

GWEN NEWS

The Newsletter for Grassroots Women's Empowerment Network

December 2015



Elections heighten domestic violence

Bya GWEN Team

You and me may know that voting in the 2016 General Elections will be by secret ballot; but there are thousands of people especially women who are living in fear at the hands of their providers / partners. Reason: they "are to vote" for a candidate as dictated by the partner / providers!

Robinah Nakyanja says, "My husband insists that I should vote Colonel Dr. Kiiza

Besigye because he has been consistent in fighting for people's rights. But for me my choice is Yoweri Museveni for emancipating women, but I fear, my husband will get to know and beats me up.

But already some women are loud and clear: they will vote a candidate of their choice... Come rain or sunshine! And you guessed right, the 'providers' are already feeling uncomfortable about this pronouncement.

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GWEN OPINION

Safety and security of the self, in the 2016 elections, starts with you!

Uganda goes to the polls in February 2016! But while all categories of people are expected to exercise their constitutional right to choose their leaders in fair and free elections, there are indicators that majority population may not be that lucky.

These are women, especially those living in disadvantaged situations. They lack information to make informed decisions, and many are living under threat meted out by their husbands / partners, that if they don't vote for a candidate of their benefactor's choice, they will suffer consequences. The apparent disfranchisement of women is visible even after the affirmative action as provided for in the constitution that women will, at the very minimum be represented with a one third quota at lower government levels, and a representation at every district.

It is therefore a welcome move by the EAGWEN partners, with support from the Norwegian Women and Family Association (NWF), and FOKUS, that time and other forms of resources have been put aside to create awareness among grassroots women, on the political process that will lead to the February 2016 elections.

This will go a long way in promoting their effective participation in that national program. It is also important that safety and security of any participating person in such a process, is taken as a personal responsibility instead of waiting for government to help!



Women are ready to cast their vote for candidates of their choice, but to some its a huge sacrifice.

How to minimize domestic violence during elections

From Page 1

Providers are up in the air – a number of men are denying their families the basic necessities especially food; the beatings have gone up; some women divorced because they have refused to say Yes to their husbands' wishes.

But even then, some men aspiring for elective positions have sold household property to finance their campaigns. Yet again some women, also aspiring for positions, are taking too many a day out of their homes, searching for votes. And the children?... they are left to fend for, or counsel themselves, some will definitely end on the streets engaged in all sorts of crimes!"

Harriet Nabankema, Senior Advocate with FIDA-Uganda observes that spouses supporting different candidates are prone to more domestic violence, poverty and unemployment, facilitating this even more. As long as a man brings food to the table, he will tend to make rules to the extent of influencing a woman's voting rights, including standing for an elective office.

Richard Makumbi, Program Officer, Centre for Domestic Violence observes: "Election period is enough to ignite pressure between lovers, especially those supporting different candidates".

Such scenarios are very synonymous with the election period, especially in developing countries, and according to Stephen Kalyegira, Inspector of Police, Kira Road Police Station, most of the offenses reported at police, at this time relate to domestic confrontations fuelled by differences in opinion on who to vote for. In extreme cases, spouses have been killed, by partners.

So how do we minimize on domestic violence incidences during this election

period?

- Remember voting will be secret ballot. Nobody will know who you have voted for!
- Don't get so excited about elections or the candidate or a party you are going to vote for. Stay calm!
- If you feel your partner / colleague may not like your choice..... pretend you support his/her candidate / party.
- Whether husband or wife, and you are seeking for an elective position, do not let the campaign time impact on the family time. Remember, there is a life after elections!
- Do not provoke your partner / colleague because you suspect he/she is supporting a candidate, of not your choice. It is his/her right to support whoever!
- Do not sell any of the family property to finance your campaign. But if you have to, your partner and children must approve of that decision, but this should not, in a way leave the family wanting in basic or social needs.
- If you decided to contest for an elective position, this should not come as a surprise to your partner or children. A progressive / sensitive political leader must be supported by the whole family, no matter the difference in choice for a candidate.
- Husband or wife / man or woman, should practice a world view that accepts and respects differences in opinion.
- Once the voting is finished, results declared, the family should stay calm, and congratulate yourselves on a successfully concluded exercise. And if you have to contest the results – do it in a calm way!

