AMPLIFYING VOICE, GAINING POWER

Stories of women's economic empowerment and leadership development.
“HEAR THE WOMEN’S VOICES”
While some progress has been made towards opening up the policy process to a wider range of actors, women, particularly the young and those in the informal sector, are largely excluded from participating in decision-making processes. This has continued to render them voiceless, resulting in profound political and social injustice. In a bid to address the contextual barriers to women’s participation in decision making, FOWODE with funding from African Women’s Development Fund (AWFD) implemented a 2-year project whose core goal was, “To empower grassroots’ women to mobilize and advocate for a greater voice and inclusion in both formal and community-based political decision-making spaces in Uganda”. The Women’s Economic and Political Project was implemented in Kabale, Luweero and Amuria Districts, covering 6 Sub Counties; Rubaya and Kamuganguzi sub counties in Kabale district; Kalagala and Zirobwe sub counties in Luweero district and Asamuk and Kuju sub counties in Amuria district. The project worked with 30 women’s groups (10 per district), 28 male champions, aspiring women candidates, 4500 citizens, local and national leaders and the media.
**Project Goal:**
To empower grassroots’ women to mobilize and advocate for a greater voice and inclusion in both formal and community-based political decision-making spaces in Uganda.

**Project Objectives:**
- To protect full economic rights and justice for women.
- To expand democratic space; sustain inclusive governance and equal political participation of women.
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30 Women’s Groups (10 per district),
28 Male champions
195 Aspiring women candidates
4500 Citizens, local and national leaders and the media.
MY VOICE, MY FREEDOM

Bessie Oluka
Bessie is 65, married to Lawrence Oluka, a mother of 6 children and has three other relatives under her care. The family lives in Asamuk-Moru village, Asamuk sub county in Amuria district.

Bessie is a member of St. Joseph Women's Group alongside 19 others. It is one of the women's groups that were empowered by FOWODE under the WEPE Project and is focused on savings and credit in addition to empowering women in entrepreneurship and agriculture. Group members are encouraged to save a minimum of Ugx1,000/= (one thousand) per week.

“The WEPE project taught us about our rights as women, leadership and business and how to make decisions. Today, all of us in St. Joseph Women's Group have value, we can talk and make important points in our homes. My husband started valuing me because of how I bring up the ideas, he listens to me and works with me on my ideas.”

Bessie is proud of her group members progress. For example, “Rose Akello, started building their family house with savings from her business of selling silver fish. Her husband was impressed and decided to sale his motorcycle taxi, invest and join Rose in the silver fish business. Their business is booming even during the COVID-19 crisis. Rose and her family are unstoppable”. Bessie says, more families in the group are eating healthier because they learnt about good nutrition and how to grow the foods they need in their homes. All the women contribute to their children's school fees and some are contesting for political positions in their village.

“My most important achievement has been the ability to be independent”. During the training on entrepreneurship, everyone was encouraged to start income generating activities at home and become financially independent rather than wait for their husband to be the sole provider. This inspired me to revive my poultry project that had collapsed mostly because of poor business management skills. I sold 10 bags of ground nuts at Ugx160,000/= each and earned Ugx1,600,000/= altogether. I borrowed Ugx 500,000/= at a rate of 10% from the group savings to top up my capital. In June 2019, I used the capital to buy 150 kuroiler chicks and revived my poultry business. In December 2019, I sold 10 cocks at Ugx 45,000/= each and 100 hens at Ugx 35,000/= each and realized Ugx 3,950,000. I am very confident that my poultry business will remain strong because I was taught how to keep records and manage expenses to ensure that the business is profitable.

Using some of the profits from her poultry business, Bessie also started an apiary project (bee keeping) in March 2020 which was cheap to start and is easy to manage. “I learnt that this business is good for the environment. My first honey harvest was 10 litres in August 2020 and I sold each litre at Ugx24,000=/. We hope to continue harvesting every 4 months.”

Bessie and Lawrence also grow oranges that they have now started selling at the new fruit factory in Soroti district. They sold 20 bags and earned more than 5 million shillings. The couple are grateful to FOWODE and the WEPE project in particular for having unlocked their entrepreneurship potential and believe that life can only get better as they continue to reinvest the profits from their various business ventures.
INSPIRING MEN, CHANGING MINDSETS
Simon Leo Okurut
“I have always desired to help my community. The WEPE training gave me the skills to help other men, and my neighbors to understand human rights and fight violence.”

Simon Leo Okurut is a ‘model man’, living in Ooloi village, Asamuk subcounty, Amuria district. He was trained as a Male Champion to sensitize and influence other men to respect human rights, prevent domestic violence (as opposed to causing and fueling it) and value their families by supporting their wives and children.

According to Simon, a male champion is an exemplary man who is aware of women’s rights and equipped to promote the protection of women and children’s rights and gender equality.

“I started my role as a champion in 2018, by educating families especially men on women’s rights, and preventing domestic violence. I was inspired to become a male champion because I knew the law but had not found a way to share my knowledge. In addition, I have always desired to transform my community and when the WEPE project started, I could see my desire of helping others becoming real[actualized]. I mobilize other men to address these issues but more importantly I live by example”.

Before the project started, Simon says, many men were denying their family members rights to peace. It was common for men to assault women, withhold and spend all family money in bars and live recklessly.

“Because of this project, I have attended very good trainings, through which I met fellow male champions from other parts of the country. The men shared success stories that were very encouraging. I got some ideas on how to support men in my village to do better”.

