

THE OTHER VOICE

It Matters too!



EMBRACING GENDER

A journey towards a just society

By Dr. Patricia K. Litho, Board Chair UMWA

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The struggle for gender equity remains a challenge, calling for more tenacity, determination and a desire for social justice. Collectively we must make the crucial steps towards building a fair, inclusive and harmonious society. It is a long journey, seeing that the Global Gender Gap Report 2022 (World Economic Forums 2022) indicates that gender parity may not be achieved for a further 132 years. Although this represents a slight improvement from the 2021 report that estimated it at 136 years to parity.

While more women have been moving into paid work over the years, with increasing

participation in leadership, professional and education attainment; society doesn't seem fully prepared to receive them as evidenced through policies and workplace environments that remain leaning more towards men's needs over women's requirements.

At its core, gender equality demands that individuals be granted the same rights, opportunities and recognition. It is about empowering women (and other minorities) to participate actively in every sphere of life including the political, economic, social and cultural. Indeed, fostering gender equality is not a favour to be granted but a fundamental human right that should be celebrated and protected.

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More efforts still needed to achieve the women empowerment agenda

By Florence Alaro

For many African Women, the 1995 Beijing Platform of Action and the various International instruments on women rights signed by Uganda, are yet to translate into positive changes in their daily lives. Many women still remain at the bottom of the social hierarchy, with poor access to social resources such as; land, credit, health and education.

In Uganda, despite the positive steps that have been taken to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, the case is not any different. The position most women hold in society is still shaky and

influenced by a number of challenges some of which include; cultural biases that unjustly stall women's career progression in public spaces, lack of academic qualifications and skills (given the already marginalized position of women and training) and low self-esteem.

Empowering women is essential to the health and social development of families, communities and the country. When women are living safe, fulfilled and productive lives, they can reach their full potential, contributing their skills to the workforce and can raise happier and healthier children.

Empowering women is essential to the health and social development of families, communities and the country.

Meanwhile, a recent study by the Economic Policy Research Centre indicated that "in Uganda women and girls spend a lot more hours on unpaid care...Continued on Pg 7



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Unveiling The Other Voice e-paper to promote gender equity



Dear Esteemed Reader,
The Other Voice is now a click away!

UMWA is thrilled to welcome you to this inaugural e-issue of the historical newspaper, The Other Voice (TOV), henceforth re-publishing as an E-paper

with support from the Royal Danish Embassy; to whom we are grateful. This publication has been operated by the Uganda Media Women's Association since 1998. Previously, issues were released based on availability of resources until 2014, when we closed shop. We are excited to be back, this time just a click away online!

Today, we are proud to unveil our groundbreaking digital news site dedicated to championing women's rights, empowerment and gender equality. With a resolute commitment to amplifying women's voices and addressing gender disparities, our platform seeks to spark positive change and inspire a world that celebrates diversity and inclusion. This editorial heralds the birth of a powerful medium for women's equity and showcases the vision and mission that drive us forward.

This inaugural issue is offering coverage on the recent social outburst of DNA testing and the related gendered issues including fueling of domestic and gender based violence. Though sadly, little attention was given to the children caught up in this DNA conflict. Other articles will focus on profiling transformational stories of women, sexual reproductive health and HIV/AIDS mitigations mechanisms and opinion articles amongst others.

For 12 years, Ugandans awakened to a newspaper

pull-out in the New Vision that amplified women's voices. We have reawakened this initiative digitally by highlighting voices of women, Persons with Disability, children, youth and the gender based issues they face, least portrayed by mainstream media.

TOV is an analytical and in-depth news platform that aims at enhancing women visibility through increased coverage of women issues that are largely marginalized by mainstream media. It also targets inclusion of women voices in decision making processes in bid to leaving no one behind, towards gender equality and social justice.

Through a two-monthly based issue, The Other Voice shall publish stories on women and gender topical areas on national topical dialogues; legislative agendas, budgetary allocations, service delivery, public interest agendas, Economic affairs; business, taxation and revenue generation, Gender Based Issues and, transformational stories: Profiling of inspirational transition stories of women.

The Other Voice will maintain its coverage of issues affecting women and other marginalized groups; PWDs, Children and Youth which are otherwise given limited attention by the mainstream media. We shall focus on providing information on development processes necessitated for inclusive social change. These issues include but are not limited to; women voices on national topical discussions to bridge their involvement in decision making processes, gender based violations least shown by mainstream media, transformational stories of women towards empowerment.

Evidently, media in its evolving landscape has persisted with least representation and irresponsible portrayal of women and the associated issues

affecting them. Women are continuously presented in a stereotypical, sexist and passive form through media content.

The establishment of TOV in 1998 was a responsive initiative to the aforementioned gender gaps in media and invisibility of women voices. Twenty-six (26) years later, the 2020 GMMP report reflects that despite marginal improvement in women's visibility. Current statistics indicate that women's visibility in media is just at 24%. Gender gaps of sexism, stereotypes, discriminatory inclusion and gender irresponsible media laws still facilitate these low figures.

... an analytical and in-depth news platform that aims at enhancing women visibility...

Inevitably, new media through digital transformation for the internet, online news and online platforms has created an alternative platform for information consumption and freedom of expression. Digitalization has created boundless space of interconnected interaction and visibility and this is much witnessed on social media platforms in Uganda.

Whereas this is a positive achievement worth celebrating, not many women have socio-economically transformed, the strong gender digital divides still persist. The traditional media gender gaps that The Other Voice sought to redress have now greatly translated in the new media; which have also presented new challenges

In 1995, Uganda was a signatory to an international protocol; The Beijing Platform for Action that through its recommendations, emphasis was put

on the role and need of the state and diverse stakeholders including civil society and media to enhance equal and equitable visibility of women in both mainstream and new media. The protocol urged that this would be a viable mechanism of increasing women participation in decision making processes.

Premised on the above reflections, TOV is relaunching digitally to provide an inclusive and responsive platform to enhance rightful representation of women, limiting issues, the wins of gender equality and equity. Also, to counteract cross-cutting gender gaps that diminish women and their ability to inclusively thrive in development and democratic processes in Uganda.

We look forward to your unconditional support towards our epaper The Other Voice and the issues it seeks to address. Here, we shall focus on a path of enlightenment, education and empowerment. Let us join hands in lifting each other up for a more equitable tomorrow. Together, we can pave the way for a more equitable world, where every one's potential is realized and celebrated and equity reigns supreme.

