

THE OTHER VOICE

It Matters too!



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Women in Media Symposium 2024

Breaking Barriers Towards Accelerating Women's Progress

“Hold a vision that speaks transformation of society” - Hon. Dr. Miria Matembe

The Women in Media 2024 Symposium held on Friday, March 22nd at Hotel Africana, was a fun powered day! It brought together women journalists and communications professionals to celebrate, reflect and collectively generate progressive strategies for their socio-economic growth in this women's month.

The Women's month, March, is an annual declared month that

highlights the often-overlooked needs, and contributions of women; and celebrates the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. It marks a call to action for accelerating gender equality. The global theme is Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress, to which the symposium objectives aligned to.

Under the theme of Women rising: include, invest and empower, the event attracted over

100 women in media to engaging panel discussions, speeches and awards ceremony recognizing outstanding female contributors to women representation in media.

The Keynote Speaker Hon. Dr. Miria Matembe reminded women journalists that they needed to hold a vision that spoke transformation of society that included them too. She emphasized that when a country like Uganda has improved in all its development areas, then

it means there are created opportunities for empowerment and representation of women.

Women constitute majority of the population in Uganda at 51% compared to men and yet continue as the most marginalized group in terms of productive work skilling, access, ownership, utilization of resources, representation and overall safety. This worsens among women journalists that encounter discriminatory payment and duty allocation, harsh working conditions.

Dr. Patricia Litho, the Board Chair UMWA stated that it is not enough for women journalists to simply source and disseminate news. “I wonder if women in media ever ...Continued on Pg 5

Among awardees at the Women in Media Symposium 2024



Dr. Patricia Kevin Litho, PhD
 Life time Achievement



Barbara Among
 For consistently mentoring and unreservedly sharing the much-needed resources with journalists



Jennifer Kalule Musamba
 For Outstanding Performance in Public Relations and Broadcasting. Given UNEB a Human Face



Diana Kibuuka
 For being Consistent and Deliberate in Amplifying Issues of the Environment Protection and Management



Emily Comfort Marachto, PhD
 Outstanding Contribution to Academia and Leadership at the Department of Journalism, Uganda Christian University



Clothilda Babirekere
 Gender Specialist UMWA. Longest serving Staff

All Previous Board Members of UMWA were also awarded

ROAD TO GENDER EQUALITY: UNFINISHED BUSINESS IN MEDIA



Margaret B. Ssentamu
Executive Director

Dear Esteemed Reader,

Welcome to another Edition of TOV!

With the gracious support of the Royal Danish Embassy, we are delighted to present to you the fourth edition of The Other Voice (TOV) E-paper, marking the conclusion of our year-long project, “Leaving No One Behind: Media for Gender Equality and Social Justice.” Over the course of March 2023 to March 2024, TOV has stood as a beacon of progressive journalism, amplifying the voices that are often relegated to the sidelines.

Throughout this journey, our reporting has traversed the landscapes of Kampala, the Acholi region, and Western Uganda, with a dedicated focus on the narratives of those often marginalized: women, persons with disabilities,

and children. TOV has served as an analytical and in-depth news publication, committed to increasing the visibility of women’s issues typically overshadowed by mainstream media. Our mission extends beyond mere coverage; we strive to foster inclusivity, ensuring that the voices of women are integral to decision-making processes, thereby advancing the cause of gender equality and social justice.

Among the many touching stories, we’ve had the privilege to share is that of Allen Katushabe, a survivor of domestic violence who lost her left arm to the brutality inflicted by her husband. Katushabe’s ordeal is tragically not an isolated incident, as evidenced by the 17,698 reported cases of domestic violence in the 2022 Annual Police Crime Report. Despite legislative efforts such as the 2010 Domestic Violence Act, countless women and children continue to endure unspeakable suffering at the hands of their abusers, underscoring the urgent need for societal change. Through TOV, we aim to shed light on these gender-based atrocities, providing

a platform for the voices of survivors like Katushabe.

In addition to stories of resilience and empowerment, this edition of The Other Voice delves into various activities undertaken by UMWA

Beyond the riveting stories and insightful analyses presented in this edition and the previous, lies a crucial question of sustainability for this instrumental platform.

as part of the supported project. This project aimed at improving the portrayal of women in politics, and women at large through promoting gender responsive reporting and contributing to elimination of stereotypes in Uganda by December 2023.

