Building the Capacities of Individuals, Institutions, and Communities in Areas of Transformational Leadership and Learning, Gender Relations, and Economic Empowerment
Happy New Year from the Institute for Social Transformation

As we say hello to 2017, we at the Institute for Social Transformation have been reflecting on our impact in the last quarter of 2016.

How do we work together to end child marriages in Uganda? And what needs to be done differently so marketplaces are conducive for female vendors? These are some of the concerns with which this Edition of our newsletter contends.

It therefore shares a broad scope of informative stories and experiences from women and men that have embraced gender equality and zealously fought for it.

Much credit goes to our development partners such as Independent Development Fund (IDF) UN Women, the U.S Embassy in Uganda and the African Women’s Development Fund (AWDF) for making this work possible.

Enjoy the read!

Rita Atukwasa
Executive Director

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Social Transformation

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ABOUT US

The Institute for Social Transformation (IST) is a non-governmental organization that promotes a more just and inclusive approach to development in Eastern Africa. The organization registered with the NGO Board in 2006.

IST’s thematic focus areas are transformational leadership development, gender mainstreaming, economic empowerment, policy and advocacy as well as research. Local knowledge and experience on the root causes of poverty, gender inequality and poor leadership play a key role in providing information on actions to be undertaken. Our work is based on the philosophy of Paulo Freire. The essence of the approach centers on the ability of groups and individuals to read their reality from the perspective of the root causes of their problems and then to take control to change their lives for the better.

In pursuit of this objective IST uses the world renowned Training for Transformation methodology as a key tool to energize a new quality of leadership that is committed to the people, their rights and the transformation of their conditions. Since working with Oxfam, IST has added the powerful Gender Action Learning Systems (GALS) methodology to its repertoire of tools to help families analyze and plan their future through a process of visioning.

In addition to the above, IST has supported 36 women from Uganda to do the Advanced Training for Transformation Diploma course in South Africa. These women are now applying this methodology in the many organizations where they work. Emphasis is placed on individual commitment, joint reflection, and action with others in order to transform small groups, institutions, communities, and the wider society.

VISION
A Society where People Value and Enjoy Socio Economic and Gender Justice

MISSION
To Develop Leaders who Champion Gender Justice through Capacity Building

VALUES
Integrity Innovation Equality Teamwork Professionalism

GOAL
To Support People to Take Action that will transform their Situations through Questioning the Status Quo
Accelerating Collective Efforts to End Child Marriage in Uganda

To support ongoing global and national efforts aimed at addressing child marriage in Uganda, the Institute for Social Transformation (IST) held community dialogues in Busia District, aimed at accelerating local efforts to end child marriage through the implementation of a multipronged approach that reflects current national and global trends and efforts.

Carried out in Busia District and under the theme “Ending Early/Child Marriages,” the dialogues further aimed at promoting and contributing to the protection of the rights of all girls and boys, both those affected by child marriage as well as those at risk; and supporting their development and welfare as espoused in the Children’s (Amendment) Act 2016; the Ugandan Constitution 1995, African charter on children’s rights and welfare, the African Union Charter; and other relevant national and international policy and legal frameworks.

In attendance were IST’s Community Women Rights Champions, Local Council representatives, district councillors and leaders, religious and cultural leaders, Village Health Team members (VHTs), village elders, youth, community members as well as representatives from the police.

Puberty as a signifier of readiness for marriage, lack of basic requirements especially among the girls, high expectations that girls perceive in marriage and negative customs and traditions such as patriarchy, poverty, and alcoholism were fronted as major causes of child marriages. As a result, girls married off at a tender age often feel isolated, disempowered and deprived of their fundamental rights to health, education and safety. And since they are neither physically nor emotionally ready to become wives and mothers, child brides are at greater risk of experiencing dangerous complications in pregnancy and childbirth, contracting HIV/AIDS and suffering domestic violence.

Accordingly, the Sub county team (technical and political) agreed and committed to initiate a by-law against child marriage and teenage pregnancy. Also, participants were urged to take up actions aimed at denouncing child marriages right from the family to the community level. They were also encouraged to support girl child education, report all cases of child marriages within the families and communities to respective officials, and engage in continuous sensitization on the dangers of child/early marriages.

The dialogues provided an opportunity for relationship and coalition building between key stakeholders working together to end child/early marriages.

Although child marriage is illegal in Uganda, it is a deeply embedded tradition and continues today, with more than 46% of girls married before they reach age 18. “Uganda Demographic and Health Survey (UDHS) 2011”

90 – the number of participants that were sensitized and empowered during the dialogue.

