FOWODE continued to demonstrate that she is a pacesetter with the virtual launch of three studies and a Policy Brief on Women and Leadership. The studies include Women Shattering the Glass Ceiling: Experiences from the 2016 Elections in Uganda; Reality Check of women in leadership positions in Uganda (Second Edition); Accelerating Women’s Economic Empowerment? A Review of the Uganda Women Economic Empowerment Programme (UWEP); and a Policy Brief on Women, Power and Leadership.

The online launch was simultaneously held in four different locations, the NBS TV studios, FOWODE headquarters in Ntinda, Sierra Leone and the UNAIDS headquarters in Switzerland.

"2020, is a year of many milestones. The global community celebrates 25 years since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action and 5 years since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In Uganda, we celebrate 25 years of the Uganda Constitution and 25 years of FOWODE championing the cause for gender equality in Uganda." Patricilia Munabi, the FOWODE Executive Director giving opening remarks

"It fills me with pride to say without fear of contradiction that FOWODE has been a consistent and bold champion of women’s rights in Uganda, Africa and globally. FOWODE’s pioneering work to promote women’s political leadership, to nurture young feminist leaders, to make gender equality central has had a significant and tangible impact." Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and also the founding Chair of FOWODE

Patricia Munabi

Hon. Winnie Byanyima
The studies break down the long stretch ahead for Uganda to attain Gender Equality, the status of women in public institutions of governance including Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) as well as Local Governments. They also document the challenges that women face in their quest to contest for leadership positions on direct seats that are falsely viewed as a men's preserve. One of the studies analyses UWEP’s potential to effectively bring about economic transformation in the lives of women in Uganda and also makes recommendations to strengthen UWEP’s contribution to women's economic transformation, giving due consideration to intersecting inequalities.

"In terms of the status quo, we have women in the informal sector, political leadership, in public service and the local government. Unfortunately, a pool of these are at officer entry level. The challenge we have is that a lot of power has been re-centralized, the budgeting process and the planning framework too have been. This has left most of the women in the sectors to only rubber stamp. We have a system that normalizes women's insubordination and men's superiority and this must stop," Solome Nakaweesti a season Feminist and Human Rights Activist - Panelist at the launch

You can access the studies using this link; https://fowode.org/publications/research.html

On 10th June 2020, FOWODE conducted its first-ever virtual training under the Data-Driven Advocacy project. This was informed by the recent Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), which put a ban on public gatherings and limited the number of people that were allowed to meet, following the outbreak of the global COVID 19 pandemic. As an organization, we realized that we had to be innovative in order to continue with our work of “Shaping the Future”.

The facilitators were at the FOWODE head office and trainees were in Masindi and Busia districts. Considering that this was the first time FOWODE was conducting an online training, it created some anxiety among the facilitators, staff and community members.

Agnes Namusiitwa, one of our seasoned trainers noted the virtual training was a timely initiative during the COVID-19 lock down when women were facing the brunt of Gender Based Violence.

As women are suffering, there was need to reach out to them and empower them in any way possible. I am happy with the training of the Community Facilitators despite the few technical challenges we got. It is a gradual process and we are all still learning. We have to find a way to make it work for us. - Agnes Namusiitwa

"I am not sure if the training was effective because there wasn’t direct contact with the participants. With my background in teaching, it would have been better if the training was face to face because then I can read body language and engage those participants who seem to be inactive. Much as I would have preferred the traditional method of training, with the increasing spread of the corona virus we just can’t just sit back and do nothing. We have to think ‘outside the box’ to ensure that we reach the women at the grassroots and share with them knowledge and skills.”