From empowering women leaders in media utilization to training journalists in gender-sensitive reporting, UMWA has been at the forefront of effecting tangible change in Kampala, Hoima, Masindi, Tororo, Masaka, Kitgum and Mbarara. Our endeavors included monitoring media for gender responsiveness, conducting gender analysis of legislative proposals,

engaging relevant parliamentary committees to address identified gender gaps, training women leaders on effective use of media and training of journalists on gender sensitive reporting. This was in addition to increasing women voices on women focused media; Mama FM and the Other Voice.

Dear reader, the Women in Media Symposium 2024 is a key highlight not missed in this Edition! Under the theme Women Rising: Include, Invest, Empower, the event was held on March 7th at Hotel Africana. It attracted over 100 women in media to celebrate, reflect and strategize on practical solutions towards improving their capacities in media practice at socio-economic levels. It was climaxed with an awards ceremony recognizing exceptional women in media development.

Through these concerted efforts, UMWA has made significant strides in improving the representation and visibility of women in media and decision-making processes. We invite you to immerse yourself in the stories presented in this edition, each offering a glimpse into the resilience, determination, and unwavering spirit of those striving for a more just and equitable society.

Beyond the riveting stories and insightful analyses presented in this edition and the previous, lies a crucial question of sustainability for this instrumental platform. We implore you to consider extending your support towards the continuity of our online women’s paper as a testament to your commitment to fostering a media landscape that champions gender equality and fairness. Together, let us pave the way for a future where women’s voices are not just heard but celebrated, and where media serves as a powerful agent of positive social change.

Thank you for journeying with us through your continued support and readership.

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CAPTION: UMWA engagement with media managers, editors, civil society and development actors on Gender-responsive media

LOSING HER LEFT HAND TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Terror from Katushabe's marriage

By Catherine Namugerwa

After years of abuse, 36-year-old Allen Katushabe's husband abandoned her with their children. At the time, she was pregnant with their youngest child, who is now six months old. The mother of three – a resident of Kisaamabare Cell, Mbaare Sub-county in Isingiro District – is a survivor of domestic violence. She's nursing wounds after her husband injured her and their baby in a domestic brawl in which she also lost her left hand.

After her husband abandoned them, Katushabe struggled to take care of her children as a single mother. One day, her husband came back home and started from where he had stopped with his habit of abuse.

"When he came back home, he started by asking for food, which he had not provided. I told him that we have no food and ever since he left home, we have been surviving on [hand-outs from neighbors] and other good Samaritans in the village," says Katushabe.

Katushabe narrates that this is when he started beating her up. Her children were not spared.

"After beating the children he took them outside then he came back for me with a panga and he started beating me as I was carrying my six-month-baby. I could not help myself; he cut off my right hand with a panga and after injuring me and the baby with severe cuts, he ran away thinking that I had died," Katushabe shares.

She says her husband had abandoned her and their children for almost a year and even after injuring her he disappeared. She was taken to hospital by neighbours.

NUMBERS

17,664 domestic violence cases were registered IN 2020, up by 29% from 13,693 cases in 2019.

Annual Police Crime Report 2020

We found Katushabe bed ridden at Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital where she is admitted with her six-month baby. She tearfully narrated her fears about facing life as a single mother with one hand, yet she was struggling even before the incident.

Katushabe, who is currently admitted at Mbarara

Regional Referral Hospital surgical ward with her six-month-old baby, survived with deep cuts on the head and lost her left hand.

"I can't imagine [life as a disabled single mother];



CAPTION: Allen Katushabe in hospital receiving treatment

previously I would dig for people and get food to eat with my children.

READ MORE: <https://theothervoice.umwamafm.co.ug/2024/04/08/losing-her-left-hand-to-domestic-violence-terror-from-katushabes-marriage/>

Parliamentary Engagement on Mainstreaming Gender in Media Laws

By Doreen Sampa, Lobbying and Advocacy Officer, UMWA

Recognizing the lack of gender equality clauses and actions in the information and media space in Uganda, Uganda Media Women's Association (UMWA), embarked on the process of conducting a Gender Analysis of selected media laws and draft principles of the proposed 2022 Information and Communications Bill with the aim of improving gender inclusivity of media related laws by identifying gender gaps and extending recommendations for legal consideration. This analysis was done in July 2023. UMWA therefore developed recommendations for advocacy engagements with relevant parliamentary committees in particular the Committee on Information, Communication Technology & National Guidance, Gender, Labour & Social Development and the Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Committee.

