

ActionAid International Uganda

Mubende Women Protection Centre

Women Economic Empowerment Project (WEE)

PHOTO JOURNAL



act:onaid



Members of Gayaza Friends Group pose for a group photo near their bee keeping enterprise in Bagezza sub-county.



ActionAid
International Uganda
Mubende Women
Protection Centre
Women Economic
Empowerment Project
(WEE)

act!onaid



STORIES OF CHANGE

Project overview

In Mubende district, ActionAid International Uganda with support from UKAid, piloted the Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) Project to uplift the most vulnerable women in the three sub-counties of Bagezza, Butolooogo and Myanzi. The project operated for two years since 2018.

To benefit from this project, women groups were formed. The target beneficiaries were survivors, **persons** living with physical disabilities, those living with HIV/AIDS, single mothers, **teenage mothers**, **and** widows. The secondary beneficiaries were the spouses of these women because involving men was crucial for the success of this project. Otherwise empowering women without engaging their spouses in positive masculinities would be counterproductive as some men would assume their power in homes was being challenged. The **spouses** of the **beneficiaries** were trained in positive masculinity **regular** sessions discussing different





Allen Bazibafite, 50, is a survivor of gender-based violence who benefited from ActionAid's WEE project. As a member of the Kisagazi Twezimbe Development Group which farms Irish potatoes as a business in Butoloo.

topics ranging from prevention of GBV, how to use power in home, decision making in homes, how to bring up children in home, being engaged in activities together as a family. **The women's capacities were enhanced through various trainings and these included gender and rights training, life skills training and economic literacy training. The groups chose their business enterprises which included maize farming, piggery, confectionery, poultry keeping, bee keeping, catering services, tents and chairs business, and irish potato growing and were taken through enterprise tailored trainings after which they were supported with startup items.** In addition, individual women in these groups have gone ahead to **start up small businesses such as establishment of market stalls in their compounds selling tomatoes, vegetables, silver fish (mukene), and small merchandise shops.** This has enabled women rise income and contribute to the economic welfare of their homes as well as building a saving culture thereby reducing domestic violence that was occasioned by poverty. Eventually, this has contributed to expansion of women economic empowerment component to other survivors.

Even when Covid-19 happened, women were trained in diversification because to contain the spread of Covid-19 some control measures negatively affected some enterprises like tents and chairs as well as outside catering services since mass gatherings for functions were banned. Women who were doing these enterprises quickly adapted to other businesses like **confectionary, backyard gardening of vegetables, tailoring, poultry farming, etc.**

Ritah Nanyonga, Technical Officer WEE Project, says in the two years the project has been running women have been empowered as seen in their enthusiasm to start small businesses that were formerly not in their villages. This project aimed at breaking the cycle of poverty and dependency among the most vulnerable members of the communities. "We wanted them to realize that even as a single mother, a widow or a PWD can come up with enterprises that support their families economically. That even as a married woman you can start a small business that can generate **income** to support the family and reduce the burden of providing on your husband," says Nanyonga.

Background to the project

WEE project was started as a pilot project in 2018 to supplement the Support Uganda's **Response to Gender Equality (SURGE)** project. The WEE project was started purposely to study if there is stability in homes if women were economically empowered; and determine if there is tremendous change in poverty situation in homes of beneficiaries.

Before embarking on the WEE pilot project, ActionAid conducted a study in 2017 about the link between poverty and domestic violence. The findings showed that poverty one of the contributing factors to gender-based violence. For example, a man whose source of income is to sell snacks and on a bad day he doesn't make any sell. He returns home, the wife requests him to buy salt and soap. But he has no cash not even savings. The wife doesn't believe him thinking that he



Some of the members of Kalagala Women Farmer's Group going to dig in their maize garden. Through unity of purpose, women in Bagezza sub-county have learnt to save some money. Out of these savings, a number of women have been able to start small income generating businesses like selling tomatoes, onions, and bananas among other basic household food stuff.

squandered the little he earned on other women. A fight ensues.

To avoid such episodes of GBV, the study recommended that methods that aim at empowering women economically, spouse communication skills, rights awareness, etc. be considered in projects and programmes that ActionAid carried out. This led to the WEE pilot project.

For the two years the pilot project has existed, the results have been impressive. Women have been empowered to believe in themselves, to change their attitude that it's men who have to always provide for the family, now can operate their own small businesses and save money for future use in their homes and supplement their husbands in meeting the economic needs in their homes like contributing to buying basic household needs like salt, soap, kerosene, buying scholastic materials for their children, paying for medical bills, etc. And the men feel relieved, happy and appreciative for the support from their wives as explained in the stories of change below.

STORIES OF CHANGE FROM PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

BAGEZZA SUB-COUNTY



A bumper harvest makes farmers to smile as they hope for more money. Happy faces of some of the members of Kaalagala Women Farmer's Group in Bagezza Sub-county, Nubende District. The group has been growing maize for the last two seasons and plan to do so in the coming years.



Kalagala Women Farmers' Group changes lives

When Mackline Tumusiime joined the Kalagala Women Farmers' Group in Bagezza sub-county, Mubende District, she could hardly speak in public. She was always intimidated by standing in front of a gathering and address people on a particular issue. At the end of 2018 she joined the group of 15 to farm maize on the 10 acres of land they had rented. It is while in this group that Tumusiime learnt social skills in communication, self-esteem, confidence, economic literacy and believing in herself. Armed with the lessons she learnt, now she is the chairperson of the group.

In the first season, **this group, which is** being supported by two men who help them cut the huge grass in the garden, had a bumper harvest from 10 acres of maize they farmed from which they harvested 40 bags of maize grain and sold Shs6 million. They saved some of this money, shared some among themselves and reinvested another Shs800,000 to rent four acres of land to grow maize which will be ready for harvest by end of July 2020.

To kick start them, ActionAid gave the farmers start-up items including hand hoes, 100kg of maize seeds, gum boots, slashers, tarpaulins, etc. on top of

providing agricultural extension services. The farmers had to find money to rent land.

"The members are happy with the progress we are making," says Tumusiime. The women used their dividends to buy goats, pigs, chicken to rear, selling children's clothes and start vegetable market stalls as individuals. This is further helping them to generate more income.

The members of Kalagala Women Farmers' Group also have a money saving scheme whereby each member saves Shs5000 per month. Once the savings have accumulated to some substantial amount, they lend to members who live within the community at a small monthly interest rate of 10%.