After the training Simon knew he had to start in his own neighborhood. “My neighbor used to have loud quarrels with his wife almost every day. I decided to invite him for a talk and slowly we talked about how both men and women have rights and the importance of valuing every human being”. Simon challenged his ideas on male power, dignity and respect for his position in the family. “Am happy that he has since changed his behavior and they are not fighting, they talk”. Another family Simon supported was on the verge of divorce because the wife was fed-up of her husband’s excessive drinking and subsequent assault. Their 3 children had also suffered significant emotional and psychological abuse as a result. Simon counselled the man and helped him recognize that he was misusing his power and that fighting was not the way to gain family respect. They also talked about how the violence was affecting the children. Today, the man has reduced his drinking and does not assault his wife anymore.

Whenever there are domestic violence incidents and other human rights violations, Simon is called upon. “My greatest achievement is, to be able to use the training I got to help my community” Simon Leo Okurut.
Good bye Poverty, Welcome Potential

Leah Amuding
“Before the WEPE project, I never thought I could do anything. I was always troubled and felt like the poorest of the poor, I was ashamed. I did not care about leadership because I did not qualify. I can now see that I was missing out on so much”.

Leah Amuding is married with 5 children. She is a subsistence farmer growing ground nuts, potatoes, cassava, maize and beans. Leah is a member of the Aparisa Active Farmers and Savings Women’s Group in Amuria district.

When Leah attended the leadership trainings offered by the project, she was shocked to learn that being a good leader primarily required one to love and care genuinely for the people they represent.

“This was shocking”, says Leah who decided to dare to lead.

Leah applied the principles from the training and quickly took on leadership roles starting from her community. She has been progressing rapidly.

“I am currently contesting for the position of LCIII woman councilor. I am confident that I will win because I now have experience which has built people’s confidence in me. I am the treasurer of Aparisa Active Farmers and Savings Women’s Group, and a women’s leader in Aparisa Church of Uganda. I tell my story and encourage other members of my group to take up leadership positions. For instance, the group chairperson wanted to contest for the woman councilor role at the sub county level but was unfortunately stopped by her husband. This is not a failure; the women will keep working to lead.” says Leah.

Aparisa Active Farmers and Savings Women’s Group has 20 members, and each member saves between Ugx1,000 and 5,000 per week. “After the empowerment sessions by FOWODE, I personally felt I could do something and started making ground nut butter, which I sold to the group members. Savings by members eventually improved and we started poultry and piggery projects which are generating income for the group”.

Leah has noticed that for the first time many women in the community including those outside the group feel they have power. “I am grateful this project has lifted and raised our spirits and position as women. We now feel that we can!” says Leah.
Overcoming Shyness and Making Money

Proscovia Asio
Proscovia Asio is not new to community mobilization and the idea of women’s empowerment. She has worked as a peer facilitator for community development in her village in Asamuk-Moru, Asamuk parish, Asamuk subcounty, Amuria district. Yet, she found it difficult to speak out on the ill treatment of women and girls in her community. Her involvement in WEPE trainings changed all this.

“In our culture, men put women down so much and that alone makes women feel inferior. Women have always been considered to have no opinion on matters in their homes. It’s the man who decides and is at liberty to do whatever he wants without any consultation”.

From the WEPE training, Proscovia realized that she never knew how to save or budget her money efficiently. She concentrated on changing this through learning how to plan for every coin she earned and stopped spending money on whatever need arose. Proscovia created a business plan and to date has a live stock business which she started with four goats. Once they multiply she will buy a cow. She is also rearing chicken and has three pigs.

“Previously, I was very shy – I could not sustain a conversation in public. I lacked confidence to express myself. The training taught me how to be calm, talk clearly, make my points and look straight at people in the eye. I practiced and now inspire many women and girls to express themselves with confidence. My work as a peer facilitator had already made me popular so it is easier work with the community and leaders at the sub county and district.

“I have conducted several sessions on economic empowerment and leadership with many groups in my sub county including St. Joseph Women’s Group, Aparisa Active Farmers and Savings Group, Ceele Women’s Savings Group, and Akumangor Women of Hope. We handle topics like leadership, governance, entrepreneurship, group dynamics, business plans and record keeping. The greatest change I see is that women are now civically aware and many are contesting for leadership positions in addition to turning up in large numbers to cast their votes”. says Proscovia.
FAMILY MAKE OVERS AND UNSTOPPABLE LEADERS

Martha Apio
Martha Apio is 35 years old, a mother of 4 children, living in Kuju sub county, Amuria district. She is one of the peer facilitators and Civic Action Mentors under the WEPE project.

“My role has been identifying, mobilizing and training women groups in entrepreneurship, book keeping, gender issues, human rights, good governance, leadership and group dynamics. I have trained 10 groups including Oguddo Women’s Group, Odangai Women’s Group, Alakaros-Asamuk Women’s Group, St. Joseph Women’s Group, Abarata-Bonik Women’s Group, Ebumainos Women’s Group, among others.

Martha speaks about the women in the groups she facilitates with great pride.

“The truth is most of us depended on our husbands for survival, we did not have our own money. But the project has helped the women start their own businesses and even keep records to see whether they are making profits. We are also saving.”

For example, Agnes Imola, a member of St. Joseph Women’s Group was staying in a very small house with her family. After attending the training, she was inspired and started a stone quarry business – a job that was previously only for men. This was exciting and it means we have to keep educating men that women can do anything.

In Abarata-Bonik Women’s Group, members unanimously agreed that whenever they have a meeting, their transport reimbursement is reinvested in their group gardens where food crops are grown for sale and a portion saved in their group fund which is doing well.

