

Community-Based Trainers (CBTs) Impacting Women and Youth.

Insights and Learnings from the Women and Youth Resilience (WAYREP)



OUTCOMES



287 VSLA groups were formed and graduated. VSLA members were engaged in dignified livelihoods which resulted in increased incomes and enhanced social cohesion.



50 of them benefitted from government programs like Parish Development Model (PDM) or Emyooga.



65 % VSLA members had an Income Generating Activity (IGAs) from share-out.



96% of 450 skilled youth received the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT) completion certificates.



65 % of the skilled youth established businesses.



666 project participants received Multi-Purpose Cash Transfers (MPCT).



72 RMMB, 135 SASA! activists, 62 Women activists and change agents and 89 community leaders were mentored and received continuous peer to peer support from CBTs.

Overview

This learning brief presents insights derived from field engagements with project participants and community structures. It focuses on the approach and impact of Community-Based Trainers on the participation of women and youth in the Women and Youth Resilience Project (WAYREP).

Project Overview

CARE International in Uganda, in partnership with CARE Austria, implemented the Women and Youth Resilience Project (WAYREP) from April 2019 to March 2024, funded by the Austrian Development Agency. The project aimed to strengthen the resilience of refugee and Ugandan women, girls, and youth, while also addressing the reduction of gender-based violence (GBV) prevalence in Gulu and Arua Cities, as well as in Omugo Sub County and Terego district settlements. WAYREP's goals included enhancing sustainable and dignified livelihoods for women and youth, reducing the acceptance and tolerance of GBV in targeted communities, providing support to GBV survivors, and increasing the accountability of the Ugandan government in implementing

relevant frameworks for the protection and rights of women and girls. The project was carried out by 438 community members across seven different community structures, which included Gender-Based Violence Start Awareness Support and Action (SASA) activists, Role Model Men and Boys (RMMB), women activists, change agents, community leaders, and institutional allies.

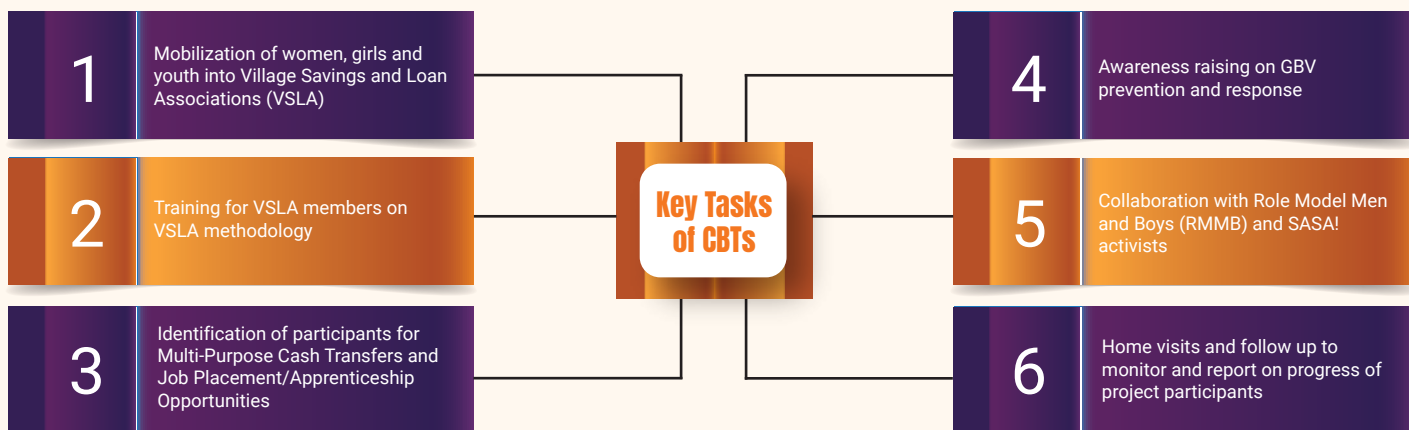
Community Based Trainers (CBT)

Selection, preparation and continuous support of CBTs

Community-Based Teams (CBTs) were the foundational structure established to support the implementation of WAYREP in local communities. Most of the members remained engaged throughout the duration of the project. The selection process for CBT members was carried out in accordance with the Human Resource policies of the partner organizations, CEFORD and Thrive Gulu.

