

The Monthly Digest

UGANDAN WOMEN LEADERS GATHER FOR AN INSPIRING BREAKFAST MEETING



Women at the breakfast meeting.

Cotilda Nakyeyune

Kampala, Uganda - In honor of International Women's Day , CARE International in Uganda arranged a special breakfast meeting on 6th March exclusively for women leaders at the national level.

The theme of the gathering was "Excelling in Leadership and Attaining a Healthy Life Balance" with the goal of inspiring women to excel in leadership, celebrating remarkable female leaders, and championing the cause of women who face barriers to leadership positions.

The event offered women a unique experience, allowing them to step away from their hectic schedules, connect with peers, and engage in meaningful conversations.

The Minister of State for Gender and Culture, Hon Peace Regis Mutuuzo, presided over the event and addressed the challenges women face while climbing the leadership ladder.

A panel discussion with prominent women leaders shared their experiences and insights on staying ahead as a female leader, balancing leadership roles and personal life, maintaining well-being amidst competing demands, and positioning oneself for greater leadership opportunities.

The event brought together diverse women leaders from various sectors, including CARE staff, private sector representatives, government officials, politicians, academia, and civil society organizations (CSOs).

VOICES FROM THE BREAKFAST MEETING

// *My journey to state house has been an interesting one. I was just a Diploma holder and never applied for the job yet I needed one. With the confidences that CARE International in Uganda gave me, the job looked for me. Women sacrifice career growth when trying to perfect their marriages. Those marriages will never be perfect in the first place. Multi-task, manage family, and advance in education. I started off as a diploma holder, but recently, I graduated with a PhD. The women movement is going down. Affirmative action is bringing poor quality women to Parliament. " Hon. Peace Regis Mutuuzo - Minister of State for Gender and Culture*

// *As you go higher, you need a diversity of skills. So invest in yourself. Build networks and service them. Check on the people in your network, find out how they are. It's those networks that will help you know about available opportunities.*

// *Balancing family and work: Add family activities to your diary just like you do for work. And if you can't fit it in, fall back on family to step in for you.*

// *Supervisor - Supervisee relationships: If you're to go higher, you must manage this relationship. Your supervisor will open up opportunities for you. " Olive Lumonya - Deputy ED UCAA*

Take time to learn your supervisor. They will keep you sane. Learn to speak and advocate for yourself. Create a relationship with your colleagues and your family. Nurture these relationships, you never know when you will need them."
 Esther Nampijja - CARE HR Manager

"Marriage/relationships are not logical. They are emotional. So, as you make career decisions, take care of your spouse's emotions".
 Flavia Tumusiime- Moderator



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By Emily Babirye

CARE'S Women at the gathering.

On March 28th, 2024, as part of International Women's Day, CARE International in Uganda organized a gathering for all female staff titled "CARE Women Gather under the theme; 'career and relationships'.

"Be intentional not to make a toxic workplace because that is where you spend most of your time," Ms. Kasoga advised, urging CARE women to lead with empathy and humility."

Ms. Kasoga 's personal commitment to supporting women in leadership positions resonated deeply as she shared,

"I have made special provisions for ladies in Plan International today because I sit in a place of power. I understand what women go through balancing career and family."

However, as Organizations put in place initiatives to support women, we ought to have a higher level of work ethics. These jobs entrust you with a lot of power and if you don't have a strong work ethic, and use it well, it corrupts you. Your strong work ethics today will earn you support when you mostly need it from colleagues and management."

“Whatever you do today, do it to the best of your knowledge. Build a reputation for yourself. I am one of your own and I am speaking out of a lived experience. When you go for these interviews, nobody cares where you worked but what you put on the table. We exercise fairness and you must meet the minimum requirements even if we say women are encouraged to apply”. Said Ms. Kasoga

One of the attendees asked how a woman working at CARE can excel in the locally-led agenda of development aid. Ms. Kasoga appreciated CARE International in Uganda for leading the localization agenda and promoting risk-sharing. She advised that a woman can thrive in the localization era by building allies, practicing diversity in relationship building, and investing in nurturing meaningful connections.