EAGWEN partners recommit to women's effective participation in elections

By GWEN Team

Member organizations to The East African Grassroots Women Network (EAGWEN), in August recommitted themselves to ensuring that the women they serve will fully participate in the 2016 elections, slated for 2016.

The three participating organizations, are: Maganjo Farmers Association (MAFA), Companionship of Works Association (COWA), and Uganda Media Women's Association (UMWA).

At a three-day annual conference held in August, at Namirembe Guest House, members explored ways of facilitating the women to the electoral processes. Some of the areas identified included: raising women's awareness, and training them in basic communication skills on the political processes.

Romana Bilak, COWA, added that it is also important to keep close with the women, even after the voting is done. She says: "It is this time that women's specific needs should be identified to make long-term programs to help them sustain their participation in politics or leadership positions". She adds, "If it is gender budgeting, for national programs, then this is the time to train women at local levels to participate in the budgeting processes at least at the sub-county or village levels".

The partner organizations' recommitment was ignited by a presentation on "The Role of Women Focused NGOs in preparing Grassroots Women for 2016 Elections" on the electoral processes, starting with the Voters Register where all intending voters, have to ensure that their names are captured, therein. The partner organizations, also



Participants at a workshop on women and politics.

identified glaring gaps among grassroots women when it comes to expressing themselves in public especially when one is expressing interest in a political office. Says Joan Nankya: "It is important to train women in basic communication, and leadership skills to facilitate them on how to mingle in a rather hostile environment".

Other areas where the partner organizations vowed to impact relate with providing safety and security tips for grassroots women so they can avoid any trouble that would be associated

with electoral violence.

The presentation was made by Alfred Avuni, working with John Paul II Justice and Peace Centre. He dwelt on the history of women's participation in politics. What the law provides to enhance women's visibility in politics; how and where women have impacted in terms of decision making. Other areas including challenges faced by grassroots women, and their achievement in the political processes of Uganda.

Grassroots women gear up to elective positions

By MAFA Team

Uganda will hold elections in February 2016 to elect a president, members of parliament (MPs) and local councilors (LCs) but the question still remains, how much has the country done to address the factors that have kept the numbers of women in politics less than men.

There have been several improvements in the country in the legal and policy framework. Several policies, rules and procedures have been put in place with an aim of improving the status of women.

The seemingly friendly legislative framework that provides for affirmative action in the Uganda Constitution of 1995, the Gender policies (Uganda Gender Policy, 2007) that promote gender mainstreaming in all government ministries are all important steps towards the improvement



After a sustained sensitization campaign by MAFA, there's hope that the coming elections will see more women participating.

of women's lives.

Even with such a conducive policy and legal framework, women in Uganda still face several obstacles to participating in political life. Structural barriers through discriminatory

institutions and practices still limit women's options to run for office. Capacity gaps mean that women are less likely than men to have the education, contacts and resources needed to become effective leaders.

While individual women in the country have overcome these obstacles with great acclaim, and often to the benefit of society at large, women as a whole, the playing field needs to be leveled, opening opportunities for all. While the situation is as such for many women in the country, it is worse for the rural women that are already marginalized by the poverty and powerlessness.

Maganjo Farmers Association's program on leadership and participation therefore provides training for women in political leadership and participation, to help build their capacities, and offer voter and civic education and sensitization campaigns on gender equality.

Our initiatives encourage local women to engage in grass-root advocacy and lobbying for improved service delivery at the district, sub county and village levels.

Are you a 'Dot.Com' parent?

Confronting the challenges of social media among youths

By Francesca Romana Bilak

"Hi Mum! Hi Dad! What's up?" is the commonest greeting from the youth, today! They walk past, and straight to their bed rooms. No time to sit and exchange 'normal' greetings as it used to be now referred to as the "P.O. Box era" or the "BBC era", "Born Before Computers". If they sit with you for a while, they are busy on their phones: touching, scrolling and laughing, by themselves! The touch phones, Hi-Pads, computers have taken over conversation at home. Even if you wanted to follow their conversation, you may never go far, thanks to the slung language. Try this:

'I am 'G', for 'I am good'.

'Are you popping to towi?' for 'Are you going to town?'

'Are you popping to the danke?' for 'Are you going to the dance?'

'Am in a taku going to towi', for 'I am in a taxi going to town'

'O.K. man, Halla mi as soon as you reach Towi', for 'Call me as soon as you reach town.'

