Annual Report 2013

The Eastern African Sub-regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women

Working to ADVANCE the status of WOMEN
EASSI is in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC). The ECOSOC serves as the central forum for discussing international economic and social issues, and for formulating policy recommendations addressed to Member States and the United Nations system. One of the ECOSOC’s responsibilities is to encourage universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. In carrying out its mandate, ECOSOC consults with academics, business sector representatives and more than 3,200 registered non-governmental organizations.
ANNUAL REPORT
2 0 1 3

Working to advance the status of women

©EASSI, 2014
Kampala, Uganda
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Acronyms</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message from the Chairperson</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message from the Executive Director</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 Overview</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Programme Area 1: Women’s Rights and Gender Equality</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaign for an EAC Protocol on Gender and Development</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Gender and Trade Project</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Women and Girls Empowerment (WOGE) Project</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Men Engage Project</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Programme Area 2: Women’s Reproductive Health and Sexual Rights</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The anti-female genital mutilation campaign</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Young Women’s Leadership Training Institute and Volunteer Programme</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Programme Area 3: Women in the Peace Processes</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Regional Women’s Voices for Peace Initiative</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender, Small Arms and Light Weapons</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication and Networking</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Strengthening and Human Resource</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About EASSI</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAFOB</td>
<td>Collectif des Associations et ONGS Féminines du Burundi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDD</td>
<td>Community Driven Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSW</td>
<td>Commission on the Status of Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWL</td>
<td>Caucus for Women’s Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSW</td>
<td>Deutsche Stiftung Weltbevoelkerung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAC</td>
<td>East African Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EADGE</td>
<td>East African Protocol on Gender Equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EALA</td>
<td>East African Legislative Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EASSI</td>
<td>Eastern African Sub-regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FPO</td>
<td>Focal Point Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GBV</td>
<td>Gender Based Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIZ</td>
<td>German International Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEC</td>
<td>Information, Education and Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFP</td>
<td>National Focal Point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PFA</td>
<td>Platforms for Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RRA</td>
<td>Rwanda Revenue Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SADC</td>
<td>Southern Africa Development Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SALW</td>
<td>Small Arms and Light Weapons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGBV</td>
<td>Sexual and Gender Based Violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SID</td>
<td>Society for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIDA</td>
<td>Swedish International Development Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECOSOC</td>
<td>United Nations Economic and Social Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSCR</td>
<td>United Nations Security Council Resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOGE</td>
<td>Women and Girls’ Empowerment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear Friends,

Once again I am grateful for the opportunity to share the 2013 Annual Report with you. The year as far as governance is concerned, was a smooth one with the usual Board meetings taking place as planned. These meetings were held in EASSI House and Training Centre which we moved into late 2012 and have continued to improve on slowly by slowly. As I write we have completed the ground and first floors and this is where we hold all our activities.

EASSI aims to be one day self-sufficient to a reasonable degree and therefore having one’s own house is a first of many steps. Unfortunately the house is being built in phases and a lot of work still remains to be done but none the less, what we have so far has given us hope and encouragement that we can actually complete a project of this magnitude.

When I look at EASSI member countries of Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda I see a mix of hope and despair. Hope that these countries have invested a lot in women’s rights and gender equality with quota’s for women in decision making positions in some of the countries, and despair that we are losing some of the gains we made in the past. This is why EASSI has introduced a programme on women and governance in its new strategic plan for the period 2014 – 2018 so as to contribute to the advocacy for increased levels of women’s participation in the governance processes at all levels of governance.

EASSI’s mandate is to monitor implementation by governments of the Beijing Platforms for Action and we have already begun to prepare our-
selves for the review process of Beijing +20 which will coincide with the end of the MDGs and the Post 2015 Development Agenda. Since 2005, EASSI has reviewed from a CSO perspective the implementation of the Beijing Platforms for Action in 2000, 2005 and 2010, and come out with reports holding governments accountable for the promises made to women in Beijing. The Beijing +20 review process is thus no exception.

EASSI's work on peace and security remains important in our countries where conflicts or effects of conflicts from neighboring countries create an environment of insecurity for women and girls. Our lobby and advocacy work together with the women's network of the International Action Network on Small Arms saw an Arms Trade Treaty adopted in 2013 with elements of Gender based violence as criteria for not transferring arms.

Unfortunately EASSI member states have neither signed nor ratified this Treaty. Part of our work in the coming year will be a campaign for the signing and ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty because we realize that the illegal proliferation of small arms and light weapons feeds off an environment of insecurity.

EASSI is also involved in economic justice work working with women in East Africa involved in cross border trade. This has contributed in enhancing the financial status of the participating women and we intend to continue with this programme that will hopefully give the women financial freedom and increase their confidence to make important decisions in their own lives.

I want to thank our national focal points, our key partners namely: CAFOB in Burundi, National Union of Eritrean Women in Eritrea, National Ethiopian Women's Association in Ethiopia, the Caucus for Women's Leadership in Kenya, IIDA in Somalia, Tanzania Gender Networking Programme in Tanzania and Uganda Women's Network in Uganda for their continued faith and partnership. In these challenging times of funding fatigue, they have continued to believe in, and continue the journey with us. EASSI's regional mandate would not be successful without your support.

Special thanks to our development partners for your generous support that has in turn enabled us to support women in different capacities, whether in peace work, economic empowerment, trade related activities, policy advocacy, and research, among others.

For additional information on our work, please visit our Web site at http://www.eassi.org.

We shall be happy to hear from you.

Sincerely,
Bazgenawork Woldemedhin
Chairperson, EASSI
It’s a great pleasure to once again share with you the annual report. This year, we came to the end of our five year strategic plan 2009-2013 and prepared a new strategy for the period 2014-2018. The new Strategy has been aligned to the current and emerging regional and international paradigms like the post 2015 development framework, the Beijing +20 review process and Agenda 2063 of the African Union among others. As an organization founded on the mandate of the Beijing Platforms for Action, we have reemphasized the gender agenda in all areas of our work.

As EASSI positions itself for the next five years, there is awareness that economic justice for women needs to be given priority if women are to benefit from income generating investments and be liberated from poverty. That is why the new strategy focuses on the following areas: Women’s Rights and Gender Equality: The focus under this thematic area will include; advocacy for effective sub-regional institutional and policy mechanisms for the advancement of women’s rights, gender equality and social justice, with emphasis on right to access to productive resources, opportunities and information, right to benefit from outcomes of development and public interventions, and addressing Gender Based Violence. The other thematic area is Gender and Economic Development which looks at economic empowerment of women to increase women’s real power over economic decisions that influence their lives and priorities in society. The third thematic area is Gender and Conflict Prevention and Post Conflict Reconstruction which includes building capacity of women and women’s movements to effectively participate in peace process and ensure women’s voices are brought to decision making tables on conflict prevention and post conflict reconstruction. The fourth area is Gender and Governance which addresses building capacity of women to increase their participation in leadership and politics. And finally Emerging Regional and International Paradigms in which EASSI will position itself to contribute to the gender priorities in the post 2015 development framework; Beijing +20, the International Conference on Population and Development Program of Action (ICPD) beyond 2014; and Agenda 2063 of the African Union among others.

