

Women's Contribution to Poverty Eradication: The Missing Link

June 2004

An Isis-WICCE Booklet

Funded by: Heinrich Boll Foundation

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CORRESPONDENCES

The Director,
Isis-WICCE,
Plot 32, Bukoto 4934, Kampala, Uganda
Tel: +256-41-543953
Fax: +256-41-543954
Email: isi@starcom.co.ug
URL: www.isis.or.ug

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Empowerment and Poverty Eradication: The role of Women Leaders

Preface

Poverty and its eradication have been topics of concern for government and the people of Uganda. The government has undertaken different policy initiatives in an effort to involve the population wholly in fighting poverty. The bottom line of these efforts is to have an improved life of the majority of the people to be able to afford the basics of life like food, clothing, medical care and education.

Programmes undertaken by government in this regard included the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA), National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) among others. Although the PEAP programme is to run for 20 years, five years after its formation (2002), 35 people out of every 100 Ugandans could not meet the cost of their basic needs¹. The basis of the government plan was to have a strong economy where the majority of the people are empowered to increase their incomes and live better lives. The empowerment would facilitate them to demand accountability especially on items and programmes that are put in place to improve their lives.

The achievement of all this however demands a multi sectoral approach as well as the active involvement not only of the population but also of the partners that work towards improved lives of the population.

It is in line with this that Isis-WICCE, took it upon herself to audit her performance in supporting women leaders to contribute to poverty eradication by organising a seminar for the women at Katikamu sub county in Luweero district on 27th May 2004. The theme of the seminar was **Contributing to Women's Empowerment: The Role of Grassroots Women Leaders**

¹The Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) May, 2002.

The seminar provided an opportunity to over 60 women and 6 men leaders to audit themselves in so far as they have attempted to guide the grassroots women on poverty eradication basing on the foundation provided by Isis-WICCE and the government policies. The seminar was also a learning experience for the leaders as they presented different view points in reaction to PEAP outlines presented by Ms Jane Nabunya, a desk officer from The Development of Indigenous Voluntary Associations (DENIVA).

Ms. Nabunya's paper attempted to give a brief to women and men leaders about poverty and its implications on the lives of the population. Her paper also discussed PEAP as a government initiated policy on poverty eradication, its origins and aims towards improving the lives of the ordinary people. It explained the factors underlying the whole programme and how leaders can intervene to make it work to benefit all citizens, particularly the grassroots women.

The booklet provides the fundamental questions of concern for women leaders that came up during the discussion, which included the need for facilitation for effective implementation, women positions in decision making and the attendant conflicts, as well as the issue of micro financing. Indeed there were concerns about the facilitation of leaders to ensure that they reach and co-ordinate effectively with their constituents. The conclusive remarks indicated that there is limited facilitation for women leaders, and meagre resources for women programmes owing to budgetary constraints at national and local government administrations.

The agreed fact through the discussion was that empowerment of women is central to the success of PEAP since the majority of women are always engaged in family productive activities that can help to achieve best results in poverty eradication. Unfortunately, it was observed that men do not see this as an important factor in the poverty eradication crusade. Due to patriarchal attitudes, men do not see women empowerment as a development tool that could help fight homestead poverty but rather as an aspect of encroaching on the power men have wielded over the family

structures for centuries. Indeed the men participants kept emphasising this issue during the seminar, clearly showing that the social and cultural factors are still prominent factors that underlie the poverty eradication programme.

The issue of micro financing is also at the heart of the success of PEAP. The fact however is that the majority of the population are illiterate and are not knowledgeable about the commercial concepts that go with borrowing and repayment. This also includes the repayment of interest. This dilemma that was roundly expressed in the seminar, left everything to the proposition of more sensitisation of the grassroots women.

In all raised aspects, Luweero women leaders were provided with experiences of women leaders from Iganga and Mubende districts and how they have tried to solve the obvious odds to poverty eradication in their districts. While Iganga district women leader emphasised education, the women leaders from Mubende district stressed the lobbying strategies at the decision making levels as an effective approach to positioning women's concerns to local government activities.

This book let highlight the numerous problems women leaders are faced with while carrying out their duties. The burden for Isis-WICCE and other such organisations is to ensure that the leaders and communities get the necessary information that can be used to develop good plans to eradicate poverty. More importantly, is government to recognise its fundamental role in enabling women leaders guide others to actively participate in development in order for them to achieve dignified lives.

Women Empowerment is the Answer to Poverty Eradication

Isis-WICCE is an organisation that works towards promotion of the rights of women through building their skills and strengthening their communicative mechanisms to share information, experiences and ideas as well as ensure that women get the capacity to become active participants in development. On 27th may 2004, Isis-WICCE carried out a sensitisation Seminar at Katikamu sub county headquarters in Luweero District. The theme of the seminar was, “Contributing to women empowerment for poverty eradication: The role of grass root women leaders.” In her opening remarks, the Director of Isis-WICCE Ruth Ochieng gave the background information to this initiative and emphasised the rational approaches women leaders should take in the poverty eradication drive.

Background

Isis-Womenís International Cross-cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE) was established in 1974 in Geneva, Switzerland, with the aim of strengthening communicative mechanisms among womenís organisations world-wide, to facilitate women share information, ideas and experiences in order to improve their status and to overcome gender inequality. Isis-WICCE relocated to Africa in 1993 to replicate this mission on the continent.

Since 1997, Isis-WICCE in collaboration with **Heinrich Boll Foundation** (a German Foundation) focused on documenting the violations of womenís rights in situations of armed conflict in Uganda². This was in fulfilment of the objective of moving the organisation to Africa³. This process has been carried out in partnership with various stakeholders⁴ in Uganda. The starting point was Luweero District.

² Gulu, Luweero, Kitgum, Kasese, Soroti, Kumi, Katakwi, Kitgum, Mbarara

³ To tap the voices of African women and integrate them into the global women’s knowledge base

⁴ Medical professionals, members of parliament, local leaders, opinion leaders, women survivors, of war, human rights organizations and women NGOs

The outcomes of the documentation provided diseggregated data on the status of women living in conflict areas. It revealed various human rights violations inflicted on women, and the consequences to their well being. These included a high magnitude of sexual and reproductive health complications, trauma, high level of poverty among women, lack of self-esteem, withdrawal syndrome with no drive to improve their situations, anger and vengeance amongst different ethnic groups. The documentation also reflected on how this state of life has deterred women's active participation in governance and other development activities hence their vulnerability in all aspects of life.

Isis-WICCE Interventions

For this to be meaningful to the survivors, Isis-WICCE used various approaches to disseminate the findings (research reports, video documentaries, fact sheets, etc), to different stakeholders, with the aim of enabling them to use the data to make appropriate redress. In addition, Isis-WICCE organised one-month short-term medical interventions in the researched areas to provide short-term redress to medical and social economic emergency cases to the survivors, as a proof that if well planned even minimal resources can make a difference. In addition, the medical intervention provided more diseggregated data on the status of women's health. Advocating for provision of building materials for those who had no shelter brought life to those who had given up hope. Selected local health workers were provided with more skills in trauma counselling and identification of ailments that needed referral.



