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Implementation areas: lugufu, Congolese refugee camp based in Kigoma, Tanzania

Introduction

In English “ACTION POUR LA PROMOTION DES FEMMES (APfemme)” means action for women promotion, is a community-based non-governmental organization founded in 2005 to support the needs and advocate for the fundamental rights of most vulnerable women and children from marginalized and underserved communities. APfemme envisions a supportive environment in which women’s and children’s rights are recognized, protected and upheld. The prevention of gender based violence is an integral part of APfemme’s work.

APfemme stared its work in Tanzania as a refugees initiative working to prevent violence against women and girls in Congolese refugees camps based in the region of Kigoma, Tanzania. What has been done and achieved was basically possible thanks to the dedicated and fruitful partnership with local NGOs such as CELA, YODE and GRACE.

Today, following the repatriation of Congolese refugees, APfemme is developing post-conflicts activities to support most vulnerable repatriated and returnees in their country of origin which is the DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO.

APfemme was recently registered in DRC as an indigenous organization carrying out long term development project, focusing on the doubly disadvantaged i.e the poorest and most marginalized within this country, working as a local NGO which encourages the participation of community members in every stage of the project cycle (planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation), seeking to empower community members to take control of their own development e.g. through skills training or raising awareness of their rights.

Report summary

In the refuge scopes, the situation of human rights continuous to be very dangerous for women and young girls. The majority of refugees is women and children. These ones become targets of rapes, neglect, subordination, exploitation and other forms of the extreme violence. However, women and girls are still targets of several human rights violations due to the following factors: harmful and discriminatory customs, lack of economic dependence, forest and village areas. Following the causes evoked above, the programme aimed at promoting and advocating for the fundamental rights of women and children in Lugufu Congolese refugees camp based in Kigoma region of the United Republic of Tanzania through a regularly approach of conducting training sessions on children’s rights, conducting information, education and communication training sessions, organizing women’s march, organizing women promotion center.

The important achievement was made during ten months of implementation and brought about significant change in the lives of refugee community of Lugufu.
1. IMPORTANT ACTIVITIES AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO WOMEN’S RIGHTS PROMOTION IN THE REFUGE SCOPES

Seminar on children’s rights

In order to help children to know, understand and assert their rights and to advocate freely, APfemme conducted a seven day seminar from 2-8 of march,2008. 45 persons (children, foster parents, personnel of education) participated and benefited complete information on the children’s rights convention. Seminar was held in the wall of Youth Center Lugufu. The seminar emphasized on the importance of children’s education in the refuge scopes.

Production of technicians in producing information, education and communication materials(IEC)

From 27 august to 7 sept, 2008 APfemme conducted a training session on production of effective IEC material in preventing gender based violence. The training last one week and facilitated by local personnel resources. The training emphasized on production of mural newsletters and the strategy was to focus on 22 community volunteers who previously benefited from women’s leadership training workshops conducted by WSPM/WLP, YODE and CELA. These community volunteers are today necessary local resources in promoting women’s good leadership and preventing gender based violence.
Women’s March in Lugufu, Kigoma:” Standing up and raising voices against violence”

On 3 July, 2008 was an opportunity for women of Lugufu to manifest against violence committed toward them. Women and men of lugufu have spoken and demanded an end to violence toward women and girls.

After a training on counseling and advocacy held from 1st to 2nd of July, 2008 the participants wore the white T-shirts with an educational message and walking in streets of lugufu to petition to the local authorities in order for them to pay attention in making justice measurements in preventing gender based violence. The march created a great sensitivity and energy in preventing gender based violence thanks to increased active participation of community members, leaders and local NGOs.

Center for women promotion

This is a basic skills training center which allow youth women to learn about soap making, animal husbandry and beautification and then encourage them to be involved in income generating activities. From April to September, 2008 the center offered opportunity to 121 women to participate in a periodic training session on soap making and animal husbandry. After a final evaluation, the more performants benefited small business loans to earn livelihood.

