



Analysis. Today, Uganda joins the rest of the world to celebrate Women's Day under the theme 'Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a Covid-19 world'. Daily Monitor's **Eronie Kamukama**, randomly spoke to some women about what they think of this day.



**Ms Betty Aol Ochan,
Leader of Opposition**

"We should use Women's Day to reflect on how far we have come as women. What gaps are still there? We have to look at women in leader-

ship and when we talk about leadership, it is not only political.

We look at leadership even at home. When it comes to taking up responsibility, we should not leave it to men only. We should share so no woman is left behind.

Women should be empowered economically and be able to earn a lot of things for ourselves. I always appeal for education for both men and women. When we all are educated, our children get equal opportunities.

The children will all be empowered to be able to speak up. Women should unite more.

They should hold each other's hands and be able to strengthen each other in leadership which starts at home. Even when it comes to succession, girls can also be heirs to their parents' property.

Let us all reflect on the message of March 8, 2021 and men should join us."

Women's Day: Time to reflect on our progress



**Ms Nataliy Bitature,
entrepreneur**

Do not be scared. Do not let your lack of qualification or experience hold you back from applying for opportunities.

Make sure you always put yourself out there. Have a brand. Know your values and

make sure you are communicating that in the way you dress, speak, integrity, professionally. Make sure you put yourself out there.

Please women, speak up in meetings, ask questions, give comments because what you say has value. No one has experiences in the specificity of the way you have it so your perspective on things is needed.

We are never going to achieve equality or parity if men keep making decisions on our behalf. That is how more doors open. We should celebrate women's day because we are still so far behind. Women are doing unpaid work.

Mothers, caretakers, sisters and we do not celebrate them. There is no Forbes or Oscars for being the best mother. There is so much unrewarded work that women put in that the world takes for granted."



**Catherine Nankabirwa,
founder, The Panel**

"I am a strong lady who loves to see women win. I will be celebrating this women's day with my mother and three sisters.

We should celebrate women's day because women are everything. My observation is that women struggle with relationships; they cannot find jobs and those that find them face harassment at work.

My advice is that we have to learn to set boundaries when we start to work for organisations.

Men have got to know that there are limits they cannot cross and it is what I do and it works for me.

Also, young women should learn follow through with the ideas that they think are viable and if they do not have resources, let them reach out to people who are better placed to help them."



PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN MUKONO, KAYUNGA AND BUIKWE DISTRICTS THROUGH EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS TO FIGHT GENDER BASED VIOLENCE



A Women's Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on GBV conducted by LASPNET in Mukono District during the baseline research survey in February 2021. Source: LASPNET

As the world commemorates the International Women's Day under the theme "Women in Leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world", it's significant to appreciate and recognize the efforts of women and girls in the development discourse of our country.

More than ever before, women and girls have elevated their socio-economic and political status and as such been able to break the glass ceiling of gender inequality.

This paradigm shift has partly been enabled by the existing legal frameworks at the international and regional level such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Maputo Protocol, the Goma Declaration as well as Sustainable Development Goal 5, which all provide for promotion of the rights of women in all spheres. Domestically, the 1995 Constitution of Uganda (as amended) provides for the

promotion and protection of rights of women under Article (33). Further, other laws and policies including the Domestic Violence Act (2010); the Equal Opportunities Commission Act, 2008; the Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Act, 2010; the Gender Policy (2016) have also acted as a springboard for women empowerment in Uganda.

However, and despite the above progress, we ought to acknowledge the existing bottlenecks that deprive women and girls from exercising their full potential. Moreover, majority of these are deeply entrenched in our social and economic fabric. That is to say, women's contribution to development remains undervalued and less recognized especially by the male counterparts. Further, one of the most perverted vices which undermine the dignity, respect and rights of women and girls is Gender Based Violence (GBV) experienced at both home and in public spaces.

"Empowering the formal and informal justice systems to handle and respond to Gender Based Violence (GBV) in Mukono, Buikwe and Kayunga Districts."

In the recent times, we have witnessed a spike in the number of GBV cases due to the COVID 19 lockdown. Statistics from the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development revealed that between the months of March to April 2020, 3280 GBV cases were registered as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. This is largely propagated by economic distress in homesteads while on the other hand, partners spending longer hours together which seemed unusual before the pandemic.

Aware of the GBV scourge, LASPNET under its mandate of enhancing access to justice for the poor and vulnerable, received support from the European Union (EU) in November 2020 to implement a 2-year project titled "Empowering the formal and informal justice systems to handle and respond to Gender Based Violence (GBV) in Mukono, Buikwe and Kayunga Districts." The project aims to provide a holistic approach towards the elimination of GBV in the above three (3) districts.

LASPNET's interventions in the selected project districts among others include; conducting evidence-based research on GBV especially its causes and manifestations in order to inform project interventions; building capacity and skilling formal and informal justice actors such as Judicial and Police Officers; Health workers; Community Development Officers; Religious as well as Cultural leaders on how to handle and respond to GBV within their communities. In addition, the project will also facilitate the provision of legal aid services to the GBV Survivors as well as focus on creating public awareness on GBV and referral pathways through radio talk shows and jingles.

Therefore, and to promote ownership and buy-in of the project by actors and beneficiaries, initial project activities which

include introductory visits to key project stakeholders such as the District Local Governments, JLOS institutions, NGOs/CSOs, LASPs among others were conducted in the focus districts at the start of the year. The above stakeholders welcomed LASPNET's initiative to implement the project within their districts.

Mr. James Nkata, the CAO of Mukono district is quoted to have said "This GBV project is a welcome development to our district and we are optimistic that it will complement the efforts of other actors in responding to GBV which is a common practice in the district." While on the other hand, Ms. Kaganyi Jane Frances, the RDC of Buikwe district and Ms. Adongo Roseline, the CAO of Kayunga district pledged full support towards the project.

Subsequently, a baseline research survey has been conducted recently with the aim of informing project interventions. Preliminary findings from the baseline research survey



A Focus Group Discussion with Adolescent Girls during the baseline survey study in Buikwe.

revealed that the predominant forms of GBV in Kayunga; Buikwe and Mukono include sexual violence; physical assault; emotional and economic violence among others. Women and Girls represent the biggest percentage of GBV Survivors whereas the drivers of GBV include household poverty; patriarchal doctrines; lesser punishment for perpetrators as well as drug abuse and alcoholism. Other findings include the limited capacity and logistical support to effectively respond by duty bearers such as LCs and Police.

It was also striking to realize that there are few Legal Aid Service Providers and no GBV Shelters in the three districts hence depriving the GBV Survivors of both legal and psych-social support. Most importantly, LASPNET will leverage on these findings to appropriately design holistic and inclusive interventions geared towards fighting GBV and some of its drivers. We contend that the LASPNET GBV project in Kayunga; Buikwe and Mukono districts just like elsewhere is very timely in terms of addressing GBV which is one of the greatest causes of gender imbalances that deter women and girls' participation in national building.

LASPNET greatly appreciates EU for contributing to the reduction of GBV and supporting women empowerment through the GBV project which is ultimately geared towards achieving the aspirations of the National Policy on Elimination of Gender Based Violence (2016) and the UN-EU funded Spotlight Initiative Programme that seeks to eliminate all forms of Sexual and Gender Based Violence and other harmful practices.

Report any GBV related cases using the LASPNET GBV Toll Free line 0800111401

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