

**A STUDY ON GIRL-CHILD PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING: A CASE
OF THE SHE LEADS PROJECT AT GIRL UP INITIATIVE UGANDA**

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CHAPTER ONE.

General Introduction

This study aims at examining and evaluating the impact of the She Leads project as an intervention on the effective participation of girls and young women in decision-making processes. This chapter includes the background, problem statement, objectives of the study, research questions and the justification of the study.

Historical Background.

Female participation in decision making processes has and is still limited in the different spheres globally. This does not excuse that there is an increase in the number of female representation in the different sectors that is to say in leadership structures. According to the World Bank in the Global Labor Force Participation rate, 2022. Women's participation globally women participation is 50% compared to 80% for men. This limits women's effective participation in decision making processes. A report Equal Power Now 2022 by Plan International on Girls, young women and political participation emphasized the different barriers to effective participation ranging from individual to structural reasons such as cultural and religious norms and beliefs, lack of skills and self-pity. All reports across the globe show that women representation has increased in the different sectors of life compared to 2015 and 2016 but still emphasize that regardless of the different interventions to boost women participation, it is still low and limited.

She Leads is a joint programme of Plan International Netherlands, Defence for Children-ECPAT Netherlands (DCI-ECPAT), African Women's Development and communication Network (FEMNET) and Terre Des Hommes Netherlands (TDH-NL). The technical partner is Equal Measures 2030. She leads main focus or goal is to empower girls and young women to become leaders with influence in decision making at any level. The project brings together women rights organizations, child rights organizations and (GYW) Girls and young women led groups for the aim of increasing sustainable influence of girls and young women (GYW) in decision making processes and transform gender norms in both formal and informal institutions following three major domains. The domains include;

(1) Girls and young women (GYW) and Civil Society Organisation Domain (GYW and CSO). This domain focuses majorly on GYW representation on the Civil Society executive boards in order to involve them in decision making concerning their well-being as girls and young women.

(2) Socio-cultural Domain. This domain focuses on stakeholders like religious leaders, cultural leaders held responsible for influencing girls and young women participation and representation in social, religious and cultural dialogues.

(3) Institutional Domain. This domain targets policy implementers at a higher level or government officials and institutions. For example in Uganda the targeted stakeholders include; Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development, members of parliament, local government and so many others.

She leads project focuses on countries and these include; Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Lebanon, Jordan. Most of the programming is targeting institutions and stakeholders in pan-African states, Middle East and at the global level.

Contextual Background

In Uganda, She leads project is a five year consortium project 2021-2025. She Leads is a gender transformative project that was launched on 13th October, 2021 presided by over by Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) Mrs. Dorothy Kisaka. The implementation of the She Leads project in Uganda is to empower girls and young women into leaders that can advocate for their desired changes and champion gender equality. The implementation of this project is carried out by the following organisations; **Girl Up Initiative Uganda (GUIU)**, **Karamoja Women Umbrella Organisation (KAWUO)**, **MUCOBADI** in partnership with Terre des Hommes (TDH-NL). **Integrated Disabled Women Activities (IDIWA)** in partnership FEMNET, **Youth Advocacy and Development Network (YADNET)** in partnership with Plan International and then The **Global Learning for Sustainability (GLS)**.

Implementation under Girl Up Initiative Uganda is done in the divisions of Kampala that is to say; Nakawa division, Makindye division, Rubaga division, Central division and Kawempe Division. In collaboration with different Civil Society Organisations within these different divisions, Girl Up Initiative Uganda emphasizes the forming of safe spaces where girls and young women can share and discuss different issues or topics that concern their well-being. Some of the topics include menstrual health, education, hygiene, climate change and action, norms and beliefs within their families and communities, and so many others. Girl Up Initiative Uganda in collaboration with the Girls and Young Women lobby and influence policies with government institution. For example the GYW where able to influence the Gender policy under the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development where they were able to advocate for breastfeeding centers in workplaces for mothers and so many other issues that concern girls and women.

Conceptual background

Girl child in the context of She Leads means any female between the ages of 14 to 25.

In this study, effective participation is defined as girls and young women's ability to perform their roles and responsibilities in decision-making processes at all levels.

Decision making in this study is defined as the making of choices by identifying a decision, gathering information and assessing alternative resolutions.

An intervention can be defined as any form of treatment or strategies that work best to improve the quality of life, outcomes and make a difference in what matters the most to people.