Solome Nakaweesti

Agnes Namusiitwa
Virtual training promotes safety given the current COVID-19 situation. Though am delighted about the idea, it still requires a lot of brainstorming to plan for an effective online session. These kinds of trainings are also good as they introduce the grassroots women to a new form of communication. - Joan Bahati, the FOWODE Data Analyst who coordinated the training

I was excited and eager to oversee the implementation of the virtual training. I was hopeful for classroom experience, to benefit everyone. We had technical glitches which seemed to take a toll on the trainer. For it to be a success, it requires a lot of investment in both the equipment and technical staff at the district level. - Jeff Iporotum, the FOWODE IT Assistant

Gulu Women’s Group Reaps Big from Entrepreneurship Trainings by FOWODE

FOWODE with support from UKAID in June organized a series of entrepreneurship trainings for different women’s groups. The trainings are aimed at empowering women economically, and in turn enable them increase their ability to run for leadership positions, as their financial independence contributes to their participation in leadership.

Rubanga Matwero women’s Group in Gwengdiya parish, Awach Sub County, Gulu District is one of the groups that benefited and has made a breakthrough in business due to trainings in the Women Empowerment and Leadership Project (WELP). Before the training, the group had no income generating activities. After the WELP training, Rubanga Matwero Group members developed a Business Plan and decided to venture into goat rearing with each member contributing twenty thousand Uganda shillings (Shs 20,000). With the savings, they constructed a shade and purchased 5 goats. The group members are hopeful that with good care, the goats will multiply and each one of them will be able get their personal goats.

“We had no knowledge of how to start any project or business to boost our stay in the group. We only used to save little money from our pocket every Sundays but I am very sure at the end of the 3 years every group member will have benefited by getting a goat from this project because we have bought 5 female goats for the group members at a cost of 380000/= from the transport and lunch refund sent to us after the training by FOWODE,” Molly Kipwola Chairperson Rubanga Matwero Women’s Group, Awach Sub County
There are very few women in political leadership positions in Luweero District. According to Ssentongo Emmanuel, the Community Development Officer of Zirobwe Sub County, there are only two female LC 1 chairpersons in the whole sub county with 57 villages.

"Women in Luweero district have for a long time been unfairly blocked from participating in leadership especially certain positions that are perceived to be meant for men. The selfish reasons given point to cultural and traditional beliefs," Emmanuel Ssentongo notes

With the Leadership and Advisory (LADs) sessions held in Zirobwe, over 100 women, aspiring to take up leadership positions come 2021 have been mentored. They were mentored in Gender and Governance, Transformational Leadership, Laws and regulations governing the electoral process, The Winning campaign, Effective communication and public speaking skills, and Campaign strategies for aspiring leaders.

Most participants in these sessions acknowledged various hurdles they are facing in their leadership journeys and thanked FOWODE for mentoring them through the LADs sessions.

"As a breastfeeding mother of just 4 weeks, I can't imagine how these campaigns will treat me. The schedule is too tight and this means I have to dedicate less time for my baby or quit the race which I need badly. Am in a dilemma and I think it's the same for many mothers out there," Justine Nakate, the woman Chairperson Zirobwe Sub County and Member Balkudembe Women's Group

Most often, the capacity of the majority of rural women to effectively engage in leadership is inadequate, in addition to the lack of skills for economic self reliance and empowerment opportunities. The uncoordinated effort(s) among lower local governments contributes to low participation of women in decision making processes in Kibuku district.

In June, the Kibuku field office begun the implementation of the Women's Empowerment and Leadership Project (WELP) in the sub counties of Kagumu, Kasasira, Kituti and Nandere targeting 16 selected women-led groups. The groups have been trained in leadership and entrepreneurship.

With the skills of approximately 400 women beneficiaries in the four sub counties built, there is increased knowledge in leadership. The WELP trainings have enhanced the ability of women to make informed decisions and 32 women who benefited from the leadership training sessions have been empowered to vie for political positions at various levels in the district during the 2021 general elections.
In recognition of the fact that Ugandan societies are highly patriarchal, working with men is helping to defuse negative attitudes like the notion that women can’t be leaders, because society thinks it's only men who are capable.