"I thank ActionAid for this project because before women were not so much considered. We lack self-confidence, money and domestic violence was rampant in our homes. Since we joined this group, we **have** improved our lives, women now own small businesses, poverty in homes is reducing and violence in homes have reduced. When we began working our husbands were happy and they now support us," says Tumusiime.

Sauda Nabukeera and her husband are now living happily

Sauda Nabukeera is 25 years old woman living in Kalagala, Bagezza Sub-county, Mubende District. She is married to Badru Kule, a village imam, who never allowed his wife to do any income generating business. Mr. Kule was worried that if his wife, Sauda, would earn money she would become big-headed in the home.

Because of this attitude of Kule, Sauda would always till the land, plant some beans, eat some and store the surplus for sale. Often times, Sauda would return home from the garden only to find her husband had sold her beans and eaten the money. Whenever she would quiz him over the missing beans and the need to reimburse her money, Kule would become violent. Sometimes when Sauda would not stand such humiliation and violence she would temporarily leave her husband going back to her parents' house.

Sauda had always wanted to do a business that would bring her daily income in order to improve on her household's economic situation. So when Sauda attended an economic literacy and women empowerment training by ActionAid, it became a spark that ignited her passion. After the training she got her Shs10,000 walked to a bigger market in Mubende town bought tomatoes. She displayed them in the verandah of her home which is on the roadside. Sooner than later the buyers were taking her tomatoes. At the end of the day she had sold all her tomatoes made a profit of Shs5,000. Sauda used Shs2000 of the profit to buy salt and other needed food stuffs at home without necessarily bothering her husband. She returned to the big market in town with Shs13,000 and again bought more tomatoes. After selling the tomatoes from her compound, she decided to use the

profits to build a makeshift stall. As the customers increased, they started asking for other food stuffs like onions, cabbage, silver fish which she didn't have. An idea came to her mind. She wanted to open a bigger stall with more stuff to sell. Her husband rejected the idea reasoning that other men will take her away from him.

"I told him that even while I am at home those men he worried of would find her," Sauda says. Anyway, Sauda decided to buy more stuff without her husband's input and against his wishes. After selling, she brought the profits at the table where her money was, telling him that is the money she had made from the market and that she would use some of it to buy a few chickens and the rest inject it back into her market business.

"At this, my husband was happy, and told me to go ahead," said Sauda. Since then Sauda has not looked back. Her stall is operating well and after her husband realized there is money in trading, he decided to establish a small merchandise shop next to her vegetables stall. It's now her husband who uses his motorcycle to shop tomatoes, onions, carrots, cabbages, mukene for her stall; and other merchandise for the shop. Sauda and her husband Kule now work together for the betterment of their family.

Sauda is happy being a member of Kalagala Women Farmers' Group from which she borrowed some money to inject in her business at low interest rates and start a retail shop.

"The ActionAid WEE project through their training sessions has helped me improve my family life since me and my husband are now working together, supporting each other. They taught best farming practices, which I am applying to generate more income from agriculture," Sauda testified, adding that: "Looking forward, our future looks bright and women's group has taught me that saving some money however little is important."

Sauda Nabukeera at her tomato stall. It took serious convincing of her husband to allow her do this income generating activity. Her husband Badru Kule was afraid Sauda would become big-headed if she started earning some money of her own. Thanks to ActionAid WEE project Kule was engaged in positive masculinity sessions and reformed.





Badru Kule now appreciates having his wife working and contributing to home's economic welfare.

Kule reformed, now supports his wife to do business

Badru Kule was invited with other religious leaders by ActionAid in Mubende to train about preventing gender-based violence. In this training, he learnt that women should be treated fairly and in a home both husband and wife have to support and respect each other.

“Before this training in GBV I knew that in a home me as a man my word was final. We were young in age and having our own egos. I knew that I am the man in the home. I used to take any opposition to my decisions as undermining my authority in a home I would beat her into line,” says Kule, adding that; “But from the ActionAid training I learnt that both husband and wife have equal power in the home. Learning this has helped me reduce my ego. We now sit down in our home, decide together, plan for our money, work together as husband and wife. This has contributed to peace and development in our home.”

PWD recovers her land and self-belief

Malita Nakalega is a person living with disability (PWD) used to think she was left behind and being discriminated against in all aspects of life. That was before Action Aid WEE project intervened to change her attitude towards work. Being a PWD some community members were mistreating her and grabbed her plot of land. A man who impregnated her later abandoned her and the child because the community members were scorning him for siring a child with a PWD. Malita approached Action Aid for help. She was counselled and helped to recover her land. She is now able till her land and plant crops from which she can sell to get money. Malita is thankful to Action Aid for uplifting her status and for supporting Kalagala Women Farmers' Group for which she is a member.

"Thanks to Action Aid I have learnt to live without depending on a man for support, and I have new friends in our farmers' group," says Malita.



Malita Nakalega at her home

Abbas Sibanza supports Kalagala Women Farmers Group. He is an example of positive masculinities. Abbas calls on all men to work together with their wives.





Sulaiman now cooperates with his wife

Abbas Sibanza Sulaiman is a spouse to one of the members of Kalagala Women Farmers Group. Sulaiman thanks ActionAid for training the people of this group. “Before my wife had joined this group I didn’t know that a woman can also sit with her husband around the table and decide how the family’s money should be used. I didn’t **know** the responsibilities of a man and those of a woman in a home. Before I was not believing that a woman can own property. Before, most of us men would not allow our wives to operate income generating businesses,” says Sulaiman.

“But now thanks to ActionAid’s WEE project that I learnt that a woman can decide together with her husband on **how** to use their resources. I now know that women can own property and conduct business activities. In my home now my wife helps me to meet some responsibilities because she started a small business from which **she** can get money to buy salt at home. This cooperation at home makes us stay peaceful and plan our activities well for the better of our home and children. We now enjoy our family life. We now respect and support each other in our homes.”

Men in the group help women as well wishers. In this particular group they cut the bushes, lifting the harvest.

Sulaiman lists low prices of the maize and poor road network which makes it expensive to reach better markets. Sometime climatic changes are making it hard for farmers to get better yields at harvest.

Gayaza Friends Group Lifting up the vulnerable



Members of Gayaza Friends Group and their male supporters pose for a group photo on July 28, 2020. The group's main enterprise is bee keeping.