She Leads is an advocacy program that aims at empowering girls and young women to become their own advocates for the transformation of gender norms in both formal and informal institutions and increase the involvement of girls and young women in decision making processes focusing on three domains namely Civil Society Organization domain, Socio-cultural domain and institutional domain. All these domains have targeted major stakeholders.

Problem Statement

Girls and young women should be in position to advocate and transform gender norms. Through participation and representation on civil society executive boards, Socio-cultural dialogues and influence on policies concerning the female gender. Girls and young women representation in all the three areas is possible yet proper and effective participation is still limited. In Uganda, effective participation is still limited according to a survey report on Women's participation in politics at the Local government level 2021 submitted to UN Women emphasized that women effective participation regardless of the increase in women representation. In the report effective women participation is limited by the different norms and beliefs in different areas for example leadership opportunities are attached to men being naturally leaders which is not the case. Approximately 63% of girls and young women cannot effectively contribute to decision making processes in Uganda. This study examines the effective participation of girls and young women under the She Leads program on civil society executive boards, Socio-cultural dialogues and influence policies and changes in order to transform gender norms for female Empowerment.

Objectives of the study

1. To examine the involvement of Girls and Young women on Civil Society Executive boards of the different organizations. .
2. To assess the participation of girls and young women in Socio-cultural dialogues in their areas.

3. To examine the participation of girls and young women in policy making.

Research questions

1. How are Girls and young women involved in the decision making processes by the civil society organizations?
2. Are the girls and young women in position to effectively participate in Socio-cultural dialogues as a result of the She Leads intervention?
3. How and what have the girls and young women influenced as a result of their effective participation in line with policy making?

Justification of the study

The study is of good importance to the researcher, girls and young women at the organization, service providers, implementing partners and all the would be readers to understand the impact and influence the She Leads project as an intervention on the effective participation in decision making processes not only to the girls and young women in the organization but also to their families, schools and communities. The study also helped provide a clear insight to the girls and young women on their impact as advocates in challenging negative gender norms and also provide where necessary possible recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews the existing literature to explain the role of She leads in including Girls and young women in decision making processes.

Objective 1: Involvement of Girls and Young women in Decision making processes by Civil Society Organisations.

According to United Nations guiding principles, civil society organisations are non-state/ government, non-profit and voluntary entities formed in society and are separate from the government and the market. Civil society organisations are very important because the guarantee citizens have the ability to voice their opinions and engage with policymakers and influence public policy through promoting and safeguarding civil rights.

In an article by women deliver titled “Strengthen Girl’s and women’s political participation and decision making power” emphasizes that in decision making, women and girls still face a number of barriers such as socio-cultural norms which has limited good governance and involvement of girls and women. Basing on this article, civil society organisations can play an important role in providing girls and young women with spaces and platforms to air out their views and influence changes and policies concerning girls and young women.

FEMNET 2022, “What did African leaders in government, civil society and private sector promise?” commitments by African Civil Society Organisations where to ensure the involvement of girls and women in different areas that is ending gender based violence, enhancing economic justice and rights. Yet in order to achieve economic justice for girls and women, then they should be involved with effective participation in decision making processes is mandatory. Although we see very many Civil Society Organisations operating in Uganda that aim at amplifying voices of girls and women, many have failed to include them on the executive board. So it leaves me wondering how the girls and young women participate effectively.

Although there is a noticeable change in that some organisations have come up with advisory groups or reference groups that represent other girls and young women in executive meetings. For example the United Nations advisory group, Girl Up initiative has both an advisory group and a reference group. This may reflect that girls and young women representation and participation has increased, this research desires to examine their involvement on the executive boards so that actually the decision making process concerning women.

Objective 2: To assess the participation of Girls and Young Women in socio-cultural dialogues within the communities.

The socio-cultural groups include participants like cultural/ traditional leaders, local government leaders and religious leaders. Uganda has about 56 cultural groups ranging from chiefdoms and kingdoms because of the different tribes within the country. Additionally the country has majorly three religions that is Christianity, Islam and indigenous religions. Ugandans have deep respect for their religions, cultural norms, values, beliefs and even the cultural leaders therefore these religious and cultural leaders play a significant role in either supporting positive gender norms or promoting and maintaining the negative gender norms.

A study report by students from the Durban University of Technology "Critical socio-cultural factors affecting performance of women in leadership positions in Quasi-government organisations in Zimbabwe", showed that the under participation of women in leadership positions was highly influenced by the socio-cultural factors. The study concluded that the leadership gap between women and men in "Quasi-government" organisations are because of the society and cultural views that discourage women to occupy top positions regardless of the qualifications.