The other day my young son offered to entertain us with his Nursery songs. We paid attention for

some time but got a little distracted. My little son suddenly exclaimed, *"You guys are not listening, I will stop singing"*. This came as a shock to both of us! The little boy in Kindergarten addressed us as 'Guys'!!!

A mother of four came back home and found her four teenagers glued on television and no domestic work was done. Funny of course, but the response was:

"Mummy, chill please, just chill Mummy!!"

Meaning, 'calm down'!

The effects of social media are many, and that is why as parents, we need to be closer to our children more than ever, to monitor and give support. Some children are glued to television programs that do not add value to their lives at all.

Those with smart phones are simply married to them, trying out all the platforms the gadget can provide. This has both positive and negative influence.

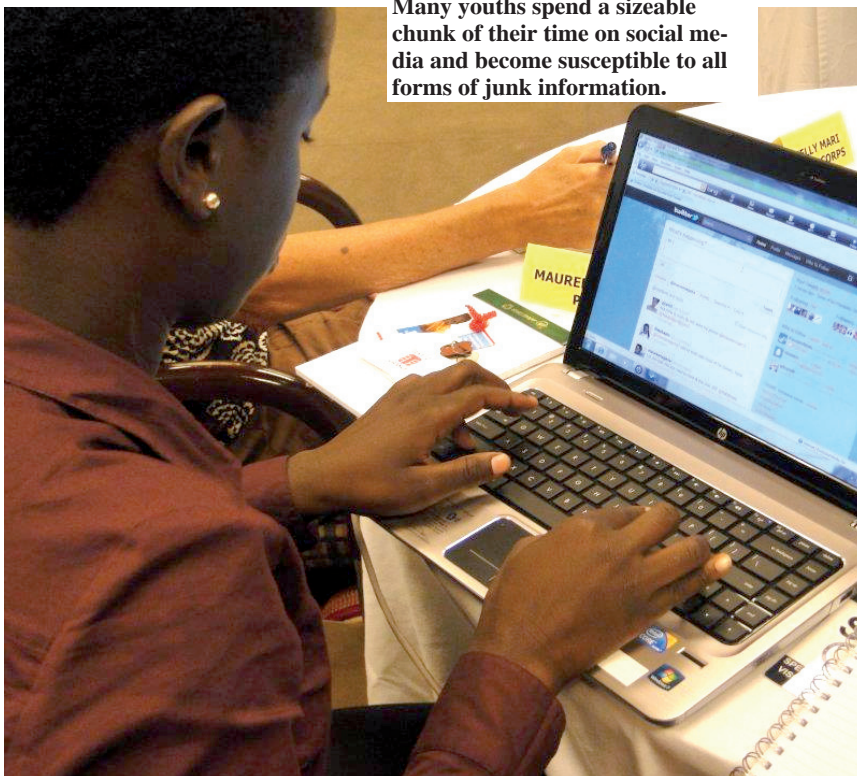
Studies have shown that some children's self esteem is boosted especially when they receive positive comments after posing, use their profiles on Face book while others get depressed or disappointed due to the negative feedback comments.

But what can parents do in such scenarios?

There is no shortcut. A good parent will have to learn and fit into this new scenario; but one has to stay sober lest you lose your cool!

●We need to accept that social media is now a normal part of life, and it is necessary for development. This therefore means that we have to parent more intently to becoming productive people, and deliberately nurture their self-

Many youths spend a sizeable chunk of their time on social media and become susceptible to all forms of junk information.



A young girl engrossed in her mobile phone.

esteem reminding them of the value of real life; and what can be emulated from the older people.

●We can talk to the children and adolescents / youth about their online use and the specific issues that today's online children face; keep an eye on each child since everyone reacts differently.

●Because most youths won't talk about such things with a parent, we must learn to create time for the children and talk to them so they can ground their self-worth on real family relationships, but not fake online social interactions that takes a lot of their time and make them lose focus on the reality of life.

●We should become better educated about the new technology to show them that we are actually part of the development but not against it. This will bridge the generational gap, children will see us as 'dot.com' parents who can help them when and where necessary.

●We should strive to stay close to our children, creating trust so that they become free to share with us what would be negative feedback from social media. But also avoid negative rebuttals to the children when found on the wrong side of the norm.

●We should sensitize the children / youth on the possible positive and negative consequences of social media including pointers to Cyber bullying and fighting that may occur in different ways.