However, Martha’s most outstanding story was from Alakaros Women’s Group. “The chairperson of the group and her children had been abandoned by her husband. He started cohabiting with another woman in another village. After the business sessions she started a silver fish selling business that went on to flourish. Using her profits, she made several developments at her home, including renovating the house. One day, her husband returned to the village for a burial of a relative. He was amazed with what he found at his former home. His wife was different, in charge of everything. The man decided to make amends, stay with his family and legalized their marriage on January 4, 2020. The couple work together and treat each other with equal respect. The chairperson has been instrumental in counselling other women facing marital challenges in her group because of her victory”.

In addition, the Alakaros Women’s Group was able to write a proposal to the Uganda Women’s Entrepreneurship Program (UWEP) and subsequently received an interest-free revolving grant. The Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP) is an initiative by the Government of the Republic Uganda to improve women’s access to financial services, equip them with the skills for enterprise growth, value addition and marketing of their products and services. The women are availed with interest-free revolving credit to initiate or strengthen their enterprises. Martha points out that steadfast mentorship has enabled several women groups register at the sub county and district to enable them qualify for similar grant opportunities. While Martha is generous in her celebration of those she supports as a peer facilitator, she herself has blossomed into an admirable leader.
NOT LESS THAN, MORE THAN

LUCY ASIKE
Lucy's life was not as bright and hopeful before.

“When the WEPE project people came to us in 2018, they taught us so many things, but among them was how to start businesses as women. They taught us that women need to have and manage personal income generating activities in order to liberate themselves economically. I previously had totally nothing as an individual; everything belonged to my husband. I came to realize that much of the stress I had was because I had to ask my husband for everything I needed. I was not making any direct economic contribution in our home and this made me feel powerless”, says Lucy.

Following the mentorship sessions offered by WEPE Project, Lucy started a piggery business with 1 piglet that she bought at UGX 35,000/=, which produced 5 piglets (4 females and 1 male). Lucy owned a cow which she sold at UGX 150,000/= and concentrated on raising the piglets. They soon produced 15 additional piglets which she sold at UGX 40,000 per piglet and earned UGX 600,000. She then bought a hybrid cow at UGX 650,000/= and also started saving between UGX 5,000 and UGX 10,000 with the group. Previously she saved UGX 1,000/= per week. Lucy has constructed a house for the pigs and recently acquired 2 hybrid (large white) pigs. Besides this, Lucy buys and resells ground nuts and her profit is growing every day.

The most important skill Lucy learnt in entrepreneurship is bookkeeping, she attributes her success to it, because like many powerful women, putting in the work was not the problem but rather how to track profit and use this information to grow the business.

**This is Lucy Asike's life now.**

“With my own income, I have been able to contribute to our main house under construction with bricks and 8 bags of cement. I have also been able to support my children in school and not to leave everything to their father. Our first born completed her first degree (Bachelors of Commerce) from Makerere University; our second born completed a diploma in civil engineering and the third born is in a vocation training institute. The 4th born (girl) in senior two (S.2) is very much inspired by her big sister who graduated with a degree. The last born is in primary one”. Lucy Asike

Lucy is 45 years, is married to Simon Okiring and together they have 5 children; 2 girls and 3 boys. Her husband is a Councilor Kuju sub county, Amuria district. Lucy is a member of Abarata-Bonik Women's Group, one of the groups in their sub county that received sessions in economic empowerment, political empowerment and civic education. Lucia has been the chairperson of Abarata-Bonik Women's Group since 2017.

**Lucy's life was not as bright and hopeful before.**

“Happily ever after

I feel happy every single day because I am able to support my family. I do not feel inferior anymore. I add money and ideas in our family initiatives and inspire so many other women. All the women of our group have been empowered in one way or the other. We are grateful to the WEPE Project.” Lucy Asike
Mark Oryema is a family man. He is married to Florence Nalukwago, and they have 3 children - aged 10 years, 5 years and 13 months. As a Male Champion, Mark helps families to prevent domestic violence, nurture effective communication and work together to achieve common goals.
This is what a day in his life looks like post WEPE training.

Mark and Florence are farmers, growing tomatoes, maize, beans and coffee. Their day typically begins at 4am with prayer, and then Mark heads to the gardens.

Tomatoes are the main crop they grow on 1.5 acres of land for commercial use. They grow maize and coffee on one acre of land each and some sweet potatoes for home consumption.

Tomato farming is demanding and Mark sometimes spends the entire day in the garden, while his wife Florence primarily takes care of their young children and helps him in the garden when she can. Except for the peak season, Mark returns home from the garden by 2pm. Later in the evenings, and on other designated days, Mark is involved in brickmaking.

The couple also run a retail shop at their home, which is managed mostly by Florence. With such a busy schedule, Mark can only meet all groups and families on appointment, usually on Sundays.

“I started doing the work of a Male Champion under the WEPE Project after the two trainings we had in 2018 at Kyooto in Namugongo and Eureka Hotel in Kampala organized by FOWODE. To be honest, before the training I thought that as a man, whatever you think and decide has nothing to do with your partner. I knew that whatever decision a man takes is final and there is no need for him to consult his wife. I thought that women were companions responsible only for things like cleaning the home, cooking food, raising children and taking care of our family welfare. I also thought that the boy children are the most important and superior over girl children and I assumed that in providing for my children, I was meant to prioritize the needs of boys over those of the girls. I was wrong!”

I have since changed these sentiments and we are now living much better, in harmony with my wife as equal partners in decision making and implementation in our home. My wife is our treasurer at home and she keeps all the money and we agree on what to spend it on.
Using the knowledge acquired from the trainings and my own experience from the changes we made at home, Mark has been able to empower so many other families. I have empowered 4 groups including one in Katwe with 7 people, another in Nakaseta with 10 people, another in Bubuubi (Nambi, Zirobwe) with 24 members.