QUICK FACTS ABOUT CHILD MARRIAGE

Every year, about 13.5 million girls are married before they turn 18.

One out of 9 girls will marry before their 15th birthday.

16.5 million girls will be married by 2030.

(Data source: UNFPA, UNICEF)
Contributing to Learning Experiences that Connect, Inspire and Engage

As a strategy, the Institute for Social Transformation (IST) participates in a number of networking receptions that are in pursuit of development endeavours. Such events provide avenues for the exchange of experiences and resources, link local efforts for more effective lobbying and advocacy, and improve the quality of our interventions and efficacy of our actions in the communities where we operate.

In light of this, we participated in the 3rd National Women’s Week that was convened by the Uganda Women’s Network (UWONET) from the 17th to the 21st of October at Hotel Africana under the theme “Every Woman Counts.” Given our vast experience in empowering women economically, we organised a Parallel Session that explored the findings of the market women situational analysis study that we conducted about the conditions under which market women work. During the event, the challenges and/or constraints that such women face, their role and capability to challenge speculations that women are weak and less capable of involving in business ventures, the opportunities available for them to tap into business, trade and market access, as well as major policy gaps that leave such women unprotected and prone to exploitation were discussed in detail.

Participants who included development partners, representatives from civil society, the media, district local governments, key line government ministries, as well as rural women and men were also able to hear real life experiences from the market women themselves, about their experiences in the business sector, particularly the marketplace.

Some of the challenges the market women posed included - lack of capital and business skills, cultural barriers, family obligations, lack of interest and confidence, sabotage by spouses/male partners who do not want them to engage in such businesses suspicious that they would cheat, and lack of support from loved ones.

The participants were particularly moved by these experiences and as a result made some suggestions that would help redeem the dire situations under which these women work, with some even going ahead to make commitments about how they would contribute their efforts and resources toward their realisation.

They included:
• Providing market women with start up and business growth matching grants.
• Supporting them in developing savings scheme, which could grow into cooperatives to minimize exposure to moneylenders that charge and exploit them.
• Facilitating trainings in financial literacy, business
A cross section of participants making their contributions during the event

Development, supplies management, customer care and record management, and:

- Lobbying to improve market facilities with the establishment of baby/child and breastfeeding centres, separate toilets and bathrooms for men and women, more stalls and spacious pathways and for the setting of rules and regulations that take into account unique roles of women.

As an organization, we established new strategic relationships and partnerships, which we hope to use as an invaluable source of information and support in future interventions during this event.

The market women on the other hand gained confidence to speak for themselves against the exploitative leadership in market places and formed caucuses (some of which are recognised by the Uganda Registration Services Bureau – URSB), for purposes of dialogue and self-empowerment. Other achievements registered by these assemblies after the IST mentorship include: enhanced ability of the market women to participate in the leadership and governance of the marketplace; and sensitisation and generation of support for women’s rights mostly from the marketplace leadership.

“The number of people engaged during the Parallel Session, with women accounting for 85%.”

Gerald Tumwebaze, Civil Society Representative from Kamwenge Development Centre

“I have liked the sensitization on women in the market, it really gave me an insight on how to work with my team as we are championing women rights in our local communities. I have also learnt about the power and importance of collective effort, and the need to tackle issues of economic empowerment, especially when working with women. This session has also given me the opportunity to witness first-hand the potential that our women have. If it were possible, IST would extend such platforms to other districts so that a bigger impact is felt.”

Gerald Tumwebaze, Civil Society Representative from Kamwenge Development centre
The Institute for Social Transformation (IST), a civil society organisation that builds the capacities of individuals, institutions/organisations and communities in areas of transformational leadership and learning, gender relations, and economic empowerment is proud to announce the launch of its new interactive website, which provides users with all the essential information they need in a single user-friendly location.

IST recognises the importance of offering a simple, yet interactive online experience. With this in mind, the organisation has added a number of new features to enhance functionality and improve navigation. The layout has also been optimised for mobile devices, facilitating access through smartphones, laptops and desktops, while on the move.

Rita Atukwasa, the Executive Director notes that the new website offers information on issues affecting marginalised people such as women, and training needs for individuals, institutions, and communities to enable them to initiate, and sustain change processes. Local knowledge and experience on the root causes of poverty, gender inequality and poor leadership play a key role in providing information on actions to be undertaken.

