

Today, Uganda joins the rest of the world to celebrate the International Women's Day. The local theme for this year's celebrations is **Empowering Women Through Innovative Approaches to Social Protection; a Prerequisite for Inclusive and Sustainable Development**. **Owen Wagabata** brings you profiles of some Ugandan women whose innovations are changing the world for the better

Celebrating women innovators changing the world



Natalie Bitature, Musana Carts

Bitature is the proprietor and co-founder of the award-winning Musana Carts, the solar street-vending revolution, which provides urban street vendors with a cleaner, safer and more efficient solution to their cooking, storage and financing needs. She is motivated by the need to create an opportunity for people who have been stuck in a vicious cycle of poverty. "We want to raise the income of the urban poor and drive them to create a business solution that is a change-making tool. We also want to work for a cleaner,

brighter and more innovative Uganda," Bitature explains. Bitature says the current model of food-vending is unsafe, environmentally hazardous and unsustainable to both the vendors and the public or environment for whom they prepare the food. "We want to reduce the negative environmental and health impact of the street-vending activities," she says. In 2016, Bitature was named among the top 30 Forbes List Africa, and in the same year, she was shortlisted in the top 10 innovators in Africa by the World Economic Forum.

Elizabeth Nyeko, Mandulus Energy
Nyeko is the co-founder of Mandulus Energy. Mandulus Energy is a developer of renewable energy projects in emerging markets, developing both on-grid and off-grid power projects. "We are committed to creating and deploying new technologies and approaches, including proprietary software, to address the energy access 'trilemma' by reconciling reliability, sustainability and affordability," Nyeko says. The team uses biomass gasification technology, which involves the thermochemical conversion of solid biomass in a low oxygen environment, into a synthetic gas (syngas) with a biochar by-product. "Syngas is cleaned to remove impurities and used to drive a gas or steam turbine to generate electricity. Biochar, on the other hand, is used to make briquettes, a clean-burning alternative to charcoal, or firewood," she says. Mandulus Energy is currently working on two projects. One is REPARLE, which is an off-grid rural electrification 8MW power generation project that uses gasification to turn agricultural residues into electricity for microgrids in rural farming communities. The other is Earth Energy, a 20MW grid-tied biomass power project in Gulu. Once construction is completed, this will be the first and largest grid-tied biomass gasification power plant in Africa



Barbara Birungi Mutabazi, Women in Technology Uganda

Birungi's love and passion for technology started in high school when she failed to get a seat in the computer classroom due to the high number of students and limited computers. And when she got a job at a technology consultancy firm, she realised that she was the only woman in a group of 10 people. It is then that she conceived the idea of creating a place where young women looking for industry-relevant training opportunities, mentoring and networking opportunities could come, learn from each other and share experiences. That is how Women in Technology Uganda came to life. "Women in Technology Uganda was created as a place where women could come and learn about technology, business and leadership and in turn become innovators and business leaders. I wanted to create a movement of women technologists and encourage young women to become tech professionals

and advance in technology to lead tech companies," Birungi says. Birungi adds that she wanted a place that would embrace young women who have dropped out of school due to poverty. She wanted to give these vulnerable girls hope for a bright future through technology education and business development support. "I wanted to link them to jobs and empower them to be part of the decision-making on issues that concern their lives and their communities," she says. Fascinated about women advancement and technology, Birungi is of the view that as technology continues to shape Africa's economies, women and girls should not be left behind. Birungi is also the founder of HiveColab, an innovation hub and startup incubator in Kampala. Through her work with WITU, Birungi received the Anita Borg Change Agent award in 2014, and is also a 2017 Mandela Washington fellowship recipient.



Sherifah Tumusime, Zimba Women

Sherifah Tumusime is the chief executive officer and co-founder of Zimba Women, an IT solutions provider specialising in the provision of technical and software solutions for small and medium enterprises. Tumusime is also a founder of the Baby Store, the first specialty retail e-commerce website for baby products and apparel in Uganda. Trained by the International Trade Centre on cross-border information technology enabled services, Tumusime is a member of the Cherie Blair Foundation mentorship programme and a Mandela Washington Fellow. In 2016, she won the regional Commonwealth Youth Award, Africa and Europe.



Joan Nalubega, Ugancis

Joan Nalubega is an entrepreneur who is passionate about saving lives with the purpose of creating a malaria-free world. With the coaching and mentorship she received from Social Innovation Africa, she founded Ugancis in 2016. Ugancis is a social business that aims at incorporating an affordable repellent into everyday use and make malaria protection safe and accessible to everyone. "It is an affordable long-lasting organic mosquito repellent soap that prevents mosquito bites. After bathing, mosquitoes are repelled for six hours and if used for washing, repellent components remain in the clothes and the water poured out from the washing prevents mosquitoes from breeding," Nalubega explains. To increase awareness and impact, Ugancis also facilitates malaria prevention outreaches and training for mothers. The company also provides the product to poorer households in rural communities at an affordable price, similar to the cost of regular soap.