In collaboration with Uganda Women Parliamentary Women Association (UWOPA), UMWA therefore organized an engagement with above mentioned Committee Members to discuss recommendations for engendering the Draft Principles for the Information and Communications Bill 2022. The meeting took place on Thursday 21st December 2023 at the Parliamentary Conference Hall.

The purpose of the meeting was to share gender recommendations for engendering the draft principles of the proposed 2022 Information and



CAPTION: A cross section of participants during the Parliamentary Lobby Meeting

Communications Bill.

In terms of way forward, the following commitments were made by the different committee representatives;

- The committee on Gender, labour and Social development; pledged to host UMWA during their committee meetings to better understand the policy requests that are specific to their committee.
- The members of the ICT Committee, assured UMWA that we had engaged them at the right time because the process of reviewing the bill was still on going and work in progress and pledged to invite UMWA for further interaction to ensure that our issues are captured.
- A request was made to all the committee representative present to review the gaps as presented in the UMWA gender Analysis report and act accordingly because government is sometimes slow to

certain issues.

- UWOPA also pledged to continue collaborating with UMWA, because it is more and better positioned to promote issues of women at parliamentary level.

A total of 33 participants attended this meeting, including (10) members of Parliament from the Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, Committee on Information, Communication Technology & National

Guidance and Committee on Gender, Labour & Social Development and Committee on human rights. In attendance also were UMWA's partners and representatives from Civil Society Organizations on media and or women rights advocacy, including; Uganda Women Parliamentary Women Association (UWOPA), Uganda Women's Network (UWONET), Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) and Pollicy Uganda. There were (11) Participants from media houses including; Salt FM, Kingdom TV, Baba TV, Channel 44 TV, Urban TV, Bukedde TV, CBS TV and Radio 4.

UMWA staff in attendance included; Doreen Sampa- Lobbying and Advocacy Officer, Brenda Namata - Communications and Advocacy Officer, Clothilda Babirekere-Gender Officer, Osoru Constance-Project Coordinator, Apalat Catherine-Radio Coordinator, Mr. Paul Kabali, a Radio Presenter and Margaret Sentamu-Executive Director.



CAPTION: Some of the Participants during the engagement



Increased coverage of women politicians and women generally on Mama FM airwaves

The support provided by the Royal Danish Embassy in Uganda to Mama FM through the project: **'Media for social justice and gender equality, leaving no one behind'** greatly increased coverage of women politicians and women generally. There was remarkable generation of content on women politicians and women generally in Mama FM's different radio programmes.

Initially two women were hosted on Mama FM airwaves weekly however this increased to six women hosted in different radio programmes. The radio programmes are, Ekimezza which airs every Saturday 11:00-2:00pm, Let's Talk (Tuteese) which airs Monday to Friday, (7:00-9:00pm), Abakyala Tweyogere which airs Thursday 1:15-3:00pm, Her Story 256 which airs Saturday 3:30-5:00pm, Youth speak out (Saturday 2:00-3:30pm) and Disability is not Inability (Wednesday, 1:15-3:00pm) among other radio programmes.

Women hosted on Mama FM were over 300, with two women appearing weekly for specific women focused radio programmes Abakyala Tweyogere and Her Story 256 and the rest appearing in other programmes. The women hosted included politicians, business women, corporate women and other women making a difference in their communities. The discussions on air offered a platform to trained women councillors by Uganda Media Women's Association to speak directly to their electorate on issues such as the Parish Development Model, GBV and corruption among other topics.

In addition, the women councillors were able to put the skills and knowledge they gained on strategic media use. Aciro Florence, Woman Councillor-Forum for Democratic Change, Nakawa Division participated in the Saturday Ekimezza radio talk show for the first time on Mama FM airwaves after getting the knowledge and skills on how to use the media from UMWA. She said, "I am really excited to appear on Mama FM airwaves and speak about the issues my community is facing. It is my first time to appear for a political talk show in a radio station". Aspiring woman politician participated in Saturday Ekimezza

radio program for the first time. She said, "I have moved in different media houses in Kampala but I have found a receptive and use friendly media house like Mama FM which gives both women and men equal space to discuss openly without intimidation from the presenter and other fellow male panelists".

Mama FM increased her visibility online specifically on Facebook and X platforms, special thanks to Denmark Embassy of Uganda, the radio purchased equipment which were used to live stream specific radio talk shows on and with women. The live-streamed radio programmes contributed to audience growth who had not discovered the radio through the traditional channel, more listeners got on board as far as UK, Sweden and UAE. Mama FM followers increased to 10K Likes and 10K Followers on Facebook. Kwagala Martha, a female listener and follower

on Facebook page had this to say when we livestreamed for the first time "This so nice mama FM thank you for putting us live on Facebook. Thank you so much Mama FM team".