Margaret Cho, an outstanding women rights activist once stated that, "The power of visibility can never be underestimated". Please leave a comment for UMWA to see that the unseen about women is more visible through each Edition we put out.

Take a deep dive into the stories of this inaugural Issue. THANK YOU

Brenda Namata
Communications and Advocacy Officer,
Uganda Media Women's Association

Management and Governance of Uganda Media Women's Association (UMWA)

Meet the Management and Governance of Uganda Media Women's Association as it re-publishes this historical platform to enhance coverage and visibility of women issues in media.

Re-publication of The Other Voice would never have been possible without the tireless efforts of the Executive Director, Margaret B. Sentamu and the Board chaired by Dr. Patricia K. Litho.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – Margaret B. Sentamu



Margaret B. Sentamu is a Development Communications expert who for the past 20 years has been involved in information and media work aimed at benefiting the majority poor with specific reference to women living in the rural areas. She has worked (as a team leader, or otherwise) on a number of communication strategies, some of which she has designed or managed. Currently, she plays a lead role at Uganda Media Women's Association, UMWA where she oversees the Association's programs and project design, supervising their implementation and the overall delivery. She is one of the brain child of Africa's first women focused radio station Mama FM managed by women.

At the Association, she has coached and mentored over 280 women now working with reputable organizations in Uganda and abroad and also has been a Chairperson of a Lead Agency of a partnership of Women Media Associations in Eastern and Southern Africa, involved in exchange of personnel to appreciate different cultures as well as offering different knowledge and skills



Board Chair: Dr. Patricia K. Litho.



Board Vice Chairperson: Dr. Emilly Comfort Marachto



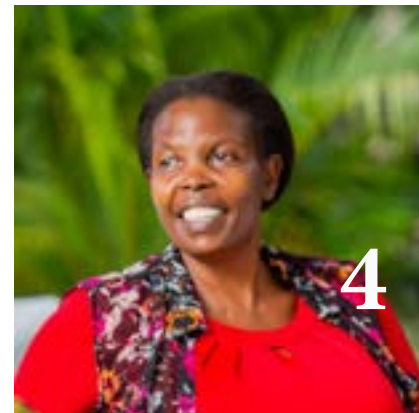
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Could DNA fuel the next Stereotype against women?

By Hedwig Arinaitwe



During a parliament sitting early this month (July), Faith Nakut the Napak Woman representative suggested that the Ministry of Health should act quickly by adding DNA paternity testing to the list of restricted health services.

“We need to protect the men who are committing suicide and also the children who are now being abandoned,” she said.

Whereas this was a solutions-based proposal backed up by all legislators and wider public, social media was already ablaze with stereotyping annotations against women. One of the famous widespread campaigns equally adopted by mainstream media was #Fear women with exemplifications of sexual immorality, extortion and source of all family wrong, of course therein hidden paternity truths.

According to the Uganda Ministry of Internal affairs, since the month of June, there has been a 75% increase in the number of men seeking DNA testing in order to verify the paternity of children in their homes.

At the beginning of the month of July, information from the Ministry revealed that at least 32 men had written to the directorate of citizenship and Immigration Control (DCIC) demanding the cancellation of children's passports after DNA results proved a different biological father.

Amidst the social family crisis unearthed by DNA processes of revealing paternity

statuses, could a new stereotype be fuelled against women? Who is the victim in this? Is it in order to oversee these “truth” centres? Who has to and for victims, where do they run to?

It was once said that the unknown is a calm place for human nature because once it becomes known, what awaits the heart is uncertain. Indeed, for Evelyn (not real names) it was confusion, betrayal,

terror and spite. This and many alike are the stories of heartbroken men and women, like Evelyn with the DNA and its aftermath. For some, it's simply crossed truths that innocently render them under the harsh perceptions of #fear women before the public.

In 2018, Evelyn birthed a baby girl resulting from a two-year love relationship with her boyfriend that now is a painful story to relate. It was unforeseen that the supposed baby daddy would deny paternity of child based on the light skin colour and absence of a mark on the fourth finger as a traditional must have of his clan fathering, on the new born.

This healing mother recalls that the first thing her boyfriend mentioned upon setting his eyes on the baby was, “This baby is very light skinned yet no one in my family is close to this color,” she recalls.

She narrates that the nurse on watch told the man that babies are usually very light at birth, amidst him checking the baby's fingers. Evelyn says that it was at this point that he got upset and started accusing her of sleeping with another man. His reason being that, his clan has a specific mark on the fourth finger, then he blurted out “Musawo can we do a DNA”, he requested.

Evelyn relates that through the outburst of the man, she tried pleading that the

child was rightfully his in vain.

A month later, this mother to one remembers to have been brought to DNA results by her supposed baby father indicating that their daughter was not genetically attached to him.

Evelyn recalls to have been broken. She says that to save her daughter from growing up without her real father, she requested they repeat the test together, but the man threw the papers at her and blocked her everywhere.

It is later that she found out the father of her child had been married for three years, had been trying for a child and his wife was five months pregnant with a baby boy, yet he never ever mentioned any of this to her.

Evelyn strongly affirms that this man was no other but the father to her daughter but because of his deceit, she and daughter were victimized.

The surge in demand for paternity tests according to counsellors has been linked to, growing trust discrepancy and moral decay among couples in the country. It is also strongly emphasized that there are other factors that society does not want to discuss including infertility in couples especially male infertility issues.

According to data released by World Health Organisation this year, the prevalence of infertility among couples ranges between 12.6 and 17.5% worldwide. In Uganda the infertility prevalence is 3% and secondary 35%.

Whereas Infertility and delayed fertility are some of the challenges couples experience today, it is often difficult for males to accept that they could be infertile and need to seek medical help.

Phiona Nanozi Ngoga, a fertility expert and director at RHF Uganda, says that male infertility is a huge contributor to the numerous Negative DNA tests today.

Surge in demand for paternity tests has been linked to, growing trust discrepancy and moral decay among couples

“Infertility is a condition for both the male and female reproductive systems. Most women go out of their marriages trying to find out what the problem could be, and end up having children. With the consequences, there is a lot of heartbreak, not only for the parents but also the children; men need to be more open to seeking fertility help,” she said

Dr. Banex Twesigye of Bethany Women's and Family Hospital was in complete agreement of male infertility, being a factor in the high number of negative DNA cases currently.

