

AMPLIFYING VOICES

Decade Edition
2005-2015



THE OPEN SOCIETY INITIATIVE
FOR EASTERN AFRICA







OSIEA Values



Justice

Justice is what we stand for

Our goal is to ensure all individuals—in actuality and not simply on paper—have equal opportunities to participate actively in society and to receive just treatment and their “fair share” from the state and the community.

Passion

Passion drives our commitment to our work

It ignites the spark to produce innovative work with intellectual rigour. Passion gives us our positive energy, dynamism, and tenacity to work in challenging and even hostile circumstances. Passion gives us the courage to stand strong and to withstand risk and uncertainty.

Equity & Equality

ALL human beings are entitled to basic rights and equitable access to opportunities and resources

Members of marginalized or minority groups often face discrimination and violence. We support their demands for the real and effective enjoyment of their human rights, regardless of sex, race, ethnicity, religious, birth, age, disability, sexual orientation, or other status. Given the prevalence of patriarchal structures and value systems that disadvantage girls and women, we stand committed to achieving gender equity.

Diversity

We support efforts that celebrate and embrace the strength of diversity and promote tolerance of difference

We live in pluralistic societies made up of people from different backgrounds, beliefs, and lifestyles. “We” are because “they” are and “they” are because “we” are: All who embrace and seek to fulfill our collective values are one with us.

Innovation

We challenge ourselves to think outside the box—new ways, ideas, insights and partners—to expand the boundaries of what is possible

Change can only come by creatively pursuing opportunities, and if necessary being ready to take calculated risks. We should not be afraid of failure when there is a reasonable chance of success. Accordingly, we value learning and intellectual growth.

Integrity

We walk the talk

We are accountable and answerable for our conduct (acts and omissions) to each and all others. We maintain high ethical and professional standards in our interactions. For us, integrity is about building authentic relationships based on respect and a sense of equality.

Solidarity & Collegiality

We are a team that works collaboratively

Our empathy, responsiveness and teamwork produce the synergy to work more effectively. Our interactions are always courteous and constructive. We undertake our work with equanimity and good humour. We stand by our colleagues in difficult times.

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DECADE EDITION
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THE OPEN SOCIETY INITIATIVE FOR EASTERN AFRICA (OSIEA)

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Our mission is to support and stand in solidarity with those who seek justice, accountability, equitable access to resources, information and public participation; we do this through tools such as grant-making, research, and advocacy.

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EDITORIAL STATEMENT

We are pleased to present the decade edition of *Amplifying Voices* covering the period 2005-2015. In this edition OSIEA takes the opportunity to highlight the different journeys it has taken together with its partners in the efforts to realize full enjoyment of human rights and freedoms especially for those on the margins of the society. Through the articles in this edition, we look at important questions around OSIEA's identity, personality and fingerprint as we clocked 10 years of existence in 2015. It is our hope that the articles in this edition of *Amplifying Voices* provide some answers to these questions and present a flavor of OSIEA's essential identity.

Our own ambition has been to ensure that the smallest bird can sing from the top of the tree. In this regard, OSIEA has paid significant attention to questions of marginalization for those who are often neglected in society. Therefore, it should not be strange to hear of OSIEA working around questions of forced sterilization of HIV-positive women or those with mental health illnesses.

Risk-taking has also been another personality trait of OSIEA. No subject or focus area has been too taboo for our engagement – if rights are at stake, we have been there. Hence, questions around the rights of sex workers have not been avoided. Neither have sensitive engagements (and as one reads from the piece by Al Amin Kimathi, also dangerous and perilous too) with such subjects as human rights approaches to counterterrorism.

What started as a one-program initiative in 2005 in Kenya has grown exponentially to eight programs in the

region. Geographically, we are now in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, South Sudan and Sudan and are considering expanding even further afield in the region. Thematically, programs around Health and Rights, Disability Rights, and Food Security are now part of OSIEA's mosaic. There's also an extant and ever-growing Learning, Evaluation and Achievement Program (LEAP). From two staff members ten years ago, we have evolved to close to forty.

As we celebrate all these achievements, we also reflect and learn from the challenges we have faced. We have sometimes been misunderstood by some and wrongly typified as 'anti-government' because we support efforts by civil society to promote greater political accountability in the region. Others have suggested that we should engage more with a robust research agenda in addition to the advocacy approach. We are all too aware of the need for a more regional lens in the initiatives we advance.


These and others are all part of the growth-and-learning curve we hope to ascend in the next decade. We will celebrate. And will continue to learn. Our endeavor shall not cease until the smallest bird sings from the treetop! And even then, the challenge will be to ensure that the song, the bird and the tree remain protected from the whimsical vagaries of absolute or unaccountable power.

Mburu Gitu
Executive Director



We Matter:

Sex Workers Build a Social Movement for Health and Rights in Kenya



It is a sleepy weekday morning at a shopping center in one of Nairobi's suburbs. A tiny office nearby bustles with activity.

"Should we screen the video before or after the presentation?" a young man with a trendy haircut asks his colleague in Sheng, the English-Kiswahili mix popular among Nairobi's youth.

Across from him, two others intensely work on training materials which must be finalized by the close of the day. They periodically set the work aside to welcome guests who have come in to use the internet or share a problem they are facing. The intensity is broken when Caro, a Mombasa-based colleague with bright red lipstick and an infectious smile walks into the office.

"How could you sneak in like this? What are your clients going to do in your absence?" her colleagues ask her.

National flags of other countries decorate the office windows, boasting the local organizations' regional and global connections.

This is an ordinary day at the Kenya Sex Workers Alliance (KESWA), a network of sex worker led organizations, community groups, and individuals in Kenya. KESWA was formed in 2010 after a group of Kenyan sex workers who had participated in the 2009 African Sex Workers Alliance meeting in Johannesburg were inspired to set up an operational country coalition.

Phelister Abdulla had been a sex worker in the coastal city of Mombasa for 14 years, and the leader of a post HIV-testing support group when she was elected to become KESWA's first national coordinator in 2012.

"I relocated to Nairobi because I believed in the dream. The movement was dormant, but I was ready to take on the challenge of reviving it. We did not want to build a movement alone. We went to nightclubs and other hotspots in search of other sex workers with potential to be leaders in their communities," says Abdulla.

"We funded the outreach and membership building from our own pockets initially. We had to significantly cut back on clients. Our own livelihood suffered," she says.

Despite a new Kenyan Constitution passed in 2010 that promised progressive reforms, prevailing laws and policies neglect the complex needs of sex workers and instead, tackle sex work (referred to as prostitution in legal statutes) by criminalizing many of its aspects. Because it is the exchange of money for the purposes of prostitution, rather than the act itself, that is criminalized under Kenyan Law, police face procedural difficulties in establishing evidence of sex-for-reward transactions and apprehending offenders.

This has created a hostile and violent environment where security officers resort to public bylaws and other regulations to illegally stop, search, detain, and harass sex workers.



Grace Kamau, a thirty year old university graduate and program officer at KESWA has been a sex worker for 10 years.

"What I like most about sex work is that I get to interact with clients from all walks of life, from senior politicians and public officials to ordinary professionals. I also use it as an opportunity to influence my clients' thinking about sex work," she says.

Kamau agrees that the criminalization of sex work in Kenya has created a difficult working environment.

"We face violence from hostile bar owners and clients who refuse to pay and coerce sex workers into intercourse without condoms. Once I was at a bar with a client who became unruly after several drinks. When the police were called to intervene, the client ran away without paying the bill. I was arrested and locked at the police station for two days until my colleagues came and bailed me out," Kamau says.

In 2013, OSIEA and the OSF Sexual Health and Rights Program (SHARP) awarded KESWA its first grant to conduct a national assessment to understand how it could contribute to strengthening the access to legal, health and human rights services for sex workers.

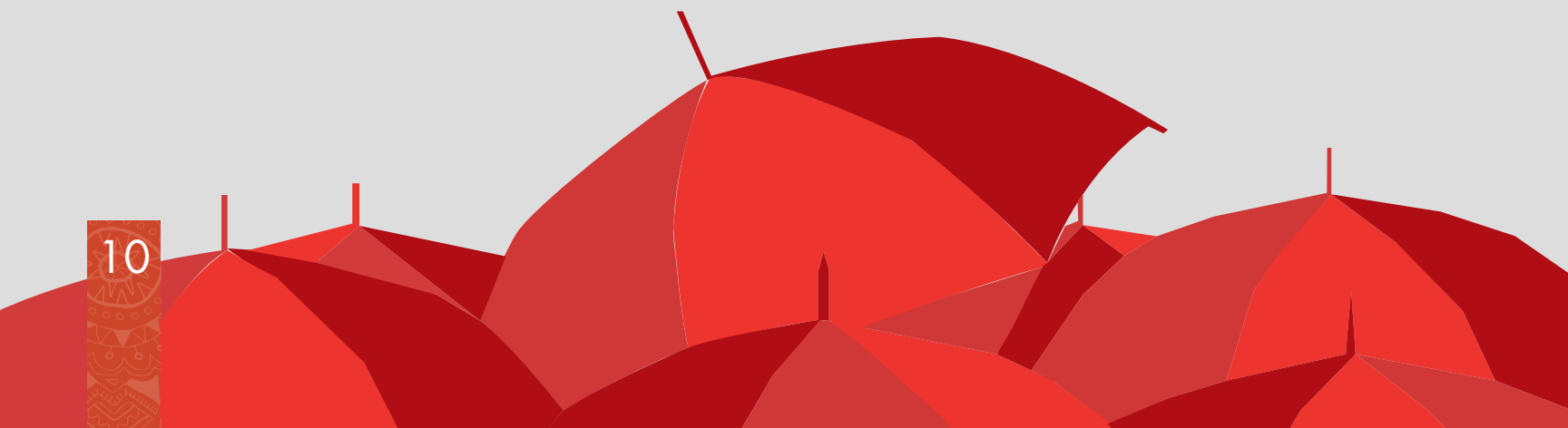
A second grant in 2014 enabled KESWA to identify key priorities and develop a strategic vision to guide its work.