The main enterprise of Gayaza Friends Group is bee keeping in Kyejunga, Gayaza parish, Bagezza Sub-county, Mubende District. The group has 12 members who comprise of most vulnerable women like widows, persons living with HIV/AIDS, persons with disabilities (PWDs), single mothers, teenage mothers and survivors of gender-based violence. Some of the reformed men help these women with some activities.

Established in 2018, Gayaza Friends Group was supported by ActionAid WEE project with training in economic literacy, entrepreneurship skills, life skills, and gender rights among others. In addition to providing this group with bee keeping extension services, ActionAid WEE project supported this with 25 bee hives, smokers, bee suits, catcher boxes, smokers, buckets for collecting honey, gun boots, sun flower seeds, etc.

According to the group chairperson Beatrice Kabuwo, 13 of their hives now have bees and they recently harvested **five** bee hives getting at least 10 litres of honey. In the market, each litre of honey is sold at Shs20,000.

Beatrice is grateful to the WEE project and ActionAid for remembering and lifting the most vulnerable people in the society. Beatrice, 40, is a widow looking after her 8 children. She says her group agreed to start bee keeping in order to create a steady flow of income in their homes. "We hope to get money from bee keeping when all hives are fully established with bees," says Beatrice. The group harvested their first honey on July 27, 2020.

"With time, we will get money from this business," says Beatrice. **"Thanks to ActionAid women are now able to do income generating businesses without depending on men for economic survival,"** she said.



A member of Gayaza Friends Group holding her gear ready to harvest honey.



Some of the members of Gayaza Friends Group harvesting honey. The honey is processed and sold. Money from honey sales is put into the group's saving scheme.





*Beatrice Kabuwo,
Chairperson of Gayaza
Friends Group is happy
with ActionAid WEE project*



*Mary Asaba is a widow and member of Gayaza Friends Group.
She now lives a stress-free life as she runs her small business*

Widow starts business with Shs20,000

Women have no access to factors of production like land and capital. This leaves them in perpetual poverty and vulnerable to abuse. To bridge the gap, WEE project aimed at empowering women **to do businesses from which they can** earn some money and look after their family. This led to the establishment of Gayaza Friends Group where women were taught how **to save money for future investment.**

Asaba Mary is a widow aged 48 looking after two children. As a member of Gayaza Friends Group Mary attended training session organized by WEE project on economic literacy and how to identify business opportunities within their communities.

From her savings with this group, Mary started frying cassava with Shs20,000 which she would sell to school children. She would get a profit of Shs6000 at the end of

the day. From this profit she would save Shs1000 daily for her daughter's school fees who is **in** Senior 3.

"I am now living a financial stress-free life. I am grateful to ActionAid WEE project for teaching **us** the business skills. I am making mats as well. Before ActionAid came **to my rescue**, women were so poor waiting on men to provide for their every need. Today, many women are running small businesses and saving money for future life," says Mary.

However, her business was disrupted by Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. But she has not folded hands before. Mary is now trading in bananas selling to neighbours **at** a profit. When she needs to increase her capital Mary borrows from her group at very low interest rate

Men supporting women

Men testify that their women have improved in discipline and home management

Mukethi Mukubi is a male supporter of the Gayaza Friends Group. He says as a result of ActionAid WEE project, women are now behaving well in their homes and they are contributing to economic welfare. "I am thankful to ActionAid for this project, because homes are now peaceful, husbands and wives are working together. The group members also are invited by the Village authorities to give counselling services to the other homes having domestic violence," Mukethi said.



Mukubi Mukethi is an example of men who have been turned around to support women social progress. Mr Mukethi supports women of Gayaza Friends Group with the menial labour that is too hard for women. He is an outstanding example of positive masculinity and calls on men to work together with women to achieve better economic progress in homes.



Members of Mugungulu Twegaffe Group wash chairs in preparation for business after Covid-19 lockdown restriction relaxation.

Mugungulu Twegatte Group



Members of Mugungulu Twegatte Group



Tents and chairs for hire is now a booming business in Uganda as communities hold different functions. Members of Mugungulu Twegatte Group in Bagezza Sub-county, Mubende District identified this opportunity and chose the tents and chairs business.

Nabulime Joyce is the chairperson of Mugungulu Twegatte Group. Joyce says women in were experiencing a lot of gender-based violence before ActAid WEE project intervention.