“Usually men don't disclose their fertility status and this leaves the woman trying to find answers, there is no shame in men seeking for fertility help and this is where our society has got to do better for the good of the family,” he advised.

The Neglected Victim

Evelyn relates that whereas she suffered emotional pain and shamed, it cannot equate to the isolation her daughter lives in.

“My daughter hasn't received enough of my time and even calls her grandmother mummy. Starting over as a new and single mom was the biggest challenge of my life; when my daughter made a year, I sold the little property and went to Saudi Arabia as a supermarket attendant to fend for my daughter,” she narrates tearfully.

In Uganda DNA testing to determine a child's paternity or maternity is catered for under the Children's Act and Children's Amendment Act, 2015. Whereas this is legally accepted, the wellbeing of the child must be prioritized.

Ibabaza Ambrose Muganga, a lawyer and Mental Health expert says that, parents should prioritise the welfare principle of the child amidst obtaining DNA testing.

“The Welfare principle questions; the child's health, is the child obtaining quality education, clothing and are the child's rights being observed.

Mr. Kenneth Mukama Katendeko, a

family lawyer, argues that a child in a negative DNA case can be identified as a neglected child if the child's welfare is threatened as under the children's Act 2015.

Under the primary Act 2015, such a child is entitled to legal guardianship and as introduced by the amendment, rights to protective services in particular alternative care.

Where do the victims go? Are there regulations?

On July, 5, 2023 the Deputy Speaker of Parliament Thomas Tayebwa while addressing Members of Parliament asked the government to regulate the mushrooming DNA paternity laboratories in the country and initiate counselling services for men who have fallen victim.

“We need the Right Honourable Prime Minister at least you come out and guide the nation on this matter and we see how best we can counsel these people. Maybe if there are regulations around it, but we just don't leave it,” Tayebwa said.

Following many debates on the issue, On July 10, 2023 Uganda Ministry of Health named MBN (private owned) and Government Analytical Laboratory as the only accredited facilities allowed to conduct deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) paternity tests in the country.

Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng while addressing the press said that, the two laboratories are the only ones that have met the requirements of accreditation to conduct the tests whose demand has increased rapidly in the past month, partly because of trust deficit.

While trust deficit seems to flourish among couples, Sandra Sande Agaba, a professional counsellor and lecturer at Cavendish University believes, effective communication and honesty could curb what looks like a new threat to the family unit.

“In all of this pre-counselling should be mandatory even after the testing is done, the couple should undergo preparation. However, couples need to erase gaps for mistrust and strive to unite families”

The Other Voice is issued every after 2 months | Our next issue will be out in November | Visit our Website for more

ARVs advocacy goes online

By Culton Scovia Nakamya

As the number of internet users rises globally, the need to tap into the internet audience especially those using social media platforms is evident for health campaigns towards social transformation.

With an internet penetration rate of 24.6%, reports by Hootsuite indicate that Uganda has 6.7M social media users, with majority as youth.

This increasing online information and communication space has created platform and opportunity for continuous health campaigns like that of HIV/AIDS that have been largely possible in mainstream media, physical gatherings and entertainment; music and drama.

The Uganda Aids Commission, Ministry

of health and the US-supported program PEPFAR, have over the past years used mainstream media to ask people who test positive for HIV to be enrolled on Anti-retrovirals.

In 2017, Uganda launched the presidential first track initiative, a campaign that majorly ran through mainstream media to accelerate, among others, the test and treat program and encouraging people enrolled on ART to ensure drug adherence.

Today, numerous individuals and institutions are using social media platforms to sensitize on the spread and prevention of HIV, Anti-Retroviral drug intake, elimination of stigma and system support.

“Many think it's the end of the world yet a smile can bring a peace of mind when

your viral load is suppressed. Take your ARVs for a better smile,” a message posted by a one Shamirah Nantaba on her twitter account.

The message is a reminder and an alert to those living with HIV on the importance of adhering to their ARVs intake to have their viral load suppressed.

Viral load suppression is the biggest achievement any person living with HIV can accomplish because then, they cannot transfer the virus to any other person. However, viral load suppression is a result of proper adherence to Anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs).

In the recent past, campaign messages like what Nantaba Shamirah posted could only be shared on radios, television, conferences and other enclosed platforms.

This was because of the limited communication space, public stigma around HIV/AIDS conversations and limited knowledge on what the virus/disease was to enable credible information sharing.

Uganda's history on HIV/AIDS prevention reflects that majority of the affected people struggle with recovery because of public and self-stigma, factors that affect adherence to ARVs.

According to Uganda Aids Commission, 1.4M people are living with HIV in Uganda. However only 82% of these are enrolled on ART and only 78% of these have achieved viral load suppression.

Uganda is one of the countries struggling to hit the UNAIDS 95-95-95 target by 2030.

By 2030, It is intended to diagnose 95% of all HIV-positive people, administer ART to 95% of those identified, and ensure 95% of those treated achieve viral suppression.

Activists like Nantaba emphasize that using digital platforms to communicate ARVs adherence is long overdue. She says that digital spaces like social media have a wider reach, personalized use and timeless to message consumption.

However, Nantaba says that this opportunity emerges with challenges like social media trolls which are becoming common and spreading of messages that can easily stigmatize assertive HIV positive individuals online.

Despite the trolls and cyberbullying, campaigns like...Continued on Pg 8

Why Uganda needs a multi sectoral approach in prevention of Sexual Reproductive Health Rights abuse?

By Mariam Namakula

In March 2019, Uganda had a last ditch effort on the sexual reproductive health rights campaigns and actions thrown back to her face. The recording of her first ever Covid-19 case fine-tuned the already worse situation and poised its fair share in disrupting especially the Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) of many young people.

With over 300,000 teenage pregnancies and ranking highest in most parts of the world, the country was left in a dilemma of whether to focus on the pandemic or rethink of strategies that seemed to have nurtured a much worse pandemic.

The total shutdowns, road blocks, curfew even in areas that lagged behind in terms of medical facilities or even supplies would rather be looked up to as pick up lessons in the readily anticipated post season.

However, characterized with the most recent paternity wave, the post Covid-19 era has proved and exposed yet another pandemic in the violation of rights and services around reproductive health.

