

# ANNIVERSARY REPORT

2011 - 2021



**10<sup>TH</sup>**  
**ANNIVERSARY**

[www.vowu.org](http://www.vowu.org)

Dignity and Justice for Women and Girls!

## INTRODUCTION

*This year we are excited to present a special report highlighting the 10th Anniversary of Voice of Women Uganda. We hope you will enjoy seeing through this report how our organisation has grown over the past decade. We strive to review what we have done, celebrate our successes, while recognising how much further we still have left to go. To mark this important milestone, we are also delighted to unveil the brand-new logo of the organization, highlighting the power of Ugandan women bonding together and strengthening one another. Only with true solidarity and unity will we achieve our shared goals and uphold our values.*



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# Celebrating

— 10 YEARS —

## A message from our Chairperson



Dear Beneficiaries and Stakeholders of Voice of Women Uganda,

Congratulations and Happy 10th Anniversary!

It is a very special day for us. I am very proud to be associated with the 10th Anniversary of VOWU. On this occasion, I would like to extend my heartfelt greetings and congratulations to all Board members, beneficiaries, stakeholders and development partners for having successfully transcended through the 10th Anniversary.

It is really gratifying for me to have taken over the leadership of VOWU which has progressed and achieved so much in a short span of time. My gratitude to the first Chairperson, Mr. Tumuhanye Ham and our Coordinator Ms. Tumukunde Meldah for laying the founding stone for VOWU. Your professionalism, dedication, courage and patience has served as an inspiration to all of us.

I wish to thank our development partners who have tirelessly dedicated time, skills, funds and resources that have enabled us to empower vulnerable women and girls.

Unfortunately, the years 2020 and 2021 respectively have been very challenging not only for us, but also for the country and the whole of humanity. The COVID-19 pandemic came as a threat for us. It has not only endangered human lives but it has also severely affected the country's economy, including service provision. However, I would like to assure you that we will continuously and tirelessly work virtually, in our offices or at home, wherever possible to serve you. In the coming years, Voice of Women Uganda has the opportunity to reach even more women and girls than before by making its presence a powerful force for change.

I am thankful to the Board members for their active participation and healthy discussions on the vital agendas of the organisation. To all our beneficiaries, thank you so much for your trust. I am convinced that given the current momentum of our struggle, we shall achieve our vision of a Society where Women and Girls live Dignified Lives. We will continue to work towards ensuring that women understand and exercise their rights and abilities.

I am proud to be steering such an organization with its passionate commitment for social justice.

I wish all of you a Happy 10th Anniversary and look forward to witness more achievements.

*Tushemereirwe Sharon*  
Chairperson Board



# Celebrating

— 10 YEARS —



## A message from our Coordinator

After spending 10 years nurturing the growth of VOWU, I feel honoured to be writing this message. This is a special time in VOWU's history and on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of VOWU, I want to spend some time recalling the past.

### Our Journey

The journey of development since our humble beginnings in 2011 is almost unbelievable. What began as a dream early days of 2011 later came true on November 21, 2011. I am deeply touched remembering the time when I decided to give up my job in order to start my own organisation. Throughout my career and professional life, I wished to help women who were experiencing problems but kept wondering how I would do it and whether I had the capacity to do so. I wanted to see the lives of women and girls change immediately, I wanted to address all the issues that affect women and deny them a chance to be heard... little did I know that it is always a journey to reach there.

One day, I shared my dream with one friend, Mr. Tumuhamy Ham, who at first did not seem to approve the idea of resigning from the good job I had. As we continuously shared, he later agreed with me and accepted to join me to think through the idea of starting an organisation. It was a number of days where every evening we sat together to think through the name of our organisation. A number of proposals came up but eventually we zeroed to the name Voice of Women Uganda, because our goal was and still is, to strengthen the voice of women in our community and country, and to let their voices to be heard.

As we discussed, Mr. Tumuhamy always encouraged me with the thought that most organisations start from scratch and grow into prominent and big organisations. With our strong commitment, we pooled the few resources that we had and this helped us to start off.