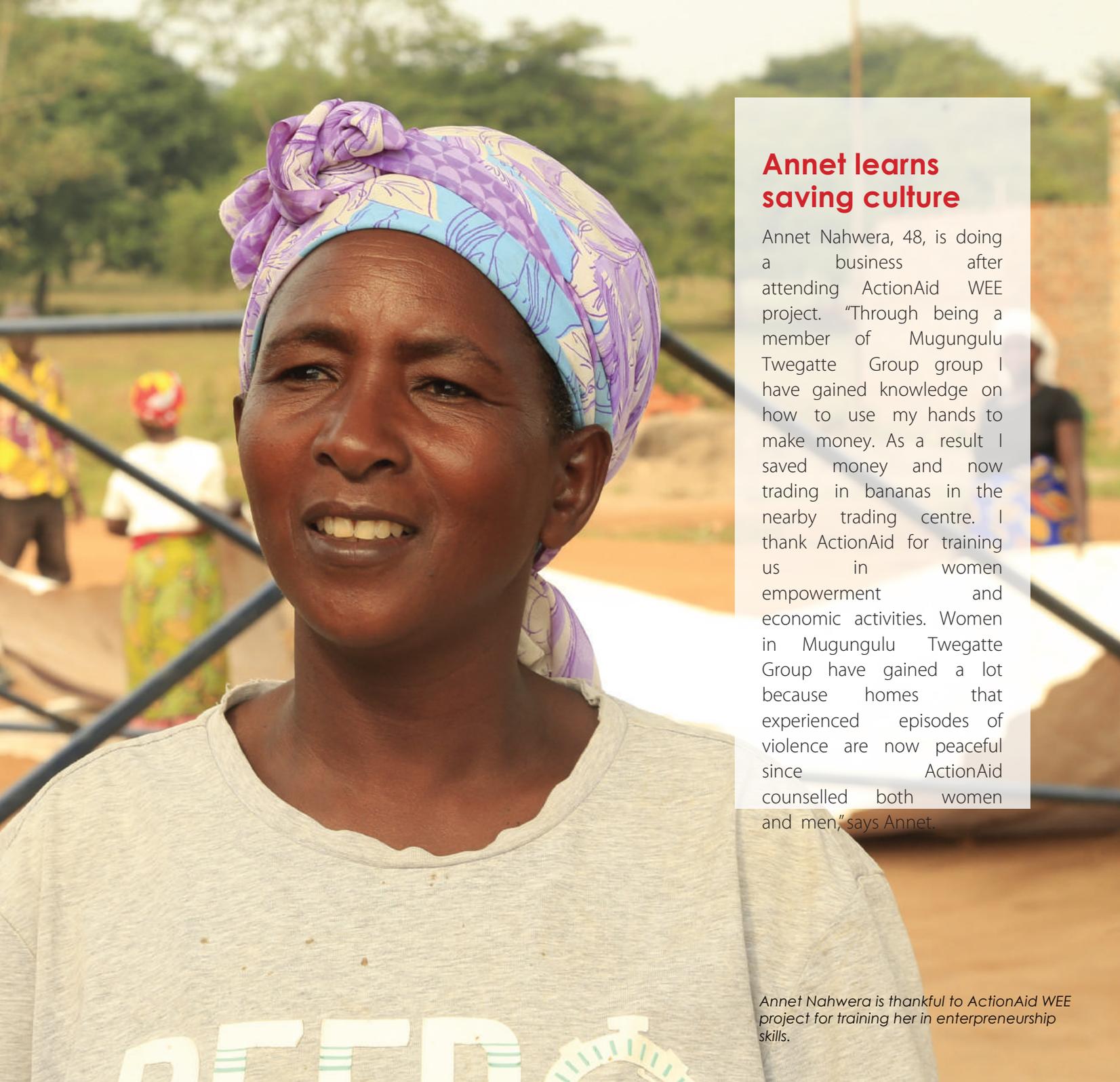
“After we got tents and chairs from ActionAid, domestic violence has reduced as both women and men are working together for better economic welfare of their homes. Now in our homes, if a man buys food, the waoman can buy salt,” says Joyce.

“It is now common that both husband and wife in the home are jointly planning their money. This is helping in fighting poverty in homes. Women now believe in themselves and have set a good example of working together as women. Our group is now well-known in the subcounty;” she says.

ActionAid supported this group with two tents (100-seater tent and 50-seater tent) and 150 chairs. They hire tents at Shs170,000 per event. Had it not been for Covid-19 lockdown restrictions which banned mass gatherings, Mugungulu Twegatte Group would be making more money. “By the time of the Covid-19 lockdown we had managed to save Shs500,000 from our tents and chairs business,” says Joyce.

Just like other groups, the Mugungulu Twegatte Group members were first trained in economic literacy and empowerment. Joyce says that women benefited much from these trainings as a number of her group members have gone ahead to start small scale businesses like selling vegetables and rearing chickens, keeping goats and pigs for business.





Annet learns saving culture

Annet Nahwera, 48, is doing a business after attending ActionAid WEE project. "Through being a member of Mugungulu Twegatte Group group I have gained knowledge on how to use my hands to make money. As a result I saved money and now trading in bananas in the nearby trading centre. I thank ActionAid for training us in women empowerment and economic activities. Women in Mugungulu Twegatte Group have gained a lot because homes that experienced episodes of violence are now peaceful since ActionAid counselled both women and men," says Annet.

Annet Nahwera is thankful to ActionAid WEE project for training her in entrepreneurship skills.

Local political leader praises WEE project

Bagezza Subcounty chairperson, Ali Ayebazibwe, thanks ActionAid for starting the Women Economic Empowerment **project** because it has uplifted women who are vulnerable. “Thanks to ActionAid for coming up with such a project because it is helping women to earn money and address poverty issues in their families. Before this group started, there were high rates of domestic violence in this area. Every week we would receive cases of domestic violence and on examining most of the cases, lack of money in homes would be the cause for violence in homes. Today we take up to three weeks without getting any domestic violence case reported. Women are earning money and supporting their husbands. Remember when there is no money in the family and then there is demand for basic needs sometimes quarrels over such can lead to violence,” says Ali.

Ali Ayebazibwe, the LCIII chairperson of Bagezza Subcounty says gender-based violence has reduced in his area since the intervention of ActionAid WEE project.





Saveri Kakooza demonstrates how he helps members of Mugungulu Twegatte Group to pitch a tent.

Saveri supports women of Mugungulu Twegatte Group

Saveri Kakooza is an outstanding example of a **beneficiary of regular sessions on positive male masculinities** in Mugungulu Twegatte Group. Saveri helps women in this group to pitch tents and lifting heavy stuff. “While supporting women, I have learnt that when a man

and his wife work together as a team, they can develop their family very first,” says Saveri. “When a woman supplements provision of basic needs in the home, pressure on the husband’s meagre resources reduces,” he says, adding that men should work with their wives and children to fight poverty in their homes.

Jackline reunited with husband

Jackline Mulebwaire, 38, is a survivor of gender-based violence. The father of her five children eloped with another woman and began to beat her and neglected supporting children. Jackline sought ActionAid intervention and later got reunited with the family. "My husband is now supportive. He pays school fees for the children and now we work together," says Jackline.

She is a member of Mugungulu Twegatte Group and is happy with the tent and chairs business. "I am happy for this business because whenever there is a function, we make money as group," says Jackline. "Because of this group I have learnt to save money and when my savings increase I will start a business," she said.





Jackline Mulebwaire is happy with ActionAid WEE project since she can now run her own small business and support her children financially.



Bugomba Model Group members in Butuloogo subcounty pose with Ritah Nanyonga (centre wearing glasses), the Action Aid WEE Project technical officer, during a field visit.



BUTOLOOGO SUBCOUNTY

Bugomba Model Group

Judith Bashabomwe used to be hot-tempered and rude to her husband. When she joined the Bugomba Model Group, Judith benefited from training on prevention of gender-based violence and economic literacy. “I did not know that the man is the head of the family. Because my husband was an alcoholic I **did** not listen to him most of the time. ActionAid counselled my husband and now we are living happily,” says Judith.