"More than five hundred male, female, and transgender sex workers spread across ten counties participated in the national assessment," says Abdulla.

Nguru Karugu of OSIEA's Health and Rights Program believes that the process of collecting information for the reports and convening sex worker organizations from 37 counties in 2014 to develop a strategic plan enabled KESWA to integrate itself and build legitimacy with grassroots organizations within the Kenyan sex worker movement.

One of KESWA's priorities is mobilizing sex workers to challenge assault, rape, emotional abuse, and other forms of structural violence perpetrated by the police force, county security officers (who enforce local by-laws), criminal gangs, pimps, bar managers, the general public, and most critically, clients. Abdulla observes that many sex workers are victimized further when they report violations to the police, who seldom follow proper procedure in investigating the cases.

"In one rape case reported to the police, an officer crudely remarked, 'how can you rape a sex worker?' " she says.





Given the stigma attached to sex work, most sex workers do not report incidences of violence to the police.

Caroline Njoroge, a mother to two girls and an advocacy officer at KESWA has witnessed firsthand how negative social norms prevent sex workers from accessing legal redress and health services. Born and raised in a brothel in Nairobi, she became a sex worker in 1999 to fend for herself after her mother died.

“When a sex worker is assaulted by a client and reports the case to the police, the police officer will send them off to first seek treatment at a health center and obtain medical documentation of the assault. When we go to health centers, we receive poor treatment from personnel who know what we do, and accuse us of stealing their husbands,” says Njoroge.

Njoroge’s role at KESWA consists of reaching out to sex workers within Nairobi and organizing sensitization and dialogue forums to educate police on human rights principles and improve relations with sex workers. “There is strength in having a platform to raise our voice on issues that affect us all,” says Njoroge, who has seen gradual improvements in everyday interactions with police in areas where KESWA has held the forums.


A crucial part of KESWA’s work is to make media appearances, organize educational symposia, public marches and other commemoration events on the International Rights Day for Sex Workers (March 3rd) and

the International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers (December 17th). These events help destigmatize sex work and humanize sex workers as mothers, sons, daughters, siblings, and community members who make valuable contributions to the economy and to society. Its success relies upon building alliances and coalitions with the wider human rights movement and NGOs working on health access, gender, LGBTI rights, and other areas of concern to sex workers.

“Five years ago it would have been unimaginable to declare myself as a sex worker. I feel empowered and am no longer afraid,” she says.

The coalition building paid off in 2014 when a spate of murders targeting sex workers triggered a national conversation on their unsafe working conditions. The most publicized of the cases involved a serial killer who confessed to murdering seventeen female sex workers across five towns in Kenya.

“We witnessed solidarity from unlikely constituencies like public officials and boda boda (motorbike taxi) drivers who marched on the streets with us to protest the killings,” says Abdulla.



KESWA's efforts to actualize and articulate the rights discourse where sex workers are concerned has also resulted in meaningful partnerships with the government of Kenya in the HIV/AIDS response. Where previously sex workers were viewed as contributors to the epidemic and approached merely as targets of programs, the winds are changing with the recognition of sex workers as vulnerable populations with a role to play as meaningful partners in public health programs.

Since 2015, KESWA has been a member of the Key Population Consortium which brings together sex workers, men who have sex with men, and injecting drug users to articulate an advocacy agenda in engagements with existing HIV and global health mechanisms including the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. This new formation is already eliciting results. Government agencies such as the Ministry of Health, the Kenya National AIDS Control Council (NACC) and the National AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections Control Programme (NASCOP) have reached out to KESWA and its members for ideas on how address stigma and other exclusions in health delivery that lead to inequitable access to HIV/AIDS treatment and suboptimal health outcomes for sex workers.

The empowerment of young sex workers is central to KESWA's mission and legacy. Bradley Njukia, a 24 year old, became a sex worker soon after completing his secondary education.

"I was raised in a single-parent home and experienced many financial hardships at a young age. As the first born, sex work offered a way to provide for my mother and siblings," says Njukia.

Currently an advocacy officer at KESWA, Bradley is passionate about supporting young sex workers between ages eighteen to twenty four who he considers especially vulnerable.

"Young sex workers become active very quickly, yet this is also a critical time when they are discovering themselves and forging their own identities as sex workers and adults. Many young sex workers entering the profession for the first time lack knowledge on how to negotiate and this makes them vulnerable to manipulation by clients who can coerce them into unsafe and risky situations," says Njukia.

Njukia is on the faculty of the Sex Worker Academy that KESWA has coordinated since 2013 to mentor emerging leaders to be the face and voice of the movement. Participating sex workers and allies benefit from modules in strategic leadership, evidence-building, community mobilization, and gain the political insight to undertake power analyses and identify advocacy entry points and levers for positive change in their localities. The academy also engages participants from South Africa, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia and Nigeria. Every year, they take away valuable knowledge from the academy sessions and experiential exchange visits with sex worker associations across Kenya and use the lessons to strengthen the movements in their countries of origin.

For the team at KESWA, some of the most fulfilling moments have been seeing graduates of the academy make eloquent presentations in international conferences or proceeding to become formidable leaders and advocates for fellow sex workers in their communities.

"In the next few years, we want to expand KESWA's presence and work beyond Nairobi, Mombasa, and Kisumu, and do a better job of supporting sex workers in rural areas who face major challenges compounded by their invisibility and distance from support services," says Abdulla.

KESWA staff are also keen to learn more about the gender diversities and unique programming needs within the sex worker movement.

KESWA's next challenge is to file a petition challenging the constitutionality of laws that criminalize sex work, an endeavor which they

acknowledge will require thorough preparation and strategy, but is worth fighting for.

I asked Abdulla, Kamau, Njukia and Njoroge to share a parting message for readers with little understanding of sex work. Their responses were strikingly powerful. "Sex work is work like any other. A sex worker is an equal, hardworking, human being who deserves respect and full rights in society. When you arrest, discriminate against us, and harm us, you deprive our children of a stable future with their parents. Clients and society should see us as partners in their privacy, health, and well-being."

Above all, KESWA and its members are united by the conviction that a Kenya where the rights of sex workers are protected and where each individual is able to make choices about their work and their body is possible.




KESWA is a grantee of OSIEA's Health and Rights Program

BEYOND THE MARGINS:

THE KARIMOJONG DEMAND A VOICE IN DECISIONS OVER THEIR RESOURCES





On a clear day in April 2009, local Karimojong leaders and elders, accompanied by a local county Member of Parliament, confiscated the keys of Oruk limestone mining site, thus stopping all activities. The mining site, located in Kosiroi village in Moroto-district belonged to Tororo Cement, Uganda's largest cement and steel company.

According to reports by a local daily newspaper, the showdown arose from long-simmering frustrations sparked by community efforts to obtain an official explanation of how Tororo Cement had acquired a mining lease in the area. Tensions between mining companies, government, local elites, and locals still loom large, occasionally boiling to the surface in heated events as witnessed in Kosiroi.

Located in North-Eastern Uganda, the Karamoja sub-region is endowed with more than 50 minerals including gold, copper, phosphates, silver, limestone, marble, and iron ore. This wealth stands in stark contradiction to Karamoja's status as Uganda's poorest region. Since independence, Karamoja has consistently recorded the lowest human development indicators nationally. The region is also known for poor levels of political representation and chronic under provision of public infrastructure and services.

The Karimojong are traditionally agro-pastoralists who enjoy a nomadic lifestyle dependent on free movement and the ability to access water and food from the land. Mounting insecurity, youth unemployment,

and susceptibility to dry spells and devastating famines have placed growing pressure on the Karimojong way of life in recent times. These challenges are exacerbated by the specter of landlessness.

A study by Margaret Rugadya, Eddie Nsamba-Gayiiya and Herbert Kamusiime reveals how over 94 percent of Karamoja was allocated to wildlife conservation in the early years of independence in the 1960s. In 2002, de-gazettement laws passed by the Parliament of Uganda changed the status of about half of the protected land, paving the way for investments in military facilities, ranches, and natural resource exploitation. The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development open Cadastre and Registry system shows over 100 exclusive exploration licenses and mining leases awarded to companies, collectively covering over 25 percent of Karamoja's land area. In reality the numbers are much higher.

When it comes to getting involved in decisions affecting their region, the Karimojong are disadvantaged by lack of information that would enable them to participate in high-level decisions touching on land ownership, management and user rights. Except for a few limited roles granted to senior local administrative officers, most exploration and mining leases are negotiated far away in the capital, Kampala.

