

## **Women Community Activities in Ugandan Context**

### **Ms.NAMANDE Grace (Uganda)**

Women engage themselves in both productive and reproductive activities. Productive activities constitute to the community and national development/national income, these include economic activities like, fishing, stone quarreling, charcoal selling, shop and bar attendants, crop growing, animal husbandry, and poultry keeping. They also include the work of civil servants like women accountants, women doctor, women lawyers, personal secretaries, teachers, traditional healers, house maids, musicians, community workers, religious activities and many more.

Women's reproductive activities in Uganda involve taking care of a community's welfare for by producing children; breast-feeding; raising and nurturing of children, cooking, fetching water and firewood, cleaning, and taking care of homes, washing and ironing clothes, washing home utensils and looking after their husbands. Unfortunately this kind of work is not appreciated by men and the community at large.

Economically women in Ugandan community are good traders. Some of the trading activities include chicken, beef, potato and cassava roasting along roadsides mainly on highways; selling of 2nd hand garments to local market (butale bwa mubuulo); charcoal selling though it is the men who do the clearing and burning; banana selling and other food stuffs, local juice processing. From this business, women have been able to supplement on men's income to meet some of the basic needs like paying children's school fees, feeding and clothing. This has raised women's position in families since they also contribute to families' welfare thus avoiding their marginalization.

Women participate in communal work. For example, cleaning and sweeping streets, roads, markets. Some do it voluntarily, while others earn a living from this. This avoids them from being redundant. Previously, this kind of work was meant to be for men. This has improved the general cleanliness of trading centers and markets, thus promoting proper hygiene and sanitation.

Women engage in religious activities. These range from preaching and ushering in several religious places. Many women are ordained as priests, reverends, canons and sisters. In many Catholic churches, sisters help fathers in serving the Eucharist while in some others religion, women preach the gospel to their convents. Some prominent

women pastors include Pastor Namutebi Imelda and First Lady Janet Museveni.

Women carry out counseling of their clients. This ranges from conflicts involving married couples and families; victims of HIV/AIDS scourge; traumatized children in war torn areas and those who have lost their jobs. This helps in rehabilitating their thinking and to cope with prevailing circumstances. Women have proved to be great counselors because of the empathy and sympathy they have.

Women have gone a step further by treating people's problems. These are done by traditional women doctors for example Maama Fina who is the president of traditional healers in Uganda. She solves people's problems like job seekers, barren women, impotent men and bringing back lost love. From this she has been in position to earn a living, solve people's problems and reputations. This responsibility shifted from men originally to women.

Women carry out circle gift receiving (Nigina) that are geared towards economic and welfare development. This has promoted unity, togetherness and hardworking in families. From this women get home utensils from fellow members and invited guests. These ranges from cups, plates, mattresses, blankets, fridges, sofa sets.

Formation of women local clubs on village levels which are aimed at imparting skills in women for income generating activities like crafts, tailoring, music, dance, for example, drama and counseling. In addition, these women receive life skill training, to manage conflicts in homes and basic skills in home management. This has promoted women to identify their problems and find possible solutions. It has also promoted social cohesion, creativity and innovativeness.

Women are involved in agricultural activities like animal husbandry, crop growing, fish farming, hot culture, and growing of flowers. The products from this are sold and the surplus is consumed. Such women have been in position to habilitate their homes, pay school fees for their children and improve their nutrition. This in turn has complemented men's income and the general development of the area.

Photo: Women gather for Gift Receiving Circle called *Nigina*.

