

Celebrating women's achievements

The month of March is set aside globally to celebrate women. In Uganda some women have been recognised for their achievements in the different spheres of life. However, despite their achievements, many more remain in the background. **Jacky Achan** identified and spoke to six of such women.

Dr Gudula Naiga Basaza: She is the chairperson of Uganda Women Entrepreneurs Limited (UWEAL). Using UWEAL, she has created a platform where women entrepreneurs come together to support each other. Women are taken through training to make them better business people. UWEAL also founded the Women Investment Club, where it pools money for women to access finances at short notice and at a lower interest rate than they would get from the bank. It has created a database of markets for women to access.



Dr Namanya showing tissue culture samples to minister David Bahati at Kawanda



Ruth Odjiambo Ochieng: She is the chairperson of Uganda Women's Network (UWONET), an advocacy and lobbying network of national women's NGOs and individuals, operating in Uganda. She is a solid advocate for women's rights and always supporting women who have survived injustice. Through UWONET, she is committed to the transformation of the unequal gender relations in society and promoting networking among women and other development partners based on mutual trust and respect for one another. She is also the former executive director of Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange (Isis WICCE), an organisation that promotes justice and empowerment of women globally.

Dr Priver Namanya: She is a senior research officer and head of the banana bio-fortification project at the National Agriculture Research Laboratories in Kawanda. She has worked to enhance the M-9 hybrid banana known to farmers

as *Kiwangaazi* with Pro-Vitamin A genes or beta carotene for better nutrition. The genes were extracted from an Asian banana known as *Asupina*, and from the African yellow maize. Her banana biofortification turned the banana into a

more beneficial food so that instead of a consumer gaining only water, starch and carbohydrates, they are now able to get Vitamin A, too. Children also benefit more now, by gaining improved sight and brain development at early age.

Atuki Turner: Atuki is a lawyer, and the founder and executive director of Mifumi, a women's rights organisation established in 1995. Mifumi has been campaigning to get bride price banned. Turner argues bride price devalues women and it is the root cause of much of the domestic violence Ugandan women experience. Turner started the organisation first with a promise to her parents to build a primary school in the village, where her parents retired. When construction



stalled, Turner turned her attention to women's

economic independence and quickly learned that domestic violence was a pervasive problem. Uganda's Supreme Court, agreed in part with Mifumi and ruled that the practice of refunding bride price on the dissolution of a customary marriage was unconstitutional and should be banned. But they disagreed that bride price itself was unconstitutional. The ruling was the beginning of a process of shifting bride price from a fee paid for a woman into a gift not demanded and not refunded.



EMPOWERING THE PASTORALIST WOMAN



Women take on diverse roles in regard to livestock, land and the household within the pastoralist setting. Unfortunately, however, their roles are not fully recognized and they are further affected by exclusion from decision making processes as a result of gender stereotyping in their communities. This vulnerability is worsened by other factors like poor or limited access to health care, high illiteracy levels and the negative effects of climate change especially prolonged droughts.

The Coalition of Pastoralist Civil Society Organisations (COPACSO) together with two of its members: **Dodoth Agro Pastoral Development Organisation** and **Warrior Squad Foundation** is implementing a "Community Managed Pasture Seed Model" project in Kotido and Kaabong districts funded by Oxfam. The Model promotes growing of a pasture seed variety that is climate resilient, fast maturing, palatable to livestock and has potential commercial value through sale of pasture and seed. The seed was developed by Nabuin Zonal Agricultural Research and Development Institute (Nabuin ZARDI) in Karamoja.

The project promotes community resilience through availing pasture for livestock especially during droughts and seeks to minimize pastoral migrations, trans-boundary animal diseases and conflicts among the pastoralist communities. The planting of pasture seed will enhance supply of animal feeds which in turn will boost milk production and animal health. It will also support women who rear small ruminants (sheep

and goats) to reduce livestock mortality due to increased availability of pasture during droughts. This will boost household incomes when animals attract good prices when sold in a healthy state and enhance household nutrition and food security. It will further create alternative income sources by sparking a commercial pasture seed and pasture as tradable commodities.

Within the project, Oxfam's Gender Action Learning Systems (GALS) methodology is being used to address gender inequalities in households and communities. It promotes household and community planning, visioning and realizing and appreciating the various roles and responsibilities of women and men. The methodology is also being used to promote women producers' right to food in the markets and value chains through addressing gender inequalities and power relations at household level. It also helps to build women's confidence to participate in development processes.

In commemoration of the International Women's day, the pastoralist woman should not be left out of the policy discourse. There is need for increased gender awareness in the pastoralist communities through educating women and men on their individual roles, worth and responsibilities; need for more research to inform interventions directly affecting them as well as ensure that the women are empowered so that they participate equitably in decision making processes.



Amanda Ngabirano: Ngabirano is an urban planner and a lecturer at Makerere University. She has been relentless in advocating for city authorities to plan for riding of bicycles as a mode of transport in Kampala, where heavy traffic jam is the order of the day. Even with the absence of bicycle lanes in Kampala, she has led by example riding her bicycle on Kampala streets. Realising the negative mindset society has on bicycle transport, she is getting to portray that bicycle transport is not for the poor. She has equally engaged government, both at national and local levels, on how bicycle transport strongly delivers on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). She has emphasised that bicycles are economical compared to using cars and motorcycles and also environment-friendly. In addition bicycles she emphasises are space-efficient in terms of road space and parking facilities and promote social justice.

Hilda Bahati: She is a relationship coach, counsellor, public speaker and experienced psychologist. She is also the founder of the Life Fix, a counselling and coaching firm. She uses her work to help both women and men identify the source of stress, anxiety or depression. Her life approach keeps providing support and practical feedback to help clients address life's challenges and long-standing conflicts as well as discover new paths to resolving a wide range of challenges and psychological issues facing them in life



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