One of the men Mark is proud to have supported is Mr. Kwilino Nkuzalusasi.

“Mr. Kwilino is married with 7 children. Previously he was considered the village drunk. Whenever he returned home, he would assault his wife. Cases of domestic violence were reported to our Local Council (LC I) on several occasions but there was no change. I took a bold step and intervened. I knew the cause of the troubles in their home was largely alcoholism, and therefore my approach was first to address that. It took time to keep talking with Mr. Kwilino respectfully but firmly helping him work through the pain he was going through and causing to his family. This is where we started and he changed. He has since reduced on the alcohol and is living in peace with the family”.

From this example, the LCI Executive Committee took interest in Mark’s work and they regularly invite him during council meetings or court sessions to discuss family matters, the dangers of domestic violence and its prevention.
NO LAND FOR GRABBERS HERE
NANTEZA SKITTER
Nanteza has been a Peer Facilitator on the WEPE Project since 2018. She has 3 children and lives in Nambi village, Zirobwe sub county, Luweero District. Nanteza learnt about her legal rights and was able to save her land from people who wanted to use their position of power to steal it.

“Before this project came to our community, women thought that its only men who could make money, and so even if women didn’t earn outside the home they thought it was the norm. We have made it clear to women that they can also provide support to their husbands and together improve their families’ livelihoods.”

After the training in economic empowerment, Nanteza started a chicken rearing business. The money she got from selling eggs helped her start another business of making (toilet) slabs, which were on demand yet no one was making them in the entire parish. “I started with 20 kuroiler chicken and the number has since grown to 200 birds. I collect between 5 to 7 trays of eggs every week and sell each tray at UGX10,000=. I have also started growing plantain and bananas which is doing well.”

Nanteza proudly recounts her biggest achievement from the WEPE empowerment so far, which has been being able to save her land land grabbers [land thieves].

“One day, strangers came and cut down my food saying that they are the owners of the land. With the confidence I had got; I could not just look on. I sought justice from the authorities. Unfortunately some of the district were allies of the perpetrators but I did not fear. I took the matter to the District Police Commander (DPC) and Office of the Administrator General, who issued an order to stop any claims on the land.  Many people advised me to leave the land and settle the matter out of court but I stood my ground and justice is coming my way. I am very confident, and no one can ever convince me otherwise, that the land grabbers wanted to deprive me of my rights because they think I am just a woman. My case is proof to so many women that knowledge is indeed power; and so many women up to now keep wondering where I got the courage to stand my ground and pursue the case.

Nanteza is grateful to the WEPE project training on social accountability and civil rights. Previously, she was afraid of going to any kind of office even for a mere inquiry. Today she pursues court cases single handedly and confidently. “I have now inspired many women, both in business and building confidence. For example, my friend Lamura Namusoke started growing plantain and sweet bananas when she saw my plantation. Another friend, Sarah Ntale also started weaving hats and she cannot exhaust the demand for her products” says Nanteza
When you meet 30 year old Christine Nalubega, Secretary of Balikudembe Women’s group, a Peer Facilitator on the WEPE Project, the room is filled with her charisma, big dreams, and no apologies. She has the confidence of a thousand leaders.

“I think I was chosen to become a Peer Facilitator because I was already serving as a secretary of the womens group and so members had confidence in me and they nominated me. I have since gained more confidence and I am now contesting for the position of women councilor at the sub county. I have also inspired four other women to contest for political leadership, including Justine Nakatte contesting for the position of councilor at LC5, two youth councilors and Esther Nakabugo is contesting for the women affairs position at LC1.

Besides the political empowerment, several women are more confident, and economically empowered especially in terms of book keeping. Proper accounting and business management skills have enabled a lot of small businesses to stabilize and grow.” Christine Nalubega
30 SHADES OF CHANGE

KISULA WOMEN DEVELOPMENT GROUP REPRESENTATIVES SHARE THEIR STORIES
**Kisula women’s development group is comprised of 30 members. The group was mentored on women’s rights, gender equality (including equal treatment of boy and girl children), leadership, prevention of domestic violence and economic empowerment. Zawedde Ludigo (Treasurer), Madina Namutebi (Secretary for Information) and Mary Nakazibwe (Member) share their experiences.**

**What we thought**

**Zawedde Ludigo (Treasurer)**

“We used to think that girls were meant to be in the kitchen and not be taught or interested in doing other things. Today we know that girls should be given and exposed to the same opportunities. For example they should receive the same education as boys”, says Zawedde.

**What we discovered**

**Madina Namutebi (Secretary for Information)**

We discovered that because most women were not earning any money and depended on their husbands, the men didn’t respect them at all and just beat them for any small request. Women had no voice and instead husbands did not want to say they had no more money and fights begun. Ever since women in our group became confident and started income generating activities in their homes, there is a difference because they are able to bring money home and cause their men to listen and budget together with them. This has reduced the domestic violence and money related fights.

**What money planning did**

**Mary Nakazibwe (Member)**

It is not that the women were not trying to make money, they had tried small ways to earn income, managing it was a problem. We have seen many of our members improve in their businesses because of the lessons we received. For instance, Hadija Namuddu in our group used to struggle with her doughnut business. After the economic empowerment we received, she improved her business by keeping records and planning her ingredients, and saving.
THE LEADING LADY, COUNCILOR

JUSTINE NAKATTE
Justine Nakatte, 35 years old, is a member of Balikuddembe Women’s Group. After getting inspired with the political empowerment training by WEPE Project, she resolved to contest for the position of woman councilor (LCV) at the district. Justine was previously a councilor at the sub county.