Jackson Angella, an elder from Rupa, a local mining area says, "It is distressing when somebody appears on a community's land not having engaged them in prior dialogue, or proved that they had been granted formal

permission to undertake prospecting activities on their land.”

According to Ronald Busiinge, Director of the Uganda chapter of Earthsavers Movement, a complex maze of regulatory and oversight processes adds to the challenges of transparency at the local level. “Besides gazettement and degazettement, there exist several license types such as exploration licenses, import-export licenses, retention licenses, and mineral dealers’ licenses. Each of these entails different procedures and implications for communities. Companies must also have conducted environmental impact assessments and released proof of commercially-viable mineral finds before mining leases can be awarded,” he says.

The Uganda Mining Act of 2003 stipulates that all licensing should involve consultations with the local communities and provide adequate compensation for those that stand to be most affected at market rates. However, locals’ rights to participation and compensation are predicated on formal proof of land ownership.

“In Karamoja where much of the land falls under customary and communal land tenure, legal ownership can be hard to prove. While there is room for certification by district-level officials, this opens the process to undue influence by local elites”, says Busiinge.

In 2011, with the support of OSIEA, Earthsavers Uganda partnered with the Moroto District Local Government under the leadership of Ayeba Cosmas, the local district Chairman, to launch a parallel contract monitoring project

in Tapac, Rupa, and Katikekile Sub Counties. The mechanism would both monitor the legality of mining and exploration activities in their areas, and ensure that government reports accurately reflected the realities in their communities.

“We wanted to educate the communities of Karamoja about the complex system governing the exploitation of resources in their region. For too long, the language of conversation had been led by lawyers, academicians, and other professionals close to government and mining companies,” says Busiinge, who also acknowledged that this would be a slow and gradual effort.

The coordinators were deliberate about conveying knowledge not only in local languages, and in local community debate spaces, but also in simple, powerful, ways that were relevant to community worldviews and experiences.

A second part of the project involved developing a simple monitoring tool to help communities document the everyday practices of regulatory agencies, government officials and investors. This proved critical for tracking compliance with existing laws and obligations to the communities.

Five years on, the Karimojong are becoming better informed about their land and livelihood rights and have a stronger public voice.

“We are beginning to see the people speaking to power in strategic ways,” says Simon Nangiro, Chairman of Karamoja Miners Association, an organization that also partners in the implementation of the project.

In September 2011, the Moroto District Council suspended all mineral exploration in Rupa area, announcing plans to probe all registered entities operating in the district. This followed public concerns regarding the degazettement and allocation of big chunks of Rupa area by unknown entities. The council's decision was also triggered by widespread concerns about the exploitative working conditions endured by local youth, especially girls and women who had to burrow deep in caves to harvest piles of marble for collection by agents of African Minerals and Harambe Africa (U) Ltd, the two leading marble buyers. Also informing the Council's decision were reports of poor environment management practices by companies that had left piles of rubble, open pits, and trenches, rendering Rupa susceptible to gully erosion.

Importantly, the Central Government for the first time in late 2012, released 17 percent worth of

backdated royalty payments to local government and communities in Moroto District and 3 percent to Tapac Sub County in compliance with its obligations under the 2003 Mining Act.

"Though the funds are not sufficient to change all lives, it is a good beginning to awaken the local community," he says.

Nangiro, Chairman of Karamoja Miners Association, also observes that lower levels of local governments in Moroto and Abim have adopted the monitoring tool to aid their collection of local revenues from the mining companies.

"Though this has not been adopted at the higher local government, it is just a matter of time," says Nangiro, speaking to the project's high potential for scale and replication.



The project has also helped catalyze collective action among artisanal miners who are often blocked from accessing land under exploration due to their lack of location licenses. Local artisanal miners oppose a purely extractive model of investment, where even companies that carry local names do not encourage sustainable local value-add industry or job creation.

Where exploration has not yielded commercially viable deposits for large companies, artisanal miners are engaging the Department of Mines for continued rights to small-scale mining, and the right to passage for animal grazing.

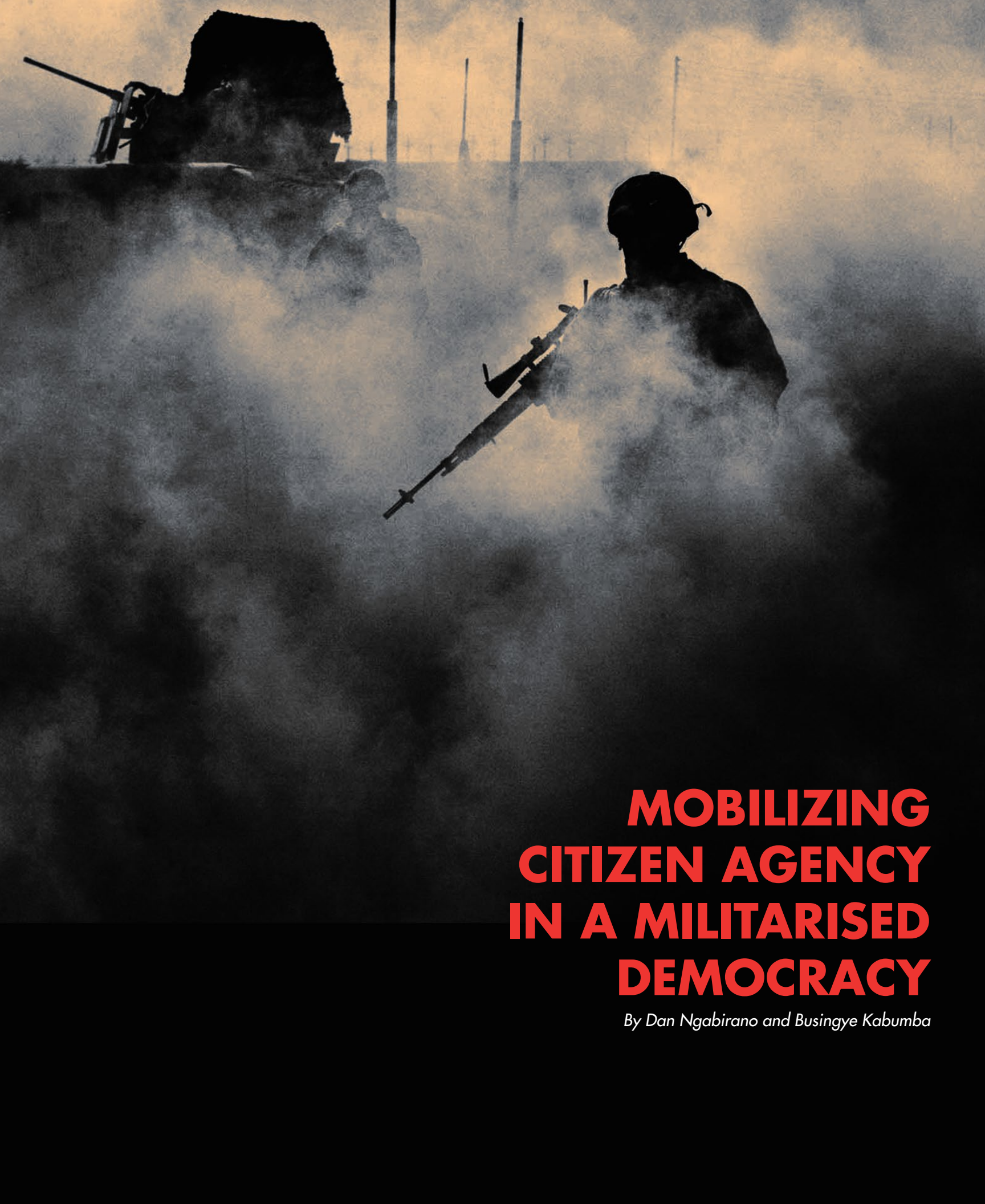
The biggest challenge going forward will be ensuring that customary and communal land-tenure systems are respected in investment decisions. Recognizing the high stakes involved, the Karimojong are pressing for a stronger voice in the review of the Mining Act 2003 and the Mining Policy like never before.

Reflecting on the impact the six-year journey has had on Earthsavers Uganda, Busiinge says,

"This project marked a new chapter in our understanding of governance and created new openings for us. We have been able to stand in solidarity with fellow Ugandans in Karamoja and inspire disenfranchised groups in mineral rich communities across Africa who are shouting from the margins for their rightful recognition."




Earthsavers Movement Uganda Chapter is a grantee of OSIEA's Uganda Program



MOBILIZING CITIZEN AGENCY IN A MILITARISED DEMOCRACY

By Dan Ngabirano and Busingye Kabumba



In this piece, Dan Ngabirano & Busingye Kabumba reflect on an upcoming report on Militarism in Uganda against the backdrop of the just-concluded 2016 Presidential elections.


Having explored possible scenarios for achieving a credible transition to genuine democracy in Uganda in the model of Ghana, Nigeria, and other African countries with a history of militarism, our study overwhelmingly concludes that a truly democratic and constitutional order cannot be delivered or consolidated by military might and armed rebellion. Rather, a return to real democracy in Uganda will take an organic, broad-based, nonpartisan, movement of citizens united by a shared vision and commitment to building a peaceful and prosperous country.