Some of the Cyber bully methods are uploading videos to YouTube that embarrass their victims; Creating fake Face book accounts and acting as a victim; Pretending to be a victim in chat rooms, acting in embarrassing ways; Sharing the victim's personal information in a public forum; Posting rumours or lies in a public forum; Sharing embarrassing pictures of the victim in a public forum or through email or communicating emails to send mean or threatening messages to the victim.

Journalists pin UCC on gender based violence

Bya GWEN Team

Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) has been accused of failing to take action against media houses that fuel domestic violence (DV) and in general, violate women by misrepresenting or under-covering them.

Said one journalist: "There are three new television stations whose content is way below standard, but pretend to promote family relations by monitoring movements of a spouse suspected to be engaged in extramarital affairs, but end up causing physical violence between the two, and sometimes relatives join the fury".

Another one says: "You would expect that newspapers founded and run by senior / professional journalists, should take balanced or analytical journalism seriously, but alas – a public newspaper is running a tabloid which you could describe as blue movies. This, spells danger to our country especially the young generation, but UCC is simply watching even when another company, soon turning into a media conglomerate continues to present women as passive sex objects, weaklings or trouble makers or secondary citizens".

Journalists who had concluded a 3-day training session on gender sensitive reporting made the observations, also pointing out that some media managers too, are to blame for the unfair coverage of women citing occasions where reporters have submitted balanced news reports, but sub-editors choose to short change them for purposes of attracting readers with nude pictures of women, and make money at the expense of the female gender, and sometimes persons with disabilities.

The training was organized and conducted by Uganda Media Women's Association, UMWA, and supported by the International Solidarity Foundation, ISF on a soon-to-be concluded 5-year project on Domestic Violence Prevention, Wakiso and Kyankwanzi Districts.

Over 60 journalists from both districts reporting for about 15 media houses including Central Broadcasting Service (CBS), Mama FM, Kiboga FM, Voice of Africa, Uganda Broadcasting



A cross section of participants/journalists who attended the training in Gender sensitive reporting.

Corporation (UBC), among others participated in the training.

While the first training took place in September 2014, the second was conducted a year later, at which several of the journalists reported changes that they had already caused due to the earlier training at their workplace, including introduction of a slot on domestic violence, paying extra attention to the needs of both men and women before and during presenting a radio program; ensuring that the voices of men and men are equally captured, and quoted on the same subject matter, rather than elevating men over women.

Nsamba Peter (Kebya FM): "I'm now more sensitive when choosing a topic for discussion.

I ensure equal number of voices of men and women. I mainstream domestic violence in most of the programs I do, maintaining an objective mind, and offering information on referral services for domestic violence cases, if need be!"

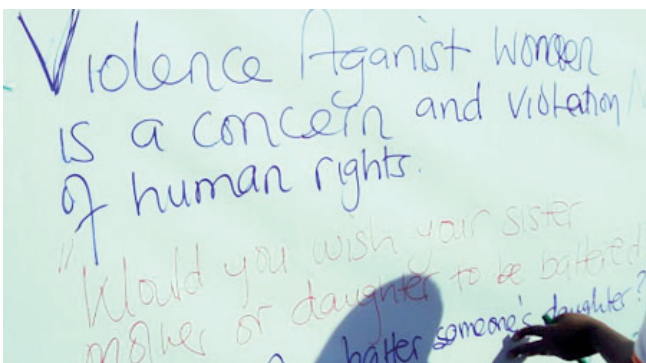
Other journalists reported that they have since then shunned judgmental language which usually depicts women in bad light.

Others narrated how they had become active advocates against domestic violence instead of being indifferent, even when it was their relatives or immediate communities that were involved in such incidences.

As a result of the training, Journalists and Community Activists from each Project District formed a network to prevent / respond to domestic violence, but further appealing to UCC to penalize such media that escalate domestic violence in our country.

Clothilda Babirekere, Project Coordinator says, "We recognized the role of the media in attitude change, but also saddened to know that the practitioners / owners / managers, too were cobwebbed in domestic violence and negative stereotypes that promote inequalities between men and women; tribes and age groups which is why the journalists were targeted. But we are aware that attitude change takes time, meaning continued training and interaction on human rights by the media would be key".

