts for over 80 years. Bio-gas is also the safest means of electricity; it's not harmful like the other gas.

#### **b. Okudda Women Living with HIV/AIDs group**

In addition to her farming project, Cecilia formed and supports a group of 25 (twenty five) women living with HIV/AIDs, within the vicinity of her farm. She supported the group to secure funding from African Women Development Fund (AWDF), acquiring 10 heifers. The group also received 50 (fifty) orange seedlings and are managing a micro- saving scheme which has multiplied into UGX20,000,000 (twenty million shillings). The group members currently contribute a membership fee of UGX300,000 (three hundred thousand shillings).

*"This village suffered a lot of conflict and insecurity during the insurgency. When we joined TEWPA, we mobilized women to form groups but it was challenging to mobilize them because they were traumatized after the conflict, and had lived in camps for long. Eventually some accepted. We have involved men who support their wives within the group".* **Atim Lydia, group member.**

#### **Lessons learnt**

- i. I learnt that a person can sustain themselves through farming. I am going to practice farming for financial sustainability.
- ii. It came to my realization that self-dependence is very rewarding.
- iii. Cecilia has challenged me, now I know that women can do things that men do.
- iv. Leadership should not be selfish. Cecilia has been generous with her knowledge by accepting us to visit her farm and educating us on her achievements. She has also enabled selected women members of TEWPA to secure farm seeds and construct bio-gas in their homes.
- v. I have come to know that farming is not only for the uneducated. Cecilia is literate and highly respected in the community, yet she is a model farmer.
- vi. Cecilia has taught me that hard work and determination transforms life.
- vii. I have learnt that economic empowerment starts with me. And if I have to start, I should start, Now.

### 3. TRAINING SESSIONS RELATED TO PRDP

Practical skills were provided in Advocacy and Report Writing, given that these are vital skills for the lobby and advocacy work of both LIPAWA and TEWPA, who are members of the WTF for PRDP.

#### 3.1 Skills in Advocacy and Networking



The skills and knowledge building on advocacy and networking was delivered using a simulation of a radio talk show, group discussions and skits. In this session, participants were able to identify: how advocacy is undertaken, making the issue deeply and widely felt to stimulate change, challenges in advocacy, and different advocacy strategies.

#### Session 1: What is Advocacy

**Methodology:** Simulation of a Radio Talk Show on Radio Veritas

The radio talk show hosted 4 participants who represented

advocates of change in the PRDP community. They were asked questions in relation to the impact of their advocacy work and its effectiveness. The radio show was then let open for listeners (participants) to call in with their concerns. The 4 guests provided responses to questions asked by the listeners. key questions:

Thereafter, the audience was allowed to phone in and ask more questions. Participants' Learnings about Advocacy from the Radio Show:

- a. During advocacy one has to be knowledgeable and prepared with information and facts.
- b. Advocacy work must have a vision, which is what one wants to achieve as the end result or goal.



- c. Advocacy requires different strategies for different target audiences.
- d. Advocacy works alongside networking with strategic others for generation of knowledge, expertise and efforts. No organization can do it alone.
- e. Advocacy work requires follow up with the decision makers over the commitments that they make.
- f. During advocacy, one has to be prepared for allies and enemies.
- g. Advocacy requires references, knowledge of legal frameworks and with documented facts on the gaps. One has to look out for laws and policies relevant to the problem/issue being tackled.
- h. Requires assertiveness and confidence.
- i. Before carrying out advocacy work one has to consult the community.

## Session II: Practical Advocacy Skills

Using guided questions, participants were assigned groups to respond to 3 questions and make a plenary performance of how they would undertake advocacy on a specific PRDP related gap. The responses to the questions from the different working groups have been indicated below.

