



Gender Transformation & Empowerment



2nd

REGIONAL

WOMEN'S WEEK REPORT

Building Bridges: Creating an Inclusive Culture
United Women Can!

18th – 21st November 2019



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Word from the Executive Director

The 2nd Regional Women's Week was the largest gathering on building bridges and creating an inclusive culture within the women's movement in Kigezi region. 1,110 people participated drawn from the 6 districts in the Kigezi regional, notably – Kabale, Kisoro, Kanungu, Rukungiri, Rubanda and Rukiga and other districts across Uganda Kasese, Kyegegwa, Tororo, Kampala, Hoima and Bullisa.

By and large, **the 2nd Regional Women's Week 2019** was a great success! It effectively amplified women's rights and gender equality in the region by providing a space for conscientization. It also effectively facilitated the harmonization of strategies that will go a long way in strengthening the capacity of women's rights organisations in the Kigezi region. The week comprised of activities and events spread over the week from 18th – 21st November, 2019.

The Regional Women's Week brought together a diverse group of women, girls, men and boys representing different concerns and ages. They also came from different vantage points: women's rights organizations, mainstream non-governmental organizations, grassroots based organizations, the informal sector, academia, government and media.

On behalf of UWONET, I wish to convey our cordial appreciation to the UWONET members, partners and participants, uniting the women's rights and development community, bringing attention to the most persistent issues affecting women and girls for collective actions.

United Women Can!

Rita H. Aciro Lakor,

Executive Director–UWONET

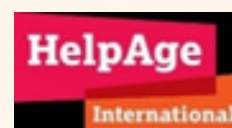
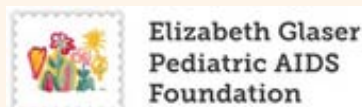
CONTENTS

List of Acroymns - - - - -	4
1.0 INTRODUCTION	6
Pre-Event Actions - - - - -	7
2.0 BRIEF SUMMARY	7
Achievements of the 2nd Women's Week - - - - -	8
3.0 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE	9
Objectives- - - - -	10
Key recommendations from the “joint call for action” on women and girls’ rights in Kigezi Region - - - - -	11
WATER WALK: Accessibility, Affordability and Availability to Clean and Safe Water - - - - -	12
4.0 MAJOR EVENTS AT 2ND REGIONAL WOMEN’S WEEK	12
5.0 ADVOCACY MEETS SPORTS –Women’s Soccer Match	14
Girls Arise School Mentorship Visits-- - - - -	16
Market Dialogue – Kigongi Market - - - - -	17
6.0 OPENING CEREMONY	19
7.0 OFFICIAL OPENING REMARKS	20
8.0 INTRODUCTORY REMARKS	22
9.0 PLENARY SESSION	24
10.0 HIGHLIGHTS FROM PARALLEL SESSIONS	26
11.0 CLOSING CEREMONY	39

LIST OF ACROYMNS

ALOWA	All in One Women Association
CAO	Chief Administrative Officer
CECSCRA	Centre for Economic Social Cultural Rights In Africa
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
ENCA-U	Empowerment of Nations Citizens Association
EWIDA	Executive Women in Development
FOLOGI	Forum for Local Giving
GWEFODE	Gender Equality and Women Empowerment for Development
KCWO	Kagamba Catholic Women Organization
KMDF	Kabale Municipality Development Foundation
KWGS	Kabale Women's Guidance and Counselling Services
KWID	Kigezi Women in Development
LC	Local Council
MPs	Members of Parliament
NAFODU	National Foundation for Democracy and Human Rights in Uganda
NDP II	National Development Plan II
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NUWODU	National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda
PWDs	Persons With Disabilities
ROTOM	Reach One Touch One Ministries
RUFODE	Rukiiga Forum for Development
SGBV	Sexual Gender Based Violence
SGDs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRH	Sexual Reproductive Health
STEM	Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics
UNHS	Uganda National House Survey
UWONET	Uganda Women's Network
VAW	Violence Against Women

Convening Partners of the 2nd Regional Women's Week.



1.0. INTRODUCTION

This report summarises the experience of the 2nd Regional Women's Week that was convened by Uganda Women's Network (UWONET), in partnership with women's rights organisations operating in Kigezi region with financial support from UN Women under the European Union – United Nations Spotlight Initiative to End Violence Against Women and Girls.

The co-organisers for this high level event which took place from the 18th to 21st of November 2019 include – Kabale District Local Government, Gender Equality and Women Empowerment for Development (GWEFODE); Kabale Women's Guidance and Counseling Services (KWGS); All In One Women Association (ALOWA); Kabale Municipality Development Foundation (KMDF); Forum for Local Giving (FOLOGI); National Foundation for Democracy and Human Rights in Uganda (NAFODU); Rukondo International Organisation; Freedom Radio; Executive Women in Development (EWIDA); Kigezi Women in Development (KWID); Rukiiga Forum for Development (RUFODE); Kagamba Catholic Women Organisation (KCWO); Empowerment of Nations Citizens Association (ENCA-U); Bakyara Kora Nobika; and EGPAF among others.

The 2nd Regional Women's Week, organised under the theme ***Building Bridges: Creating an Inclusive Culture, United Women Can!*** was a buildup to the first one that was convened in 2017 in Kabarole District in the Rwenzori Region. The event sought to:

- * Increase awareness about issues impacting women and girls in the Kigezi region and south western Uganda at large.
- * Provide a platform for participants to share experiences, lessons learned and innovative approaches to overcome gender inequalities in all sectors and society spheres.
- * Build partnerships among government, private sector, civil society and international organisations, to accelerate the elimination of gender gaps.
- * Build the collective and common understanding for driving change towards the achievement of gender equality in the Kigezi region.
- * The report has been prepared for circulation to participants of the 2nd Regional Women's Week. However, it is also intended as a resource for those interested in the discussions and outcomes pertaining to this event, but were unable to attend. It is structured to reflect the outcomes of the 4-day event as it takes the reader on a journey; from the contextual background; to objectives; overall approach adopted.