First VOWU Office

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We constituted ourselves into office bearers with myself as a Coordinator and Mr. Tumuhamyé as the Interim Chairperson.

The challenge remained where to work from and who else to work with. I offered my garage as an office and opted to park my car outside in the compound. A few months later, thieves came and vandalized my car and left just a scrap. I later resorted to my garage being an office during the day and a garage at night. It was not easy lifting desks in the morning and in the evening but my family endured. By this time, we hired our first staff, Ms Ainembabazi Immaculate, who had just graduated from a Technical College as a teacher with a diploma in agriculture but with no idea about office operations. I had to commit to mentoring her for the sake of our work moving on. It was not after long that she picked up the work and we started introducing ourselves to the communities. Every time women told us about their issues, it appeared an impossibility that we would ever manage to address these issues since we did not have any resource to invest. However, the major resource that both of us, Immaculate and I had, was the knowledge of talking to people, I mean counselling and guiding them, and this later became our stepping stone. I am a professional counsellor and Immaculate being a teacher, she had learnt how to manage and to deal with students in the classroom. This was a very good resource we started with and it has continued to drive our work.



*Our Coordinator and the Programme Officer  
in a meeting*



*Staff and Executive Committee of VOWU  
in a planning meeting*

## ***Special thanks to our staff, supporters, partners and clients***

We have faced difficult times throughout the journey but our devotion in growing the organization has never wavered. Special recognition goes to our 10-year employees and volunteers: Ainembabazi Immaculate, Atukwatse Samuel, Atukwatse Miliet, Atwijukire Claire, Nuwamanya Gerald, Ayesiga Frank, Amutuhaire Pauline, Bwambare Rabson, and Gorett Natabanzi, who responded positively when we approached them with the opportunity to join us in this startup. You have been such a wonderful team with passionate commitment to seeing women realise social justice.



*Administration Staff*



*Nabatanzi Gorett  
Counselor*



*Ainembabazi Immaculate  
Project Officer*



*Atukwatse Miliet  
Field Officer*

I take this opportunity to congratulate members of the Board chaired by Ms. Tushemereirwe Sharon, who have confidently steered the organization. To the esteemed women and girls out there who have trusted us throughout the years to serve you, it has been an honour and privilege to help you achieve and even exceed your growth objectives. We could not have survived or achieve this important milestone without you. Thank you for inspiring us every day. We look forward to spending the next decade providing you with innovative and rewarding response strategies to your issues. We have had the opportunity to work with over 1000 women, 590 girls and 175 men throughout our history and we have valued every interaction along the way.

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I wish to deeply thank our development partners who have dedicated funds and other resources that have enabled us to empower vulnerable women and girls. We are very grateful!

To all our generous donors, we are deeply thankful you chose to support our work. Thank you for being a part of our team of supporters that are making our project a reality. On a special note, I wish to thank Ms. Fiona Forsyth from Scotland, who has been there for us through the years. She donated computers, stationery, a camera, a tent and she generously committed personal funds.



*Fiona handing over a laptop to  
VOWU Chairperson*



*Fiona while running a workshop  
for VOWU staff and Board*

Special thanks also to Ms. Leslie Daktari Mosher of Surprised by Hope who supported us to develop our first strategic plan in 2014.



*VOWU staff and executive with Leslie Mosher after a strategic planning meeting*

To all our stakeholders and friends, I thank you for your continued commitment to VOWU. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are not able to gather to celebrate this milestone but we hope to be able to share the celebration of our 10th Anniversary with you at some of the events we are planning for 2022.



## ***Our future goals***

I want to affirm that throughout our work, there is one thing that has never changed and will never change in the coming years. Our mission has been, and always will be, empowerment of women to understand and exercise their rights. With this mission as our guiding light, I am very optimistic that the future will be bright and our next decade will be filled with expansions, improvements, and more innovations.

As part of our future goals, we are in the process of setting up a *Health facility called Mothers' Care Medical Centre*.