Luwero Women Leaders Registering for the Seminar at Katikamu Sub-county Headquarters as Isis-WICCE Director Ruth Ochieng looks on.

Furthermore, Isis-WICCE set up three rural women information units in the districts of Luweero, Mubende and Iganga. These were to enable women leaders at the grassroots to have a central place where they could meet and acquire skills in generating, processing and dissemination of information to different clientele. In addition, Isis-WICCE provided literature to these units from other parts of the world, related to some of the gender challenges of the specified districts.

From 1999, Isis-WICCE and Heinrich Boll Foundation went further and enhanced the skills of women from the documented areas on gender analysis, conflict analysis in Uganda and beyond, importance of participating in poverty alleviation projects, peace building, and use of different communication strategies like drama skits, and radio programmes to share information about reconciliation and peace building. This approach provided more women and men with knowledge that could help them build their self-esteem and get capacity to engage in development related activities. This has enabled women and a few men to organize themselves into groups of change agents although the major beneficiaries of these interventions have been women. Isis-WICCE recognises efforts of other development actors (in the study districts), who have played critical roles to the empowerment of women and men.

Isis-WICCE's Evaluation

In 2000, Isis-WICCE carried out an evaluation to find out the impact of its community-based activities to the improvement of women's status. It is acknowledged that Isis-WICCE's activities, and the packaged information have been very instrumental in exposing the needs as well as help in imparting skills to women on the issues of women's rights with an objective of the replication of this knowledge to other women in the communities. These efforts notwithstanding, poverty has remained a major hindrance to women's access to some of these educational programmes for their empowerment. The causes of the persistence of poverty among women are many and they remain threats to Isis-WICCE's ability to realise its purpose of existence⁵. These include;

⁵ To promote the fundamental human rights of women through networking, action oriented documentation of women's experiences and the cross cultural exchange of skills.

- Addressing in a timely manner the needs of the women at grass root level.
- Lack of information⁶ and access to education. A review of 5-year district⁷ strategic plans indicate that activities geared to sensitisation and awareness raising in communities do not receive any financial facilitation. This therefore means that communities remain uninformed of policies in place and how they can utilise them to demand for interventions in their communities.
- Deep-rooted patriarchy and cultural practices in communities have continued to marginalise women's potential and capacities in decision making and leadership.
- Continued low knowledge of women's rights by women themselves and men is another disturbing factor.
- Despite the increase of numbers of women in various governance positions, women are not yet effective participants in local authority politics due to lack of knowledge on these structures and how their roles fit in the entire system.
- General apathy in the communities, especially men resorting to drinking alcohol, which has resulted into men not engaging in productive activities, leaving high workload to unskilled and uninformed women.
- The failure to understand the role of gender budgeting by the local government structures has disillusioned women empowerment strategies.

Government Efforts

The Government of Uganda recognises the need to involve women and men in efforts of uplifting the economic base of the country. As stipulated in the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda Objective X (page 5.), "the State shall take all necessary steps to involve the people in the formulation and implementation of development plans and programmes which affect them". Objective XII (ii) further indicates that, "the State shall take necessary measures to bring about balanced development of the different areas of Uganda and between the rural and urban areas".

⁶ The Uganda Poverty Assessment Programme (UPAP)

⁷ The Mubende District 5 year Strategic Plan document; 1999-2003

Article 33 (1)⁸ and (4)⁹ put emphasis on the rights of women in development.

In order to fulfil the above constitutional commitments, and in response to various international instruments¹⁰, the Government of Uganda formulated several policies and structures to address the high level of poverty amongst its populace. Realising the impact to all government plans of modernising and improving the status of its people, poverty has been made a central issue in most of the government policy frameworks and plans. The primary instrument for tackling poverty in Uganda is the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), developed in 1997, revised in 2000, and currently undergoing a further revision since 2003. The purpose of PEAP is to provide a strategic framework where the public can be guided towards reducing poverty in their households.

Also formulated in 1997 was the National Gender Policy, which indicates that all planning, resource allocation and implementation of development programmes would be undertaken from a gender perspective. Since then, many key national planning documents, such as the Programme for Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA) and sectoral plans, such as those in Education and Health, have been developed with a gender perspective. However the implementation seems not to effectively reflect this.

Likewise, despite the presence of all these policies and structures, there is still looming poverty mainly among women in both conflict and non conflict areas. The implementation of these very good policies and frameworks seem not to have taken root. It was Isis-WICCE's expectation that the available conducive policies and the provided diseggregated data would help provide an effective platform to address the marginalisation and discrimination of women continue to face, which has kept them in poverty-stricken conditions.

⁸ Women shall be accorded full and equal dignity of the person with men.

⁹ Women shall have the right to equal treatment with men and that right shall include equal opportunities in political, economic and social activities.

¹⁰ Millennium Development Goals, 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, CEDAW, Poverty Reduction Strategy Policies (PRSPs).

Auditing the performance of women in Leadership

It is upon this background that, on 27th May 2004, Isis-WICCE carried out a sensitisation Seminar at Katikamu subcounty headquarters in Luweero District. The theme of the seminar was, *Contributing to women's empowerment and poverty eradication: The role of grass root women leaders.*" A total of 65 women and 6 men attended.

Two women from other districts where Isis-WICCE operates, Ms Nantale Basalilwa from Iganga district and Hajati Hawa Semakula from Mubende district were also invited to attend this auditing seminar and share their experiences. During the seminar, participants acknowledged government's efforts in bringing peace and security to the area, improving the infrastructure like roads, providing credit (entandikwa), building health centres, improving agriculture by introducing clonal coffee seedlings, providing cows for restocking, as well as embarking on Universal Primary Education (UPE) programmes. It was also recognised that government has also uplifted the status of women to a position of respectability, and generally encouraged credit organisations to help them access loans. There have also been sensitisation programmes aimed at improving the welfare of the people. It was also observed that government has put in place laws that ensure that women take up decision-making positions in the community as leaders. More importantly, government has enacted a constitution that put in place safeguards on women equality and protection of their rights. However, participants at this seminar noted that the majority of women in the district have not realised this and continue to live below the poverty line.

Isis-WICCE then introduced the aim of the workshop as making an audit of the performance of women leaders they had trained in the district. The men were also to provide their views in this regard. The programme coordinator Isis-WICCE Ms Ruth Ochieng called for an honest stock taking exchange where participants would ask themselves questions such as; *"Since we got peace, what have we done to uplift the lives of those women we lead?" "How have we used our positions as women leaders to lead our colleagues out of poverty?" "Government and NGOs have given us skills and emancipated us this far, but what have we done as women leaders*

to uplift the standard of women at the grassroots?” “What have been our challenges in leadership?”

