

GWEN NEWS

The Newsletter for Grassroots Women's Empowerment Network

September 2017

Are youths prepared for the global market?



Right Honourable Speaker, Rebecca Kadaga prepares to cut the ribbon to launch a workshop on skilling the youths for the global market.

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No world for women or men alone

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GWEN Opinion

A shared vision, key to development

Regular interactions with people and organizations that share a vision is so important, particularly if actors include governments.

At the 61st CSW, this became critical as individuals, NGOs, governments and UN Agencies, exchanged notes on the status of women, and how our situation can be improved.

Participants deliberated on different themes and identified gaps as well as emphasizing horizontal communication.

One of the areas that need urgent attention is Women, Media and Development which, when given the attention it deserves, will trigger positive ripple effects in other sectors. It was therefore pleasantly received by those who work in Gender and Media / Communication that next year's theme will greatly constitute that theme.

We at EAGWEN are excited, and gladly await participation in next year's deliberations because we believe information and media are important tools for development.

GWEN News is produced by the East African Grassroots Women Network (EAGWEN) and supported by FOKUS and the Norwegian Women and Family Association, NWF, whom we greatly appreciate.



Hon. Kadaga and the Italian Ambassador pose for a photo with COWA staff and students.

Are youths skilled enough for the global market?

By Okello Francis

The Right Honourable Speaker of Parliament, Rebecca Kadaga, on May 15th, 2017, launched a two-week workshop on making quality Italian shirts. Ms. Elena otilia Pavel a renown fashion designer from Italy conducted the workshop.

The workshop with the theme "Skilling Vulnerable Youth for the Global Market", aimed at triggering COWA CVTS trainees' interest in specific artisan design and prepare them to meet the global demands in the Fashion and Design Sector.

Hon. Rebecca Kadaga informed COWA staff and trainees and the guests that in a week she gets about 300 youth who consult her on youth unemployment and how it can be solved, "the reason I accepted to come to COWA CVTS and engage on this subject". Adding;

"Whenever I go to Abuja I get very nice tailoring piece of work because the tailors out there do excellent work a thing which must be copied by Ugandans. With these tailors I describe how I want my dress to look. They choose the colour and in a matter of hours, they deliver."

The Italian Ambassador, His Excellency Domenico Fornara who closed the two-week training said he was very impressed with the quality of work produced by COWA and their commitment to empower the young generation. Quoting "Ocean is made from drops of water", the Ambassador pointed out from the few numbers of trainees COWA produces each year, a lot is achieved in national development. He reminded the trainees that they are the drivers of their own future, noting that it is very

important to empower women.

He promised to work more closely with COWA in especially empowering the trainees to do design Italian shirts. Adding, "We shall also send an Italian Chef to enhance the Catering Department".

Kibukaire Grace Consolate, a Tailoring Instructor at COWA CVTS says: "The training was an inspiration, it broadened my thinking. I now aim at making clothes for different categories of people, the corporate class such as Parliamentarians, Ministers. and others.

Nakiryowa Rashidah who said that the visit of the Speaker of Parliament and the Italian Ambassador was a very great honour to the COWA CVTS family and memorable, says: "I was excited to have the opportunity of being taught by a renown international fashion designer. The facilitator was very good. I picked many styles of making classic shirts. I got inspired to keep on learning new fashions of international standards to compete favorably in the market where customers demand high quality products. Nirelle Kellen, a Catering and Hotel Management first year student says:

No world for women or men alone

By Gwen Writer

Talk of gender specific challenges! These will be there, even within the women-led or specific activities meant to benefit women. But why?! Sometimes, I get annoyed!

When shall women learn?? What annoys me most is the fact that some of those challenges are created by women themselves!! Or so I thought! Take for example the initiatives or proposals by government that support will be extended to people when they have formed themselves into groups, because the truth is – it is easier to target a group, and even the group members learn from each other! But now comes in this argument, that rather than an individual, No, women prefer to work alone, not in a group –

But why? I thought when we come as a group, we tap into each other's strength and learn from the weaknesses. United, We Can – Not so?! But why the mumbling! Are not meant to co-exist?

True, the dynamics are different,

Youths and the global market

From P2

"The visit was a memorable one. I never at one time ever imagined meeting such dignitaries. My heart palpitated with excitement when I was assigned the task of handing over a gift and a bouquet of flowers to the Speaker.

Masikala Gertrude, a second year student of Catering and Hotel Management says: "Being selected to give the Ambassador the bouquet of flowers was a very big honour. The preparation to host the two diplomats gave me an opportunity to train fellow students the East African Anthem when my teacher printed for us the lyrics. For the very first time the anthem was sung well due to the encouragement from our teachers. I am very grateful to COWA administration for partnering with such dignitaries".