2.0 BRIEF SUMMARY



Pre-Event Actions

- a) **Weekly planning meetings:** An Organizing Committee established at the UWONET Secretariat to plan and agree on the finer details of the 2nd Regional Women's Week. Another committee, constituted in Kabale district, and chaired by Gender Equality and Women Empowerment for Development (GWEFODE) convened bi-weekly meetings that handled day to day planning and grass root mobilization of participants. This ensured that no loose ends were left untied.
- b) **Social Media engagements:** UWONET and partners utilized social media through Facebook and Twitter to not only promote the 2nd Regional Women's Week prior to the D-day, but to also initiate online discussions on the emerging trends and opportunities, and map out key actors in the identified thematic topics in line with the theme. Furthermore, social media helped ensure that the 2nd Regional Women's Week doesn't only have a physical presence but also create virtual spaces for diverse voices and stakeholders to share solutions, build coalitions, and drive progress for the wellbeing of the Ugandan woman. Discussions and engagements were managed under the hash tags;

#UgWomensWeek #RegionalWomensWeek
#WomenMovtBuilding #SpotlightInitiative



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Achievements of the 2nd Women's Week

Alongside the speeches, presentations, plenary discussions and mentoring sessions; many other exciting events took place during 2nd National Women's Week. For instance, a Water Walk featuring the Kabale District Police Commander SP. Brian Ampaire, as Chief Walker; and a Women's Soccer Match that was held at Kabale Stadium and utilized as an advocacy avenue to promote dialogue on unpaid care and domestic work in sectors of water and education. Additionally, 10 exhibitors showcased different products and services provided by women and women rights organizations.

Additionally, the event created a safe space for shared learning and network building for future collaborations on women's rights and gender equality among different actors from the CSO fraternity, as well as the public and private sector.

The main outcome of the 2nd Regional Women's Week was a "joint call for action," that highlighted the recommendations that emerged from the numerous presentations and discussions. It reinforced a clear pathway for government ministries, agencies and departments, as well as civic society and the private sector within which to work together for the attainment of women's rights and gender equality in the Kigezi sub region.

3.0 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

For seven (7) years now, the Women's Weeks (National – 2012, 2014, 2016, 2018 and Regional – 2017) have been a catalyst for policy advocacy, national and regional initiatives and projects, new ideas, collaborations and partnerships. The Women's Weeks aim to elevate the dialogue and overall awareness of the importance and benefits of enhanced social, political and economic participation of women in Uganda. They also create a space for the collaboration between Government, the private sector, civil society and development partners, to share their commitments to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.

The Regional Women's Week is a biennial event which brings together women and men from different parts of Uganda and across sectors to network, share knowledge and experiences to holistically address the multi-dimensional factors that continue to impede gender transformation and equality in Uganda. The 1st Regional Women's Week was held from 4th – 8th September 2017 in Rwenzori region under the theme: *"Advancing a Women's Movement: Creating an Inclusive Culture"*. Through the regional Women's week, UWONET initiated a process of building a culture that embraces diversity and thrives on synergy for the advancement of women's rights. The proceedings of the regional women's week confirmed that building an inclusive culture will require exploring new perspectives and strategies that will inspire women to participate more substantively in formal and informal government policy making and programme processes at a regional level.

Quick Facts about the 2nd Regional Women's Week 2019

1,110 participants from the 6 districts in the Kigezi regional, notably – Kabale, Kisoro, Kanungu, Rukungiri, Rubanda and Rukiga and other districts across Uganda Kasese, Kyegegwa, Tororo, Kampala, Hoima and Bullisa attended the 2nd Regional Women's Week 2019

- Participants included government officials from more the aforementioned districts
- 4.6% of the participants were men, while women accounted for 95.4%.
- The event held special thematic sessions on different topics.
- **At least 509** students from Primary and Secondary Schools benefited from the Girls Arise intervention.

It's against this background that UWONET organized the 2nd Regional Women's Week in the Kigezi to create impact by bringing together the most relevant stakeholders and leaders from region (government representatives, parliamentarians, as well as representatives from the private sector, donor community, academia, media, civil society, and a few selected community members and youth) to strengthen regional cooperation and identify best ways to drive positive change toward gender equality and women's empowerment.

Objectives

The overriding aim of the 2nd Regional Women's Week was to create a vibrant and influential women's movement advocating for gender equality and equity.

The event was guided by the following objectives:

- * Increase awareness about issues impacting women and girls in the Kigezi region and south western Uganda at large.
- * Provide a platform for participants to share experiences, lessons learned and innovative approaches to overcome gender inequalities in all sectors and society spheres.
- * Build partnerships among government, private sector, civil society and international organisations, to accelerate the elimination of gender gaps.
- * Build the collective and common understanding for driving change towards the achievement of gender equality in the Kigezi region.

Key recommendations from the “joint call for action” on women and girls’ rights in Kigezi Region

The strengthening of the women's movements in the region is an important role of UWONET and women's rights organizations and must be achieved to unite a broader number of women, build allies among policy makers, to eventually eradicated gender inequalities. Through the week's activities, workshops and sharing, the participants

came up with specific regional advocacy actions to achieve women's empowerment and rights at the grassroots level, security, peace, and justice, and the strengthening of women's political participation. Key actions moving forward included:

1. Participate in district, regional and national CSO and government reviews of the National Development Plan III (NDP II);
2. Participate in national and regional CSO reviews of the Beijing + 25 and ensure that national reports reflect the real situation of women on the ground and propose alternatives for women, and identify possible joint activities and actions ahead of the 64th **Session of the CSW** (2020) in New York;
3. Actively engage in Sustainable Development Goals implementation reviews at the national level;
4. Actively participate and engage more women at the district and national level to respond to issues and concerns of women to strengthen the women's movement.

The women's week noted the worsening threats to the lives and livelihood of women in the Kigezi region. Among the highlights of the women's week are the engagement of young women activists by supporting and expanding their participation in all aspects of development interventions. At the conference, the women's organizations and CSOs presented the following specific recommendations to their leaders:

1. Ensure and develop more fostering environment that does condone impunity in any form.
2. To respond to calls for stronger policy protecting the rights of women with disabilities, identifying and implementing specific policies to foster or ensure rights and protection for persons with disabilities.
3. Facilitate space for women's meaningful participation in all forms and avenue of democratic exercise.

4.0 MAJOR EVENTS AT 2ND REGIONAL WOMEN'S WEEK

DAY ONE – MONDAY 18TH NOVEMBER 2019

WATER WALK: Accessibility, Affordability and Availability to Clean and Safe Water



In light of this, a Water Walk, themed

“Accessibility, Affordability and Availability to Clean and Safe Water,” was organized. To help participants relax and get to know each other far more quickly, a one-hour aerobics class was organized. The class promoted women's fitness as a key aspect of wellbeing for all women and more so women human rights defenders.

