

LET ART BE MY VOICE ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN BREIF REPORT:

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE.



Introduction

Let Art Be My Voice is an advocacy campaign against gender-based violence that uses art through a gender transformative approach to teaching school children, school administrators, and community members about the different forms of violence against girls and women and their role in eradicating these vices.

This program uses fun-filled art painting sessions to disseminate information and raise awareness on the different forms of gender-based Violence among school children ages 10 - 17, school administrators, and community members through the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. The [16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence](#) is an annual international campaign that kicks off on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and runs until 10 December, Human Rights Day. The global theme for this year's 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, which will run from 25 November to 10 December 2022, is "UNITE! Activism to end violence against women and girls".



Children at Nakasero Primary School excited after their art gender-stereotypes' session

With the ultimate goal of teaching children to be responsible leaders that advance gender equality without fronting violence in all social aspects, the campaign was conducted in 4 primary schools, 2 secondary schools, and 1 rural community together with partner community-based organizations in Kampala, Wakiso and Mukono districts.

Through this campaign, children, school administrators and community leaders used art as a medium of communication and to express their views on the issues around violence against women and girls. Before and through the 16 days of activism, each day was themed under a form of violence faced by women and girls and each school or community focused on one. Online dialogues through Partner Twitter spaces discussing specific forms of violence were also held within the 16 days of activism against Gender-Based Violence.



Community engagement session on access to women's property rights with the Village Local Council Court and community members of Joggo-Sonde, Mukono.

Background and Rationale



As Dwona, we acknowledge that for the world to realize 100 percent of its goals, women's and girls' voices need to be heard, amplified, and empowered. However, these voices are silenced by many factors; from the epidemic levels of gender-based violence to biased laws and norms that prevent them from attaining or completing education, owning property, working, and making decisions about their own lives.

Nearly 1 in 3 women have been abused in their lifetime. In times of crisis, the numbers rise, as seen during the COVID-19 pandemic and recent humanitarian crises, conflicts, and climate disasters. A new report from UN Women, based on data from 13 countries since the pandemic, shows that 2 in 3 women reported that they or a woman they know experienced some form of violence and are more likely to face food insecurity. Only 1 in 10 women said that victims would go to the police for help.

While pervasive, gender-based violence is not inevitable. It can and must be prevented. Stopping this violence starts with believing in survivors, adopting comprehensive and inclusive approaches that tackle the root causes, transform harmful social norms, and empower women and girls.

Our campaign had a focus on harm and abuse education to teach children about the different forms of violence or abuse through art which will help them easily identify these forms of violence and abuse and know their role in preventing them. Since children that have been abused most times find it difficult to tell someone or recognize that the abuse is wrong, this campaign will help them find confidence to ask a trusted adult for help. It also seeks to empower school administrators and community leaders to identify and recognize abuse or violence and respond appropriately to the children who confide in them.

By equipping children, school administrators, and community members with the right and adequate information on the different forms of violence against women and girls, and how to identify, prevent and eradicate these vices, we believe we can end gender-based violence and enable children to know their role in ending it.



Activities within the campaign

We kicked off day one of the campaign on the 17th of November, 2022 under the theme, *Online Gender Based Violence and Cyber-harassment* together with local partners; Women of Uganda Network (Wougnet) and Be My Denim at Tassaga Secondary School in Wakiso District.

We arrived at Tassaga Secondary school, our host school for the day at 1:00 pm. Our partners for the day, Women of Uganda Network (WougNet) arrived shortly thereafter. The Dwona team then held a brief introductory meeting with the school administration of Tassaga Secondary School to paint a better picture of what the session would look like.



Women Of Uganda Network is an NGO that was founded in 200 by several women's organisations that envisions an inclusive and just society where women and girls are enabled to use ICT for sustainable development. He explained this as the kind of development that benefits everyone.

The program was divided into sessions that were held in one of the classrooms. The teams from Dwona Initiative and Wougnet first introduced themselves. They then held ice-breaker activities to build rapport with the students and get to learn them better before they started off with the sessions.

The first session was led by Letowon Saitoti Abdi, the Senior Technical Support officer from Wougnet. He did a powerpoint presentation on what the internet is, how it is used, which gadgets we can use to access it among other things. He engaged students in a brainstorming session about the internet. Some of the responses varied from a global connection to a system that enabled communication between people.

He broke it down to a classroom experience where one person wanted to borrow a pencil from the other and so sent another to get it from him. He used this analogy in relation to computers for the transfer and exchange of information. He gave a synthesis of what the Internet is, what the internet is used for, and the threats found on the internet. It was a very interactive session with the students as they contributed to most of the responses. Another facilitator called Patricia Nyasuna from Wougnet took on the session of the specifics on Online Gender-based violence. She started by sharing a personal experience from her university days, when on their first day of school at the School of Gender studies, the lecturer told them to say the word *Vagina*. They told the students to say the word who seemed quite uncomfortable with saying it aloud in public. She used this to expound on the issue of Gender, and its social constructiveness.

She went ahead and differentiated between Sex and Gender. Sex is founded on one's biological anatomy while Gender is a social construction which refers to the roles assigned to a person because of their sex.

She illustrated the idea of gender with a basic family experience in a home where men were given the physical duties and women and girls were assigned the care roles.

Online Gender based Violence is any form of harm that happens to someone as a result of their sexual orientation that happens online.

She said, "Online Gender Based Violence refers to acts of violence that are committed, abetted or aggravated on the internet."

It can be verbal, Graphic threats, abusive photos

The facilitator then went ahead to the forms of Online Gender Based Violence:

- non-consensual intimate images

She dwelt more on this and simplified it as what is commonly referred to as *Revenge Pornography*. She gave the children various instances where they could fall victim with more recent examples from viral graphic videos that have been posted online.