By Jacky Achan

Stella Lanam was abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels when she was 10, from Madi-opei in present day Lamwo district. She was forced to become the wife of a 38-year-old fighter. At 13, Lanam gave birth to her first child (a son), while in captivity. She persevered in the harsh conditions in the bush and was eventually released from captivity. But upon returning home, life was not the same. She felt estranged from her own family. Lanam married again and gave birth to a daughter, but her husband did not want anything to do with her firstborn. The trauma forced her to abandon her marriage, effectively becoming a single mother. Lanam's experience is not an isolated one. Several young women in northern Uganda have experienced abduction and gender-based violence, which has left them languishing in poverty. Today, Lanam is the director of War Victim and Children Networking, a non-governmental organisation in Gulu district working to improve the lives of women affected by the LRA war. "The challenge is in land. We do not have land for livelihood activities nor do we have the means to educate our children. Our parents refuse to give us land to use. They are in a dilemma. They love us as their children, but find it difficult to accept the children we had in captivity. But we cannot separate from our children; they are not our blood even if we may not know their

LRA war women victims need empowerment

names," Lanam says. "Rejected, we end up going to the towns and living as single mothers with no adequate means to take care of our families. One cannot go back to school having spent 10 to 11 years in captivity. Also, the fact that one is already mother, one knows they have children to take care of," she explains. **Survival** Today, the women are involved in petty chores, including washing clothes for a fee to survive, Lanam says. "I do not think the majority of women have been empowered in this country. We live like we are not in our own country," she says. "We struggle to educate our children and to survive; we are not at peace. If you want to empower women, come to the grassroots and see the actual suffering. From experiencing the suffering, then you can know as a leader, what ought to be done to empower the women," she adds. Lanam says for leaders to take empowerment drives to radio talkshows is not helping. "The women do not have radios and will not get the message. So they remain stuck in poverty and abuse," she says. Nonetheless, the women dream of a better life. "Personally, I want to venture into farming. I know I can thrive and take care

of my family. Other women want to sell produce. We all have dreams of being economically empowered, but it will need government support," she says. **Legal protection** On November 23, 2018 and December 4, 2018, the Uganda Association of Women Lawyers (FIDA Uganda) led representatives of formerly abducted women and children born in captivity to present their petition to Members of Parliament. Harriet Olanya, the project co-ordinator of Voice, a project by FIDA Uganda supported by Oxfam, says they went to Parliament to urge the Government to take responsibility in addressing issues raised by women survivors. On receiving this petition, the Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Jacob Oulanyah, ordered that a motion should be moved and presented before Parliament for debate. Gulu Municipality MP Lyandro Komakech presented the motion before Parliament on February 19. Through victim-led advocacy, Parliament passed a national policy to provide livelihood support to formerly abducted women and to provide for the specific unique needs of children born in captivity. The Voice project is amplifying the voices of formerly abducted women and children in northern Uganda to protect their land and property rights.



Wives and children of former LRA rebels that were returned to Uganda

Impact of LRA conflict Between 1986 and 2006, the LRA conflict that engulfed northern Uganda led to gross human rights violations including murder, rape, mutilation and torture, among others. The conflict resulted in displacement of about two million people, with the Government forcing locals into internally-displaced people's camps. According to a 1997 Amnesty International report, it is estimated that over 90% of the LRA combatants are, or were, abducted children. The abducted girls and women were conscripted as combatant child soldiers,

porters and labourers and subjected to torture, rape, mutilation, forced marriage, forced impregnation and sexual enslavement among others. They gave birth to children during captivity, many unaware of the identity of the fathers or their ancestral homes. The report says similar to the experiences of girls elsewhere, despite the scale of the abuse they experienced during the war and their struggles after the war, the formerly abducted girls remain invisible or "exterminated" by the dominant group. Oulanyah says although families have performed ritual cleansing ceremonies to rid the formerly abducted girls of 'bad spirits' and protect ownership of land within their families, the latter are suspicious that the mothers and their 'classless' children will take over their land. **Effect of poverty and vulnerability** Nickson Ogwal, the business development manager of Action Aid Uganda and a human rights defender, says for as long as poverty and vulnerability are still high, people lose focus of empowerment of women and equality because life is all about survival. He says poverty and vulnerability have a strong face of women. Giving the example of climate change, he says, "if there is no rain, no food, no firewood, it's the women and children who suffer

the most; they have to look for food and firewood which is not there". Ogwal emphasises that when it comes to property and land ownership, little gain has been made in terms of empowering the women. He cites the Apaa land evictions, saying: "They may say they are compensating these people, but the money is insufficient. Taking away this land leaves mostly the women and their children vulnerable, suffering and in a desperate state." Ogwal also says corruption is making the country dysfunctional. Most state institutions are dysfunctional even those put in place to empower women and build equity. Uganda was the 149th least corrupt country out of 175 countries, according to the 2018 Corruption Perceptions Index reported by Transparency International. Ogwal says the country still has many limitations to women empowerment, including resource limitation, laws, frameworks on gender equity and patriarchy, which need to be addressed to make more gains in women empowerment. He says commitment to support women through the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme in terms of economic empowerment of women is significant. "However, even working to end gender-based and sexual violence against

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women, where there is no economic empowerment for the women, becomes a waste of time as women remain vulnerable," Ogwal says.



We wish to Congratulate the Administration of Bunyangabu district upon hosting the International Women's Day 2019.

Attractions: Boat experience at Lake Nyanzeza, Sport Bike riding, Walk around the Lake. Guided tour around Rwenzori region to places like the Hot Springs, Tooro royal Palace, Nyakusira Mabere caves, Rwenzori mountains, semiki park, Queen Elizabeth Park and many others.

STARTERS	FISH FILLET
EGG PLANT SCARP ACCIO	FRIED POJKR or FRIED BEEF
VARIETY OF SOUPS	TUMBER
SANDWICH	SIDE DISHES
SPANISH OMMLETTEU Sns 6.000	ODOO Green local vegetable
CHEESE OMMLETTE	SALADS
FIRST COURSES	DESSERTS
PASTA TOMATO SAUCE	MIXED FRUIT
PASTA ROLLODISE	COCONUT-LEMON CAKE Amazing combination of coconut and lemon
VEGETABLE LASAGNA	PIZZING
MAIN COURSES	PIZZA
CHICKENANDCHIPS	Salted in wooden oven
FRIEDTILAPIA	

Location: 40km from FortPortal Road towards Kasese
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