	Group I	Group II	Group III
<b>Qn 1:</b> Identify an issue for which your community wants change.	Drug stock out in health centers.	Sanitation in schools	Inadequate staffing of midwives in the maternity ward
<b>Qn 2:</b> Identify the advocacy steps you'll undertake to address the issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Hold a dialogue with the community to identify the issue</li> <li>* Hold a dialogue with strategic sub-county stake holders</li> <li>* Hold a dialogue with taskforce members</li> <li>* Make submissions to the district authority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Carry out school visits</li> <li>* Carry out sensitization meetings in the community</li> <li>* Draft reports on advocacy activities</li> <li>* Present photographs of the advocacy activities undertaken to leaders for change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Consult health center in charge</li> <li>* Forward report to the sub-county chiefs</li> <li>* Involve the community in advocacy</li> <li>* Dialogue with district leaders</li> <li>* Advocacy sessions with district leaders</li> </ul>
<b>Qn 3:</b> Identify the leader (s) you want to approach on the issue of concern	The district health officer and counselors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* LC I Education Sector</li> <li>* District Education Officer</li> <li>* Health Assistants</li> <li>* LC III District Councilors</li> <li>* Head Teachers</li> <li>* School Management Committees</li> <li>* Parents Teachers Associations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* LC III and V</li> <li>* Health Secretary</li> <li>* Sub-county Chief</li> <li>* District Health Officers</li> </ul>
Plenary presentation of the advocacy, using a favourable methodology (4minutes)	Drama	Presentation	Skit

The feedback from the presentations revealed that the groups had ideas of steps in developing

advocacy campaigns. The most significant was the idea of consulting with communities, building community acceptance to work towards a common vision and goal while engaging directly with technical staff at sub county and district level. Despite the knowledge exhibited, the groups were not very clear on how to follow up such engagements to ensure issues of advocacy follow up through the plans and budgets of the district. Therefore the session closed by providing participants with advocacy steps to address such gaps; these included:

- a. Identify the issue for which you want to make change;
- b. Collect information and facts on the problem/issue (facts, figures, pictures, testimonies)
- c. Set your objectives
- d. Identify people for the advocacy work, that is who you want to influence
- e. Identify people you want to work with
- f. Develop your advocacy message
- g. Identify the advocacy activities you will undertake
- h. Identify resources you need (people, money, time)
- i. Implement the activity
- j. Monitor the change coming from your advocacy work

These steps should apply to any on-going advocacy work in the organisations, especially to their work as WTF for a gender responsive PRDP. Overall, participants expressed satisfaction with the learning as many continued to discuss the dramas during the break.

### **3.2 Report Writing (Capturing Field Data)**

Despite the women's involvement in advocacy work, Isis-WICCE realized the gap in their capacity to document activities implemented in order to efficiently and confidently engage policy makers at district and sub-county level.

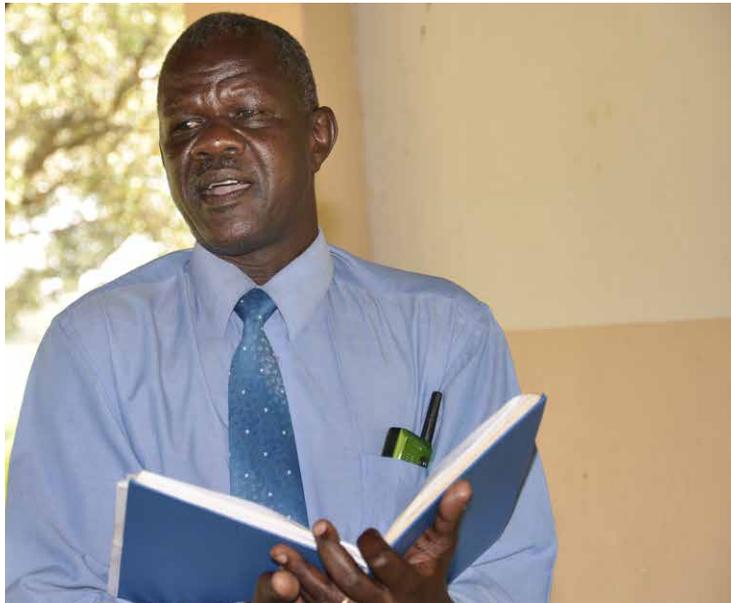
Using the field visits that had been conducted in the Teso-sub region during the week, the facilitator tasked participants to:

- a. Identify one of the most exciting field visits during the week;

- b. Creatively develop a report about it.