Abu Mubiru, Executive Director MAFA.



Francesca Romana Bilak, Principal COWA.

but I think whoever is initiating such projects / activities including government, should first appreciate the dynamics. Because – partnerships are a Must. We can't be an island!

Sentiments like the above dominated the greatest part of the day's symposia on Economic Empowerment, whose intention was to lay strategies for improved women's economic empowerment.

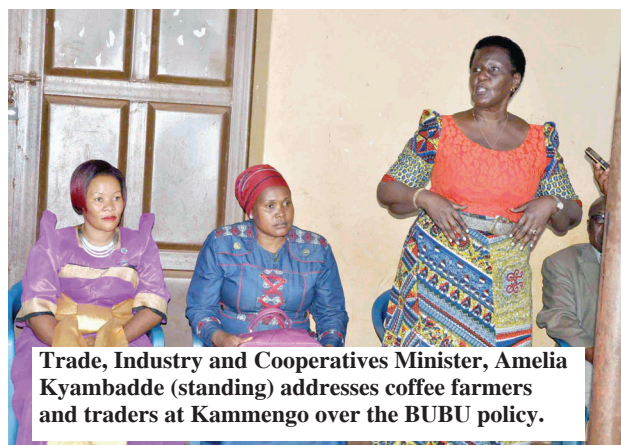
While the representatives from the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development insisted that government means well for women, pointing out that, all government ministries must, as a priority present a gender certification before the budgets are passed, the women (elite and grassroots) raised inconsistencies in government policies.

On group formation, most of the women said government leaders target those led by men. But if it is the women-led groups, when supplies or inputs are provided to such groups, the

men are quick to position themselves for them.

The Minister of Trade, Industry and Cooperatives, Hon. Amelia Kyambadde, who was in attendance shared an example, "When the Ministry provided a windmill to the Nakaseke women groups, men working with government quickly shod off the women claiming that the latter are "not interested". Really?! The Minister however, noted that as women, we need to build a tough skin, be assertive, become aware of our rights and get the skills to claim them.

She said it is important for women to get out of self pity because there are very many opportunities, and those who are faster and smart will get them. She advised that women need to work in groups, network with several organizations, and belong to organizations like Uganda Women Entrepreneurs Association, among others. That way, women will get the necessary information and related opportunities. Amelia emphasized the need to co-exist, as there is no world for men only neither is there one for women only.



Trade, Industry and Cooperatives Minister, Amelia Kyambadde (standing) addresses coffee farmers and traders at Kammengo over the BUBU policy.

Speaking about Buy Uganda Build Uganda (BUBU), the women cautioned government against opening up Uganda's economy too much for foreigners who bring in products, sometimes cheaper and better. They noted that it is every country's policy to protect their own, the reason the Uganda government should do the same, reasoning that nobody including the Minister, can buy a Ugandan product for the sake of being a Ugandan product.

COWA Celebrates Women's Day with vendors

By Okello Francis

The International Women's Day, is a time to reflect on the promises made by government towards the achievement of women's rights in all sectors. This year's theme was: Women's Economic Empowerment in a Changing World of Work.

And so COWA decided to bring to the fore, the concerns of women street vendors, who for the past five years, have been running battles with city authorities. Reason? They want fairness. They want to lead dignified lives, and so they set out to eke a living through sale of goods. But the authorities seem not to appreciate their plight. The taxation policy is not fair to them. From acquiring the goods, to renting a stall is all taxes, too exorbitant for them. And no one seems to listen.

Women who are caught up in this scenario, most of them are single mothers, yet catering for lots of dependants whose families are no longer in position to lend a hand. They are semi-literate, and quite underprivileged, yet with large families.

Over 80 women street vendors converged at COWA premises to interact with the trainees on the theme. In attendance were representatives from the police, whose role is to enforce law and order on the street, meaning that, when the women are not in conformity with the law while doing their businesses, it is the police who lock them up, sometimes beating them up.



A vendor raises a point during the function.

A representative from Kampala Capital City Authority, KCCA, Elijah Irukunda was also in attendance to 'educate' the women about the relevant laws especially those that govern business, and operating from the business centre.

To portray the scenario of an ordinary woman city vendor well, trainees of the COWA, acted out a skit at the beginning of the session. The drama skit evoked a lot of emotions from the audience sending some of them crying, and cursing law enforcement officers who were seen to be

merciless.