Each candidate was required to present an introduction letter from their local council leadership, which served as a testament to their good conduct. Once selected, the CBTs were oriented to the project, including its Theory of Change, goals, and objectives. The selection process for CBT members was carried out in accordance with the Human Resource policies of the partner organizations, CEFORD and Thrive Gulu. Each candidate was required to present an introduction letter from their local council leadership, which served as a testament to their good conduct. Once selected, the CBTs were oriented to the project, including its Theory of Change, goals, and objectives.

“In Africa it takes a village to raise a child. In our service we gave back to the communities wholeheartedly”
Santos Ogik Kilibaki, CBT from Gulu



Contribution of CBTs to project success

Through their dedicated work and their comprehensive understanding of the project and its approaches, CBTs significantly contributed to WAYREP’s impacts. The main achievements are described in this chapter.

Formation and Graduation of VSLA Groups:

A total of 287 Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) groups were formed and graduated. These groups served as the primary entry point into the communities and as a platform for economic empowerment and awareness of gender-based violence (GBV). The CBTs successfully established, trained, and graduated these 287 groups, which are now registered with government authorities in the project locations.

With the support of the CBTs, over 50 of these graduated groups have benefitted from government programs such as the Parish Development Model (PDM) and Emyooga. In Omugo Sub County, group members were connected to other implementing partners for agriculture and farming-related training. Additionally, 176 well-established groups were linked to formal financial institutions for saving and loan purposes. Their members set savings

goals, resulting in 65% of VSLA members initiating or expanding Income Generating Activities (IGAs) following their share-out. Some mature groups in Gulu City have successfully managed four saving ledgers: assets, development, emergency, and savings, with others launching their own group enterprises.

Building Strong Social Networks:

VSLA facilitated the development of strong social networks. Members shared experiences and provided social support to one another. The social fund was particularly helpful in challenging situations. Furthermore, the agency of VSLA members was enhanced, with women taking on leadership roles within the savings groups as well as in community and religious organizations.

Placement of Youth for Jobs:

The CBTs successfully placed 450 youth under artisans for skills development, following up on their attendance, availability of study materials, and progress reports. A total of 432 youth completed the training and were examined by the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT) in trades such as motorcycle mechanics, tailoring, hairdressing, crafts making, catering, carpentry and joinery, and electrical installation. The trained youth received start-up kits, and over 65% have established businesses in the informal sector, with some securing formal employment. The CBTs continued to mentor the youth in record-keeping and customer care to ensure the growth of their businesses. Moreover, some skilled youths have begun transferring their skills to peers in their communities for a minimal fee; for instance, two youths trained the last cohort of WAYREP participants in tailoring.

Support for Vulnerable Women and Youth:

CBTs identified 666 particularly vulnerable individuals in the communities as potential recipients of WAYREP's Multi-Purpose Cash Transfer (MPCT). Selected recipients were assigned to CBTs for preparation, which included confirming their phone numbers, training on mobile cash transfers, and providing life skills training, such as reflections on their life journey and goal setting. CBTs also followed up to confirm that participants

received their monthly disbursements and to report any GBV incidents linked to the cash transfers. With MPCT support, recipients were able to meet essential needs such as food, education for their children, and healthcare. Some recipients initiated IGAs, joined VSLAs, and are growing their small businesses toward self-reliance. For example, a woman with a disability in Gulu City, who initially had a stock worth only 5,000 Ugandan Shillings of silver fish and tomatoes, significantly boosted her stock with MPCT support and is now able to support five children, including her own and those of relatives.

Monitoring and feedback on project implementation:

CBTs were trained and equipped with mobile devices for routine data collection and reporting. They also supported data collection for MPCT Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) and the CHOMOKA baseline for digital record-keeping. Throughout their duties, they received feedback from project participants and proposed solutions to identified challenges, which were key in delivering and improving the project. Stakeholders at sub-county and division levels appreciated the CBTs' skills in monitoring and reporting and began involving them in community activities.

COVID-19 response and project continuity:

During the COVID-19 lockdowns and movement restrictions, there was an increase in cases of GBV and domestic violence. As the only active community structure at that time, CBTs were trained on GBV prevention and referral pathways. They raised awareness about COVID-19 and GBV, identified and referred GBV

survivors for health services and justice, maintained home visits to project participants, and provided Psychological First Aid (PFA). They also supported VSLA groups in remote saving and using digital methods like mobile money transfer for savings and loan repayments.

