The Women’s Economic and Political Empowerment project (WEPE) aims at enhancing women’s participation in political and democratic processes for the promotion of gender equality and strengthening of women’s economic self-reliance for their effective participation in decision making.

For purposes of tracking and monitoring the progress of the project, FOWODE embarked on a monitoring exercise in the targeted districts; Amuria, Kabale and Luweero. Here are some of the highlights and the most inspiring stories:

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Kabale technocrats speak out!

While most of the technocrats stipulated that it is part of their jurisdiction to incorporate gender into the local government council resolutions, plans and budgets. They mentioned the various challenges they face towards materializing this within the local government. These include preconditioned budgets from the central government such that the resource envelope allocated towards gender is almost negligible as compared to the existing needs.

In addition, the interviewed district officials mentioned the need to improve the capacity of the district officials in gender responsive budgeting which may result into increased resource allocation for gendered priorities.

In response to key policies and laws that the district observes in order to protect the economic rights of women; the officials mentioned that certain ordinances and bylaws have been passed locally so as to protect women such as the sanitation ordinance and a bylaw on alcoholism. These are reinforced by the national laws such as the constitution of Uganda.

According to district officials, majority of the women own animals such as goats, pigs, poultry and only a few women own land through the customary arrangement. Most of the land is still owned by men in the district. However, sometimes men authorize their wives to use the land for the benefit of the family. Therefore this has limited women from participating in political leadership that has been highly commercialized.

A conversation with the Headteacher at Kabirago Primary school

In a conversation with the head teacher of Kabirago Primary School, Mr. Kabagambe Willy, highly commended women’s groups for closely monitoring the institution at the school. He said that as a result, the school had purchased some sanitary towels using funds from the UPE grant. He also plans on purchasing liquid soap to improve on the school’s hygiene as recommended by the women’s groups during an earlier monitoring exercise.

“Despite buying the pads, girls go for a whole term without using them because they fear to approach their male teachers. We only have one female teacher in the whole school, but she is usually absent because she hails from a faraway Sub County and the school can’t accommodate her.” Said Willy Kabagambe.

The monitoring team suggested that the school should empower the female prefects to handle distribution of sanitary towels since pupil to pupil relationship is less stringent as compared to male teachers. They were also encouraged to partner with organizations or groups that can teach their pupils how make reusable sanitary towels as a more sustainable way of keeping the girl child in school.
ON ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY ACTIVISM

Goretti shares her story:
“I carry out sensitization in churches especially on issues of economic rights and I encourage women to start income generating activities. For example nonmembers of our group who used to cultivate crops for us have now officially joined the group because of our messages to them and because they now admire our lives. Personally, I can now pay school fees for my children unlike before.”

Evidence Kabasinguzi shares her story:
Initially, I had land that my husband left for me and my children before he died, I would first ask permission from my in-laws to use my husband’s land yet I wanted money for school fees and if I was denied access, I used to keep quiet but after the group training, I know my rights in owning land, so I reported the issue to the sub county leaders and since then, I was given full ownership.

GROUP EMPOWERMENT:
Women Venture into making crafts

“In December, we used to share the group savings and purchase meat and rice in bulk for our families. Most of the meat would go bad because it was always too much to be consumed in time. However, after the training we realized that it was more important to save for investment. We then resolved to use our savings to buy raw materials that we are using to make mats and baskets which we sell between UGX 10,000/= and UGX 100,000/= . This has boosted our group’s general savings by up to 60% compared to what we had before the group trainings.

We shall use some of this money to support both our families and our colleagues who are contesting in the 2021 elections because we want to see more women take up leadership positions!”

said Kyarimpa Noridah the group Treasurer, Kyasano Irish Potato Growing Women’s Group in Rubaya Sub County.

The group shows off some of their products during the monitoring visit
INDIVIDUAL EMPOWERMENT: Peer facilitator undertakes animal husbandry

“When I was invited to Kampala for a training of trainers on entrepreneurship. Not only did I use the opportunity to learn, but also saved some money that I used to buy an ewe (female sheep). This sheep has reproduced and now I have a total of 6 sheep. I sold some of the sheep to pay school fees for my children and also support the family. I also use their dung as manure for my Irish potato garden which has enabled me gain higher yields than before.

Secondly, I have greater support from my husband because he has seen the benefits of women’s economic empowerment. For example, one time I had to sell off one of my sheep at UGX 90,000/= to bail him out of a financial situation. From that day, he has been supporting me and now he takes care of them even more than me. He says that I inspire him, so he is planning on undertaking a cattle rearing business. The income will be used for further investments and to support me as I contest as a councillor in the 2021 elections.” Revealed Judith Kobusingye, a peer facilitator and group member of Kyasaano Irish Potato Growing Group in Rubaya, Kabale District.

A MALE CHAMPION’S VOICE
Male Champions share stories of change at Individual and community level

“Even more than me. He says that I inspire him, so he is planning on undertaking a cattle rearing business. The income will be used for further investments and to support me as I contest as a councillor in the 2021 elections.” Revealed Judith Kobusingye, a peer facilitator and group member of Kyasaano Irish Potato Growing Group in Rubaya, Kabale District.

Male Champions share stories of change at Individual and community level

“I used to leave my wife to work alone when I am in a drinking joint but after the male champions’ training, I now support my wife and we both plan for our children. Today, all my children are in school and I will continue supporting them until they complete school.” Pledged Tibesigwa Milton.

In our community, previously men would just wake up and just go to the bar. The women would suffer alone in the garden, plant crops and also do the harvesting by themselves and the men would only wait for the money from selling produce. But due to continuous community outreach by male champions and the sub county ordinance, men have resorted to helping their wives both at home and in the garden.” Nicholas Ntegyereize.