The District Police Commander Kabale District, Sp. Brian Ampaire flagged off the Water Walk with a keynote address at Kabale Stadium, during which he appreciated UWONET and her partners for choosing Kigezi to host the 2nd Regional Women's Week, and acknowledged that women face huge challenges, one of them being the inability to access clean water supply.

Key Achievements

- **149 participants**, with women accounting for 89% benefited from this intervention.
- The Women of Kigezi Region represented by students of KABALE NURESRY TEACHERS INSTITUTE in partnership with other Community women presented a 14 points PETITION TO WATER AUTHORITIES named Accessibility, Affordability and Availability to Clean and Safe Water for Women, Girls and All Citizens of Uganda.



Participants march through the district during the water walk.

The Walk amplified the plight women face in regards to accessibility, affordability and availability to clean and safe water; the effects of climate change which have also increased incidences of drought compounding the problems faced by women, and the unequal burden of collecting water which still lies heavily on women who have to walk long distances to collect water.

As a result, participants developed and delivered a petition to the District Water Department, and National Water and Sewerage Cooperation. Some of the recommendations in the appeal included among others – organization of community sensitization drives that will ensure even distribution of labor when it comes to collecting water, provision of simple labor-saving technologies such as water wheels, tap stands and reservoirs, adoption of a multi-sectoral approach that will bring on board and engage other sectors such as Education, undertake gender responsive budgeting and planning as required by the Public Finance Management Act (2015), promote women's leadership and participation in decision making process concerning water management, and provide the necessary financing and human resources to operationalize their plans.

In summation, participants also recommended that the concerned stakeholders should, in a context of relative uncertainty associated with climate change projections, make policy responses and practical decisions based on clear criteria, to improve the resilience of local communities when it comes to water and sanitation services. It is anticipated that once these recommendations are acted upon, the drudgery of water collection will be reduced, access to clean and safe water will be improved, and women will be in position to use their time more productively.

5.0 ADVOCACY MEETS SPORTS –Women’s Soccer Match



Team Captain introduces the Board Chairperson to the the women soccer players.

Since football has the power to bring people together regardless of their age, gender, culture and political affiliations, it was used as an advocacy avenue to further promote dialogue on unpaid care and domestic work in relation to the sectors of water and education at the 2nd Regional Women’s Week. It ended in 6 - 2 in favor of Reproductive Health Uganda, and added the much-needed pleasure and excitement to the climax of Day 1.

153 participants also engaged in the post-match dialogues on women’s concerns in regard to safe water access and quality education.

Sound Bite

“The Women of Kigezi, and the general public need more spaces like the Women’s Week, where they come together and discuss issues of gender equality, and women and girls’ rights. Such platforms enable a comfortable ambiance to start important conversations that might not otherwise happen in other spaces monopolized by men.

*It’s great to be able to hear and see large numbers of people, coming together for nothing else but women’s interests.” —
Namala John Bosco, LC 5 Youth Councilor Kabale District*

Most of the issues that emerged from these conversations re-echoed what had been presented earlier in the day, with participants emphasizing the need for:

- ✱ Local authorities in charge of security to put in place measures that protect children and women who walk long distances (most times late in the evening and/or during the wee hours of the morning) looking for water. These are normally targeted by SGBV perpetrators, and in extreme cases results into incidences of rape.
- ✱ Key stakeholders, including the local governments, local politicians, Civic Society Organisations, and Development partners to increase safe spaces for women which they can utilize to discuss and front issues that affect them, including unpaid care and domestic work.
- ✱ Local governments in the Kigezi sub region to improve budget allocations to the water sector in fulfillment of the Government of Uganda's commitment to achieve universal access to clean water, through the development blueprint, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and through its support for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which was adopted by world leaders in 2015.
- ✱ Relevant stakeholders, including parents, as well as duty bearers such as the Police and the Community Development Office to relentlessly tackle the issue of early marriage, which has grappled the region and largely contributed to high rates of girl child school dropout.



One of the soccer teams pose for a group photo

DAY TWO – TUESDAY 19TH NOVEMBER 2019

GIRLS ARISE SCHOOL MENTORSHIP VISITS



Six (6) mentorship visits, that improved young people's knowledge and understanding of menstrual health, girls' leadership, STEM careers, sexual harassment and career development were organized at Hornby High School, Kabale Primary School, St. Tereza Girls Vocational Secondary School, Muyumbu Primary School, and Rutoma Primary School.

The sessions were facilitated by renowned positive role models, professionals and peer educators with technical support from UWONET, NUWUDO and Kigezi Women in Development.

The participants were among other things able to discuss sexual harassment, acknowledge its impact and understand why it is important to stand up for themselves and their peers, as well as consider how their own behavior or actions might be hurtful to someone else.

Additionally, the girls were able to appreciate their right to be valued and treated with respect, while the boys were made to understand the responsibility to value and respect others, especially fellow female students.

Girls were also challenged to pursue STEM courses/ careers, and embrace leadership at all levels. The discussion on stigma of menstruation perpetrated by cultural taboos could not go unnoticed during the mentoring sessions. Participants were informed

One of the panelists shares during the dialogue.

Key Achievements

6 Mentoring Sessions
were organized.

509 female students
from 6 schools
benefited from this
intervention.

200 packs of menstrual
pads were distributed
to support girls to stay
in school and address
the stigma associated
with menstrual periods

that menstruation is a necessary biological function experienced by all women at a particular age and that it does not make women or girls unclean or unfit to perform normal tasks such as studying and playing.

In summation of the talks, the students were encouraged to make healthier relationships and lifestyle choices that will enhance their self-esteem and self-confidence, improve their interpersonal skills, decrease likelihood of initiating drug and/or alcohol use, and improve their behavior both at home and at school. They also developed action plans that stipulated how they intend to use the acquired knowledge and skills. Among other things, the students committed to establish SGBV Prevention Clubs that will be charged with the responsibility of empowering fellow students with the skills and confidence to become agents of change that challenge the spread and severity of sexual harassment and discrimination of girls in schools and communities.

MARKET DIALOGUE – KIGONGI MARKET

Organised in partnership with the Institute for Social Transformation and the Leadership at Kigongi Market, the dialogue sought to raise the agency and visibility of the plight of market women entrepreneurs in the Kigezi Sub Region, and support them to establish networks and linkages with key stakeholders in the trade, industry and commerce sector.