A research paper "the role of culture in influencing sexual and reproductive health of pastoral adolescent girls and Karamoja sub-region in Uganda" shows how socio-cultural dialogues influence girls sexual behaviour and resistance towards sexual reproductive health. This paper gives an insight on how such dialogues emphasise negative and discriminatory gender norms. The paper additionally shows the significance of socio-cultural dialogues in transforming the negative norms to positive gender norms.

The She Leads project in the second domain targets religious and cultural leaders to provide and ensure that girls and young women are given platforms and spaces in community dialogues and when making decisions. This research desires examine and assess the involvement of girls and young women in such dialogues concerning the wellbeing of women in the community, have religious leaders started to include women in the different church or mosque activities rather than leaving them behind, what have these leaders done so far in transforming the negative gender norms?

Objective 3. Examine the participation of girls and young women in the policy making process.

Participation is an action and for one to fully participate, they must be involved from start to finish. Participation must also be effective which makes it a fundamental human or citizen right.

The Beijing Declaration 1995 set a target of gender equality in political decisions which is seemingly failing twenty-nine years later. Political participation of women is very low in different countries worldwide which makes it obvious that women do not participate in the policy making process. Emmanuel. B, Women in policy making in Africa, reveals that participation is a fundamental citizen yet the unequal gender relations make it impossible for women to exercise this fundamental right.

Call to Action on Young women's political participation and leadership (2020) shows that young women are the least represented in leadership positions which is clearly evident in Uganda's parliament. Years and years presentation of leadership is limited to elder women yet we are in changing times that need people that can adopt to the different changes and shape policies that are actually linked to the changes happening. To ensure political participation and leadership, the first step is involvement of girls and young women in policy making processes, listen to their views and put them into consideration.

She leads project targets political institutions to enable meaningful participation of GYW in policy making processes and increased will to involve girls and women in decision making processes. Therefore this study is to examine the effectiveness of the GYW participation.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction.

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the methodology to be employed during the study. In order to lay the groundwork for the subsequent exploration of the study, the researcher case study research design under descriptive studies. According to Creswell (2014), this research design aids to explore the program in-depth focusing on the participants experience and aid collect detailed data from the participants.

To analyze the data the researcher used qualitative analysis approach that is narrative analysis. Narrative analysis is appropriate for qualitative research because it guided the researcher into understanding the overall experience, feelings and participation of the girls and young women in decision making based on experience within the program.

Research design.

Case study research design was employed in this study with a combination of qualitative approach to data collection. This research design enabled the researcher to explore, understand, and develop new insights into the impact of She leads as a program in the participation of girls and young women in decision making processes specifically at Girl Up Initiative Uganda.

Study population

According to Majid (2018), a study population is the population the researcher intends to study.

The girls and young women

The main study population in this research were the girls and young women under the She leads project at Girl Up Initiative Uganda.

Sample Size

The sample size for the qualitative data was calculated using the Yamane formula with a 95% confidence level and 10% precision.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

From the formula

n= sample size

N= Total population

e = level of precision (0.1)

Estimated population and sample size of the study (Smith, 2018)

Showing estimated population and sample size of the study (Source: primary data)

No	Sample category	Estimated study population	Sample size	Sampling method
	Girls and young women	30	23	Random
	Total	30	23	

Sampling Techniques

The researcher employed the approach of purposive and random sampling from the population. Since the study focuses on the understanding how the She Leads intervention has impacted the effective participation of Girls and young women in decision making processes, the researcher selected participants that directly fit these criteria relevant to the research questions. This criterion is aimed to capture and

explore the impact of the intervention on effective participation in decision making processes at all levels for girls and young women at Girl Up Initiative Uganda. Random sampling will ensure that the research findings are a representation of the entire population allowing generalizable.

Data Collection Methods

The researcher utilized qualitative data collection methods and these included in-depth interviews. The researcher also considered both primary and secondary data. The primary data was utilized through the use of interviews with girls and young women. Secondary data was sought from existing studies, journals, and articles relevant to this study. The researcher also considered data from existing organization records like activity reports and documented success stories in order to compare the findings and also provide a detailed impact of the intervention.

