



COMMITTEE FOCUS

Anne Marit Hovstad, ACWW Projects Committee Chairman

ACWW Projects promoting maternal health and combating violence against women



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In the first of a new series of guest articles, we introduce one of the ACWW Committee Chairmen, and explore their role, work and focus.

Name: Anne Marit Hovstad

Country: Norway

Role: Chairman, Projects Committee

Term: 2013-2016

Previous Role: Member of Projects Committee, 2007-2013

Member Since: 2002

Background:

In 1996 she was elected as board member of FOKUS (an umbrella organisation in Norway with more than 70 women's groups and organisations), and from 1998 was President of FOKUS. From 1987 to 1991 she was a local politician. She has attended several ACWW Triennial World Conferences and also European Conferences. Since 2001 she has held the position of NWF's project leader and as such is responsible for projects in Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe. She visits the projects once or twice a year.

Two photos from Anne Marit's time in Uganda on Project Monitoring trips. The top image is from Project 0982, the Kituntu Women's Association, whilst the second is from Project 0919, Kasese District Women with Disabilities.

Sustainable Development Goal 3 is Good Health and Well-Being, and relates directly to many of the projects we support.

The ACWW Projects Committee meets twice a year to consider applications for funding from grassroots member and non-member organisations. Over the past Triennium we have received in the region of 600 applications for project funding and have approved 61 of these with grants totalling £288,550. This money has been raised by ACWW members and supporters through regular donations to the various projects funds and via the "adoption" of projects by societies once they have been approved.

When we last met at the 2013 Triennial Conference in Chennai, India, resolutions were approved calling on ACWW members to focus on the situation of girls and women who are victims of different forms of violence; further access to quality maternal health education and services; and campaign together to end the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). The Projects Committee has also endeavoured to be mindful of these issues during its decision-making process.

All of the projects funded by ACWW benefit women and communities in need of safe water and sanitation, healthcare, education, civic awareness, skill training or income-generating opportunities. Improved maternal health in particular is an outcome of any project that permits access to safe drinking water, promotes sexual and reproductive health and gives women the means to supplement their incomes and improve their diets by growing nutritious vegetables or milking cows and goats.

However, some of the projects funded recently have had more specific goals related to these recommendations from the outset: Kasese District Women with Disabilities in Uganda is being supported to decrease high regional maternal and infant mortality rates through a health education project. They are also meeting with local leaders to discuss prevalent health problems and the lack of maternal health services by mapping those areas in need of the most attention. It is hoped that as a result of the project, women in the region will have better access to maternity services and also better healthcare facilities for their families.

Cameroon Gender and Environment Watch aims to empower teenage girls by improving their awareness of reproductive health. The organisation found through their research that



many girls are forced into early, illegal marriage resulting in frequent pregnancies (some dealt with by unsafe abortions) and children whose basic needs are not met. These young mothers often become victims of domestic violence and lead very restricted lives. ACWW is currently funding a project that offers counselling services, health education and computer literacy training to these girls with the goal of reducing early marriages and improving their skills and future prospects.

The essential work of these women-led community organisations is made possible thanks to the generosity of ACWW members and their societies and so if you would like more information about making a donation or "adopting" a project, please contact the Projects Administrators at Central Office.

