NATIONAL UNION OF WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES OF UGANDA

SUCCESS STORIES FROM THE DISTRICTS OF BUYENDE AND GOMBA
Abatuuka Gladys is a 29 year old girl with a physical disability. A student of Jinja Teacher’s College, Gladys is both a Primary school teaching Assistant and the Secretary of a Savings Group for Girls and Women with Disabilities in Kagulu sub-county.

As one of the participants in the Sexual Reproductive Health and Family Planning trainings, Gladys said she learnt that Girls with Disabilities should get involved in sexual relations when ready if not practice child spacing. She reiterated its necessity for Girls with Disabilities and their need to have kids they can look after.

Aside from that; the trainings taught her confidence as a Girl with a Disability. It is through them that she was encouraged to work hard for financial independence and also, realized she had a right to freedom of choice when it comes to relationships. It is because of the trainings that she chose to abstain until the right man comes along. When it came to the savings group, Gladys was only happy to share that has been able to set up a stationery shop next to the school she teaches at because of it. Income from the Stationery shop supplements her teaching allowance and makes it
possible for to meet her tuition expenses and the college. The group also enabled her to form friendships with other Girls and Women with Disabilities whom she looks up to for advice and guidance when the need arises.
Figure 2 Gladys showing off the Stationery in her shop
Nabirye is a 40 year old mother of 7. She learnt about Family Planning through the Sexual Reproductive Health Rights trainings where she understood the importance of child spacing and HIV/AIDS testing.
A farmer by profession, Nabirye stopped using Family Planning and opted to leave it all in God’s hands. However, she admitted that Family Planning is necessary for Girls and Women with Disabilities. It limits them from having so many children they can’t look after and gives them time to cater for a sizeable number of children.

**LAKERI SUSAN (PHYSICAL)**

![Lakeri Susan with her 3 children](image)

Lakeri is a 30 year old mother of 3 with a physical disability. A recipient of a wheelchair from the Ministry of Health and National Union of Women with Disabilities drive for assistive aids, Lakeri revealed that the Sexual Reproductive Health trainings enlightened her on the necessity of Family Planning for Girls and Women with Disabilities and also brought her information on the importance of saving and saving groups.

She started animal rearing by buying a goat from the savings she raised in the savings group and also fries pancakes for sale at the trading center to maintain a steady flow of income for a sustainable living. The little money she earns from both businesses has helped her pay fees for
her 7 year old son unlike the 6 year old girl who dropped out of school due to her speech impairment.

It is this lack of financial support from the father of her children that forced her to abstain after the birth of her last born. She had considered going back to the pill as a Family Planning method but the bad experience she went through before – heavy bleeding made her opt for an easier method.

KWIKIRIZA IRENE

A tailor and a farmer; Irene Kwikiriza is a 33 year old Girl with a Disability who opted to abstain from sexual relations until marriage. With that decision in place; she affirmed that the Sexual Reproductive Health Rights and Family Planning trainings built her self-esteem and widened her knowledge on sex and relationships. It is because of them that she has been able to choose and make decisions on whom and when to marry without the community’s influence.

She also shared that the savings group enabled her acquire a goat which she is now rearing for sale once it starts reproducing.
NKONDO SUB-COUNTY

NAIROBA KOTIDA

Nairoba Kotida is not only partially deaf but speech impaired too. A girl with a double disability, Kotida’s show of confidence and self-expression could not hide the impact the Sexual Reproductive Health Rights and Family Planning trainings had on her life.
According to her guardian Ms. Rose Nakato, Kotida used to be so shy that she would even hide away from guests. Her shyness was far reaching that she had to drop out of school in P.5 because of her acute fear of people and association. All this changed once the Sexual Reproductive Health Rights and Family Planning trainings took place.

They helped her come out of her shell and the association with fellow Girls and Women with Disabilities gave her a shot of confidence that she is now able to interact with guests at home and everyone she comes into contact with except men. Kotida is more than reserved where men are concerned. She is in fact hard and tough which dissuades them from pursuing her and in some way; keeps her protected from their interest.

Cleanliness comes naturally to Kotida especially in matters of menstrual hygiene. Her guardian revealed that Kotida bathes up to four times a day during her menstrual period and uses cotton which her mother buys for her from the hospital – largely due to the high prices attached to pads.

Unlike any 17 year old, Kotida is not letting go of the confidence and lessons she learnt from the trainings. Her involvement in the savings group enabled her to purchase a goat which gave birth to four kids. She plans to sell them in the nearby trading center once they hit maturity. Also, she is learning tailoring and already has a customer base in the neighborhood children who wear the clothes she makes.
ANASTAZIA TABINGWA

Tabingwa is an epileptic mother of 2 kids living with her parents. The frequent epileptic seizures she suffered as a child, forced her to drop out of school in P.6. Fortunately, she ably manages them through taking medicine obtained for her from the hospital by her father. At 38 years of age; Tabingwa admitted that the only form of Family Planning she practices is abstinence. A decision she made after the father of her two children failed to support them yet keeps coming around.

