

GWEN NEWS

The Newsletter for Grassroots Women's Empowerment Network

October 2015

DISABILITY MAINSTREAMING Key to Uganda's development



INSIDE

Why teachers need refresher courses ...P.10

Men too suffer domestic violence ...P.6

Persons with disabilities express their concerns through singing at a recent UMWA event.

By GWEN Team

There is no doubt that disability mainstreaming formed a bigger part of the EAGWEN programming; and in particular the UMWA specific project, after all the 2015 – 2018 program main target are Women With Disabilities (WWDs).

It is for this reason, that UMWA more than her other partners, COWA and MAFA, rolled out her project with Persons With Disabilities (PWDs)

in mind, especially in as far as promoting their political and economic rights is concerned. And so, a baseline survey to establish the knowledge levels on political and economic rights, among WWDs kick-started the project, revealing glaring gaps to the point that over 70% of the WWDs targeted were not aware of their political rights, the electoral roadmap leave alone the provisions that relate to PWDs!

A training on political and economic rights, in

particular electoral rights was later conducted attracting over 64 participants, who at the end of the workshop expressed satisfaction with the awareness created among them, in addition to the communication and negotiation skills that they were exposed to. Among some of the new things the WWDs said they had learnt included:

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GWEN Opinion

Capacity may be the missing link in Uganda's pursuance for development

Having trillions of dollars may not be enough for anybody's development. We have seen this a lot, especially among children who inherit wealth of their parents but never move very far with such resources. Reason being, such children were never prepared to utilize such resources in a more meaningful way. They did not have adequate capacity to exploit such resources to take them to another level.

This is also relevant to organizations and even nations. For as long as we can remember, Uganda has received billions and billions of dollars in development aid most of it ending up underutilized or misutilized while similar amounts end up in corrupt dealings. Same with Non Governmental Organizations except that the underutilization is largely accounted for by inadequate capacity on the part of the implementers!

It is for this reason that The East African Grassroots Women Network (EAGWEN) member organizations salute her partners: the Norwegian Women and Family Association (NWF) and FOKUS for providing substantial resources towards capacity building in areas like Results based programming, conflict management, disability mainstreaming, among others. As EAGWEN partners, therefore, we shall have no reason not to perform to our best as we facilitate our colleagues, the grassroots women, to become active participants in the affairs that affect them!

EAGWEN partners enhance knowledge and skills in key thematic areas



EAGWEN partners/ beneficiaries and NWF officials after the annual Conference.

By GWEN Team

As part of the partnership between EAGWEN and NWF, it was agreed that enhancing capacity in carefully selected thematic areas be part of the three-year contract (2015 – 2017). Four thematic areas were identified as key for the smooth operation of the Program. These included but not limited to: Results Based Reporting, Conflict Management and Resolution, Disability mainstreaming, and Writing for

GWEN News.

Considering that the first three areas, were pretty urgent, EAGWEN partners convened at UMWA premises to enhance their knowledge and skills in these areas. The training was conducted by renown Trainers in the selected subject.

By the end of the two-day training in Disability Mainstreaming, participants were able to among others:-

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Why disability mainstreaming is so easy

From Page 1

"I have learnt about the electoral roadmap, procedures, and now know when and where the voting will take place. I have learnt that there are lots of opportunities during an electoral period, but that I have to control my temper to stay safe and secure. Not to provoke anybody to hurt me".

"I now appreciate that all of us have a stake in the political process, and that once violence erupts, it is us WWDs who would suffer most. Other activities to promote WWDs including facilitating them to participate in radio shows were undertaken. But the realization that most of us have been fooling around about issues of sensitivity to diversity especially on issues of disability struck management and staff in the disability mainstreaming training: Take for example how most of us describe or identify PWDs..... It is always negative, degrading, labels, labels!! Name calling, etc".

Mr. Martin Senoga, Program Officer, with

the National Union of People With Disabilities in Uganda (NUDIPU) posed and requested the class how they would wish to be described. Trust me all the descriptions were positive:

"A journalist and a reporter". "Calm, respectful, hard working". "Beautiful, intelligent, humble, hard working, principled". "Simple, down to earth". "Strong, able bodied". "Son of God, intelligent, courageous, etc..".