She affirmed that it was healthy for women in leadership to make an audit of their performance since it enables them understand their achievements and challenges. This way they can be able to make realistic projections for the future. She asserted that documenting such experiences helps women to lobby the policy makers at district level, in parliament and even the presidency to further improve women’s situation. It helps women leaders to reflect on their strength and weaknesses. Such points of self-reflection at leadership level help in planning on the way forward, as well as empowering women to advocate for important issues that affect them. The programme co-ordinator challenged participants by giving them a scenario of Bugiri district where women have not got as better opportunities as of those of Luweero but the situation of women in the two districts is equally bad. *Why therefore, is it that in spite of the many opportunities you have had, the women in Luweero are still as poor as those in Bugiri District,* she asked? There are programmes like PEAP, PMA, and NAADS, which are supposed to help women eradicate poverty. How have you used them as women leaders to improve the status of your fellow women?

She concluded by emphasising that the women’s major concern is to eradicate poverty because as long as there is poverty, conflicts, bad governance and discrimination will continue. Women leaders therefore must play their role if they are to keep off conflicts from their district. However, it is our responsibility as women to put the government dream into action so that these good laws and policies reach all the disadvantaged in their communities.



Isis-WICCE Director, Ruth Ochieng has remained vocal on women empowerment at the grassroots level

Understanding the Poverty Eradication Action Programme (PEAP).

Jane Nabunnya is a senior desk officer of The Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Organisations (DENIVA); an organisation that believes in positive gender based power relations as important elements in the fight against poverty. In a paper she delivered to Luweero women leaders during the Isis-WICCE sensitisation seminar, she urged women leaders to try to understand government policy programmes like PEAP as the best foundation of fighting poverty in their communities. Below are excerpts from her paper...



When we are discussing poverty, we cannot be happy but sorrowful. Even if you were to ask your immediate neighbour one simple question like; are you poor? You may not get a definite answer. In certain circumstances, the person's looks and appearance can help to judge whether he/she is poor or not.

This is because outside appearance may not be the best way of judging whether someone is poor or not. It may also be important to know whether a person can modestly afford the basic necessities of life since this makes him/her happy and peaceful. Freedom and peace as well as possessing material wealth go together to ensure harmony hence the opportunity to participate in development. If an individual has a lot of money but has no freedom and peace in the home, then he/she could also be regarded as poor.

All the development programmes government undertakes like provision of credit, improving agriculture, providing security, empowering youth and women and building the infrastructure etc, all need support peaceful environment and funding in order to succeed. Organisational improvements that government undertakes to eradicate poverty need funding. Government put all these development programmes that aim at

improving the welfare of the population, and eradicate poverty in a programme called Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP). This was an all-encompassing arrangement of eradicating poverty that government released in 1997. Government of Uganda enacted PEAP programme without any foreign or external pressure, as mostwant us to believe. In fact, PEAP was a major government initiative undertaken after the rehabilitation phase of Luwero?. From 1990 to 1995, government was involved in rehabilitation programmes throughout the country that resulted from the destruction caused by war.

This programme was later to benefit government by helping it mobilise donor support. In 1999-2000, for example IMF and World Bank decided to forgive all highly indebted countries part of the loans they owed to these multilateral bodies. The major condition was that the forgiven money be used in programmes that improved the lives of the people like education, health, development of agriculture extension, improving the infrastructure etc. The targeted countries were supposed to come out with comprehensive plans of poverty eradication.

The government of Uganda therefore presented the 1997 PEAP programme to the World Bank for consideration. The World Bank found this PEAP programme comprehensive and convincing and representative of the country's initiative in fighting poverty. As a result, Uganda was among the first countries to be forgiven the debt. This is where the country's efforts of fighting poverty started.

In 2000, PEAP was revised. This was however done against the background of an escalated war in Northern Uganda. The donors felt Uganda, which had been forgiven debts in the highly indebted countries initiative, was diverting most of the money to fighting the war in the North instead of using it to fight poverty. This heightened conflict with donors who mainly touted government to reduce defence spending. They also threatened to stop funding the country's poverty Eradication Programmes if this was not adhered to. Through rigorous negotiations the government and the donors reached an amicable understanding and they continued to fund the country's poverty eradication programmes.

The 3rd phase of PEAP is expected to lead to further review of the programme and help to generate more financial resources with the major aim of ensuring an improvement in the lives of the population.

The PEAP of 1997-2000 was translated into four languages; Luganda, Ateso, Luo and Runyakitara. This was also after editing it to a reasonable size to ensure it is well understood by most stakeholders when disseminated. Women leaders must get copies of these PEAP programmes, read and understand them in order for them to be able to effectively sensitise their colleagues at the grass root.

Just as the first chapter of the Uganda Constitution states that power belongs to the people, so is power to eradicate poverty entrusted to them in the PEAP programme. You as women leaders must sensitise your colleagues at the grass root on effective measures of fighting poverty without waiting for government every aspect of their lives. She informed the participants that government does not have the capacity to do everything even if it wants to. She however asserted that the PEAP programme is a good guide that will enable women fill the information gaps experienced by women at the grassroots.

These grassroots women look at you as their leaders who should have the capacity to fill this information gap. The government has also presented the information you need in PEAP. She urged women leaders to get copies of PEAP and to read and understand them so that they are well positioned to disseminate right information to the women at the grassroots.

She went further and discussed the four sections of the PEAP of 2000. These included:

- i. Building the economy on a firm foundation so that it enhances total growth like handling inflation and ensure a good tax policy.
- ii. Government providing security to all her citizens and their property.
- iii. Improving on the incomes of the poor like undertaking profit-motivated agriculture, through programmes like NAADS.

iv. Improving the general welfare of the people through activities like Universal Primary Education (UPE), construction of health centres, provision of water etc.

She added that PEAP of 2004 has a few changes where the third section emphasises democracy and human rights. In this section, people are mandated to ask for accountability from their local leaders like on public expenditure of locally generated funds or of the Local Government Development Programme (LGDP) grants.

There is also plan for modernisation of Agriculture (PMA), which is in the second section of the new PEAP programme with NAADS as a major subsection.

She went further to say that, for easy understanding, the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries has also simplified the Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture programme. The popular version with simplified outlines for ordinary people to understand easily. Women leaders she said, should have this information and especially get the translated versions, which are readily available. She concluded by saying that PMA and NAADS give a good foundation for women leaders to effectively guide their colleagues. Where they don't understand, they can call in experts to guide them. She concluded by asking participants whether they had access to any of the publications she had referred to. Surprisingly only two participants (male) responded positively!

Experience from National Women's Association for Social and Education Advancement (NWASEA)

Anna Nantale Basalilwa is the coordinator of NWASEA, a women's organisation formed to educate society on gender issues among others. The organisation used Functional Adult Literacy as an entry point into the government's Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP). It uses formal and non-formal education (particularly targeting women who never went to school) to teach them how to read and write to be able to access some of the written materials on PEAP.



