



WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE

With support from the European Union, ASF and YWCA are implementing a 24 months programme to promote access to justice in the wider urban and rural areas in and around Solwezi and Kasempa in North Western Province; and Mbala and Kasama in Northern Province in Zambia.

In its overall objective, the programme seeks to contribute to the enhancement of public participation in democratic governance and improved service delivery in Zambia. There are two specific objectives through which the programme seeks to accomplish the overall objective. Firstly by contributing to the enhanced empowerment of citizens, especially members of vulnerable groups such as women, so that they know, secure and enforce their human and democratic rights; and secondly, by contributing to the promotion of gender equality and democratic rights at the levels of the policy & legal framework and implementation.

To achieve the first objective, one of the key result indicators is that 10 women are identified in the project areas, to act as advocates participating in dialogue meetings with community leaders and also to make presentations during community outreach activities on gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and access to justice throughout the project implementation.

During the project lifecycle, women are to be mobilized to share their stories and as such are to be supported to speak out and to voice their concerns related to violence against women, economic, social and cultural rights (ESCR) and access to justice in forums which they normally would not participate. This support would take the form of bringing their voices to the fore as a link between GBV and ESCR.

To further this, the paralegals in Solwezi have mobilized the women who attended one of the Access to Justice mobile legal desks. After attending the mobile legal desk, the women realized that their rights were infringed and most of them had no idea that they could stand on their own. The women have since come up with the aims and objectives of the group.

AIM

1. To encourage each other to know their rights.
2. To know who to go to if they need legal advice.
3. The group to forum where the women can share information on how they can advocate on issues relating to GBV, to leaders in the community and to the community at large.

OBJECTIVES

1. To help each other be more self-reliant,
2. To help other women know more about their rights,
3. To have more information about access to justice with the help of the European Union Funding.
4. To have women who can easily participate in community focus and meetings that involves decision making processes.
5. To have basic skills in deferent fields.



Members of Butemwa Women's Group pose for a photo with the Site Co-ordinator Clement, after one of their meetings © ASF/C. Lecrenier

The Butemwa women's group has had four meetings since inception. The women are eager to learn more about their rights, acquire skills such as tailoring, community banking and knowledge about small scale businesses and how they can improve their homes and lives.

"I would like to see this group grow; to see how we can help ourselves as women, how to develop our skills so that we become more independent as women and to understand our human and women's rights better in order to help other women in our community. I think this more than anything will help us in the fight against GBV," said Helen, a member of Butemwa Women's Group.

Having understood their rights, they have shown a passion to move forward, to be advocates for other women who may have lived in ignorance thinking it was acceptable for their husbands to batter or mistreat them with a notion that it is an indication of them being loved.

As the project continues, it is the project team's hope that more women will come forward, so that in this way, our overall objectives can be met.



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