Then the facilitator posed: "How then do you think persons living with disability feel when they are presented in bad light..... but for us we have to bring all the positive adjectives to describe ourselves".

The conclusion of the training on this topic was that it is important to place ourselves in the shoes of others, and test how it feels when given a negative label, or discriminated, etc.

And Yes, it worked because now – at UMWA / Mama FM – sensitivity and inclusiveness are key words that staff and management take very seriously!



A demonstration farm in Luweero District

Bio intensive agriculture key to sustainable production

By MAFA Team

Agriculture in general and small holder farmers in particular face several challenges including reduced soil fertility due to poor agricultural practices leading to soil degradation, land shortage due to high population growth rate and climate change among others. These have negatively affected agriculture productivity leading to food insecurity and loss of livelihoods for the smallholder farmers.

This therefore calls for promoting sustainable practices that will enable farmers to increase productivity in their limited pieces of land (intensively rather than extensively) while also improving soil fertility and general restoration of the eco system. Bio intensive agriculture is one such farming system.

Bio intensive agriculture (BIA) is an organic agricultural system that focuses on achieving maximum yields from a minimum area of land, while simultaneously increasing biodiversity and sustaining the fertility of the soil. The goal of the method is long term sustainability on a closed system basis. It is particularly effective for backyard gardeners and smallholder farmers in developing countries, and also has been used successfully on small-scale commercial farms.

Bio intensive farming methods i.e. deep land preparation, compost making, calorie farming, close spacing, intercropping, carbon farming and use of open pollinated seeds can enable small scale farms and farmers to significantly increase

food production and income, utilize predominantly local, renewable resources and decrease expense and energy inputs while building fertile topsoil at a rate of 60 times faster in nature.

According to MAFA Director, Abu Mubiru, it is important to apply / promote a holistic farming method which embraces all methods of bio intensive agriculture. He says: "Farmers using bio intensive techniques have the potential to:

- Use 67% to 88% less water than conventional agricultural methods.
- Use 50% to 100% less purchased (organic, locally available) fertilizer.
- Use up to 99% less energy than commercial agriculture, while using a fraction of the resources.
- Produce 2 to 6 times more food at intermediate yields, assuming a reasonable level of farmer skill and soil fertility (which increase over time as the method is practiced)
- Produce a 100% increase in soil fertility.
- Reduce by 50% or more the amount of land required to grow a comparable amount of food. This allows more land to remain in a wild state, preserving ecosystem services and promoting genetic diversity".

May Mwogezi, 42, Twekembe Women Farmers Group

"I used to live on a very infertile small piece of land which limited my output, but ever since the training in Bio intensive agriculture conducted

EAGWEN Partners meet on skills' development

From Page 2

Critique their own programs in view of disability inclusion; share experiences and activities in disability inclusion, and discover, how insensitive they have been against Persons With Disabilities (PWDs), among other things. Says a participant from COWA: "I was very negative about PWDs and never imagined that they would be trained at COWA. But I was later encouraged by fellow staff, and today, I feel that PWDs are part of COWA".

At the end of the training, participants proposed practical recommendations for each organization to undertake in order to mainstream disability issues in their programs. These included among others: development of a PWD policy, and mainstreaming PWD issues. Says Kalanzi Lawrence of Mama FM: "It will now be a policy to ensure that on every Mama FM program, a PWD is facilitated to participate".

On Results Based Reporting, participants were trained in designing a Results Based Program capturing objectives, outputs, outcomes among other things. It was noted that once one has a Results Based Program, it becomes easy to write a report that is results based. Said Patrick Kato, who facilitated the course: "Once you are clear with the above four, and ask yourself 'what shows that you have achieved – in other words – the indicators', then you already have a report that gives the results of your program".

It was noted that it should not only the donors who should be interested in project results to account for the funding, but the communities too, who we serve – need to see results. Partner organizations, too, it was pointed out, should too be very much interested in capturing the results of their energies and time spent in the field. Said a participant from UMWA: "Results motivate us, project implementer to do much more. But without touching results – you are as good as nothing!"