But while it is true that there are laws that require Ugandans including the women street vendors, it was thought that possibly there should be safety nets when it comes to the low income earners.

Says Grace, one of the ladies who deals in fish vending: "I pay taxes right from the landing site, to the stall owner, for transporting the goods, leaving none to take home. All my sweat benefits those manning those points. So I get perturbed when Kampala Capital City Authority, demand that I rent space in a commercial building. Registering a business is also a cost. And sometimes, we are conned by the same authorities".

ASP Bishaka Godson's pleas to the women, went unheard as most of them accused police of double standards. Bishaka, however emphasized the need for the women to know the law, and to stop engaging their children in business during school time as this contravenes the law.

But when all was said and done, COWA achieved their objective as the different stakeholders, interacted on one platform, and exchanged some ideas, with the hope that a few things may change in the interest of the low income earners, the women! Says Romana Bilak: "I find such interactions very crucial in bridging the gap".



ASP Bishaka Godson and an official from KCCA.



Group session in progress.



A participant presents to the group plenary.

Training women with disabilities in entrepreneurial skills

By GWEN Team

Thirty five (35) Women living With Disabilities, WWDs, underwent a two-day training in entrepreneurship skills held at the UMWA Training premises. One of the learnings from the training was that, with self-esteem and opportunity to showcase their skills, WWDs can do any job that is available, only with added knowledge and creativity.

Asked about what type of business they were involved in, they mentioned all kinds of jobs including poultry keeping, vending, tailoring, crafts, house-keeping, restaurant business, teaching, Director of School, among others.

The facilitator of the training, Rose Kalanzi went ahead to remind them that the mere mentioning of all the above was proof that disability is not inability, the reason for the WWDs to assert themselves, become innovative and get into the mainstream businesses.

Asked about what type of challenges that limit them from reaching their full potential, they mentioned high taxes, harassment by city authorities, low pay, low awareness about how businesses are operated. Other limitations / challenges rotated around, customers or clients failing to pay on the pretext that the WWDs have not done the best job or provided the best service. Other clients simply refuse to pay for the services because they take the WWDs for granted.

To address the challenges, the WWDs were encouraged to seek for training in how businesses are run, participate in community meetings and ensure that they speak out any time they feel undermined.



A participant presents to the plenary.

Kalanzi said: “It doesn’t matter if they are shut down the first time, or even the second time. If you do this the third time, you’d have gained confidence and the tactics to be heard. But it is important to get the necessary knowledge on how things operate. There, you get the confidence and people will listen to you”.

The participants were taken through the stages of accessing, and managing a loan. And where to source it from. Basic communication skills, as well as not forgetting the Dos and Don’ts when one gets a Loan. The two-day interaction attracted WWDs from two of the five Divisions that constitute Kampala District. Also in attendance were three men, two representing the Sub-

County office Kampala and the other representing the National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda, NUDIPU.

The three were part of the package to enable the WWDs tap into the knowledge, especially regarding the processes through which loans or grants meant for marginalized groups, can be accessed.

Said Nakabugo Irene of NUDIPU: “It was heartening to hear how well WWDs knew the operations of NUDIPU – but disheartening to hear how marginalized they continue to be made by society. But with added knowledge and skills, they will make it.

UMWA Executive Director at CSW, New York

The 61st session of the Annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York, this year provided lots of opportunities to Uganda Media Women's Association, UMWA, thanks to the financial support that enabled UMWA Executive Director spend productive time with the movers and shakers of the global affairs at the UN Headquarters, and elsewhere in the world, thanks to the financial support from FOKUS.

Margaret Sentamu says: "Unlike my first time at a similar event ten years ago, this time around, save for the cold weather, I was able to find my way among the highly congested UN premises where everybody mean their own business. I interacted with representatives from both NGOs and UN agencies, on several issues".

Some of the take-aways from the 61st seating according to Margaret, are:

"We need to put more emphasis on local mobilization and, ensure we have mobilized to the fullest, that is how we shall be able to impact on the global. It is important to be assertive to ensure your point is heard, but in a respectful way. I saw this 'Native American lady', despite not being on the speakers' slot, the lady 'made a scene', and she ended up attracting media attention, thereby having her concerns heard.

The other take-away, is the importance of local organizations, for example those supported by FOKUS in Uganda, to create a meaningful coalition, to increase their impact. Important to speak as one voice, but also to build on each other's strength and minimize weaknesses. I'd therefore expect that going forward, the FOKUS partners in Uganda would create time to deliberate on lessons and chart a way forward instead of waiting for the 62nd CSW seating".

