WHEN WOMEN SPEAK UP FOR THEMSELVES

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A compilation of Short stories of change

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Since 2009, the Women’s Democracy Group (WDG) has been building the capacity of women to influence decision making processes at the District levels.

The WDG is a consortium of 5 women’s organizations in Uganda focused on governance namely: Action for Development (ACFODE), Women’s Democracy Network (WDN)–Uganda Chapter, Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE), Center for Women in Governance (CEWIGO) and Uganda Women’s Network (UWONET) which also coordinates the consortium.

In 2012, the WDG with support from the Democratic Governance Facility (DGF) began to implement a project titled “Enhancing District Women Councilors’ Leadership Roles.” The project is being implemented in 50 districts of Uganda. Geographically, the project covers the regions of West Nile, Karamoja, Central, Western, Eastern and parts of Lango sub-region. Each of the members of the WDG has an allocation of ten districts within which to implement their work.

So far, Women caucuses have been formed in all the Districts of operation. CEWIGO’s Districts of operation are: Ibanda, Isingiro, Kamwenge, Kiruhura, Mbarara, Bushenyi, Sheema, Kabarole, Kyenjonjo and Kasese.

The caucuses have been trained in lobby and advocacy, gender budgeting and accountability, communication skills, public speaking and work/family life balance, among other skills.

In this short publication, we share some of the success stories of the women at individual level and one by the Isingiro women’s caucus.

This intervention is under the Women’s Leadership Development Programme of CEWIGO.
From the Isingiro Women’s Caucus

“We conducted sensitization meetings for both sub county members and police to curb down on domestic violence in the district. The caucus identified the most affected sub counties by domestic violence and they came up with Ngarama, Rugaga, Kikagate, Nyakitunda, Nyamuyanja and Isingiro Town Council. They budgeted for 20 million to curb down domestic violence in these sub counties and so they agreed to ensure to put the issue in the district work plan. As a result, the action plan on GBV was integrated into the district budget through the Community Based Services committee. The 20 million that the women had budgeted to use in their sensitization efforts was approved in the budget. This way, the caucus is able to demand accountability from a documented viewpoint given that they were part of the budgeting process.”
“Before attending the trainings by CEWIGO, I was in conflict with fellow women councillors. I would be blasted and humiliated from time to time and I felt that they envied me since I was on the Executive. They also felt that I was taking myself to be a class above them. However, after forming the caucus we were able to iron out all of our issues. We are now one person. CEWIGO, I thank you for all our trainings. - -
Tumwesigye Felly, Councillor Mbarara

“From CEWIGO’s trainings I gained skills in advocacy, lobbying and resource mobilization. I am a district youth councilor, deputy speaker and member of the Uganda District Speakers’ Association. I was elected for the position of treasurer with the Uganda District Speakers Association, thanks to skills acquired during CEWIGO’s trainings. I pray that CEWIGO supports me as I intend to run for woman Member of Parliament.” -- Jane Asiimwe, Kasese District

“Through lobbying and advocacy, Kyenjojo district council elected a female vice chairperson un-opposed." - Ruth Katabarwa - Caucus leader, Kyenjojo district

“Being a youth councilor and a first timer in council, I was terribly afraid of council sessions. Everyone looked so mature. Thanks to CEWIGO’s trainings, I am now very confident and able participate in council. Long live CEWIGO.”
Agatha Kabatsyaba, Youth Councillor, Ibanda district

“I wrote a proposal to the office of the Prime Minister under Luweero – Rwenzori Development Programme. The proposal was under the group of Kabunganyanja catering group in Kibiito sub-county. We sought the purchase of tents, chairs, sauce pans and other cutlery for outside catering business. The group comprises of 50 members. Our proposal was approved for funding of Ushs.20,000,000 /=. In the same spirit I wrote another proposal for Ijunju Women’s Group in Kibiito sub-country and am waiting for it to be approved”.
Amina Kajja, District Councillor Kabarole District