In Uganda, promoting a deeper public understanding of the political history is a critical part of the broader struggle towards a more open and democratic society. Civil society plays a key role in filling this knowledge gap, especially for younger generations born during the current 30-year long regime of President Museveni. It is in this spirit that Development Law Associates (DLA) has completed a three-year study on the role of the military in Uganda's politics.

The soon to be released study, *Militarized Democracy: The Ugandan Case*, examines how armed, military units have been deployed since the British colonial period to exert power and control in all spheres of individual, social and political life. The result has been a succession of post-independence regimes defined by a culture of war and violence, a culture grounded in often tense and distrusting relationships between civilians and politicians accustomed to exploiting military power to safeguard their survival and interests by intimidating critical voices.

In the course of our research, we extensively engaged with civil society actors, a diverse range of stakeholders, and the general public. Many were of the view that Uganda is already more or less democratic, so that all that has to be done is for citizens to use the existing institutions and processes to express their visions for an even better governed country. This sentiment was perhaps best captured in campaigns conducted by a cross-section of civil society actors ahead of the just-concluded Presidential Elections. The campaigns were aimed at mobilizing citizens across the country to honor their votes by turning up for elections in large numbers.

Although a large majority of citizens turned up to cast their votes on Election Day, their votes do not appear to have been, in fact, honored. Instead as we had, at various fora and in several engagements with key actors, predicted, the elections were marred by significant and blatant irregularities including the non-delivery of voting materials at several polling stations and intimidation and harassment of voters.



Perhaps the greatest factor that derailed the expression of the voters' will was the reliance on and deployment of the military apparatus across the country. This produced an environment of terror and intimidation of primarily opposition parties and their supporters. It is also on record that on many occasions before and after the election, high-ranking officers within the military came out to issue partisan statements in support of the incumbent. In some instances the army openly threatened the masses that there would be instability if their desired candidate was not elected into office.

In addition, the conduct of the police vis-à-vis the political opposition during and after the elections left no doubt regarding their support for the incumbency and their readiness to crush voices for change. In a number of cases the police abdicated its role of keeping law and order and instead took to confronting citizens, especially those in the opposition. In effect the police commandeered by a military General Kale Kayihura is highly militarized and unable to play its traditional role as the police. This was further exacerbated by the training and deployment of the so-called crime preventers outside the provisions of the law. Many actors have likened the crime preventers to an unlawful partisan militia formed to entirely protect the interests of the incumbent under the guise of community policing.

Under these circumstances, a number of local observers, the Commonwealth observers and the European Union Observer Mission all concluded that the 2016 Presidential election fell short of minimum democratic standards. All

observers also agreed that the playing field was not level for all contesting parties, noting that the Electoral Commission lacked independence and transparency in its operations. Indeed, all commissioners are appointed by the President and these appointments are simply rubber-stamped by a toothless parliament that has been held hostage by the militarized incumbent government.

The 2016 Presidential elections proved that it is impossible to have a free and fair political contest in a militarized democracy where the ambitions of those with military power trump the voices and aspirations of ordinary people. Indeed, after the elections, a number of Ugandans publicly expressed the view that they had been misled by the voter turnout campaign, and vowed not to continue to participate in elections held under the prevailing regime. It is noteworthy in this respect that a very low voter turnout was registered for the local council elections subsequently held on February 24th 2016, which should be of great concern given the importance of local citizen representation and participation for democratic deepening.

Militarism in Uganda has to be addressed if the country is to have a chance at peaceful transfer of power. Our report advances three recommendations. Firstly, it is crucial that civil society actors themselves understand the nature of Uganda's governance if they are to engage with it effectively. The impulse behind the civil-society led voter turnout campaign revealed the need to do a lot more in terms of dissecting and understanding our current form of governance, as a first step in recovering the elusive hope felt

by all when Uganda became an independent nation in 1962. Short of acknowledging and confronting the reality of Uganda as a State crafted around a military machine, we collectively risk fooling ourselves and legitimizing sheer military power by blindly participating in symbolic rituals of Constitutional democracy.

Secondly, political actors across the spectrum need to concretely appreciate both the reality of militarism in Uganda today, but also to understand and acknowledge that the answer to this cannot be more militarism. Instead, the only effective and sustainable response must be for them to harness the power of a higher morality – the realm of public legitimacy and the natural superiority of the popular will – in a context where military power has subverted all institutions, including Courts and Parliament.

Finally, Ugandans from all walks of life have to be similarly equipped with these insights if they are to occupy their rightful place in the constitutional square (literally and metaphorically). Informed citizen engagement – based on a proper

diagnosis of the nature of the contemporary Ugandan State – is vital in two respects. It will prevent citizens being misled into more needless civil wars and conflicts based on the mistaken belief that militarism can be addressed by more militarism. Informed citizens will also be less likely to be distracted into complacency and a form of apathy by participating in choiceless elections, approaching besieged courts for justice and relying upon a mortgaged parliament to make just laws. In the coming months and years, it is these three forms of engagement that are crucial if a real transition to democracy is to be achieved.


We have begun the work of sharing our findings in a bid to inform efforts towards a real movement to a truly peaceful, democratic and free society for all Ugandans. Fifty-four years after independence, Uganda's political story sends the loud and clear message captured in many of our proverbs, that we are doomed to repeat the costly mistakes of the past if we do not learn from our history.



Development Law Associates (DLA) is a grantee of OSIEA's Uganda Program. The report, Militarized Democracy, the Ugandan Case is authored by DLA's Dan Ngabirano, Busingye Kabumba and Timothy Kyepa



**CATALYZING COMMUNITY
PARTICIPATION TO IMPROVE
MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH IN
SOUTH SUDAN**



Maternal mortality is the leading threat to women's lives in South Sudan. It is estimated that roughly two thousand and fifty out of every hundred thousand, that is, one in seven pregnant women die during childbirth. Despite some progress in tackling infant and child mortality in the first two years of independence, the rates remain high. According to the World Health Organization, one hundred and seventy nine infants and children die in South Sudan for every thousand live births. Most of these deaths are due to predictable birth complications and infectious diseases such as malaria that can be controlled with timely professional medical care. Significant health access barriers occasioned by poor infrastructure and high costs mean that most women give birth at home and only travel to formal medical centers at late stages of complications when other alternatives have failed. Even then, making it to health centers does not guarantee access to quality, life-saving care for pregnant women and newborn children.

Josephine Lamoo, a midwife at a primary health center in Magwi County, one of the poorest regions in Eastern Equatoria State talks about the difficult conditions.

"There are frequent power outages. The generator broke down a long time ago and we now use handheld flashlights to deliver mothers at night. Water tanks and latrines are all broken down, even those that serve the maternity ward. We lack adequate beds, scissors, gauze, cotton wool, oxytocin, and other supplies essential for safe birth.

"We have no ambulance, yet we have to refer mothers to a better equipped hospital nearly 40 kilometers away."

Tereza Kio, a mother and resident of the nearby Ingiri village agrees that shortages of essential medicines are frequent and services could be better.

"Pain relievers are the only drugs freely available at the health center. On a normal day, we queue for hours because health workers often come in late."

In theory, South Sudan's Transitional Constitution, Health Sector Development Plan and Family Planning and Reproductive Health Policies affirm the government's commitment to expanding access to quality maternal and child health. Jolem Mwanje, director of Impact Health Organization (a national health rights NGO), attributes the current crisis to a chronic underfunding of the health sector.

"South Sudan allocates roughly five percent of its national budget to health, far below the fifteen percent recommended by the Abuja Declaration."

Jolem also notes that hardships in the health sector have been worsened by the massive devaluation of the South Sudanese pound, drop in oil prices, and added austerity measures from the 2-year civil war which have collectively seen more development funds channeled towards security and humanitarian response.


"Medical staff lost as much as eighty four percent of the value of their salaries and savings overnight with serious impacts on their motivation," he says.

Lawrence Otim, a clinical officer in Magwi Primary Health Care Centre says that health workers lack motivation because their wages are not only insufficient, but also not paid on time.


"Most of my colleagues are no longer turning up for duty. They prefer other jobs where they can earn a living. I feel that I too should give up because my salary cannot support my family yet I am expected to pay thousands of pounds for school fees," he says.

Despite these challenges, Impact Health Organization (IHO) sees opportunities to work with communities to maximize the impact of existing resources. Every year, all ten States in South Sudan independently prepare and submit their own health budgets to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning for resource allocation. To ensure that State health budgets reflect the needs of communities, State submissions should have the input of County Health Departments and primary health center management committees, which should in turn represent priorities identified by community members.

One of the most significant challenges is Eastern Equatoria is that communities as health users lack awareness on their rights and how to take



I feel that I too should give up because my salary cannot support my family yet I am expected to pay thousands of pounds for school fees - Lawrence Otim



forward their concerns to facility management committees, which generally function poorly.

In 2015, IHO piloted a community scorecard project in Magwi County to promote a stronger role for the community in the management and delivery of local health services. Jolem remembers one of the situations that inspired the birth of the project. Despite the UNFPA providing the Ministry of Health with reproductive health and family planning medicines and supplies one year, most of the shipment remained in the central government storage for more than nine months due to lack of transportation. Involvement by IHO and community groups saw the medicines and supplies delivered to County Health Departments and eventually, to primary health centers across the country where they were most needed.