In the year 2013 we have placed a lot of emphasis on economic justice for women using a two pronged approach. One has been a direct approach, working with women at Meso level and enhancing their capacity in entrepreneurship through skills enhancement and business start up as well as exposing them to national and regional trade fairs to learn how to improve the quality of their products to competitive levels. Our second approach has been at the level of policy advocacy at both national and regional level through different ministries such as trade and gender with an aim of developing strong alliances to promote women’s economic participation. Our work across East African borders with women cross border traders has been ground breaking and we intend to continue with this project, expanding from three to seven border points. The women cross border traders under the leadership of their associations are now represented on border management committees and have influenced national and regional agenda. Cross border trade in East Africa has been made more attractive through the Customs Union and Common market protocols that provide immense opportunities for people in business willing to capture the market of 130 million persons. Our advocacy for an East African Proto-
col on Gender Equality continues and we have engaged with the East African legislative Assembly as a new ally in this process as we advocate for an EAC Gender bill as well. The road has been long and tenuous but we continue with this campaign which has proved to be one of the most challenging struggles for the women’s movement in East Africa. Never the less we produced a gender barometer using the Articles proposed in the Draft Gender Protocol as a way of holding governments accountable by measuring their commitment to women’s rights and gender equality.

Another area of work has been around the involvement of men as champions against Gender Based Violence. This has been piloted in Uganda in three districts where male leaders identified by community members have become champions against GBV. This project has used innovative approaches such as community sports to pass messages against GBV, exchange visits among communities and working closely with government officials to promote community bylaws against GBV developed by the communities themselves. As I mentioned last year, working with local government or village leaders changes the rules of engagement and decision-making parameters and that is why we have chosen to work closely with local government in the districts where we are working.

Last year I informed you of our work on the gender dimensions of small arms and light weapons that involved the campaign for a gender responsive Arms Trade Treaty. The ATT is the first international Treaty aimed at regulating international transfers of conventional arms and is the first international instrument to establish legally binding obligations on States to ensure responsible and effective controls on all types of international transfers of conventional arms, ammunition and parts and components. The treaty stipulates that exporting state parties are to take into account the risk of conventional arms being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against women and children.

I am pleased to report that the Treaty was adopted in April 2013 and several countries have already signed and ratified it although it can only come into force after 50 ratifications by UN Member States. We continue to work with the Commonwealth Foundation where I sit as a CSO member of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group that monitors the implementation of the Commonwealth Plan of Action on gender equality and as Vice Chair of the NGO/CSW/Africa of the UN Commission on the Status for Women which will coordinate African women’s advocacy on key issues during the UN Commission on the Status of Women during its 58th meeting to be held in March 2014.

We have settled down well in our own premises although it remains incomplete. Only the ground and first floors are ready and serve as the EASSI’s Offices. This has helped reduce some of the overheads and given us breathing space to concentrate on our work even as we continue to raise funds to complete the building. This is a long term project and we will be grateful for any support in cash or kind.

We once again offer our heartfelt thanks to our development partners including the Netherlands Government, Sida, Trademark East Africa, Open Society International, whose support have gone a long way in contributing to our work in the sub region. We say a big thank you for your unreserved support to EASSI. We look forward to working with you in future as we advance gender equality and women’s rights in the sub-region.

I must also sincerely thank the EASSI Board of Directors, led by Ms Bazgena work Wallomedhin and all the EASSI individual and organizational members in the sub region for their continued commitment to the organization and to the purpose for which EASSI was set up. I must also thank staff at EASSI, for their commitment during both good and bad times. To all I say thank you very much and may God bless you.

Marren Akatsa-Bukachi
Executive Director
The Annual Report 2013 provides an overview of EASSI’s objectives, activities and outcomes for the year 2013. This report is a summary of the key activities that the EASSI Secretariat implemented in line with the 2009-2013 Strategic Plan. The report highlights activities carried out under the three focus areas of Women’s Rights and Gender Equality, Women’s Sexual and Reproductive Health and Women in the Peace Processes, giving some of the general outcomes and impact.

EASSI was formed in 1996 after the Beijing conference to monitor the commitments of Eastern African governments towards gender equality. Since then the organisation has remained committed to contributing to the attainment of the commitments.

To achieve its objectives and expected results, EASSI works across eight countries through member organizations which include: Collectif des Associations et ONGs Feminines du Burundi (CAFOB) and Reseau Femme et Paix in Burundi; National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW) and National Association of Eritrean Youth and Students in Eritrea; Centre for Women’s Leadership (CWL) and Women’s Rights Awareness Program (WRAP) in Kenya; Profemme TweseHamwe and Society of Women Living With Aids in Africa (SWAA Rwanda) in Rwanda; Women’s Development Association (WDA) and Coalition of Grass roots Women’s Organization (COGWO) in Somalia; Tanzania Gender Networking Group (TGNP) and Tanzania Media Women’s Association (TAMWA) in Tanzania and Uganda Women’s Network (UWONET) and National Association of Women’s Organization in Uganda (NAWOU) in Uganda.

Over the years EASSI has experienced substantial growth in programming and delivering programs. Moving from the first implementation model where the focus was on identifying challenges affecting progress towards gender equality at national level, collecting data with or through members, analysing the data, producing reports and disseminating results to members to inform advocacy at national level, to the second model, where based on the learning from the first implementation model, EASSI gradually moved to strengthening the Secretariat to take more responsibilities in relation to implementation of programs. During the strategic plan 2009-2013, EASSI adopted a two-pronged approach to program implementation touching base directly with the grass root women at a Micro level and maintaining advocacy work at Meso and Macro levels.

**Micro Level:**

By the end of 2013, over 500 women informal cross boarder traders have tremendously grown their businesses through the interventions that EASSI has made in the East African Community. More and more women informal cross border traders are registering their goods and using the official crossing routes as a result of the awareness EASSI has created at these border points. The women have organised themselves into groups at the various borders, created national and regional associations, this has made the women informal cross border traders visible as their chairpersons have been invited to participate in regional policy meetings. This has given them a collective voice and exposed them to regional policy fora to articulate their
issues. Under The Women and Girls Empowerment project, 1,271 women and girls were trained in various income generating activities and supported to start their own projects. EASSI built capacity of service providers at boarder points and there was evidence that they are now more friendly and willing to cooperate with women. There is increased knowledge and skills in providing enabling trade environment for women traders through the capacity enhancement workshops on gender dimensions in trade for government authorities in Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda and Burundi. A Uganda Revenue Authority staff at Mutukula Border revealed that after the training there is increased knowledge and skills in handling women traders.