Basalilwa emphasises that the Functional Adult Literacy programme helps the rural women participate actively in poverty eradication. We believe that if the ordinary woman manages to read and write she will get more capacity in participating effectively in the poverty eradication programmes, she noted.

This basic part of learning gives women capacity to air their views about poverty eradication and participate actively in the general development initiatives. Reading and writing also empowers women with the ability to learn demand and make choices according to their needs. We also believe that women with such skills will have the basic knowledge that can help them manage and use equitably the loans acquired from micro-finance funding opportunities to improve their well being.

This allows women to further understand that the credit acquired from micro finance companies is not free or just a donation, but rather know that the credit facilities are for them to use and get profits as women. They will know that it is these profits that would help them get capacity to solve their basic needs and at the same time pay back what they originally borrowed.

NWASEA also believes that women with basic education can easily understand to use the available health facilities. The organisation empowers them to understand programmes like immunisation, antenatal

care, safe motherhood, hygiene, and nutrition. These programmes are fundamental in improving welfare and in the eradication of poverty of families. Through experiences, he said, we have managed to understand that in agriculture, such women perform even better because they can easily understand and follow the recommended agricultural practices.

Therefore the leadership of NWASEA believe that if all women were educated, there would be a big difference in their lives especially when fighting poverty. We started on this line by doing advocacy for the girl children to ensure that they also get equal opportunities like boys to go to school. This was paramount because it is common understanding that even with the Universal Primary Education (UPE) programme in place, parents allow these girl children to drop out of school and get married leading to such problems like early pregnancies, defilement and continuous ignorance among the female gender.

NWASEA also did research and found out that most girl children drop out of school in the upper classes of primary. These girls, as it has been reported in the news media, are vulnerable and are especially defiled by their teachers and immediate relatives. Therefore, if we are struggling for women empowerment, we should emphasise the girl children. These are the future leaders that are going to take on greater responsibilities in future.

NWASEA therefore, has been engaged in advocacy and in the sensitisation of the concerned authorities like school management committees on the need to address the problem of the girl child. Our call has been to ensure that girl children do not drop out of school especially at the current rate. This is to ensure that the boy and girl children move on together in education so that they can have the opportunity to compete favourably in the future. This will be the basis for the firm foundation that is necessary for poverty eradication and of ensuring balanced development in the country.

Poverty Eradication in Luweero: Reactions from Women Leaders

Introduction

Poverty is an ever-present consequence in families in Uganda. Indeed, the government has devised measures to tackle this problem at the individual, family and national levels. Policy initiatives involve tactical measures that aim at alleviating and to eventually eradicate it, depending on the financial input of the national and local administrations and the general reciprocation of the population.

These efforts have however been largely unsuccessful because policies are initiated without involving the general population who remain the major implementers. These are ignorant, poor group of people who largely misunderstand the whole process.

During the seminar, participants highlighted many challenges faced by women leaders as they struggle to link up with their counterparts on the grassroots.

The propositions are not only frustrating but also illuminate all about the policy gaps and the dearth in planning.

Whereas there is general belief about the role women play in development, there are no firm commitments on the government level to facilitate them to make positive impact. The

majority of women leaders at the seminar expressed concern about the failure of planners at all levels to recognise the invaluable contribution of



Luweero Women Leaders listening attentively to strategies of eradicating poverty during the seminar on 27/5/04

women in the poverty eradication initiative. The central point being the need for a deliberate approach to empowerment as a central factor in giving women an enabling environment financial to eradicate poverty.

Effective Mobilisation Needs Facilitation

Women local leaders at the seminar indicated that they have the potential and capacity to mobilise the grassroots women. They also noted their ability and capacity to establish worthwhile linkages that could help them educate and sensitise their colleagues. They however noted that one of their major impediments was lack of facilitation.

As individuals, women leaders complained that they lack means and resources to reach the ordinary women in rural communities. This activity demands financial input to be

Mrs. Aisha Kayaga

There is generally poor funding for women programmes by the central and local governments ... No practical funds are allotted to women leaders to carry out mobilisation. The budgets are largely theoretical. No money is ever released."



able to organise and sustain the mobilisation process. Women district Councillors expressed the gravity of the problem to the seminar participants. They said; **“We as women leaders are well sensitised and mobilised but we are not facilitated.”** They further noted that, **“the attendance of sensitisation meetings is largely pegged on some sort of facilitation like provision of refreshments lunch and transport refund for the participants. We cannot afford that.”**

They further highlighted other resultant dilemmas that impede the leaders’ mobilisation efforts. They concurred that; **“As women leaders, we have been trying to link up with our grassroots colleagues to address the issue of poverty. However, mobilisation and sensitisation meetings have become commercialised. Women always want to know how much they will be paid as their take home package since they will not have participated in any activity in their homes.”**

On the same dilemma of taking sensitisation messages to the grassroots, women Councillors also asserted that; **People have a lot of expectations from their leaders. Women at the grassroots always expect facilitation from sensitisation programmes, which we cannot afford. We need mobilisation support funds from central and local government administrations if we are to make a remarkable impact in poverty eradication.**

The seminar participants generally noted that poor facilitation causes problems of information flow, in the long run disrupts development. They singled out the LC1 level where failure to disseminate major information has led to the stalling of development initiatives. There was a general feeling that well-informed, motivated and educated women can easily engage in gainful agricultural activities. The general understanding on information flow however, is that government and NGOs have tried to provide women leaders with knowledge but did not budget for it in the implementation support.

Prioritise Women Issues in Planning

The question of failing to get facilitation is so much related to planning. Women leaders that attended the seminar noted the problem of budgeting or even giving priority to women related

**Mrs. Mutumba Margaret,
Deputy speaker LC III,
Katikamu Sub County**

Most women were not involved in the electoral process of the women councils and therefore feel that the system does not represent them. After their elections to posts at the district leadership, they should be listened to”.

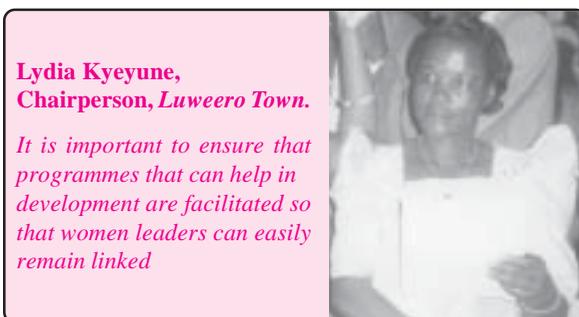


programmes. They for example noted the dearth in budgeting when it comes to women issues **They all affirmed that there is no practical budget that is specifically set aside for grassroots women leaders to carry out their plans. Most budgets always done at central and local administration levels are largely theoretical on paper. The plan is visibly there in budget books, but in the end, no money is ever released to implement the plan,** they lamented.