Despite the fact that there have been numerous programs geared at sensitizing especially the majority young population about their reproductive health, the journey towards unearthing the so many myths around SRHR has remained slumping

but also daring in the country.

Florence Nabukenya the Public Health Ambassador Uganda (PHAU), argues that the greatest challenge thus arises from the lack of access to quality information especially that much

DEFINITION

Sexual Reproductive Health could be defined to include issues among others adolescents health, infertility, prevention and management of unsafe abortion, reproductive health tract infections including STI / HIV/AIDS, reproductive organ cancers however, continued to be redefined to simply spell out family planning, maternal health or even issues to deal with femininity alone.

of it is being churned down via internet where youngest people consume as gospel truth.

With all the misconception thrown around and safe spaces increasingly shrinking down, Nabukenya says there is no room for especially the young people to share or even access credible information from the authentic sources.

Currently Uganda is placed 16th

among the countries with the highest number of teenage pregnancies with over 1000 cases registered daily and the Lango sub-region accounting for 28% while Oyam district taking the lead with over 4,448 cases all together according to a 2021 UNICEF report. The vulnerability especially by the adolescent girls and young women to these circumstances thus explains why most developmental partners and other stakeholders still see it paramount to first solve the gender equity issues rather than starting to take on a collective approach.

Discussions around the need to have a transition however remain pivotal especially that there is need to harness better health for young people through a multi sectoral approach.

Haruna Musa an SRHR Communication Specialist at the Uganda Youth Adolescents Health Forum notes that having partnership remains one of the key things that different stakeholders needed to build, focusing on who does what, in what area and then come together.

According to the specialist, understanding where the problem is, who dubs as the major challenge in the problem and a collective discussion held around the issue to gather comprehensive resolutions and recommendations towards addressing the challenges that young people

face including adolescent girls and young women.

“Having male engaging organizations like the Male Engage Uganda, Male Engage Alliance, Male Engage Africa deliberately establish partnerships with organizations that are more female centered in terms of SRHR and ensure that they work in the same lane,” Musa noted.

Adding that this will bring wealth of expertise in different areas and they will look at how they involve boys in given activities where females are also involved. For Musa, working as isolated agents may prove a lot of work especially that different stakeholders contribute differently for example a parent might easily take on a leadership role in the family while a health worker could come handy in providing health reproductive information but also services to the young people.

The challenge however according to Florence remains access to SRH services especially for those in rural areas as many drug stocks discourage the young people from continuously going to health centers for authentic health care support especially family planning methods.

The situation however is no different from most cultural and religious values and restriction that contemplate on the how and why SRHR continue to be

a priority. A lot of communities are still faced with resistance as many are rooted in their cultural beliefs and values and don't want to adopt new norms and what is needed at the time. “You have seen activities flop in some areas due to the negative attitudes of leaders who are basically male and because they are attached to some culture and have their values,” Musa recalled.

Arguing that there needed to be an inter-generational dialogue were young people interfaced with the other key stakeholders including different leaders of the communities, male and female to discuss these issues together and come up with a solution collectively.

Uganda unlike other countries also faced with a similar challenge is not short of policies to support the key aspects of SRH and if implemented could hold guide in how every stakeholder could become a support system towards the sector.

A follow up strategy or mechanism in that case remains a big issue to see to it that these policies are implemented.

And while there is no specific policy that speaks to men alone about SRHR issues, the debate will always be a universal challenge speaking to the different

sexual reproductive health right challenges only putting the females at the forefront due to the gaps in women empowerment and gender equality.

Policies like the National Policy Guidelines For Sexual Repro-



tive Health Services

2006, thus need to take a center role through sensitization and finding ways of penetrating to the deepest organs even at the grass root levels to create awareness especially that these issues are still appreciated by a few elites.

Worry as more women opt for cesarean births over normal delivery



In 2021, Esther Nakajugo (not real name) a top manager at one of the education institutions in the country, was two weeks away for her exams in public administration and management at Uganda Management Institute.

At the same time, Nakajugo was due for delivery in the same period. She took a bold decision and asked her gynecologists at Nsambya Hospital to opt for cesarean section to avoid collusion with

her examination time table. Upon examination, this was done, one week away.

“I weighed in and realized it's the only option I had. It's hard to be a mother and at the same time a student. My worry was missing exams and then prolonging my graduation period. Both academics and motherhood were demanding, but at least I managed to succeed,” relates Nakajugo.

Nakajugo had one week of

nursing the baby and the cesarean wounds and later, happily walked the examination room. She would go with her baby and leave her in the car parking with a nanny as she wrote her papers.

“It was quite discomfoting. If I knew what it takes, I should've made a different decision. My concentration span was low. I kept thinking about my baby, whether she is safe, crying and lots of other things. The cesarean wounds were discomfoting. You have to be extra careful not to hurt yourself”. She narrates.

Joselyne Nalujja a senior midwife at Jinja regional referral hospital says there is an increase in elective cesarean delivery. Elective cesarean is a delivery option upon the request of the expectant mother. Elective means it is planned before the mother goes into labor.

The practice is most common in western countries. In Australia for example, according to the Australian department of health

The annual health sector performance report further indicates that Uganda registered **1,226 maternal deaths**, which translates into 85/100,000 live births

and aged care, 3 out of every 5 births are elective.

Reports from different major facilities indicate that the practice is steadily growing in Uganda, especially from working class women and students.

The annual health sector performance report 2020/21, indicates an increase in health facility deliveries, from 62% in 2019/20 to 64% in 2020/21 financial years.

This increase does not leave out an increase in cesarean deliveries. Whereas the health sector report does not clearly state the ratio of normal and cesarean deliveries, it notes an increment in the delivery services especially at health centre IV facilities.

According to the report, Rwekubo health centre IV in Isingiro registered the highest number of cesarean deliveries with 1,555. St. Paul Health Centre IV Kasese followed with 1,450, Kyangwali HCIV in Kikuube with 947, Midigo HCIV in Yumbe registered 886.

In Kampala, Kisenyi Health Centre IV registered 885 and Kawoola had 781.

Ordinarily, cesarean deliveries are done from the 39th week of pregnancy onwards, many times after a recommendation of a midwife or gynecologist upon examination and conclusion that the expectant mother might not achieve a safe normal delivery.