Margaret Sentamu-Masagazi, UMWA Executive Director says that she is hopeful that once the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy for Media in Uganda receives the necessary technical and financial support, issues of inequalities or misrepresentation in and by the media, would be a thing of the past. The Strategy was designed by UMWA with support from the Ministry of Gender; and the UN Human Rights, in 2014.





A cross section of Wakiso and Kyankwanzi activists on domestic violence during the experience sharing workshop held October 2015.

Why Domestic Violence is beyond physical abuse!

Read about revelations of economic and emotional violence from highly qualified and economically able women. Their names will remain anonymous for obvious reasons.

"I am a Medical Doctor and my husband is a renowned politician. But I have to first get permission from him to purchase anything, from the money I receive as a salary. For seven years he demanded that we open a joint account on which my salary would be deposited", as narrated by Rose:

"I got married at 16, but later upgraded to the level I'm today (one of the renowned physical therapists) in East Africa. I have one child, a daughter, and is now 25 years. I have clothed, sheltered, and schooled her to the university level. Her father is alive but has never even sent a pen or an exercise book for this child. The other day, my daughter said to me after her father had called to say "how are you". "I don't have a dad but a man who fathered me several years ago". When asked why she had said that, she said – because he has never been there for me. It is you I know as a my mother and father. I hear such fathers surface at graduation or wedding ceremonies or when their children are launching big events", as narrated by Monica.

CONTRARY to many development theories that state that "once a woman is economically empowered, she would at her disposal, have several choices including escaping domestic abuse".

This does not seem to hold water, at least according to the stories of Rose, Lillian, Monica and Joy's stories do not seem to affirm this. The four are highly exposed and are aware of the

available choices. But have apparently stuck in there!

Experiencing almost all forms of domestic violence: physical, economic, emotional, and sexual. Even those who may not be that exposed but seem to have the economic ability are experiencing some form of economic violence. A quick count at the Kaleerwa Market – showed that out of every ten women, only one benefits from the husband / partner's contribution to the family needs; while only two said

that the husband pays school fees for the boy children while the daughters are a responsibility of the mother!

Councilor Nalunga, also a Community Activist / Change Agent Against Domestic Violence, Wakiso District confirms this and says, "I used to experience domestic violence, because the man had refused to foot the domestic chores, and denied my daughter the chance to go school.

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"At 52, I have 4 wonderful children, all graduates now! We live a 'very comfortable' life – in Muyenga, with the father who is an Engineer, very well paid, in fact. But all the family needs including the school dues and clothings have been my responsibility. We never get to know where he spends his money. Recently I bought a Prado and he blared at me, almost kicking me in front of my children – wanting to know 'who gave you permission to buy that car?"; as narrated by Joy.

"I live in the UK but married to a young man. My husband used to frequently call and update me on the construction of our house in Najjeera. And I would gladly keep sending money for various needs including finishing the house. Little did I know that he had gotten a concubine on whom he was spending the sent money. And the last straw was the fact I could not claim the house because the land title was in his names!"; as narrated by Lillian.

DV cuts across social, economic status

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Despite I having some money, I too, did not pay the daughter's fees because I thought it was the man's responsibility. However, after a training in gender equality, I appreciated the importance of sharing and complementing on each other, and since then, we started joint budgeting, but most importantly, I am now paying the school fees for my daughter, while my husband; is footing those of the sons.....

In Kyankwanzi District, like in other rural settings, there are stories of men selling off domestic animals which were considered as a source of income to the family.

Nakirijja cries out: "The man (husband) has now sold off my children's cow, where does he expect us to get school fees for the children, now that we'll no longer get milk from the cow for sale!"

What is most hurting though is that Nakirijja's and other such women take the time to tend such animals but the husband targets the time to sell! When it comes to crops, stories are told of how husbands would take it easy at the bar, while the women will be clearing the land, plant the crops, weed or do the pruning. But at harvest time, the husband will quickly bring the buyer, sometimes daring enough to even offer the crops for sale before harvest time!!

Nakirijja says: "My husband would bring the buyers even before harvest time. But in later seasons I outwitted him and entered into a contract with a potential buyer of the millet, I had planted on the 3 acres. But this brewed further physical and emotional abuse from the father of my children to the extent that he at one time almost beat me to death accusing me of selling millet grown on his land. He started referring to me as a thief wherever I'd go, a situation that I found very embarrassing".