The women leaders also noted that even if some money is availed for women issues, policymakers who are mostly men end up diverting it to what they think are crucial issues or assumed important activities. **In fact, the only practical budget for women activities from district administrations to local councils is for 8th, March women's day celebrations!** If they said with regret. This therefore demands that leadership at every level should prioritise women issues in development aspects. Presently, women issues are not emphasised in development-related planning at grassroots level. Women leaders are therefore becoming more and more concerned about the 'propaganda-like' value all administration tiers give women issues as they keep strangling them financially.

Policy Gaps and Pit Falls

From the women leader's analysis, there is poor co-ordination in the past and present policies initiated about poverty alleviation or eradication. To eradicate poverty, policies should be as realistic as possible



and clearly linked to the beneficiaries at the grassroots. Both men and women should understand, appreciate and see these programmes as theirs. This way, they said, they can ably participate and benefit.

Most women leaders at the seminars informed Isis-WICCE staff that the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) was not known to them as was Plan for Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA) or even National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS). If that is the case, is poverty eradication therefore a reality without due involvement and participation of all the beneficiaries?

How would the understanding of policies by women be achieved when sensitisation is not facilitated and women issues are continued to be

marginalised. In respect to this, the women leaders also complained about the disjointed nature of policies done without involving stakeholders. Speaking about some government-initiated policies, they said that; **Programmes like NAADS do not benefit local people but the practitioners. Some of the women leaders lamented that practioner just give prescriptions that people cannot afford. For example, they talk of using improved seeds to eradicate poverty through improved yields, but they do not give out these seeds and expect the poor people in villages to buy them! On the otherhand the male leaders felt that the local people are well mobilised by NAADS and get sufficient knowledge they can never put in practice due to the level of poverty experienced by the population.**

Then there is this disjoint link between these programmes given out to eradicate poverty like PEAP, PAP, PMA, NAADS etc. The confusion goes from the local population, to women leaders and then to the practitioners. There is an inevitable clash that eventually benefits no one. **Imagine you are on the sub county executive committee of NAADS but what you observe is that most money goes to service providers with noticeable duplication of activities. For example in some sub counties, there is a Community Development Officer as well as an extension worker of agriculture and veterinary. Why should a service provider come and bypass these professionals who have for a long time helped us despite the meagre resources provided to them?**, the women leaders unanimously reasoned.

Like women leaders, these extension and development staff posted at sub counties are not facilitated to do development work. The women leaders summed up this anomaly thus; **They are posted without operational guidelines. They are even given motorcycles without budget for fuel or maintenance. Eventually you find this crucial manpower that is essential for development and poverty eradication dormant and demobilised.** It is therefore important to give these resident professionals a programme of operation and facilitation to speed up the poverty eradication process.

Domineering Patriarchy in Planning Activities

Although the contribution of the men in families cannot be underrated, it is the women that do the donkey's work. The majority of the participants noted that, *Most women in homes work alone on family development. They are always overloaded with development activities while men these days do not work and are most of the time drinking alcohol. Yet these same men always want to eat well and take major decisions on the use of money generated at the family level.*

Roles and responsibilities of women in a home further complicate the situation. *We as women leaders as well as our grassroots colleagues are still constrained by our marital responsibilities and demands. The majority of women at the grassroots are housewives, still overburdened by numerous domestic chores in a patriarchal decision making hierarchy. They therefore fail to get involved in educational programmes run in communities by the different stake holders,* the women leaders reflected.

Milly Sewankambo:

Women will have successful poverty eradication programmes if they willingly discuss development concerns with their spouses. They should not join credit organisations without first discussing and agreeing with their husbands. Eradicating poverty successfully demands that family efforts move together.



Other women leaders however, held a conciliatory approach about the eradication of poverty at the family level. They supported the idea of having a discussion and agreement on

strategies by couples. They argued that; *Although development in our case is aimed at eradicating poverty, family efforts should move together. As women leaders, we should advise the women to always discuss and mobilise their husbands to be part of the poverty eradication initiatives.* There was agreement that not all men are lazy and that women should readily involve those who are dependable and willing to participate. They maintained that; *women should willingly involve their husbands because they can complement their efforts effectively in eradicating poverty. Some men are really supportive to women's development efforts,* they concluded.

Utilisation of Micro-finance Support

The situation of women in general and grassroots women in particular is very precarious when it comes to acquisition and utilisation of credit facilities. Major improvement in poverty eradication activities needs funding. Although women generally have no collateral security to use to get financial backing for their activities, the micro finance institutions provided the much-needed respite. Whereas most women at the seminar were generally happy with micro finance support, they also noted that majority lost property after failing to pay back the loans. This was mainly attributed to their lack of knowledge on how to use the money profitably since most of them are illiterate and lack access to capacity building thus, not exposed to modern principles of financial discipline.

They were generally didactic while talking about this problem. They for example asserted that; **in order for women to get out of poverty, they must be trustworthy. Lack of trust makes most women fail to repay loans acquired from credit schemes.** It was noted in the seminar that some of the women just borrow money without knowing what to do with it. They were all in agreement that grassroots women have to be more careful and strict with borrowed money. **Better borrow money after you have evaluated what you want to do with it, and do it when you get money... do not divert the borrowed money to other speculative ventures and get yourselves and your families into problems,** they advised.

It is however evident that the micro finance experiment needs to be complemented with other initiatives in poverty eradication. Participants were advised by individuals at the seminar on alternative options where women could form development groups that can work like co-operative societies. they noted that, members could help each other in a circle-like method depending on their own generated funds. This system would give members the opportunity to use their own rules with minimal or no external influence. The participants again concurred that; **These groups are good because members know each others' problem. They went further to say that these are community-based associations that could ably**

respond to community, as well as individual development needs. They reduce conflict and strengthen individual ties.â

From the discussion, it was explained that the women who use such systems improve materially and become confident because they are not threatened with the interest rates that are demanded by micro finance organisations. It was also observed that it is important to emphasise that money loaned to grassroots women to eradicate poverty should be at manageable interest rates and terms

Harmonise Linkages between the System

Planning of poverty eradication has to a large extent been disrupted by failure to harmonise activities of local councils and the newly established women councils. The women leaders emphasised the need to perfect the link between women local councils of local administrations with women council administrations. At the level of handling women issues, the two women leadership structures do not seem to co-ordinate.

The women leaders noted the problems that emanate from the way women councils were formed. There was evidence that the election of women councils was not done transparently. It looked

Mrs. Jamia Senkanja, Chairperson, District Women Council, Luweero
Women councils are supposed to be autonomous in order to be sustainable but they have failed to be because of funding. Therefore, women should unite and work together to eradicate poverty. Women leaders should especially guard against being undermined by politics, which could lead to their easy manipulation... It is sad that many women leaders have failed to notice that the problems of women are peculiar to them alone."



as if women leaders were just appointed because of their connections to the governments. System since all the women were not involved in the electoral process, they feel that the and selection of the representatives is not of their choice and hence do not represent them.

This meant that the women councils, which were supposed to be independent and act as such, were not. The women leaders observed that in the present circumstances, these councils do not look autonomous.