To this extent, she empowered the students to look up for the law that concerns Online Gender Based Violence and gave some examples like the Computer Misuse Act, The Penal Code among other laws applicable. She also ensured that the students understood that they had the right to consent and not to consent to persons taking pictures of them or videos where they appear.

- cyber bullying
- online sexual harassment
- doxing
- cyber stalking
- impersonation.

The students were also shown a video about Online Gender Based Violence.

Art Session.

The children were given a brief lesson on painting and art tools. During this session, they were exposed to a new register of words like canvas, brushes, colours and were also taught how to use them.

The art session was led by Stella Bukirwa, a prodigiously talented artist and an amiable spirit that loves to interact with the students. She was assisted by the Dwona team that helped to explain to the students the connection between the Art they were about to make and the session they had just attended on Online GBV.



Students were divided into 6 groups, each with a canvas that had the sketch of a girl bowing at her laptop with her face in her hands. The students were asked if they had used phones, or owned gadgets and most of them had. They were also asked about some of the trigger words that could cause or have caused them hurt while using the internet and the responses were overwhelming. Answers ranged from Stupid, Silly, Shapeless, Senseless among other derogatory descriptives.

They were asked to write those words down in their groups. They were also asked to write down a list of possible emotions the girl on the canvas could be feeling at the moment and what they thought the ideal internet would be. To the latter came responses like safe, happy, educative and entertaining while to the former came responses like sad, sorrowful, angry, stressed, shy, ashamed.

The children then proceeded to paint their canvas with help and guidance on colour mixing from Stella (the artist) and the Dwona team. They were then told to write the words they had listed previously over their canvas. It was akin to painting the violence out.

The session wound up at 6:00 pm, after which the students had a photo moment with their paintings, the partners from Women of Uganda Network and the Dwona Team. At the end of the day, they left happier, more informed and guarded about the internet and its potential threats.



The same session format was used on the following days of the campaign which included;

- Day two, 21st November 2022 focused on Gender-stereotypes and girls' leadership at Nakasero Primary School in Kampala City. The team from Dwona and pupils had open discussion on the common gender-stereotypes that both girls and boys faced in society. They were asked to sketch out who they want to be when they grow up and each of the pupils was given a plain sheet of paper. They were then given instructions to write their names and sketch a drawing of what they wanted to be in the future. Several sketches came up like pictures of women treating patients, aeroplanes, churches and mosques, cars, painting. They were also tasked to mention the barriers and these were some of the responses. In the end, they were asked to write and paint their future careers and hopes on the art murals. With support from our partner enjuba, we were able to donate 100 books of *Amani the boda boda rider*, a story of an african girl that rose above a gender stereotype in her community and achieved her dream.



- Day three, 22nd November 2022 focused on child pregnancies and Marriages together with Raising Teenagers Uganda and Femme Forte Uganda as local partners at Kawaala Secondary School, Namwezi village, Mukono. The team from Raising Teenagers Uganda and Femme Forte Uganda took lead on discussing issues around child pregnancies and marriages. The students shared stories of their peers who have fallen victim of these vices and ways they think they can prevent them from happening in their communities. These key learnings were translated together with the school administrators within the art session onto the art murals.



- Day four, 23rd November 2022 focused Emotional and psychological violence together with our partners; Awesome Mind Speaks at Daffodils Primary School in Kampala. The team from Awesome Mind Speaks held an open discussion with the pupils around emotional violence as the pupils shared their experiences in this helm. These experiences were then translated together with the school administrators onto the art canvas.



- Day Five, 24th November 2022 focused on domestic Violence and Access to Justice for Children together with our partner, Uganda Police Force - Child and Family Department at Kitante Primary School in Kampala. A discussion was held on the forms of domestic violence and how children and school administrators can seek help incase of any incidents of domestic violence. These key learnings were translated onto the art murals by the pupils and teachers to reflect their experiences as well.



- Day six, 25th November 2022 focused on period poverty and stigma at St. Kizito Joggo Primary School in Joggo, Sonde Mukono district. Our partners, Rotary Club of kampala Munyonyo - Ngege Buddy Group and The Stutes Clean Water Project joined us to onboard this school onto our RUMPs for rural girls program where we trained the pupils on making re-usable sanitary pads, provided menstrual hygiene information and gave 44 fempacks to the girls in the school. These fempacks have reusable menstrual shields and liners, soap and a menstrual calendar. A 60 litre water tank was donated by The Stutes

Clean Water Project to the school for clean and safe drinking water. Together with the school administration, it was agreed that a menstrual hygiene club is to be instituted at the school in the following term.



- Day seven, 10th December 2022 focused on Access to Women's Property Rights together with our partners, Barefoot law Uganda and Uganda Police Force - Child and Family Department at the Village Local Council Court Joggo, Sonde Mukono. In this session, Barefoot Law, Dwona, and the Uganda Police Force team held focus group discussions with the community members and the village local council court members on the issues around property rights. They discussed what to do before buying land and property and where you can seek help in incase of any disturbances around property issues. The key learnings and toll free helplines were then painted onto the art canvas by the community members and then placed on a "famous tree" in the community so that other members in the community can access this information in their local language.





Impact

This campaign was able to reach 700 pupils and students, 17 school administrators in 6 schools and 40 community and village local council court members in 3 districts.

The campaign was supported by The Thinking Watermill Society, Stanbic Bank Uganda, The Stutes Clean Water Project and Rotary Club of Kampala Munyonyo - Ngege Buddy group. In each school and community, a talking compound stand will be placed in the strategic areas to advance activism against gender-based violence in the following school academic term.