IST is excited about the number of people who have already signed up for the subscription facility provided on the website. This bodes well for those that want to get involved in upcoming campaigns/events to highlight key policy initiatives especially around women’s rights.

To access the new IST website, click here

www.ist-tft.org
Women’s Economic Empowerment: the Importance of Small Market Stall vendors in Urban Areas

Women’s economic empowerment is a key priority in the development agenda and is viewed as a key solution to empowering women and addressing problems like poverty and gender-based violence. To address this, significant attention is being given to employment/wealth creation and to women’s engagement in the agricultural sector in Uganda.

Unfortunately, less attention has been paid to the many women in urban areas who make their living from the smaller market stalls that are so prevalent in places like Kampala and all other municipal and town councils.

Rather than viewing these smaller local markets and home-based stalls as marginal players in the bid to improve women’s economic empowerment, small market stalls are just as – if not more – important than the larger markets because they are such a prolific feature of the urban landscape. Understanding these small stalls as sites of

**Most Prevalent forms of VAW in the marketplace (IST Research, 2016)**

- **Economical** - 0.82%: this includes deprivation of access to basic needs e.g. food, unrealistic pay, women not allowed to work, taking women’s earnings, over working women.
- **Sexual** - 8.57% market: this consists of sexual harassment, inappropriate/unwanted touching.
- **Physical** - 25.7% market: this includes slapping, harming the body
- **Emotional/Psychological** - 69.5% market: includes verbal abuses, threats and insults, intimidation and humiliation.
economic empowerment can shed important insights into local processes of women’s empowerment and disempowerment, and the moral values and norms that shape how women make a living.

Small market stalls play an important social role in the localities. They are places where people convene to catch up with the day’s news, organise plans to support each other with issues like childcare, or simply to take a breather and have a conversation. Community communication takes place at these sites not only through leaving messages for each other but through the sales of phone credits or sharing of news.

Other important economic activities also occur, such as the lending of items by the vendor to a known customer who has fallen short of money to buy food or any other essentials. Because many of these stalls operate into the night, they can also have implications for improving law and order in urban areas. As lit-up areas where people interact, they often provide a sense of security in localities, which enables more people to move about in the evenings – something places like Kampala desperately need.

Evidence already tells us that a significant number of people in urban areas rely on the informal sector, and that women dominate this form of economic engagement.

Hence, in commemoration of the 16 Days of Activism against Violence Against Women (VAW) 2016, the Institute for Social Transformation (IST) in partnership with, UN Women, and Swedish Embassy engaged with Nakawa market women and men in form of a multi focused one day camp for dialogue, learning, HIV testing and legal aid provision in the marketplace. Primarily, the event was organized to ignite women’s robust involvement in the marketplace, and action to
end violence against women and girls.

The camp, conveniently structured to fit into hours that are off peak for business in the market (10:30 am – 3:30 PM) was delivered in the English and Luganda for easy comprehension by participants. It covered areas such as business skills, budgeting, savings and women’s rights, alongside HIV/AIDS counseling and testing, individual legal and business consultations, and inspirational talks on growing businesses and opportunities available for trade in Uganda.

Other participating organisations included FIDA Uganda, the Uganda Police, Enterprise Uganda and Uganda Cares who brought on board legal, business and HIV/AIDS expertise respectively. During their sessions, they enlightened participants about the linkages that exist between these fundamental issues and VAW.

The Nakawa Market chairman Mr Charles Okuni and the Market’s In-charge of Women Affairs Ms. Norah Baguma gave the official remarks. Both expressed gratitude to the IST, and all the other partnering organisations for extending their services to the market and challenged all participants, particularly women to put into practise the skills and knowledge that they had acquired to improve their socio economic standard of living because for many — if not most —, small market stalls are usually their most viable option for making a bit of money to not only empower themselves but support their families.

By and large, the camp was a success! Effectively galvanised powerful and unified action for women market vendors’ involvement in the governance of the market, which will in the long run ensure that such spaces are safe, inclusive and non discriminatory. Over 270 market women and men, as well as representatives from civil society; the Police, private sector and other stakeholders directly participated in the event’s activities.

"Marketplaces are key sites for women’s economic empowerment as well as national poverty reduction. They are often dominated by rural and urban women vendors whose cash incomes constitute a significant part of the income of poor households.”

Rita Atukwasa, IST Executive Director.

-- “This event has been of great help as it enlightened about the importance of saving. It was for instance emphasized that it is always important to keep the trust of our group lenders. If one gets a loan on 10% interest, they should make sure they pay it very on time because the next time the leaders will be very willing to extend another loan at a much lower rate because the more your lender gains trust in you, the less the interest rate.”