Data Collection Instruments

INTERVIEW GUIDE

The researcher conducted in-depth interviews to gain insights from the respondents. This enabled the researcher to gather valuable experiences from the girls and young women and how She leads has impacted their decision making in all aspects. Collecting data with the help of the interview guide permitted sufficient flexibility in the structure of questioning to allow the respondent to respond promptly to what is relevant. (Johnson, 2020)

DATA ANALYSIS

The qualitative data obtained was analyzed using narrative analysis. Narrative analysis guided the researcher to give a comprehensive exploration and understand the overview experience, feelings and participation of the girls and young women in decision making based on experience within the program.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Ethical guidelines were followed throughout the study in order to ensure rights and protection of participants and below are some of the guidelines that the researcher will consider.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Confidentiality of the information shared by participants was guaranteed. The researcher used pseudonyms when reporting the findings and their identities are only be known to the researcher to create a safe and secure environment for them.

Informed consent

The researcher sought for verbal consent from participants before they participate in the research. Participation was voluntary and informed.

CHAPTER FOUR

Introduction.

This chapter represents the finding from the qualitative study conducted on girl child participation in decision making. A case of She Leads project at Girl Up initiative. The study involved in depth interviews with girls and young women to understand how as a result of the She leads project what the state of the current girl child participation is.

Findings

Objective 1: involvement of Girls and Young women on CSO executive boards.

The major objective of the CSO domain of the She Leads project is to ensure capacity strengthening, movement building for GYW rights, joint learning, linking and networking.

Findings.

Out of the fifteen (15) Civil Society Organisations under Girl Up Initiative Uganda, only three (3) one in central division, another in Nakawa division and the other in Kawempe division have girls on the CSO executive boards.

According to the she leads theory of change, CSOs are to ensure that girls and young women leadership skills are improved by providing spaces for leadership on executive boards, adult-led organisations to engage GYW in advocacy related cases, CSOs organizing safe space meetings for GYW. GYWs on executive boards are representatives of all girls and young women and are supposed to front other girls' issues to the board committees.

The three different GYWs on the CSO executive boards reported that their major work on the board revolves around advising on the new trends of advocacy all over the world and how they can be implemented to benefit their communities. GYW Y from central division narrated that on her CSO executive board, there are two young women from different projects. On the board, they are responsible for representing other girls on matters concerning health and overall wellbeing. Each board member has other duties assigned by the executive director and her role as a GYW is to draft possible implementation plans following the current trends of advocacy. GYW N from Kawempe division narrated that as a board member, she was given an opportunity to work with the organisation and drafted a program. The program's main goal was to ensure that schools in Kawempe have access to clean water and sanitary towels for girls. The program is still on-going and so far five (5) schools in Kawempe with the help of the organisation, they are teaching girls how to make reusable pads.

Furthermore, this study found out that actually no GYW is fully represented on CSO executive boards because most organisations prefer individuals that can invest and be part of the organisations losses and profits which then excludes the girls and young

women representation and involvement. Additionally, the research unveiled that yes civil societies are actually taking in advisory groups rather than actually including girls and young women onto executive boards. So the advisory groups are then supported to become girl-led advocacy group. Below are the current girl-led advocacy groups working hand in hand with civil society organisations;

Reference group: This is a girl and young women group that also in turn acts as an advisory group to most civil society organisations in Kampala. It has 11 girls to represent all the other girls at regional level in Central region. Girls and young women in the She Leads program, raise the issues, problems and challenges to the reference group so that the leadership in the group so that these challenges are pushed, aired out and tabled to the different stakeholders.

National Girls Desk. This is also a girl and young women group but at the national level, therefore it fronts all GYW challenges and problems to the country director of the She leads program who then in turn guides in the creation of platforms and organize meetings with different stakeholders.

GYWs on executive boards reported that there is no clear channel of involvement as individuals in the a GYW from Kawempe division reported that “I am only called to help and provide assistance but not represent my fellow girls and young women” this clearly shows that organisations have not yet embraced the involvement and participation of girls and young women on civil society organisations executive boards.

GYWs in advisory groups seem to be doing better than those on CSO executive boards when asked on how the advisory groups have improved their advocacy and leadership skills, two GYW from the reference group reported that” being part of this group has granted us more opportunities to meet with stakeholders in all domains of the project, make reports and position papers to different organs of the state and attend meetings, study seminars with different ministries thus an improvement in the advocacy skills.” Another GYW reported that “the National Girls Desk has really improved my leadership skills because I am the current vice chairperson, it has given space to understand and work with different girls and young women, understand how to behave and conduct sessions with different individuals.” The major challenge is the zero to no involvement with the GYW on the executive boards and even when an issue is raised by a GYW, the board members never take it serious.