We saw the need of embarking on this ambitious goal because in general in Uganda, and especially in the communities we have worked in, women experience unique health-care challenges and as a women's organisation, we realise that women's health remarkably equals women's empowerment. Improving women's health increases their chances of pursuing education, strengthens their economic empowerment, therefore making progress towards gender equality, which is at the core of our organisation's vision. This health facility will provide a variety of healthcare services and resources to help meet the need for basic healthcare in rural communities and specifically to help women, mothers and their children with their unique health needs. Mothers' Care Medical Centre will provide among others reliable supply of contraceptives and family planning services, medical supplies, immunization services, clinical care, HIV/AIDS testing kits, delivery kits and health related information to assist communities to make better health choices. We realise this is an ambitious goal, but we firmly believe in it and we are already progressively working towards its realization.

A second goal we are working on, is to establish a *Creative Learning Centre* where women survivors of violence will be provided with knowledge and with practical and technical skills for life-advancement and economic growth, with the goal of building their economic self-reliance and empowerment.

While at this centre, women and girls will be able to learn a variety of skills, that are not limited to just handcraft-making and that will be directly applicable in working situations for career development like accountancy, hair-styling, catering, nursing, fashion and design etc. We receive a continuous demand from the survivors for start-up capital and skills to be able to work and earn income of their own and this goal aims at meeting their growing demand.

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In connection with this goal, we intend to create a *Finance-service facility*, providing micro-credit services and village-level loan hub.

We believe that increasing financial inclusion and teaching financial literacy empowers poor and vulnerable women to take control of their livelihoods and their lives. Our finance service facility will provide capital, training and support services to women survivors of violence and women in need so that they will be able to engage in income generating activities and use their business profits to improve household living conditions for themselves and their families.

Another important goal we have set in front of us is to *intensify our work in counselling and mentoring* to meet not just the unique needs of women victims of violence and women in general, but to *meet the needs of whoever is in need of psychosocial support and guidance: children, adolescents, men and families*.

This of course will call for extensive training of our existing counsellors and recruitment of new professional human resources, but we strongly believe in the inspiring goal of making VOWU a reliable support centre providing community mentoring and counselling services for all.

We also commit to *double our impact in the next decade* so that we can reach as many more women as possible.

I am incredibly excited about this journey and truly believe the best of Voice of Women Uganda is yet to come. Moving from the start-up to the scale-up calls for celebration. It also calls for forward thinking because, without question, our greatest accomplishments still lie ahead of us. We know it is possible to end gender inequalities and we are going to prove it to the world. We will continue to work towards ensuring that women and girls understand and exercise their rights and appreciate their abilities.

Looking to the future, we hope we can count on your continuous support to strengthen the voice of women in Uganda. Surely, you wouldn't want to miss our future - would you? We are confident you will join us in the struggle to empower women!

*Sumukunde Meldah*

Coordinator

# OUR VISION AND MISSION

## OUR VISION: A SOCIETY WHERE WOMEN AND GIRLS LIVE DIGNIFIED LIVES

We envision families and communities in Uganda where women's and girls' voices are heard and respected and where they can live free of violence and discrimination.

## OUR MISSION: We educate, equip and empower women and girls to understand and exercise their rights and abilities so as to free themselves from poverty, violence and inequality in their homes and their communities

We work with vulnerable women and girls who are experiencing discrimination, violence, abuse and exploitation. We involve women in planning and implementing activities that benefit them, in sharing testimonies and experiences as well as in setting goals. However, in addressing issues of violence, we have also men as our targets as we have through experience realised that no change can be realised in the lives of women if we do not have men as change agents.



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## OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

Our programmes are intended to build women's self-reliance in four key areas: rights and decision-making; economic independence; reproductive health and wellness; and support networks.

### EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

Voice of Women Uganda main mission is to educate women and girls to understand and exercise their rights. We equip women with information on their rights on key issues like reproductive health, defending themselves from conflicts and domestic abuse, custody of their children, access over resources and property, personal health and hygiene among others. Once they learn their rights they are empowered to stand, speak out and make healthy and informed life choices and they are better equipped to relieve themselves from poverty, injustice and violence. They can in turn share their knowledge with others in their communities and this contributes to the growth of safe, healthy, productive and equitable communities for all.