In the discussion, the dilemma was summed up thus; *Women councils were supposed to be autonomous financially but now they have to work closely with district administrations since money from their line ministry never comes at all. As such, they have not managed to improve the situation of grassroots women as to form a cohesive force of fighting poverty.* This therefore shows that their relationship is just a matter of convenience and their roles can easily conflict. In such a situation, fighting poverty remains a far cry.

Poor Leadership, Poor Representation

Although Government did very well in giving women a 30% slot in all leadership positions, women leaders reported that they have neither fully occupied this slot nor improved in leadership. They noted

Ms. Lydia Kayise

Women leaders should avoid political rivalries and differences amongst themselves. These negatively affects the input of effective women leaders who are particularly committed to the sensitisation of grassroots women about poverty eradication."



that; *There are still political rivalries* The women at the grassroots are not confident enough to go in leadership on independent tickets other than affirmative action. We should readily take the lead and let other women learn about leadership in practice.

This dilemma further reflects a situation of total confusion especially where there are no set operational procedures. This means that in local council administrations, woman leaders do not know who does what, where and when. *Women councils and women councillors in the local council administrations lack a clear chain of command that could unite them and mobilise funds for their activities,* the women leaders observed. As a result, there are other problems that come up which are related to this poor representation and uncoordinated administration. The women cannot have a strong voice in administrative circles that are mainly male dominated, to push for their cherished objectives in poverty eradication. *Women leaders are still few and the majority of these are not yet assertive*

enough. They are easily intimidated and silenced in a male dominated decision making system;î The women leaders noted with dismay.

This alone does not only undermine women leadership but general grass roots women aspirations to development and participating in the poverty eradication drive. Moreover, women activities and assistance to individual women leaders is usually hampered by the numerous female related problems. This means that measures should be taken to ensure that women leaders are sensitised on their individual and separate responsibilities in relation to leadership and poverty eradication. Since women in leadership positions are easily manipulated, and can effortlessly abandon the cause, the women leaders agreed that women at all levels be given leadership skills so that they can readily fight for the womenís cause when they take up positions of leadership.

Civic Education is a Must

It is important to note that the problems for grassroots women are still many. They are not financially empowered and lack information on all aspects of life including poverty

Mrs.Lubwama Joyce, Vice Chairperson, Katikamu County
îGovernment should take the policy to the grassroots by organising sensitisation workshops for men and women. The grassroots populations need information and knowledge on how to protect their rights and actively participate in development.



eradication strategies. Although women still remain very important in development and poverty eradication, information and financial edge are crucial for them to participate actively. As the seminar participants concurred; îThere is need to initiate relevant civic education programmes for women leaders. That should also be taken to the grassroots so as to make direct impact in transforming the lives of individuals who are still poor, marginalised and with their basic freedoms curtailedî.

Grass roots women need information to at least help them make a distinction between politics and development. The women leaders cautioned about the danger of being diverted by politics. They called for

the making of a clear distinction between voters education and civic education policies, politics and development. **Do not involve politics in development activities because poverty eradication demands unity and royalty to each other**, they warned .

Commitment or Political Advantage?

Therefore, the challenges of poverty eradication are still many even when government puts in place policy guidelines and certain funding initiatives. The position of women in poverty eradication is very important mainly because women form the majority of the workforce. Genuine guidelines that are therefore in favour and promote the activities of women leaders are crucial to the major poverty eradication effort. This becomes more important since the decision making mechanism and policy making communities are male dominated. Whereas the matter of women empowerment and affirmative action are important realities in our body politic, it is important to understand tokenism and the use of short term strategies by politicians to get maximum advantage from the women's constituency.

There was a common belief held among some participants that indicated that it is possible for central and local government institutions to ably finance women initiatives. The argument is that the necessary support is knowingly withheld and given at a time when it is expected to get political gains and advantage to certain individuals. The women leaders questioned why assistance to women groups is given at the time nearing election time like the recent formation of the National Council of Small Business Organisations.

We think they have now timed the 2006 elections and many more organisations will certainly come up about the end of 2005 with the intentions of gathering support for government. It is prudent that any assistance to women comes in its own time so that people can feel its impact without external excitement, they emphasised. Therefore, if the assistance to the grassroots women is to be considered genuine, respected and used to eradicate poverty, it should be given with no strings attached. That is why grassroots women tend not to take politicised programmes seriously.

Men's Views on Poverty Eradication

Introduction

The sensitisation seminar provided an occasion for men to make their input too. Throughout the discussion, the male participants advised roundly on how policy linkages could be made and harmonised towards poverty eradication. Issues that also came up directly concerned women empowerment and the differences in outlook and in approaches to poverty eradication between men and women especially due to the patriarchal considerations. The arguments indicated that there have been low-key struggles between couples at homestead level on rights and strategies of handling the poverty eradication drive.

Equal Rights

The men participants raised concerns about the failure of their spouses to involve them in poverty eradication initiatives. Mugisha Ellias, a magistrate of Katikamu subcounty stressed the importance of respecting the rights between men and women for harmonised operations in poverty eradication. *“If men and women want development, they must respect each other and agree that they have equal rights. This will enable them to work together in fighting poverty,”* he argued.

He also noted the importance of facilitating grassroots women to participate actively in development initiatives since they are more involved in general economic

Mr. Mugisha Elias, Magistrate
“Men should readily contribute to family labour and productive activities. It is unfair to depend on only a woman to support the whole family. By working together, men and women can find the easy solution poverty.”



activities than men are. He envisioned success in mutual co-operation and co-ordination of activities as the best way forward. Mugisha especially

advised women to use the existing administrative structures including making alliances with their male counterparts. He stressed that; **men and women must respect each other and work together for a common cause** **Men should complement their spouses in their efforts to push for issues that can help to advance their concerns.**

Involve Men

Men also expressed concern that the campaigns to eradicate poverty stress the support of only women while men are expressly neglected. This is because most organised seminars and financing opportunities target women. This state of affairs causes mixed feelings and suspicion about the overall poverty eradication strategies as men feel that women are being unduly empowered to fight against them. The men feel frustrated at being edged out of crucial development programmes and they directly start fighting their spouses.



Men freely exchanged ideas at the seminar on 14/6/2004

Mr. Lukwango Kezekia, a male seminar participant noted that leaving out men denies the poverty eradication campaign an important resource. The men have particularly been expressing fears about what their wives are told in the many sensitisation campaigns. Due to this, Lukwago argued, **Men should be allowed to know what their wives are being sensitised on so that they can accept and willingly participate in poverty eradication.**

It is not clear yet whether this suspicion has always been the major cause of men's despondency in many development initiatives. The truth is that they can make a great difference if they participate. Mr. Lukwago clearly confirmed this by stressing that; **in situations where some women may not be able to put the information acquired into practical use, men could**

come in to complement their efforts.â The bottom line of every thing is that men can bring in an important resource that has been neglected and lacking in the poverty eradication struggle.