Norah Baguma
The IST Executive Director Ms. Rita Atukwasa giving opening remarks during the Camp

An Inspirational Speaker from Enterprise Uganda Ms. Auma Christine sharing ideas on value addition in businesses with the market women.

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The number of people reached during the Camp, with women accounting for 52%.
Access to justice is a fundamental right. Thus, an adequate legal aid system is one of the prerequisites for access to justice. This acquires more significance in the context of developing countries due to higher levels of poverty, socioeconomic inequalities, and serious accessibility and affordability issues.

It’s against this background that the Institute for Social Transformation (IST), in partnership with FIDA held Legal Aid Camps in Busia District, that provided free legal services to marginalized groups, especially women who could not afford the services of a lawyer for the conduct of a case or a legal proceeding in any court, tribunal or before an authority.

The Camps, which were held in Busia also created awareness on women’s rights, in addition to providing psycho social support to survivors of violence, creating awareness on structures for redress, providing a platform for community members to openly discuss issues that affect them, and helping women understand their challenges in a more appropriate and detailed manner.

The Resident District Commissioner (RDC), Mr. Adhola Ottiti alongside the Assistant Chief Administrative officer (CAO), flagged off the Camp.

Harriet Nabakama; a lawyer, facilitating one of the Sensitization Sessions
Whilst giving his opening remarks, he urged participants to know their responsibilities and obligations as citizens of Uganda in order for them to understand and enjoy their rights. He also sensitized them about the various redress structures in their communities established by the Local Government Act to handle problems, such as the Women Council that address women issues.

Other issues that were at the heart of plenary sessions during the legal camps included: marriage - with participants being urged to legalise their unions so that they are protected by the law; matrimonial and joint property rights in a marriage; parental responsibilities, as well as domestic violence, its causes and consequences on the family and community at large.

Besides, participants were made to understand the different structures within their communities where they can seek assistance when faced with problems. Examples given included: Women council, Local Council courts, Community Development offices, Police, probation office among others. Most of these participants preferred to keep quiet about their problems because they did not know where to report, but with this sensitization, they became aware of what to do when faced with a problem, with one of the women noting, “If I had known all these structures, I would not have suffered silently.”

During the Private Consultations, 43 cases were registered: 33 from women and 10 from men on different issues such as land disputes, domestic violence, property sharing and family neglect among others. The IST Field Officer has been following them up to ensure that the survivors get the necessary help. 

“Injustice Anywhere is a threat to Justice Everywhere,” Reverend Martin Lutherking JR

Over 111 people (85 women, 26 men) from Masafu, Dabani, Masinye, Bulumbi, Busia Municipality, and Buteba Sub Counties partook in this initiative.
My name is Winnie Itago. I am a Kenyan and currently a fourth year at the University of California, Berkeley. My major is Environmental Economics and Policy with a minor in Global Poverty Practice. During my second year summer holiday, I desired to have a meaningful internship that would provide the opportunity to have momentous interactions with locals and still gain valuable work experience in the field of development and community engagement. I also wanted to work on the African continent, since I value being in touch with the current issues on the continent. I interned at Institute for Social Transformation (IST) Kampala for about 2 months. Working with Dr. Thelma and her team has been one of the pivotal experiences in my college career.

I worked with the team on the launch and implementation of the Market Women Project, which aimed to increase the representation of market women in leadership circle. I believe that women are the most impacted when policies and laws are (not) passed thus it was pertinent that market women have a voice in the leadership. In the project, I was able to be part of media trainings and briefings on the plight of the market woman. Since IST has a small team, I got to know my colleagues at a personal level and developed working and mentorship ties that have lasted even past my internship. I particularly enjoyed being part of the team writing proposals and managing the documentation of events, which is a skill that I have carried with me through university. IST also gave me the platform to build my leadership skills by allowing me to be part of the organizing of a learning exchange visit in the Butaleja-Kumi region. I learnt a lot about sustainable living, organic farming, and energy saving in rural areas.

In addition, interning with IST gave me a wholesome opportunity to see how community engagement and organizing works. It really took a lot of work, time, emotion and effort, but was worth it. I also enjoyed learning Luganda, eating Katogo, and exploring Uganda’s rich and diverse culture. Going forward, I intend to work in local and international development and with mentors like Dr. Thelma and her team, this is definitely achievable.
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