“I decided to contest for the position of woman councilor at the district. I have always wanted to do this, never felt strong enough until after the WEPE empowerment sessions that we received”, says Justine.

Besides political leadership, Justine benefited from the economic empowerment classes because she was able to recognize that her business was failing mainly due to poor record keeping.

Justine recognizes that the other women she mentors are transforming their lives. “Amiina Kiiza for example, thought she did not have the right to ask her husband about what he did with their finances, since he provided for the home. When we had a session on household finances, the couple realized that they needed to share responsibilities and plan finances together. In addition, Sarah Namuli another member, used to leave home without communicating to her husband and this caused many problems. Today, as a result of the sessions we have had, Sarah realized the need to have clear communication with her husband. The fights have stopped, because the couple are using the methods we learnt.” Justine.
On Mangoes and Marriage

David Kalema Kiyimba,
Model Man
David Kalema is a 40 year old farmer and family man with 4 children. He has worked as a community worker in Kalagala Subcounty, Luweero District promoting Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLAs) and promoting harmony in families for more than 6 years. David is one of the Male Champions trained through the WEPE project.

“Previously, I had a belief that housewives are not supposed to work for money or run income generating activities. I used to believe that when a woman starts earning money, they can easily disregard their husbands and start disrespecting them. I also had a misconception that women are not supposed to own or inherit property. The training changed my mindset. I learnt that the income from the woman’s earning can be of great benefit to the family. I sat with my wife and we talked about this issue and we agreed for her to start working. She went back to teaching. With her income from teaching and mine from farming, we have been able to increase our savings and investments. We now have acquired some cows, and enlarged our mango tree farm. I have helped many other families to have this change in attitude and embrace the idea of women earning some money as a blessing.”

David got the inspiration to start mango tree farming from one of the trainers during the WEPE training held in Namugongo, Kampala. When he returned home, David first planted 1 acre of mangoes but now has more than 3 acres and they have started to bear fruit. This initiative combined with previous other projects will significantly improve their family income in the short term and for many years to come.

As a model man, David also supports other families within his community to live in unity and harmony. “I have also helped a family that had domestic problems. Nakigudde (the wife) used to call me complaining of her husband’s negligence and she was always threatening to divorce. He spent his days loitering aimlessly in the trading centre and he did not support his family. Frustrated and desperate, Nakigudde had decided to take control of the family’s coffee plantation, which was the family’s only income generating stream. This led to a terrible fight. I visited the family and we explored the causes of their challenges and through mutual agreement were able to resolve them. Today, they are living happily. David is glad that through his mentorship, Nakigudde’s husband has taken up his responsibility in the home and no longer wastes time in the trading centre.”
SURVIVING COVID-19, WISE WOMEN

Sauda Nakabuye
Sauda Nakabuye is married, a mother of twins and a member of Aniyali Amanyi Women’s Group in Luweero District. The group, consists of 70 members, is largely a savings and loans association with a strong emphasis on entrepreneurship, with members saving between UGX2,000 - UGX20,000 per week. Sauda and the group were trained on economic strengthening and leadership through the WEPE projects.

Thanks to the WEPE empowerment sessions, Sauda is now actively participating in leadership, as the chairperson of youth at Kibanga villages, the finance secretary at the parish level and is also contesting for the youth representative position at the sub county.

“When we got the empowerment from WEPE I got to understand that no one can fail once they determine to change their lives. I have gained a lot of confidence from the trainings we had. I had never thought of contesting for high political positions but now I have no fear at all. Now, I feel like it is my responsibility to see that the right decisions are taken for the good of our community and this can only be possible when I participate in leadership. The confidence I have has been as a result of the trainings from the WEPE project. I can now speak to all kinds of people without fear.”

Sauda also acknowledges the enormous impact of the project economic empowerment sessions, which she says opened her eyes to opportunities to make money and supplement the family revenue rather than wait for her husband to provide everything, as was the case previously.

“Our area was becoming a busy trading centre, with people using charcoal as their main source of fuel. I saw an opportunity and I resolved to sell my cock to get capital to start a charcoal business. To my surprise, my first sack of charcoal was sold in one day! I never looked back!! In addition to the charcoal business, I am slowly growing a grocery shop which I started in June 2019. I can never ever go without a single sale in a day and as I speak, I have over 6 times the capital I started with. I am so glad I started the business. My husband lost income during the COVID-19 lockdown. I recall how the lockdown came down on us and if it were not for my initiative of the grocery shop, we could have easily starved”.

Sauda has made sure that her women friends benefit. “One of my friends Shamim was a typical housewife like me. When she saw what I was doing, she got inspired. When she received some money from our group, she decided to start a business of selling green bananas. At first she would buy from other growers and make profit off each sale. Shamim then used the money she earned to rent a space and construct a kiosk, started growing her own bananas and selling them. Her business is booming and she is no longer dependent on her husband for everything. Generally, members of Aniyali Amanyi women’s group have become something different, something good, a great inspiration to many around us! All this improvement begun with the WEPE project trainings.”
Yes We Can, Change Moments

Hanifa Nakawunde
“The mentors empowered us and SPECIFICALLY encouraged US TO stop shying away and start participating in LEADERSHIP and BUSINESS. When they said that leadership does not require ONE TO BE highly educated; so long as you have the minimum requirements and you have a good message and agenda for others, you can lead—IT was the moment I changed my mind. From that time on, I have been inspired to take up leadership roles and I am now aspiring to become the WOMENS representative on the LC1 executive committee.