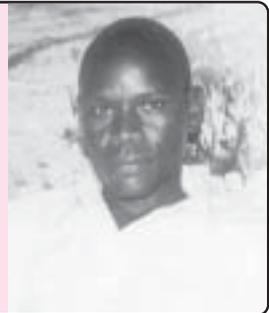
Women responded to this but were quick to assert that as individuals, they (women), have a right to run their personal projects which men seem to be against.

At a certain level however, men themselves should seriously consider their own weaknesses which they need to rectify in order to fit in well with women in this campaign. There are accusations always levelled on men by women. The majority of women label their male counterparts as lazy and exploitative. They submitted thus against their male counterparts; ìsome men these days wait for women to take the lead in economic activitiesÖ They donít even care about paying school fees for their childrenÖ some men donít work and most of the time, they are drinking beer!â What then is expected when men are disruptive of womenís development activities and yet they always want to take major decisions on spending the generated resources?

Indeed Mr. Lukwangoís concerns about sensitisation are crucial in ensuring harmonised operations. In his own words he commended Isis-WICCEís initiative thus; ì It is important to have such sensitisation

Mr.Lukwago Kezekia:

ìInformation about poverty eradication should be readily given to women leaders so that they are able to give qualified information to grassroots women. Remove suspicions on the family level by ensuring that the men know what their wives are being sensitised on. Women should involve their husbands in poverty eradication programmes"



seminars about poverty eradication at this level, involving both men and women. Both men and women should know the real information about policies and programmes about poverty eradication so that they are able to contribute to the process. The same sentiments were echoed by Haji Kyagulanyi, the LC 3 Chairman, Katikamu subcounty. He maintained that; ì it is good for development partners to carry out such sensitisation programmes such as those on fighting poverty because they enlighten all leaders on how to give right information to grassroots populations.â

Streamlining Development Initiatives.

One of the issues raised was about the poor funding of women activities. Men leaders expressed concern about the shift of major burden from the central government to Local administrations, which cannot generate enough resources to handle women development concerns. Haji Kyagulanyi put it clearly to the seminar participants; **“We local leaders have a very big problem in fulfilling people’s expectations. We depend on the meagre resources collected from graduated tax, which cannot be enough to meet the development demands in sub counties, especially of those with no any other major income...we are also in dilemma like women.”**

He emphasised the problem as experienced from the budgetary process. **“Whereas during the budget process we plan for every section without**

Haji Kyagulanyi Walakira, LC III Chairman, Katikamu Sub County

“The ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development should be consistent about women grants and the funding of women activities. The financial assistance to women should be clearly specified and sent to distinct administrations to remove unnecessary frictions and suspicious about its use.”



with discrimination, at the end of the day, we find we have not collected enough to meet each sections’ demands. The women affairs, are likewise affected”, he lamented. In this issue, there is public concern about government commitment to the women’s cause in spite of the latter’s devotion to all development causes, be they national or family. The question is; where does government come in to boost the women’s efforts and by how much? Why are development burdens being shifted to the lower administrative levels?

Haji Kyagulanyi spoke about those burdens that were shifted to lower administrative units such as contributing to the funding of larger central government programmes like Local Government Development Programme (LGDP) and National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS). He explained that; **“Presently, Katikamu Sub County has to**

contribute eight million shillings and over four million shillings respectively to these programmes. This over stretches our planning and we accordingly neglect crucial sectors like that of women. As a major policy maker, he thus confirmed the women's complaint of the marginalisation of their priorities.

Such planning originating from the national policy makers hinders the attainment of tangible results in the poverty eradication drive at the grassroots. Being the majority in practice, the women are always directly affected. Although most men participants in the seminar appreciated government's concerns about poverty eradication through improved homestead incomes, they advised government organs concerned with women issues to be consistent when handling women related issues. Haji Kyagulanyi categorically stated thus; the ministry responsible for women affairs should be consistent about women grants and to particularly streamline women development concerns at all levels of administration.

Borrowing According to Plan

Development in general, and poverty eradication in particular demand resources. From the onset, the central government formulated a policy on poverty eradication,

which was not wholly funded. Government however, allowed other partners to intervene and give financial support to individual women and women groups in every district. Some of these partners came in form of micro finance institutions that provided money to women on modest interest rates.

Lugesera Abel Salongo

Women who are ready to work should be supported and encouraged to enhance the opportunities available to them... Micro finance is good because it gives beginning capital the beneficiaries. Borrow money according to plan especially after evaluating whether the business you are going to do is viable and can help you to manage paying the interest."



Men participants noted that the micro finance experience has not yielded tangible results. This is because most women beneficiaries reportedly

got problems of repayment because of numerous reasons. These reasons included failure to use these loans profitably because of inexperience, outright diversion, and failure to get market of produce, interference of spouses and the ignorance resulting from borrowing without plan.

Most of the men participants noted the importance and contribution of micro finance institutions. They said that they provided another window through which women could get capital to begin some economic ventures in the poverty eradication strategy. It is better to educate people to use it gainfully than discouraging its use altogether. Mr. Lugesera Abel Salongo, a male participant insisted that micro finance money can not be avoided in the present circumstances; He maintained that; **although borrowing has some disadvantages, if you do not borrow, you may fail to get capital to begin with.** He went on to advise women by saying that; **before you go to borrow, first establish what you are going to do with the money...borrow according to plan after assessing the expected benefits.**

Women leaders were also urged to sensitise their constituents on to how to use the loan money profitably and avoid concerns of repayment. Haji Kyagulanyi emphatically put the burden to all leaders. **As leaders, we should guide our people so that they can make right choices in the fight against poverty. Otherwise, micro finance can be another source of poverty for our people if beneficiaries take this money without assessing and evaluating what they wanted to do with it profitably,** he declared. This also meant that micro finance providers should as a matter of priority plan for continuous training and information provision to their beneficiaries. This has to go on as women's leaders in the district intensify civic education to their constituents about poverty eradication.

Lessons from Buwekula Women Development Association

*By Hajati Hawa Semakula;
Co-ordinator, Mubende Rural Information Unit.*

I want to thank Isis-WICCE for inviting me to attend this function in Luweero. All the issues raised here concerning the challenges of women leaders in Luweero district in the fight against poverty are the same everywhere. The same issues have also been of concern for us in Mubende district.



The truth is that there are no funds allocated to run women councils yet they should be the umbrellas for all women development initiatives. In fact, women activities are not allocated any money at sub county, district and national levels. This has affected women development initiatives and frustrated those women leaders that take up leadership positions with determination to alleviate the welfare of their women colleagues.

The ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Affairs where women issues are supposed to be handled has no money for women development concerns. The women representatives in parliament have also failed to ensure that the ministry that caters for women and other interest groups in the whole country is given money. It is not clear to women leaders as to why the ministry's budget is always cut. Therefore, women leaders have to do a lot of lobbying.

We as women leaders have no chain of command linking us together. We have therefore failed to unite. Women must have one voice to ensure that the lobbying they do succeed. They have to work and fight together for their causes, including the eradication of poverty.