It was also appreciated that aside the project people, accountants too should be interested in project design, implementation, reporting results, and evaluation. Says Doreen Naggayi – Accountant, MAFA. "Finance people should be engaged in report writing to appreciate what the funds they requisition or release, do!"

The training in Conflict Management and Resolution, came as a result of the need to equip members with the necessary skills, as it is a given, that operating in an organization, or network, is not without conflict.

By the end of the training, participants appreciated potential areas of conflict, how it can occur, and how it can be responded to, pointing out that it was important for partner organizations to meet regularly, apply the principle of mutual respect, and increased communication, to minimize on the incidences of conflict.

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MAFA improves water, sanitation and hygiene in rural schools

By MAFA Team

Lack of safe drinking water and basic sanitation imposes a heavy health burden especially on the young children and the poor. It aggravates poverty, poor school attendance and overall development is affected. In sub Saharan Africa, 45% of the population uses either shared unimproved facilities or an estimated 25% practice open defecation.

Maganjo Farmers Association (MAFA)'s assessment of the communities in Luweero District revealed that, access to clean and safe, hygiene and sanitation conditions are very poor. There are only a few protected wells in the area and water coverage is less than 13.3% thus forcing residents to walk long distances in search of safe clean water.

The sanitation situation is worse in schools. The MAFA team observed that latrines do not match with the government recommended latrine users' ratio: no privacy, water for washing hands is inadequate and there is lack of soap. The boys find it easy to practice open defecation while the adolescent girls have no incinerators which hinders proper hygiene during their menstrual cycle.

Gaita Rebecca, Headmistress Zinunula P.S says:

"We are grateful to MAFA for considering our school. This has improved the hygiene and sanitation situation. There is no more open defecation! And students no longer have to walk long distances



A new toilet facility constructed by MAFA.

It is against that background that MAFA is supporting rural farming communities in Luweero District by reaching out to the rural poor children in particular orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs). The targeted schools are: Monde High Primary School (202 pupils), Ndabilako Ddala Primary school (307 pupils), St. Joseph Kachwampa Primary School (156 pupils) and Zinunula Primary

School (244 pupils).

Each school was supported with 10,000 litres capacity rain water harvesting tanks, 10 stance toilets with 2 rooms specifically designed for children with disabilities, and trained pupils in school kitchen gardening, in addition to establishing school health clubs of 7 members each and also sensitized the children about good hygiene and sanitation practices.



Tank for water harvesting for each school.

Namutebi Grace P.4, student Monde High P.S.:

"I am particularly happy with MAFA for having provided a toilet for the disabled children at school. The toilet has a seat (toilet bowl) and support handles on each side of the wall. So many times, we the disabled people are left out from the development processes which discourages us not to attend or stay in school. I was very unfortunate to have lost my leg at a very tender age but I am now very happy to feel included at last."

Namugera Catherine, P.6, Ndabilako Ddala P.S. Health Prefect

"Together with the school health club and the teachers, we are going to ensure that the students uphold the good hygiene and sanitation practices that the toilets and the tank are properly handled and are always kept clean".

Sustainable development through bio-intensive agriculture

From Page 3

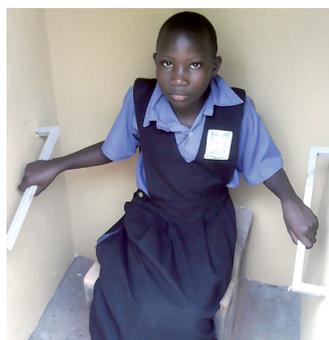
by MAFA, my life has never been the same. The training empowered me in how to rejuvenate the fertility of my land by adding composite manure. This enabled me to have a small garden of bananas (Matooke) which I use to feed my family and I am also growing various vegetables in sacks at my home. The vegetables i.e. Nakati, Amaranthus, Spinach, Green pepper, tomatoes and Eggplant are currently my main source of income. I get at least UGX 25,000 per day after selling them to my neighbors and the community at large. I am very grateful."

Sanyu Goretti, 37, Agali awamu Farmers Group

"The best thing about the practices promoted by MAFA is that they are cost effective as one uses locally available materials in farming to increase on household food production".

Mambi Esther, 47, Kyotta Farmers Group

"These methods have particularly enabled me to have enough food even in the dry seasons for example the sunken beds retain water for a long period of time which has ensured food security for my family."





