

## Uganda: A man shares his thoughts on embracing women's empowerment

Mr Chebet Abubaker from Taramasiga west village in Ngesi Panol Kaserem sub-county Kapchorwa District in Uganda, is a member of Kubutyem Farmers group, and participated in the EWA project.

<http://www.wecf.eu/english/about-wecf/issues-projects/projects/ewa/>



According to Mr Chebet, in the past a woman was regarded as an inferior person and was required to perform all domestic activities. These included working on the farm and collecting water and firewood. Women were denied the opportunity to share ideas with their husbands, including their ideas about the household budget. They were also required to undergo circumcision or female genital mutilation as a way of being initiated into society. This procedure would qualify them to pick cow dung from kraal, to pick food from the granary, add hot water to a beer pot and to welcome candidates for circumcision. In the end, a woman was considered as someone whose role was to get married, produce children and perform domestic duties.



However, in the process of gender sensitization, the traditional ways are gradually being left out. Now, women can partially contribute to ideas within Uganda's society. Although there are some households that are still completely traditional, others have completely accepted gender equality. Mr. Abubaker learned from the EWA project trainings that for a household to prosper, men and women need to work, share and plan together. He has since realized that there is a need to allow women to attend trainings, to give them time to care for children and to allow them to

join groups freely, because it helps them develop ideas that can benefit the family. He uses his wife as an example for this, as she is one of the two community based facilitators (CBFs) for Kaserem Sub-county.

Due to the sensitisation, he now shares some tasks with his wife, whereas before he decided on all family issues and his wife did not have any say at all. Before the project Mr. Abubaker only performed typically male tasks, but now he chops firewood, collects water using a wheelbarrow and has trained his sons to do the same. Furthermore, he regularly works in the gardens (weeding) especially during the holidays, which is something he used to do only once in a while. Abubaker also cooks food - simple dishes like rice and chapati - when his wife is sick or gone for other activities, and washes clothes.



He confesses that he is more gender sensitive now. According to Mr. Abubaker, there is no more oppression in his household, as he claims that "I completely do not deny her the chance to make use of any opportunity that comes her way". Before, when his wife got an opportunity that would take her away from home, he and the children would be forced to cook. This would annoy him because he would feel inferior and also feared for what his friends would say. Because of this, he refused to do things which were good for him and his wife. On realizing that he was hurting himself, he decided to disregard what people said and started doing things with his wife and family. Now, his children freely ask him to chop firewood. He proudly noted that his participation in household chores speeds up things. For instance when they return from the garden, tasks are divided and they all get refreshed in a short time, which saves time for other things. Mr. Abubaker plans to continue this process for other tasks.



The effect of this new distribution of roles on his wife is that she is happy and free to do other things. She is free to go anywhere, as her husband lets her leave unconditionally and lets her regulate herself. Before, the story was different as he would set limits on time spent outside the home for any activity. Mr. Abubaker said that in those days his wife had to ask for permission for everything and no property belonged to her. Now, he consults his wife when he wants to sell something. Commenting on what should be done for men to change how they treat women, he said men need to

be sensitized. This should be done by fellow men, and discussions should be initiated at social places where men meet, such as the trading centres. He expressed willingness to lead discussions on domestic gender issues with other men.

### **Uganda: How a family benefits from women's empowerment**

Mrs. Carolyn Cherotich is a member of Kapkoch Reflect Circle in Cheminy village, Kapkoch parish, and Kaptoyoy Sub County (formerly Binyiny) in Kween District. <http://www.wecf.eu/english/about-wecf/issues-projects/projects/ewa/>

Before the EWA project, Mrs. Cherotich practiced conventional agriculture, and from her ¼ acre of maize intercropped with beans she would get 150kgs of maize and 10 kgs of beans. However, when she started practicing conservation agriculture (CA) (<http://www.wecf.eu/english/publications/2014/Agriculture-guide.php>) using organic practices, she started to get 350kgs of maize from the same plot. Mrs. Cherotich has also





adopted CA on part of her banana and coffee gardens. As a result, the yields are very good on the side where CA is practiced. Here she gets very big bunches of bananas that sell at Ugx 12,000 (\$4.4) in contrast to the ones on the conventional side, which provide just Ugx 5,000 (\$1.9). She gladly stated "My income has more than doubled from maize and bananas and I'm able to save in my Village Savings and Loan group".

Carolyn also happily explained that before, much of the income from the harvest was controlled by her husband, but after the training by the EWA project - which her husband attended- they can now both decide on the spending of the money. They even include their grown up children in discussing issues, as they too need to learn to consult others and plan together. She is grateful and hopes that the knowledge she has gained will be passed on to future generations, just like she is practicing with her children.

Just like other women have shared, when her husband was controlling the money, it was used on things which were not profitable to the whole family. However, with joint planning, the money is used for the education of the children, for healthcare and for other family issues. She concluded saying her family is now peaceful and they have improved financially, as they are even able to start saving from their various sources of income.