“Most State ministries of health and county directorates do not keep good records on government and donor funds received and spent for health services. Financial controls are non-existent and many who run the administration and finance departments lack the requisite background and training. This combination of weak, uncoordinated management and lack of adequate channels of communication between health service users and health providers denies community members the opportunity to hold their leaders accountable”, says Jolem. The situation is not helped by a general lack of civil society groups working on health sector policy and governance in South Sudan.

The project began with a community-outreach campaign that educated local health care

workers, health center management committees, and community members on the principles of rights-based health service delivery. In particular, the outreach campaign provided opportunities to women and traditional birth attendants to share their experiences on maternal health.

“We used feedback from the outreach campaign to develop a scorecard with indicators based on the ideal characteristics that health institutions and community members, especially women, envisioned for a responsive, well-functioning health system,” says Jolem.

Local health center management committees are able to use the scorecard as a self-assessment tool to evaluate the effectiveness of their planning, expenditure tracking and oversight roles in the management of local primary health centers.

Joseph Okumu from Obbo Payam has been a member of a local health facility management committee since 2014. He says, “since we were appointed, we barely heard from the government about what is expected of us. We now have a better understanding of our roles under the new village health committee guidelines.”

Every quarter, the committees hold public meetings to get feedback from the community on whether the quality of care delivered meets public expectations. Staff and administrators from health care centers and County Health Departments are usually in attendance. This helps strengthen and improve relationships

between service providers and health users, and ensure that there are channels to follow through commitments made. In a few cases, better coordination has helped in identifying additional sources of support for primary health centers.

"I have realized we can actually support some of the health facility expenses through our Payam health budgets," says Celivio Ochan, a Payam (village) health supervisor in Magwi County.

Charles Obale, a local, elected chief in Magwi notes the community scorecard project has helped to remove the climate of blaming and energized community members to take action. With a better understanding of the constraints that service providers face in delivering quality maternal health services, communities are being inspired to contribute and take action.

"You can blame the health workers for not being available at night when women are in labor, yet they have no accommodation, despite the policy providing for 10 staff houses," he says.

"As a community we can make bricks and provide labor to construct the staff house if the government can provide the iron sheets and other required materials" adds Lam Peter Philip, also a local, elected leader in Magwi County.

Last year's health budget season saw a marked improvement in transparency and coordination among the local health center management committee and County Health Departments. With this came the hope that allocated County health budgets would align better with the maternal and reproductive health priorities on Magwi County, and contribute towards bringing an end to needless deaths of pregnant women during childbirth.

Tonny, a female nurse at Obbo Primary Care Center says, "since we started actively reaching out to educate women and communities on their health rights, we have seen a nearly twofold increase in mothers attending antenatal care. Many pregnant women are also coming to the health center in earlier stages of labor with advice from traditional birth attendants. We are seeing fewer deaths during delivery."


These early results demonstrate the potential of the community scorecard. IHO hopes to take this approach nationally in partnership with South Sudan's National Ministry of Health where it serves on the technical working group on maternal mortality surveillance and response.

"When people come to realize the underlying causes of their hardships, accountability sets in and change begins to happen", says Jolem.



BEATING THE ODDS:

Advancing the Rights of Persons with
Psychosocial Disabilities in Rwanda



April 7th every year ushers in Rwanda's 100-day national remembrance period to commemorate the massacre of over 800,000 people in the genocide of 1994. The community vigils, wreath laying ceremonies and public events held at key genocide memorial sites are punctuated by screams, wailing, convulsions, fainting, and other expressions of grief and trauma which find release, for a season, to be bottled up until the next mourning period.

Two decades after the genocide, depression, chronic anxiety, and posttraumatic stress disorder continue to pose high levels of suffering and social functional loss among Rwandans of all walks of life. The percentage of Rwandans diagnosed with severe forms of psychosis including suicidality stands at 28 percent, significantly above the international average. There is a huge gap between the need and availability of quality mental health services.

According to statistics from the Ministry of Health, Rwanda has one mental health professional for every 71,597 people. Despite efforts in recent years to integrate mental health into primary health care and expand the pool of professionally trained mental health workers from district to community level, widespread stigma, discrimination, and taboo around mental illness remains a critical challenge for treatment and care. This is exacerbated by the poverty and financial hardships experienced by those living with psychosocial disabilities, and the lack of family integration and support which is crucial for well being and recovery.

When Sam Badege, a Rwandan youth worker, was invited to the World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry conference in Kampala in 2009, he was curious to know how people who society had dismissed as "mad" could discuss issues and make recommendations that would be taken seriously.

"I had suffered a mental illness and isolation from the community. It dampened my confidence and hope for the future," Badege said.

At the conference Badege observed stark similarities in how the psychosocially disabled were treated in neighboring Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and other countries represented. In Rwanda, people with psychosocial disabilities faced barriers in accessing health cards required for participation in the national health insurance program and for school enrollment. At the community level, they were often locked up and mistreated by their families, arrested and treated violently by police, denied access to their land and property, and marginalized from social life.

Badege's experiences at the conference inspired his dream of setting up a national, peer-based platform for persons living with psychosocial disabilities in Rwanda. By the end of 2010 after several starts and stops, Badege had mobilized 45 peers. Together they registered the National Organization of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry Rwanda (NOUSPR), which initially functioned as a loose network without a physical address.

With a seed grant from OSIEA in 2012,

NOUSPR secured a physical space and formalized a network of 14 peer support groups representing over 1,000 committed members diagnosed or treated for psychosocial disabilities across Rwanda.

Badege, now the executive secretary of NOUSPR, describes the activities that typically take place in peer support groups, "Members receive basic skills on introducing themselves to strangers, communicating effectively, and asking for their families' understanding and support in coping their fluctuating moods. Going to a psychiatric hospital is often a difficult experience. Members accompany one another for psychiatric visits, serve as each other's helpers in adhering to prescribed treatment, and support each other in their life's journey and development," he says.

Badege observes that the organizational model has been self-sustaining because peer-groups organically attract community members who are interested in the welfare of others and are willing to support others in seeking help and standing up for themselves.

Ndereyimana Andrew, a peer support group leader remembers being constantly ill, restless, and withdrawn as a child. After being diagnosed with a mental illness at the age of eight, he was committed to the care of nuns in a convent hospital and was unable to get along with his family when he was returned home at the age of 17.

"When the genocide occurred, I fled with a neighbor to the Democratic Republic of Congo

(DRC) where we stayed in refugee camps for several months. I did not talk to anyone and spent a lot of time alone in the camps. I was eventually taken into a special trauma treatment program," Andrew says.


Like many post-genocide returnees, Andrew faced challenges resuming his life in Rwanda. After dropping out of accountancy training due to lack of school fees, he turned to his lifelong interest of writing songs and mentoring local youth through traditional musical performance. When he is not singing and playing music at one of the local hotels, Andrew can be found participating in various NOUSPR activities where he has been a member since 2011.

"I feel more settled. The doctor gives me pills once a year and it has been like this for many years," says Andrew, who views the hardships he once experienced as giving him a better understanding of the problems that fellow peer group members face in their daily lives.

"I consider my most important work to be showing those the world believes to be mad that they can recover and support each other to fight the discrimination and stigma which ruled my early life. I speak for others with the local authorities. I help them access treatment and medication. Sometimes I find that the best help I can offer is through music and singing so we do this often at our gatherings," he says.

Vestine Bayisengye remembers a difficult childhood in a poor household run by an unloving stepmother. Things improved at the age of 12 when she and her brother went





to live with their uncle. At the age of 23, Vestine's uncle and his family of four were slaughtered before her eyes during the height of the genocide. She ran away and spent days wandering around in a daze, scavenging for food from garbage piles. She would learn later than her brother had also been killed.

"When I reconnected with my fiancé by chance and told him I was pregnant, he ran away. A friend gave me a home and helped me deliver my daughter safely, but I could not stay with her. I left and roamed alone again, without hope or purpose," says Vestine.

With the help of a cousin who came back looking for her, Vestine saw a psychologist who diagnosed her with severe trauma and helped her cope with her symptoms. She got married and had a son, only to be deserted by her husband when her symptoms relapsed.

A few years ago, Celine Mukakarera, a NOUSPR member approached Vestine and introduced her to a peer-group, which became a source of mentorship and support on coping strategies and techniques to prevent and recover from relapses.

"I slowly came back to the world as I spoke out and shared what I had seen and experienced," says Vestine.

As a member of NOUSPR, Vestine has been trained as a peer counselor, outreach worker and an advocate for the rights of persons living with psychosocial disabilities.

"As Celine did for me, I now visit others and their families to share my story and encourage them to open up and seek help to find some peace," says Vestine.

The peer-support groups also play an important role in linking socially excluded persons with psychosocial disabilities to existing community development resources and opportunities in the form of grants, loans, and training in income generating activities.

"In a short period of time NOUSPR has become an important voice for persons with psychosocial disabilities in Rwanda where civil society and human rights advocacy is still very weak," says Boaz Muhumuza, the disability rights program officer at the Open Society Initiative for Eastern Africa (OSIEA).

NOUSPR is frequently consulted on high-level policy dialogues on health, policing, and other key public issues. Ahead of the 2017 Presidential Elections, it is spearheading a campaign for the amendment of the Rwanda Mental Health Law and National Election Commission rules, which prevent persons with psychosocial disabilities from participating in elections as candidates and voters.