While civic education should also be emphasised at every level, women leaders should take on positions of leadership with the necessary commitment. Some of them go in leadership for personal benefit and to solve their own economic problems. If you are going to serve, serve selflessly without thinking about your personal gain.

Women should effectively utilise the one-third slot and the affirmative action ticket, as well as encourage each other to join politics as a way of marshalling a sizeable team to fight for the women issues. The women leaders should separate politics from women issues. Do not decampaign each other so that we as women are able to make the necessary critical mass. Unity is the strength we all need as women.

Women, youth and the disabled should struggle to sit on district sectoral committees to pursue critical objectives. More importantly, they should have well thought out programmes to put forward for support. We should continue lobbying and lobby those who are useful and powerful and can support our cause.

In Mubende district, we have managed to lobby the district leadership successfully because they can now allocate money for women council activities as well as for the women's day celebrations. You should put pressure on budget desks in your districts to ensure that women issues are given due consideration and can be put in the councils for discussion. Always evolve programmes and work plans, which you can lobby for and put forward for support and facilitation in different fora.

If women councils and women councillors do not work together, they will not manage to help and effectively represent the grass root women. Let all levels of women leadership harmonise activities so as to gather enough strength to fulfil the necessary purpose. We should also use initiative and generate our own resources to work on women issues without waiting for government support, which may never come. If we want to get our fellow grass root women out of poverty, we should use every available opportunity. A leader who wants to be effective should

also be ready to use his/her own resources to serve the common causes of women.

The use of gift circles is good and can benefit local women if well handled. In Mubende, gift circles proved to be useful and we have made them a policy of the women councils. We have institutionalised them through seeking women council blessing as a stopgap for any misbehaviour of members or of those in control. Therefore, institutionalise all local development initiatives you undertake so as to get recognition and support.

It is important to appreciate the role of micro finance institutions in helping women fight poverty although some women got problems with them. It is upon us leaders to sensitise our colleagues on how to maximise benefits from them. We should not discourage women from getting assistance from these institutions but instead educate them on how to use the money gainfully without endangering themselves or their families. Women should not get the loans unless they have evolved plans for using the borrowed money gainfully. They should also not work as individuals but in groups

“Sit on District Sectoral communities. But most importantly, you must have well thought out programmes. Continue lobbying those who are useful, powerful and can support your cause”.

Eradicating Poverty; the Duty of Local Women Leaders

After a lively exchange of views, participants at the seminar resolved that women leaders should undertake the following measures to guide the grassroots women to eradicate poverty;

1. Women leaders should undertake sensitisation programmes for the women at the grassroots and especially ensure enhanced exchange of information. The women must unite in order to build a strong constituency that can ably and confidently fight against poverty. This should be supplemented with the development of effective mechanisms for monitoring of their activities regardless of government intervention.
2. Women leaders should learn to separate development aspects from politics as well as politics from leadership.
3. They should advise women at the grassroots to readily use and exploit the available opportunities in development. More especially, they should accept to begin with the little available to them in fighting poverty.
4. They should desist from giving false or even high expectations to the grassroots communities. The women leaders should especially be honest and committed when providing information and educating grassroots women.
5. They should ensure grassroots women willingly attend all available sensitisation programmes where they can get enhanced capacity to make adequate decisions.
6. They should make grassroots women understand that development can be practical and meaningful if it starts from the homes. It is therefore important that couples co-operate in all development endeavours. Unity

and co-operation of couples is crucial in successful implementation and getting benefits from poverty eradication programmes.

7. They should ensure mutual relationships between women and district councils as a way of having an enabling environment for poverty eradication.
8. Women leaders should be firm when defending issues relating to women's lives. They should especially remain assertive and principled to their cause.
9. They should be good examples in their communities with the ability to undertake confidence building measures in grass root communities like attracting new opportunities that aim at eradicating poverty through community development initiatives. This entails maintaining close links with their constituents.
10. They should lobby central and local governments to fund women councils before election time so that they are not easily corrupted. This should be an ongoing process.

Reflecting on the State's Responsibility

Although the women leaders have a major role to play as was largely reflected in the discussions during the workshop, the government remains the major player if the poverty eradication programme is to succeed not only in Luweero district but also country wide. Since government is the major initiator of policies, and the key protector of women's rights, her points of focus to ensure women are empowered to eradicate poverty should be to;

- ◆ Put in place a harmonised policy framework on poverty eradication that also includes the ideas of major stakeholders and beneficiaries.
- ◆ Ensure that the budget lines for the Ministry of Gender and Social Affairs are increased and supported so as to cater for women needs at all levels of administration in the country.

- ◆ Subsidise the operations of the micro finance institutions so that the money loaned out to women grassroots communities is affordable especially on interest rates so that the ordinary women can equitably and profitably use it to raise their standards. Policy makers should especially understand that project maturity in agriculture take a long time to generate modest profits.
- ◆ Address the land question as a way of ensuring women get collateral that is necessary in enabling the financing of their programmes.
- ◆ Expedite the enactment of the Domestic Relations Bill to harmonise family relations.
- ◆ Revisit the policy on extension services delivery as a way of removing unnecessary clashes while ensuring that the extension workers are facilitated to reach and be closer to the grassroots women engaged in production.
- ◆ Put in place a separate credit scheme that can assist women acquire new and improved technology as well as farm inputs like fertilisers that can help them improve their productive activities.
- ◆ Work towards the substitution of the traditional hand hoe, cognisant of the fact that women farmers are still engaged in farming activities which are time bound and seasons-dependant.
- ◆ Develop an irrigation plan so that women farmers can engage in continuous production without being limited by weather patterns that are always having long spells of dry seasons.
- ◆ Address the social-cultural factors like patriarchy, which are detrimental to women empowerment and directly hinder womenís poverty eradication efforts.
- ◆ Ensure a continuous multisectoral sensitisation and capacity building programme for grassroots women by forming an adult literacy curriculum for rural women, the majority of whom are illiterate.

Conclusion

Poverty eradication is a demanding undertaking for both men and women leaders at all levels. To be successful, the guidelines initiated at national and local administrative levels like NAADS, PEAP and PMA should be clear to the leaders. The local councils should address the gaps between developing communication and education strategies for the local people and then facilitate the implementation process. Most importantly, men and women should work together and use available opportunities to ensure projects can give quality returns.

Basically, the seminar indicated that government should clearly take up her role of ensuring that assistance supposed to go to women is specified and availed in time. The burden should not be shifted to local administrative units who can not generate enough resources for effective intervention.

While women can still get a lot of support from micro finance institutions, they should borrow according to plan and with a clear understanding of what they want to do. More importantly, women leaders should come out with their own method of work that harmonises general development concerns of women with government's poverty eradication measures. Therefore, the fight against poverty needs patience and careful evaluation. It is also important that other stakeholders develop strategies to address attitude change that will reduce the patriarchal tendencies that have continued to hinder women's capacity and potential in development.