Ms. Pamela Lakidi making a presentation on Land Rights during the market dialogue.

It kicked off with a cleaning exercise that ensured good sanitation at the work place. Thereafter, discussions on different topics such collective action, market women's participation in leadership and decision-making processes, good governance and accountability within the marketplace, as well as proper hygiene and sanitation were held.

Some of the issues that emerged from these conversations included among others:

- * **The need to improving the basic working conditions** within the markets to **ensure dignity** of the women market entrepreneurs while they are working. This involves improved access to clean toilet facilities and safe water.
- * **Access to business skills and capital.** The issue of exploring possibilities of supporting women market entrepreneurs to access the capital they need to grow

and expand their businesses also came out strongly.

- * **Modalities for continuous learning.** Participants also stressed the need for apprenticeships, to support market women to learn and continuously improve themselves while they work.
- * The need to avail **opportunities for market women to increase market access** especially given the kinds of commodities they deal in such as fruits, vegetables and foods that have regular buyers and are on demand in the region didn't go unmentioned.



Participants sharing during the market dialogue.

- * The women also discussed their invisibility in the development initiatives within the sub region, and the abuse and exploitation they experience on a regular basis, with one observing that “the market leadership is very uncooperative when it comes to women issues.”

The Market Dialogue ended with a powerful presentation on Women's Economic Empowerment. Facilitated by DFCU Bank, the session aimed at providing a business perspective and best practice experiences from DFCU's Women in Business Investment Club Account – an initiative that allows women entrepreneurs to pool their savings and take advantage of opportunities like the unsecured Club Loan and access to financial literacy training.

Participants were encouraged by that fact DFCU's best performing investment clubs are those owned and managed by women. Accordingly, varied examples of successful women investment clubs were shared to inspire them.

The bank committed to continue offering free financial literacy services to market women who were willing to join and/or form investment clubs.

Key Achievements

71 market vendors (with women accounting for 92%) attended the dialogue.

The agency and visibility of market women entrepreneurs in the region was raised.

Commitments from key stakeholders such as DFCU Bank, to improve market women entrepreneurs' access to capital were garnered.

6.0 OPENING CEREMONY



*Welcome Remarks by Sandra Komuhiimbo-Programme Coordinator –
Knowledge Management, Voice and Accountability, UWONET*

Ms. Sandra Komuhiimbo, on behalf of the Executive Director of UWONET gave the welcoming remarks. She extended her appreciation to all the participants for making the time for the engagement.

She observed that the Regional Women's Week is a biennial event which brings together women and men from different parts of Uganda and across sectors to network, share knowledge and experiences to holistically address the multi-dimensional factors that continue to impede gender transformation and equality in Uganda.

Through the regional Women's week UWONET initiated a process of building a culture that embraces diversity and thrives on synergy for the advancement of women's rights.

She further explained that outcomes from preceding regional women's weeks confirmed that building an inclusive culture will require exploring new perspectives and strategies that will inspire women to participate more substantively in formal and informal government policy making and programme processes at a regional level.

7.0 OFFICIAL OPENING REMARKS

Keynote Address

Mr. Mugisha James

**The Principal Assistant
Secretary of Kabale District
Local Government.**

In his keynote address, the Principal Assistant Secretary of Kabale District Local Government, Mr. Mugisha James commended the theme of the 2nd Regional Women's Week, saying *“it reminds us about the need to stand together, and assist each other in achieving equal human rights for all.”*

He further stressed the importance of continually demonstrating our commitment to gender equality and women's rights by recognizing the contributions women make at family and community level as well as in the workforce as care givers, educators, entrepreneurs, farmers, bread winners, and leaders.

He called for an end to ***negative social cultural*** practices such as wife beating and forced/early marriages that ***perpetuate violence, inequality and keep women and girls stuck in poverty and other deploring situations.***

Mr. Ntimba Edmond, CAO of Kabale District Local Government officially opened the 2nd Regional Women's Week.

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In his remarks, Mr. Ntimba underscored the importance of girl child education.

He made reference to the African proverb which says, *"If we educate a boy, we educate one person. If we educate a girl, we educate a family – and a whole nation."*

He further elucidated that since educated women have higher chances of a healthier and happier life, that should be reason enough for promoting girls' education. Such benefits, according to Mr. Ntimba, extend to the community as well since an educated woman has the skills, information and self-confidence that she needs to be a better parent, worker and citizen. He made his final call by challenging parents, guardians and community leaders to espouse a positive attitude, and be champions of girl child education. This would be achieved by dropping negative social and cultural norms that tend to overlook the need to keep girls in school, and also ensuring that girls have adequate school requirements and facilities that will enable them to excel.



*Mr. Ntimba Edmond
Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) –
Kabale District Local Government*

Sound Bite

"Girls education is a life line to development."

Mr. Ntimba Edmond, Chief Administrative Officer– Kabale District Local Government.

8.0 INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

In her remarks, Hon. Tezira Jamwa, the Chairperson of the UWONET Board expounded on Ms. Komuhiimbo's address by outlining UWONET's strategic objectives and areas of operation.

She also gave a brief overview of the Regional Women's Week, that amongst **other aims, seeks** to build the collective and common understanding for driving change towards the achievement of gender equality.

She acknowledged that Uganda, and Kigezi region in particular still has a long way to go to achieve full emancipation of women from the hardships they have experience because of their gender and social class such as difficulty in accessing education, justice, credit schemes and other basic services.

She noted that sexual violence against women and girls also remain a challenge in our society. Poverty and poor living conditions have added to women's vulnerability to violence, living scars and unimaginable emotional damage on many.

In summation of her remarks, she called for adoption of pro-poor policy approaches that aim to improve the capabilities of marginalized groups, such as women, in a number of areas including education, health, agriculture, natural resource management and leadership; by government and other key stakeholders.



*Hon. Tezira Jamwa–The Chairperson
(UWONET Board of Directors)*

Sound Bite

“The Regional Women’s Week is an event that commemorates women’s struggle for change, celebrates the progress, which has been made towards improvement of quality of life of women and lays a strategy for the future. It is the week for reaffirming our commitment as a people to the liberation of Ugandan women.” — Hon. Tezira Jamwa, Chairperson UWONET Board

Keynote address



Ms. Ruth Ndyabahika, the Director of Grace Villa

The keynote address called for gender equality and social inclusion, as they are critical to achieving desired development outcomes of increased well-being for all, and a fairer distribution of resources and opportunities among women and men.