The different CSOs also reported and I quote of the Executive Director of an organisation in Kawempe division, “it is very difficult to add an additional board member when other individuals are not satisfied with the decision because it would mean that as an organisation, we would have to change the whole structure which might then affect the daily functioning and running of activities” this actually supports the existing literature that indicates how organisations are failing to involve and allow GYW to effectively participate on CSO executive boards for the

improvement of girl and young women representation in matters concerning their well-being and health.

Objective 2: To assess the participation of Girls and Young Women in socio-cultural dialogues within the communities.

The major outcome of these dialogues is increased acceptance of positive social gender norms, the influential cultural and religious leaders in the community publicly question the validity of the different social norms. In this domain boys and men are also engaged to champion change in transforming the different gender norms.

Findings.

With socio-cultural dialogues, there is a significant increase in the number of GYW's that have participated and even given platform to raise issues concerning girls and their wellbeing.

Improved Involvement in decision making processes.

A GYW in Kawempe division reported "Yes I have always been given a platform in our community meetings, the first time I was addressing the problem of drug consumption and abuse that GYW's in the Kawempe safe space had raised. The drug abuse had led to an increase in rape and defilement cases by men and boys who were high on drugs, gang violence and theft. So I was given the opportunity by the area's councilor to talk to the community so that we can draw solutions, I was happy that the conclusions drawn were put into use and drug abuse and consumption has been reducing gradually."

GYW X in Makindye safe space reported that "I was given an opportunity to speak to the community on the issue of gender equality in education by the woman councilor of Makindye. I educated the community on the importance of taking girls to school and ensuring that the education, necessities are all equally provided rather than focusing on boys alone. This was because the rate of school dropouts among girls in the area had increased because parents only felt the need to educate boys alone, after my presentation in 2023, there is a change because now many girls in Makindye are going to school."

Many GYW's noted that girls and women in the community are very involved in the dialogues and that community behavior and discrimination towards girls and young women has greatly reduced in the different divisions. Also religious, local and cultural leaders have vowed to always engage men and boys in challenging the existing negative gender norms within the community and country at large.

The registered change within the different communities by the GYW's supports the existing literature on the influence of socio-cultural leaders and community dialogues

on changing the existing negative norms to positive gender norms. Although the community dialogues have not yet addressed the gap between men and women leadership, the study showed that such dialogues must be considered as a starting block to ensure the involvement and effective participation of girls and women in community, local and government leadership.

Objective 3: To evaluate the participation of girls and young women in policy formulation and review.

According to the She leads theory of Change, this domain is more focused on lobbying, advocacy and evidence generation research where political institutions enable meaningful participation of GYW and one of the indicators should be increased political will to change decision making structures and promote gender equality.

This study evaluated the participation of GYW in policy formulation and review and the participation is quite high which is an improvement but the follow-ups on the commitments made by the policy makers is very lacking and more needs to be done.

Findings.

The GYWs have had meetings with government bodies such as KCCA, UWOPA, Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development on a number of policies such as the employment act, marriage bill, popularization of the succession amendment Act, Human Assisted Reproductive technology Bill, National youth policy and the Alcohol Bill. In all these meetings, views and matters for change or proposals from the GYWs were welcomed.

GYW X reported “while reviewing the employment act, one of the major proposals from us was ensuring breastfeeding centers for mothers at every work place so that then children aren’t left home starving. We also advocated that the act should emphasize that women must be in position to hold key position in different workplaces regardless of the age, marital status and number of children. Additionally we advocated for an increase of the minimum wage and the agreed amount at the time was one hundred thirty six thousand (136000) Ugandan shillings.”

GYW Z reported “the alcohol bill as the GYWs we focused on the need to increase the age of alcohol consumption and make it strictly 21 and in order for one to buy alcohol, they must present an ID that shows and indicates that they are above 21 years of age. More emphasis on the issue that Children especially young girls should not work in bars or any other place that sells alcoholic drinks this is because the children policy stipulates that children can start working at 16 years of age but with minimal work and working in the bar is considered minimal work by most people so as GYWs, we found it puzzling for children to work in bars thus needed that completely out”

GYWs that represented the girls during the review of the Human assisted reproductive technology bill with the Uganda Parliamentary Women Association reported “with this bill we advocated for the protection of surrogate mothers, this is because even with this bill in existence most women do not know about it thus they end up being exploited by the couples they are helping. Additionally, we wanted to ensure that there is clear law enforcement on the mistreatment of the surrogate mothers.”