A COWA trainee demonstrates how to knit a sweater.

From 'Lazy' to 'Busy'!

How COWA transformed Martha into a useful person

By GWEN Team

“Work never kills but gives you dignity”, Principal Romana usually addresses us at the assembly. This has helped change my attitude towards life and more particularly towards work!

My name is Martha Nalwoga. I am 19 years old. I did my Ordinary Level Certificate in 2014 and passed in Division Four. So one can see how discouraged and hopeless I felt when my results came back. I did not think that with that kind of grade I would be taken in any Institution. But my cousin knew about COWA CVTS and so, she suggested that we try to seek admission there. My parents had wanted me to do Hairdressing or Fashion & Designing! But my interest was in Catering and Hotel management since I had done some Home Economics in my former school. And I liked the subject!

The reason why I want to share my new life in COWA CVTS is due to the changes that have happened to me ever since I joined this school. At my former school, things were so routine which

did not make me appreciate to study there. It was enough to follow the school regulations and life moved on without any consideration of something extra that could add value to my life.

At COWA CVTS I have learnt to associate with others in a productive way, become more responsible in and out of class. I have learnt the value of work. I used to hate work so much and wanted others to do things for me, but now I am the first person to volunteer to do any kind of work.

Even at home I am a changed person, can clean the house because at COWA CVTS cleanliness is taught as a priority. I can wash my mum's clothes before anybody tells me, contrary to the past when mum would tell me to do housework and I refuse! I feel this change of attitude towards work has helped me a great deal. I am a very happy person now.

Everybody used to complain about me at home. I would eat but was very negative against those who had cooked the food who would rightly remind me that food cannot bring itself to the table, but that one had to work hard for it. I would

feel very bad but could not overcome that laziness until when I joined COWA CVTS.

One time I went home to get some requirements. I found the compound very dirty and immediately I remembered that at COWA CVTS we do general cleaning on Fridays. So I started cleaning! Everybody at home was surprised to see me do that. It was a transformed Martha!

This made me also have a feeling of being useful at home, being appreciated by those who love me and a feeling of belonging, which I used not to have due to my lack of cooperation. I owe them this change to colleagues and the school at large and I promise I will continue to be helpful, hard working and social, in all aspects of life. I am now a very busy and self driven person.

To my fellow students: Learn how to associate and support each other. I advise you to love work for a better life. Nobody wants to stay with a lazy person.

Men too suffer domestic violence

Now's the time for both genders to appreciate the changing social dynamics

By GWEN Team

Meet Maria Nakazibwe, a Probation Officer – Wakiso, the woman, women love to hate accusing of her of being ‘unwomanly’ and ‘unmotherly’. *As if she did not experience labour pains; what is wrong with that woman, was she bribed to surrender a four-month child to a father instead of leaving it under the care a mother!!*

Such are the accusations against this Probation Officer – who works with 23 lower governments, and mans the office with a junior staff; arriving in office at 9 am and can only retire if, and only if she has sorted out the last case of the day, sometimes leaving office as late as 9 pm to navigate through the traffic jam across the city.

Nakazibwe says: “Many women hate me because they fail to prove the fit parents that they have to be, to win the custody of their children in case of separation or divorce. My guiding principle when passing judgment in such matters, is the best interest of the child which is security.