Ms. Ndyabahika observed that like many African countries, Uganda has moved to enhance constitutional protections for humanity — particularly in the area of women's rights and equality since the last two decades have seen the emergence of legislation to address violence against women and girls. These developments have been accompanied by improvements in the women's political representation and are evident in women and girls' access to education, as well as economic empowerment since women are contributing more to their families and communities and are gaining access to credit and jobs that can give them a decent standing of living. However, she was quick to note that there is need to acknowledge that as a Country, we still have a long way to go to achieve full emancipation of women from the hardships they have experience because of their gender and social class.

Rural women particularly have the most difficulty in accessing education, justice, credit schemes and other basic services. Where there is no running water, they are the ones who have to walk long distance to fetch it for use by the whole household. Alongside the above, they are ones who go into bushes to collect woods for families with no electricity. Sexual violence against women and girls and rape are other issues that remain a challenge in our society. She concluded by calling upon all Ugandans to stand together and provide assistance in achieving equal human rights for a better life for all.

9.0 PLENARY SESSION

The following were the supplementary issues that were raised during the plenary discussion at the opening ceremony:

Multi sectoral approach to women and girls' rights in Kigezi region: participants at the opening ceremony called for the development and implementation of a framework that promotes integration of women and girls' rights into all sectors of government and development endeavors in Kigezi region.

Expedite strategies to improve access to information by women and girls: recognizing that all persons should have the same opportunity and ability to exercise their right of access to information, participants emphasized the need for key stakeholders to develop gender targeted initiatives that will facilitate access to relevant and timely information by women and girls about their rights and entitlements. It is anticipated that this will bolster their empowerment.

Reinstate the moral authority of the family: one participant shared that over the years, parenting styles have become so lax when it comes to disciplining children. "Many transformations in family life have occurred as a result of modernization. Thus, parents are afraid to discipline their children because they think this will affect their self-esteem. Thus, it was suggested that once more, parents need to take time to redirect their children and teach them about what is right and legally acceptable especially when it comes to the rights of women and girls.

Impose stiffer penalties on perpetrators of VAW: the importance of strengthening the prosecution of VAW perpetrators, through more stringent laws and harsher punishments was recognized. Participants felt that it is the only way to ensure that offenders will stop raping, defiling and abusing women and girls.

Provide thought leadership: participants observed that as custodians of morality in society, religious leaders have a duty to sensitize their congregations with a view of clarifying upon what the respective Holy Books such as the Bible and Koran say about confusing myths and beliefs such as women being weaker and less significant than men, polygamy amongst Muslims, food taboos, sex before and during marriage, bride price, family planning, among others.

Encourage more girls to pursue STEM courses and careers: since women remain underrepresented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) courses and careers, participants called for denouncing of stereotypes and cultural norms that dampen girls' interest in STEM. It was urged that this will not only improve the quality of the STEM workforce, but also bring on board great minds with a broad range of experiences and varied approaches from a women's perspective.

Regular assessments to ensure compliance to the Equal Opportunities Act: participants proposed the need to have regular reviews of local governments within the Kigezi region, to establish whether or not they integrate gender in any planned policy action, including legislation and programmes.

HIGHLIGHTS

FROM PARALLEL SESSIONS



10.0 HIGHLIGHTS FROM PARALLEL SESSIONS

Understanding Ageing for a vibrant and influential Women's Movement in Uganda. Unequal Distribution of Unpaid Care Work, accessibility, affordability and availability of basic needs in life.



The presenter leading participants in a session on ageing for a vibrant and financial women's movement in Uganda.

Across Africa, millions of families would not survive without the contribution of older people – from caring for orphaned grandchildren to providing much-needed household income. However, they are often discriminated against within families and services, and this discrimination is often underpinned by the legal systems and government policies of individual countries despite the fact that older people's rights are set out in a range of international and local legislation.

The facilitator, Ms. Rwantagare Twinomusinge Jairis, the Chairperson of Reach One Touch One Ministries (ROTOM), stated that as Uganda continues making progress in realizing human rights, the rights of older people continue to be invisible within sustainable development, gender equality, protection of human rights and non-discrimination debates. The specific national mechanisms necessary for the protection of older people are lacking, and those that exist are poorly implemented, and suffer from weak coordination and accountability mechanisms.

As a result, older people have very limited access to the social security, health care, education and legal protection that are theirs by right. In addition, they are often denied the right to participate in development activities. Older women, in particular, are often subject to discriminatory inheritance and property laws, and face greater discrimination in access to services. Due to lack of awareness or negative attitudes, professionals and family and friends can fail to detect abuse of older women and men, often assuming that their problems are caused by 'old age.'

The participants pointed that the Government of Uganda should put in place a comprehensive and systematic legal framework for the protection and promotion of all human rights of the elderly community. Furthermore, it should empower the citizenry to better understand and assert their rights in older age, and challenge stigmatization and dehumanization of ageist attitudes and behavior. This it was proposed can be achieved through unrelenting mass sensitization.

Amplifying the voices of grassroots women and promoting inheritance and property rights for women and girls.



The presenter makes her submission on promoting inheritance and property rights for women and girls.

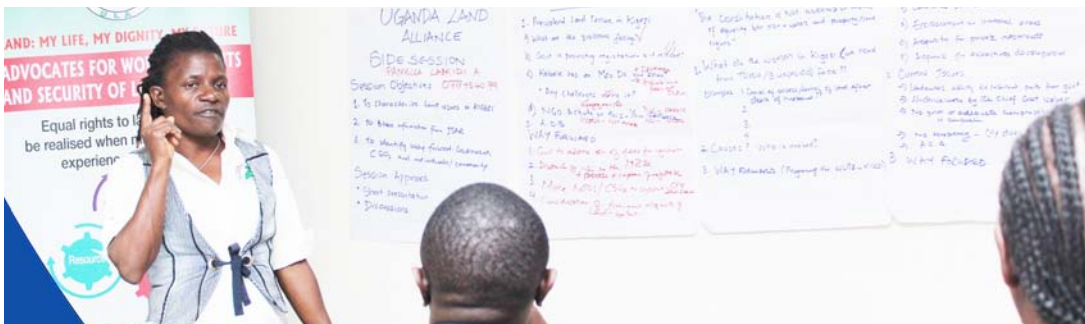
This session sought to amplify the voices of grassroots women in as far as their inheritance and property rights are concerned. The other learning objective was for the 103 participants (92 F, 11 M with PWDs accounting for 5%) to understand the importance of women's empowerment.

