



## STEWARD WOMEN-UNTF NEWSLETTER FOR RUBKONA-UNITY STATE DECEMBER 2021-MAY 2022

### **Contextual Analysis;**

In Rubkona County, Unity State, during the period December 2021 to March 2022, there was flooding which led to displacement of many people including women, children, men, boys, elderly and even cattle. As a result, mobilization of participants for activities was a major challenge as people had relocated to Bentiu and other counties. Cases of rape and early/child marriages were also on the rise following the flooding as many women and girls sought refuge in homes of relatives and friends, who took advantage of them by abusing them as they were vulnerable. In April, the water level started dropping as the International Organization of Migration (IOM) managed to pump out the water in Bentiu and Rubkona with several water pumps. IOM still continues to dump soil & reinforce the dykes higher as the level of water is expected to be below 20ml during the rainy season, which is yet to begin. Currently most part of Rubkona has dried up and some few people have started returning to their homes and opening up their business premises. There are now high cases of early/child marriages which is attributed to the fact that many people lost their cattle in the floods, and the men wanted to regain back their wealth thus, they married off their daughters to any man who could give them the cows as dowry. This is attributed to the harmful cultural practices in the community that girls are a source of wealth. Additionally, since most schools were submerged in water and closed, the girl child was exposed to sexual exploitation, teenage pregnancy, rape and physical violence since they stayed home.

In the months of April and May, 2022 again, there were instances of forced disarmament in Rubkona by a group of youth. However, the locals of Rubkona County remained friendly to humanitarian workers offering services to them and faced no insecurity challenges so far. The activities were able to be completed despite the context. There were no known cases of target beneficiaries getting infected with COVID-19. People have eventually adapted to living with the new normal.

### **1. Progress Summary;**

448 project key stakeholders were reached in Rubkona during the period Dec 2021-May 2022 including local government, community leaders and survivors through the following activities namely 32 through consultative meetings, 20 through phone calls, 29 through formation of saving groups, 30 through development of by-laws workshop, 71 with emergency dignity kits, 43 through policy dialogue, 100 through dialogues, 15 through updating of the referral pathway, 78 through training for local government and community leaders and 30 from livelihood. The numbers reached through distribution of ICE materials on COVID-19, awareness raising on referral pathway through radio talk shows, medical and risk management allowances, newsletters and distribution of hand washing facilities have not been included here.

### **2. THE KEY TASKS ACHIEVED IN THE REPORTING PERIOD.**

- **DIALOGUES WITH SURVIVORS ON HUMAN, LEGAL RIGHTS, JUSTICE ISSUES;**

4 dialogues on human, legal rights and justice issues with survivors were conducted with in Rubkona with 100 participants (78F & 22M) aimed at enhancing the knowledge of survivors on human, legal rights and also to ensure survivors take-action and claim their rights. Some of the women and adolescent girls in Rubkona were not aware about their rights and appreciated having learnt about their human rights and seek to claim their rights when infringed by anyone in the community.



Photograph of the participants during the dialogue on human rights in Rubkona

*Photo taken by: Emma Achan Cirino.*

#### • DISTRIBUTION OF IN-KIND START UP KITS;

30 women and adolescent girls were supported with in-kind start up kits in Rubkona. The assorted in-kind start up kits included items for the Bed sheet and tea business. Most of the women were not currently engaged in businesses before as they lacked resources but had the knowledge and skills for conducting the various businesses as they were initially engaged in conducting those businesses. The tea business received dozens of tea cups, plastic jugs, tea spoons, kettles, tin of milk, sack of charcoal, cooking stove, drum of water, tea trays, plastic cups, and sieves.

The bed sheet group received assorted rolls of clothes, rings of different sizes, boxes of needles, boxes of pencil, assorted boxes of thread. STEWARDWOMEN conducts routine visits at the business premises to monitor the operational progress and also to find out and address any challenges affecting the members of the group.



Photo of distribution of start-up kits in Rubkona.

