

MARCH 2026 NEWSLETTER



80,000+

vulnerable individuals were reached through AWYAD's interventions across Uganda in March.



Welcome to the March 2026 edition of the AWYAD Times. This issue highlights key activities and events, showcasing our progress and community impact.

This newsletter reflects our commitment to learning, accountability, and sharing knowledge. We sincerely thank everyone who contributed.

We encourage you to stay engaged by sharing your articles, insights, and feedback as we continue working together to uplift our communities.

Regards,
AWYAD Communication Team

Empowering Communities Through AWYAD's Ongoing Efforts

STEPS Project Closes, Leaving Lasting Protection IMPACT in Nakivale

AWYAD Amplifies Protection, Education Support in Oruchinga and Kyaka II refugee settlements

AWYAD Strengthens Youth and Women Livelihoods in Kyegegwa District

AWYAD Strengthens Protection for Refugee Women and Children in western Uganda

AWYAD intervention returns teenage mothers, keeps learners in school in west Nile

AWYAD Champions GBV Prevention Efforts in Urban Refugee Communities

EU-FUNDED Project amplifies fight against Child Labour in Busoga

International Women's Day Celebrations



STEPS PROJECT CLOSES, LEAVING LASTING PROTECTION IMPACT IN NAKIVALE

The STEPS project concluded in March, marking the end of a multi-year initiative to strengthen gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and child protection in vulnerable communities.

In its final month, **30 child protection cases**—including separation, neglect and abuse—were recorded. Through follow-up and referrals, **20 cases** were successfully resolved, enabling affected children to access care and protection services.

GBV prevention and response activities continued to show results. In March, **450 women and adolescent girls** participated in Women and Girls' Safe Space activities, while **133 women and girls** received targeted GBV information, counselling and skills support. Over the project's lifetime, more than **5,300 women and girls** were reached through safe-space programming and prevention initiatives.

Support to vulnerable households also included material assistance. A total of 65 foster parents, including **15 supported** in March, received essential items to care for children in their homes.

Overall, **58 children** were supported through foster care, with **23** remaining in foster placements at the time of project closure. Items were also distributed to children in foster care and breastfeeding mothers to improve household wellbeing.

“Women and girls are now more aware of their rights and where to seek support, while communities are increasingly taking responsibility to prevent violence,” a project official said.



Women's Day Celebration Amplifies Call for Rights and Justice

The final month of the STEPS project coincided with the commemoration of International Women's Day, marked on March 10, 2026, at Nakivale Basecamp.

The event brought together about **240 participants**, including refugee women, host community members, community leaders and humanitarian partners, under the theme Rights, Justice and Action for All Women and Girls.

Through drama, music, poetry and community dialogue, women reflected on progress made in preventing gender-based violence while calling for increased access to justice, economic empowerment and sustained protection services.

Speakers emphasised that continued support for women's livelihoods and community engagement is critical to maintaining the gains achieved following the closure of the STEPS project.

Family-level prevention remained a key focus. In March, more than **300 parents and caregivers** participated in positive parenting sessions promoting non-violent discipline. Since project inception, **2,086 parents and caregivers** benefited from the programme.

Community engagement strengthened prevention efforts, with **232 community members** reached through door-to-door GBV awareness in March, contributing to a cumulative reach of **4,023 people**. In addition, 55 police officers and health workers were trained to improve survivor-centred response and child protection services.

As the project came to a close, stakeholders called for continued community leadership and cooperation to sustain the gains made and protect women and children beyond the project's lifespan.

Success Story: When Support Turned Into a Safe Home

When the STEPS project arrived in her community, Mariama never imagined it would change the course of her family's life. Struggling to care for her children amid violence and poverty, she was identified through community outreach and linked to support. Her child was placed in safe foster care, and the foster family received essential items to ensure proper care.

With counselling, parenting support and follow-up, Mariama slowly rebuilt stability. By the time STEPS came to an end in March, her family had been safely reunited—stronger, supported and hopeful. Her story mirrors that of thousands reached by the project, proving that timely protection and community care can turn crisis into recovery.

In March, AWYAD, through the **MOFA-INSPIRE project**, intensified interventions aimed at protecting children and promoting education in Oruchinga and Kyaka II refugee settlements amid rising cases of child labour and low school attendance, largely driven by reduced household incomes and declining humanitarian assistance.

The interventions were implemented at a critical time when economic pressures were increasingly forcing children out of school and into hazardous labour.

AWYAD carried out the activities in collaboration with the **OPM, UNHCR and other humanitarian partners** to address emerging child protection risks.