Earlier on in the same city, the UMWA Executive Director was privileged to participate in a high level meeting attended by global actors on/in Gender and Communication. The three-day consultative meeting was supported by the World Association for Christian Communication, WACC. It aimed at, among others, to come up with a plan of action to advance the End News Media Sexism by 2020 Campaign; to lay strategies to mobilize people, groups and funding for the campaign. And to also make recommendations of the sub-thematic directions for the Gender and Communication Program 2017 – 2021.

The highly participatory consultative meeting was crowned with a communique which among others, re-emphasized "equality, freedom for women, justice, equal access to media resources and against all kinds of inequalities". The participants who came from Africa, the America, Asia and Europe, called on the governments to release writers and journalists who were imprisoned for reasons related to freedom of expression, reminded governments of the urgency and need to close the digital divide, and ensure that women actualize their right to control their sexuality.

Other recommendations to governments – the UN and International Actors rotated around:

- Strengthening the women led media.
- Eliminating gender stereotypes and hate speech from pub-



UMWA Executive Director, Margaret Sentamu with WACC's North American representative at the New York meet.

- lic media, and continual promoting of gender equality in the media.
- The incorporation of gender-sensitivity, local history and cultural diversity in the education and training of professionals in the field of communication in order to increase gender sensitivity of reporting and to eliminate sexist and misogynic media content.
- The expansion of gender-specific media research and documentation.
- Promote affirmative action and positive discrimination for the access of women and sexual minorities to mass media and to alternative media of their own.
- Decrease sensationalist media reporting that justifies and normalizes violence against women, and introduce gender sensitive reporting on violence against women.
- Urge universities and communication training spaces to include the gender perspective as part of their curriculum and media companies to promote this training among their staff.
- Develop and promote media tools for gender sensitive reporting (gender sensitive language, databases of experts, journalist codes) but also continually monitor their implementation in media content, in the community of journalists and their associations.
- Enhance the women rights defenders access to media.



UMWA Executive Director, Margaret Sentamu Masagazi.



Angella Balaba of Spinal Injuries talks on MAMA FM, one of the few community radio stations in Uganda.

The future of community radio stations challenged by funding mechanisms

By GWEN Team

The successes of the community radio continue to surface, as several marginalized groups attest to the fruits they have gotten, thanks to such media in Uganda. The Persons With Disabilities, PWDs, and women in low income areas, will tell you – there is no other radio they know of apart from Mama FM. In fact during a recent audience research survey done about Mama FM, the station was best known as a radio for persons with disabilities. But the success story of Mama FM is not the story for today, rather, the tribulations of operating a developmental station like Mama FM.

It is community based, not-for-profit, meaning that almost 100% of service is done on a voluntary basis. Yet there are bills to pay – electricity, water, internet, licence, etc. With rather very limited funding the predicament of this station, can already be seen. The station spends at least USD 3,000 on electricity, water, and other public utilities every month.

This is in addition to an equivalent of USD 1,500 for annual licence. Important to note that the station's human resource is heavily dependent on young people – who have to be facilitated with transport and meals at least every time they come to the station or assigned to collect stories. But the young people also have bills to pay.

On average, about USD 10,000 has to be spent every month. In the meantime, with or without paying the staff, or volunteers, these are constantly trained in various fields to ensure quality work. But soon these have to leave for greener pastures because unfortunately the station cannot afford to pay. And the cycle starts again: train, train, and then the trained, move to greener pastures..... It can be frustrating, isn't it?!

This year, Mama FM had to lose three of its best staff to commercial stations. Reason? Lack of money!! But how long should this go on? What are the available solutions to Mama FM and similar stations that are trying hard to actualize the communication rights of the underprivileged?!

While a number of development partners emphasize capacity building as a way of sustenance – this has not been found sustainable itself without availing staff salaries for at least the key staff (Station Manager, Technician, Producer, Editor, Programs Director, and at least 5 Reporters).

The other solution lies in investing in fund-raising or sustainability strategy and putting funds to its implementation. Mama FM, for example, has a well crafted strategy awaiting implementation, but the initial funding is still lacking. The other strategy is to ensure

that Mama FM is strategically linked to the mother organization, in this case Uganda Mother Women's Association, UMWA, that way, it can tap into resources to enable its volunteers go in the field and collect material for the station. But this strategy can only work if the mother NGO is financially sound.

Best practices from the region, are not limited to the above, some talk of such stations to lobby government for funding after all, they do development work, and are not commercial. The other is for such stations to write as community media to development partners who support education campaigns, to condition such funding to having some of the funding into such campaigns channeled through community radio.