CBTs are core connectors of other community structures: CBTs received training and provided mentorship to members of WAYREP's various community structures, including 72 Role Model Men and Boys, 89 leaders, and 62 women activists and change agents.

Their motivation to participate in project implementation

Social commitment of the CBTs:

CBTs were selected from their own communities and had a deep understanding of the issues, cultures, and social norms that affected their surroundings. This knowledge allowed them to effectively address key issues that arose in the project locations. Because they were familiar with their communities, they were able to mobilize participants and secure venues and resources necessary for implementing project activities. Across different locations, the CBTs observed, “We were picked from the community, and the members knew us well and accepted the message we conveyed.”

Appreciation by the communities and local leaders:

The CBTs earned respect within their communities, where they were often referred to as “teachers.” They were frequently called upon to assist in areas beyond Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) activities. Their efforts enabled them to expand their networks and build relationships. Local leaders reached out to them for support in various community programs. For example, in Arua City, two CBTs participated in initiatives in the River Oli division, while two others were involved in youth programs in Gulu City. This respect and involvement served as motivation for the CBTs, leading many to pursue courses in different educational institutions, anticipating future opportunities with local governments and NGOs.

Clarity of their role:

The CBTs had a clear understanding of their roles, which they fulfilled with passion and commitment because they recognized their

contribution to the project’s vision. The project design established a strong connection between its result areas, ensuring that their work supported the overall objectives. For instance, the CBTs not only contributed to women’s economic empowerment (WEE) but also participated in efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence (GBV).

Opportunity for personal growth:

The CBTs valued the training they received in WEE and GBV, along with the interactions they had with project participants and peers. This had a positive impact on their own lives, motivating some to explore their potential beyond the project’s scope. Oscar from Gulu stated, “We received substantial support and appreciate it. The project supervisor was approachable, and we built a strong rapport, which allowed us to consult freely about personal growth.”

The CBTs learned valuable lessons from the changes reported by participants.

Many began saving money and investing in income-generating activities, such as retail shops or soap-making. Some acquired assets, including land that they plan to develop, and established their own businesses. Several discovered their capacity to implement more ambitious projects and returned to universities and other educational institutions to prepare for future opportunities. As Joy, a CBT from Gulu, expressed, “CBT work has transformed my life. Before, I didn’t know about VSLA. Now, I am a member and have saved 2.2 million Shillings. I own personal land and support six children with their school fees.”

Challenges of working with Community Based Trainers

The Community-Based Trainers (CBTs) were young, ambitious individuals with aspirations for a brighter future. Some CBTs sought employment opportunities beyond the project locations based on their academic qualifications, while others returned to schools outside these areas. For instance, two CBTs from Gulu and two from Arua possessed university or tertiary qualifications and secured positions in institutions and organizations outside the project’s scope. In the Omugo settlement, there were cases of dropouts due to relocations either back to Sudan or to urban centers. These departures created gaps that required replacements and caused delays in implementation at their locations.

Lessons for future programming

Understanding cultural context is key for engagement with local communities.

CBTs with an understanding of gender, social and cultural norms as well as language of supported communities, have the right tone to call for action. For example, participants from Omugo Refugees Settlement were excited and grateful that they have a CBT who is one of them and who speaks the local language which helped them understand the methodology.

Comprehensive orientation and mentorship of Improved CBT Effectiveness or performance.

Thorough preparation, training, and continuous mentoring of CBTs enable them to fully understand the project's theory of change. When CBTs know how their work contributes to the project's goals and objectives, the quality of their work improves, along with their commitment and motivation.

Psychosocial and GBV Training Enhance CBTs' Support Capabilities

Equipping CBTs with knowledge and skills in

psychosocial support and gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response enhances their ability to identify and support GBV survivors. This understanding facilitates better support for participants and fosters collaboration between GBV and women's economic empowerment initiatives.

Sustainable strategies are needed for lasting community impact

CBTs can help sustain project impacts after completion. Developing sustainable financing mechanisms can further strengthen support by community-based structures beyond project funding.

Investing in CBTs' personal and economic growth yields better outcomes

Strengthening their capacities and creating new opportunities enhances their motivation and provides additional incentives to continue their valuable work.



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