From the economic literacy training, Judith learnt that a woman is supposed to have an income generating activity. During the training Judith remembered she had long ago acquired tailoring skills in the 1990. She began to save to acquire a sewing machine. Each day she saves money and waits for three months to count her total savings. Recently she counted her saving and she had Shs480,000. In her home Judith pays school fees for all their 6 children.

During the Covid-19 lockdown measures, Judith has found gold in sewing masks which she sells to the gold miners in the nearby villages of Kasanda District.

“I am happy and thankful to ActionAid, for training us because before I would not speak in public as a woman but now whenever there is a domestic violence issue within the community I am always called to come and provide counselling and settle the fighting couple,” Judith says.



Hasifa Nabacwa displays some of her chickens from which she earns some money to support her family.

Hasifa keeps chickens as a business

Hasifa Nabacwa as a member of Bugomba Model Group, also benefited from ActionAid WEE project training on economic literacy. She picked interest in modern farming practices. She now keeps **poultry** for sale. Part of the money gained from this business

is used in meeting her household needs and the rest is reinvested in buying more chickens. She also farms beans and maize. She can now ably pay for her children's school fees and medical care.



Judith Bashabomwe, chairperson of Bugomba Model Group in Butoloogo subcounty displays one of the dresses she tailors. She has also seized the opportunity presented by COVID-19 pandemic to make masks which she sells to gold miners.





Twezimbe Women's Group Cooking as a business





Members of Twezimbe Women's Group display a sample of the cuisine that has made them the most sought after caterers in their parish.

Located in Buganyi Village, Kalama Parish, Butologo Sub-county, Mubende district Twezimbe Women's Group has made a name for itself as the best catering enterprise in the area. The members of Twezimbe Women's Group who comprise widows, single mothers, survivors of GBV, persons living with HIV/AIDS and persons living with disabilities settled for outside catering as a business. They cook food at functions like wedding parties, birthday parties and burial functions among others for a fee. ActionAid under the WEE project supported this group with sauce pans of all sizes, serving dishes and spoons, etc.

Before getting into catering services, the members of Twezimbe were trained in economic literacy, gender rights and empowerment. They learnt about saving culture and

how to start an income generating activity using available money however little. The group was established in 2018. For the four months this group had operated before Covid-19 lockdown measures banned public functions where outside catering services are needed, members of Twezimbe Women's Group had offered their services at three places and now has Shs400,000 on their bank account.

Their catering fees depend on the size and expected attendance of the function with the minimum fees being Shs150,000 per day and the highest is Shs300,000. According to the group chairperson, Faith Nakamya, for every function they provide with catering services, a fixed amount of Shs100,000 is saved, the rest of money is shared by members to buy soap and other basic needs at home.



A landscape of Kalama in Butologo sub-county, Mubende District

The group is now well known in the parish and their catering equipment is sometimes hired. “Our husbands are now encouraging us to carry on because they have seen the results of our work,” says Nakamya. “The community is satisfied with our catering services and the demand is increasing. Thanks to ActionAid WEE project for lifting up the women in our community.”

Single mother adapts by laying bricks

When 47 year-old Specioza Nankya separated with her husband life was difficult. She rented a room nearby her marital home but sometimes she could not afford a meal. One day she was selected among the women who were to form Twezimbe Women’s Group. This became a turning point in Specioza’s life as ActionAid WEE project trained her in economic literacy skills, life skills and gender equality and rights.

“From this training I learnt that as a woman I have the ability to change my economic situation without waiting for a man,” Specioza recalls. After this training, her group chose catering as their main enterprise. The group was trained in how to prepare different food dishes for parties and other ceremonies in their communities. Soon Specioza made friends in her group and she no longer felt lonely. She had found a new family as they would work as a group when a cooking business presented itself.

However, after cooking at four different functions, Covid-19 pandemic caused the Uganda Government to ban mass gatherings of people including parties and funerals that provided money to Specioza and her group members. This sudden turn of events threatened Specioza’s main source of livelihood.



Specioza Nankya now makes bricks to adapt to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions on outside catering.



Faith Nakomya, the chairperson of Twezimbe Women's Group, is optimistic that soon the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions on public functions will soon be over and resume the business of cooking.

Quickly, she remembered that their facilitator had taught them how to use hands to earn a living. Specioza decided to go to a brick laying ground, where she asked for a plot of land that she could use to make bricks. "The owner of ground and the boys who worked there laughed at me trying to scare me that I would not even manage let alone finish a day because I had no built body muscles," Specioza narrates her ordeal. But these men were proved wrong. Specioza was determined to work and earn money without waiting on any man to provide for her.

Within a two months she had laid 7,500 brick and sold

5,000 at Shs500,000 gave 1,100 bricks to the owner of the ground as rent and the remainder was damaged as she burnt them. She saved Shs300,000 and used the rest to settle her domestic needs. "I am happy and thankful to ActionAid for this women economic empowerment training. I am now confident, and can work for myself," says Specioza. She is laying more bricks to build her own house.

Woman buys goat from cooking savings

Nagitta Bena is a survivor of GBV. Her husband had neglected her and children. He was not fulfilling his responsibilities.

He would not use his money to support his family members. Bena joined Twezimbe Women's Group to start catering services. Before choosing the catering enterprise, Bena and her group were trained by ActionAid WEE project on economic literacy, prevention of GBV, and self-confidence. Her husband is now supportive. Bena is saving money and has bought a goat from the money she saves when her group shares proceeds from catering services.

Saverina Nyirimana recovers her land

Being a widow in Uganda is never easy. Relatives of the deceased usually grab property of the widows and orphans because of greed. The same unfortunate incident happened to Saverina Nyirimana. Her land of 15 acres was grabbed not this time by relatives but some greedy landlord who claimed she did not have land title deed. Those who sold her the land had wanted to grab it.

ActionAid Mubende office mediated this land conflict and managed to help Saverina recover her land and got a title deed for it. Saverina now lives happily and is utilizing her land growing crops. She is also a member of Twezimbe Women's Group.

From farming this land, Saverina has managed to pay the education of her two children who have finished Ordinary Level of education. She also vends tomatoes and other vegetables. "I no longer lack salt or soap in my house because I have income generating businesses. For this, I am thankful to ActionAid for educating about how to start business, and how we as women can believe in our abilities," says Saverina.

Saverina Nyirimana



Kisagazi Twezimbe Development Group

Allen Bazibafite, 50, is a survivor of gender-based violence (GBV). Her husband was violent, an alcoholic found of selling family property like goats, chickens, crops, and land among others to buy himself alcohol. Allen was fed up with his lifestyle yet whenever she talked to him to change his behavior, her husband would quarrel and beat her.