After group feedback, the facilitator outlined the following as important steps in reporting:

- a. A report must have a title, date,
- b. Indicate where the event took place,
- c. Objectives of the event;
- d. Who was present at the event,
- e. A brief introduction,
- f. What was discussed and responses,
- g. Lessons learnt, way forward/follow up actions,
- h. Successes, challenges and
- i. Conclusion.



Participants were supported through the steps, processes of writing reports and use of pictures to support their field reports. The session on report writing shared the importance and different methods of reporting (receipting items purchased, capturing testimonies/storytelling, photography, voice recording, using record books, accountability for money spent and use of print, television and radio media).

### **3.3 Advocacy Session PRDP Implementation: Kapujan PRDP Advocacy Group, Katakwi District**

**T**EWPA is among the WTF members who have formed and coordinated task forces at district level. TEWPA Kapujan PRDP Advocacy Group, composed of District Councillors who sought for form a force from within the decision making platform. The team of counselors used their decision making platform to lobby for gender responsive budget allocation, availability of health services and monitoring quality of deliverables.

Kapujan Health Center III, serves a population of 4,280 people, is run by 14 staff (9 female) and is the referral to all the health centers in the sub-county. It offers antenatal services ( received 369 mothers in the last quarter with 228 deliveries); offers family planning services, HIV testing & counseling, ARVs treatment, immunization, PMTCT and referrals for extreme cases. The health center in charge, Julius Opolot was proud to report that they have not had any case of mother to child HIV transmission.

#### **The visit:**

- \* brought together a number of Katakwi District level leaders. The Sub-county Chief affirmed that the PRDP related training by TEWPA and Isis-WICCE, had empowered female counsellors to lobby and that is why development within the district has spread.
- \* Enabled the visiting team to visit Health Centre III, and identify with the service gaps that the district counselors constantly alluded to;
- \* Enabled the visiting team to learn some of the successes of the Female Counselors lobby team; the counselors have ensured functionality of the maternity ward, lobbied for a fully equipped and functional maternity ward, latrine, staff houses and a fence around the health center. However, the Health Center often lacks essential drugs.

#### **Recommendations from Kapujan Health Center III:**

- \* The need for effective follow up on the different PRDP projects within the health center.
- \* The district should be allowed to hire their own building contractors, this eases monitoring.
- \* The women's health caucus should lobby for renovation of the Out Patient Department building.

#### 4. OUR BODIES, OUR SELVES: SEXUAL HEALTH DISCUSSIONS AT THE CAMPFIRE



Women work in highly contested social-cultural spaces and their work edges on sexual violence and servitude. There are also gender stereotypes that underpin the challenges that they face. At personal levels, women leaders experience challenges of sexual nature and hardly have space of mutual support to find answers to deep seated questions around sexuality and sexual pleasure.

In the past, women and girls used to sit with sengas (marriage counselors) and grandparents to prepare them. Such social glue has been dismantled by war and displacement. Isis WICCE recognizes that healing body, mind and spirit of women is vital to their

individual and communal empowerment. Yet, this aspect is ignored in women's engagements.

Isis-WICCE sought to bring back positive cultural processes using the camp fire, over a cup of tea and goat roasting. Women converged in a private space, with burning fire, to discuss issues of sex, sexuality and sexual pleasure. Women started by

understanding that it is important for them to take care of themselves in order to sustain taking care of others, Using anonymously written questions, answers were generated from within the group, on the following issues:

- a. hygiene;
- b. sexual satisfaction and pleasure;

When women are economically empowered, they raise healthier, better educated families. Their countries are more economically prosperous because of it, too.