Meso level:

EASSI greatly contributed at initiatives for advancement of women in the member countries. Through the East African Declaration of Gender Equality commonly referred to as the EADGE campaign; EASSI highlighted the gaps on consideration of gender equality as a development issue in member countries. The campaign tools were used as score card to name and shame countries that were not progressing in various areas of gender equality. As a result countries like Kenya embarked on developing and reviewing their gender related laws and policies. EASSI visibility increased at Meso level and the capacity of member organisations was enhanced especially in lobby and advocacy on gender equality. The campaign against female genital mutilation achieved great results in countries the campaign ran; capacity enhancement for gender mainstreaming in small arms and light weapons in EAC has positioned EASSI as a strong stakeholder of women in peace processes in the great lakes region; the young women leaders training produced young women who are influencing decisions in various fields, the media engagements made great contributions to how the media should cover gender issues, EASSI produced several publications on topical gender issues and policy briefs to influence policy and public opinion on gender issues, researches were carried to deepen understanding on specific areas and provide evidence for national and international advocacies, several trainings were conducted at national level to build capacity on understanding and handling gender issues in service provision and policy formulation processes.

Macro Level:

EASSI is a member of regional, international and global initiatives such as the International Action Network on Small Arms, where it sits on the Advisory Committee and the Women’s Network, The United Nations Commission on the status of Women in Africa, in which EASSI is the Vice Chair, Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group in which the EASSI Executive Director is the Spokesperson for CSO members and the East African Women in Business Platform in which it is a co-chair. On each of these platforms, EASSI has presented the issues of Women in Eastern African Sub-region. EASSI tracked government progress against the commitments they made in Beijing by producing a Gender Barometer and scorecard. Apart from interventions being linked to the Beijing Declarations, EASSI interventions were also linked to the Millennium Development Goals and the post 2015 Development Agenda.
THE INTERVENTIONS

1. CAMPAIGN FOR AN EAC PROTOCOL ON GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

The Campaign for an East African Community Protocol on Gender and Development spearheaded by EASSI and supported by a coalition of women’s organisations in the East African Community (EAC), emerged as a response to the need to ensure that the EAC regional integration process fully addresses gender considerations through development of a Gender Protocol that brings into one legally binding document all commitments to women’s rights based on international instruments such as the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW and regional instruments such as the AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality and the Protocol on African Women’s Rights. The campaign seeks to ensure that gains made towards addressing women’s rights do not dissipate in the integration process but are scaled up to the regional level.

The goal of the campaign was “To contribute to the achievement of gender equality, equity and sustainable development in the EAC.” The campaign purposed to do this by bringing together into one legally binding regional instrument all the commitments to gender equality. The governments of EAC have signed up and ratified several international and regional human rights instruments including the Beijing Platform for Actions, the Convention to Eliminate all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and the Millennium Development Goals. The biggest challenge has remained the will to put into action these commitments. This campaign emphasized the importance of gender mainstreaming to the development of the EAC. It’s internationally recognised that there can be no significant development without the role of women. The EAC treaty too pronounces itself on this in Articles 121 and 122. This campaign
highlighted all the gaps and loose ends curtailing gender mainstreaming in EAC and called for strengthening of the institutional structure to promote gender mainstreaming in policies, programmes and projects of EAC as a means of influencing legislations in member countries.

In 2013, the coalition ensued the development of an EAC Gender Bill as a way of fast tracking the EAC Gender Protocol that has been delayed in the EAC bureaucracy for the past 3 years.

The draft Gender Bill was developed by the EAC internally after lobbying by the Gender Protocol Coalition, that proposed an alternative approach to the campaign. In addition and as part of the ways to hold our governments accountable, EASSI, in partnership with the Society for International Development (SID) produced and disseminated a regional Gender Monitoring and Evaluation framework.

When we set out to champion the campaign for an EAC Gender and Development Protocol, we did not anticipate the level of bureaucracy that we had to go through to have the Protocol adopted. What has been achieved over the past few years is therefore tremendous. Now that the EAC proudly speaks of the gender Protocol speaks volumes of how things have changed. The same EAC drafting a gender Bill which reflects almost 100 percent women’s aspirations as set out in the draft Gender Protocol is in a way communicating that campaign coalition has done a good job.

Civil Society lobby meeting for EAC Gender and Development Protocol with Dr. Sezibera Richard, the EAC Secretary General
2. THE GENDER AND TRADE PROJECT

The goal of this project “To create an enabling environment for women trading across the East African Community” directly feeds into the vision of EASSI. The goal and objectives of the project at addressing challenges faced by women faced by women cross border traders. The project identified the provisions in the EAC Customs Union and Common Market Protocols, analysed the provisions from a gender perspective to deepen understanding on opportunities for women traders and to bring out challenges that would specifically affect women or have a different effect on them. The Project's focus was on influencing trade policy reforms and capacity enhancement of targets through different activities.

The project sought to identify how the provisions in the customs union and common market protocols can be exploited in order to increase women's trade volume, reduce transaction costs and eliminate the non-tariff barriers which remain obstacles to trade - including sexual and other forms of harassment. This is by way of arming women with information and supporting their collective organization.

This resulted into well-coordinated interventions at various levels of the EAC to engage on these issues. As a result the project greatly contributed to increasing women’s trade volumes, reducing transaction costs for the women informal cross border trader and efforts to eliminate the Non-Tariff Barriers which remain obstacles to trade including sexual and other forms of harassment women informal cross border trader experience.

Women traders have benefitted from the project in different ways and some of the cross border traders at the borders of Busia, Gatuna, Katuna, Mutukula, Bibia and Namanga hailed the resource centers at the borders that have been acting as avenues through which Women Informal Cross Border Traders can air their views, concerns and challenges they face as they engage in Cross Border Trade.

The resource centers have become centers of excellence as they are sources of information for business support to women on a day to day basis. From these resource centers, women have been able to get market information services that have boosted their business as well as information on certificates of origin for their goods.

The continued partnership with government border officials and support from the EAC government ministries, departments and agencies reflects a positive gesture towards addressing the challenges faced by women cross border traders in the EAC.

A case in point is the issue of taxation. One of the initial challenges that was faced by women traders was cited as inherited fear of taxation. This is slowly being overcome as women now have information about taxation which is readily available either at revenue offices at the border points or at the resource centers.