A visit to a soap making group in Lugufu camp

2. OUTCOMES

Thanks to a center for women promotion, advocacy action, seminar on children’s rights, information, education and communication training session APfemme recorded many noticeable outcomes which are:
- women and men are just having consciousness regarding violence and injustice towards women and young girls
-women’s self-confidence in improving family economy
-availability of human resources in preventing gender based violence and in promoting women’s good leadership
-a certain decrease of risk and impact of violence and discrimination towards children thanks to increased understanding and knowledge of their fundamental rights

3. CHALLENGES TO BE ADDRESSED

Even if the progress be more extended, APfemme met largest difficulties which are:

- decrease of the number of institutions working on gender based violence prevention in the area we worked
- the number of women and children correctly informed and educated about their rights still very lower
- the poverty of refugee camps in which women and girls remain more vulnerable to the different situations such as HIV/AIDS and sexual violence
- under funded of our local efforts
- the lack of resources guides in planning, implementation and monitoring a project to prevent violence has been challenging the work.
- the lack of external support (financial and technical) has been challenging, when the sources of funding are diversified, by receiving grants and donations can a local organization work effectively and reach a wide variety of poorest and marginalized people in a given community.

4. LESSONS LEARNED

-Violence against women and children happens across all sectors of society and then all remedies such as prevention must begin at the family level to the highest level community.
- adoption of a local chapter which coordinate and support women’s and children’s rights education and advocacy for greater protection of victims.
- violence against women and girls occurs in every segment of community regardless of their status.
- around the refugees camps, women are victims of countless acts of violence. In a great of these instances, the violence is not random, women are victims only because they are female.
- in the refugees camps, talking about gender based violence is challenging, those of us who are raising issues about equity and equality are often targeted by insults and isolation. Organizations addressing violence against women and girls in the refuge scopes need courage, love, boldness and support from others.
- violence against women and children is seems as a human rights violation and its prevention requires a deepest approach of promoting women’s and children’s rights.
-if we include men who are willing to stop ignoring violence of women and children, we could foster effective and sustainable change that benefits all of us.
-building up the problem of violence as a communal task and responsibility and not “women’s problem” could engage a wide range of community members in finding solutions.
-involving community leaders and volunteers significantly in the process of addressing the problem would promote ownership of the work in the field.
-building capacity of staff members and resources persons could solidify and amplify the potential impact of the work.

5. EVOLUTION OF OBJECTIVES, VOLUNTEERS, PROGRAMMES AND ADMINISTRATION OF APfemme

The actions of APfemme are currently of the nature to promote women’s rights. These actions are realistic thanks to voluntary and responsible involvement of members who were more mobilized until programmes become operational. Voluntary involvement of members was basically thanks to previous training workshops conducted by WSPM/WLP and YODE in lugufu camps.

6. FINANCIAL SITUATION

Financial situation continuous to be disturbed for community based organizations. Since its inception, APfemme functions thanks to initial and regular contributions of members, self-funding micro activities and certain contributions of local NGOs such as CELA, YODE and GRACE. The GLOBAL FUND FOR WOMEN-USA is a largest source of funding which still in the negotiation processes.

7. DESCRIPTION OF PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT YEAR

-training workshops on women’s good leadership promotion and gender.
-psycho-social-family assistance to women and children whose the lives were disrupted with abuses and HIV/AIDS.
-production of information, education and communication materials to prevent violence and to advocate for the women’s good leadership and gender.
-gender and livelihood to ensure economical independence for women in the future.
-local workshops, a strategy to improve women’s access to decision making power.
-women’s and children’s rights education.
-training and workshops in parenting skills help caregivers to better understand and meet children’s needs.
- awareness campaigns in schools, churches and other community centers to prevent gender based violence and HIV/AIDS.
- women promotion center whose the main activities including basic skills trainings and small business loans help women to be involved in income generating activities.

These priorities above mentioned are very important due to the fact that they enable:
The emergence of women leaders in the private and public sectors, active participation of women and children in combating abuses, to remove women’s and children’s ignorance in human rights, women to prove their role in the society, integration of women in a violence free homes and communities, preparation of a free and fair environment in which women and children are offered opportunities and facilitations to participate in the rural development processes.

8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Community based organizations have a noble place to address community needs simply because they are working hand-in-hand to plan, implement and evaluate programmes work. Therefore, technical and financial support institutions could invest in the community based groups so that to reach a wide range of poorest and most marginalized communities and then maximize the impact of work.