During the month, **905 learners** were reached through child protection awareness sessions in schools, focusing on children's rights, prevention of abuse and the dangers of hazardous work, including sand mining and casual labour.

"These sessions have helped parents and children understand why education must come first, even when times are hard," said a community member in Oruchinga.

At community level, **846 parents and caregivers** participated in dialogue sessions on positive parenting, child protection and the importance of keeping children in school.



Psychosocial Support in Schools

In addition, AWYAD provided psychosocial support to **1,020 learners** through Team Up sessions conducted in selected primary schools. The activities focused on stress management, teamwork, inclusion and conflict resolution.

Teachers reported improved learner participation and classroom behaviour following the sessions.

Women's Day Highlights Rights and Justice

AWYAD supported the commemoration of **International Women's Day on March 10**, which attracted **536 participants**, including refugee women, host community members and partners.

Held under the theme **"Scaling Up Investments to Accelerate Access to Justice for All Women and Girls in Uganda,"** the event featured drama, music and dialogue. Women called for improved access to justice, economic empowerment and continued protection support, noting that poverty and dependence remain key drivers of violence in refugee communities.

AWYAD Amplifies Protection, Education Support in Refugee Settlements





AWYAD Strengthens Youth and Women Livelihoods in Kyegegwa District

Thanks to the **Agriculture Growth and Innovation for Livelihood Enhancement (AGILE) Project**, African Women and Youth Action for Development (AWYAD) has scaled up efforts to improve mental wellbeing, financial inclusion and livelihoods among youth and women through a series of targeted interventions.

In a bid to strengthen psychosocial wellbeing, AWYAD completed **Problem Management Plus (PM+)** sessions for 310 young adults in **March 2026**, equipping participants with practical skills to manage stress, solve everyday problems and build stronger social support systems. The sessions have contributed to improved wellbeing and productivity within participating communities.

To enhance field operations and community outreach, 33 AGILE extension workers received branded visibility materials, including umbrellas, raincoats, T-shirts, gumboots and reflector jackets. The support improved safety, identification and professionalism. Alongside this, AWYAD conducted a **Training of Trainers on VSLA methodology and financial management**, benefiting 48 extension workers and strengthening their capacity in group leadership, savings mobilisation, loan administration and accountability.



Strengthening household economic resilience remained a key focus, with AWYAD advancing financial inclusion through **Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) mentorship**, supporting 1,176 youth and women group members to improve savings practices, loan management and group governance. To reinforce these efforts, **VSLA kits were distributed to 44 savings groups**, providing cash boxes and record-keeping materials that promote transparency, accountability and effective financial management while enabling members to invest in livelihood activities.

Beyond community-level interventions, AWYAD participated in an **EU-GIZ AGILE Project field visit in March, in Kyegegwa District**, aimed at reviewing progress in the coffee and horticulture value chains. The visit engaged vocational training institutions, nursery operators, farmer enterprises and savings groups in **Kyaka II Refugee Settlement**, highlighting ongoing efforts to strengthen skills development, market linkages and inclusive livelihood opportunities for youth, women and refugees.





AWYAD INTERVENTION RETURNS TEENAGE MOTHERS, KEEPS LEARNERS IN SCHOOL IN WEST NILE

AWYAD SUPPORTED OVER 200 SCHOOLS AND REACHED MORE THAN 16,000 LEARNERS WITH SRHR AND LIFE-SKILLS EDUCATION UNDER THE PROTECT PROJECT IN WEST NILE.

THE INTERVENTIONS ADDRESSED SCHOOL DROPOUT, TEENAGE PREGNANCY AND SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN PAKWACH, NEBBI AND MARACHA DISTRICTS.



More than **16,000 learners** in Pakwach, Nebbi and Maracha districts have remained in school following an intervention by AWYAD.

The initiative, implemented under the PROTECT SRHR Project, targeted teenage pregnancy, school dropout and sexual and gender-based violence.

443 senior teachers from **221 schools** were trained to identify and follow up learners at risk of dropping out, while **16,575 learners** received age-appropriate sexuality education through school clubs.

As part of community go-back-to-school campaigns, **123 teenage mothers** and **104 out-of-school youths** were reintegrated into schools across the three districts.

In addition, **300 cultural leaders** were trained to promote adolescent health services and discourage harmful practices linked to early marriage.

District education officials say the intervention has strengthened school retention, particularly among girls.

The project, funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, is being implemented with partners including World Vision Uganda



“Teenage mothers are slowly returning to school because the community is now more supportive.”