Some underlying causes include high blood pressure, diabetes, HIV, fibroids, placenta preavia, abnormal position of the baby (breech position or feet first) and the midwife fails in positioning them rightly. Other underlying medical conditions are infections that can be passed onto the baby

By Culton Scovia Nakamya

among others. Cesarean deliveries are aimed at saving both the lives of the mother and the baby.

Nalujja says the option is risky due to anesthetic complications no wonder, all mothers who opt for elective delivery are counseled before approval.

“We always tell them this is not the best mode of delivery because there are no underlying factors. But because they have a right to participate in decision making of medical care, they deserve a chance to be listened to and that why their choices get approval”. Says Nalujja.

Emmanuel Ssendikwanawa a medical researcher says the risk of getting complications with elective delivery is higher and some of them can lead to death like hemorrhage.

Reports from the ministry of health indicate that Hemorrhage is the leading cause of death among women in Uganda at 42%. It is a...

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From human medicine to hair care: Meet Nakayiza a professional nurse turned cosmetic chemist

By Hedwig Arinaitwe

Many people envision career and development through the lens of blue-collared work practices like medicine, engineering, accounting, teaching, journalism and others. Skill based practices among which cosmetology are last opted for by majority because of low perceptions as informal, for least educated and 'side' income generation. And interestingly, trades like hair care are categorized as feminine and attributing saloon growth to women-led entrepreneurship.

According to a report published by the World Bank Gender Data Portal 2022, the global labour force participation rate for women is just over 50% compared to 80% for men. The report reveals that women are less likely to work in formal employment and have fewer opportunities for business expansion or career progression.

However, the Forbes Magazine 2021, observes that women fail to flourish in these businesses because of limited start capital and funding, stiff market force competition and low resilience.

The challenges and diverse perceptions around skills based and business practices are lived realities for many women. Meet Nakayiza Safina Sofi Buwembo who not only discovered hair care as a delayed dream but also glowing many whose hair has her product touch.

Who is Nakayiza?

My name is Nakayiza Safina Sofi Buwembo, the founder of Pzazrio, a hair product business. I'm childfree by choice, first born daughter, and a professional nurse who quit nursing to focus on my passion for creating things in this case, formulating and growing a hair product business.

What inspired you to pursue this particular line of business?

In 2015 when I took the big chop, I struggled with managing my hair. Also, while growing up in a society that enforces haircuts, hair among as a girl was stereotyped as a distraction and hard management. This was worsened by difficulty

in finding products that worked well for me especially from large brands. This background made me realize that there was a vacuum with natural



hair care thus my business venture.

When did you start?

After evaluating the business gap, I made it my mission to formulate products according to hair porosity that would ease this anxiety. I started working on this dream in 2020 by reaching out to a graphic designer to design a logo and create a brand book. Then I began looking for suppliers on Alibaba after reading about what the best plant derived ingredients were for people with kinky hair. This was very challenging because the minimum order quantities are high but everything came

together with time.

What makes your products stand out?

My products are strongly rooted in African culture; I particularly use Luganda for my product naming. Secondly, the products really do stand out because of the gold and black packaging. It's elegant and different! These products are infused with plant extracts wonderful in hair care and amazing quarteniums like honey which are softening and conditioning agents. These products were made with kinky hair in mind!

What challenges have you faced in trying to achieve your dreams as a business owner?

It's been a struggle juggling taking care of my siblings and starting a business because as a firstborn, I am more of an assistant parent and expected to raise funds to help where there is a challenge. Uganda Revenue Authority is also unforgiving—they charged me over UGX 150,000 in taxes for every litre of a very important ingredient called radish oil that I needed for one of my

products. This was very challenging for a person importing in minimum order quantities.

It's very disheartening and demoralising for people starting out like myself. The high taxation of such an ingredient hikes the price of the end product which can discourage customers.

What has been your biggest achievement so far?

My biggest achievement has been finding other women to work with especially outside these borders. I was over joyed when; I sent a book order to Dar es Salam recently. It brings me so much joy to be able to share my products and business development journey with so many people, and transform how they view their hair because our hair is gorgeous and finding products that work shouldn't be a struggle.

How has your business impacted women's lives?

There are women who are stocking these products in their salons bringing in revenue from satisfied natural hair clientele and

thus putting food on the table. Other women long to have healthy easy to manage hair whether it's relaxed or natural and these products are satisfactory.

What is your give away secret?

Focus, resilience, and people with disposable income who greatly helped me bring this dream to life. I wouldn't have accomplished this without this and so many women's dreams remain unrealized because they have no access to the capital they require.

How can women break the barriers and take the front row seat in business?

With access to capital, women can do almost anything they put their minds to. It's challenging to save enough capital to launch a brand. Women need access to capital. Working with women and being able to share knowledge is one way to inspire women into thriving business.

What keeps you going?

I come from a long line of go getter women who largely pushed the barriers to succeed. I believe with access and ability; the sky is the limit for any of us.

Embracing gender: a journey towards a just society

One of the most pressing issues in this battle for gender equality is the persistent gender wide gap. It is a sad reality that, in many societies, women continue to earn less than their male counter parts for the same work. Bridging this gap isn't necessarily about economic justice but also about creating an environment in which individuals are recognized and rewarded based on their skills not their gender.

The fight for gender equality extends to challenging traditional gender roles and stereotypes. For centuries, societies have prescribed rigid norms that dictates

what women and men can and cannot do. Breaking from these shackles requires collective efforts to dismantle the toxic belief that certain professions or qualities are inherently gender specific. It is essential to foster an environment where both men and women can explore their interests and passions freely without fear of judgement or ridicule.

Promoting gender equality is not an isolated endeavour, it is intimately connected to other social issues such as education, healthcare, and violence against women. Access to quality education is a powerful tool in empowering

women to reach their full potential and contribute significantly to society. Additionally, ensuring accessible healthcare for all, with particular focus on reproductive health, is a critical component of gender equality. Likewise, addressing violence against women and providing a safe environment for all is an indispensable aspect of building an equitable society.

The media as a powerful influencer of societal norms, bears substantial responsibility in the quest for gender equality. The representation of women in media should move

beyond stereotypes and objectification, portraying them as strong, independent, and multifaceted individuals. By doing so, the media can play a transformative role in shaping attitudes and promoting gender inclusivity.