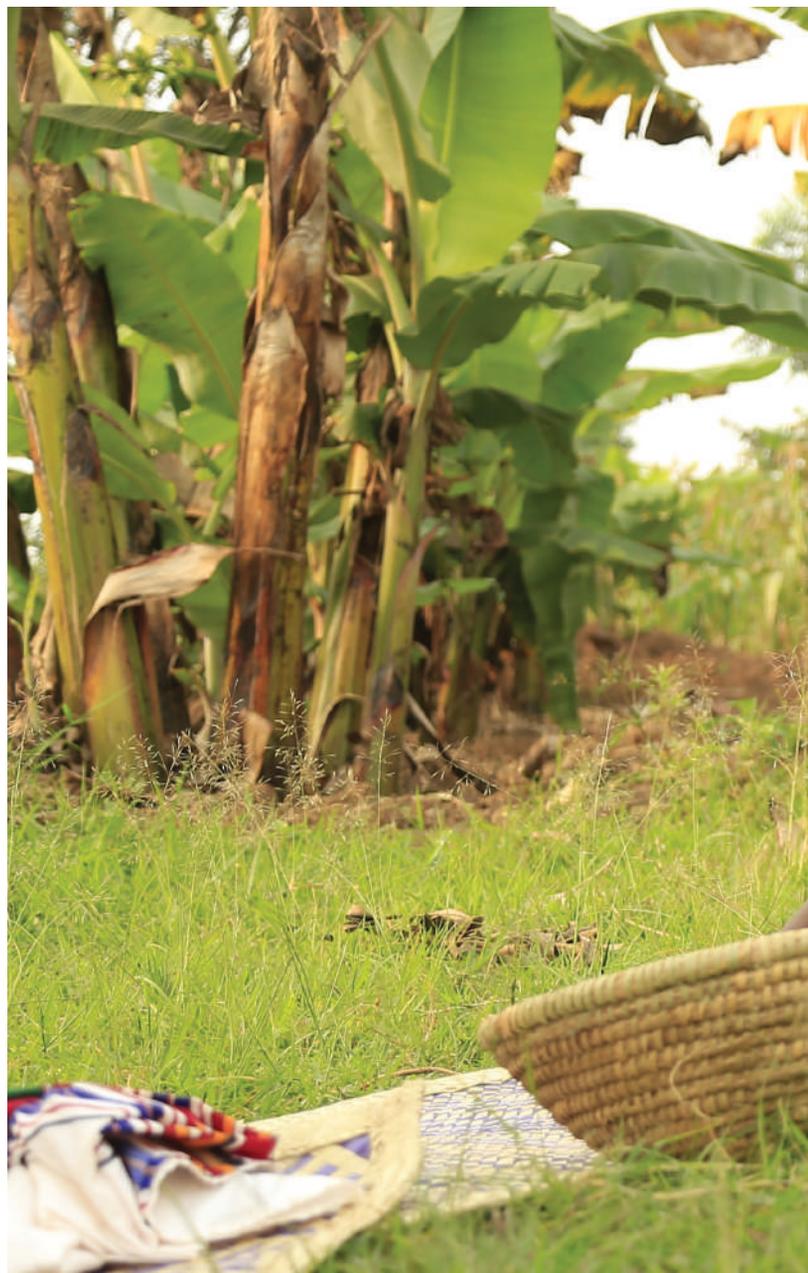
To resolve this, Allen decided to separate with her husband with whom she had six children. Soon after Allen left, her husband began selling land. She reported him to the local council court but she was not helped.

In spite of this setback, Allen did not give up. She took the matter to ActionAid Mubende, which helped her and her children regain their land. Allen is now a member of the Kisagazi Twezimbe Development Group which farms Irish potatoes as a business. Being a member of this group, Allen benefited from ActionAid WEE project. She found new friends in this group and now saves money with this group. Allen has established a tomato stall which helps her to get some income.

"I am grateful to ActionAid for helping the vulnerable persons get justice," says Allen.

PWD weaves baskets to earn some money

Nabawanuka Sitenda was born with physical disabilities in her left hand, and both legs are paralyzed. Sitenda also has speech impairment. She cannot talk properly. When she was born her father abandoned her. It is her brother





Nabawanuka Sitenda weaves baskets for money.

Benon Tweekwase who takes care of her.

Sitenda had been weaving baskets as hobby. She uses her right hand to weave. Sitenda has no wheelchair. She moves crawling on her knees.

When Sitenda joined Kisagazi Twezimbe Development Group, she got trained in economic literacy from ActionAid where she learnt to turn her hobby into a business. After this training, Sitenda now weaves baskets for money where she sells the biggest at Shs10,000.

Women's group reaps big from potato farming

Perepetwa Nakatimbo, chairperson of Kisagazi Twezimbe Development Group in Butologo Sub-county, Mubende District, says after being trained by ActionAid in economic and gender rights, they selected irish potato farming as a business. ActionAid through WEE project provided extension services on how to grow irish potatoes and

provided startup capital of irish patato seeds **totalling** to 30 bags of 100kg including hoes, slashers, fertilizers, etc.

In their first season, the 15 members of Kisagazi Twezimbe Development Group harvested 25 bags for sale and 31 bags for seeds for sale. They sold some of these and got Shs4.5 million. "Our homes have peace because of the gender rights training we received. Women in our group have started earning their own money from their small businesses in addition to what we share from our group. They can now save money regularly, all thanks to ActionAid," says Nakatimbo. In their second season they will plant 9 bags and hope to earn over Shs2,000,000.



Fred Kisakye, Head of Production Department at Mubende District Local Government, shares a light moment with Ritah Nanyonga, WEE Project technical officer, at Mubende District headquarters.



Community leader happy with Action Aid's WEE project

Jafari Kayongo, a Councilor for Kisagazi parish in Butologo Subcounty, Mubende District, appreciates the gender rights and economic literacy training by ActionAid which have helped community members to keep peace in homes and develop themselves. "Before the intervention by ActionAid, there was a lot of gender-based violence orchestrated by men," says Jafari. "Now women are earning some money of their own, they have bought goats, chickens and run different small businesses. When a woman has money in the home, there will be less pressure on the man as the sole provider and hence they will work together as a family, they will be happy. If a woman has made some money she can contribute to paying school fees for their children and the man will appreciate. Since the ActionAid intervention, I have seen couples that used to fight a lot change and now live happily," Jafari said.

