

NAPE LOBBY

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50th Edition



Women are Agents of Change

Uganda's Experience



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Wisdom is the power that enables women to use their knowledge for the benefit of themselves and others.



One way to change the world is to tackle the problems that we have here and now. What we do today can change the world forever.

Our actions will transform our communities into a place in which we can all live together in harmony.

How women can change their families, communities and countries

- *If they had equal employment, women could raise every country's GDP*
- *If companies put women in leadership positions, they'd both benefit*
- *If women were more politically involved, we'd have better policies for our poor*
- *If women were paid more, families would thrive*

EDITORIAL

Since time immemorial, women have demonstrated that they can drive change in many conditions. Today more than ever, women are determined not to let their past or our circumstances cast a shadow in their way. They are unleashing their power and knowledge to reap their rewards, shape their own destinies and empower future generations.

Women nurture innovative ideas, birth and rebirth business, and protect what perceive dear to them. In rural Uganda like elsewhere, women are finding solutions to current persistent challenges they and their communities confront. Women are using their knowledge to tackle current decreasing clean water access by harvesting and storing rainwater from their roofs. They are also developing viable solutions to energy poverty in the face of climate change. Women are involved in constructing energy-saver cook stoves to address the problem of diminishing fuel wood for cooking.

Women are also tackling the problem of irresponsible disposal of used plastic materials such as drinking straws into the environment by recycling them into new usable products. In these way women they are addressing environmental degradation.

Women have demonstrated they can rise above the frustrations of gender inequality, workplace and domestic injustices and glass ceilings. Women understand that every situation is an opportunity to give their best, to challenge themselves, to persevere in tough times and celebrate in good ones.

Women can and will change their communities if given chance. They are already matching towards achieving lasting change in society. Women in both rural and urban communities are learning how to run successful businesses. They learn how to evaluate their ideas, make business deals, get access to services and gain control over their resources.



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STRENGTHS

Women Can Change the World

Today more and more women are rising above the frustrations of gender inequality, workplace injustices and glass ceilings. Women nurture the most innovative ideas, birth and rebirth business, and protect what is dear to them. Women everywhere in the world are unleashing the power of choice to reap their own rewards, shape their own destinies and empower future generations. Women are finding solutions to current and persistent challenges the world is facing. It is true, a big percentage of women still lag behind in income parity, opportunities for promotion and the ability to tap into government resources to balance home and work duties. But if women are effectively supported, and all barriers to their participation in decision-making processes at all levels, women can be perfect change agents.

Women's critical role in Agriculture

Peasant women in Uganda and Africa produce 60% to 80% of consumed foods within rural households, and put on the rural table fruits, medicinal herbs. While women provide the majority of the labor in agricultural production, their access and control over productive resources is greatly constrained due to inequalities constructed by patriarchal norms.

Improving women's access to and control over land is crucial to enhancing food and nutrition security, and reducing poverty. Having control over land can strengthen the position of women within the household and promote other social and economic rights.



Women tending to their vegetable garden. The vegetables are consumed at home and the surplus sold to raise money for other domestic needs



Today many women are involved in family-base livestock farming as an effective entry points for poverty alleviation. Livestock provide a renewable asset, a ready source of cash, quality nutrients in the human diet, and are often essential for meeting important social and cultural needs and obligations. Some women are involved in poultry farming. Such small-scale enterprises provide practical and effective steps in alleviating rural poverty.

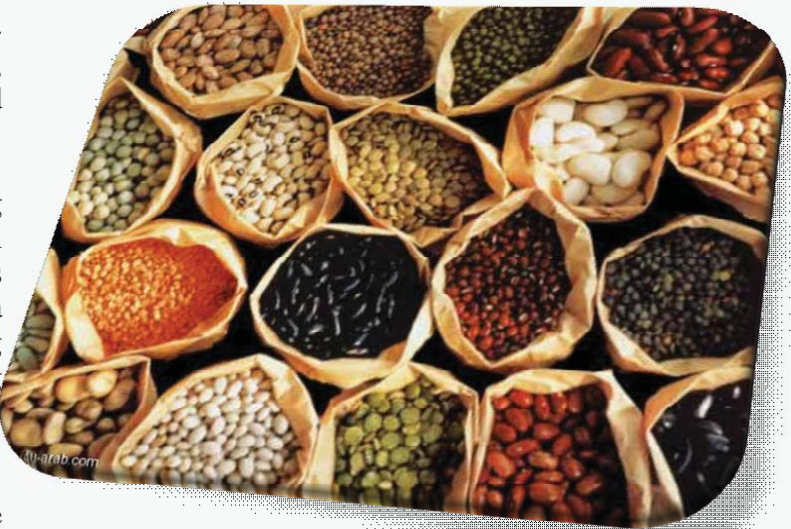
Given the rapidly growing demand for animal products, including dairy and poultry products, there is a need for increasing investment in livestock production.