But while the economically able / empowered women may not suffer physical abuse at the hands of their partners, they are prone to emotional violence, which if not handled early enough may lead to further emotional stress / depression



Nalunga Betty receives a bicycle to facilitate her activism against Domestic Violence.

leading to high blood pressure, heart failure, and sometimes death!

A number of women leaders (parliament and NGOs) spoken to revealed that most of them had gone through such stress including:-

Passports being confiscated by husbands:

One woman leader recalls a time when she was not able to fly out moreover on official duty because the passport had 'gone missing', later the husband revealing that it was him who had hid it, accusing the woman of global trotting, yet for him, he had never even flown to Kenya!

Some women said their husbands would ask why they had to buy this or that; sometimes likening this or that to wastage of resources. "Hey you, don't you think you wasted money to have bought that car or any household item?!" Many of them have to answer or explain where they had been when the husband called at such or such a time. The extreme case was a husband scrolling through the phone demanding to know which people the wife had talked to and why.

Interestingly too, are cases of some of the current women Members of Parliament who have been refused by their spouses to stand

for elective positions again! for the first time or for another term. Many of them are being told to choose between marriage or politics.

But why is it that especially the economically able, and more so, the educated, and are rights aware, instead stick in abusive relationships or marriages?

The obvious reason is death threats:

Several women talked to said that their husbands / partners had at one time hinted on: "If you leave me, I'll kill you". While others reported of death threats targeting their own family members like their fathers or mothers, even the children that belong to the couple! Said Naalya, "At some point, I thought I had decided, but the man told me, 'these children may not have a chance to see you alive again!'"

But there are those who said "enough was enough", trivialized the death threats and moved out. These are few, but speak of occasional threats from their ex, and interestingly missing their men, saying if it was not for exploitation, I'd still be with him!

However, there are others who decided to hang in there for fear of societal pressures / expectations, many alluding to the stigma associ-

ated with divorce or separation. Says Eunice, "While I was, and am still ready to move out, my parents keep reminding me about what will our neighbours or relatives say? My mother could even remind me that if she had not stayed, me and my siblings would not be what we are".

So should society look on as more women lose their minds, property or lives?

No body would support the notion that women should suffer whatever form of domestic violence but what is needed is a holistic approach to overhaul society's norms and expectations. But the starting point is to socialize the girl and boy child the same way, offering them equal opportunities and challenges, therefore instilling in them a sense of equality.

Once children pick up the social justice belief and practices, they are more likely to grow up with them and later impact on the now lopsided social constructs.

As for the current generations, government is urged to operationalize and finance the Equal Opportunities Commission with nationwide sensitization programs to constantly impact on the mindset, because the underlying cause for domestic violence is a mind problem.

Dear Teacher, are you an inspiration or a scandal!

By Alice Nyachwo

She stands out stoutly like a gazelle in the savannah; she is a black beauty who commands respect even from the most stubborn students. She looks at you with love and kindness that makes you feel at home, away from home, but when she is provoked, she will spit fire!.... It is Madam Betty Adong, the Deputy Principal of COWA CVTS. This is my story of how the Deputy Principal and others impacted on me!

My mum, had escorted me to school, and by the time I stepped into the gate, I felt already at home. I felt some kind of peace! Reaching the office of the Deputy Principal, the warm reception we received confirmed the kind of environment I thought I would find. She personally guided me in the office of the Principal later accompanying me to the Dormitory of the girls. Other students gave me a similar welcome that made me feel I was in a different type of school altogether. No bullying or teasing but a smile here and there with a word of 'welcome' from the students. Could not distinguish a second year from a first year student since they behaved in the same manner.

As part of orientation, the Head of Catering and Hotel management and instructor Ms. Emecu Miriam advised me to work extra hard since I had reported late by one term. She told me that determination and focus will enable me cope. She advised me to socialize with students which would help me get supporter faster.

Ms. Miriam is a very soft spoken person who loves her work dearly and this is shown in how she handles students in class as well as outside the classroom. She is very approachable and available when any student needs her help. The two teachers inspired me a great deal and I want to appreciate their approach to teaching. I have learnt that teaching can be in a class environment or outside the classroom through socialization. But all the teachers at COWA CVTS talk to students before giving any kind of punishment so that a student can understand his/her mistake and correct it.