Hanifa is quick to point out that many members in her group had talents that had never been tapped into. Many women can do a lot but the problem has always been lack of confidence and shyness among most of them. After we got the trainings, we realised that we could do simple but profit making initiatives like making reusable sanitary pads and soap. We invited an expert to train us and now many of us are making soap and pads.

“I am an expert basket and mat weaver. By early 2019, I had saved UGX100,000/= from the sale of my products, which I used to start a business of selling silver fish and groceries right at home. I have had very good business management skills, thanks to the trainings we received from the WEPE project. In less than two years, business has grown to UGX 500,000/= which is five times my initial capital. This is a testimony that you can start small and grow your initiative as long as you are determined.

My mother in-law, also a member of the group started a poultry business and she is doing very well. Of course, we have been discouraged by negative people who have been responsible for many failures in our community. They discourage you from doing things that will even benefit the entire community. But we have kept going. In our group we have decided not to listen to such people and we are developing day after day.” says Hanifa.
Tukolele Wamu Women’s
Group has 30 members
(26 women and 4 men).
Reflections of three
members- Nuru Nkaynzi
(Chairperson), Catherine
Nakaayi (Secretary),
Samantha Namuddu
(Treasurer).

The group was empowered to monitor
government services in their community.
They were attached to schools and health
centres in Kalagala sub county, Luweero
district. The group visited 2 schools before
they were closed due to the COVID-19
lockdown.
WATCH DOGS

Nuru Nkaynzi (Chairperson)

“We started with Kibanga Church of Uganda Primary School. We were welcomed and taken around and we noted several things in our monitoring visits. The school kitchen was the most worrying facility. The walls were almost falling, it was leaking and the hygiene was very poor. The only available meal for the pupils was porridge. Also, the compound was very bushy and there were no emergency menstrual health plans for girls at the school. In our concluding debrief we agreed to plan a parents’ meeting to address the issues identified. In the parents’ meeting, we made very many decisions aimed at improving the livelihoods of our children at the school. Important among the decisions that we made was that parents contribute UGX 25,000/= per child for lunch at school. We also set up an emergency plan for the girls and a specific teacher, Ms. Natongo appointed as in-charge. The head teacher also says both the school and parents were happy about the monitoring visits which help keep everyone accountable.

COMMUNITY MOBILISERS

Catherine Nakaayi (Secretary)

At Siira Memorial Primary School the challenges were similar although not exactly the same. Pupils at Siira primary were always loitering on the road even during class time. To us this meant that there was a bigger problem. According to the head teacher, Ms. Milly Namutebi, the reasons for the children’s loitering included lack of books, food and uniform. On a positive note, the compound and kitchen at Siira Memorial were in a much better condition than what we found at Kibanga. Nonetheless, we summoned a parents meeting and parents agreed to provide scholastic materials for their children.

DON’T FORGET THE MONEY

Samantha Namuddu (Treasurer)

The group has also benefited from the WEPE project economic and leadership empowerment sessions and members have started income generating initiatives including making sanitary pads, rearing animals, poultry and making snacks. They have learnt how to start and grow businesses and also understand what can make a business fail.

“In addition to the achievements so far; we were also able to tap into other opportunities as a group. We were able to write a proposal to Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Program (UWEP) and we got UGX 7,000,000/= interest-free revolving grant which we have invested and are now repaying slowly.” Nuru Nkaynzi (Chairperson), Catherine Nakaayi (Secretary), Samantha Namuddu (Treasurer).
POWER A WOMAN, CHANGE THE WORLD

Peninnah Agaba
Peninnah Agaba is a mother of 2, has 12 adopted children. Peninnah is married to Spencer Arinaitwe, a teacher at Kitooma Primary School. She is the Secretary of Rwanyena Bakyara Twetekatekye, a 22-member women’s group which she joined as a member in 2015.

In 2017, the Women Economic and Political Empowerment (WEPE) project was introduced to their group through the Sub County Chief who recommended them for inclusion. The WEPE project started with several interventions which included trainings in book keeping, entrepreneurship, record keeping and budgeting.

“Our biggest challenge before was lack of start up funds. We used the knowledge and skills from WEPE to compete for the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Program (UWEP) funds which we got and started projects for the group. We got an interest free loan of UGX 4.2M (four million and two hundred thousand) and we have been able to pay back with only UGX 1.26M outstanding as of September 2020. We had a grace period of a whole year before we started paying back.

As an individual, I have been able to start home based projects. I have 20 chicken, 7 turkeys and 2 pigs. Because of the empowerment we got through WEPE, we were also able to tap into the Ministry of Agriculture support through the Agriculture Cluster Development Project (ACDP), which gives agricultural inputs at subsidized prices. This season (September 2020), I have been able to get 30kg of improved seeds of beans, 50kg of fertilizers and a tarpaulin for drying produce.

In addition, I have really learnt planning and budgeting for all my businesses. I was teaching at Rwanyena primary school but I had to resign in 2017 to tend to my business. I was also able to adopt more children who were abandoned in the community. The business and family keep me busy.

Through the WEPE project networks, Penninah was connected to Stuart and Barbara, a UK-based couple who had lost their son and, when visiting Uganda, sought for an individual or organization looking after orphans to support as a memorial for their son. They particularly wanted to provide health care support for children. On hearing about Penninah's initiative with the 12 children in her care, the couple decided to fund the construction of a home-based clinic and also pay the monthly salary for a nurse.