Nkemba of community radio in Tunawa, says. "Community radio stations in Uganda need to work as a team, approach donors, and present their case". Otherwise there is no other way for community radio to sustain themselves. What we are currently experiencing, for example losing staff for lack of payment is similar in our African countries. But some donors have been kind enough to condition some of to their funding going to other NGOs, to go through community radio stations, in case there is if there is any information campaigns to be done under the projects.



Dr. Patricia Litho
UMWA Chairperson

UMWA elects new board

Members of the Uganda Media Women's Association, UMWA, on April 22nd, 2017, held their Annual General Assembly electing a new Board to steer the organization's affairs for the next four years.

Out of the seven-member Directors' Committee, four new faces came aboard including: Emilly Marachto, who became the Vice Chairperson; Catherine Ageno, General Secretary; Nuliat Nambaziira, Committee Member; and Dorothy Nanyonga, Treasurer. Dr. Patricia Litho was re-elected for the Chair, while Sylvia Nalukwago and Beatrice Birungi came back as Committee Members.

Part of the Agenda the new Board is tasked will include but not limited to exploring multiple sources of funding; dealing with the generational issues and

increased membership.

Said Emilly Marachto: "Many Associations are closing shop because they have not taken it seriously to deal with intergenerational gaps. But I'm glad that at UMWA there is a conscious effort to deal with this.

Resources are a blood life for the Association, and without funding, UMWA will collapse. For this reason, we as a new Board, we commit to facilitate the Secretariat in the fundraising efforts".

The other major task the new Board tasked itself with is the importance of documenting UMWA's journey, noting that, UMWA has done so much, but little is documented. And yet there are small organizations that do little but do a lot of media work to publicize their work.



Dorothy Nanyonga
UMWA Treasurer



L-R: Emilly Marachto, Nuliat Nambaziira, Beatrice Birungi, and Sylvia Nalukwago



Catherine Ageno
UMWA General Secretary

MAFA capacity building projects excel



By GWEN Team

Robert Kiboneka is one of the 35 members of the Balitwewunya Farmers' Group ('They will be astonished group'). The group is composed of persons with disabilities who have participated in the MAFA capacity building projects. He says: "Forming Balitwewunya Farmers' Group has certainly been an eye opener. It has improved just about everything for us as farmers, living with disabilities."

Kiboneka says: "MAFA taught us records keeping, how to save and exposed us to better hygienic practices. Also facilitated us to learn from demonstration farms. They also demonstrated to us, the benefits from collective marketing, which in turn inspired us to mobilize as farmers and form this farmer's group."

Adding, "We are now bulking together our produce, which has enabled us to access bigger markets and better prices for our produce and animals. We can now each access credit of more than 200,000 Ugandan shillings [\$50] from our Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA), compared to only 50,000 shillings in the past.

This has helped us improve our standard of living, especially access to Medicare and better education for our children.

This program has been timely in a place which was devastated by decades of protracted wars. In the past, these problems kept farmers in poverty", says Kiboneka, but now we are positive because we can strengthen our position as part of a strong farmers' group under Maganjo Farmers Association".



Staff from MAFA assisting beneficiaries in Luweero District.



Ms. Sarah in her mushroom garden

Earning big from mushroom Farming

Coffee and cotton, may have been Uganda's foreign exchange earners from which the country's GDP depended. But come Uganda's 2040 national strategy, new crops are being emphasized.

Mushroom is one such crop which the lowly and the powerful including Uganda's President are now engaged in for commercial purposes. Aside making money from it, mushrooms also have high nutrition benefits.

Sarah Kironde who has greatly benefited from MAFA trainings says: "From UGS 5,000 per day when I started engaging in mushroom farming, two years ago, now I earn UGS 25,000 a day, which helps me pay for school fees for my children, and pay back a loan.

She continues: "Mushrooms are grown in a small space, need less water compared to other crops, matures within a month, and can be harvested four months under good management. It has a ready market and gives you time to carry out other activities. Mushrooms are widely used in restaurants.

They can be either eaten fresh or dried.

Each kilogram of fresh mushroom is sold at a minimum of UGS 4,000 and the dried one at a minimum price of UGS 25,000.

Mushrooms are so delicious and have high nutritional content and therefore good for improving the nutrition status of people, especially the HIV infected and those with other deficiencies".

President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni in his mushroom garden.