It is essential to note that participation is a key human right yet participation without results could be considered effortless and non-yielding in Uganda. The findings support the existing literature concerning women effective participation in policy formulation, a survey report on women participation in policy formulation showed that all over the world, only 13% of women effectively participate in policy formulation processes and reviews. Another survey report on Women’s participation in politics at local government level in Uganda emphasized that women effective participation is very minimal regardless of the increase in the “on-surface” participation.

Additional findings.

A table summarizing the demographic information of the GYW's interviewed.

	AGE	EDUCATION LEVEL	HOW THEY JOINED	CURRENT STATE/ SUPPORT FROM THE PROJECT
GYW 1	14	Primary	Through a CSO	Confidence
GYW 2	13	Primary	Through a CSO	Confidence
GYW 3	15	Primary	Through a CSO	Confidence
GYW 4	17	O' level	Through a CSO	Exposure
GYW 5	15	O' level	Through a CSO	Platform for engagement
GYW 6	15	O' level	Through a CSO	Leadership skills
GYW 7	18	A' level	Through a CSO	Capacity building
GYW 8	16	Primary	Through a CSO	Platform for engagement
GYW 9	20	A' level	Religious leader	Public speaking/confidence
GYW 10	21	Vocational school	Friend	Exposure
GYW 11	19	A' level	Through a CSO	Exposure
GYW 12	19	University	Through a CSO	Confidence
GYW 13	18	O' level	Through a CSO	Exposure
GYW 14	21	University	Local leader	Platform for engagement
GYW 15	22	University	Through a CSO	Platform for engagement
GYW 16	22	University	Through a CSO	Exposure
GYW 17	18	A' level	Through a CSO	Capacity building
GYW 18	19	Vocational school	Through a CSO	Capacity building
GYW 19	15	O' level	Through a CSO	Exposure
GYW 20	23	University	Friend	Platform for engagement
GYW 21	23	Vocational school	Through a CSO	Confidence
GYW 22	17	O' level	Through a CSO	Exposure
GYW 23	20	O' level	Through a CSO	Platform for engagement

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

Introduction.

This study explored Girl Child participation in decision making. A case of the She Leads project in Girl Up initiative Uganda. This chapter enshrines discussions based on the objectives, literature review and the findings from the study conducted. Furthermore, this chapter gives a conclusion and recommendations based on the different findings. The findings not all give an insight into the current states of girl child participation in decision making, but will also foster further research into the participation of women in decision making at different levels within the country.

Discussions.

Objective 1: involvement of GYW on Civil Society Executive Boards.

CSO executive boards usually undergo three stages that is the founding board, governing and resourcing board respectively for a fully functional civil society organisation. Basing on the roles of the board members on each stage, GYW can be involved in each and every stage especially if the organisation is dealing with children, girls and women.

The civil society organisations under Girl Up Initiative Uganda She Leads project are majorly still on the founding stage with very few advanced to the governing board. If a girl is involved as one of the founding board member, it automatically there would be a sense of belonging, understanding of the organization's goals, aim and objectives and a desire to actually meet the set objectives. Different studies show that the founding stage of board is the easiest and best to involve girls and women because in this stage decisions are majorly informal and leadership is also of consensus. This indicates that if a girl is added onto such a board, a shaping occurs that will enhance actual communication between the GYW representative, the organisation and the other girls and young women.

Additionally both existing literature and the findings indicated the significant rise in the use or creation of advisory groups rather than actual involvement of girls on executive boards. Although having GYW advisory groups can be viewed as involvement and participation, the researcher thinks it's very absurd. There is a clear difference between "being a board member" and being an advisory group member meaning these two cannot be the same. An advisory group has specified tasks that actually presented to the executive director of the organisation and the major task is to just provide advice on specific topics and this is usually when asked to actually provide advice. It is important to further more understand that advisory groups serve a maximum of one and a half (1.5) years. Which eventually broadens the gap between what needs to be done and what is actually done by the organisation. Now a board

member is actually more involved in the organization's structure, principle, activities, public outlook and so many others. A board member is an actual representative of the organisation at different occasions. Although organisations are adopting to advisory groups, these groups do not effectively involve the girls in decision making processes. The ideal would be that for each advisory group, one or two of the members would be on the executive board yet from the findings of the study none of this is the reality.

Additionally the study uncovered that CSO leaders clearly have a misconception about an ideal executive board limited to monetary value. The whole concept that a board members is only capable of bringing money into the organisation overshadows the fact that knowledge and other skills is also a resource. This has greatly hindered the involvement and effective participation of girls and young women in decision making processes especially with matters concerning their wellbeing.