#### • POLICY DIALOGUE ON JUSTICE AND PROTECTION NEEDS OF SURVIVORS;

2 policy dialogues on the justice and protection needs of survivors were conducted reaching 43 participants (35F & 8M) in Rubkona. The policy dialogue aimed at ensuring survivors participate in developing policies and strengthen their protection mechanisms. The major protection needs mentioned by participants were the boreholes as there was no functional boreholes following the flood and people have to get water at the river side, which is not very clean. The survivors also mentioned the issue of 3 schools in Rubkona being submerged in water during flooding, lack of plastic sheets for erecting shelter for IDPs in their settlement zones and intercommunal violence.



Photograph of participants including Chiefs during policy dialogue on justice and protection needs of survivors.

#### • COMMUNITY CONSULTATIVE MEETING TO IDENTIFY SURVIVORS WHO NEED MEDICAL, LEGAL AND LIVE HOOD ASSISTANCE;

32 survivors were identified in Rubkona as those who need support i.e. 2 survivors were identified with the need for legal assistance and 30 for livelihood assistance.



It should be noted that survivors who need these services are profiled in our survivor support center when they visit to seek services. STW has been conducting community awareness sessions to sensitize the community on the services available at the Survivor Support Centers.



Participants during consultative meeting in Rubkona.  
*Photo by: Stephen Madit.*



Photograph of STW staff in studio during the live radio talk show at KONDIAL FM on referral pathway in Rubkona.

#### • AWARENESS RAISING ON THE REFERRAL PATHWAY THROUGH RADIO TALK SHOW;

STW conducted awareness raising sessions through a live radio talk show on the referral pathway in Rubkona at Kondial FM. The session was conducted in the local dialect of Nuer as the station is mostly listened to by the elderly men, women, boys and girls and covers mostly areas in Unity State including Bentiu, Rubkona, IDP camp, Tong, Pakur and Dingding Payams among others reaching out to 15,000 people. The topics discussed included the available services from partners including the health services, PSS services, protection and security and the legal services. During the live radio talk show, there were 3 phone calls and 7 beeps. One of the callers was not aware about the legal services and wanted directions to our office and the contact details, which was shared. STEWARDWOMEN focused also on the legal services they offered to survivors of rape and early /child marriages and why it was advisable to go to High Court than the traditional court for such cases.

The team also emphasized on the need to seek medical attention within the 72 hour period especially for rape survivors to ensure they get the Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) to prevent HIV&STIs and unwanted pregnancy by use of emergency contraceptives.

#### FORMATION OF SAVING GROUPS;

1 women saving group was formed in Rubkona with 29 (28F &1M) participants aimed at ensuring women are able to save money in order to provide for their families and not rely on their husbands. Most of the women in Rubkona rely on the food rations from WFP and live from hand to mouth. The saving group will enable them to set money aside for future use as they take care of their families. The saving group formed is called 'MAL WOMEN VILLAGE SAVINGS & LOAN GROUP' and has saved a total of 52,000 SSP by the time of reporting and they meet every week. The harsh economic times & increase in prices of items in Rubkona and especially due to the previous floods, getting money has proven difficult and as a result, the women are not able to save diligently because they do not have



Photograph of members of MAL SAVING & LOANS GROUP during their weekly meetings.

*Photo by: Madit Stephen.*



**• LITIGATION OF CASES;**

STW has registered 6 cases of rape to be litigated in the forthcoming mobile court in Rubkona-Bentiu.

**• DISTRIBUTION OF DIGNITY KITS;**

In Rubkona, 10 survivors have received dignity kits. Additional 61 pieces will be provided to the survivors who visit the Survivor Support Center (SSC). Sanitary pads are not affordable by all and the women have had to use unhygienic methods during their menstrual cycles. The distribution of the dignity kits was a great help to the survivors in the IDP camp and host community.



A cross-section of the 10 women and girls who received dignity kits.

*Photo by: Emma Achan Cirino.*

**• PHONE CALLS ON HOTLINE NUMBER:**

+211176337844-Rubkona

STW has availed hotline numbers for each location where people can call to refer survivors who need support. 20 calls were received in Rubkona. 3 of the calls in Rubkona were from partners referring survivors of rape to our office while others called because they wanted to be assisted with jobs or money for food.