Don't be the office pest

By MAFA Team

Hygiene at the office has the power to determine your mood, productivity and even job security. If you are the shabby, smelly employee and the time comes for cost-cutting at work, you will be the first to go. If you sit next to the shabby, smelly employee, then you know you only get half as much work done. For the nine or so hours that you are at work, keep up appearances and don a tidy cap. You can toss it off the minute you walk out, that's your business.

Cleanliness matters a lot at the office because you are in a communal environment where so many people with different up-bringing gather and spend more time with each other than they do with their families.

The Toilet

Use of toilet determines whether you will fall sick or stay healthy. The cleaner it is, the happier everyone will be. But some people just don't care how they leave things. After all, someone else will be in shortly to clean up their mess, so they think. Such people also believe that no one needs to flush the toilet after urinating. Have the sense to be patient, wait for the cistern to fill and try again. If you don't want to wait there and keep your poor company, then who do you think will relish the task?

Others choose to stand or squat on the toilet seat, leaving it dirty for the next user. You know there's the option of lining the seat with tissues so you can sit, so take it. Wipe away any urine you have sprinkled on the seat and don't leave your sanitary towels lying about. That's why bins are provided.

The air freshener, where provided, is supposed to give the room a clean feel and sweet odour. Please don't turn it into a deodorant and make our small office space smell like the toilet!



Participants at a training in Sexual and Reproductive Health.



Skills building for women with disabilities in progress.

Don't forget to wash your hands with soap after using the toilet. Use the toilet paper responsibly lest you will clog the toilet bowl. But when this happens, don't be tempted to walk out after ascertaining that there is no one else to place them at the scene of the crime. Do the right thing and try and sort out your mess. If you cannot, inform someone who can so it can be sorted out quickly.

The Kitchen

Is the scene of another sanitary bomb about to explode. Don't throw left-overs into the sink and forcing it down, which eventually blocks it. Others pour old tea leaves into the sink and don't bother to wash the mess away. Dirty dishes get piled up and bring

in flies and cockroaches, which feast on food left unattended.

Where water dispensers are provided, pay attention as you draw some water so it does not spill over. If it does, have the courtesy to pick up a mop and clean it up. If you can't do so, look for a cleaner and ask them to help you out. Don't use other people's cups or plates. There will be the one who spills water, tea, coffee and sugar on the table and fails to wipe it.

At your Work Station

If you are going to eat at your desk in a confined office space, please be mindful of others. Don't be swinging your piece of pork sausage as you explain something to a Muslim brother. Foods like bananas, roast ground nuts and boiled eggs are only fragrant to the person eating them. Don't force others to hang around that smell all day.

Do not spill food on your desk and leave it there because that is a clear invitation for rats, cockroaches and ants. The rats could chew out the cables on computers or crawl into drawers and feast on important documents.

On a Rainy day

Wipe your shoes clean at the door where mats are placed for that purpose. Don't take cakes of mud to your work station or mess up the toilet by cleaning your shoes there. If you must, then leave the place clean. Use wet tissue to clean the shoes and then put it into the waste bin, not inside the toilet bowl because you will clog it.

Making hands dirty!

Maganjo Farmers Association, MAFA, has partnered with schools in Luweero District to inculcate the value of “making hands dirty”, among pupils and students.

Mr. Abu Mubiru, the Director explains that despite agriculture being the main sector in Uganda, today’s children look at farming as a punishment. But if the youth can appreciate it, it may solve the food insecurity Uganda is currently facing.



Students in Luweero District shown how to plant with fruit foods.



From zero to real business

Babirye Annette lives in Butanswa, Luweero District. Back in the years, she describes her life: “Even though we are a family with five children we used to stay in a single-roomed mud brick house. Survived on subsistence farming, one meal a day, because neither my husband nor I had a job. Life was very difficult back then, it was our children who suffered the most,” she continues. “Many times they were chased from school because we had no money for fees, they would also suffer from diarrhea, their clothes were dirty, because we could not afford the supplies”.

But this is not anymore when two years ago, Swiss Hand and Maganjo Farmers Association (MAFA) began working in Annette’s village. She realized that this was a chance to finally change her family’s life for the better. She says; I joined the group, and started participating in trainings on savings and credit management. This opened my eyes to the extent of knowing how to start a profitable income generating business!

Annette joined Butanswa Farmers’ Group four years ago from which she borrowed UGS 350,000 with support from Swiss Hand. She bought tomato seeds, planted them the first season, and reaping profits that she had never thought of.



Babirye tends to her vegetable garden.

Four years down the road, Annette says she is happy, earning more money. The family’s quality of life is much better, taking two meals a day, can now afford quality education for the children, including building a modest but comfortable home.