- c. sex styles;
- d. barrenness and drunkardness;
- e. assertiveness with sexual partners;
- f. family planning

### **Key issues coming through the discussions**

- a. Women have less power in negotiating for pleasurable and safe sex;
- b. There are myths surrounding the safety of family planning methods. Many women hardly use the methods for 'fear' of diseases;
- c. Many women have been brought up to believe that it is only men to enjoy sex
- d. To many participants at the visit, sex is more of penetration. They hardly relate it to personal grooming, care and outlook;



The health session was electrifying for these women as they gained new knowledge and skill from their peers. For Isis-WICCE, it became more evident that women must continuously be provided such safe spaces, for them to discuss and discover new information and skills surrounding sexuality.

## 5 CELEBRATING ISIS-WICCE AT 40

The Acholi and Teso sub-regions have benefited from Isis-WICCE's interventions of documenting women's experiences of conflict; medical camps to address war tears; peace education for women as agents of change; the 1st and 3rd international peace expositions, as well as movement building for high level advocacy with national level, African Union and UN leadership on gender responsive peace and recovery processes.

The year 2014 marks forty years of Isis-WICCE's existence. The exchange visit was also an avenue for the celebrations. Community conversations were held to assess the impact of Isis-WICCE work, and a cross cultural night was held towards this commemoration.

Using the strategy of Community Conversations, 31(thirty one) women and men participated in convenings to discuss their knowledge of Isis-WICCE, impact of its work and suggest changes to its work.

### Effectiveness of our work

Isis-WICCE does not only work with grassroots but comes down further to our huts. In my case the organisation went beyond the call of duty. They came down to my little home, and visited my incapacitated son. They did all they could, the rest is history. My son moved from being bed ridden to a wheel chair. He actually sent you greetings when I was coming here. **Theresa, Soroti**

Another beneficiary stated that:

You may be Isis, ... but we are the Isis

This was a special statement by Immaculate Kongai, who strongly asserted that Isis-WICCE's work had uniquely impacted on her life. Another beneficiary reported that:

Through Isis-WICCE I had an opportunity to travel to Nairobi by Air; this was the first miracle in my life. Isis-WICCE taught me how to love and this has enabled me take care of 2 children whose mother was a member of Usuk group but passed away, both children are HIV positive. Isis-WICCE also encouraged me to develop my English, today I can speak good English and no one can believe I am a primary level 3 drop out. Isis-WICCE also enabled me attend a leadership training which elevated me to position of Sub-county Counselor."

## Knowledge about Isis-WICCE and its work

The groups that knew Isis-WICCE had learnt about it from TEWPA, WORUDET and PRDP Taskforce. This demonstrates that Isis-WICCE has been effective in strengthening networks by building on their efforts. However, this approach of reaching communities through networks keeps Isis-WICCE far away from community people. Individual organizations that are not deeply interested in Isis-WICCE or who have self-motives may not necessarily profile it. Isis-WICCE needs to be clear in its recruitment of partners. It may also need to make its own direct/ strategic engagements with communities.



In the evening a cross-cultural night celebrating Isis-WICCE's existence was hosted. During the event, TEWPA alluded to its founding and history which was rooted in Isis-WICCE's Exchange programme, Institute, and how the alumni had established TEWPA, giving room for further replication effect. As a symbolic gesture, Isis-WICCE was able to celebrate with its institute alumni as one of its powerful constituencies.

The cultural performance and cultural dress in the evening alluded to the cross-cultural nature of Isis-WICCE's interventions, embedded in uniqueness, groundedness and tapping into community knowledge to accelerate development.

When women are economically empowered, they raise healthier, better educated families. Their countries are more economically prosperous because of it, too.