### EMPOWERING SESSIONS

Empowerment sessions are continuously organised to educate women and girls about their rights as well as empowering them with self-defence skills and related knowledge. Women benefit from the sessions such as: gender rights, legal knowledge, peaceful coexistence, conflict resolution, self-defence and assertiveness, techniques of preventing violence, managing conflicts in relationships, parenting skills, reproductive health rights, sharing of testimonies among others. Our empowering sessions are not only an occasion for women to learn but also important moments for them to socialise, smile and freely interact with fellow women.

## GIRL CHILD EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment of women starts with empowering a girl child to grow up into a responsible woman. We provide young girls with correct knowledge and skills for reducing their vulnerability to sexual abuse and harassment, improving their sexual and reproductive health outcomes. We engage also with schools and parents to empower in-school girls with mentorship and career guidance.



## SANITARY PAD CAMPAIGNS

Many girls in Uganda do not have access to proper menstrual products and stay away from class due to lack of means of managing their menstrual hygiene. Voice of Women Uganda runs a seasoned campaign to solicit in kind support and donations of sanitary pads to keep a girl child in school. Individual well-wishers as well as business owners have generously contributed towards this initiative. A total of 186 girls have benefited from the donated sanitary materials. Our future plan is to train young girls in making their own re-usable sanitary pads

## SELF-DEFENCE TRAINING FOR GIRLS

The objective of this recurring three-hours training course is to provides teenage girls with self-defence and assertiveness skills, including life skills for self-protection and self-development.



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## ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

More women than men live in poverty in Uganda. Economic disparities persist between men and women partly because much of the unpaid work within families and communities falls on the shoulders of women and because they face discrimination in the economic sphere. This is worsened by unequal gender relations, unequal access to resources, assets, income opportunities and social power. VOWU supports women to improve their economic status through skills, employment and income. We help women to learn a marketable job skill such as craft making, as well as some simple business training to turn their skill into a stable income so as to support themselves and their families. They also receive our support to establish Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) so that they can make the most of their earnings.

### VOCATIONAL HANDCRAFT TRAININGS

We train vulnerable women in various vocational craft works with the goal of turning their skills into an income and improving their economic status. We build the beneficiaries capacity through a community-based group training, engaging them in a participative process of generating activities at both an individual and group-level. The many participants have been able to make beautiful and unique products such as bags, jewellery, mats, shoes and baskets. At the culmination of the training course, our program provides each woman with a vital business kit with the materials they will need to continue the work independently. VOWU facilitators then follow each woman's progress through the successive stages of the project through follow-up meetings with the local groups to supervise, monitor and mentor their work.





## KITCHEN GARDENING PROJECT

We have mobilised households, trained and demonstrated to them the importance of kitchen gardening in improving the nutritional status of their families and raising income through sales of vegetables and crops. This has enabled beneficiaries to increase their household income, access better health services, provide themselves and their households with basic needs thus improving their livelihoods. We integrate the aspect of Village Savings and Loans Associations with kitchen gardening as a means of keeping participants together to create continuity and sustainability.

You can watch one training in the following link:

<https://tinyurl.com/farming-vowu>



## PIG SEED PROJECT

We have trained women in piggery management and marketing - this includes how to erect a sturdy shelter, how to properly feed and clean the pigs, as well as how to care for pregnant pigs. Beneficiaries are women with limited health care services while living with HIV/AIDS. This is a revolving project.



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## GOAT REARING PROJECT

The goat rearing project is revolving among Muslim women living with HIV. The aim of the project is to enable the beneficiaries to achieve small scale goat rearing production so as to support themselves and their families.



## VILLAGE SAVINGS AND LOANS ASSOCIATION

We have mobilised women into saving and lending groups (VSLAs) as a means of increasing their saving skills and making profitable use of their earnings and savings. In some groups, members share the savings at the end of the cycle (normally a year) whereas in other groups, members share the savings as they save using a rotational approach. Both approaches have seen the economic status of women improve. We have also trained women in groups to put their savings to proper use by starting income generating projects. The focus has mainly been on women who are living in or have survived violence of any kind.





## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS: PREVENTION AND SUPPORT

At VOWU, we challenge abuse of women and educate communities about each one's role in preventing violence. We also provide hope, healing and justice to victims and survivors of violence.

**PREVENTION:** Violence against women is a violation of dignity, safety and human rights. We challenge socio-cultural norms, behaviours and practices that justify abuse of women's rights educating communities about their role in preventing violence. We empower victims and survivors to defend themselves and we work with men to challenge discrimination and help them become allies in the fight for gender equality.

**SURVIVORS' SUPPORT:** Violence leaves women devastated, hopeless, isolated and at constant risk of harm. We help survivors to rebuild their lives after experiencing violence. We provide victims and survivors of abuse with counselling, mediations, referral and support. We also engage with men and rehabilitate willing perpetrators.



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## DRAMA, MUSIC AND THEATER PRODUCTIONS

VOWU utilizes the potential of talented women survivors of violence by including them in music, drama and theatre groups. Drama and music is one of the strategies VOWU uses to create awareness on various issues affecting women, because it empowers communities to comfortably discuss sensitive issues like domestic violence and abuse. Theatre presentations also encourage women to seek help if involved in violent relationships and to rehearse positive interventions. They help community members to realise how they contribute to systems of oppression. Drama has proved to be a powerful education tool because of its entertainment effect and it has particularly touched people's feelings and behaviours towards women. Our drama groups have performed at public events such as World AIDS Day, International Women's Day and other social events organised by stakeholders. These performances have not only exposed the groups and increased VOWU's visibility but they have also spread the gospel of ending violence against women.



## MEN'S ENGAGEMENT

In order to help women to break through the stereotypes that limit their opportunities, we work with men to challenge discrimination and help them become allies in the fight for gender equality. VOWU organises sensitisation foras for men on gender related rights, specifically engaging men in dialogues to deeply reflect on factors that contribute to violence against women. From the discussion, issues such as poverty, cultural practices, religion, upbringing of children, have greatly contributed to power imbalance. We have made great strides in involving men in the dialogue to win their support in promoting and advocating for women's rights and access to justice.



## COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY

Efforts are invested in educating communities about gender-based violence and its effects. Through community meetings, gatherings, workshops, community radios and other events, community members are able to discuss ways of preventing and ending violence against women. The facilitators strive to make interconnections on such issues as HIV, power imbalance, poverty, communication techniques and how these contribute to violence against women.

VOWU staff also continuously engage with local leaders such as local councils, women representatives, religious leaders, political leaders, police officers, other NGOs among others. This enables us to bring on board these leaders as change agents in addressing issues of violence. We also dialogue with police and other security agencies to help us in addressing violence related crimes.



## SUPPORT TO SURVIVORS

We handle violence related cases during the empowerment sessions, one-on-one counselling, community visits and referrals. As an empowerment tool, we provide victims of abuse with counselling, mediations, referral and support. We have been able to support survivors in various ways including provision of antibiotics for HIV survivors, sanitary materials, transport to health centres, facilitating the police officers to carry out investigations on scenes of crime, taking statements from witnesses, conducting family mediation sessions etc. Cases have been referred to the police, probation offices, courts of law, Justice Centres for probono legal aid support, health centres for HIV tests, PEP, family planning and other diagnosis and

treatment, shelters for further practical assistance and counselling. We always follow up with the cases that we refer for support. We also conduct mediation sessions as a means of helping families to remain together and peaceful.



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## **GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING SERVICES**

At VOWU, we believe that one-to-one counselling as well as joint support are essential parts of the empowerment process. On a daily basis, our counsellors receive and interact with women who visit our office to report cases, for routine counselling, to seek support and to follow up with their reported cases.