“I appreciate CARE International in Uganda for leading the localization agenda. For coming out to recognize that communities always have solutions to their problems and so their voices should be brought on the table. I appreciate CARE for promoting and advocating for risk sharing. CARE has taken leadership in this conversation when most of us feared to go in, it came out. Plan International will join CARE through the Charter for Change.

Ms. Kansime Evas Atwine, a Clinical Psychologist, also spoke at the event, discussing self-care and relationship dynamics.

“It is important to note that our relationship with self, others, and the Supernatural defines who we are. Humans are serviced from within and therefore the energy in the workplace is hatched in private spaces. Our level of investment in relationships is equal to our wellness,” she remarked, advocating for intentional investments in nurturing meaningful connections.

In a world where the demands of career and family often collide, Evas offered sage advice on maintaining equilibrium. Communication, agreement, and shared connection, she stressed, are the cornerstones of harmonizing professional pursuits with familial responsibilities.

Testimonies from CARE women shine a light on a future where women's voices are not only heard but also valued and celebrated, illuminating the path towards equality and empowerment for all.

“I think yesterday I got the answer I have always looked for at the women gather. Evas answered my question well, I have always contemplated around the same issue. As women we struggle with so many things and want to be always perfect in everything. But I have understood that everything has a season. We can have a family, work, and do other things but the key is to know and manage one's priority at a specific time in life. For me that was a Game Changer. Thank you Team Women Gather for choosing the best Speakers for the event.”- Jacqueline Laker.

Sylvia Turyamuhebwa conveyed her heartfelt appreciation to CARE for the exceptional care towards their staff, especially women. She underscored the significance of compassionate employers and supervisors who offer support during challenging moments, highlighting the pivotal role of understanding and empathy in fostering a supportive workplace environment.

“As women we intend to do everything and forget ourselves. In today's fast paced world, women often neglect self-care due to their multiple caregiver roles. I broke down and fell sick for some months and I want to thank CARE for the exceptional care for its staff. If we have someone who listens, offers flexibility, and helps us maintain work-life balance, why would we leave such a workplace?” Noted Sylvia.

During the meeting amidst the rhythmic beats of "Sili Regular," a local tune that echoed the vibrant spirit of the women gathering, the ladies celebrated The Human Resource Manager, Esther Regina Nampijja With pride and admiration, Esther was congratulated on her appointment as the Vice Chairperson for the Human Resource Managers Association of Uganda. Her achievement symbolized not only her individual success but also the collective strength and resilience of women in leadership.



Ms. Phoebe Kasoga



Ms. Kansime Evas Atwine



GUDIE LEISURE FARM HOSTS WOMEN'S INFORMATION HIGHWAY

Jacqueline Laker

Najjera, Uganda – Gudie Leisure Farm, in collaboration with CARE, DFCU Bank, Bank of Uganda, UN Women, and the GROW project, organized the Women's Information Highway as part of the 2024 International Women's Day celebrations. Held on 8th March, this one-day event served as a pivotal platform to empower women entrepreneurs by offering comprehensive business development support services.



Stakeholders during the Information Highway.

The atmosphere at the event was nothing short of electric! With the collective efforts of CARE and its esteemed partners, a one-stop shop for women entrepreneurs was created. Over 10 organizations participated, providing workshops and resources covering various aspects of business development, from registration procedures to personal branding strategies.

The thirst for knowledge among the attendees was palpable! Women eagerly explored the stalls, seeking insights into finance, marketing strategies, and legal intricacies related to business operations. The event buzzed with energy and excitement, fostering invaluable connections among participants.

This event resonated deeply with CARE's mission, which advocates for a world of hope, tolerance, and social justice. Emphasizing local leadership, CARE collaborates with national NGOs, Women's Rights Organizations (WROs), and Women's Leadership Organizations (WLOs) like Thrive, CEFORD, and UWEAL. By empowering local partners, CARE strives to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 17 on Partnerships for the Goals.

The Women's Information Highway provided a golden opportunity to prepare project participants and other women to become advocates for this locally-led agenda. Personally, I envision our project participants evolving into local partners and service providers. CARE offers numerous avenues for women's empowerment, including roles as project participants, implementors, service providers, and employees across various projects.