One of the strategies adopted by EASSI and the women cross border traders was to form national and regional cross border trade associations. These are becoming a powerful platform for the collective voices of women and for advocacy of their own issues.
3. THE WOMEN AND GIRLS EMPOWERMENT (WOGE) PROJECT

The Women and Girls’ Empowerment (WOGE) project is a four year (2012-2015) joint project of EASSI and DSW. It was purposefully designed to draw from and complement the ongoing work of EASSI and DSW. The Project has its roots in both organizations’ common concern for the plight of women and girls and complementary advocacy and programming strength at national and regional levels.

The goal of the WOGE Project is to contribute to poverty reduction by strengthening women’s and girls’ voices for economic self-reliance in the East African Region particularly in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia.

This project is designed to strengthen and promote economic empowerment of women, give them a voice to champion for themselves their own issues and reduce their vulnerability violation of their rights.

It is expected that by 2015, 6000 women and girls will have developed the knowledge and skills to ably influence decisions on their economic self-reliance. A baseline survey conducted in 2012, a copy of which can be retrieved from - http://www.eassi.org/publications/cat_view/133-woge-
project-publications, revealed that majority of the women and girls were engaged in trade in a non planned manner, had no business plans, lacked record keeping skills and limited communication skills. It is against this backdrop that the Project has so far supported the formation and strengthening of a total of 150 women and girls self-help groups.

**Empowerment of women and girls in leadership, life skills, business skills and entrepreneurship**

In 2013, the capacity of 90 women and girls was enhanced in leadership, life skills, business and entrepreneurship skills. These have gone ahead to practice some of the skills acquired such as proper book keeping, how to come up with business plans, how to sustain their businesses, customer care and effective communication at group and household level. During the trainings, many of the women disclosed that they had small businesses which were not successful due to lack of knowledge on proper business planning. The trainings were therefore an eye opener.

For some of the groups, their businesses have improved since they now possess marketing and branding skills, better negotiation skills, customer care among others all of which were acquired during the trainings.

**Below are voices from two of the Women**

“My name is NAKIMERA ZULFAR. I belong to a group called Bivamuntuuyo which was formed during the intervention by UWESCO. I had the privilege of attending the WOGE skills training in Jewelry and this has not only given me more money but has changed my life. The growth in sales is greater than my business in clothes. Thanks to EASSI for this opportunity to empower women.”

“My name is EVELYN OTIRO. I have been trading in liquid soap which I have been buying so expensively from Busia, Uganda. I still cannot believe that one can make 40 liters of soap from very few materials. All my days of being cheated are over since I now possess the skill to produce the soap on my own. I am now going to be a distributor to other women who trade in liquid soap but do not know how to make it. I am so grateful to EASSI for this training from which I can already see a positive change in my life.”

60 copies of a simplified training manual called “A Do-It-Yourself Guide to Empowering Communities” were published and given to the trained group members (peer educators) for use to share with their fellow group members the skills that they acquired during their earlier trainings in 2012. Through the peer to peer trainings, 2,100 women and Girls have been reached in 2013, out of the total projected 6000.

**EFFECTIVE COLLECTIVE ACTION AT LOCAL LEVEL TO IMPROVE ECONOMIC SELF-RELIANCE**

1. Creating employment and improving livelihoods

The Project has so far supported the formation of 50 women’s groups in the project implementation areas specific to EASSI. These groups have received practical skills trainings in various cottage industries that were decided and agreed
upon by the women and girls. The aim of the skills trainings is to create employment amongst the women and thereby improve their livelihoods at group and individual level. The skills are: liquid soap making, bar soap making, bakery, candle making, peanut butter processing, poultry keeping, mushroom growing, jewelry making, tailoring, tie and dye among others. The group choices were largely based on market availability, demand for the products, accessibility of raw materials, the ability to use the products both individually and at the community and also how easy it would be to engage in the businesses individually. 39 groups totaling with a total membership of 400 women and girls were equipped with practical skills in various cottage industries of their choice.

2. Support to income generation: contributing start-up capital to WOGE Groups.

In acknowledging the fact that acquiring capital to start a business would be a potential challenge for the women and girls, and that it would cripple the newly formed and trained groups to start engaging in Income Generating Activities (IGAs), EASSI and DSW supported groups in formulating sound business plans. The plans played a key role in outlining particular businesses of interest and benefit to the groups and the required equipment and ingredients for the identified businesses. Subsequently, the plans were used to inform the startup capital contribution to the groups. The group were given peanut butter machines, local ovens, candle making machines, bar soap making machines, sewing machines, sweater making machines, beads, poultry, and ingredients for making products such as liquid soap.

3. Learning exchange visits amongst the women and girls

Exchange and learning visits provide an experiential hands-on way of learning and this is part and parcel of the project. Women and girls participated in 4 exchange and learning visits which included a learning tour, 1 regional exchange visit and 3 country-level exchange visits. These visits enabled the different groups spread across the region to share experiences and learn new things that can benefit their businesses. The learning tour took place in Uganda at the Uganda Industrial Research Institute (UIRI) that not only provides and shares new innovations but also manages a business incubation centre where interested parties can come for advice to innovate and to build their business ideas into reality.

4. Exposure visits to Trade fairs

The trade fairs and exhibitions serve as avenues for learning opportunities, networking and exposure to wider markets. For this reason, the women traders attended two trade fairs to exhibit their products, to network and to learn. These trade fairs were attended were the National ‘Nane Nane’ trade fair held annually in Tanzania and the regional Uganda manufacturer’s association trade fair held annually in Uganda.

During the trade fairs, the groups learnt a lot from the exhibitors ranging from agricultural best practices such as effective better farming methods, poultry keeping, fish farming, health, beauty, marketing and branding.
5. Inter-community Group Competitions

Through intercommunity competitions, WOGE groups from different areas regularly meet to exchange ideas on how well to productively engage in a particular income generating activity. The competitions are also used as a measure of how well the different groups are putting to use the practical skills acquired through the WOGE project.

In 2013, intercommunity competitions took place amongst 16 WOGE groups in Busia Uganda, Busia Kenya and Kabale district in Uganda.. The winners were each rewarded a modest cash prize for showcasing the most exemplary projects.

IMPROVED REGULATORY FRAME WORK AND BUSINESS SERVICES FOR ECONOMIC SELF-RELIANCE

The project aims to make a fundamental change by contributing to improved regulatory frameworks and business services for the women and girls’ economic self-reliance. Advocacy strategies involve meeting with members of Parliament and local government officials from relevant ministries to lobby for their support of the project.