Achieving gender equality demands the active involvement of governments, civil society, businesses, and individuals. Legislation that upholds gender equality should be enacted and enforced rigorously. However, legal measures alone are insufficient. It requires collective efforts on challenging discriminatory

attitudes and behaviors, promoting diversity and inclusion and fostering a culture of respect and empathy.

Education plays a central role in the fight for gender equality. Schools and educational institutions should teach children from an early age about the importance of gender equality and challenge harmful stereotypes. Moreover, educational curricula should be revised to include the achievements and contributions of women in history, science, arts and other fields.

In conclusion, gender equality is not an utopian

concept, it is an achievable reality that lies within our grasp. By dismantling barriers and fostering inclusivity, we can pave the way towards a just society, where every individual, regardless of gender, can flourish and contribute meaningfully. Embracing gender equality is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic move towards a more prosperous and harmonious future. Let us join hands and embark on this journey together, with compassion and determination, for a world where gender equality is celebrated and upheld as a cornerstone of progress.

Tales from the field



Many times we miss the story especially when we don't reach out to the person we are reporting about and whose voice we intend to amplify. Getting the story right may require us to prepare, do research, plan the time and period with our targeted audience.

The number of young mothers has tremendously increased of late in Kyegegwa District, many of them came from distant districts in

search of fields to work on, and you can imagine the stories they will eagerly share with you. During the season time they toil to dig the land expecting to gain. But how much do they go through before the harvest? As media we ask ourselves, do they really gain? Do they make their own decisions to sell, do they even know about the right markets? Do they have access to the right customer, or do they end up in tears after the harvest?

LESSON

As media women, we still need to do a lot more to assist families with important information regarding health, finances etc. that will improve their social wellbeing in their communities and marriages.

In response to the above questions a few months ago, I happened to meet Mama Charity in the garden during harvest time. Mama Charity is a young mother of about 17 years. She had been blessed with a baby girl whom she got by caesarian. She dropped out of school while she was in primary five due to lack of school fees. She later got engaged with a young man and they started a new life. The young man was also a school dropout and still living at his parents'

home.

"The work became too much for me because I had to look after the entire family as young as I was. Taking on the house chores became too exhausting and yet I had to prepare the land for the coming season", she narrates. "I wondered whether I could ably handle the responsibilities" she lamented. On whether men do help their wives during such conditions, Mama Charity said, "it is true some men help their wives but others don't because that is what they have seen since they were born. Men are used to being served all the time," On whether she harvested and sold her produces, she said that most men take the responsibilities at harvest time and some will spend the money on alcohol. "We are still young to decide," she commented!

And whether she has aired such views on any media, she was just overwhelmed to have narrated her story with

the person from the media for the first time. "For us we listen to the radio and that is all, we don't even know how it operates." She said.

Sometimes I wish I could make some decisions or have a say when it comes to the finances at home. See I and my husband work together many times but some other times I go in the field without him. Charity recently lost her baby because she couldn't access medication. They had realized that they had got pregnant again so soon and as if the situation had not settled in their hearts, they realized they were losing the child. She couldn't get to hospital because the husband thought that she would pull through it and besides they had no money on them because the man had lost all of it in one of his gambling schemes. She had not got enough time to learn about family planning. And so she had little

knowledge about what to do while still breast feeding. The husband was on many occasions on the run having made several foes whom he now owed money. It's a miracle that she survived the ordeal and is now able to continue with her work in the field, the only thing she know how to do well.

As media women, we still need to do a lot more to assist families with important information regarding health, finances among other area which will improve their social wellbeing in their communities and marriages. The question remains whether we can reach every corner, how we can create awareness on different issues which affect our societies. Can we bring all the sectors on board? Is there a way we can network with the entire communities in Uganda?

Worry as more women opt for cesarean births over normal delivery

Continued from Pg 4

condition where the mother bleeds to death due to delivery complications. Some are normal while others are due to cesarean complications.

Ssendikwanawa says the period of recovery for normal delivery is much quicker and safer than cesarean, urging women to accept and revise their decisions until doctors advise otherwise.

"So many infections can be avoided with normal delivery. It might give them convenience now but it's risky at a later stage. Women

need to let cesarean deliveries happen only if the doctor or midwife says so," he said.

Reports from the ministry of health indicate that maternal mortality increased at higher levels of care than lower facilities in the 2021/2022 financial year.

The annual health sector performance report further indicates that Uganda registered 1,226 maternal deaths, which translates into 85/100,000 live births.

Referrals and large private but not for profit facilities recorded 566 cases (46%), General hospitals registered 387 deaths (32%), Health Centre IV's recorded 183 (15%), Health Centre III's 61(5%), and health Centre II's 26 (2%).

927 deaths were reviewed and 42% were attributed to hemorrhage (excessive bleeding both during normal and cesarean deliveries), 15% were due to hypertension and 13% were not assigned a cause.

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Why Ugandans should embrace the DNA technology



The recent months have been a social outburst of testing paternity statuses of children by majority of the men through the DNA process. Amidst the increasing practice, many have been victim to negative results to children they biologically identified as their own.

This has led to social pressure and a mixture of feelings among Ugandans on whether DNA is something many should opt for. Through social media expressions, a number of people think it is simply a truth that none should seek and if they must, the traditional culture of paternity testing on children is something to highly preserve.

Sarah Sunday, a traditional midwife who has practiced the profession for close to 15 years describes the African DNA testing as being the most intense and uncertain.

During the testing process, Sunday says children who would undergo the procedure upon birth were subjected to numerous rituals which would leave some children in fright and their mothers in so much fear and distress.

According to Sunday, in Buganda tradition, the Lugave clan was responsible for these duties, “a basket was weaved in less than a day, smeared with ghee and poured in water. The umbilical code of the child would then be dipped in the basket and when the code remained down it meant that the baby did not belong there but when it floated it was pure celebration and joy.”

However, Dr. Ronald Mukiibi, a research fellow in Aquaculture and Genomics notes that the African traditional methods were rather inaccurate to solve paternity doubts.

The inaccuracy, he said has for many years placed a burden on the African women to prove the identity of their children but

also individually deal with the trauma that comes with it.

Dr. Mukiibi notes that with the adaptation of DNA as a new technology, there is opportunity of a highly precise method for establishing biological relationships between individuals.