Widow makes ends meet vending vegetables

Felista Nasaka is a widow living HIV/AIDS and a member of Kisagazi Twezimbe Development Group. Nasaka too was trained by Action Aid WEE project in entrepreneurship skills which she has put to use. She operates a market stall that sells tomatoes and other vegetables as well as sweet bananas. From the sales she has managed to save Shs10,000 per month with her group. Out of her savings Nasaka has managed to buy three pigs and seven chickens which she taking care of with a hope of making a profit. "I thank ActionAid for the training they gave us since I have managed to take care of myself and my children are going to school. Before this training I did not have an income generating activity, today I have a small business. I also rear pigs as a business which knowledge I acquired from Atcion Aid training," says Nasaka.

Single mother starts poultry business

Jane Nabibsinde is a single mother and member of Kisagazi Twezimbe Development Group. Like other group members, Jane was trained by Action Aid WEE project on entrepreneurship. Using the knowledge acquired from this training, Jane started saving with the group. She acquired a loan from her group to buy 12 broilers. Jane has sold 5 and paid back the loan. She will soon be selling the remaining 7 broilers at a profit of Shs20,000 each.



Members of Kisagazi Twezimbe Development Group display the potato seeds they will planting soon.





MYANZI SUB-COUNTY
Winners Development Group



Eva Nabyonga, is the chairperson of Winners Development Group, which started in December 2018. The group has 12 members and is engaged in piggery. As a single mother of 4 children, Eva has spearheaded her group into monthly savings, and other small businesses to enable women especially widows, persons with disabilities and teenage mother to sustain themselves economically. “Most of these women would not even afford to earn Shs1000 a day by then; implying they were really poor,” says Eva.

All this was made possible by ActionAid’s WEE project which empowered women to believe in themselves and become enterprising. “Before I joined this group, I was always stressed thinking how as a single mother would take care of my children and my family. I did not have a job. Thanks to Action Aid I learnt how to save money and start a business. Now I am able to earn some money, take of my children’s needs like food, education and medical care,” says Eva.

Eva used to despise vending vegetables but after learning that even big businesses started from humble beginnings she established a market stall where she sells vegetables, tomatoes, silver fish, onions and she is happy because of the money derived from this business.

Her group members with the help of their small businesses, are now able to save Shs7000 a month. The group now is into rearing pigs, and now boasts of 15 pigs which will soon produce. Each woman in this group has a day she takes care of the pigs. **The received the piglets in January 2020 from ActionAid WEE project.**



Members of Winners Development Group in-Myanzi



In the past, according to Eva, men would not allow their women to get into business because of attitude and wrong mindset that women in business are morally loose. With training from ActionAid WEE project, the men whose women had reported not being allowed to operate businesses were taught about gender rights and these men became examples of positive masculinity.

"It now good that men are working together with their wives for economic development of their homes. Thanks to ActionAid for this project since the vulnerable and often forgotten women are now making money through their businesses," says Eva.



Yewaina Najobe feeds the pigs of her group.

Nanjobe Yewaina finds joy

Feeding pigs is one of Nanjobe Yewaina hobbies. Since her Winners Development Group started a piggery **project**, Nanjobe has picked interest in looking after pigs.

"After my husband died I was worried how I would survive and support my children, thanks to Action Aid for training us the ordinary Ugandan women in entrepreneurship skills. I hope our piggery business will benefit us a lot when they produce," says Nanjobe



Salongo Kabunga and his wife now happy in their marriage as they work and decide together for the better of their family. Before the intervention of ActionAid WEE project, Salongo used to sell family property without consulting his wife.

Salongo Kabunga now supports his wife

Salongo Kabunga is a bicycle mechanic. Whenever he returned home on a day that he had not got any bicycles to repair his wife would quarrel accusing him of telling lies claiming he had spent the money on other women. Sometimes these quarrels would end in fights. That was not all, Salongo would grab goats from the family's fold and

sell without telling his wife and would eat the money alone. After attending one of the **positive masculinity regular sessions organized by** Action Aid WEE project, Salongo **reformed. Under these sessions different topics such as power in a home, economic development in a home, ending gender-based violence, etc. are discussed** Salongo now supports his wife in farming and they are keeping goats together. "If I want to sell a goat I first consult my wife and we decide how to spend the money. We are now living happily and as a result of working together we have built a new house," says Salongo.