“We identified a qualified nurse from the village and she is still working and earning salary on a monthly basis since 2018. Stuart and Barbara also send funds for supplies for the clinic every month and I am happy to say that the clinic also serves other children in the village. I attribute this achievement to WEPE because this opportunity came to us after we got organized and focused under the WEPE project”, says Penninah.
A joyous season in Kabale
Joy and William Rwendeire
Joy and William Rwendeire are farmers in Rwenyana village, Rubaya sub county, Kabale. They mainly grow Irish potatoes, beans, peas and sorghum. Their 5 children are all married now. However, they currently live with 2 grandchildren and 2 adopted children. Joy joined Rwenyana Bakyara Twetekatekye Women’s Group in 2014. She confesses that it’s through the programs in this group that she has transformed their lives as a family.

“Through our group, I have been encouraged to save money to start personal initiatives. We were introduced to the WEPE project in our group in 2018. Following the empowerment sessions, I have so far bought 4 sheep and more than 10 chicken. I also make 6 jerricans (about 120 liters) of “bushera” (sorghum malt drink) that I sell every Sunday in the trading centre. These economic empowerment sessions have been very helpful because we now manage our projects better as a family. We harvest between 40-50 bags of Irish potatoes every season. A bag of Irish potatoes (edible) is sold between UGX100,000/= and UGX130,000/= and the one for replanting (seedlings) is sold at UGX160,000/=.

In terms of political empowerment, I have been inspired and am now contesting for the position of representative of the elderly at the LC I in Rwenyana.” Joy Rwendeire

Joy’s husband, William has never been prouder.
Liberated to Lead

Judith Kobusingye
Judith is a peer facilitator, the Secretary of Bushabira Bakyara Kwebesaho Women’s Group, where she has been a member since 2013. Each member of the group members saves a minimum of UGX 2,000/= (2 shares) and maximum of UGX 7,000/= weekly. Members borrow funds from the group at an interest of 5% per month; and every end of year each member is given their savings plus earned interest.

Judith was convinced by the group chairperson to join. “She wanted me to take up some roles and she was confident that I could represent the group well whenever needed; so I joined.

The FOWODE team contacted the group looking for candidates for a Training of Trainers (ToT) in the region, and Judith was nominated as part of the participants for the WEPE project trainings on economic and political empowerment.

“During the training, we were introduced to gender issues and how women can liberate themselves and reduce domestic violence by engaging in entrepreneurship and income generating activities. We also learnt business management skills, project planning and proposal writing. We have now proved that empowered women can participate and contest for political positions, and start & manage personal businesses. After the empowerment, I personally saved money and bought a dairy cow that has since calved and it gives me milk for home use and for sale.

I have helped many women to join our group and benefit from the trainings that we get. I have inspired Clare Kamusiime, who was making baskets and mats but had previously left the group. She has since returned received more training, expanded her market and has made more sales than ever before. I also encouraged our Chairperson’s daughter to return to school. She is now 18 years old and in primary five. She works with her mother and saves money with the group regularly.

The group has also started two money making initiatives together. First, we put up our 5 bicycles for hire at UGX10,000/= per bicycle per month. We hire them to members only, and they use the bicycles to carry out their work. Secondly, we have sewing machines that we also hire out at a rate of UGX 10,000/= per month.

In terms of political empowerment, we have two group members strongly contesting for political positions; Beatrice Tumubwoine is contesting for Women Councilor at LC III and Jane Barikurungi is contesting for the Elderly Representative post at LC III. This is the first time we have ever had leaders in our group running for important positions.
SISTER POWER, REACHING MILESTONES TOGETHER

Enid Andidire
Enid Andidire is the treasurer of Bushabira Bakyara Kwebesaho Women’s Group in Kabale District. The group owns sewing machines received through the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Program (UWEP) grant, 4 years ago. Group members make mats, baskets, and are involved in agriculture, especially growing sorghum and beans. Enid reveals that before the WEPE project started working with their group, members were saving only UGX1,000/=, after the empowerment sessions, they doubled their savings to UGX 2000 per week.

“I have been a trainer since 2019, and I have inspired many women with economic and political empowerment. However, I have also personally benefitted significantly from the knowledge and skills that the project training gave us. As a result, I started buying and selling sorghum. I started this business with UGX1,000,000 in 2018. Today, my equity in this business has grown to UGX2,000,000. In addition, I also stock beans and sell to traders who take them and sell them in Kampala. With this particular business, I started with 50kg from my garden and today I have 500kg worth of stock.

Among the people I have empowered and inspired with my own personal success is Jane Barikurungi, our chairperson. Jane started with less than 50kg of beans and 1 pig. She now has more than 150kg of beans in stock and 2 pigs and she has already started making sales from selling piglets.

Rosette Niwebyona has also put into practice the business management skills we have taught her and as a result of her diligence, she has been able to start building a permanent house out of savings from frying irish potato chips as a snack in the nearby trading centre. Her house is near completion, now left with fitting shutters.

As women we are determined to help each other reach higher and higher.” Enid Andidire
WE DESERVE QUALITY, HEAR OUR VOICE

JUDITH KOBUSINGYE -

KYASAANO HEALTH CENTRE II
Judith is the chairperson of Kyasaano Irish Potato Growers’ Women’s Group in Kamuganguzi sub county, Kabale district. The group was started in 2011 and has 20 members now. The aim of creating the group then was for EACH one OF THE members to save UGX 1,000/= per month and be able to borrow at a low interest rate of 2% per month.

“When the WEPE project was introduced to us, a lot of things started to change. First, we realized that each one of us could start a business and each one of us started an income generating activity. Most of our members weave baskets, mats and table cloths for sale. We decided to increase our monthly saving to UGX5,000/= and up to now we have managed to keep it at that amount. As the group realised we could make and save money, we became bold and gained confidence to lead”.