The interventions in regard to this outcome were:

1. District Lobby meetings

3 district lobby meetings were conducted with Local Government officials to discuss areas for their support aimed at strengthening the project outcomes as well as ensuring their sustainability. As a result of some of these meetings, the district leaders allocated the WOGE project space to set up resource centers within the town councils, such as Rakai in Uganda and Busia in Kenya. Other Districts where the project is being implemented also promised to follow-up with the land board and ensure that space is allocated to the WOGE project. The District leadership also promised that their doors would always be open for the women groups to visit them for information and opportunities available at the District.

“My name is MILICENT APONDI. I have been unemployed for a long time and have always thought of starting a business on my own. The major challenge I have always faced is coming up with a business idea in which to engage given that the market seems to be already overflowing with all the ideas I have thought about. I am so grateful to EASSI for the training in Liquid soap making because I do not know of any one engaged in the business in this constituency. I am now going to start making liquid soap and distribute it in this constituency. Indirectly, EASSI has created employment for me in Butula
In September 2013, EASSI took her advocacy efforts a notch higher to directly target men through a new Project, the Men Engage Project, with support from the Netherlands Government. This is to be implemented in three districts in Uganda, namely, Kabale, Rakai and Busia Districts. The Men Engage Project is a complementary intervention of the WOGE project that believes that targeting men as change agents in the fight against sexual and gender based violence is a long overdue strategy. 90 community Male champions have already been trained and have become change agents in their communities. The project also works with government officials such as the Ministry of Gender and local government in order to entrench the project within the communities for future sustainability. These champions include religious leaders, Local council chairpersons from various institutions including health facilities, who are ready to become the focal point for advocacy activities in their communities; and Experienced district-level officials and youth councilors from the selected districts. Involving community leaders is the first step towards supporting and linking SGBV survivors to legal referral networks as a way of creating pathways for them to report their cases.
Available statistics show, that every minute, a woman dies of complications related to pregnancy and childbirth.

This adds up to more than 500,000 women annually and 10 million over a generation. Almost all of these women – 99 per cent – live and die in developing countries. Statistics further show that, every year, more than 1 million children are left motherless and vulnerable because of maternal deaths.

Children who have lost their mothers are up to 10 times more likely to die prematurely than those who have not. Maternal mortality remains unacceptably high across much of the developing world. The risk of maternal mortality increases with each pregnancy. Yet, 200 million women who would like to delay or avoid childbearing are without access to safe and effective contraceptives. Every year, an estimated 19 million unsafe abortions take place in the developing world, resulting in some 68,000 deaths.

Under the Women’s Reproductive Health and Sexual rights thematic area in the strategic plan 2008-2013, EASSI implemented three interventions. The interventions were all relevant to the development context, the vision and mission and EASSI and the real needs of target groups as they addressed the real problems facing Women’s Reproductive health and sexual rights of women and girls. These interventions included: 1) A campaign against the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) 2) A research on safe motherhood and 3) A research on progress against the Beijing commitments.

**The Anti-Female Genital Mutilation Campaign (FGM):**

EASSI began a regional anti FGM campaign in 2006 when a decision was taken by members during the ten years celebration (1996 – 2006) to advocate for legislation against FGM and its total eradication. FGM is practiced in 6 of EASSI’s 8 member states of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea. Tanzania was the first country to criminalize FGM in 1998. Section 169(a) of the Sexual Offences Special Provisions Act of 1998 prohibits FGM. Ethiopia followed in 2005 and Eritrea in 2007. In November 2009 and September 2011, Uganda and Kenya followed with similar legislation.

From a human rights perspective, FGM reflects deep-rooted inequality between the sexes; the practice constitutes an extreme form of discrimination against women and is a violation of the rights of the child. Most FGM is usually carried out on minors. EASSI uses the human rights instruments such as The Protocol on African Women’s Rights, Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, to say that cutting of women’s genitals is a violation of their human rights, and their sexual rights.

Female Genital Mutilation is still highly cherished by clan leaders who are the main voices behind the cultural practice in communities where it
is practiced. Culture is usually employed to justify discrimination and violence against women, impose control over women’s bodies, sexuality, emotions, decisions and actions, preventing them from expressing their own free will and enjoyment of their fundamental freedoms and human rights. Campaigns like what EASSI did become very necessary to bring the issues to debate and help a new culture evolve and to create changes with time.

**Safe Motherhood Research**

EASSI carried out two researches on the state of maternal health and safe motherhood in Uganda and Kenya. The researches detailed the state of reproductive health affairs in the two countries. The findings were used for evidence based advocacy on what needs to be done by governments and stakeholders ahead of 2015 end of the MDGs.
THE YOUNG WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP TRAINING INSTITUTE AND VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME
Since the year 2000, EASSI has been running the Volunteer and Young Women’s Leadership Programmes targeting young women aged 18-35. The Programmes have contributed to the empowerment of many young women in Eastern Africa.

Through this capacity building initiative EASSI has contributed to the nourishment of the women’s movement through imparting leadership skills to young women from the eight member countries.

The objectives of the leadership training program include: Equipping young women with knowledge and skills in leadership, gender analysis as well as in the formulation and implementation of gender responsive projects and programmes; Initiating a forum for young women to meet and build alliances for individual and professional support; Sensitizing and empowering young women on gender issues so as to improve the quality of gender analysis and research coming out the Sub-Region; Strengthening existing national and regional networks through net-working and solidarity and to build and sustain links and Empowering the young women living in fundamentally patriarchal communities with self-development and life skills.

Leadership training is strategic in addressing issues of women’s rights and gender equality. Young women empowered and mentored by experts in fields like gender and development, transformational leadership, feminism, communication, international human rights of women advance women issues in their circles of influence.

EASSI is proud of the over 80 young women who have been mentored and stepped out to mentor others and occupy positions of leadership.

We are not just a spring board but, similar to a loving mother, we keep in touch with our grown daughters, ensuring that they make a mark, even leave a legacy wherever the benefits of the training take them.

*We got in touch with some of the alumi and this what they had to say:*
ELIZABETH KASUJJA:

EASSI's Women and Girls’ Empowerment Project gave me the confidence I needed to be the voice for the underprivileged women and girls. In addition, I incorporated the training skills I had acquired in soap making into my Start and Improve your Business initiative and so far, three women have set up flourishing businesses in soap making. This gives me a feeling of satisfaction, for which I credit to EASSI. “I would recommend that EASSI keeps up the program since it also avails a rare opportunity for fresh graduates to acquire coveted skills.

CAROLINE NAMIREMBE:

EASSI was my first place of experience and I love it because it taught me a lot about workplace etiquette. I also learnt how to save and this saving enabled me to pay for my early stages of my CPA Course. I learnt how to work in a Multi-cultural environment and this has enabled me to communicate well with my fellow employees and customers effectively at my current workplace – a financial institution. Thank you for mentoring me EASSI.