Councilor Kufateka Abdul-Nur

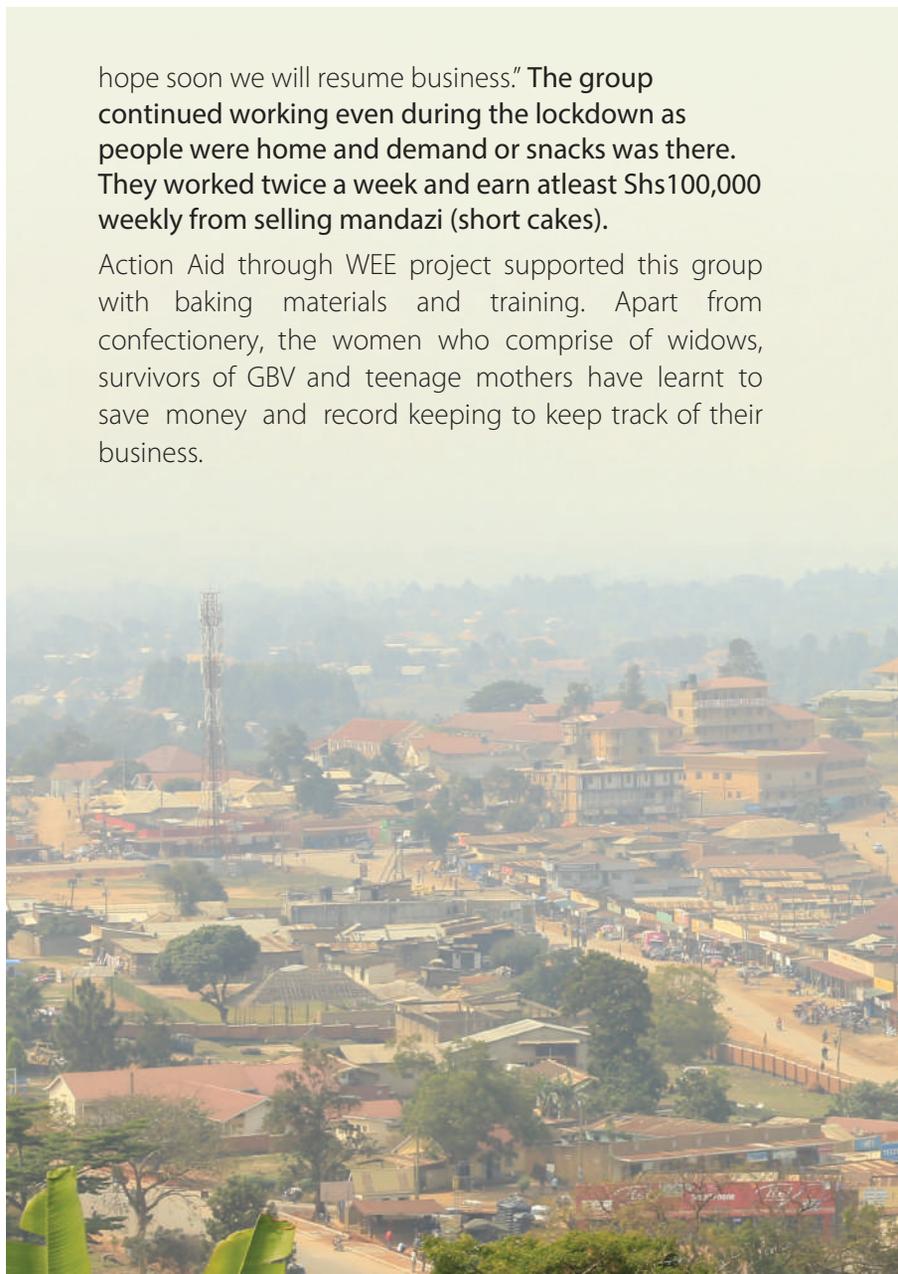
The councilor for Kasaana Parish in Myanzi Sub-county, Abdul-Nur Kufateka, says before ActionAid WEE project intervention men were often beating and mistreating their wives. **“Spouses of women** with a history of gender-based violence were gathered and trained by Action Aid on gender rights and positive masculinity. This training marked the beginning of change in behavior among these men towards women. Today men appreciate women as equal partners,” says Abdul-Nur. “Men now support their wives in farming and the small businesses they do. They now appreciate women for the income generating activities they have started in the homes.”

Bwavu Mpologoma Kasana Development Group bakes money

Veronica Nyanzi is the chairperson of Bwavu Mpologoma Kasana Development Group in Myanzi Sub-county. The group started confectionery as their business. The 12 members of the group bake cakes, mandazi and bagiya which they sell to members of their community. “We thank ActionAid for training us on how to do this business,” says Veronica. “Our business had started picking until Covid-19 lockdown restrictions. We were selling to school children and other members of the community but we

hope soon we will resume business.” **The group continued working even during the lockdown as people were home and demand for snacks was there. They worked twice a week and earn at least Shs100,000 weekly from selling mandazi (short cakes).**

Action Aid through WEE project supported this group with baking materials and training. Apart from confectionery, the women who comprise of widows, survivors of GBV and teenage mothers have learnt to save money and record keeping to keep track of their business.



What Mubende District leaders say

Sanyu Rosette, GBV Coalition Member, says WEE project has empowered women to not only talk and speak in public with confidence but also start small businesses. "When a woman earns some money from her small business, she will not wait for a man to buy some basic needs in the house like soap, salt, clothes for children, etc. and a man will find her not starving," Rosette said.

Earning money in a home helps to reducing gender-based violence because arguments over none availability of money to buy home basics **like food, clothes and medicines**. It's good that a number of women are empowered as they can now believe in themselves that they can run businesses, and save money for future use."



A bird's eyeview of Mubende town



Ssanyu Rosette

Mariam Nagawa, Senior Probation officer at Mubende District Local Government, says ActionAid WEE project has supplement government programmes like Women Empowerment Programme which cannot reach everybody. As a probation officer, Mariam receives gender-based violence cases which her office tries as much as possible to settle.

“We are very grateful to Action Aid for coming up with such a project and we pray that they continue empowering our communities. The WEE project has assisted our women and some men have been involved thereby a sense of ownership has been created within the families,” said Mariam.

The project empowered the most vulnerable women to start income generating activities and therefore improving their



Mariam Nagawa, Senior Probation Officer, Mubende District

income. Hence reduction in gender-based violence. Women suffer gender-based violence to a large extent due to poverty. “Sometimes you find that if a woman is not earning some money there is a lot of violence at home whereby a woman requests everything from the husband which piles financial pressure on him and in some cases end up becoming violent when he cannot afford to provide,” says Mariam.

“This project has built the capacity of women to generate their own income through small businesses. The project trained women in financial literacy, record keeping and saving as well as working as a team. Working together, they can be able to achieve much as opposed to working alone.”

Mariam promised that Mubende District Local Government will continue to monitor, give support and supervision to the women groups formed in the three sub-counties of Bagezza, Butoloogo and Myanzi to ensure continuity.

Fred Kisakye, Head of Production Department at Mubende District



Fred Kisakye

Local Government, appreciates ActionAid for empowering vulnerable women because these women now know where to demand for certain services. “Now that we have been working with women groups we are going to include them in our activities,” says Fred.

“For the last two years we have been working with Action Aid under the WEE project to empower women in agriculture. Majority of Ugandans depend on agriculture as a source of livelihood. We thank ActionAid for the initiative of identifying these women, building their capacity and linking them to us. The lesson for me has been that even those we think are vulnerable people can do a lot if they get proper guidance. These groups are now able to mobilize resources on their own. It is unfortunate that this project is coming to an end, but the next steps are that we can continue to work with these groups, we will pick and use the good practices from the WEE project and use them in our production department to reach out more farmers,” Fred said.



Veronica Nyanzi, the chairperson of Bwavu Mpologoma Kasana Development Group in Myanzi Sub-county, displays some of the short cakes (mandazi) her group makes.



Some of the members of Kalagala Women's Group in Bagezza subcounty on the way from their maize garden.

Change lives. **For good.**

act!onaid

act!onaid