Judith and the other women admit they had noticed so many unfair things and identified issues to change but they did not believe, women had the ability to address these problems.

“Some of the problems that needed changing were so obvious, yet we were afraid. However, with the project leadership sessions, we gained confidence and have since taken up leadership positions. For example, I am chairperson of Kyasaano parish and now contesting for the women representative role at the sub county”.

Through the WEPE Project the women learnt that they had the right to hold government accountable for effective service delivery.

“We started quarterly monitoring visits at Kyasaano Health Centre II. On our first visit, we met with the In-Charge, Pison Byaruhanga and introduced our objectives. Our monitoring revealed the poor state of the centre. It was very dirty and bushy, had a leaking roof and the nurses were not staying at the hospital yet there were staff houses. We also later found out that the management team of the health centre was coming from another sub county- Katuna town council and were not from our area”.

The Kyasaano Irish Potato Growers’ Women’s Group had always been appalled by the facility but were apathetic and thought not much could be done. The women discovered that they had the right to ensure that government services are delivered, protected and those in charge held accountable.

“After the visit, we presented our findings in a letter to the district authorities, followed it up and continued with our quarterly monitoring visits to health centre.”
The group further learnt later that much as medicines were being delivered, “coartem” (malaria medicine) in particular was scarce and always out of stock, despite it being supplied as one of the priority medicines. Although findings from their subsequent monitoring visits still do not show satisfactory levels of coartem stock, they continue to keep a close eye on the list of medicines supplied and dispensed, which keenness they strongly believe keeps the staff at the health centre in check.

Today the Kyasaano Irish Potato Growers’ Women’s Group leases land to farmers and grows Irish potatoes. Their harvest averages at 25 bags in a good season, with a bag selling at a minimum of UGX 90,000/=.

“We are now very confident people; our group members are looked at as very important people that can be trusted to lead.” Judith Kobusingye

Judith and the group are proud of the results. The Management Team of the health centre was changed and is now composed of 5 members (2 women and 3 men) who are residents of our sub county- (Kamuganguzi), and from Kyasaano parish in particular.

The nurses now stay at the health centre every day - in the staff houses, unlike previously, when they used to drop in and leave at their will, moreover not on a daily basis. The situation had been appalling; patients would come and sleep painfully on the veranda waiting for the medical personnel, with no guarantee that they would be served due to uncertainty of the availability of nurses.

In addition, the district procured 100 iron sheets for the health centre and is awaiting the prevailing COVID-19 crisis to subside to have the roof repaired. In addition, the bush around the health centre was also cleared and is now regularly trimmed.”
RAISING MEN, A NEW DAWN
Milton Tibesigwa
Milton Tibesigwa 60, is a married man, living with his wife in Kamuganguzi subcounty, Kabale district. He was nominated together with 5 others to be trained as male champions by the community members in a meeting at Kamuganguzi subcounty. Milton and his wife are farmers growing Irish potatoes, beans, and sorghum.

“FOWODE invited us for a 3-day training in Namugongo, Wakiso district. They taught us many things including human rights and handling family matters and challenges especially domestic violence - it's causes and possible solutions.

When I returned home, I decided to start by addressing the challenge of alcoholism in my community - having learnt that it was one of the major causes of domestic violence. I have helped many families deal with this issue.

The head teacher of one of our primary schools used to take a lot of “enturire” (local sorghum beer brew) and fight with his wife almost every day. This was not only bad for them, but it was a disgrace to our community because they were meant to be role models for their pupils and so their misconduct was inexcusable. With the skills I got from the training, I was able to intervene and counseled him. He has reduced the alcohol consumption and the fights have completely stopped. Their home is peaceful and the community have started respecting them.

Another case is of a church warden in the community who had the same challenge. It was disgraceful for a church warden to fail to live by example, so I intervened and to date its impressive how his family has greatly improved.

I also realized that there were many things I was not doing right in my own home. I used not to work and take decisions with my wife for the family. Today, just working and taking decisions together improved our love and our home is indeed a nice place to be.” Milton Tibesigwa
THE QUEST FOR SIGNIFICANCE

Constance Akankwasa
Constance Akankwasa is the chairperson of Ahamuhambo Bakyara Kamuganguzi Subcounty, Kabale District. The group is 5 years old now with a membership of 21 individuals who each save a minimum of UGX 2,000/= per month.

According to Constance, the women in the group lived insignificant lives, were unaware of their rights and did not consider their contribution to be valuable.

Women were operating income generating projects but had little knowledge on book keeping and business management. For the first time, Constance and the other women began to understand their own power, importance and ability to make a difference in their community. They learnt about running successful businesses, human rights including children’s rights, which stood out for Constance.

“We learnt that we had rights and our children too. I discovered how to prepare to become a leader, from how I dress and how I speak. I learnt about how to make a manifesto to share my message and plans with voters.

I am now contesting as a woman councilor at the sub county for Kisasa and Buharo parishes. Five other group members are also contesting for different political positions, thanks to the WEPE Project empowerment, namely: Enid Tukamubona for the Finance Secretary role at LC1, Judith Ashaba for chairperson LCII, Lydia Nyamirere as representative of people with disabilities (PWDs) at LC1, and Annet Turyagumanawe, Secretary for women and children affairs at LC1.

The Ahamuhambo Bakyara Twebiseho Group have also improved their earnings. The women make baskets that they sell between UGX 3,000/= and 6000/=. They also grow climbing beans (sugar 31 variety) and sell a kilogram at a minimum of 3,500/=, and have 1 pig and 1 cow.”