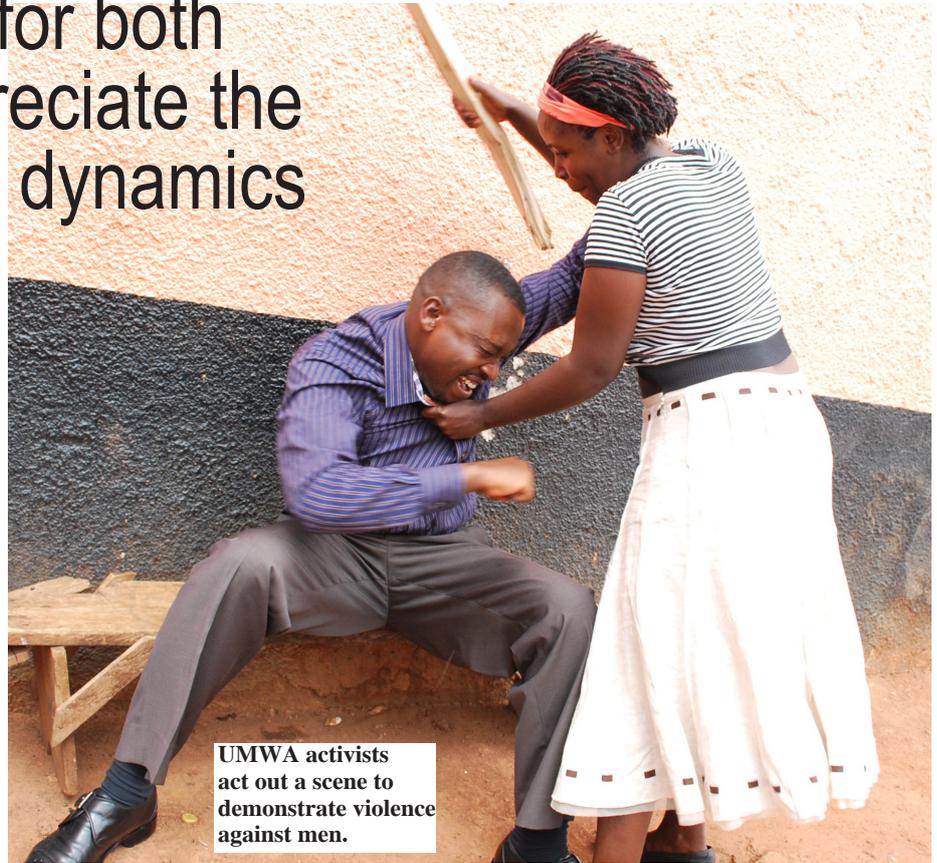
The law which previously allowed underage children to be under the custody of their mothers was repealed. Fathers now are allowed to stay with a child of even 2 months if the mother qualifies herself as unfit, meaning that she cannot provide the basic necessities (housing, food and medical care).

It is important for the public to know that the other parent only comes in to complement what the parent who has won the custody of the child. And the bear minimum is the child’s security in all senses. Personally, I do not take mothers for granted – but have to apply fairness so that I do not compromise the child’s security. There are times when it becomes so disgusting and challenging. I have seen women behaving like monsters or lionesses who are only after the man’s property or money but not the child’s well being.

One day I slapped a woman, not that I do not regret it, but it was too much to stomach. Can you imagine that a woman used me (this office) for several months to obtain money from a father of her “two” children!

It reached a point when the father demanded to see both children who the woman had claimed were fathered by the man before the separation. This time the man refused to surrender any more money. The appointment was agreed upon, and the father came, only to be told by the mother that the other child had just died.

Interrogating the woman further, it was found out that the story was fake..... the other child was fathered by another man!! We arrested the woman for unlawful declaration of death! I have also been enticed by women into signing wrong documents for women to claim property that belongs to men claiming that their partners have become mentally



unstable..... so it is them to start managing the family property! I did my research and fortunately I found the women wrong!

I have time and again appealed to women to treat men fairly if we too, deserve that equal treatment. It is important to appreciate that men too suffer domestic violence. Once the economic trends changed, the manifestations of domestic violence, too changed.

There are women who marry for property!

Research has shown that very few economically empowered married women contribute to the household needs, claiming that it is the role of men to provide! But this is wrong because once both of us are earning, then both of us have to contribute to the family needs. But when I advise women on this, they instead hate me!

Sometimes I’m misunderstood when I tell the

truth that men too, suffer domestic violence. For example there are women who marry for property or money. There are women who borrow from microfinance institutions and pledge the family house as collateral, and once the loan is provided, they quickly divorce, leaving the man to service the loan, lest they lose the house.

There are also women who divorce / separate, and win the custody of the children, but get support from the fathers of the children. But you can imagine cases where the father is providing money (UGS 1.5m) to pay in an upscale school yet the mother decided to take the children to a UPE school, meaning that she is using almost all the money for her business or any other thing but no school fees!