The accuracy therefore is very useful to objectively settle disputes where paternity of child is contested or doubted and in circumstances of establishing maternity when children interchange happens.

Similarly, genetic identification helps to establish the genetic background of partially heritable diseases such as cancer and fully heritable diseases such as sickle cell, conditions that can be medically handled before worse.

Whereas there is need to welcome the DNA process as a truth search, recent outcry on high negative results from the testing raises debate and urgency of credibility and authenticity of medical facilities that provide the results.

The preliminary Data review by the ministry of health, indicated that seven out of the ten paternity that sought DNA testing turned out to be positive biological relationships while only three of the ten were negative confirming to the grounds of dispute. This were done in the two accredited facilities by the Ministry of health

Earlier on, the deputy Speaker of parliament Thomas Tayebwa had also shown concern on the mushrooming laboratories requesting Uganda’s Premier Robinah Nabbanja to come up with guidelines but also regulations regarding the matter.

The Ministry of Health recently approved two laboratories to carry out paternity testing. These are; Government Analytical Laboratory and MBN Clinical Laboratories and has since added the Uganda Police Forensic Laboratory.

By Mariam Namakula

Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng, the Minister of Health told Parliament that the two approved laboratories had that met the required standards and will be responsible for carrying out all paternity DNA testing.

The decision was to limit the number of authorized laboratories and ensure proper oversight and control over the DNA testing process as earlier requested by the Deputy Speaker in one of the settings.

“Any laboratory that is prepared and wants to carry out DNA paternity testing can apply to the Director General of Health Services,” she said.

Dr. Aceng emphasized governments commitment to safeguarding the integrity and accuracy of DNA testing in Uganda and their willingness to track down any unauthorized DNA testing facilities operating in the country and take appropriate action against them.

Experts state that without proper handling including highlighting the possible psychological/emotional consequences of DNA testing, the process risks causing feelings of rejection, low self-esteem and identity confusion for the child in question.

The issues concerning emotional distress could also be easily dealt with by engaging multi-disciplinary leaders including among others the religious leaders, elders, cultural and community leaders to give guidance on the matter at hand.

This according to Dr. Allan Newton, Icon Medical Center is in addition to the pre and post counseling always provided by professional and approved facilities who prepare the parents on how to handle the information but also disseminate it.

The burden however remains in the legislation where the current law does not protect any aggrieved party/or victim.

According to Counsel Nicholas Agaba, President Mavin Health Focus Initiative Limited, revealed at the moment, the Country needs a resource to explore on identifying rights, remedies and basically not on whether or not to do DNA but rather on the question of how.

Agaba adds that as a matter of fact any recognized facility is presumably professional enough to produce correct results

EMPOWERMENT

More efforts still needed to achieve the women empowerment agenda Continued from Page 1

work, twice as much time as men and boys.”

This disproportion entrenches social gender norms that continue to disempower and impede them from gaining quality employment. Unpaid work absorbs a lot of women’s time and energy, reducing their competitiveness in the labor market. Consequently, women are more inclined to accept lower income and insecure jobs, often in the informal sector.

However, placing the women’s agenda at the forefront of budgeting and planning service delivery points, may effectively tackle the cycle of women’s economic disempowerment. Provision of government assisted low interest schemes, will help them in the informal sector to boost their businesses.

As women will be required to repay these loans, this will encourage hard work, as well as provide capital options for businesses that would otherwise need to close due to lack of funds.

Also on the agenda, publicly provide accessible alternatives to ensure that women can thrive sustainably, market funding initiatives, affordable health care access for women working in markets and better access to health services would allow women to focus on earning a living thereby, cutting the amount of time spent queuing to access medication. All these measures will enable Uganda to work towards achieving Agenda 2030 and ensuring that no one is left behind.

.....
unless proven otherwise.

Therefore, the only way any one can challenge results is by going to court for alternative orders of which even the grounds are not identifiable

One would however argue that DNA much as a child could be a victim, it’s also done to their true parentage, that doesn’t in the circumstances rule out the fact that a child may not be interested in such an exercise and therefore is coerced into the same, he noted.

Adding, we have seen children being thrown on streets after DNA results show they belong to some unknown families, but question is! Whose fault and who should pay for that? Is it a child? Of course not. so law to create a safe landing for such scenarios too.

Despite the gaps emerging with this popularized practice of DNA testing, Ugandans need to embrace it as a technological credible means to genetic truth. The inevitable demand should however persistent on the process, who conducts it and protection of the victims who are largely children.

Engendering newsrooms: Insights into change stories of beneficiaries

By Babirekere Clothilda

Engendering media to achieve equal and sensitive representation of women has been an effort of various interventions from Uganda Media Women's Association, UMWA. This has included; awareness creation, media monitoring to identify gender gaps, advocacy, capacity strengthening of media on gender issues, mentorships and networking.

These efforts have indeed amounted to improvement in women visibility despite the marginal and slow actualization. The 2020 GMMP report indicates

that women visibility has increased to 24% with women as news sources and subjects from 17% in 2010.

The 7% rate is among which, strongly attributed to improved reporting of media with gender sensitivity and responsiveness. The realized skills and change are a result of training sessions that UMWA persistently and consistently empowers journalists with.

In partnership with the Royal Danish Embassy RDE, UMWA is within this year, strengthening capacity of 210 journalists on gender sensitive reporting from

districts of; Kampala, Mbarara, Hoima, Tororo, Masaka, Kitgum and Masindi.

This one-year project, Media for Gender Equality and Socio Justice: Leaving No One Behind is to improve the portrayal of women in politics, and women at large through promoting gender responsive reporting and contributing to the elimination of stereotypes.

As one of the project's output; "Increased knowledge and skills in gender responsive reporting among the target media practitioners", the project is working with media personnel:

practitioners, owners and managers to enhance the capacity of 210 media practitioners from

50 media houses, from the (7) focus districts.

UMWA has so far conducted trainings for 120 media practitioners, in four (4) districts (Masaka, Tororo, Kitgum and Kampala). The objective of the training is to equip the media



Courtesy Photo

practitioners with knowledge and skills in Gender Sensitive Reporting.

Therefore, through this category, we shine insight into beneficiaries' experiences and change stories realized from the capacity building UMWA extends on gender and media across the seven focus districts.

Also, experiences of other beneficiaries from the different programming of UMWA and its activities shall be shared too.