I attended CEWIGO’s training workshops in 2010 and 2011. The facilitators kept emphasizing the need for women to stand on the direct seat. I gathered courage and decided to stand on the direct seat in my constituency. I was nominated as the flag bearer for NRM despite getting a lot of resistance from the area MP, chairman LC3 and 5. Through it all, I made it, thanks to the skills that CEWIGO gave us on how to win an election. Some of the challenges I faced during my campaign period were resistance from fellow women, being single, people thought that I was too young, the demand for money by the local people since MPs and chairpersons were injecting in a lot of money. I really thank CEWIGO for its endless support to bring as many women on board as possible. Long live CEWIGO.
Jeninah Kaggwa, Direct Councillor Bushenyi district

Because of the skills I acquired from CEWIGO, I managed to form an association of women with disabilities in Bushenyi district. Formerly we had an association of both women and men funded by NUDIPU. I used the skill of mobilization to gather women with disabilities and formed our own association called Bushenyi Union of women with disabilities. As I speak we have got funding from NUWODU and a project officer.
Justine Burisadi, Councillor representing PWDs in Bushenyi district
Following CEWIGO’s workshop held in May 2013, I managed to use the knowledge and skills acquired to lobby and advocate for my constituents. A school in Nyabubare sub county called Kihungye Primary School was affected by heavy rain. The roof was blown off and the children had no classes to study from. I lobbied the district planner who advised me to write a letter with photos of the school to the CAO. The CAO addressed the issues as an emergency case. A reallocation was internally made and 100 iron sheets were purchased for the school. Thank you CEWIGO.

Peace Tibakuna, Councillor - Bushenyi district

It was on 25th December 2013 when a man known as Barisigaara Edward raped a girl called Janet Matsiko. I had earlier attended a workshop with CEWIGO where we were taught about GBV and some of the legal framework. I helped the girl get to hospital in time for medical check up. The results were positive and the man was sentenced to one year in jail. However, to my disappointment he was released before the end of the one year. We met in the caucus and I explained the situation to the other women. Together we approached the LC1 and 3 Chairpersons who called a village meeting. A letter was written to the DPC, copied to the RDC, state attorney, woman MP and District MP. In the letter, it was communicated that if the rapist was not sent back to jail then the community members would riot. As per now, the rapist is in jail and the girl is back to her studies.

Jesca Arinaitwe Barya, Councillor - Isingiro district.

At first I was very shy, I couldn’t even move a motion in council but now things have changed. I have reformed and learnt the importance of keeping caucus secrets. Because of the boost in my confidence my electorates are really proud of me because of the meetings that I schedule. During those meetings I sensitize communities using some of the knowledge that I gained from CEWIGO for example that women too can own land, and that it is wrong for a man to sell property without the consent of his wife and that domestic violence is a punishable crime.

Vasta Kemirembe, Councillor Ibanga district

I am a deputy speaker and in this position I cannot sit on committees where recommendations are proposed to be forwarded to council for approval. I had a problem on how to get my emoluments after being deleted from the pay roll by public service. I talked to council about my problem but no one seemed to care. It was not until after CEWIGO’s training that we formed the caucus. I tabled my issue in the caucus and together we agreed that if I am not budgeted for in the supplementary budget then we would not support the budget. Together as the women caucus we brought it to council. We moved a motion and I was given fuel, airtime and an allowance per month. The caucus has really helped us.

Juliet Kamushana Atuhairwe, Deputy Speaker Mbarara district

Before CEWIGO’s training we were so much in the dark. The chairperson would give us reports during the council sessions and immediately we would skip to the recommendation’s section. In CEWIGO’s training workshop we were sensitized that we had to be given the report at least seven days prior to council session. I moved a motion to have the reports give to us 7 days prior to council and I got the support of the majority. Since then, things have changed in council. I am really proud to have been trained by CEWIGO.

Kakyara Justine Mwesigye, Councillor – Mbarara district
The Centre for Women in Governance (CEWIGO) is a political but non-partisan, non-profit, NGO established in 2006 in Uganda. It is committed to the promotion of effective and equal participation of women and men in all spheres and at all levels of decision making. CEWIGO’s office is located in Kampala the capital city of Uganda.

Our mission is to mobilize and build a critical mass of purposeful and effective women leaders with capacity to influence the governance agenda at different levels through training, research, documentation and advocacy.

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