I’m also hated for challenging women’s sense of judgment when they present cases to this office. Many women are incapable of making proper decisions, and they are easily told lies, because they are “too much in love! For example, how can anybody in the right thinking mind start contributing to constructing a house where you have no ownership or control?! An interesting scenario here.

A woman got married, and possibly due to much love, she quickly decided to contribute money to buy family land, but the title deed was put in the names of the man. Years along the road, she had had three kids, and soon, she was divorced taking the children with her.

Later she came back with trucks of construction materials to start building a house for her

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Sports for education at COWA excites NWF team

By Okello Francis Billy

SPORTS and physical education build personal attributes that are important for the holistic development of a student such as self-confidence, ambition, discipline, sense of judgment, being able to cope with winning or losing, and establishment of productive relationships, among others.

With such qualities, young people are more likely to feel secure in taking risks for challenging work, and therefore improving their ability to perform in various beneficial activities. This strategy is most effective when it is also used to build a positive ethos and culture across the school.

Explicitly building on skills developed in physical education in a wider range of circumstances is more complex than the other strategies because it requires schools to develop skills in a coordinated way, rather than each subject determining its curriculum in isolation. However, schools that have done this have reaped the rewards in terms of increased skill and confidence levels among students, as well as reducing the amount of teaching time for duplicate ideas between subjects.

In this regard, COWA undertakes physical fitness classes for both staff and students every Wednesday; and on 19th August sports activities, music, dance and drama, plus exhibition and tree planting dominated what now has been proposed as annual sports day.

Staff competed among themselves and so did the students in walk race, athletics, bottle filling and tug of war. A drama on the importance of different people of their status and professionalism was performed by the students. This was of great importance in creating a feeling of respect for one another in society.

In a move to create more awareness about the importance of environmental conservation three citrus fruit trees were planted by Anne Marit, Kristin Hansen and Agnes Mutesi of AVSI.

Agnes Mutesi a social worker with AVSI says: "This has been my first time ever in my life to plant a tree. I have seen people planting trees for remembrance during functions but never realized the value, till today. I urge the school to make sports day an annual event. Exhibition of



COWA staff in a group discussion during the training.

the different activities COWA undertakes was also spot on for publicity of the school. But the students need to be guided and encouraged more to become more creative and to love whatever they do to compete favourably in the job market".

Vilda Oedegaard one of the members of the NWF team who visited COWA says: "This is my first time in Uganda. I have enjoyed the hospitality. I have been reading about tree planting without necessarily experiencing it practically. I have liked a lot about the vocational skills training offered by COWA. This prepares them for employment and job creation".

Exhibition was another interesting activity of the day where COWA trainees exhibited finished products and demonstrated the processes the products go through. Nagudi Elizabeth an alumni of COWA exhibited party bags, money purses

and laptop bags which she makes. She says: "I am very grateful to COWA. I earn my living from the sale of these products. My market base grows everyday because I advertise my work. I am also grateful for the opportunity to exhibit my products. This is a blessing to me though I may not sell much today but consider it as exposure to new clients".

From 19th August activities, COWA learnt a lot, including that strong team work can be built by both the trainees and staff for the betterment of education.

How changing social dynamics affect gender

From Page 6

children, but the man sells them off despite having 'allowed' her.

The woman was not done yet, ferries more trucks only to end up the same way. The contestation of the ownership of the land was brought to court and the woman obviously lost it – she was not the legal owner despite having contributed to the purchase! So I usually tell women to do the

basics before they love too much.

To end domestic violence, I believe, both men and women need to appreciate that the social constructs are still with us, despite some sensitization programs and doses of modernity, here or there. Both gender need to go back to the drawing table to appreciate the changing gender dynamics and how both, can fairly respond to them. But

important to appreciate that this will not happen any time soon, but a journey all of us have to embrace. Government should implement national programs targeting both men and women to ensure that the mindset (superiority / inferiority) is broken."



Msgr. Charles Kasibante (in white) poses for a photo with the graduands.

COWA bridges gap in essential employable skills

By Okello Francis Billy

SKILLING Uganda is a recent programme by the Government of Uganda aimed at creating the essential employable skills and competencies relevant for the formal and non-formal job market.

However there are still gaps in implementing program due to a number of socio-economic factors. Changing the negative attitude of most Ugandans to embrace technical and vocational subjects as top priority is still very low.