Gender sensitive training shaped my reporting on women as a male journalist

By Babirekere Clothilda

Meet Kabali Paul, a Media Practitioner/News Anchor from Mama FM 101.7, presenter of a 'Health programme', and a part time media monitoring personnel, now gender champion.

Kabali reflects that before attending the training for gender media monitors, he did not take reporting responsibly a responsibility for all practicing journalists.

Gender media monitoring in simple terms is research, which is conducted for purposes of generating information and adding on what others have done before.

"My previous reporting entailed collecting field stories only. Today I have gained skills to fairly and equitably report on men and women. During the monitoring exercise, I realised that media generally reports favourably on men and poorly on women and deliberately stereotyped by media, yet reporting responsibly, requires facts, and confirming the statements with figures, hence the need for media monitoring" says Kabali.

He adds that he has evolved from a journalist aiming at beating the editor's deadline,

to a Gender Sensitive Media Monitoring Champion, who is aware that effective reporting requires conducting research for authenticity.

Kabali states that as a Gender Media Monitor Champion, he participated in the exercise for updating and aligning the monitoring tools; including the monitoring guide, and coding sheet with the variables to be monitored while implementing UMWA's Media for Gender Equality and Social Justice Project between 2018-2022.

"I also participated in the pretesting of the monitoring guide. Media Monitors need

facts and figures, which I ably get by collecting and analysing data in a systematic manner. Being part of the monitoring team requires me to put apportion some time to the exercise where I sit quietly and concentrate on the coding exercise for accurate and reliable results. The exercise requires me to look backwards and in front to get background information and the current status" he further shares.

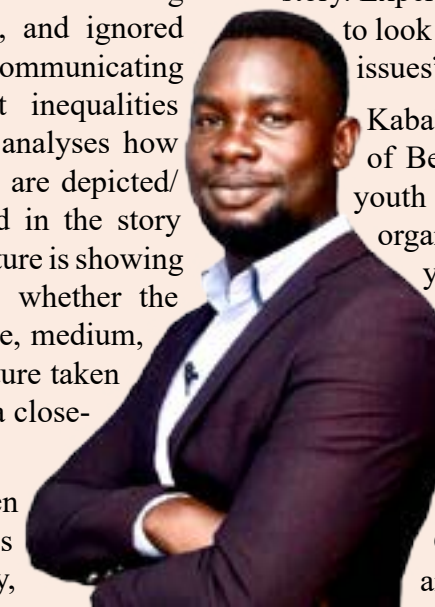
As a Gender Media Monitoring Ambassador in UMWA, Kabali starts by establishing facts to monitor, including the representation

or misrepresentation of men and women. He analyses the smallest details, not part of the coding sheet requirements, and ignored by reporters, yet communicating very loudly about inequalities in media. He also analyses how the pictures/images are depicted/portrayed or placed in the story and whether the picture is showing a different person, whether the picture passport size, medium, or large? Is the picture taken from a distance or a close-up picture?

"I had never taken interest in this analysis. Today, I use gender lenses to

understand, interpret and relate the prominence/implications to the story. Experience has taught me to look for the non-obvious issues" he says.

Kabali is also a founder of Better man Project, a youth centred community organization focusing on youth empowerment programs with emphasis on Livelihoods & Skills Development and Behaviour Change Communication among others.



Kabali Paul

ARVs advocacy goes online

Continued from Page 3

Nantaba's are paying off. More social media users are gaining confidence to disclose their HIV statuses and carry forward positive messages encouraging others to adhere to medication and eliminate spread.

"Imagine, had I given up on my dream

profession, I wouldn't be here today. HIV has nothing on you, you can do anything you set your mind to. Dreams do come true". Ruth Elizabeth Namutebi through her twitter account equally posted, a message of encouragement that once drugs are adhered to, all dreams can come true.

Another social media user Samie Kimberly posted "do not stop taking your ARVs because you will experience side effects like nausea, anemia, skin rash and others".

Elizabeth Kintu an HIV activist says the use of social media to spread a message of adherence to ARVs is a great success

because more people are getting online.

"We have to find people where they are. We have to use what they enjoy so we can best reach out. People now consume information more using their smart phones than mainstream media channels, this is a plus to the HIV advocacy," says Kintu.

I deliberately ensure women voices in my Stories-News Editor, Liberty FM

By Babirekere Clothilda

Meet Byamukama Patrick, a News Editor with Liberty FM in Hoima district who attests to enhancing women voices in his stories and diverse media work. After ten years of considering 'powerful' sources in society regardless of gender, Byamukama recognizes that majority of which were male thus gender imbalanced reporting.

"I had worked with the media for over

ten years before getting an opportunity to participate in UMWA's training sessions on gender sensitive reporting. Previously, I'd source comments from those



Byamukama Patrick

people who are fast and important in society, usually the men and key persons in government (Civil servants, the Police, Members of Parliament, and Local Council Five Chairpersons). This has changed after participating in the UMWA/DGF training sessions. Today I deliberately ensure that my stories include women's voices, and people living with disabilities. It does not matter if they are slow, because I learnt to be

patient and appreciate their socialisation process. After the training, I now report including women's voices and other marginalized groups to ensure they are heard. I also plan to prioritize women issues in News and programs" recalls Byamukama.

The Liberty FM News Editor reveals that a number of products have changed for women politicians in his media house, especially during this electoral period that is digital based.

He says that Liberty FM has subsidized the women politicians' fees. The DJ mentions and announcements, which used to cost between UGX 25,000 - UGX 15,000 cost UGX 10,000, and the radio has encouraged women politicians to participate in political meetings, rallies and dialogues. These are pre-recorded and aired out on Liberty radio. The station's performance and revenue has improved, and the number of

announcements has improved by about (60%), who are mostly women candidates.

Byamukama applauded the efforts of UMWA that through its strategic engagements with the media and women politicians in Hoima district, it has contributed to building self-confidence among the women leaders and strengthened the relationship between women leaders and the media.

"More women contested for various leadership positions. They have also started to use other platforms other than the radio talk shows to reach their communities. I have seen Many women politicians who were not initially on social media are now using Facebook to campaign. I also received phone calls from some ten women politicians requesting for media coverage, which was not the case before. I request UMWA to continue with the commendable work they are doing since change of attitude/mindset requires time and persistent" said Byamukama.