NAMUDDU MARIA THERESA:

I was attached to the Women and Girls Empowerment (WOGE) Project. The programme helped me to learn about the need for economic empowerment of women and girls. During my time, I was able to train 90 men duty bearers on Sexual and Gender based Violence, and I believe that the men that I trained are now agents of change in their communities. The training is one of the interventions under the Men Engage Project of EASSI. And because of that I can ably train and talk to people with more confidence. Thank you so much for the program of volunteering which has helped so many people to gain more confidence in what they do. LONG LIVE EASSI.
IRYNE KYOMPEIRWE:

I feel very privileged to have had my internship from EASSI. It is a home away from home. I was attached to the Women and Girls Empowerment project. Now I feel that I am a better student because I can make better reports, my communication skills have also improved, a strength I attribute to EASSI because they gave me the opportunity to train with them. And for the future interns, just do the right thing and always be willing to learn new things, give it your best.

JUILET GWOKYALYA:

“During my stay at EASSI I was attached to Gender and Trade project, where I was able to write and compile I- stories of women Informal Women Cross Border Traders who had benefited from the project. I also attended a training on M & E and this has helped me because at the moment am doing my own business and I am able to closely monitor my business and apply what I learnt during the M&E training to assess my business and also appreciate people for who they are. Thanks EASSI for the opportunity you gave me. To the young girls who are interested in volunteering, EASSI feels like home and they will also correct you whenever you are not on the right path so I encourage you to apply whenever an opportunity comes your way.”

Within the context of the African Women’s Decade, the training speaks to the tenth theme of the decade on empowering young men and women. EASSI committed itself to increase the number of young women to be mentored during the decade to contribute to the continuity of the women’s movement and so far, more than 250 women have been mentored both directly and indirectly through our leadership program. Mentoring not only empowers the young women to be leaders in their communities but also impacts on their other potentials such as self-reliance. EASSI is grateful to her focal point organisations in the member countries that have in the past, helped in supporting the young women on return to their own countries.
The aim of this programme is to contribute to the realization of women’s human rights and enhance their involvement in peace building processes. The strategic objective of this programme is to increase the participation of women in challenging systemic causes of conflict and providing alternative paradigms to peace building and conflict resolution. Our work is focused on gradually bringing women’s voices into the decision making spaces on peace and security matters.

Relevance of interventions under Women in Peace Process

Women are important players in peace building initiatives. Sub-Saharan Africa has been characterized by instability with women and children bearing the larger percentage of the brunt of conflict. And yet the voices of women continue to remain muffled. The ground-breaking UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which was passed in the year 2000, is the first to link women’s experiences of conflict to the international peace and security agenda, focusing attention on the disproportionate impact on conflict resolution and peace building. It is important to note that the process began in Beijing in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women, with the consideration that the subject of
women and armed conflict was an area of particular concern within the framework of the Platform for Action. Since then, the issue of women, gender, peace and security has been on the international agenda on a constant basis, although with differing results due to some obstacles and unresolved challenges. This makes the theme of women and peace processes a relevant issue to work on.

Under the thematic area of Women in Peace process, EASSI implemented two key interventions 1) The small arms and light weapons programme and 2) The Regional Women’s voices for peace initiatives.

The Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) programme: EASSI has been a lead organisation in the advocacy for gender dimensions of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Eastern African Sub-region. In various instances, gender issues are not included when countries are drawing peace and security plans of actions.

The impact of SALW on women can take many different forms. Besides actual injury by firearms, many women suffer psychologically from being threatened or intimidated by a weapon as a tool of domestic violence. In this regard SALW control must be improved and explicitly linked with measures to reduce domestic and other forms of gender-based violence. Equally, women are affected when men fall victim to armed crime, as they may become economically responsible for the household through the loss of a husband, father or brother.

EASSI participated actively in the global campaign for the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) which is aimed at regulating the trade in arms and conventional weapons across the globe. EASSI’s focus was on the gender dimensions of small arms and how gender could be integrated into the ATT. The campaign which was carried out by several organisations was successful as potential sexual and gender based violence was included in the treaty as an issue that should be assessed prior to an entity selling arms to another country. On 2 April 2013, the General Assembly adopted the landmark Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), regulating the international trade in conventional arms, from small arms to battle tanks, combat aircraft and warships. The treaty will foster peace and security by thwarting uncontrolled destabilizing arms flows to conflict regions. It will prevent human rights abusers and violators of the law of war from being supplied with arms. And it will help keep warlords, pirates, and gangs from acquiring these deadly tools.

In order to enable women to conduct dialogue and engage in lobby and advocacy through participation in international and regional fora on access to justice, peace-building as well as decision making power, EASSI held lobby meetings with policy makers in Gender & SALW including officials from EAC peace and security department on gender mainstreaming of security sector programs.

Three national workshops were conducted in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania to further highlight the need to streamline gender in SALW issues. During the meetings it was observed that the issues of security were of paramount importance with several atrocities being committed both within and across countries. The spill-off effects of the conflict in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) were being felt by the entire region, with women and children being the most affected. Out of this came a
women’s partnership with EASSI and partner organizations traveling to Goma in the DRC to sensitize and build capacity of women in negotiation skills so that they can be able to participate in peace delegations and negotiations.

The Regional Women’s Voices for Peace Initiatives:

The Regional Women’s Voices for Peace initiative brought together women from different countries to discuss peace strategies, share experiences, learn and replicate the best practices in peace building. It was part of awareness creation on the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women’s participation in peace processes and advocacy for countries to develop and implement national action plans for implementation of UNSCR. EASSI organised exchange visits and trained women in Peace building and conflict management in North Eastern Kenya.

Under her Regional Women’s Voices for Peace Initiative, EASSI has used the strategy of exchange visits to enhance partnership, collaboration and to raise the voices of women in East Africa across Eastern Africa. Activities are designed to lead to increased:

1. Advocacy for increased women’s participation in peace management and reconstruction efforts;
2. Strengthening linkages with national and regional organizations in peace management and
3. Facilitating the participation of women in challenging systemic causes of conflict;
4. Providing alternative paradigms to peace building and conflict resolution; and
5. Promoting gender mainstreaming in Small Arms and Light Weapons control and management

In 2013, women peace makers from Kenya and South Sudan converged in Luweero, Uganda for an exchange visit. The visit aimed to foster learning and sharing post conflict coping experiences especially in regard to economic empowerment amongst the women. The field visit was followed by a workshop to formulate lobby and advocacy strategies for the participation of women in peace, security and economic empowerment initiatives at country level. The event further informed by a research conducted by EASSI and International Alert entitled “Changing Fortunes: Women’s economic Opportunities in Post war Northern Uganda and Implications for Political Participation and Empowerment” September 2010, which study explores the links between new economic opportunities for women and their involvement in decision-making at different levels in Northern Uganda after the 20 year war.