CAPTION: Community Engagement

Not only did the radio increase her visibility online but also reached out to her listeners in the communities through conducting four outside broadcasting activities in Kyambogo, Luwero, Namere and Mutungo areas. Women councillors identified topics affecting women in the communities and this provided a platform for them to speak out and be heard on radio. Some of the topics include: education challenges for the girl child, women and ICT use, GBV, Domestic violence and gaps in provision of maternal health services in government hospitals and health centers. Outside broadcasting attracted new listeners to Mama FM. More women were able to learn about the radio station and its programmes.

Vasitina Mutunzo, Woman Councillor, Kyambogo trained by UMWA on how to effectively use said, "This outside broadcasting has really empowered me and I have been able to speak

through the radio on a topic that is an everyday issue in my community. It is the first time I am dialoguing with my community through radio and I am very excited. I pray you come again".

Edith Nakalembe, Woman Councillor Kintintale trained by UMWA on media to effectively use the media during the outside broadcast in her community said, "Mama FM coming to the community has given me and also the radio station to be known. I choose the topic on domestic violence because it is the commonest issue I handle. I have really loved the discussion which has helped everyone to speak out their mind". Outside broadcasting brought Mama FM closer to her listeners and this contributed to better understanding of the listeners' needs with more engaging and participatory discussions between women councillors and the listeners.

Increasing coverage of women politicians and women generally on Mama FM airwaves interlinks directly to Mama FM's vision and mission, which should be the daily core business of the radio station. Yet still as the project wines up, Mama FM still grapples with challenges of no advertising revenue generation, audience analysis from recognized companies like IPSOS, payment of the annual license fee to Uganda Communications Commission and technical requirements. However, the radio this year is strategically and deliberately mobilizing resources to sustain its self, improve its content which can be sell-able, build partnerships and networks and also increase its visibility online.

By Catherine Apalat, Radio Coordinator



Married to a man with disability: A tale of strength and resilience

By Sarah Nakasenge



CAPTION: Ninsiima and Kyokusiima while at their home.

It's a common societal perception that every woman would wish to marry a perfect man. People with disabilities in particular face prevalent discrimination in relationships. This is not, however, always the case because preferences and attitudes towards relationships are highly individual and vary widely.

While some individuals have biases about dating someone with disability, many are open to relationships based on compatibility, personality, and shared values rather than physical attributes as the story of Sylvia Kyokusiima and Milton Ninsiima proves. Kyokusiima narrates her relationship journey with Ninsiima,

who was born with a physical disability.

How they met

Kyokusiima and Ninsiima met in Mbarara. Their meeting was coincidental. One rainy day, Kyokusiima and a friend were heading somewhere but they had to take shelter from a heavy downpour. "When the storm started, one of the gentlemen inside the shop where we were sheltered directed his colleague, whom I guessed to be his brother, to offer us seats," says Kyokusiima.

She explains that they watched Television as they waited for the rain to stop. When the rain stopped, Kyokusiima and her friend resumed their journey. "After we had left the shop and moved for about a kilometer, the brother of the gentleman in the shop came running after us; he told me that his brother had told him to go back with the lady who had big eyes."

Obviously that was Kyokusiima. And the gentleman in the shop was Milton Ninsiima, who is now her husband.

She was surprised and wondered what a person with disability could want from her. "My whole body got goose

pimples, I was asking myself what the disabled man wanted from me," she adds. Kyokusiima says she shouted at the messenger not to even bother her again.

One day, Kyokusiima and Ninsiima met in the market and shockingly they both looked at each other in a way they never expected. She says Ninsiima offered her money to buy items from the market, which she accepted. The two met on several occasions until Ninsiima won her affection. They have now lived together for over 15 years and they are planning to legalize their marriage soon. They are blessed with three children.

What people say

In the beginning it wasn't easy. At some point Kyokusiima contemplated quitting the relationship. Her father-in-law thought she had come to steal their son's money. "I remember the day his father found me at the shop, he quarreled, saying I was taking money from his son!"

Most of her relatives and friends also wondered why she would have a relationship with a disabled man. "I remember my aunt and my parents asked me whether that was the only man I could choose," she states. Kyokusiima paid a deaf ear to people's



CAPTION: Ninsiima Milton Preaching on the Streets

opinions. She had found true love.