The counsellors have played a vital role in changing the mindset, attitude and behaviours of women and communities about family planning service awareness, HIV testing, living positively with HIV, access TO antiviral treatment, managing property conflicts and gender equality among others. Our counselling model aims at reducing or doing away with stress, anxiety or depression and ensures that domestic violence survivors cope better with the situation than before. We exercise a great deal of understanding, caring, empathy, and pay careful attention to victims of violence while expressing their pain in order to provide a healthy and peaceful environment to them. When possible, we make it a goal to involve family members in the guidance and counselling process so as to create a family close support group to the victim. We also welcome men to our offices seeking help and guidance on how to manage peacefully their families.





## COMMUNITY OUTREACHES

We conduct community outreach visits to follow up with the survivors and get to understand their daily realities and felt needs. We feel that these visits help to reduce the social stigma and also instil confidence in survivors.



## SEEDS OF HOPE

We identify survivors that could be resourceful in mentoring their peers as role model survivors (Seeds of Hope). Those willing to participate in this programme as mentors are taken through a 3-days training where they acquire theoretical, practical and technical aspects of rendering protective and remedial services to survivors. In this training, emphasis is put on elimination of gender bias, discrimination, stigmatisation and promotion of gender equity. The Seeds of Hope appreciate the mentoring and pledge to ensure privacy, confidentiality and respect while providing peer support to fellow survivors.



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## REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS EDUCATION AND CARE

In Uganda, most women lack access to information about their reproductive health rights and as a result, they are not able to consciously decide whether, when, and with whom to become sexually active; to avoid sexual violence and abuse; to plan pregnancies and to access care. They lack personal power to negotiate safe relationships and to talk about reproductive health issues with their spouses. They lack knowledge of infections and diseases and how to recognise and prevent them and as a result, they become prone to sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV and other sexually transmitted infections and chronic illnesses such as cervical cancer. At Voice of Women Uganda, we educate women and girls about their reproductive health rights and the need to promote personal hygiene and a healthy diet. We also make sure women are connected to local healthcare providers and we follow up with their healthcare.



### HEALTH CAMPS AND OUTREACHES

VOWU in partnership with health service providers organizes health camps and outreaches in various communities. These offer an opportunity to community members to test for HIV, have access to family planning services, infant immunisation, HPV vaccination for girls, follow up for those who have tested HIV positive, as well as health education to all community members.





## NETWORKING

One way to empower a woman is to expose her to the environment beyond the household. VOWU promotes this by mobilising and facilitating women to participate in public events, exhibitions and sharing days. When a woman joins our programmes, she comes together with other women, forming a tight support group that helps to break the isolation caused by violence and insecurity.

We also participate in national and international events, exhibitions, meetings and conferences to expose women and their issues to relevant stakeholders.



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## PARTNERSHIP

VOWU cannot manage it all. We always identify and contact various organisations for collaboration in matters regarding empowerment of women and girls. VOWU is a member of the Nansana Civil Society Network, Wakiso District NGO Forum, GBV Prevention Network, National Association of Women Organizations in Uganda (NAWOU) and Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA). Through these different networks, we have been able to link with organisations and service providers working on gender related issues including violence. We have worked with several organizations such as Justice Centres Uganda in legal support and rights education, Reproductive Health Uganda in SRHR education, local councils in mobilization and other organizations in service delivery among others. These organisations and service providers have been listed and compiled into a booklet for easy use and reference in referral and networking.



## SUCCESS STORIES

(Note: Some names have been changed to maintain confidentiality)



### Economic Empowerment of Women study case: Sylvia's story

*It is amazing how Sylvia's life has changed from jobless housewife to a model farmer in the community!*

Sylvia was tired of being a jobless housewife with no income living in a violent relationship and VOWU supported her in starting a business that led her to economic independence and hope. She started with one pig given by VOWU that has transformed her life. When you find her mixing feeds and cleaning the pigsty, you can easily mistake her for a typical ordinary village woman, yet this so-called dirty animal has given Sylvia "a new hope for prosperity". She narrated to VOWU staff that "this is a good source of income that sustains her family". In a period of one and half years, Sylvia has managed to accumulate over 45 pigs, though she keeps selling some overtime. Out of the sales, she has managed to buy a cow. From one piglet to a cow! She is a member of the SITUKA Saving Group started by VOWU to enable women save the money they earn to be able to use it effectively. From her savings, she has bought a boar. She appreciates Voice of Women Uganda for identifying her and nurturing her to become a model farmer in the community.