Some of the women in Luweero have organized themselves into groups to generate income for their livelihoods. Below is one of the experiences that was shared by the Luweero Agali Awamu Cooperative. This group comprises Nubian women who were affected by the 1979 and 1986 wars. Nalongo, a member of the group spoke on behalf of the group members thus:

“After the war, we could no longer continue waiting and depending on the government to provide relief aid since it was inconsistent and could take months without coming. With support from UNIDO, we formed a group and opened up a crafts shop. Initially, we only made Nubian Crafts, but UNIDO trained us to make other kinds of crafts. We now deal in baskets, mats, jewelry, photo frames made from banana
fibers and bark cloth. We learnt that it is better to be innovative than wait for government interventions. When we came together as a group we were able to help each other and achieve more than we could have achieved from the government aid. Our group consists of 100 members with 30 being the active members.”

It is worth mentioning that although many years have gone by, the effects of conflict in Luweero are still visible. After the war, the government put in place many projects to help the survivors to rebuild their lives but almost all the projects were geared towards providing physical support. For instance, schools and hospitals were built but no project was put up to provide psycho-social support to the people affected by the war especially women.

The learning from the exchange visit was that there is need for gender justice and this is an avenue for advocacy work (for civil society actors) in Luweero. One does not always need money to be economically empowered. The women in Luweero who shared experiences on how they have managed to sustain themselves did not first wait to get money.

In the short term, the women peace makers agreed to: Male Engagement /Involvement in advocacy work; Information Sharing with the relevant stakeholders; share feedback to lessons and challenges amongst organizations. In the long term, the strategy is to integrate economic empowerment in peace and security programmes.
PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EVENTS ON WOMEN, PEACE BUILDING AND SALW

Peace Building & Negotiation Skills training for women in Goma, DRC

In order to scale up advocacy on gender & SALW issues at regional level, EASSI in partnership with Isis-Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange (Isis WICCE) conducted a “Peace building & negotiation skills training for women from July 1-5th, 2013, Goma in Eastern DRC.

The purpose was to enhance the capacity of women peace activists in DRC region to effectively participate in the peace process and to discuss gender based violence, Women economic empowerment, securing livelihoods and movement building in the region.

The training imparted participants with lobby and advocacy skills, negotiations skills and at the end of the training they developed a communiqué which was later handed to DRC and Uganda government of the need to incorporate women on the peace negotiating team between the DRC government and the M23 rebels. The communiqué, recommended that partners should continue to monitor the DRC peace talks and engage the ICGLR and the negotiators to ensure women's participation in line with UNSCR 1325. The women called for further training to enhance their capacity to engage in the peace process. They called upon the continuously engagement of the African Union, the ICGLR and the UN Special Envoy on the Great Lakes Region, to implement the Peace Security and Cooperation Framework for DRC.

Participation in the Preparatory meeting and 57 Session on the Commission on the Status (CSW) of Women

In March EASSI attended the 57th session of the CSW and organized a side event on the impact of small arms on sexual violence in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. The side event was a well attended workshop during which EASSI illustrated, through the use of a captivating and emotional documentary, the painful reality of suffering of the Congolese women and the impunity that accompanies such violent acts.

The situation portrayed in the documentary contributed to the advocacy for ending violence against women and the need for the gender responsive Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Subsequently, on 2nd April 2013, the UN General Assembly adopted the ATT with provisions to prevent armed gender based violence.

The treaty’s explicit provision on gender based violence not only recognizes the links between such violence and the arms trade, but makes it illegal to transfer weapons if there is a risk, for example that the weapons will be used to facilitate rape.

EASSI through its networks at national, regional and international level was able to contribute to gender justice.
For the most part of 2012, strategic communication was an integral part of EASSI. This is a comprehensive and holistic vision of the communication activities needed for designing and implementing successful programmes and projects. Strategic communication ensured that the programmes and policies of EASSI were appropriately designed, with the participation of all parties concerned and consequently the implementation was largely successful. The guiding questions in employing this strategy were:

1. What types of stakeholders should be targeted?
2. What is the desired change in behavior?
3. What messages would be appropriate?
4. What method or media of communication would be most effective?
5. How will the communication process be monitored and evaluated?

The communications interventions were:

**Production and dissemination of 250 copies of the Annual Report 2012**

250 copies of the EASSI Annual report were published and shared with development partners and stakeholders. The report gave an account of the 2012 events in terms of results, challenges, and lessons learnt. A copy of this report can still be accessed from the EASSI website – [http://www.eassi.org](http://www.eassi.org)

**Print media publicity**

On four separate counts, print media was used to draw attention to the various gender issues including the need to empower women and girls as a strategy for poverty alleviation and male engagement in the fight against sexual and gender based violence. The New Vision newspaper, the daily monitor and the East African newspaper were used for print media. The choice of the two newspapers is due to their nationwide readership.

**Video Documentary on economic empowerment of women**

In regard to the WOGE Project, as part of one of the immediate objectives of the project of documenting the processes and outcomes of the various intervention strategies relating to knowledge, skills and capacities development on girls and women economic empowerment, a 30 minutes video documentary was produced, for evidence based lobby and advocacy with a variety of targeted audiences including DSW and EASSI constituents and policy makers, The Netherlands Government (Donor), Implementing Agencies and the public. The documentary is to be utilized in all our WOGE Project related events during the project period.

**Production and dissemination of Newsletters**

2 Editions of the 16-page WOGE Project bi-annual newsletter highlighting the interventions so far, were published and shared with the various stakeholders during lobby and networking events.
advocacy meetings. The purpose of sharing the newsletter is to keep partners and stakeholders informed about the Project and to garner support of the WOGE Groups beyond the Project period. Some of the target stakeholders include the District officials in charge of local government initiatives that can benefit the women groups such as the Community Driven Development Initiative.

In addition, 2 issues of the 12 paged Gender and Trade bulletin were published and shared with stakeholders and development partners. This was a quarterly publication for the Gender and Trade project that ended in June 2013.

Print and Broadcast Media Publicity

Throughout the year, the beneficiaries from all the districts of operation were invited to different radio stations to discuss various issues in relation to economic empowerment. The women talked about the benefits of being in groups, and how the WOGE project has changed the lives of the women and girls. Some of the talk shows were held to denounce gender based violence during the annual 16 days of activism against gender based violence.