“I am the chairperson of the Lands committee in kamuganguzi Sub County, I use this position to sensitize the community about land rights and I encourage women to register their land under the customary land ownership registration that is ongoing.” Said Nicholas Ntegyereize.

“My brother used to be involved in domestic violence in his home, he had stopped his wife from participating in economic activities, I sensitized him about the benefits of economic empowerment of women and he allowed his wife to start working again. Today, he looks up to me as his role model and he thanked me for I did for him and as I speak, his family is happy and doing well financially and there is no more violence. The community around him is learning from him as well.” Turyasingura Manuel said.
Our group received training on leadership and Entrepreneurship where the session on record keeping opened my eyes and I started taking note of all my expenditures. Since this training, I have been able to record both my expenditures and savings than ever before which has helped me to start up a second-hand cloths business.

I am now able to save over Ugx 80,000/= weekly. Earlier this year, I began constructing my big modern house since the one I stay in is too small. I can now buy essential items like salt, sugar, soap and reduce over dependency on my husband. Thanks to FOWODE for planting a seed in me” - narrated by Abiro Betty from Ebumainos women’s group in Asamuk subcounty, Amuria district.

After the Women’s Economic and Political Empowerment training with peer facilitators supported by FOWODE, I got an idea of starting up a business. I went ahead and borrowed Ugx 300,000/= from my friend and then used that money to buy a cow which later gave birth to four calves. I started up a diary business and supplied milk to people in the community. Besides that, I planted cabbages and tomatoes for sale.

Within 3 weeks I was able to pay back the money. “The leadership training inspired me to stand up and take action without fear. In 2021, I plan to contest for LC 1 councilor. My husband is proud of me and pledges to support my political ambitions” - narrated by Ingola Elizabeth, strategic women group, kanji subcounty, amuria district.
My positive journey of change started after the WEPE training on Entrepreneurship. After the training, I approached my savings group and borrowed Ugx 500,000/= from my savings group and bought 150 chicks for Ugx 300,000/=.

I used the balance to buy feeds, vaccines and constructed a house for them. My future plan is to sell them off to different restaurants, community members, markets and ultimately partner with Ugachick to adopt new strategies to boost my business.

Testimony narrated by Oluka Basia a member of St. Joseph women’s group in Asamuk subcounty, Amuria District.

“In Kalagala, men wake up very early and go to the bar to booze. It is the women who take care of the home, the property, the businesses and the children.”

- Mr. Patrick Kalyowa CDO Kalagala S/C Luweero.
A young woman on a mission to grow

Madiina Narrates her story...

When FOWODE came to Luweero for the first time, they asked us a lot of questions. They asked us, ‘how many of you have resources like land that they completely own?’ At the time, the land I had belonged to my husband and I. The questions asked challenged me to think outside the box. I started saving my own money from that day onwards.

Earlier this year, after collecting my own savings combined with those I collected with my group (Balikudembe women’s group), I managed to buy a plot of land at 1.8 Million; 500 by 100. The next time I wanted to borrow money from my group, they asked me for a land title or anything that I owned. Luckily, because I already had my own plot of land, and it was registered in my name, I was able to give it in exchange for the loan. I used the loaned money to start a brick making project on my land and now, I am happy to report that I have over 2000 blocks and I hope that in the coming month, I can sell some. Those that remain, I will use to build rental houses. My plan is that in the next year, I will be one of the few land ladies in this area.

Many people asked why I invested at such a young age? The belief is that most young women spend most of their youth taking care of their beauty and buying clothes. I told them that I have to prepare for my old age right now when I am still considered young and energetic. Secondly, because of the economic independence, I feel empowered and because of that, my goal is to eventually stand for a political position.

I used to fear, I couldn’t speak up for myself. Now I can stand in the area and teach people important lessons on empowerment and investment just like FOWODE taught us. I call out to my fellow women to start developing and investing in themselves so that they can have economic independence which will eventually result into their empowerment.

Testimony from Madiina, a Peer facilitator in Luweero district

“If we don’t address gender and economic issues then sustainability will be hard. Women now can stand up and speak up about issues that concern them which they couldn’t do previously. This has improved in health services for example in Zirobwe HC III when they were dumping waste next to a maternity ward, women spoke up and the waste was removed. Women also recovered money which was lost in Kyevunze HCII and in the process they also recovered a microscope which was missing. This is just the tip of what empowered women can do”

_ Mr. Henry Namakola, Health Education Officer, Luwero._
Working with my husband

I used to work with my husband on different projects such as making bricks, rearing animals and farming. We then decided to buy cows that would help us get milk for sale. Money from the milk sale was then used to buy items for the home. However, time came when he decided to sell the cows without my permission. When I found out, I suggested that after sale, we can both decide to invest in another business together. We failed to agree on the next family project. My husband wanted to use the money on other things that he could not tell me. I was over-powered! I allowed him to use the money in the hope that whatever he was going to spend on, it would eventually help our family continue to grow. Until today, I do not know what he did with that money.

After attending the Women Economic and Political Empowerment classes organised by FOWODE, I realised the importance of starting my own business. I started rearing cows and hens all bought with my own income. This meant that my husband had no say in how long the business existed or what I would eventually do with the income. I went back to my group (Balikuddembe Women’s group) and I borrowed money. I used this money to start another major business of renting out tents and chairs for events. Now that I am fully independent economically I can decide what to do with my money and also I can pay school fees for my children. Today, I feel more empowered than I have ever felt before!

Hajjat from Balikuddembe Women’s group

“It is powerful to see women speak up about issues that affect them. Women’s participation helps us improve service delivery.”

_ Mrs. Nagadya Faridah, Assistant CAO Luweero._