During his presentation, Rogers Mugabo, an official from CESCRA observed that in the Kigezi region, women's property rights are limited by social norms, customs and legislation thus hampering their economic status and opportunities to overcome poverty despite the fact that women constitute the majority of small farmers and do more than 75% of the agricultural work. This often relates to other vulnerabilities such as domestic violence and sexual abuse.

Since property ownership is critical for women rights in Uganda and the Kigezi Sub region in particular, CESCRA advocates for women's inheritance and property rights as part of its core strategy to enhance their economic security and rights, and reduce feminized poverty.

This has resulted in mass sensitization of local communities that are aware of, and appreciative of women's land and property rights. In order to create learning experiences that inspire and engage, CESCRA invited fourteen (14) women that had benefited from their interventions to share their experiences during this session. From not being aware about their inheritance and property rights, to securing them, the women shared stories that enthused participants to become advocates of women's land and property rights.

Taking Stock of Women's Land Rights in Kigezi Region



Ms. Pamella Lakidi makes a presentation on Land Rights.

Land is probably the most invaluable asset for the citizens of Uganda. With more than 80% of the rural population directly deriving livelihoods through subsistence agriculture, land access, ownership and use are core to economic, social and environmental drivers of land reforms in Uganda.

It is against the central role of land and its resources in Uganda's economic development agenda that Ms. Pamela Lakidi, from Uganda Land Alliance gave a presentation on the uphill struggles of the Uganda Land Alliance and other civil society organisations in lobbying for legislation for women's land rights.

She challenged claims that the 1998 Uganda Land Act adequately provided for the rights of women; in fact, the law has failed to offer real benefits to poor women. Much research has demonstrated the need for real ownership rights to land by women but for the legislators this has not been enough. She observed that sentiments such as when women get rights of ownership to land they will not have stable marriages and will go all around marrying and divorcing, or they will become too powerful have been used to deny women their right to land ownership, control and access.

Her presentation also covered freehold and registered leasehold (including co-ownership), documented unregistered rights, group tenure, formal undocumented tenure types, and informal tenure types, and made mention of best practices that can support the realization of women's land rights notably: reassessing conventional

Sound Bite

“For many women, land ownership can end years of economic uncertainty, vulnerability, and fear.”– Rogers Mugabo, Centre for Economic Social Cultural Rights (CESCRA)”.

tenure types and land registration systems and use them in more innovative ways; strengthening and simplifying land administration and processing of records before planning; decentralizing land management responsibilities, including administration of deceased estates, with clear guidance from central land and succession laws; involving local communities in adjudication processes; prohibiting forced evictions by law; providing legal aid, (including community-based paralegals) and recourse in case of violation and simplify court procedures in case of violation; supporting the training of male and female paralegals who assist legal aid centres; as well as mediating in disputes and raising awareness at the grassroots.

The effects of gender roles on family welfare and development of communities



Participants taking part in a group discussion.

This session enlightened participants about gender roles and how they affect individuals, family welfare and development of communities. The facilitator, Ms. Uwimana Annah Besigye defined gender roles as societal expectations about how men and women, as well as boys and girls are expected to act, speak, dress, groom, and conduct ourselves. For example, girls and women are generally expected to dress in typically feminine ways and be polite, accommodating, and nurturing, while men are generally expected to be strong, aggressive, and bold. Every society, ethnic group, and culture has gender role expectations, but they can be very different from group to group. They can also change in the same society over time.

She explained that such exaggerated gender stereotypes can make relationships between people difficult since people are not allowed to fully express themselves and their emotions for fear of being tagged either too feminine and/or too masculine. They also promote cultural attitudes and gender ideologies that frequently regard women as subordinate to men. Often times, such norms are so widely and deeply held within the community that they are almost invisible, except in their effects that perpetuate discrimination, violence and humiliation.

Uwimana correspondingly elucidated that the 1995 Ugandan Constitution obliges the state to eliminate discriminatory stereotypes based on socially constructed roles and attributes associated with gender. Further, it recognizes the common responsibility of

men and women in the upbringing of their children. *“This addresses the need to change stereotypes about the mother as the nurturer and the father as the bread winner that are most strongly replicated in family roles in relation to child rearing,”* she said.

Consequently, she stressed the importance of achieving substantive equality between men and women. For that purpose, she recommended abolishment of discriminatory laws and modification of discriminatory social norms. Upon getting this revelation, participants resolved to speak up against gender stereotyping, be living examples - by doing things that are not commonly associated with their gender, and create safe spaces with in their homes and communities for people to freely express themselves and their true qualities regardless of what society's gender stereotypes and expectations are.

Sound Bite

“Only 27% of registered land in Uganda is owned by women yet 70% of the women are engaged in agriculture and surprisingly, less than 20% control outputs of their efforts

– (UNHS 2012/13).

Women's Political Participation



A participant makes her submission on women's political participation.

Throughout the world, the power relations that shape political, social, economic and cultural life prevent women from participating fully in all areas of their lives, whether it's in the home or in the public arena. While women's dedicated efforts to challenge the status quo have allowed more women to reach positions of power in recent years, women continue to be under represented in all areas of decision making, such as religion, the media, and the law, they also still face significant challenges to their full and equal participation in the structures and institutions that govern their lives.

These challenges notwithstanding, women have a right, on equal footing with men, to participate in the politics and decision making of their own country. It's against this background that GWEFODE convened a session on Women's Political Participation and Leadership during the 2nd Regional Women's week.

Participants, majority of whom were women leaders (incumbent and aspirant) were provided with a lot of learning opportunities on topics such as: the legal and human rights basis for women's participation in politics, the benefits of having women in political leadership, and tips on how women leaders can win an election. Furthermore, they were empowered with skills in public speaking and presentation, fundraising and resource mobilization and proficiencies on how to deal with confrontation (hurdles) while trying to secure votes and/or running for political office.

The participants were quite impressed by the presentations and preferred the participatory training approaches that were used; most especially the experience sharing sessions where they were motivated to exchange and share proficiencies, knowledge and skills. This enhanced motivation and relationship building among them.