Women are the custodians of seeds

In the Ugandan traditions like in many other traditions world over, seeds are kept and re-planted when planting season comes. In this way, different varieties of seeds have been protected since beginning of time.

Women play a crucial role in protecting indigenous seeds. Women know the ecological flow of when they should plant and when it is best to harvest and to eat. In Uganda and Africa as a whole, seeds are not just about producing food. Seeds are also used in performing different rituals. Seeds are the back bone of our livelihoods.

Today our indigenous seeds are at the verge of extinction due to various reasons -current climatic change and introduction of genetically engineered seed varieties. Women should be supported to keep and protect traditional seeds. Traditional seeds protect the cycles of life and our seed sovereignty.



Women have acted as custodians of the common genetic heritage through the storage and preservation of grain

Women are health care givers



A traditional birth attendant examining a pregnant woman

Since time immemorial women have provided traditional midwifery. Traditional midwives or traditional birth attendants provide basic health care, support and advice during and after pregnancy and childbirth, based primarily on experience and knowledge acquired informally through the traditions and practices of the communities where they originated.

In remote rural Uganda where conventional health services are limited, women as traditional health providers have played a crucial role.

Women know about caring for babies, home and their environment. They are giving birth, protecting and caring, it is in their genes. They have an important role to play in adding care and humanity to our world heritage. Women are taking charge of public health issues in many at both local and national levels.

Women develop effective & affordable energy saver cook stoves



Women constructing an improved cook stove at Rubiriizi, Masaka, S. Western Uganda

Women are the most affected by the impacts of climate change. Today women in Uganda and many other developing countries are increasingly getting involved in developing lasting solutions to energy poverty in the face of climate change.

Becoming part of the solutions to the current energy crisis, which is generally blamed climate change is a step in the right direction. Government and the general public should support women financially and technically to improve and promote efficient, effective and affordable alternative energy options that are locally available.

Using the traditional three-stone cook stove is wasteful as heat is allowed to escape into the open air. This method also requires more labor on the part of the user to gather more fuel which results into increased faster deforestation.

Women have now become part of the solution to develop improved cook stoves that do not use a lot of fuel. In this way, women are saving our forests.



A traditional three stone cook stove wastes fuel, and if used indoors causes indoor air pollution leading to health problems.

Solar Sisters promoting safe, affordable and clean solar energy solutions



Members of Solar Sisters network in Mityana, Central Uganda in a meeting, 2014

Women are taking responsibility for generating safe, affordable and clean energy while helping women to earn a steady income through the sale of portable solar lighting systems within their communities. Their initiative has provided green power to rural areas as well as provided jobs and a regular income for a growing number of women.

Solar sisters, a women-lead initiative is empowering women with economic opportunity in Uganda and Eastern Africa.

Women accelerating rural self water supply

In families women are responsible to them ensure there is enough water to drink, prepare food as well as to wash. With clean water sources scarce, women often have to travel several miles a day to collect enough water for the family. Uganda is located in the tropical region and received enough rainfall for almost half of the year. Tapping and storing rainwater in the past was not a priority for many families. Rainwater would just be left to flow and find its' way into streams, rivers and lakes. If much, it can cause flooding and soil erosion. But when collected and stored, it can be used for various purposes at a later time in dry seasons or when water supply is scarce.



Women from Butagaya community in Jinja construct a rainwater harvesting tank in one of their member's home.

Today women in many rural Uganda are at the forefront of tapping storing rainwater for domestic use. Individual or through women groups and associations, women are constructing rainwater harvesting tanks in their homes. In this way women are providing clean and safe water to their families.

Advantages of rainwater harvesting

Easy to Maintain: Maintenance requires little time and energy. Installation and operation is much lesser than that of water pumping systems.

Reducing Water Bills: leads to a large reduction in utilities bills as it can be used for various purposes

Suitable for Irrigation: Rainwater is free from many chemicals found in ground water, making it suitable for irrigation and watering gardens.

Reduces Demand on Ground Water: reduces depletion of ground water which has gone to significant low level in some areas where there is huge water scarcity.

Reduces Floods and Soil Erosion: Reduces floods in some low lying areas as well as soil erosion and contamination of surface water with pesticides and fertilizers from rainwater run-off.

Can be Used for Several Non-drinking Purposes: can be used for several non-drinking functions including flushing toilets, washing clothes, watering the garden, washing cars etc.