Kyokusiima says hers is a normal, happy marriage and as a wife she gets everything that any woman would wish to get.

READ MORE: <https://theothervoice.umwamamafm.co.ug/2024/04/07/married-to-a-man-with-disability-a-tale-of-strength-and-resilience/>

Increased knowledge and skills in gender responsive reporting among media practitioners



CAPTION: Training of journalists in gender responsive reporting in Tororo District

With support from the Royal Danish Embassy, UMWA successfully implemented a one-year (from March 2023 – December 2023) Project code-named "Media for Gender Equality and Social Justice; Leaving No One Behind". The project aimed at, improving the portrayal of women in politics, and women at large through promoting gender responsive reporting and contributing to elimination of stereotypes in Uganda by December 2023.

The project was implemented in seven (7) project target districts of Kampala, Hoima, Masindi, Tororo, Masaka, Kitgum and Mbarara.

Under Project Output (1): Increased knowledge and skills in gender responsive reporting among the target

media practitioners; UMWA enhanced the capacity of 211 journalists (37% female+ 63% males) from 48 media houses from the target districts in Gender Sensitive Reporting. Seven round table meetings with 160 Media Managers, Editors and Owners were also held to discuss strategies of increasing the number of women using the media.

According to the pre and post analysis report administered to participants before and after the trainings, over 78% of the trained journalists demonstrated an increase in knowledge and skills in gender responsive reporting. Some journalists pledged to create more platforms for women affairs and increase their participation through for instance: assigning special lines for women only to call in, initiating programs geared towards addressing or disseminating issues that affect women and other marginalized groups, always being patient with women; be deliberate and use other means like vox pox to get voices of women.

Media houses like Radio Maria, Radio West, Spice FM, Liberty FM, etc recruited more female journalists. Journalists during a follow up session mentioned an increase in the number of female that participate in programming for example the morning show in Vine media, in Hoima district which was initially being hosted by two males, now is hosted by three presenters and one of them is female.

There was also designing in-house policies aimed at increasing the number of women using the media. Media houses like Mighty Fire FM, T FM, Tembo FM developed in-house policies aimed at increasing the number of women using the media and in programming. UMWA shared a tracking tool to enable them assess the impact of the training and also monitor number of women that utilize their media.

UMWA reproduced and circulated over 900 copies of the gender Sensitive reporting guidelines with the journalists trained and shared more copies with their respective media houses.

A key challenge noticed was the influence of culture and societal norms that still compromise objectivity in the way women are portrayed in the media.

Key Recommendations:

- Include cultural leaders in the next programming, culture has a big impact on how the media is reporting. Culturing expectations always pulls the women down.
- Media managers and owners should have journalists go down to the grassroots and capture stories of the ordinary women instead of focusing on workshops and press conferences only.
- In order to ensure adequate coverage for women in leadership, journalists trained recommended that media houses should design specific programmes where women in leadership can engage on several issues to advocate for issues that affect women and the girl child.
- Media houses should adopt an institutional policy that requires every presenter and reporter to promote Gender equality when presenting their program and in so doing, women are adequately covered.

Connie Osoru
Project Coordinator

Women in Media Symposium 2024

Continued from Pg 1

remember to have time for self in addition to alternative sources of income. An economically empowered woman stands less chances to vulnerabilities especially of sexual harassment, intimidation or desperate actions in newsrooms” she emphasized.

Agnes Kyotalengelire, a seasoned journalist observed that it is important to identify the barriers

express their concerns in the newsroom,” he shared

Research shows that a third of female journalists leave the newsroom by year end because of discriminatory treatment, safety and security abuses. This leaves fewer female journalists contributing to hard news reporting thus limited exposure to better opportunities in the newsroom.



CAPTION: During the Women in Media Symposium 2024

that women in media go through like stereotypes because women will always be seen as people who can't do much or deliver.

A number of surveys and trainings conducted by UMWA on gender issues faced by female journalists in newsrooms proofs that many are stereotyped into soft news reporting based on gender, among other limitations.

Julian Mwine, the News Manager of NMG shared his experience as news head as far as stereotyping female journalists.

“Several years ago, we had some interns at Daily Monitor and there was this young Muslim lady who came to me after a few weeks requesting to concentrate on sports reporting. I held a stereotypical mind perceiving her as one dodging to do any heavy work because I thought she considered that no one would assign her to do sports by her Muslim dress code. But I accepted knowing that she was just an intern and if she failed it would reflect on her report and she would be gone. It turned out that later on she returned to join the company and she is one of our prolific sports reporters. I learnt the hard way not to judge a book by its cover,” he shared.