Most youths join vocational and technical institutions as a last resort, after failing to proceed to Advanced level of education in the formal setting and yet practical skills in health, agriculture, tourism, catering and hospitality, tailoring, and others are much more readily relevant and marketable nowadays in Uganda's labour market.

COWA Centenary Vocational Training School Nsambya is one of the private institutions in the country that has taken up the program. Within the 23 years of its commitment to vocational skills to the disadvantaged youth, COWA has contributed to Uganda's development. By April 2015 many of the trainees who sat for their final exams in 2014, had got employment.

October 2nd, 2015 marked the 18th graduation ceremony of COWA CVTS. The ceremony attracted among others 78 graduands. The ceremony undertaken under the theme "Skilling Uganda, begins with me". This was meant to create more awareness to the community to have a positive attitude to vocational training.

It was presided over by Mrs. Kyobe Ethel (Ag Director –Directorate of Industrial Training) who commended COWA staff and management



The Principal of COWA, Romana Francesca and Angela Zawedde of MAFA at a function.

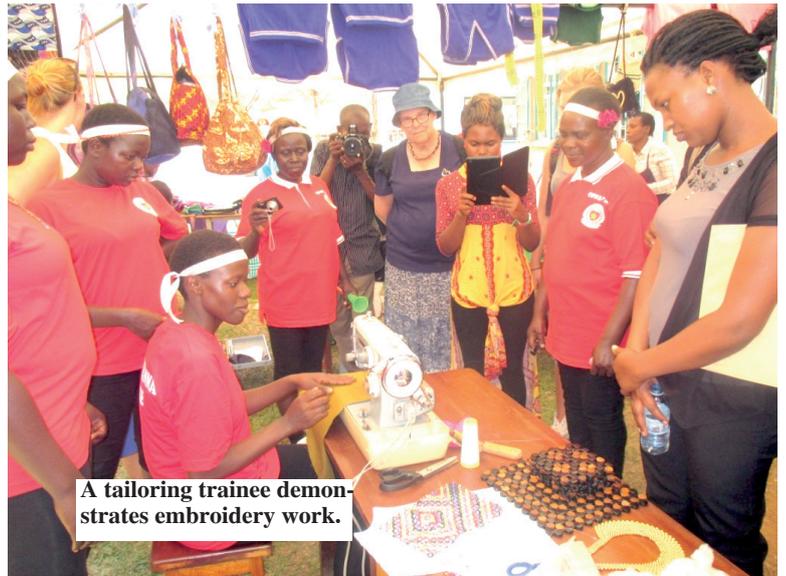
for providing Competence Based Education and Training (CBET), advising the graduands to utilize the acquired knowledge and skills to develop themselves and the nation at large. The Director – Directorate of Industrial Training pledged for continued support to COWA CVTS. She said: "While the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology and Sports is pursuing skilling Ugandan, DIT will emphasize Competence Based Education and Training and conduct Competence Based Assessment, a thing that will give COWA graduates the edge over others".

Kampala Archdiocese Vicar General Monsignor Charles Kasibante congratulated the graduands saying, "This is a day for you to enjoy but at the same time keeping in mind the objectives that you want for life. The skills that you have acquired are precious, seek every opportunity to develop them further, and encourage others to join COWA. If you show that the course you did is beneficial to your livelihood, others will be attracted to COWA CVTS for a similar course".

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Teacher Esther of COWA guiding students in product costing.



A tailoring trainee demonstrates embroidery work.

Bridging gap in essential employable skills

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Rev. Sr. Boniconsilii Ngabirano – COWA Board Chairperson, appreciated the theme saying, “Promotion of vocational skills training should begin with every individual”. This also signifies that at every level, whether as a husband or wife, as a professional in any trade, practical skills acquisition can add value to one’s life and family.

Francesca Romana Bilak – Principal, COWA CVTS: “COWA is proud to pass out seventy eight (78) vibrant youth who are ready to make a positive change in their social, economic and spiritual lives. This brings the total number of graduates to 798 since the school’s inception in 1992. Out of this, 84% are either employed or are self-employed”. Adding, the theme: “Skilling Uganda begins with me!” is a challenge to all of us. The negative attitude towards vocational training must change. The contribution COWA makes to the development of Uganda is in line with the national, regional and international legal frameworks that emphasize the right to education but more especially the technical vocation education and training (TVET) as enshrined in Article 30 of the Constitution of Uganda (1995) among others.