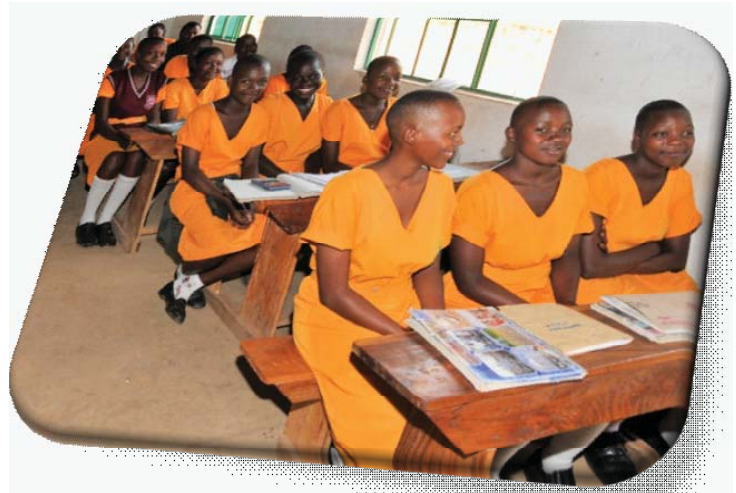


A woman stands in front of her rainwater harvesting tank

More girls are enrolling in Schools

In Uganda today there is increased enrollment of girl children in schools than it was four decades or so. More educated women have meant increased living standards of communities in general. Educated women achieve, increase and sustain crucial elements in their society so that they can live successful and fulfilling lives.

Providing girls with a good education is vital for a community's development. When women are equipped with learning and share decisions about families and livelihoods, the productivity of a society rises.



Women begin teaching from family levels as mothers, sisters, wives and as elders. All other professions in the society have their bases in the profession of teaching.

Women have the ability to be more structure and organized with setting rules in a classroom. Women have rare qualities – they bear some pain and then see a child smile. Women have patience and can tolerate more of naughtiness of children. They have affection towards children as they themselves are mothers.

Women have the ability to mould children into useful and productive citizens, so that as they grow into adults, they live a fulfilling life.



Rural women in their community groups teach each other methods for generating sustainable income. Using their craft making skills, women generate a sustainable income through makings and selling crafts.



Women play a critical role in resolving conflicts

Women also play a key role in preserving order and normalcy in the midst of chaos and destruction. Women organize peace education activities that focus on alternative forms of behaviour that stress equity and social justice and nonviolent ways of dealing with tensions and conflicts. Women also play a major role in shaping public opinion by organizing peace demonstrations whenever there is a threat or an actual eruption of hostilities between clans, communities and or nations.

Women's engagement in peace-building is a crucial element of recovery and conflict prevention. Women are victims of unbelievably horrific atrocities and injustices in conflict situations; this is indisputable. As refugees, internally displaced persons, combatants, heads of household and community leaders, as activists and peace-builders, women experience conflict differently.

In Uganda women played a big role in peace-building and conflict management in Northern Uganda during and after the LRA war and the tribal conflicts that resulted in cattle rustling in Karamoja sub-region in North-Eastern Uganda.



Karimojong women sing a song about how raiding hurts communities and how peace can unite them



A Women in Northern Uganda participate in traditional justice system (Mato put) to resolve conflicts



FIDA Uganda contributes to conflict resolution, peace building, transitional justice



A community workshop to promote peace-building and conflict resolution

Women in politics and decision-making

The increasing number of women in political positions at all levels is a significant benefit in effecting change on critical national issues as well on vital issues that affect women and children in the country. Thanks to government of Uganda for creating a constitutional requirement to include a certain number of women in the national parliament and other decision-making positions. Today more and more voices of women are reflected in national development planning.

Inclusion of more women in political positions has shown that Ugandan societies are changing at all levels. Uganda women and girls are increasingly able to choose their own course in life as well as making remarkable contributions towards national development of the country.



RT. Hon. Rebecca Kadaga is the Speaker of Uganda's Parliament, and also a vocal advocate for gender equity and real change



Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of Oxfam International is a globally recognized expert on women's rights

On the international scene, Ugandan women are making waves in pushing for real solutions to the current global challenges, most of which affect women the most.

A number of Ugandan women are involved in international campaigns for justice and human rights and are participating in international negotiations processes for binding rules aimed at bringing global order and a sustainability.

At national level, women policy-makers have ably influenced policy decisions and advocated for better management of natural resources and human rights



A woman member of parliament making submissions on the floor of parliament

Women are better environmental managers and business entrepreneurs

Women are significant actors in natural resources management and they are major contributors to environment rehabilitation and conservation. In addressing some key environmental problems women play a major role. In Uganda, women from Kinawata sub-township near Kampala are leading in tackling the impacts of environmental degradation through an initiative to recycle drinking straws and polythene shopping bags.

Women direct contact with environment has produced their deep-knowledge about the environment. Women, who are important managers of natural resources, will be major factors in constructive responses to climate change.



A heap of used drinking straws disposed in the environment. Drinking straws are made of plastics and do not easily break down in the environment.



Women making mats from used drinking straws

The Kinawata Women Initiatives (KIWOI) attempts to address environmental problem by recycling used drinking straws into reusable bags.

Other products the women are making include mats and belts.

In addition to offering eco-friendly alternatives to polyethylene bags, the women provide training to groups across the country to educate Ugandans on the need to recycle.





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