Mwine elaborated that his experience simply shows that when producers and editors are assigning, they make certain assumptions on the kind of stories that women can and cannot do no wonder the male dominance in core news areas. This happens in a space where there are no channels for women journalists to

Sector Foundation, like minded Civil Society Actors, Development Partners, Media Managers, Academia with an interest in media and women's empowerment.

A key highlight was with the awards ceremony where exceptional women were recognized and celebrated under the categories of;

- Managing Male dominated newsrooms
- Academia towards women and media development
- Life Time Achievement
- Innovation
- Investigative Reporting
- Leadership
- Advocacy
- Resilience
- Young Achiever under 30

Women play an integral role in development processes towards transformational, environmental and social changes through community building, governance and social justice. The power of women to explore and contribute to these fundamental roles lies in their socio-economic empowerment through skilling, access to resources and equal participation in decision making of resource allocation and distribution. This is especially for women in media and therefore urgent that all relevant stakeholders consider investing, including and empowering female journalists.

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

Improved Gender Representation Urgently Needed in Ugandan Media

By Joan Nankya, Gender Media Monitoring Officer

The latest findings from a comprehensive gender media monitoring initiative reveal a stark reality: women remain severely underrepresented and often stereotyped in Ugandan media content. The research, conducted from May to September 2023, scrutinized news stories in three prominent print newspapers (New Vision, Bukedde, and Daily Monitor), three leading radio stations (CBS, Radio Simba, and Radio One), and popular television talk shows including Bukedde's "Akabbinkano," NBS's "Frontline," and UBC's "Behind The Scene."

The analysis uncovered a disheartening imbalance in gender representation across all media platforms. Shockingly, none of the analyzed talk shows featured a female moderator, and female guests accounted for a mere 18% of total appearances, contrasting starkly with the overwhelming 82% male representation. Similarly, women comprised only 25% of news subjects, a marginal improvement of merely 7% over the past 28 years, emphasizing the persistent and stagnant nature of gender disparity in media coverage.

Even more concerning is the disparity in the gender composition of news reporters, with females making up only 18% despite outnumbering male graduates from journalism schools in Uganda. This gender bias extends to quoted sources in news stories, perpetuating a narrative that sidelines women's voices and issues from the national discourse, hindering their inclusion in the country's development agenda.

In response to these troubling findings, the Uganda Media Women's Association (UMWA) urgently calls upon all stakeholders, including the government, civil society, development partners, and educational institutions, to unite efforts in addressing gender inequality in the media. Without swift and concerted action, the media will continue to neglect critical issues affecting women, undermining efforts towards achieving equality and inclusive development in Uganda.

UMWA remains committed to advocating for gender-sensitive media representation and pledges to work collaboratively with all stakeholders to create a more equitable and inclusive media landscape for all Ugandans.

SUPPORT

Support The Other Voice towards its continuity



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The Other Voice is supported by the Royal Danish Embassy

Ten years of embracing a positive living with HIV

By Gabriel Luryeyo

10 years ago, Ms Lilly Atim started falling sick frequently. Friends advised her to go for HIV test. The test results were not what she had desired. She was found living with HIV. The counselling did little to calm her nerves. Later on, she accepted her status. "That was the beginning of the end of my worries," she says.

Ms Atim was born in 1971 in a family of seven siblings. She now lives in her parents' home in Olano Village, Unyama Sub-County in Gulu District. Her husband died six years ago. "I now live on a piece of land I inherited from my father. I left my marital home because the love broke down," she says.

Atim is one of the thousands of Ugandans living with HIV. A survey by the Uganda Aids Commission (UAC) indicates that HIV prevalence among Ugandan women between the age of 50 and 54 years was higher compared to men of the same age bracket. The survey conducted between February 2020 and February 2021 puts HIV prevalence among older women in the country at 13.6 percent while men at 11.1 percent. The survey also noted there has been an increase in

About accepting her HIV status, "That was the beginning of the end of my worries"

new cases of HIV infections among young women between the age of 15 and 24 years than in men of the same age group. 15,801 people who are living with HIV across the country participated in the survey.

Meanwhile, the UAC report further indicates that Gulu is among the districts with the highest number infection rates in the country at 12 percent compared to the natural average which is 6.5 percent. Other districts in Acholi sub-region burdened with high HIV infection rates are Pader (8.5 percent), Kitgum (7.8 percent), Lamwo (7percent) and Omoro and Agago, both with 6 percent.