### Violence against Women and Girls prevention and support study case: Nakasi's story

*"With the help of Voice of Women Uganda, I am looking after my children and working and I regained my identity and freedom"*

Nakasi has been living for almost two decades in an abusive relationship and this is her story in her own words.

"I was in a violent relationship for 18 years. At the beginning of the marriage there wasn't any episode of violence or abuse. But after half a year, abuse started to happen. Initially, it was things like 'you are not allowed to work or to go to the market'. He actually would not hide the abuse from the children, sometimes, he would have outbursts in front of them. Somehow, I still believed it was better to stay for the good of the children, not knowing that for children who witness the abuse, it is as if they experience it themselves. When you are in an abusive relationship for a long time, you lose your identity, you believe in the lies you are told, you don't believe in your ability and on average, it takes a woman seven times to leave a relationship for good. I lost the support of my own family and friends. The emotional abuse gradually became more intense, then the physical abuse set in. One of the things abusers tend to do is to isolate us from the community so it's hard for us to seek help and over time, we believe in their lies. And then, you find it hard to open up to anyone.

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I was kicked out of the house together with my children in the middle of the night just because that evening, we had a conversation about how I wanted to start working to pay the school fees for my children. My message to women out there who are struggling, I would say, seek help. No one can understand your situation if they are not professionals, they can't offer you a safe place to start over. Like me now, with the help of Voice of Women Uganda, I am looking after my children and working. I am also a member of SITUKA Saving Group empowered by VOWU. One of the things you get from recovery is you regaining your sense of identity and freedom, which I have achieved with the help of Voice of Women Uganda."



### Reproductive Health and Rights study case: Jenny's story

*"I was hurt when I found out that I was HIV positive but I am now empowered"*

This is the story of Jenny, 45 years, an HIV survivor who lives together with her husband and their six children, as told in her own words.

"In January 2019, Voice of Women Uganda invited all the community members to go for HIV counselling and testing. When I tested myself, I was found to be HIV positive. At first, I felt ashamed, I feared and kept the bad news to myself until when a counsellor from VOWU encouraged me to disclose. The hardest part was disclosing to my children as I feared what their reaction would be, but I am happy I did it. It was not my wish to contract HIV and at first I thought of revenge against my husband but this was only going to prolong my suffering. Voice of Women Uganda raised my hopes through counselling and support and directed me where to get medication. Now I am a member of the drama group, a member of the kitchen gardening group, a member of SITUKA Saving Group, all formed by VOWU. I am now empowered. Yes, it hurts to share, but it hurts more to stay ignorant of your status. Through the counselling and support I was given, I have managed to convince my husband who has been frequently sick to go for HIV testing and he has also been found HIV positive. With the help of the counsellor, we have been able to disclose our status to each other and both of us are now on medication. My goal is to care for myself so that I can live positively with HIV. I will follow the advice of the counsellor and also adhere to the medication. I have shared my story so that it could inspire any other woman out there: I appeal to you to join Voice of Women Uganda and become empowered to deal with your problems."

In a follow-up of this testimony, VOWU has invited Jenny's husband to participate in the men's dialogues and we are happy that he is an active participant. We are hoping that with time, he too will be able to share his testimony.



## A GOOD WORD

**Fiona Forsyth** is a retired fundraiser with **Volunteer Services Overseas** living in Scotland. She has a good word to tell you about VOWU.