But most importantly, they were able to understand the significance of survival, renewal and reinvention needed for women's presence in political spaces owing to the fact that the political tides are changing; hence the need to adapt to changing times.

Mainstreaming Women with Disabilities in Uganda's Women's Movement



A facilitator makes a presentation on mainstreaming women with disabilities in Uganda's Women's Movement.

The Government of Uganda has undertaken major efforts to establish a legal and institutional framework for the inclusion of persons with disabilities. However, its implementation has realized limited success. As a result, persons with disabilities in the country face challenges accessing healthcare, education, and justice with disabled women and girls bearing the brunt of the discrimination due to their marginalized gender.

It is within this context that NUWODU organized a session to support women and girls with disabilities in Kigezi sub region by i) amplifying their voices based on evidence supported needs, aspirations, and priorities; ii) addressing negative cultural norms;



iii) and advocating for improved response and prevention to Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and access to sexual reproductive health (SRH) services and justice.

What came out clearly during this session was that effective inclusion of women and girls with disabilities will require collective action by government, development partners, the academia, media and civil society. Participants also came up with other recommendations, that if effectively implemented by the State and other actors, will ensure that the rights of women and girls with disabilities are realized:

- * Mainstream the issues of women and girls with disabilities in all sectors, particularly gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health, and livelihoods sectors
- * Establish indicators for the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities against which state and non-state actors must report
- * Support the formation of representative groups of women and girls with disabilities at village level that will be supported to conduct grass root advocacy and sensitization about their rights
- * Ensure equal representation of women and men with disabilities in community committees and structures
- * Women with disabilities focused CSOs should support the capacitation of other actors within the women's movement so that there is better appreciation and representation of women with disabilities voices in the movement.
- * The state and other key actors should support the development of leadership skills of women with disabilities such that they are in position to engage and collaborate with multi-stakeholders with regard to fundamental human rights and a just and inclusive society for all.

Modernization of Agriculture



A participant makes a contribution during a dialogue on modernization of Agriculture.

Since Agriculture is the backbone of Kigezi Sub Region's economy, a whole session was dedicated to deliberate on matters concerning modernization and feminization of the sector. During the discussion, there was a longstanding debate as to whether men's declining role in agriculture is a challenge or an opportunity for rural women in the region.

Other issues that took center stage during this session include: modern agricultural technology adoption to reduce labor intensity, increase livestock and crop yields, improve farmland productivity, reduce loss due to disease and insects, develop more efficient equipment, and increase overall food quality; climate change impact on agriculture, including adaption and mitigation strategies; infrastructural development including but not limited to - **road infrastructure** which is essential for farmers to take their produce out to the markets, **energy infrastructure** which is essential for development of agro industries, **information infrastructure** which is vital for timely technological information to farmers and agro-industrialists but also between producers and markets; **water infrastructure** which is a precondition for irrigation and water-based power generation and the availability of **storage infrastructure** which is considered essential for two purposes; the reduction of post-harvest losses resulting in food shortage, and allowing for gains from inter-temporal trade due to potential arbitrage opportunities arising out of volatility in food/grain prices.

In summation of the session, it was strongly recommended that farmers within the region should make good utilization of agricultural advisory services offers by government extension works such as the agricultural officers, and embrace value addition for their produce in order to have a high return, access new markets, promote farm diversification and even build their own brand.

Domestic financial management versus domestic peace



Presenter makes her submission on domestic financial management versus domestic peace.

Family financial management and control practices have received little attention. Yet they are increasingly important, due to changes in the financial environment such as deregulation of the banking industry and the increasing number of dual income families. Also, it is because of the failure to manage the monetary possessions that many families get bound to bank loans and bankruptcy; which often times disrupts domestic peace thereby leading to violence and/or separation and divorce.

Thus, during this parallel session, participants were asked to reflect on the importance of saving and money matters in a home. From lack of accountability, to poor spending habits and lack of common values, participants shared some of their frustrations with their spouses when it comes to finances in the home. Accordingly, the discussant, Mr. Ariho Abino Gracent from National Teachers College Kabale shared some Tips for Healthy Financial Management, that included:

Identify money habits and attitudes – couples were challenged to handle financial discussions and conflicts in healthy ways if they are to have a good understanding of each other's habits and attitudes towards money.

Prioritize spending and live within your means – additionally, they were encouraged to live within their means by first of all discussing and agreeing on their household needs (what is necessary) versus wants (what is desired).

Develop and follow a family budget – it was also noted that couples need to carefully identify all family expenses in a specific period of time (such as a week or month), and create a spending plan based on that. Following the budget or spending plan will not only keep the family out of debt but help it work its way out of debt if currently in debt.

Set goals – the discussant further challenged couples to always create time to discuss their personal and family aspirations; which they can work towards by saving.

Mutual financial accountability – principles of mutual financial accountability such as openness, true transparency, authentic honesty, and genuine answerability were also underpinned during this session.

Lastly, couples were encouraged to avoid debt and manage loans wisely, make joint investments, alongside creating an emergency fund for both small and large unexpected expenses to create violence free homes and communities. Most participants met this advisement with great enthusiasm as they committed to put it into practice, moving forward.

Evidence Based Communication Research for a progressive women's rights agenda – Research presentation



Ms. Sandra Komuhiimbo presents findings from the research.-

Ms Sandra Komuhiimbo from UWONET presented the findings of the Evidence Based Communication Research for a Progressive Women's Rights Policy Agenda. The research project was conducted in partnership with the Busara Center for Behavioral Economics as the lead research team. The research sought to understand what drives Members of Parliament's perceptions and decisions around progressive women's rights bills in the Ugandan context. It was shared that the research reached out to urban and rural decision-makers (MPs) and influencers (community members/constituents, religious members) in Kampala, Pallisa, and Kamuli.

The exploratory research was initiated by a series of in depth interviews that tackled issues of gender norms in society, gender expectations, divorce, land/property inheritance, forced marriage, and domestic relations which included matters of bride price, assault, cohabitation and polygamy. The following findings were shared:

Most Influence on MP Decision-Making

MPs are much more likely to listen to higher-in-commands than their peers and constituents due to:

- * Perception they know better and have inside information;
- * Possibility that they represent aspirational growth of the MPs in their professional prospects;
- * More trust in their level of experience and insight.



MPs are highly likely to reference religious leaders (and the leaders themselves are likely to reach out to MPs) because:

- * Religious leaders are the custodians of social norms in relation to culture and morality;
- * What religious leaders root for, others (i.e. constituents) will very likely support;
- * Not many politicians will willingly vote against the grain. Religious leaders offer both a moral and social compass.