## 6 SKILLS TRANSFER- GOING HOME, BEING DIFFERENT: THE AHA! MOMENT...

Forty five people participated in the Peer Cross-Cultural Learning and Exchange Visit, with 13 having their maiden visit to Teso sub-region. The exchange visit was unique, embraced practical and innovative strategies to ensure that participants learn in effective ways. These were: Story Line presentations, Site Visits, Smart Economics-interactions with successful business women, Camp Fire on sexual and reproductive health concerns, and adult learning methodologies for teachable topics. Both LIPAWA and TEWPA groups went home with new levels of awareness and energy to act. The groups appreciated Isis-WICCE and Womankind Worldwide for listening to their needs and for hosting the event.



## Relevance of the Exchange Visit (Participants' Voices)

### Veronica

I am going to form an advisory board for LIPAWA and we as a group will agree on how to grow and empower LIPAWA to show tangible impact.

### Florence

I am going to multiply the small income I have to startup a business.

### Mary

I am going to expand my banana plantation.

### Jimmy

I will network LIPAWA to other organizations and will empower them in proposal writing.

I was inspired by Usuk women living with HIV to take care of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. I am going to begin taking care of such children.

### Salome

I am a counselor but had never had such exposure. The exchange visit has inspired me to contest at district and Member of Parliament level.

### Grace

I had fear of how to sustain my small business. This kind of exposure has given me courage to continue and grow my business.

### Helen

Am going to start up a peace club in one of the schools in my sub-county.

### Gertrude

I am going to increase on the 72 orange plants I have. I got inspiration from Cecilia.

### Doreen

I thought sweet potatoes were for only home consumption. I am now going to grow my sweet potatoes for both business and home consumption.

### Rose

I have 100 banana plants, goats and 2 bulls. I am going back to expand on these.

### Aida

I am raising 3 goats and 3 cows and I am determined to increase on the number of goats and cows I have.

### Betty

I have always undermined myself as a woman; the peer visit has made me realize my full potential. I will continue saving with savings group until my money is enough to construct me a house.

### Alice

I am so inspired by Cecilia who has worked hard as a woman affected by conflict. I am going to buy chicken and eventually expand to goats and cows.

### Theresa

I am going to sensitize my community on economic empowerment and will continue advocating for tree planting which affects climate change.

### Winfred

I am going to empower other women to advocate for their rights.

### Eberina

Am so encouraged that despite my old age, I was invited to the peer learning visit. I am going to take my daughter who got pregnant back to school, I am going to buy a goat."

### Susan

Cecilia emphasized keeping group secrets. I'll ensure confidentiality within LIPAWA.

## 7. BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

The experiential learning visits had a lot of insights for the visiting group and for TEWPA members who have had creative forms of engaging with communities for all this time. Because of the wide membership of TEWPA, some of the members of TEWPA on the learning exchanges were visiting their colleagues activities for the first time. Collectively, the following issues need to be appreciated:

**Challenging formative stages of organisations:** Most women-led initiatives go through formative stages. The humble beginnings of TEWPA and LIPAWA resonate with the foundations of many women-led initiatives. The beginning is tough, resources are scarce and women have to rely on personal/private resources to build institutions that are later absorbed as public property. This process however, needs a kind of leadership and commitment to make it work. Just like in TEWPA, the leadership in LIPAWA has had moments of triumph, misjudgment, personal sacrifices, selflessness, and working with deep passion to make things move. In this story of resilience also lies individuals who demand personal and selfish gains out of social justice work. Critical to this reality is the need to document the stories of gallant women and girls who initiate actions against social injustices globally. Their stories will stand to inform future generations of the web of resistance against social injustices, time in history.