Highlighting the significance of access to key information, Dr. Gudula, CEO of Gudie Leisure Farm, emphasized,

"The information highway aims to empower women and girls with invaluable knowledge and tools, breaking down barriers that hinder their growth. Many times, opportunity doors are shut in the faces of women because of lack of documentation and compliance issues. Today is their chance to interact with the gatekeepers for their business growth."

Reflecting on their experiences at the event, Anna, a woman entrepreneur from Bushenyi, expressed gratitude for the exposure provided by CARE and Gudie Leisure Farm, enabling her to address certification challenges faced in marketing her products.

"My products have always been pushed back because they are not certified. People are always critical about what they eat. However, today, I am going back with the contact information of someone from UNBS and a clear process and requirements for certification. I can say it is a great milestone I achieved on this women's day." Anna explained.

Similarly, Susan Adong Odong, a woman entrepreneur from Lira district, shared how the Women's Information Highway equipped her with the information and contacts needed to navigate certification requirements for her training business.

"As a trainer, DIT certification has been a challenge for me, I knew they existed but had no idea how to get them. Today, I have been able to not only get the information but also a contact person from DIT. This is the information I shall be very proud to take and share with my other trainers in Lira. Thank you, CARE, for inviting us." Reported Suzan.

The Women's Information Highway stands as a testament to the transformative power of collaboration and knowledge-sharing, paving the way for women's economic empowerment and inclusive growth.



Dr. Gudula Naiga Basaza



CARE'S GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE INITIATIVES IN WEST NILE

By Josephine Anek

Arua, Uganda - As part of the pre-event activities leading up to IWD, stakeholders convened on the 5th of March at Letshuba Grande Hotel in Arua City to highlight CARE's collaboration with partners such as Restless Development, Naguru Teenage Centre, and CEFORD, showcasing their collective efforts and impact in communities across West Nile. Florence Sinia, an SAA facilitator under the SHE SOARS project in Oluko sub-county, shared a compelling testimony of the transformative power of CARE's gender-focused approaches within her community.



SAA facilitator Florence Sinia shares her testimony at the pre-event.

I knew we needed to engage men, the key decision-makers. Before long, the dialogues sparked real change. Women gained confidence, and discussions around property rights and gender-based violence became commonplace.

Thanks to CARE's presence in Arua and across West Nile, women now have a voice in decision-making, property ownership, and leadership roles. I've seen firsthand the impact of our efforts, and I believe our community will

As our first SAA group graduates and new ones form, I'm filled with hope. The process is smoother now, as the community embraces change willingly".

Looking ahead, she expressed optimism for continued progress and lasting change within her community, fueled by the collective efforts of organizations like CARE and its partners in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.



It all started when I was chosen as a facilitator for the SAA program. We underwent training, and I was tasked with forming SAA groups and leading weekly dialogues. But getting community members to join wasn't easy. Many saw it as a threat to their traditions and a waste of time. Yet, slowly but surely, attendance grew.

By Edton Babu

In celebration of Women's Day 2024, I aim to emphasize the remarkable progress achieved by CARE's Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) in advancing financial inclusion for women in Uganda. With over 1 million women enrolled in VSLAs, these initiatives have helped women to save, borrow, and improve their income, providing them with more opportunities for economic empowerment.



A women's group in Lira City exhibit their products.

In collaboration with the government, CARE has spearheaded various initiatives to strengthen the VSLA ecosystem, including developing guidelines for Self-Help Groups (SHGs), promoting digitization, and conducting research. These efforts have created an enabling environment for women's economic empowerment, ensuring stability and accountability.

The impact of VSLAs has gone beyond borders, inspiring similar initiatives across Africa. Commercial banks and microfinance institutions are offering tailored financial products for women in VSLAs, while initiatives like Emyooga and GROW provide critical financial support.