Least Influence on MP Decision-Making

MPs tend to see peers as equals and therefore not particularly compelled to seek their approvals or influence. Their interactions are as such:

- * Most peer relationships are messy and happenstance (i.e. committees, friendships, etc. In other words, the potential to influence can be on many factors.
- * MPs are more likely to be convinced by the strength of a peer's argument than the peer him/herself;
- * Because they are on equal levels, MPs think they influence their peers more so than the other way around.

MPs pay lip-service to the influence of their constituents. However, this may be automated behaviour rather than meaningful statements because:

- * MPs stated that they are capable of and tend towards influencing the opinions of their constituents due to "ignorance";
- * Whatever constituents feel are often heavily influenced by religious leaders themselves;
- * Realistically, MPs are far more exposed to the inner workings of Parliament on a day-to-day basis than their constituency areas.

Religion drives MPs and their influencers: Religion underpins many interpretations of what women can and cannot do. This can act as significant impediments to some topics within progressive women's rights. However, there is space to integrate religious principles into future messaging.

MPs are more likely to drive their decision-making by higher-in-commands: Of all potential populations that MPs can be influenced by, higher-in-commands are more likely to make an impression on MPs.

The fear of contradicting religion and culture is strong: While MPs have their independent stand on pertinent issues on women rights, when push comes to shove, they are less likely to take a contradictory stand with their core influencers. The same is true for their influencers. Nudges around status quo bias can be designed to set a path towards progressive women rights.

Differences in theory versus practice: Finally, across all populations, respondents seem idealistically in support of further women's empowerment and equality in theory, but their attitudes carry hesitations when considering it in practice. This should be tackled through more storytelling approaches.

Land and Property Inheritance: If the man and woman already have a standing agreement (especially written), the woman is to acquire half of the land after divorce. However, these idealistic sentiments differ from practice, especially in rural areas, and also whether the woman initiated the divorce.

Forced Marriage: It appears that many respondents not only believe this is a backwards concept, but also one in which the possibility of contracting HIV is of a dominant concern. The wholesale disapproval of this topic presents opportunities for future messaging.

Divorce: This topic was the most contentious, with most respondents vociferously opposed to divorce. Muslims are generally more liberal about the question of divorce and advocate for separation when a woman finds herself in a marriage she is not happy with. Catholics are very strongly against divorce. The question of sharing property upon divorce feels very alien to the community members especially in rural areas.

Domestic Relations: Domestic violence (physical assault, marital rape and death) is deemed by all to be unacceptable in society. However, issues of bride price and polygamous marriage elicited diverse views.

Girls Empowerment



Presenter shares during the meeting on girl's empowerment.

This session delved into the challenges that adolescent girls in Kigezi region face, ranging from risks and vulnerabilities that challenge their social development, such as high rates of gender and sexual based violence, unsafe sex that puts them at risk for unwanted pregnancies and infections, high school dropout which more often than not is fueled by the heavy load of unpaid care and domestic work, and the lack of social, health, and economic resources that are necessary to mitigate these risks.

The discussion among participants suggested the need to unleash potential in girls such that they in position to transform from being victims to victors walking in the

fullness of their potential. The general consensus was that such a strategy should embody a diverse and holistic approach that will instill girls with the necessary knowledge and skills, and facilitate their confidence and determination such that they are in position to better themselves.

The participants further agreed on key actions that would bolster girls' empowerment in the region, notably:

Empower girls by giving them a chance to learn about issues that affect their lives, enable them to expand their social networks and, in some cases, support them to attain vocational and life skills.

Shift gender norms, attitudes and practices by increasing girls' self-confidence, encouraging them to express their views, and giving them access to role models who will also act as mentors.

Challenge social actors to target the most vulnerable girls e.g. teenage mothers by organizing capacity enhancement sessions for them at convenient times.

NGOs implementing girls' empowerment programmes in the region were challenged to regularly engage with the girls' families to influence girls' lives so that they can pursue their rights within a supportive environment. Male engagement was particularly emphasized (fathers, grandfathers, uncles and older brothers) since they have the greatest decision-making power over girls' lives.

The need to massively mobilise girls within the Kigezi sub region, and support them to join empowerment programmes didn't go unnoticed.

Participants further agreed to proactively fight against, and eliminate practices/norms that grossly violate girls' rights e.g. forced/early marriage, defilement, denial to quality education, among other; thereby creating an environment where girls enjoy their full rights and reach their potential.



11.0 CLOSING CEREMONY

Attended by 127 participants, the closing ceremony was presided over by Ms. Kedres Mutabazi, the Deputy Mayor of Kabale Municipality, Hon. Sam Arinatwe, the LC III Kabale Municipality, and Hon. Namala John Bosco, LC 5 Youth Councilor Kabale District, who delivered the vote of thanks on behalf of the leaders of Kigezi sub region. Outstandingly, they acknowledged UWONET for being the driving force behind the whole process. Furthermore, they expressed their sincere gratitude and appreciation to all organizations and individuals that attended the 2nd Regional Women's Week, and expressed their thoughts and opinions.

“What has been talked about here for the last three days will have direct implications on the future of the women’s movement. The interest and enthusiasm you have shown is already a good sign,” said Ms. Kedres Mutabazi

Finally, Hon. Tezira Jamwa put on record her tributes, on behalf of UWONET to Kabale district for hosting the event, and to all attendees for their fervor. In summary of her remarks, the Hon. Tezira Jamwa appealed to the Government of Uganda (specifically the leadership of Kigezi sub region) to:

- * Appoint and recommend more women to available opportunities within and outside the country. This should be earmarked by a clear set of targets to increase their representation in key institutions from local to international levels.
- * Enforce the existent Equal Opportunity laws to reduce and address institutional discrimination to which women are victims.
- * Design interventions that tackle the persistent negative attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate violence against women and girls, and;
- * Give more girls and women access to quality and meaningful education and training to enable them gain the necessary and relevant expertise and experience to access management positions in and live meaningful lives.
- * The 2nd Regional Women's Week ended with the Runonko Festival, a social celebration among the Bakiga that promotes unity and celebrates cultural heritage through partaking of traditional food, as well as dancing to edifying custom music.

A wrap up of the 2nd Regional Women's Week 2019 in pictures.





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