**• HAND WASHING CONTAINERS, SOAP, SANITIZERS, FACEMASKS;**

As a way of preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the community, STW distributed COVID-19 items to Rubkona family court, Survivor Support Center, Bentiu Police Station and the Bentiu Prisons, where survivors seek legal services. The In-Charge in Bentiu Prisons appreciated the items citing that they did not have any

of those hand washing containers or sanitizers in the Prison for a while. He said he will ensure everyone in the facility adhered to the covid-19 preventive measures by washing their hands with soap and water and sanitizing.



Photograph of prisons department receiving COVID-19 items from STW Team in Rubkona.

*Photo by: Emma Achan Cirino*

**• DEVELOP AND REVIEW OF THE REFERRAL PATHWAYS;**

STW together with other partners operating in Rubkona developed and reviewed the referral pathway for Rubkona. Various partners including both the national & international NGOs participated in updating the referral pathway which was last done in May, 2021.

The updated referral pathway for Rubkona is currently in use by survivors.



Photo of protection/GBV partners during review of the referral pathway in Rubkona.

*Photo by: Emma Achan Cirino .*

**• TRAINING WORKSHOP FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY LEADERS ON MANAGING RAPE AND EARLY CHILD MARRIAGES USING THE DEVELOPED TRAINING MANUAL;**



2 training workshops were conducted for the local government and community leaders on managing rape and early child marriages in Rubkona with 78 (49 F & 39M).



Photograph of participants interacting in plenary session during the training for local governments and community leaders. *Photo by: Madit Stephen.*

#### • DEVELOPMENT OF BYLAWS;

One session on the development of by-laws for the survivors was conducted reaching 30 (28F & 2M) aimed at ensuring the survivors in the new saving groups have ability to develop their own internal laws governing the saving group, including the name of the saving group, the amount to be saved, the amount to be loaned, who qualifies for loans and when to come for meetings among others. The MAL women saving group in Rubkona meets every Friday at 8;00 am and contribute 500 SSP per person.



Photograph of the Director General (DG) from the State Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare addressing the participants during the development of bylaws in Rubkona. *Photo by: Emma Achan Cirino.*

### 3. LESSONS LEARNED;

For purpose of gender balance, the Rubkona family court now has 2 women leaders who seat with the Chiefs to listen and decide cases in the community.

- The community in Rubkona has appreciated the need to ensure the girls are kept in school instead of being married off at an early age.
- Awareness on legal services in Rubkona has reached limited areas as there are people who do not know about such services as they live in remote areas in Rubkona County.

### 4. CHALLENGES AND ACTIONS TAKEN;

- Majority of people in the community are not aware about the referral pathway and only know about medical services. STW conducted a live radio talk show on awareness raising on the referral pathway in the local language so as to reach a wider population within Unity State.
- Some of the items for businesses were not available in Rubkona and as a result. STW procured them from Juba and sent them over.
- The women cannot join any women groups in the community without first consulting with their husbands and getting their approval and STW involves men when forming groups so that they are aware of what their wives will be doing.
- Majority of women in Rubkona are not involved in any income generating activities and they depend solely on their husbands for money for food.
- The Police Officers keep changing their stations every now and then, making it difficult to follow up cases with them. STW team has shared our contact details of focal person at police stations in Rubkona and Bentiu for easy referral of rape cases.
- Cases of early/child marriages are rampant during & after floods as most people loose their cattle in floods and as a result want to regain their wealth through marrying off their daughters.

## 5. QUOTES MADE DURING THE PROJECT;

• “The importance of the referral pathway explained is to ensure survivors report these cases of rape and early child marriages and receive support timely”.

*Stephen Madit, STW Paralegal in Rubkona during talk show to raise awareness on referral pathway.*

• “There is unequal right to education as most people only educate the boys while the girls are forced to remain home and do house chores”. *Nyamiet Rieng, dialogue participant in Rubkona.*

• “If parents are given awareness on the importance of education, they will value education for girls as much as boys”. *Elizabeth Nyakuoth, dialogue participant in Rubkona.*

• “Most decisions are made by the men and women do not get a chance to speak their minds”. *Nyataba Kei, dialogue participant in Rubkona.*



Photograph of one of the participants giving an example of a human right during dialogue sessions.

*Photo taken by: Emma Achan Cirino.*



Participants taking a group photo after the training on managing rape and early/child marriages for local governments and community leaders in Rubkona.

*Photo by: Madit Stephen.*