"I was enrolled on ARV therapy about nine years ago. I have been living positively since then. I chose not to remarry," she says. Atim did not have children with her late husband. However, she has faced hostility with some of her relatives after returning to her father's

home. In April last year, her niece burnt down her grass-thatched house.

"They hate me not because of my status but they do not want to see me use this land," she reveals. The fire also destroyed her ARV drugs, which



Courtesy Photo

were in her house. The matter is now in court, and the suspect is in custody, awaiting.

Atim has also become careful with her diet as advised by the physicians. She eats food rich in vitamins and proteins. According to The Aids Support Organization (TASO), lack of adequate food and poor diet among persons living with HIV remained a challenge to clients enrolled on Anti-Retroviral Therapy to adhere to treatment. The organization attributed

the challenge to high cost of living, alcoholism and sexual gender based violence (SGBV). ARV drugs cannot be taken on empty stomach.

In June 2023, Ms Pamela Abonyo, the Coordinator for People Living with HIV/Aids in Gulu delivered UGX162,000, and an assortment of utensils to Atim. Ms Abonyo noted that stigma is a major stumbling block in the fight against the scourge. A recent report indicates that majority of people living with HIV are abandoning their drugs because there is a lot stigma in the communities. Stigma has also forced hundreds of people living with HIV not to disclose their status even to close family members.

According to a report by PEPFAR, at least 75,463 people living with HIV in Acholi Sub-region have been enrolled on Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART). This translates to 97 percent of all the people living with HIV in the sub-region being enrolled on HIV treatment. 77,797 out of the estimated 1.9 million people in Acholi sub-region are living with HIV. HIV care and treatment in Uganda is majorly funded by the US government. By June 2020, 1.241 million Ugandans living with HIV had been put on Antiretroviral Therapy.

Equal access to information crucial for PWDs: Areba, an example of possibility for the deaf

By Hedwig Arinaitwe



CAPTION: Grace Areba, middle, pauses with fellow women that have hearing impairment, on the streets of Kampala

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 15 percent of the world's population, or estimated 1 billion people, live with disabilities. They are the world's largest minority.

Ms Grace Areba is part of the 1 billion people living with disabilities and, although she can see and write, she has a challenge of accessing information because she is deaf.

Removing communication barriers is crucial to improving access to health, education and other obligatory services for people like Areba to achieve their full potential.

Areba is the fifth born and only child with a disability in her family. She was not born deaf; but became deaf at a tender age. For a long time, she lived in her own world and interaction with the rest of the world was a constant challenge, since her family members and the community had not embraced sign language.

Areba narrates how she was seen as a cursed child in her own community because of her disability. "I had to attend a public school with normal children despite being a deaf child. I am a Kenyan citizen. I consider myself linguistically and culturally minority. I am deaf by disability and very proud of my disability regardless of what the community or society think/look at. I believe there is no single soul seat here or there that is useless and God has blessed everyone in His own unique way."

To stir change, Areba has decided to advocate for prevention of violence, inclusion, and amplification of the voice of the voiceless, access to equitable information, affirmative development for deaf women and girls. She has made some impacts through advocacy and awareness creation.

"As a deaf woman, my tenancy is not in doubt when many realize the extra work I had to put in, while undertaking my graduate course," she recalls.

Areba was first rejected at university just because she was their first student with a disability, and they claimed lack of reasonable accommodation for students. But this never stopped her pursuit for education and advancement in her career journey. It took the intervention of the deputy dean of students who not only looked at her disability but capacity beyond disability to achieve great academic results.

READ MORE: <https://theothervoice.umwamamafm.co.ug/2024/04/09/equal-access-to-information-crucial-for-pwds-areba-an-example-of-possibility-for-the-deaf/>

Women leaders empowered for media and leadership



Women leaders empowered for media and leadership in Kitgum District

UMWA has been implementing a one year project aimed at improving the portrayal of women in politics, and women leaders at large through promoting of gender

responsive reporting and contributing to the elimination of stereotypes in Uganda. Under the project UMWA trained (120) women leaders from the project districts of Masaka, Kampala, Kitgum and Tororo districts after conducting a rapid appraisal in Kitgum to establish knowledge and skills level of women leaders in media use.

At the end of the training, women leaders were able to debate in council meetings with male councilors and during radio talk shows for example Falida Nangozi from Mbarara district

has participated a lot in District Council meeting debates and radio talk shows.