The project implementers should clearly review and educate both the GYWs and the CSOs because of the wide knowledge gap. The findings indicated that both are not fully aware of the functions of the different board members. This only zeros down to the fact that involvement of GYWs on executive boards will remain extremely low if proper training, education and awareness are not conducted.

Objective 2. Participation of GYWs in socio-cultural dialogues.

Socio-cultural dialogues foster exchange of ideas and solutions to particular problems or issues from all perspectives. Social problems affect every member of the community regardless of age, culture, social capital and so on. In another context, gender inequality is proving to be a social problem making it an issue that needs to be addressed with utmost urgency.

The findings indicated that socio-cultural dialogues are fostering and championing the involvement of the girl child in decision making processes in the different communities around Kampala. Not only in Kampala because existing literature from

Karamoja region indicated that cultural leaders also joined the move to girl child participation in decision making, some are taking it upon themselves to even popularize acts directly affecting women such as the succession act, education policy and so many others.

Basing on the findings, the researcher strongly agrees that socio-cultural dialogues should be the first stage or move to transforming negative gender norms and involving girls and women in decision making processes across cultures and religions. This is because Uganda is heavily a cultural and religious country, people are generally immersed in their cultures and religions thus making them the highest influencers both at local and national levels more than any other government organ. Therefore in order to influence the change in public opinion concerning girls and women, such dialogues are extremely important.

Objective 3. Evaluate the participation of GYW in the policy making process.

The findings indicated an “on surface” participation rather than effective participation of girls and women in decision making concerning policy making and formulation. Policy making is a process with a number of stages ranging from issue or problem identification to policy change. These stages include; problem identification, research, options development, policy legitimation, policy implementation, policy evaluation and lastly policy change. Each of these stages requires the effective participation and involvement of girls and young women. Although the government agencies seem to only recall that during the policy evaluation and change stages.

Uganda’s leadership is 66% men and 34% women, out of the 34% only about 2% are actually girls and young women. It leaves one wondering that in the constantly changing world how does the old generation keep up with the current trends that influence people’s behavior and how are the formulated policies actually meeting the needs of the younger generations. Policies formulated directly or indirectly affect everyone including girls, women and children for example the youth policy, education policy and so on. The main challenge with policy makers is that they never consult the parties affected and influenced by the policy throughout the stages of formulation which then results into policies with no valuable achievements.

The findings indicated that yes policy makers are involving girls and young women in the policy making process but majorly at the evaluation and policy change stages which makes such participation “on surface”. Additionally the findings furthermore indicates that regardless of the involvement, none of the GYW ideas and matters have been put into considerations meaning the policy makers just make commitments to include a particular clause yet at the end do not include it in the policy. So this study poses a question to the policy makers whether this is the true meaning of involvement of women and girls in decision making and policy making?

Basing on the findings, policy makers have a lot of matters to sort through ranging from personal views to the national and government views on the involvement of young people both girls and boys alike. An old generation will look at old tactics yet there needs to be a balance and this can only be achieved with effective participation and involvement of the young generation in policy making as part of decision making.

Conclusion.

The study discovered that the girls and young women in the She leads project at Girl Up initiative Uganda are of various ages and education backgrounds. Although the project focuses on the major three domains that is CSO and GYW domain, socio-cultural and political institutions for the involvement of GYWs in decision making processes, more needs to be done at the family level. The interviews conducted provided an insight on how GYWs are empowered to deal with the different national and community stakeholders but not their families. The study also discovered that capacity building and trainings have built and boasted GYW participation in decision making processes in all the three domains. The study also uncovered that the GYWs are ready for change and transformation yet the sought after stakeholders are still redundant on the involvement of girl child in decision making.

Recommendations.

The government should work and respect the opinions of the GYWs in order to realize the change. It is important to understand that government plays a huge influence on all the other stakeholders, therefore if government could enforce and emphasize the involvement of GYWs then other agencies would follow suit.

GYWs must learn how to lobby for opportunities for growth and advocacy on their own because after the project ends, most of them have no future plans or goals of advocacy which means their journey of advocacy is strongly attached to the project and organisation.

To the project officers, more needs to be done to ensure that GYWs and the stakeholders actually understand the goals and objectives of the project.