The Women’s Empowerment and Leadership Project (WELP) that is being implemented in the 5 districts of Gulu, Luweero, Kibuku, and Amuria and Rukungiri seeks to work with male champions to promote women’s rights and participation in leadership and decision-making processes.

FOWODE’s Gulu Field Office conducted a Training of Trainers for 15 male champions in June 2020 in order to enhance their capacity. Each of the identified male champions is expected to reach out to 40 men in their community with messages on positive masculinity.

The male champions are a formidable cadre in championing women’s equality and rights.

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In Kagumu sub county, Hadija Namukose who is a member of Nakooma Nkola Baseka Village Savings and Credit Group declared her interest to contest for sub county Councilor representing Nakooma Parish supported by the group as a strategy to advance critical issues of interest to women in their communities.

"Before this particular training, I was shy to stand before people but with these new skills I gained in public speaking, I am now confident with support from my group members, I will contest for a position in the 2021 local council elections in our district Kibuku. I am grateful to FOWODE for the training opportunity given to us women at rural level," says Hadija Namukose.

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"I must admit that I have been lagging behind and had failed to appreciate that women play a key role in community development. Many of us have been thinking “Gender” meant Women. The training that we have received has opened our eyes to understand that women and girls’ rights need to be upheld at all levels in the society," Lawrence Nyaigolo, Kibuku District

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Male champions in Kibuku district pose for a photo with FOWODE Community Facilitator Fazirah Namwabira.
FOWODE through the Women’s Action for Transparency (WAfT) is empowering citizens with skills and knowledge to hold their leaders accountable. The WAfT project aims to enhance women’s participation in the fight against corruption and support a proactive citizenry championing government transparency and accountability in Uganda.

A Training of Trainers workshop was held in Kampala with participants from Rukungiri, Kibuku and Luweero districts. The participants noted that they all believe leaders ought to be held accountable but seemed to be resigned as they lacked the necessary information on monitoring of government projects.

It was noted that there is need to hold leaders accountable if communities and Uganda are to attain development and the citizens to live a meaningful life.

“Fazirah Namwabira”

“In Kibuku District, there is an area called Parisa which is full of school dropouts who resorted to dealing in drugs. I talked to these children and helped them form a group. I later wrote a concept note about the need to take these children back to school and shared it with the District Councilor who helped me forward it to the District Education Officer. It is sad that the DEO’s Office did not have funds to support the cause. I will hold the incoming leaders accountable if the rights of these children are not respected.”  - Fazirah Namwabira

Giving Women a Voice

FOWODE with support from UKAID/FEMNET trained 12 community resource persons and 6 women’s group representatives from Bulumbi and Buyanga Sub Counties In Busia district.

The training equipped the participants with knowledge and skills on the use of data to advocate for women’s issues in their communities and gender responsive budgeting.

The training encouraged women to always participate in the planning and budgeting processes and to engage their leaders for prioritization of their needs in the sub county and district plans and budgets.

“I have learnt to engage in the budgeting process as I have always been excluded and yet I can be of importance in causing impact in the home budget” Getrude Nekesa

“I have gained confidence through the training. I will not only accomplish my domestic work commitments but also advocate for change in the community where I live,” notes Josephine Akol

Spotlight

Tell Us About Yourself

My name is Jackson Mugambwa and I have worked with FOWODE for the past sixteen years. Although I came in as a driver, my responsibilities have over the years grown to a transport officer of sorts.

Achievements attained from working with FOWODE?

I have learnt a lot and I am now a responsible family man who understands the importance of a united family rather than being a GBV perpetrator.

What have you learnt at FOWODE that you have put to good use?

I encourage my peers to dialogue when they have conflicts with their wives instead of resorting to violence. I have become a male champion, in my community and I am always invited to counsel couples that develop misunderstanding. I explain to them the importance of unity and the dangers of GBV.

What has been your experience working in a women’s rights organization?

I have found it easy to work in a women’s rights organization because I have learnt to understand the different personalities that I come in contact with. Women are very intelligent people that are willing to share constructive advice.