Some of the graduands shared their experiences:

Barbra Namunyolo: “I intend to be employed for a little time; save money and set up my own business but also pursue a Diploma”.

Vicky Kawune is a housewife. She says: “I now have a profession! It has been a long journey to this success. Balancing education and family and as a mother of two was difficult. With the skills I have got now, I can work in any hotel department. I’m happy that I was retained at the place where I was posted as an intern. So I have a job, already. Now I can support my family financially. I really appreciate the choice I took to enroll for catering course at COWA”.

Ataliwaya Judith who was also awarded with a business startup kit says: “I shall open a snacks business”.



COWA staff in a group work during the training.



A COWA facilitator demonstrating colour mixing.

Regular refresher courses, a must to teachers

By Okello Francis Billy

Upon leaving school, graduates are equipped with knowledge and skills but few of them are able to practice or sustain this for a long time due to the dynamics in the work world.

New technologies are difficult to cope with, there are fewer jobs than what you would expect, leave alone being pushed to a job that you had not trained for. For the non-formal sector, too, new scientific ways of doing things such as agricultural practices are being introduced but still less people can cope without the necessary exposure.

It is therefore important for a company, or any workplace or individuals to regularly conduct refresher courses to cope with the new dynamics.

COWA woke up to this realization, and on December 1st – 3rd, 2015, management organized a refresher training for its management and support

staff to equip them with more skills to bring out the hidden potential in them. The theme was “The Risk of Education”.

Facilitated by a staff from Luigi Ginsani Institute of Higher Education, the IBM founder Thomas J. Watson said: “There is no saturation point in education”. The content included education, tradition, authority, personal verification and freedom, which the teachers appreciated as a holistic training for the young generation.

At the end of the training teachers shared their experiences. Viola Nakakeeto, an Instructor in Hair dressing says: “The training made me appreciate the need to move from the class room teaching style to something more practical. Informed by view points from the trainees” pointing out: “In a school where I was teaching earlier, when a teacher resigned from her position. I was asked to take over the class as another teacher being was

sought to replace her. When I started my lesson with the students, I noticed that they were not interested in the course.

An idea then came to my mind to have a one on one discussion to establish what was at stake. I later learnt that many of them had been forced to pursue a course of not their choice. I decided then to take time to explain to them the importance of the course in their lives.

Our discussions lightened their reasoning in understanding the sacrifice their parents and guardians were offering to finance their education.

The discussion was very fruitful because the students who had negative attitudes towards the course later opened their minds and changed and later pursuing the course with vigour. This taught me that we need to discuss with our trainees to appreciate their courses”.

EAGWEN gets new office bearers



Margaret Sentamu & Florence Mukasa during the annual Conference (handing over leadership).

EAGWEN selected new office bearers in August that saw Ms. Florence Mukasa, working with COWA hand over the Board Chairmanship to UMWA. Explaining that it may be difficult to single out one person from UMWA to become the Chairperson, Ms. Margaret Sentamu-Masagazi, Executive Director of UMWA said that the Chairperson role will be executed as an organization, explaining that

due to high staff turnover and other organizational dynamics, it may be safer that way!

Representation from other partner organizations on the Board included: Angela Zawedde from MAFA, and Nalunkuuma Fatuma from COWA. The GWEN News will be supported by Billy Okello Francis (COWA) and Doreen Naggayi (MAFA), while its lead role remains under UMWA.



Mukasa Florence presenting during Annual Conference

Maganja Farmers Association, MAFA changes name!

The Director of MAFA, announced that his organization plans to change name to that which best captures what they do. Abu Mubiru says that in the near future, this organization will be known as Focus of Community Integrated Development (FOCID). He regretted the many times MAFA was denied support because of the limiting name.



Juliet Namugga, a MAFA beneficiary campaigns for a post of District councillor.

EAGWEN CONFERENCE 2015



Young men raise awareness about issues of disability in Kisaasi.



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