Badege says, "We view our work as a slow, incremental effort to realizing our dream that the stigma and shame experienced by persons with psychosocial disabilities will one day be replaced with hope and equal opportunities for well-being and self-realization."

The National Organization of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry Rwanda (NOUSPR) is a grantee of OSIEA's Disability Rights Program





EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS

*BREAKING THE SILENCE ON FORCED AND COERCED
STERILIZATION OF WOMEN LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS*




**(Names and details have been modified to protect confidentiality)*

Official statistics estimate that there are over 900,000 women living with HIV/AIDS in Kenya. Despite the steady progress that has been made in reducing new infections, facilitating antiretroviral access, and influencing public attitudes, stigma and discrimination abound, especially for infected women of childbearing age.

**HIV-POSITIVE
WOMEN HAVE
ROUGHLY A
5% OR LESS
CHANCE OF
PASSING THE
DISEASE ONTO
THEIR CHILD**

In 2011, when controversial news broke out about a US-based organization that was paying HIV-positive women in Western Kenya to have intrauterine contraceptives (IUDs) inserted, three women in different parts of the country were paying attention. Njoki Otieno, Maureen Murenga, and Inviolata Mmbwavi who work with three community-based women's organizations recalled some of the stories women living with HIV had shared amongst each other in support group meetings.

In one story, *Selina, a 23-year-old HIV-positive woman had been admitted at the Kenyatta National Hospital with Tuberculosis and pre-term labor pains. Unknown to her, the practitioner who



performed an emergency cesarean delivery to save her baby also conducted a bilateral tubal ligation, a pregnancy prevention procedure considered irreversible.

"I only got to know about it several months later after unsuccessful attempts at having a baby," Selina recalled. "My husband, whom the doctor had allowed to sign the consent forms, left me and remarried because he could not live with a woman who cannot give birth."

In another account, *Alice, a 28-year-old vegetable seller, HIV positive since 2001, went to deliver her baby at Pumwani maternity hospital.

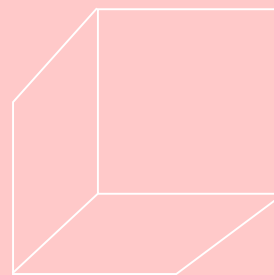
"The doctor looked at my file and said to me, 'Woman, you are still giving birth and you are HIV positive?' " recalled Alice. Her ability to give informed consent was impaired as she was in labor.

"When they insisted on tubal ligation, I signed the documents so they could relieve me of the pain I was going through. I was unable to reach my husband as he had no phone," she said.

Despite overwhelming evidence from the World Health Organization that safe childbirth practices and a single dose of Nevirapine regimen significantly minimizes the risk of delivering HIV-positive babies, unfounded fears regarding vertical transmission and poor survival prospects for infants born to HIV-positive mothers remain deeply entrenched in health institutions.

According to Dr. Anne-Beatrice Kihara, a gynaecologist at the University of Nairobi and vice-chair of the Kenya Obstetrics and Gynaecology Society (KOGS), "It is critical that women are provided with adequate counsel on various existing methods of family planning and their implications prior to their providing informed, voluntary consent," she adds, "to do otherwise is a serious violation of the ethical code."

In 2012, Njoki, Maureen, and Inviolata, through their community organizations, Personal Initiative for Positive Change (PIPE) in Nairobi, Lean on me Foundation (LOM) in Kisumu, and the Grassroots Empowerment Trust (GET) in Kakamega joined forces with the Nairobi-based African Gender and Media Initiative (GEM) to investigate the extent of the problem and start a campaign to bring attention to the issue. The 2012 report, *Robbed of Choice*, documented 40 testimonies from HIV-positive women that confirmed widespread use of unethical practices by doctors and nurses to coerce women living with HIV/AIDS to undergo bilateral tubal ligations in health centers throughout Nairobi, Western Kenya, and beyond. The report highlighted several instances where false information and intimidation tactics were used alongside financial and non-cash incentives such as baby formula. In majority of the testimonies provided, the women were simply sterilized without their knowledge or the hospitals obtained consent signatures from accompanying spouses and relatives who were not properly briefed on the procedure and its full implications.



Deby*, a mother of two, remembered learning about her HIV-status at the antenatal clinic.

"The nurse said to me, 'I can see from your file you have another child. Your viral load is very high and we fear if you get pregnant again you will die.'"

Although, they discussed other contraceptive options according to Deby, the counselor insisted that the only option was the bilateral tubal ligation.

Aida*, a HIV-positive mother of three regularly visited an NGO clinic in Nairobi's Mathare area for baby formula and antiretrovirals.

"During a postnatal visit after the birth of my twins, I was told I had to consider tubal ligation because I was HIV positive and already had many children," Aida said.

She was aware of other family planning methods and was skeptical of tubal ligation. "I was told if I did not undergo tubal ligation I would not receive drugs or milk formula for my babies again," she said.

The release of the report made headlines and sparked intense debate across Kenya. In the months following, more women got the courage to come out and share their experiences. To sustain public attention and enable more women to keep sharing their stories, GEM, LOM, and GET set up a rolling documentation project that also consisted of bi-monthly peer-based psychosocial support meetings and facilitated radio listening groups

on sexual and reproductive health and rights issues.

Gladys Kiio, a program manager at GEM and one of the authors of the report, shared that the program has been transformative for the women in many ways. "The women have found solidarity and healing in sharing these painful experiences. Some have found the courage to disclose what happened to them to their spouses, which has made dealing with stigma much easier," Gladys said. "Many are now community champions engaged in spreading awareness on reproductive health rights among adolescents and fellow women living with HIV in the community", she adds.

Nereah*, an active, Kisumu-based community worker who also was pressurized into sterilization by her gynaecologist in 2007 observes that forced sterilization is common among poor, uneducated rural women, and women living in informal urban settlements. "The doctor declined to give me time to think about it. I remember signing the consent forms after the surgery," she said.

Nereah would like to see medical practitioners retrained on women's reproductive health rights to reduce stigma against living with HIV.

To mobilize action from the government and the health profession, GEM engaged the support of the Division of Reproductive Health and the National Aids and STIs Control Programme (NASCOP). Despite the difficulties they have faced from segments of the medical community

who view the work as an attempt to smear the profession, Gladys remains hopeful.

"We hope our efforts will result in a review of current practices of obtaining consent for permanent contraception in health institutions. Our desire is to see stronger compliance with the latest guidelines of the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) that categorize forced or coerced sterilization of women as "an act of violence," she says.

Another positive outcome from the campaign is that the Government of Kenya, through the office of the Director of Public Prosecution, officially engaged GEM to assist in conducting an independent investigation of the violations and recommending appropriate measures.

In the first national challenge of its kind in December 2014, five women who had shared testimonies in the report filed petitions against six hospitals and non-governmental organizations implicated in the sterilizations.

"The process was slowed down by difficulties in getting medical doctors to conduct examinations for litigation purposes. We found that very few doctors were willing to contribute to providing evidence against fellow practitioners," said Allan Maleche of the HIV/AIDS legal organization KELIN, also the attorney for the women petitioners. The cases still await ruling by the High Court of Kenya.

"What we unearthed was just a slice of the problem. We do not know how many

more vulnerable women were violated by health professionals who were supposed to be upholding their best interest. There are probably more women who do not know that they were sterilized," he said.

Regionally, the campaign has contributed to the passing of a resolution on involuntary sterilization and the protection of human rights in access to HIV services by the African Commission on Peoples and Human Rights on 5th of November 2013.

Faith Kasiva, a co-author of the report would like to see the government of Kenya commission a formal inquiry to determine the prevalence of the issue and develop comprehensive strategies to address it. She said, "Looking back, the campaign contributed to shifting the forced and coerced sterilization of these vulnerable women from a private suffering endured in secret to everybody's business."




Gladys Kiio of GEM was a lead contributor to this article. GEM is a grantee of OSIEA's Health and Rights Program

NO LONGER SPECTATORS:

Religious Leaders as Partners
in Holding Elected Leaders
Accountable for Campaign
Promises





Every five years, Uganda's General Elections set the same dance in motion. Elected politicians leave the relative comfort of the city and descend upon their neglected constituents in big cars, dismissing last season's unfulfilled promises with bigger and shinier pledges. The 2016 elections were no exception.

"We are tired of these politicians and their empty promises, they only see us when it is voting time," says Senfuman Norman, a local community leader in Mukono district. He recalls how one candidate from the ruling political party promised better roads during the 2011 campaigns.

"The candidate hired road construction machines and paraded them at the district headquarters. The machines were taken away soon after he was elected in office. We are still waiting for the construction work to begin five years later," he says.

According to Despina Namwembe, coordinator of United Religions Initiative - Great Lakes (URI-GL), it is common for politicians in Uganda to promise all manner of things, from buying saucepans and plates for the women, to taking constituents' children overseas for better education and employment opportunities.

"Politics is too important to be left to politicians. We are consistently treated to ridiculous and unattainable promises, and distracted by excessive displays of wealth during elections. These are missed opportunities to put real issues on the agenda. Our jobless, disenfranchised

youth are especially vulnerable," says Despina.