Soft skills key to success

By Okello Francis

COWA CVTS in its efforts to empower its trainees with vocational skills finds it very difficult to achieve its holistic education approach because majority of the trainees especially in Year One have very low self-esteem.

This can be attributed to the different socio, economic and political background with low empowerment of the youth. Some of them are orphans, house helps, some staying with relatives and others staying with their biological parents, which affects their self expression.

To avert the above situation COWA CVTS is engaged in sensitization workshops to raise their self-confidence and positive relationships with the members of the society. Such workshops include reproductive health, legal and human rights, gender, communication skills and entrepreneurship. The trainees are encouraged to express themselves and experiences through which they develop soft skills.

This year a new form of soft skills..... has been embarked on by COWA CVTS ICT department. The soft skills learning by trainees is online, in which they are exposed to a platform that comprises a number of grouped content that include amongst others entrepreneurship, ICT skills, Communications skills with a bias on application letter writing, curriculum vitae writing, interview tips and English grammar. This platform has content of text as well as video clips on the topics which makes it very exciting. However one can only access it after signing up through their tutors' contacts. Computer literacy is a must for this platform and the pioneers are the students of second year.

The platform has been made accessible to COWA CVTS through one of its development partners ICEP which capacity built two of COWA CVTS staff in the first quarter of this year. The platform, accessible from www.learnwise.org is from WADH-WANI foundation that is empowering the youth with soft skills in East Africa, Asia, Canada and other parts of the world. Some of the COWA trainees share their experiences on its usefulness.

Wanyana Sandra Ruth says: "It was my first time to get exposed to online training. At first I was filled with fear for making mistakes. But with the encouragement from my teacher and fellow students I managed to get along with it. I had to sign up for an email before registering for the course. When I went through the platform



Round-table discussions enhances self esteem.

I realized that there are a lot of beneficial materials that are not related to my course but they can help strengthen my potential in utilizing the skills in Tailoring and Garment Cutting/Making. The video clips prepared me for the job environment. I feel I need to share this knowledge with my friends and young siblings so that they also benefit from it".

Kimbugwe Simon says: "The training is very good for people with an open mind to learn. After exploring the platform I realized I can learn more than I expected. I expected only communication skills but I found out that there was more to learn. In fact the training has inspired me to use internet for learning purposes in different fields such as humanities, commerce, sports and entertainment".

The International Project Coordinator, Mr. Adul encouraged the trainees to make use of the platform frequently to reap the

benefits. Basemera Sandra commended the tutors for the great work done and encouraged the trainees to take the training seriously. She also testified that after getting the introductory knowledge on how to use the platform, she is able to learn more on her own and is always willing to come to COWA and learn with them. Tutors from other departments were also encouraged to sign up because it is helpful to them as well.

Soft skills are very important for the personal discipline of an individual, improvement of communication skills and general improved self-esteem. A person competent in soft skills finds it easy to fit in society especially in the work environment where academic qualifications alone cannot earn someone a job. These can be achieved well through constant practice through which other skills are developed which are important in the life of an individual.



COWA trainees have adopted online studying.

COWA CVTS sensitizes alumni on customer care and marketing



Some of the COWA alumni who benefitted from the training in customer care.



By Okello Francis

With the high rate of unemployment in the country, many Ugandans are working hard to create their own jobs. Many are engaged in small-scale businesses such as Tailoring business, Restaurant business, Liquid soap making, Fruits and vegetables vending, amongst others. Unfortunately, many of these collapse in the first year for various reasons especially lack of knowledge, or even failure to appreciate that a business has to bring a profit. Many Ugandans simply start something in the name of a “business”.

COWA CVTS in its move to encourage entrepreneurial development amongst its beneficiaries it has for the past years been donating start up tools and equipment to graduands. But through tracer studies of its alumni, it was realized that most of them lacked adequate customer care and marketing strategies to improve on their work performance and market base for their products and services. Consequent upon that realization, COWA CVTS organized a two-day May 29th – 20th, 2017 for its alumni and women from the surrounding community who are engaged in small scale businesses. The workshop was aimed at equipping them with more business management and sustainability skills in particular customer care and marketing.

The training touched on the challenges they faced, prompting some of them to share their own experiences. Adekur Angella, a tailor for example said, that many customers / clients do not trust them because of the unfulfilled promises. She said: “At one time someone asked me to make a “gomesi” a traditional wear for a function. I accepted the job well knowing that I was fully booked. I got full payment from her in advance, but requested a colleague to do the gomesi which was very badly done.