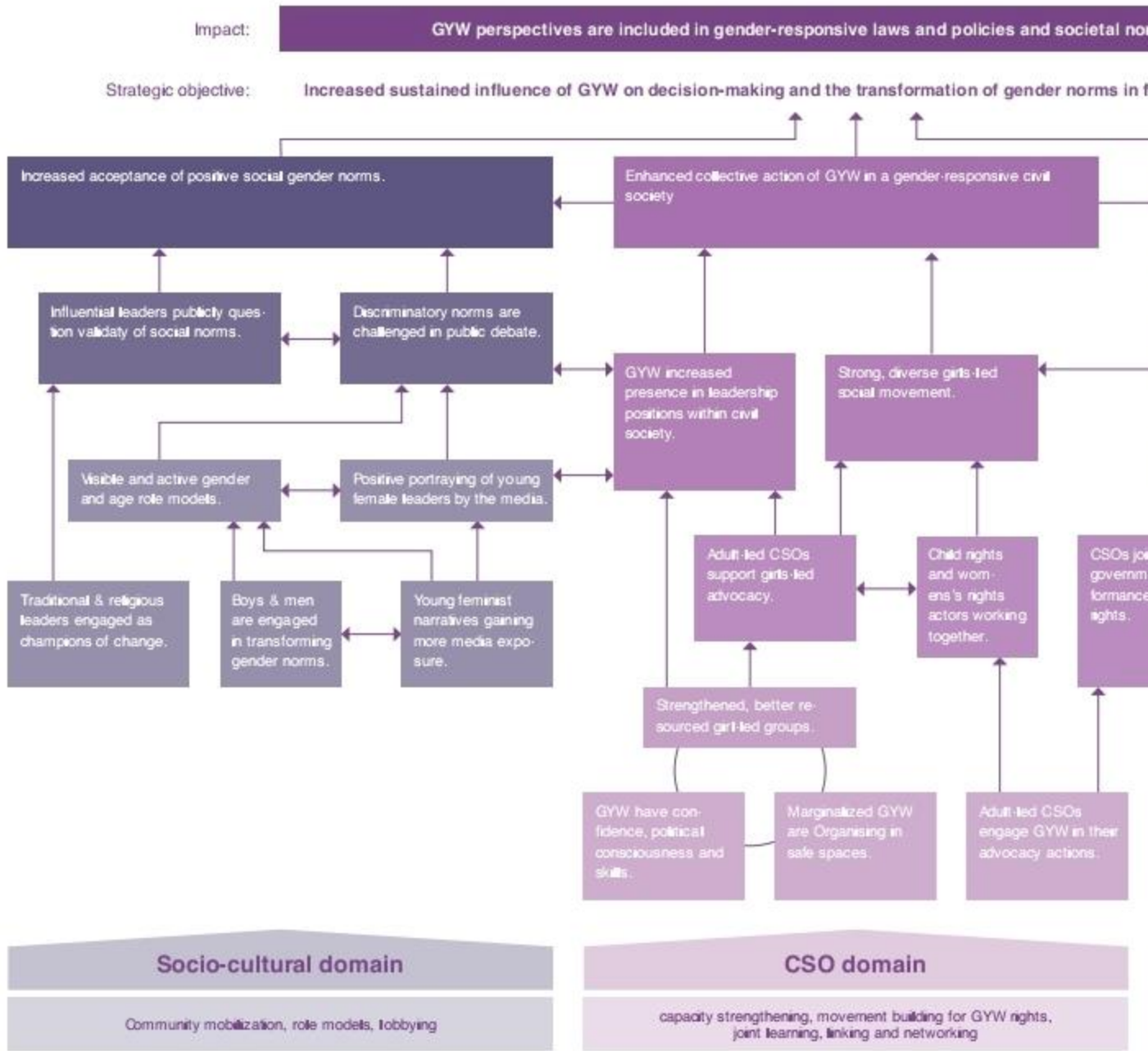
APPENDIX ONE: INTERVIEW GUIDE.

1. How and when did you join the She Leads program?
2. What is your level of education?
3. What support has She Leads provided to you in order to focus and grow your advocacy for the participation of girls and young women?
4. As a GYW, are you on any civil society (CSO) executive board?
5. What do you do as a GYW on the CSO executive board?

6. How often are you present during board meeting?
7. Are you given a chance to speak to other board members?
8. How has being part of the executive board of the CSO influenced your advocacy and leadership skills to foster growth for other girls and young women?
9. Have you ever participated in any social or cultural meeting within your community?
10. Have you ever been given a platform to speak in community or cultural meetings?
11. And if yes what did you speak or talk about?
12. Have you ever had an opportunity to meet up with policy formulators and implementers?
13. On what policies?
14. Whether the reviews and matters raised by GYWs put into consideration?

APPENDIX TWO: SHE LEADS THEORY OF CHANGE (TOC)

She Leads theory of change



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