Sheikh Musa Khalil, the Gulu District Kadhi, and a URI member observes that in the North and Eastern parts of the country, marginalization of the youth has driven them to join extremist groups led by those unafraid of exploiting the power of religion for political gains.

"Besides brokering true faith teachings, we need to give our youth opportunities to realize their full potential. This means providing them with platforms to make their voices, experiences and perspectives visible," he says.

In the just-ended elections, URI-GL saw an opportunity to work with local faith communities in three districts, Wakiso, Mukono, and Kayunga. These districts have a history of violent, high-stakes electoral contests. The project sought the partnership of respected, local clergy recognizing that they were well-established in communities and seen as a source of moral legitimacy, and anchors of peace and justice in their communities. This earned them mobilizing power in their congregations, the wider community, and among aspiring and incumbent politicians.

The OSIEA-funded project trained clergy members on processes of democratic representation enshrined in the Constitution of Uganda, from the roles and duties of high level officials, to the local council chairs. It also focused on the existing avenues for citizen participation and oversight at different levels of government.

To better understand the dynamics between politicians, political parties and communities, URI-GL engaged and supported campaign monitors to travel and actively monitor campaign events. They recorded promises made by candidates on the campaign trail, especially those pertaining to improving development conditions in their communities.

Molly Basimaki, who participated as a monitor in Wakiso district reflects on her experience, “we were shocked at how few of the campaign rallies actually brought up important issues in the communities. Most rallies tended to turn into musical galas where popular local figures beat the drum for powerful candidates, and asked people to vote for the bearer of their party symbol.”

Basimaki’s team, like others in the project had to improvise alternative strategies to obtain parties’ manifestos and record candidates’ promises.

“We listened to their statements on TV and radio stations, and took advantage of smaller social events such as burials, and prayer days to hold one-on-one interviews with candidates and their campaign teams,” she says.

As the dust settles and elected candidates take office, the clergy members plan to regularly bring up the elected politicians’ promises in sermons before their congregations and offer other safe community dialogue spaces.

Some of the promises documented by the monitors touch on hot-button issues that trigger tensions in the three districts of Mukono, Wakiso and Kayunga. Namboozie Betty, vying for Member of Parliament in Mukono municipality, has promised to resist heavy taxation by local authorities, and challenge the takeover of Kiwanga area by the government as an administrative unit of the capital, Kampala.





Like Aidah Nantaba, an independent candidate for the women's parliamentary representative in Kayunga district, many aspirants also made promises to address land grabbing by politically-connected private developers, a source of perennial violent conflicts.

Some promises touch on important development needs which although neutral, could go a long way in improving living standards and health outcomes in the three districts. Muyanja Senyonga, a candidate with the ruling party in Mukono-South promised to construct public toilets in trading centers and improve the transport system and electricity supply.

According to Despina Namwembe, URI-GL plans to facilitate regular in-person FM radio show conversations between religious leaders and elected politicians over the coming months, "this is both a way of keeping the promises made high on the radar, and doing this is a way that will reach a wider grassroots and policy audience," says Despina.

Reverend Senkaaga Kizito of Mukono district reflects on his experience with the project.

"It has awakened us to the everyday politics around us. As members of the clergy, we realize the importance of engaging the Uganda Electoral Commission to mandate all future aspiring candidates to provide manifestos charting their vision for their communities."

For Reverend Senkaaga, this is also an opportunity to guide and mentor aspiring leaders in the community.

"The politicians have been coming to us for blessings before the start of the campaigns. We bless them and they go and we never see them until the next elections. As they aspire for these positions, we need them to understand that effective leadership entails honoring your duty to those who elect you to office", he says.

More than this, it is about taking a stand as an inter-faith community. Although the Constitution of Uganda enshrines separation of state and religion, clergy members supporting the opposition on key issues have historically been exposed to attacks by the state, while those who support the ruling party have enjoyed a cordial relationship with the State and benefited from perks such as Ministerial positions. This is confounded by often confusing messages on the role that religious leaders should play in elections.

Bishop Macleord Baker, URI-GL Chairperson says, "For too long, we Ugandans have been stuck on representation as an end goal in politics. This is an opportunity to begin moving the public conversation towards quality of leadership. We want to raise the bar on what interfaith cooperation can achieve."


United Religions Initiative - Great Lakes (URI-GL) is a grantee of OSIEA's Uganda Program.



CELEBRATING SOUTH SUDAN'S DIVERSITY IN ARTS AND CULTURE

By Don Bosco Malish





One of the main challenges of nation building in South Sudan is fostering a shared vision that embraces the country's linguistic and cultural diversity as a resource to be celebrated rather than a weakness to be exploited for political ends. This is especially important as South Sudanese reflect on the failed efforts that resulted in an outbreak of war between armed political factions just two years into independence. The South Sudan Theatre Organization (SSTO) is an important contributor to this conversation given the ability of arts and culture to challenge the status quo, connect with emotions across divides, and stimulate public debate.

In September 2015, SSTO hosted the first ever Inter School Theatre Festival. Held at Nyakuron Cultural Center, the four-day event marked a departure from Nyakuron's history as the venue where two years earlier, forces loyal to the incumbent president and the opposition broke ranks, triggering the recent South Sudan civil war. On this occasion, the bright school uniforms and costumes worn by students from participating schools added a festive atmosphere to the beautifully decorated Center.

With over 800 people seated and many others lining the walls of the auditorium, the air quickly became hot and stifling. However, eyes were glued to the stage to see actors portray the everyday realities of South Sudan's families, communities and society. Student

groups performed plays on a range of salient issues such as early, forced, and arranged marriage, land grabbing, and the plunder of public resources.

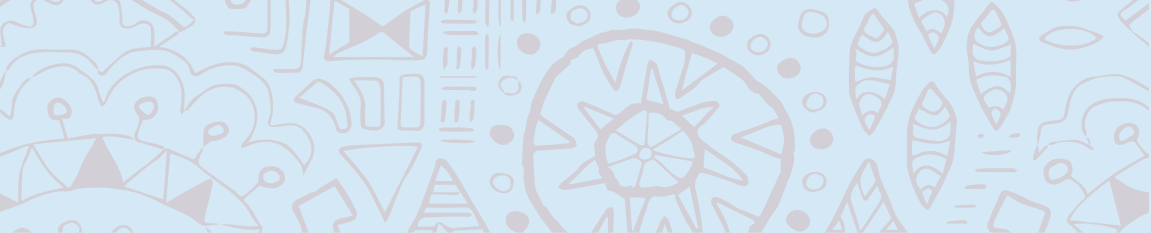
Not surprisingly, many school teams represented the ugliness of the ongoing conflict and its disproportionate effects on daughters, sisters, and mothers amid moments of silence for teachers and students who had been killed. In one of the plays, a character, Big Ben, enacted a robbery by so-called "unknown gunmen", to depict how the state had failed to deliver on ensuring public security.

Another play involving two lead girls, Supiri and Fatima, portrayed how tribalism and corruption had led to the deaths of innocent South Sudanese. Underlying these representations of conflict was the recognition that war persisted because the possibility of lasting peace and human rights threatened the power base of some individuals.

Despite the bitter and controversial facts presented, the troupes from the ten participating secondary schools attracted rounds of audience applause for their creativity, and talent. For a moment in time, audiences swayed to different traditional dances, seeking out the similarities that connected them.

The festival was also an opportunity for alumnae from the schools to give back by volunteering as adjudicators. Their service, combined with





a cash gift from the Mr. Bol Makweng, Deputy Minister of Education, signaled commitment to making future festivals a success.

Joseph Abuk, a lecturer of drama at the University of Juba believes that theatre has not been sufficiently promoted in South Sudan in particular and Africa in general.

“African leaders and governments generally do not care about arts such as theatre and singing except when it benefits them,” he said.

Abuk considers drama as essential for South Sudan and sees its potential to promote peace, brighten everyday life, and help in conflict resolution.

Unnoticed throughout the festival were the thieves and brutal crime preventers Nyakuron is renowned for attracting. Despite the congregation of more than 2,000 secondary school students and members of the public, there was no noticeable presence of security personnel addressing the usual car breaking and pick pocketing.

The Inter-school Theatre Festival paved the way for the African Cup of Nations (AFCON) later the same month. In its first ever qualifier match

as a new country, South Sudan won by a goal to nil in a game with Equatorial Guinea.

If you are unfamiliar with celebrations here, revelers traditionally fire live bullets in the air to commemorate death announcements, the ushering in the of a New Year and other momentous occasions. Not this time. Celebrating citizens sang their throats hoarse, honked their horns with excitement, and gave free lifts to passers by without the usual questions and phases like Kokora? (an expression enquiring which tribe and state one is from). Despite the chronic fuel shortage, many forgot to turn homewards until all the celebrating passengers they were carrying alighted. Perhaps most interestingly, the two main warring groups temporarily put their enmities aside and exchanged congratulatory messages on Facebook and Twitter, giving the media something different to write about.

Jointly, the two events in 2015 offered a glimpse of the connectedness that could be achieved in South Sudan through shared cultural activities and symbols, and fuelled our hopes of getting peace right this time round.