The client was very much dissatisfied, and I lost her forever”. Akello Judith COWA CVTS alumna was very grateful to COWA CVTS for organizing the workshop for alumni and women market vendors. She says: “This workshop has been very helpful in my life because I have been going through challenges with implementation of business plans. It has provided answers to business startup and management questions. For example, I have been confusing customer care and management customer care and customer service. I now know what to do with product branding. This training has also inspired me to believe that everyone can start a business and run it well sustainably provided that a person has positive attitude and desire to do business”.

Awino Winnie says: “The training was a motivation. I had tried a business which collapsed without yielding any fruits. But now I have been inspired to rejuvenate it. I will now start small, and later expand”.

One of the Instructors at COWA observers: “Many women doing small business need a lot of inspiration to build their businesses to a higher level. They also need frequent capacity building in business management. Many of them may not be satisfied with the level they are operating in but have no expansion ideas and whom to consult. It is therefore very important for the women to get organized in groups and get help”.

How much of the law do journalists know?

By Hilda Namara
and GWEN Team

“My in-laws have grabbed my property after my husband passed on”. “My husband has refused to share the matrimonial property after we divorced”. These and so many more are cries from women whether married, single, or otherwise. Every other day they are losing property. Chased out of homes; beaten or violated in any form that you can imagine. But who will tell their stories?! Media! Right?!

But how ready is the media to tell such a story? If it is not the media manager, the reporter in the field will be blinded by the gender stereotypes, justifying such violations.

Most of what we see in the media are sensational stories, sometimes intended but most times not intended. Most of the media practitioners lack adequate knowledge on rights, laws and the general operations of government. In the Schools of Journalism, little specialization is done and little exposure to the legal framework, (domestic or international). The problem becomes bigger when journalists of today do not want to seek knowledge even when they are provided with the necessary knowledge. All they do is “arm-chair journalism”. But in the meantime the real issues that affect majority poor go underreported.

It is for this reason that UMWA, with support from UN Human Rights, and UN Women, conducted a series of trainings for journalists on the law, gender, human rights, and freedom of expression. Four such workshops were done in Kampala, North Eastern Uganda and Northern Uganda.

What was learnt from the trainings was the apparent lack of knowledge on these areas, among the journalists. Says one of the facilitators: “When the media is ignorant, they will use their tools to spread the ignorance, rumours, etc, negatively affecting society”. It is also important to note that despite the media having been identified as one of the development partners, is not forthcoming. The little that comes through comes in piecemeal and not strategic.

Says Margaret Sentamu: “It would make a great difference in the emancipation of women efforts if media is looked at as a strategic area rather than just a tool”.



Female journalists meeting over the law, gender, freedom of expression, and human rights at the UN Human Rights sponsored conference, organized by UMWA.

Is journalism still relevant?

By Hilda Namara and GWEN Team

Years back before the “global village” era, one would wake up early to tune in to a radio and listen to news. One would also rush back home for the evening news or buy newspapers. But now with everything getting “viral”! there is no need to wake up or rush home because the mobile phone is everything, computer, radio, office, etc.

With the online information, the audience now decides what information to take or leave. The dynamics at play including people’s different programming, sources of news, the future of journalism seems to be at stake. And as such, radio listenership, television viewership and reduction of newspaper sales has been affected. “So what is the future of journalism in this internet era?! This was one of the shocking questions community broadcasters had to deal with at a recent training. But there should be no fear because “when there is a new innovation, the latter does not disappear”, as Tom Rosensteel once said during a radio conference in South Africa.

The three-day training workshop aimed at educating community radio broadcasters on understanding the use of internet in radio programming and broadcasting. Four community radio stations including Mama FM, participated. It was supported by UNESCO. Participants at the workshop argued that while we cannot stop innovations, and internet growth, as journalists, we must up our game by becoming more credible. In the sense that we do research, verify and be the first to know, and publish.

They noted that even when people have read on social media, most of them still wish to verify, and later look for radio, television or even newspapers to verify the information. They concluded this: “I am still the public’s trusted source of information and a voice. This means I have to be curious. I should use the internet as well, but use it intelligently for building credibility. I need to know my audience and start moving ahead of their pace. I should be the one to know before they do, and this will only be possible through amplifying my social media platforms”.



Uganda Media Women's Association, UMWA was commissioned by AIDOS to host an International Training in Film Making. The UNFPA Country Representative (in the middle), officiated at the opening ceremony.



UMWA hosts, an interactive television show (People's Parliament) on the International Women's Day. Over 100 people interacted on the global theme, and also engaged on the strengths and weaknesses of the Uganda's Women's Movement.

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