AWYAD CHAMPIONS GBV PREVENTION EFFORTS IN KAMPALA'S REFUGEE COMMUNITIES



Across Makindye, Ndejje, Wakaliga and Nakulabye, AWYAD and its partners conducted sensitisation sessions that reached **160 community members from more than ten nationalities**, focusing on GBV prevention, positive masculinities, sexual and reproductive health services and psychosocial support.

In addition, **over 75 parents and caregivers** in Namugongo and Kawempe were reached through age-appropriate awareness sessions on education, health services and informed decision-making.

Thanks to the UN Women Spotlight Initiative project, with funding from the NRC, in partnership with UNHCR and other stakeholders. AWYAD has stepped up efforts to prevent GBV and improve access to SRHR, reaching more than **260 refugees and host community members** across Kampala during March.

As part of its prevention strategy, AWYAD engaged **16 Sudanese refugee women leaders and male role models** in community dialogues aimed at strengthening GBV prevention and response. Participants underscored the need for continued capacity building in case management and referral systems.

AWYAD also joined national and community-level commemorations of **International Women's Day on March 8**. National celebrations at Kololo Ceremonial Grounds focused on access to justice for women and girls, while community events in Nsambya brought together refugee women to share experiences on leadership, education and livelihoods.



Integrated GBV and sexual and reproductive health clinics held in Kawempe served **24 community members**, providing psychosocial support and referrals. During the same period, **eight GBV cases** involving female survivors from Somali, Burundian and Congolese communities were reported and managed. **Two survivors** were provided with temporary shelter, while **16 referrals** were made for medical, legal, mental health and livelihoods services.

Community members also raised concerns related to loss of income, rising rent, unemployment and lack of documentation, calling for stronger collaboration with government institutions and partners.



The UN Women country representative giving speech during the commemoration of IWD at Kololo

EU-FUNDED PROJECT AMPLIFIES FIGHT AGAINST CHILD LABOUR IN BUSOGA

AWYAD, with funding from the European Union and in partnership with the LWF and Mayuge District Local Government, is implementing a project to eliminate child labour along agricultural value chains in the Busoga sub-region, particularly in Mayuge District, aimed at protecting children, strengthening community systems, and supporting vulnerable households.

In March, AWYAD provided psychosocial support to **30 out-of-school children** affected by child labour through a five-day Interpersonal Therapy Group Support session held at Magada Health Centre in Imanyiro Sub-county.

The organisation also supported schools to participate in International Women's Day celebrations, where children raised concerns on access to education, early marriage and gender discrimination, prompting district leaders to reaffirm commitments to child protection and equal opportunities.

Child-led radio talk shows promoting the Go Back to School campaign reached more than **1,000 listeners**, leading to increased enrolment at Mbaale Islamic Primary School from **20 to 80 pupils**.

AWYAD further distributed scholastic materials to **166 vulnerable learners**, supported the ratification of the Imanyiro Child Labour By-law, engaged the business community to identify **26 child labour cases**, and strengthened livelihoods through savings groups mobilising over **UGX 5.27 million**.



CAO officiating children's symposium women's celebration



Certification of the child labour bye law Imanyiro by the district council



Children's community parliament at Bufulubi parish

“Ending child labour is not the responsibility of one institution alone; it is a shared commitment between families, communities, and leaders to put children first.”



AWYAD STRENGTHENS PROTECTION FOR REFUGEE WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN WESTERN UGANDA



Thanks to funding from UNHCR

AWYAD has strengthened the delivery of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Child Protection services for refugees living in western and south-western Uganda, in response to ongoing protection risks affecting displaced communities.

During March 2026, AWYAD implemented a **comprehensive protection program project (CPP)** covering **Nakivale, Oruchinga, Kyaka II, Kyangwali and Rwamwanja refugee settlements**, as well as **Nyakabande and Bubukwanga transit centres**, targeting women, children and other vulnerable populations.

International Women's Day activities formed a key part of this outreach, contributing to the reach of over **2,000 people** across the settlements and transit centres. The commemorations provided a platform to promote women's rights, access to justice and the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, while reinforcing community commitment to gender equality and protection.

Under the project, AWYAD supported over **70 survivors of gender-based violence**, the majority of whom were women and girls. The most reported forms of violence included rape, emotional abuse, denial of resources and physical assault. Survivors received survivor-centred case management, psychosocial support and timely referrals to health facilities, legal services and other protection partners.