*“I was in Uganda at the time of formation of Voice of Women Uganda. I met Meldah in Uganda in 2011 while I worked with Wakiso District Union of People with Disabilities and she shared with me about her new organisation. Thereafter, I left Uganda back to Scotland. I later visited VOWU in 2014 and I observed at first hand their holistic approach, supporting women dealing with domestic abuse and poor health while providing income generation opportunities. While running a workshop for VOWU staff and Board to develop a fundraising strategy, I was impressed by their enthusiasm and local knowledge. I have stayed in touch with VOWU ever since, observing the innovative ways the organisation has developed to address related issues of gender-based violence and health. I have assisted VOWU with applications to charitable trusts, with business planning and with online fundraising via social media. I congratulate VOWU on the first ten years and wish you well for the next ten years.”*

**The National Association of Women's Organisation in Uganda (NAWOU)** is an umbrella organisation of women-founded and women-led organisations in Uganda.

VOWU is registered with NAWOU since 2013 and this is a good word from **Monica Nantume**, Membership Officer of NAWOU:

*“VOWU is a member of NAWOU that is committed to transform the lives of girls and women in Uganda. The organisation shares the vision of the National Association of Women's Organisation in Uganda, and through working with her, NAWOU is realizing steady progress towards achieving her vision.”*

This is a good word from **Ofono Leonard Reck**, Executive Secretary at the **Wakiso District NGO Forum**:

*“Voice of Women Uganda is a recognized and active member at Wakiso District NGO Forum that is well known for its work of promoting the rights of women and girls. They are instrumental in providing services such as sensitizing communities to stop violence against women. As a forum we are updated with the organization's activities and have found them to be very positive in improving the well-being of vulnerable women and girls in Wakiso District. I must say that there are particular demands for their work because women and girls experience traumatizing situations on a daily basis and often no one is there to rescue them. I therefore consider their work timely.”*

**Dignity and Justice for Women and Girls!**

## HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT

Together we can do so much more!  
You too can help us in strengthening the voice of women in Uganda!

- **Get in touch:** We would be happy to get to know you and hear from you. You can visit us at our offices in plot 2294 Ssenge, Kawanda Road, off Hoima Road, Wakiso District and get in touch with us through  
✉ P. O. Box 26257 Kampala, Uganda

✉ info@vowu.org or voiceofwomenuganda@gmail.com

☎ +256 392941133, +256 77 6 851606

- **Get involved:** Visit regularly our official website [www.vowu.org](http://www.vowu.org) to receive alert and news about women's issues that are important to you.
- **Join the conversation:** Join the VOWU's global online family on our social media channels. Add a like and spread the word!

 [voiceofwomenuganda](https://www.facebook.com/voiceofwomenuganda)

 [voiceofwomenuganda](https://www.instagram.com/voiceofwomenuganda)



- **Volunteer:** There are many opportunities available for you to volunteer your time, energies and abilities in our programmes and projects. Please contact us to know how you can make a difference now!
- **Be generous:** You can support our cause by donating or raising money through our Globalgiving platform

 at <https://tinyurl.com/globalgiving-vowu>  
GlobalGiving

- **Become our partner:** You can have even a greater impact on our mission by becoming our partner. You can choose to advocate or sponsor one of our programmes dear to you.



## WOMEN'S ANTHEM

*Chorus:*

*Mothers, Daughters  
All Women everywhere  
Stand up and embrace  
Your role today*

We are the proud mothers of our Nation  
The Backbone without which it can never stand  
We wake up, wake up  
We wake up at the crack of dawn  
And feed the nation with our brains  
With love and joy we care  
For our baby Uganda

*Chorus:*

*Mothers, Daughters  
All Women everywhere  
Stand up and embrace  
Your role today*

Step by step with tender care  
We nurse her we mould her at home and in school  
Leading, leading  
Spearheading her identity, production and development  
In Government and Profession  
Name it women are there

*Chorus:*

*Mothers, Daughters  
All Women everywhere  
Stand up and embrace  
Your role today*

We call on you women of Uganda  
Wake up if you've not yet embraced your role  
Wake up, wake up  
Besides our men let's play role  
In solving all our nations needs  
In every walk of life  
To Develop Uganda

*Chorus:*

*Mothers, Daughters  
All Women everywhere  
Stand up and embrace  
Your role today*

**Dignity and Justice for Women and Girls!**





Office address:  
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off Hoima Road, Wakiso District

[www.vowu.org](http://www.vowu.org)

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