Don Bosco Malish is OSIEA's South Sudan Program Officer. OSIEA, USAID and Transformedia jointly supported the 2015 Inter-School Theatre Festival






Radio Kireka:

Upholding Constitutional Rights and Due Process in Counterterrorism Efforts

By Al-Amin Kimathi



East Africa is facing an upsurge of deadly terrorist attacks. Preying on historical conflicts and deep-seated religious, political and socio-economic divides, violent extremist groups have grown from localized fighting forces into fluid networks with links to regional and international terrorist groups and a growing ability to recruit marginalized, disaffected youth and communities with separatist ambitions.

As governments in the region realize the limits of military action and embrace enhanced counterterrorism methods to allay public concerns over safety, there is need to strike a careful balance between responding to the immediacy of current threats and public outcries over insecurity on one hand, and on the other, ensuring respect for human rights and due process. Reports linking states to draconian legislation, arbitrary arrests, detentions, illegal deportations, extrajudicial killings, and other human rights violations not only victimize the already marginalized. They also represent missed opportunities to reestablish legitimacy, build channels of dialogue and trust, and secure community cooperation necessary for tackling underlying drivers of violent extremism.

Against this background, OSIEA has continued to support groups and individuals bold enough to publicly defend and speak out against the discrimination and unfair targeting of minority groups, and challenge 'official' attempts to clamp down on civil rights and liberties in the name of counterterrorism.

In this piece *Radio Kireka*, Al-Amin Kimathi, director of OSIEA grantee Muslim Human Rights Forum (MHRF) recounts his arrest and year-long detention following the July 2010 Kampala bombings. Al-Amin's account illustrates the complexities and risks faced by civil society groups advocating for greater respect of constitutional rights and due process in counterterrorism efforts.

Radio Kireka - By Al-Amin Kimathi

It was Tuesday, September 14, 2010. I rushed to check in at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Nairobi where I would meet Mbugua Mureithi, a renowned Kenyan human rights lawyer. We were going to Kampala to attend the trial of one of the suspects implicated in the Kampala terror attack where 78 football fans were killed while watching the World Cup finals. The illegal deportation of Kenyan Muslims by security forces from Kenya to Uganda under opaque circumstances bothered me because it was done on mere suspicion. Kenyan law did not allow for rendition of Kenyan citizens except by following a judicially sanctioned legal process. By then, at least eight Kenyans (and three Ugandans) had been arrested in Kenya and surrendered to the Ugandan authorities without any recourse to the Kenyan court system.

During our first fact-finding trip to Uganda a fortnight earlier, we had met a team of security officers and visited the court to interview the detainees. We wanted to speak with the Kenyan detainees and security agencies in charge to seek permission for Mbugua Mureithi to act as defense counsel for the detainees.



The Arrest

We landed at Entebbe International Airport around 11pm. En-route to our hotel, I returned a mysterious call received earlier that day from a man, Andy, who said he had a message for me. Andy explained that we were to urgently meet with Mohammed Hamid, someone I had known for many years as a former volunteer at the Muslim Human Rights Forum (MHRF). We were to meet Andy at a hotel on Entebbe Road. When we arrived, Andy was already waiting for us at the parking lot, flipping through a newspaper.

Mbugua stepped out of the taxi to light a cigarette. Just then, four armed, unidentified men stepped out of the car parked next to ours, shoved us into their car, and covered our heads with their jackets as they pointed their semi-automatics guns at us. They shouted at us, calling us terrorists all the while. We were taken to the Jinja Road Police Station where we were held in special cells. Nobody took our details.


The next morning, fully armed soldiers ordered us out of our cells and escorted us into waiting cars. They covered our heads, again, uncovering us for air each time they stopped to make phone calls. We eventually stopped at Luwero Forest, famous for bloody massacres during the bush war of 1981 - 1986.

"Are you going to kill us?" I asked.

"Yes, that could be a possibility. Wewe Mzee (you old man), we are not going to allow you to do what you did in Ethiopia," one of the armed soldiers said.

"We have arrested people, and now you want to take them away as you did in Ethiopia. We would rather kill you," he said.

He was referring to work MHRF had carried out in 2007 to uncover a huge movement of illegal extraditions from Kenya to Somalia and on to Ethiopia. Our advocacy campaign had led to the release of 8 Kenyan nationals and 18 others who had been illegally taken from Kenya and abused by a concert of international security agencies.



We stopped at a farm. Mbugua and I had been separated in different cars. I was hungry. I had not eaten anything for 36 hours. We began the two and a half hour trip back to Kampala from the farm.

"Where are we going?" I asked.

"I want you to tell your friend that we are not killers and don't intend to kill you. We are going to Kireka," the man in charge said.

Kireka, I later learned, is the detention headquarters for the Violent Crime Crack Unit, a special criminal investigative arm of the Uganda police.

A heavily built man who seemed to be the senior officer came to meet us in the boardroom.

"You are the terrorist lawyer. Your work is terrorism," he said.

We did not know whether this was a question or his assessment of our work. Mbugua protested.

I was handcuffed and taken out of the boardroom. They put chains around my legs. It dawned on me that I was in trouble. I was very scared.

We crossed a street into another building. It was painful and humiliating walking as the chains tightened around my legs. Children were terrified at the sight of me. As I was being led into the building, the Kenyans we sought to represent, five of the eight illegally extradited from Kenya were being taken out. We hurriedly

greeted each other before they were whisked away.

Radio Kireka


I was put in a cell with 15 others. Nobody came to talk to me until much later. During the day the cell filled up with Ugandans who were conversant with "the big case". I was in a detention center for high profile criminals.

The paramilitary police would come to take selected prisoners for questioning. The detainees told me this was how people were disappeared. Whenever the detainees returned we would debrief each other by shouting through the walls of the cells.

I shared a cell with Habib Suleiman Njoroge, a Kenyan radio presenter. Next door was his brother Yahya Suleiman Mbuthia and Mohamed Hamid, the man my captors had used to bait me. We spoke through the walls, a method that inmates referred to as "Radio Kireka", named after the prison.

Hamid told me that the foreign agents at Kireka had told him, "the next person in will be your defender Al-Amin, you will have no one to defend your case". In my cell the cheerful Habib briefed me about the interrogations.

I later learned that Mbugua had been questioned all-day and part of the night. They asked who was funding his legal defense efforts. He was at pains to explain that the MHRF was above board. He knew that as policy, MHRF had long decided not to take any funds from individuals or religious organizations lest it fell into suspicion



from counter-terrorism agencies. Mbugua left us on Saturday morning for interrogation and never came back. We later learned from a guard that he was taken to Kenya and freed. Before he left, another Kenyan who had been his client in Nairobi was brought into the cells in the early hours of the morning.

On September 21st 2011, six days after our arrest, I was taken to a courthouse in Kampala alongside Omar Awadh, a newly arrived Kenyan detainee. It was the same courthouse Mbugua and I had gone to on our previous visit to Uganda, only this time I was under arrest and in shackles. There was a lot of press and the court was packed. Even at this point, I did not think I would be charged. I expected to be freed.

The court ordered that we be remanded in Luzira Prison alongside other high-profile suspects. We changed into the official prison wear. At Luzira Prison, I shared a cell with two other Kenyans. One of them, Mohamed Abdow, had been my first client in the wake of the Kampala World Cup bombings. He was among the suspects charged with 76 counts of murder for those killed during the Kampala World Cup bombings. His family had formally approached MHRF for assistance upon his arrest. I was glad to have been united with him, even under the circumstances. I spent the next 48 hours listening to his prison tales.

Back to Kireka

I was returned to Kireka for interrogation. It became clear that some of the interrogators were Kenyan. They never asked me about the Kampala bombings for which I had been charged. They mainly wanted to know about

my family, friends, MHRF's sources of funding, and whether I had any dealings with Muslim religious organizations. Besides collaborating on human rights issues, I'd had no substantive dealings with Muslim organizations.

Moving out of interrogation, I saw Caucasian agents standing outside watching me. I realized they were monitoring my interrogation, but were careful not to be associated with questioning me. Fellow inmates told me they had been questioned by those "white agents" and were asked about me.

After being interrogated two more times, I wrote a short statement affirming my position and innocence. I was held in Kireka for three more weeks before the court ordered us to be returned to Luzira Prison where I would remain for the next 10 months and three weeks. For most of this time I was held in solitary confinement.

#FreeAlAminKimathi

In the meantime, back in Kenya, and internationally, civil society groups held a vibrant, coordinated campaign for my release. They used the media to keep a spotlight on the case and pressed the US, Kenyan, and Ugandan governments for my release. In Uganda, the Commonwealth Lawyers Association ran media campaigns to sustain public attention on the case.

Free at Last

The campaign for my release brought a great deal of public attention to the violation of constitutional rights and due process in

transnational counterterrorism collaboration that MHRF had uncovered in its monitoring work in the East and Horn of Africa region.

The robust campaign culminated in my release on September 12th 2011, three days short of one year since my arrest and subsequent detention. On that day, I was brought to the High Court for the opening of the trial, even though I had never formally been charged with any offences. To my surprise and relief, my name was read amongst the five people for whom the prosecution was dropping charges and I was released. The campaign had borne fruit.

The trial for the World Cup bombings against 13 accused persons finally began in March 2015 and was postponed indefinitely following the murder of the lead prosecutor Ms, Joan Kagezi. The high court in Kampala has since sentenced five people to life imprisonment and others to 50 years imprisonment.

In the end this was the most thorough fact-finding mission or trial monitoring I could have ever dreamt of.