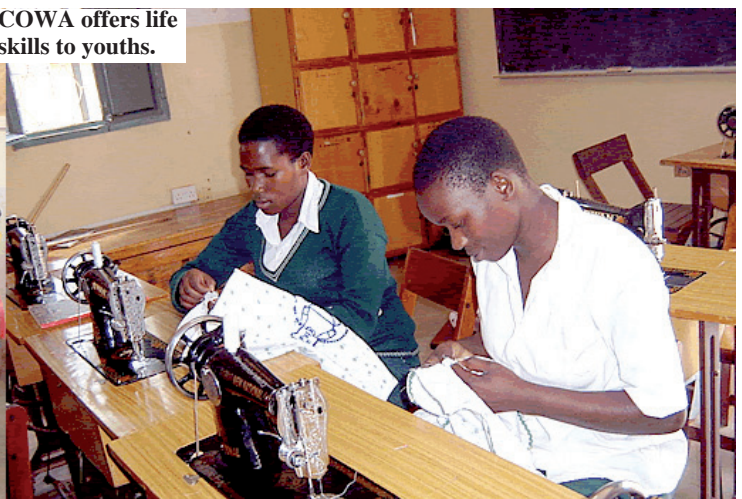
This was a very different school environment from what I had experienced in former schools where the teaching approach was characterized by corporal and other forms of punishment that affected me negatively. I hated some of the teachers because they never gave us a reason to like them or their subjects. Students are human beings in need of guidance but the way the guidance is given should not be with cruelty or inconsideration of our feelings. As youths we are so delicate that our adult mentors (parents / guardians or teachers) should endeavour to give inspiration. At COWA, I have regained my confidence because of the encouragement from our teachers and I know that I will excel.



Namatovu Saida at COWA. The institute helps disadvantaged youths.



COWA offers life skills to youths.



Farmers take on new agricultural practices to mitigate climate change

By MAFA Team

MAFA with support from NWFA has introduced the use of agricultural lime and intercropping of early maturing legumes to farmers in Luwero district to increase yields, reduce carbon stored in soil “the agricultural lime helps to neutralize the soil PH, making calcium and magnesium available to the plants”, explains Christine Nakalanzi, MAFA Agricultural officer adding: “It also increases water penetration, improving the uptake of major plant nutrients such as nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium, increasing yields”.

Sarah Namutebi says: “I used to harvest 10-15tins of beans on 0.4 acres, but now I harvest 60 tins of beans and seven bags of maize. It has delivered me from hunger”.

The project also trained farmers to conduct soil analysis and intercrop legumes such as soya beans and calliandra with maize. “I used to harvest 2 bags of maize per 0.4acres, but since I started planting the soya beans and calliandra with the maize it has improved to 6 bags explains Christopher Musige, a farmer from Bamunanika Sub-County.



Young girls pose with MAFA Agriculture Officer in front of fruit trees grown with agricultural lime.

Contribution of indigenous foods to households

By GWEN Team

Mrs. Lutaaya Florence 45, Luweero District says: “I like to eat local foods because they make one strong and healthy. When I was younger, there were preferred varieties of millet and cassava which were excellent for “atap”, a staple food. Most of those foods have disappeared. The young people now prefer rice and sorghum. They are very lazy and don’t like to produce those foods which grow slowly but are very good to eat.

During my earlier days, no woman would cook sauce without “Abalang”- local salt extracted from ash of special plants. Abalang was added to also meats and fish. The best Abalang is got from burning thorny Amaranth mixed with papyrus and sedges. A woman who cooked without Abalang was upon and her food would be rejected by the husband. I was the first of seven wives so we had to compete for our husband’s attention by preparing the best traditional dish sometimes with a mixture of various vegetables. Abalang was such a treasure. Lazy women who could not make their own Abalang had a habit

of begging from other women”.

Young women these days like to cook very fast and their vegetables are not as tasty as we used to have them. For example, if I wanted to cook ‘eboo’- cowpea leaves, I would pick the tender leaves, put them under the sun to wilt a little, collect them and then cover them under a calabash for sometime. This helps the vegetables to acquire a pleasant aroma and taste. During this process, I would be doing other chores like grinding millet or fetching water or firewood. It was also common to mix several vegetables together for a better taste and texture.

Right now Younger women are also spoiling their children by denying them local foods such as atap (millet and cassava) bread which is nutritious to the children’s bodies, instead they are being fed with fried foods that is disastrous.

