Improving Inclusivity of Marginalised Groups in Uganda

Consultative field meeting between the committee on Equal Opportunities, Civil Society Leaders and Marginalized groups (PDWs, Deaf, Youth, Elderly & women) in Eastern Uganda from the 13th - 14th November 2016.

AWEPA under the Strategic Partnership Programme on Lobby and Advocacy with NIMD and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs begun a Programme in 2016 aimed at contributing to good governance and democracy through a conducive environment for effective policy influencing.

In Uganda AWEPA’s focus is centered around capacity strengthening/building and technical assistance for both staff, members and committees of the parliament of Uganda.

In 2016, AWEPA supported the committee on Equal Opportunities to undertake a field visit to the Eastern Uganda districts of Soroti, Tororo and Mbale to interface with marginalized groups, CSOs and local communities. This is part of AWEPA’s objective of promoting gender equality and inclusivity that would ensure participation and representation of women and minority groups in political processes.

Cognizant of the fact that the involvement and inclusivity of marginalized groups is key in harnessing their uniqueness for national cohesion and development, the committee on Equal Opportunities, through this field exercise, sought to appraise the extent of inclusivity of persons with disability, women and the youth in the management of public affairs.

AWEPA works in close cooperation with the parliamentary committee on Equal Opportunities to appraise the awareness of marginalized groups of their rights, the accessibility to ongoing government interventions and to explore modalities for improving inclusivity of marginalized groups in the management of public affairs and responsibilities.

In this regard, AWEPA organized an outreach visit to Eastern Uganda and convened consultative meetings where marginalized groups ranging from women, people with disabilities, youth and the elderly explained their neglect from public affairs thus rendering their potentials redundant. They also informed the members of Parliament of the challenges they face and asked Parliament to work towards mainstreaming the issues of the marginalized groups in all societies in the country.
The consultative meetings helped to build confidence in these groups such that they can understand that they can also equally compete for public positions and take up representative roles at different levels in the country. “Men continue to feel insecure as the discussion and process to attain real equity takes center stage both at national level and the other lower political structures” says Hon. Hellen Asamo, Vice Chairperson of the committee on Equal Opportunities in Parliament.

The feedback and information obtained from these meetings has informed the committee on Equal Opportunities and committee of Gender both working on the People with Disabilities Bill 2015 to take care of their core concerns that affect women and other marginalized groups. The Bill has already been tabled on the floor of Parliament for discussion. To emphasize the ultimate goal to have this passed into law, Hon. Hellen Asamo called for her female counter parts to lobby amongst male Members of Parliament to support the Bill.

More proposals from the marginalized groups were handed over to the committee on Equal Opportunities for further discussion both at committee level and later be tabled on the floor of Parliament. The marginalized groups from the region came up with a set of proposals that they want Parliament to consider in order to improve their political participation. All these have helped to instill hope and confidence in women and other marginalized groups in the region.

The parliamentary committee on Equal Opportunities with the help of AWEPA is committed to continue lobbying and advocating for equalization of opportunities for women, youth and other marginalized groups in the country in order for them to be able to participate in political processes and other areas of public affairs. The committees’ work will be boosted through tools like the Certificate of Gender Equity which is a requirement before any budget is passed by Parliament. It ensures that concerns of women are addressed during the budget appropriation which in case short of should not be passed by Parliament.

The women in the region pledge to continue to advocate for gender mainstreaming and accepted to offer themselves for service at different levels in society leadership from district, regional and national level.