Through prevention and awareness efforts, AWYAD reached more than **2,000 refugees** and host-community members with GBV prevention and response messages. These activities were conducted through community dialogues, women and girls' safe-space sessions, outreach at transit centres and male engagement initiatives aimed at reducing violence and promoting help-seeking behaviour.

Early reporting and community awareness are key to preventing and responding to gender-based violence among displaced populations.

At Nyakabande and Bubukwanga transit centres, AWYAD provided emergency protection services to newly arrived refugees, including GBV screening, counselling, dignity kits and referrals as survivors awaited relocation to settlements.

Child protection services supported more than **200 vulnerable children** during the month. This included over **70 unaccompanied and separated children** identified at transit centres and more than **130 children** at risk assisted in the settlements through case management, interim care and referrals. In addition, **88 caregivers** were reached through positive parenting sessions aimed at improving child safety and wellbeing.

Despite operational challenges such as high demand for services and limited resources, AWYAD reaffirmed its commitment to safeguarding the dignity, rights and safety of refugee women and children across all areas of operation.

The project also prioritised women's empowerment and resilience, reaching nearly **500 women and adolescent girls** with targeted GBV prevention activities, psychosocial support and resilience-building sessions across the settlements. To strengthen accountability and safe programming, 28 partner staff were trained on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.



International Women's Day 2026

AWYAD joined the national celebrations on **8th March** to mark **International Women's Day** in Kololo under the theme **"Scaling up Investment to Accelerate Access to Justice for All Women and Girls in Uganda."** The organization also commemorated the day in the South West, Busoga Region, West Nile, and across all its operational areas, as reflected in the pictures below.



HAPPY WOMEN'S DAY

AWYAD joined partners and stakeholders at the national #IWD2026 celebrations at Kololo Independence Grounds, which drew over 1,000 participants to call for justice, equality, and women's empowerment.

Highlights included an all-women security parade and the launch of national frameworks addressing GBV, FGM, and gender equality, officiated by the Vice President, H.E. Jessica Alupo. The event also honored 34 champions of women's rights, reaffirming Uganda's commitment to justice for all women and girls.

08TH MARCH, 2026

The commemoration of Women's day in Nakivale Refugee Settlement, AWYAD, partners and the Refugees stood in solidarity with global women's rights movements, calling for renewed commitment to justice, protection, and action especially for displaced women and girls in search of safety, dignity, and hope.



During the #IWD2026 celebrations in Kyakka Refugee Settlement, AWYAD Uganda, in collaboration with UNHCR, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), and partner organizations, continued to champion the rights, dignity, and leadership of women and girls. The commemoration highlighted the importance of inclusive equality and reaffirmed collective commitment to ensuring that refugee women and girls are not left behind.



This #IWD2026, Kyangwali Refugee Settlement celebrates women who refuse to stay silent in a world that expects them to. We honor those who speak up, stand tall, and demand justice in the face of inequality.



The #IWD2026 celebrations in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement brought the community together, with activities such as bicycle racing adding energy and excitement to the day. We were honored to host the Chief Magistrate of Kamwenge Court, reinforcing the call for justice and inclusion.



AWYAD joined Kisoro District to proudly mark #IWD2026, highlighting continued efforts to advance women's empowerment. Thanks to partners for their ongoing commitment to supporting women and girls.



Oruchinga Refugee Settlement marked International Women's Day 2026 by celebrating the strength and resilience of women and girls—mothers, daughters, leaders, entrepreneurs and changemakers shaping their communities despite displacement. The commemoration highlighted collective action with partners to advance equality and opportunity for all women and girls.



AWYAD, together with Mayuge District Local Government and partners, commemorated International Women's Day 2026 under the theme "Scaling up investment to accelerate access to justice for all women and girls in Uganda." The event brought together community members, district leaders, and schoolchildren to spotlight gender equality, child protection, and access to justice, with leaders reaffirming their commitment to advancing the rights of women and girls.



Happy
womens'
day
2026

Happy belated

INTERNATIONAL

Women's Day

Rights ^ Justice ^ Action

For **ALL** women and girls.
Including those forced to **flee**.
Equality without **refugee women** isn't equality at all.