**TEWPA stands out as a model CBO,** that was started by activists who sought to change daily lives of post-conflict communities of Teso and Karamoja sub-regions. The model of mobilizing and training peace animators and forming them into vigilante Peace Committees has been a source of early warning on tensions and conflict prevention in the community. Mobilising of people's movements of women, men and youth has ensured that several social groups remain committed to peace and security. Furthermore, the TEWPA constituents are engaging different spectrums of development. Some of TEWPA's groups focus on policy advocacy, income regeneration, respond to socio-cultural and environmental issues, all geared towards peace communities. Through its diverse constituents and interpretation of what peace is to different communities, TEWPA places itself as the knowledge hub on key dynamics in the region.

**From Good to Great:** LIPAWA has excelled as a small group of committed citizens changing the face of poverty, vulnerability and suffering in post-conflict Agago District. LIPAWA in its infancy has shown muscle in being watchdogs for resource distribution and service delivery in health and education sectors. They were eager to learn from what has worked in Teso sub-region, and the sisterhood and opening of inroad into TEWPA activities was their eye opener.

The Cultural Exchange and training program gave the groups opportunity to unfold skills and

capacities in an interactive form, due to the cultural difference, age, learning styles, artistic expression and philosophical points of view. The program widened appreciation of the participants to lives and practices of other post-conflict communities with new possibilities; it additionally addressed apathy and enhanced dialogues between the two communities which, was a source of new energy and new initiatives towards social change. By attending the Peer Learning and Cross-Cultural Exchange Visit, participants agreed to adhere to the basic principles of voluntarism, resilience and economic empowerment through self-sustenance in order to comfortably sustain activism.

**Male Engagement:** TEWPA provides a unique edge on how it has engaged men and boys in its social justice work. Men and boys belong to some of its groups, associations and peace clubs. The successes alluded to TEWPA's engagements, has affirmed that meaningful and sustainable development should bring both woman and men on board for collective action against social injustices.

**Legitimacy of Women's Work:** Globally and historically, women in militarised settings have been violated and yet excluded from effective remedies and resource allocation. Such communities have crafted various forms of resistance to fight their way to ensure gender equality. International instruments such as UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security, as well as Beijing Platform for Action have however, enabled many initiatives to have mandate to challenge peace and security discourses. A case in point, the WTF that both LIPAWA and TEWPA belong to, has challenged the government of Uganda's resource allocation and budgeting in post conflict reconstruction using such international and regional frameworks. The struggle for the WTF has been about a security that should care more for the individuals (body, mind and spirit) beyond the institutionalized security that is militarized. The Task Force has challenged resource allocation that is blind to gendered experiences of war and arising needs and priorities. These issues of concern by Uganda's WTF on PRDP are similar to the struggles that global activists have had at the international level.

**Making this possible:** Isis-WICCE remains indebted to its development partners who have continued to provide technical and financial resources for the work it has undertaken, over the years. This activity was made possible from project developments/ impact of Isis-WICCE's funding partners, and with special contributions from Womankind Worldwide-UK.

**Leaving a Legacy and the sustainability model of Isis-WICCE:** TEWPA and LIPAWA show case Isis-WICCE's mobilizing capacity towards gender equality through the Women's Task Force for a gender responsive PRDP. From this peer learning and cross-cultural exchange visit, it is clear that through resource tracking and monitoring; advocacy; and PRDP awareness raising activities, the taskforce has moved mountains to ensure that most vulnerable communities can reap from more efficient and sensitive service delivery in sectoral areas of health and education. The Task Force has

over 21 groups from North and North Eastern Uganda committed to gender equality in post conflict reconstruction. This is the legacy that Isis-WICCE leaves behind in Uganda, and in the several countries that it has worked with.

Isis-WICCE plans to upscale and sustain its work through establishment of a Peace Centre that will galvanise a movement to break through hindrances to those working in the field of women, peace and security. By working with an array of actors (including feminist peace experts, feminist scholars, activists, health professionals and leaders) the peace Centre will recreate ways of transforming the lives of women, who have lived and worked in situations of armed conflict and human insecurity.

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