Lessons learned from these partnerships have paved the way for transformative projects like the Deliver Women's Economic Resilience through Enterprise and Market Systems (DREAMS) project. This project, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, aims to strengthen the economic resilience of 340,000 women in Uganda by empowering women entrepreneurs to grow their businesses and drive sustainable develop-

In Uganda, collaboration and progress are transforming lives and shaping a brighter future for everyone. CARE's VSLAs have played a vital role in promoting financial inclusion, and through ongoing efforts, we can continue to empower women and drive sustainable development.

CELEBRATING ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2024

By Hellen Alobo

CARE International in Uganda joined the global community in celebrating International Women's Day 2024, under the theme "Accelerating Gender Equality through Women Economic Empowerment." The event, held at Boma Grounds in Katakwi district and officiated by President Yoweri Museveni Kaguta, brought together dignitaries, government officials, and private sector partners.



President Yoweri Museveni tours an exhibition stall during the event.

President Museveni echoed the call to narrow gender gaps through economic empowerment interventions, citing the Poverty Decentralization Model (PDM). He emphasized the need to tackle inequality and launched several products

facilitated by the GROW project, including certification services by MAAIF and UNBS, skilling and incubation by UIRI, mobile business registration by URSB, and market facilitation by Uganda Export Promotion Board.

Addressing the gathering, the minister emphasized the importance of promoting women's economic empowerment through tailored financial products and simplified documentation procedures. President Museveni echoed the call to narrow gender gaps and launched several products facilitated by the GROW project.

The event was graced by a number of dignitaries including government officials- political and technical, UN, CSOs, Business Community, Women Council among others. CARE's representation included staff and private sector led partners.

CAMP+ LEGACY: TRANSFORMING REFUGEE SETTLEMENTS INTO MODELS OF SUSTAINABILITY

By African Muhangi

The Climate Adaptation & Mitigation Project (CAMP+) is an innovative intervention that aims to improve the livelihoods and living standards of both refugees and host communities while protecting the environment. Uganda was chosen as the ideal location for the project's inception in 2019, targeting areas where innovation was most needed to create sustainable solutions.



Some of the participants and CARE staff with solar powered stoves in Kyangwali settlement.

Over the years, CAMP+ has achieved several significant milestones, with four key outcomes guiding its path. These include institutional solar-powered cooking, expansion and additional funding, continuous improvement through innovation, and global impact and knowledge sharing.

One notable achievement of CAMP+ has been the design and pilot of institutional solar-powered cooking at Kinakyitaka Primary School in Kyangwali Refugee settlement, providing a clean cooking alternative. Other institutions have followed suit, and the project has attracted additional funding, enabling further expansion to benefit more institutions.

CAMP+'s proof of concept has garnered attention and additional funding opportunities, with the food component taken over by DANIDA for the CLIRK project. Also, lessons learned from solar clean cooking have led to funding for the biogas component. This expansion has reached hundreds of farmers, fostering sustainable practices and income generation. CAMP+ has embraced the ethos of continuous improvement through innovation, with learnings from pilot projects informing improvements. Innovations such as durable stoves adaptable to various environments and a practical plastic compressor have been developed.

CAMP+'s journey extends far beyond Uganda, with its learnings influencing initiatives in other regions. Partnerships with private sector actors have been forged to promote solar clean cooking solutions in refugee settings. According to Sebastiaan Soeters of CARE Denmark, communal hydroponics farms in Cox's Bazaar have drawn inspiration from CAMP+'s community-driven approach. Despite challenges, such as cultural beliefs around cooking as a private matter, CAMP+ has acknowledged them and underscored the importance of cultural sensitivity in project design.

As CAMP+ bids farewell to its current funding cycle, reflections abound. A recent learning event facilitated by StartHub

Consulting Group Ltd brought together stakeholders to ponder the project's journey. Four key takeaways emerged, including the importance of reflection, embracing failure as a pathway to success, recognizing alternative evaluation methods for innovation, and the need for rapid iteration. CAMP+'s donors, including Novo Nordisk and Innovation Norway, as well as CARE Norway and CARE Denmark, have provided unwavering support throughout the project's journey. As the sun sets on one chapter of CAMP+, its legacy of innovation, resilience, and community empowerment will continue to inspire change-makers around the world.



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