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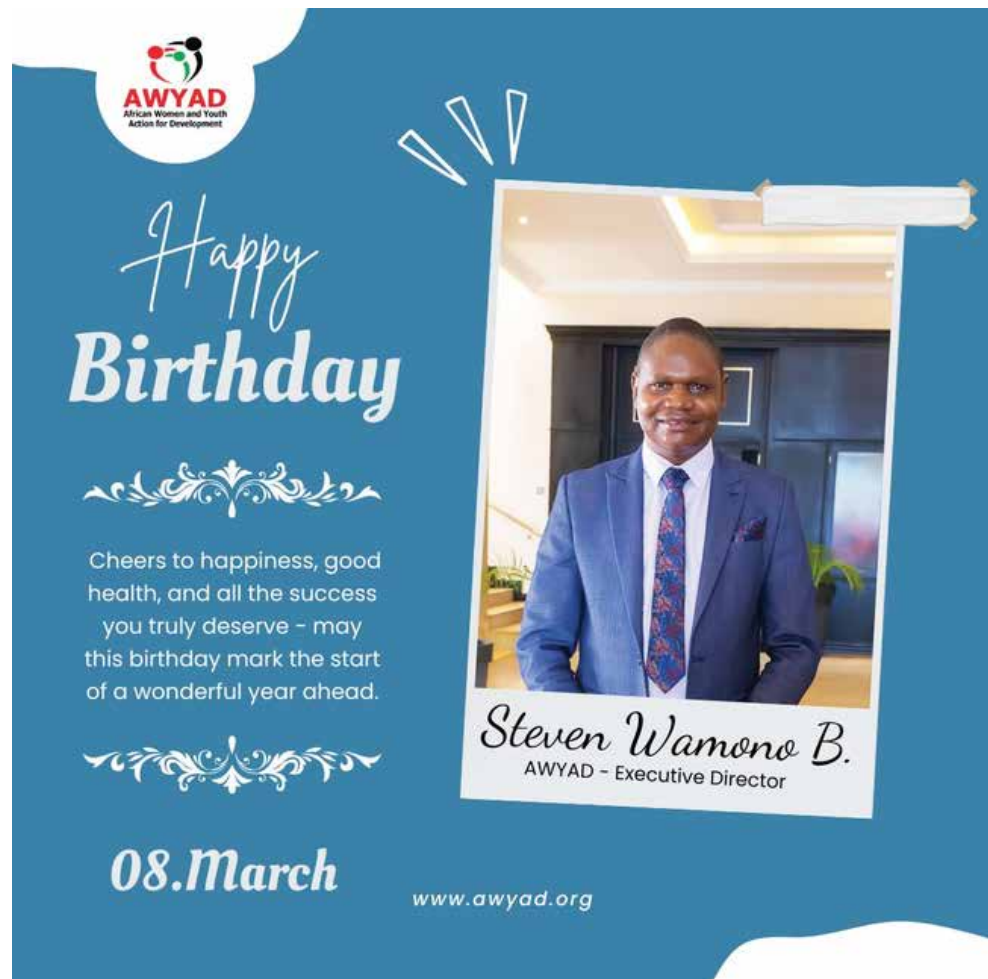
IMPORTANT CELEBRATION

March 17, 2026, marked a major milestone for AWYAD- celebrating 10 years of bold action, resilience, and impact! For a decade, AWYAD has championed the rights, leadership, and voices of women, girls, and young people across Uganda, driving change and building hope in communities.

www.awyad.org



As Women's Month came to a close, we were delighted to celebrate the birthday of AWYAD's Executive Director, Steven Wamono, born on International Women's Day - a fitting tribute to his commitment to equality. Through his leadership, AWYAD continues to empower women, youth, and children, advancing dignity, inclusion, and protection for the most vulnerable. Happy Birthday, Steven - thank you for the impact and inspiration!



AWYAD participated in the CSO Market Place at the UNICEF-WFP-UNAIDS Common Premises in Kampala, showcasing our work and engaging with fellow organizations. We thank @UNICEFUganda and partners for organizing the platform.



AFRICAN WOMEN AND YOUTH ACTION FOR DEVELOPMENT – WHO WE ARE!!!

1. What we are

African Women and Youth Action for Development (AWYAD) is a national women-led humanitarian and development NGO serving women, youth and children.

The organisation is 100% women-governed and focuses on empowerment, rights promotion and protection of vulnerable communities.

AWYAD works in both emergency response and long-term development contexts.

1.2. Our Vision

A society where all women, children and youth are free from all forms of inequality & violence; and are at the forefront of development.

1.3. Our Mission

Empower vulnerable women, children and youth, to rise up against inequality & violence; and actively participate in socio-economic transformation of their communities.

Thank You to Our Donors and Partners

We extend our sincere appreciation to all our donors and partners for your continued trust, collaboration and support. Your commitment empowers African Women and Youth Action for Development (AWYAD) to protect, uplift and empower women, youth and children in both emergency and development settings. Together, we are creating lasting impact and driving meaningful change in the communities we serve.



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Thank You



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