A total of 15 talk shows were held on different radios in the region with a reach that goes beyond the Project’s scope of operation. From the feedback, it was evident that more women and girls outside the scope would like to benefit from the intervention given the progress that has been made by the groups. 2 articles were run in the print media (The East African Newspaper) to talk about the project and the importance empowering women as one of the steps towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and other commitments to gender equality and equity. In addition, some of the Project interventions such as the 16 days of activism against GBV received media coverage in the New Vision and Daily Monitor Newspapers. The two papers have country wide reach.

Websites and social media platforms

The EASSI and the WOGE Project websites were maintained i.e. http://www.eassi.org and http://www.woge.org respectively, throughout the year. Over time, these have grown steadily and currently receive a total of 5000 visitors on a monthly basis. Majority of the users are from the East African Community Partner states who constitute 65% of the traffic. On a complimentary note, the EASSI, WOGE Project and Men Engage Project face book pages were remarkable routes to the our websites as they are directly linked. With a total of 600 likes and a reach of at most 150 people per post, these platforms were regularly used to share information in real-time – a practice that triggered conversations on various concerns especially on skilling women, health and domestic violence issues. Additionally, EASSI and the WOGE Project maintained twitter accounts as well as the FLOW Project online community. These too were used to share and learn about interventions that speak especially to the need for economic empowerment of women and other gender equality issues.

Mailing lists

EASSI maintains two 2 mailing lists namely: eassi@googlegroups.com and woge-list@woge.org. These are the main means of communication on our work. Both lists have a total of 1000 members. EASSI received positive feedback from the members subscribed to it that the news and opportunities shared are relevant to the recipients.
Institutional Strengthening and Human Resource

The aim of the Institutional Strengthening, Organizational Development and Capacity Building component of EASSI is to strengthen and enhance its capacity as a sub-regional CSO to monitor the implementation of the BPfAs in Eastern Africa. Institutional strengthening is a cornerstone of any vibrant and sustainable organization. This includes both human and non-human resources that work together to hold the institution together. In EASSI, this includes the members, the staff at the secretariat and the tools that have been made available to make the environment conducive for efficient and effective delivery of the organizational goals and objectives.

GOVERNANCE

Board of Directors Meetings

EASSI Board meetings take place once every year during which annual work plans and budgets, annual reports and audited accounts are discussed and approved. In 2013, the board meeting as well as the General Assembly took place in April and August, respectively during which the Board of Directors was able to interact with staff and share some insights on how best to work as a team during the year.

New 5 year Strategic Plan

The new 5 year Strategic Plan of EASSI was presented to the Board. The key elements presented included: Strategic direction 2014-2018 with proposed changes on the vision and mission, thematic areas, levels of intervention, internal and external analysis; Programme plan and Conceptual framework highlighting 6 strategic goals with their respective strategic objectives and expected results; organizational development; Change Management; Staffing Structure; and Resource mobilization structure.

Acquisition of Immovable Assets

EASSI moved into its new premises in Kisaasi. The House is almost 60 percent complete and funds allowing, by 2016, it should be completed. It will comprise a training centre on the bottom floor and first floor, offices on the second and third floors and between ten to 15 self contained double rooms on the top floor. As part of its sustainability plan, EASSI will lease out some of the office space and establish a vibrant training centre on broad issues of women’s rights and gender equality. The Secretariat has already been proactive and held all its Kampala based trainings at EASSI house long before it was completed to its current quality.

Staffing

In the course of the year, some EASSI Staff moved on to greener pastures or for personal reasons. In response to this, EASSI recruited some staff to fill the gap. In addition, a number of volunteers were taken on under the different departments, and this ensured that all programmes remained on course. The total number of core staff during the year was 17, while the non-core staff were 6.
ABOUT EASSI

WHO WE ARE
The Eastern African Sub-regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women (EASSI) is a registered sub-regional civil society organization working in eight countries namely Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania. EASSI was born in 1996 after the Beijing Conference and is mandated to monitor the commitments of Eastern African governments towards implementation of the African and Beijing Platforms for Action.

OUR MISSION
EASSI’s mission is to facilitate follow-up of the Beijing and African Platforms for Action in order to enhance the advancement of women and social justice.

OUR VISION
EASSI envisions a society where all enjoy gender equality, social justice, peace and development.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE
The General Assembly: The General Assembly is the highest governing body of EASSI responsible for ratification of major policy decisions, plans and budgets. It comprises 26 members, 16 of which are member organizations with wide national networks of women’s rights organizations, and 10 are individual members. The General Assembly meets every two years.

The Board of Directors: The Board of Directors is comprised of 12 members elected from the General Assembly. The Executive Director is an ex-officio member. The Board meets at least once a year and has got three specialized committees to support the Secretariat. These are: the Finance and Investments Committee; the Human Resource Committee; and the Programmes Committee.

The Secretariat: This is located in Kampala, Uganda. It is the coordinating unit of EASSI, headed by the Executive Director with the support of 12 staff. The Secretariat promotes EASSI’s mission and vision, oversees the daily operation and implementation of programmes, interprets and spearheads implementation of the strategic plan, provides the link between national, regional and global processes, spearheads and coordinates resource mobilization and capacity building, promotes networking within the women’s movement in the sub-region.
## 2013 SECRETARIAT STAFF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Designation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Marren Akatsa-Bukachi</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Christine Nankubuge</td>
<td>Programmes Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Assumpta N. Muweera</td>
<td>Finance and Administration Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sylvia Namale</td>
<td>Communications and Networking Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Nivatiti Nandujja</td>
<td>EADGE Project Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Eric Tumwesigye</td>
<td>Gender and Trade Project Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Elizabeth Ampairwe</td>
<td>WOGE Project Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ruth Warutere</td>
<td>WOGE Project Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Valerie Mbeo</td>
<td>Men Engage Project Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Harriet Akot</td>
<td>Finance Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Caroline Namirembe</td>
<td>Administrative Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Loy Aceng</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Martin Katongole</td>
<td>Office Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Fred Begumisa</td>
<td>Driver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Alex Kitonsa</td>
<td>Driver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Anette Auma</td>
<td>WOGE Project Assistant - Busia District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Stephen Gerald Okello</td>
<td>WOGE Project Assistant - Rakai District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Loy Musiimenta</td>
<td>WOGE Project Assistant - Kabale District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Pearl Atuhaire Karuhanga</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Maria Teddy Namuddu</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Juliet Nakyanzi</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONTACT

The Eastern African Sub-regional Support Initiative for the Advancement of Women (EASSI)
P.O.Box 24965,
Kampala, Uganda

Phone: +256 312 266 451

Email: eassi@eassi.org
eassi.eassi@gmail.com

Web: http://www.eassi.org