One of the women leaders in Kitgum said she can now debate in clan meetings and make decisions. Women leaders are no longer waiting for media to look for them but using their WhatsApp group to engage media. The women leaders from all the target districts were followed up to establish how the project beneficiaries were adopting the strategies given to them in order to address gender inequalities in the country.

Despite the achievements, women leaders from the lower government levels cannot participate effectively

during council meetings because of language issues and limited understanding of the laws. In Kitgum, the women leaders said that its only the women at district leaders who are constantly engaged by media and are invited for talk shows.

The women pledged to improve their attitude about media and build strong working relationships for future collaboration.

UMWA also learnt that constant communication with all stakeholders and documentation of all project processes is very key to the sustainability of the project.

Clothilda Babirekere
Gender Specialist, UMWA

HOW 23-YEAR-OLD APIO IS TRANSFORMING LIVES OF TEENAGE MOTHERS

By Hedwig Arinaitwe



CAPTION: Social entrepreneur Peace Apio Zitty

Teenage mothers face numerous challenges that require support and training. Peace Apio Zitty is a social entrepreneur passionate about making a positive impact. She had her first baby at 17 years and after enduring several challenges that come with teenage motherhood, she decided to make it easier for others. Apio shares insights about her coffee initiative with Hedwig Arinaitwe

Why coffee?

I chose coffee because it provides a welcoming space for the young mothers to connect, share experiences, and find support. Coffee creates a platform where young mothers can build a community, fostering a sense of empowerment and encouragement in their journey.

What inspired you to start Afri-Coffee?

Afri-coffee is based on my true life story. [I was once a teenage] mother; this project supports and empowers teenage mothers. The initiative was inspired by a desire to create a supportive community for young mothers. Recognizing the challenges they face, I wanted to establish a space

where they could connect, share experiences, and find inspiration.

How do you use coffee to transform lives of teenage mothers?

Coffee isn't just a beverage; it's a catalyst for change. Over the years we've managed to provide jobs for a few teenage mothers. Through our coffee sales they are able to earn a living. Afri-coffee also empowers mothers through training on how to make different products out of coffee. This kind of empowerment not only improves their lives but also fuels their self-confidence.

How have you benefited?

Supporting teenage mothers through coffee has helped me build potential to empower and uplift communities and create a positive impact on both the individuals involved and the broader society. Additionally, I'm able to promote social awareness and sustainable practices in the coffee industry.

While the initial goal was to create a supportive space for young mothers through the coffee business, the journey has likely brought new insights and opportunities. As a result, my goals have expanded to include broader community impact, social initiatives, or other avenues that align with the evolving vision and mission of the venture.

What do you attribute your success to?

Mentors and personal focus but also

willingness to learn and unlearn.

How do you impact fellow women?

The rewarding aspect lies in making a positive impact. I have witnessed the tangible benefits of this initiative, such as increased confidence, a sense of community, and improved opportunities for these mothers. I've created a positive change and contributed to a supportive environment for them, where they're free to learn and express themselves.

Any advice on how to end the prevalent teenage motherhood?

I would encourage comprehensive sex education, accessible healthcare, and community support. I'd also empower young people with knowledge and resources to help them make informed decisions about their reproductive health. Additionally, promoting economic opportunities, mentorship programs, and fostering a supportive environment to help reduce teenage pregnancies.

What advice would you give an

18-year-old who looks up to you?

Embrace your uniqueness, value your voice, and trust in your capabilities. Life is a journey of self-discovery and growth, so be kind to yourself, set meaningful goals, and don't be afraid to pursue your passions. Surround yourself with positive influences, and remember that your worth is not determined by external expectations. Seize opportunities, learn from challenges, and foster connections with others who uplift and inspire you. Most importantly, believe in the strength you carry within, and never underestimate the impact you can make on the world.

Do you think Ugandan female coffee growers need to increase their autonomy?

They need to because increased autonomy can lead to several benefits. It can enhance their ability to negotiate fair prices, improve farming practices, and enable sustainable growth in the coffee industry. This may also contribute to fostering local economies and building resilient communities. However, careful consideration should be given to ensuring that any changes support the well-being of the farmers and promote environmentally sustainable practices.

What is that one interesting thing people don't know about you?

I'm a passionate soccer player and a midfielder in particular. Beyond my professional roles, I'm a devoted mom, a loving partner, and my faith is a guiding force in my life.



Apio mentoring rural women on coffee planting. While her initial goal was to create a supportive space for young mothers through the coffee business, the initiative has expanded to include broader community impact.