A respectable woman was also supposed to store food for the dry season. We dried vegetables such as eboo and atigo, sweet potatoes (Amukeke) that were stored in pots or large gourds that we kept in our granaries so in the long-run food never run out on us.



Some of the local foods at one of MAFA exhibitions, they are nutritious and healthy.

Why demand for beetroot fruit is high on the market

There is ready market for beetroot fruit and supplements waiting to be tapped as more people embrace the use of it to manage curable and incurable diseases, due to their efficiency, affordability and at times easy availability.

According to Ms. Sheila Nansamba, a 30 year old single mother of four, trading in fruits is becoming more and more lucrative due to its high demand. But she is unable to take full advantage of the market as she lacks capital to expand her business and also relies on rented farms to grow fruits which have proved quite unsustainable.

Ms. Mambi Esther, who has been in this business for the last 3 years, was introduced to this trade by her late mother Mambi Maria. She says, "As a young girl, I would watch my mum, prepare the fruit and as I became older she started teaching me how to grow and prepare the fruit for use and for sale. When she passed on, I continued with this trade from which I now earn a living". She states that her involvement in the promotion of health through beetroot and supplements is not driven by the desire for profits but a realization that there are thousands of people who cannot afford modern medical treatment but can be provided with an alternative in form of fruit juice medicine.

Now a member of the *Kwegatta Ge Maanyi* Women's Group, Nnaalongo Kirumira says that the most popular fruit she grows is beetroot, pointing out that it improves blood in the body and offers treatment for various illnesses.



K & G solar power Uganda and MAFA light rural areas

By GWEN Team

Kiberu Lawrence a resident of Kawanda- Watungu, in Ziroobwe Sub County narrated his story: "In the village was one of the last things I would think of in my life.

This was due to absence of electricity in the

village, perhaps I was used to the electricity lights in town that is Kampala but however this could not last for long because am now staying and working in the village.

Life wasn't easy at first due to inadequate water supply, poor roads and worst of all the darkness all brought about by the absence of electricity.

This increased on my family daily expenses that is to say buying paraffin, a challenge in charging my phone yet it was my business. Home security was also at stake because every now and then I would be disturbed by dogs which would be chasing thieves in my compound.

My children would not revise well since they couldn't read for long on *tadooba* (make shift lamps) as their eyes could be affected.

However, this nightmare came to an end when Maganjo Farmers Association organized

a community outreach in which a solar company was contracted to train us on solar energy, how to access it, use it and maintenance but the best part was that their solar panels were sold out on a loan basis.

This pushed me to the marketing manager and I applied for a solar loan. 2 days after my application, the solar package was installed on my house and all the misery came to an end because all that a town dweller could do could also be done at my home like charging phones, watching television and much more. Am settled happily and not even wishing to leave village for Kampala because I get everything a town dweller has".



Abu Mubiru Executive Director-MAFA.

Increase loans for youth entrepreneurs

By GWEN Team

Due to the central bank of Uganda's lending rate increasing up to 14.5%, commercial banks have been charging a very high interest rate and repayment rates to youth farmers and other individuals accompanied with the collateral securities that they can't afford to have in order to get the monies.

As a result of lower interest rates, Nakatudde Jennifer a coffee farmer was able to take up a

loan of UGS 350,000 from MAFA to purchase coffee seedlings. The process of applying for and obtaining this loan from MAFA was "smooth and satisfactory" I have had one loan from MAFA, explains Nakatudde Jenifer who owns a 1.5acre coffee farm". I was given 6 months to repay the loan at 2.5% interest and I have repaid at all!"

As a direct impact of the loan, Jenifer's sales have increased to 56% after introducing her new seed coffee varieties. She obtained her loan; her pre-loan monthly sales figures increased from

UGS 420,000 to UGS 436,000 and she hired one to assist her in her work.

Moreover, because of the positive impact of the loan on her business, Jenifer plans to apply for a new loan .she says that she "could not have been able to purchase her new coffee seed varieties nor improve her sales and business if it were not for loan obtained and the kind support of the loan officers".

Role models take on the leadership mantle



Senior media women in Uganda



Annemarit during annual EAGWEN conference



Kristin at a recent event.



UMWA Chairperson, Dr Patricia Litho (Left) and senior media woman, Sarah Ssegane at a recent event.



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