From the training held in Nkondo sub-county Church, Tabingwa was able to learn more about financial independence and how she could sustain herself as a woman with a disability. Even though her mother pays her children’s fees, she buys them the necessary school materials and stationery from the money she makes out of selling hand-made brooms.

As far as her menstrual hygiene is concerned; Tabingwa, like many others, uses old panties and clothes for pads because she can’t afford the imported type.
Figure 7 Anastazia Tabingwa on the veranda of her parents' house
ESEZA ASIO (PARTIALLY BLIND & PHYSICALLY DISABLED)

Eseza Asio is an 18 year old girl with a double disability. Partially blind and physically disabled, Eseza attended the Sexual Reproductive Health and Family Planning trainings with the company of her mother Ms. Babirye Scovia.

Her mother narrated the ordeal she went through trying to confirm Eseza’s blindness as being a hard and financially straining one. She was first taken to the Eye – specialists that came to village and given eye drops which didn’t cure Eseza’s lack of vision. It was during the third visit that the Specialist discouraged her from seeking further medical attention for Eseza’s vision as it would never be restored.

In order to keep her child safe, Ms Babirye resorted to keeping Eseza at home and doesn’t send her to fetch firewood and water by herself. She also shared the information she got out of the trainings to her family members who, along with Eseza, know to report to the either the Paralegal or LC1 in case of sexual assault. Regarding menstrual hygiene, Eseza too uses old clothes as padding during her menstrual cycle.
Halima is the mother of Ndyebonera Fatuma and Namuyanga Amina; two girls with an intellectual disability aged 22 and 20 respectively. Along with her daughters, Halima attended the Sexual Reproductive Health Rights and Family Planning trainings where she learnt more about disability, family planning and menstrual hygiene.

She explained that the trainings helped her daughters in that they gave them confidence and courage to interact with community members and fellow girls with disabilities, unlike before when the girls used to be shy and fearful of people. They also helped erase the derogatory language used to address persons with disabilities in the community.

Halima herself got the opportunity to know more and understand disability, especially on ways she could take better care of her girls like; how to make boys accountable in case of assault and protecting them from acquiring HIV/AIDS once they are ready for sexual relationships. Because of the trainings, her daughters are now the recipients of community protection against child
abuse. Their father’s second wife who would beat them at every chance she got for failure to do household chores and her bidding.

In her own way, she tries to keep them safe by taking them everywhere with her so they can engage with people in her presence to avoid the peer pressure that comes from making bad friends.

The girls wear two skirts and two panties each during their menstrual cycle.

Figure 10 Ndyebonera Fatuma (L) Nabirye Halima (C) and Namuyanga Amina (R)

WABULUNGIBWE SHEILLA

Sheilla is an 18 year old single parent of a week old baby girl. She is both speech impaired and physically disabled (club foot) living with her aunt Mpandu Rose.

According to her aunt; Sheilla was neglected and mistreated by her parents during childhood. They would hide her away from society, give her food when they remembered and leave her
alone without attention for days on end. Seeing the poor conditions Sheilla was living in, Rose asked to be her guardian and took care of her from her own village in Nkondo. Under her watchful eye and treatment, Sheilla grew into a beautiful girl who could take care of herself and do household chores while she went to the farm.

They attended the Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights trainings together and Sheilla learnt more about menstrual hygiene, rights awareness for Girls and Women with Disabilities especially when it comes to Sexual Reproductive Health, education and the importance of a savings group – which Sheilla is involved in courtesy of her aunt who saves for her to make her feel financially independent. For Aunt Rose; she understood the need for Girls with Disabilities to have responsibilities and why they should be encouraged to become productive members of society.

Figure 11 Wabulungibwe Sheilla after breastfeeding her baby
KIDERA SUB-COUNTY

ESEZA MUKYALA (EPILEPTIC)

Eseza is a married 31 year old with 4 children. Now married to a supportive husband who takes care of the family along with her mother and grandmother; Eseza revealed that her first husband took their children with him when her seizures became frequent. She attended the Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights trainings at the district head quarters and with the help of the Paralegals, she is able to obtain medicine for her condition.
KAFUKO BEATRICE (DEAF)

Kafuko Beatrice is a deaf mother of two children. She left her marriage after 1 year due to domestic violence from her husband. He was once arrested for denying her second pregnancy and failure to pay child support.

With the assistance of her mother, Kafuko attended the Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights and Family Planning trainings where they both learnt that Girls with Disabilities should be treated equally and that whoever mistreats them should be arrested.

As part of participation in their savings group; Kafuko was given a basket of eggplants and hens to start up a business. She started up a vegetable garden from which she ekes an income for her personal needs like lotion and a pair of shoes.
Figure 13 Kafuko Beatrice at the balcony of her mother’s house
NAMWAZE OLIVER (PHYSICALLY DISABLED)

Figure 14 Namwase Oliver at her home
Namwase Oliver participated in the Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights trainings and mentioned that the trainings helped teach them independence as Women with Disabilities. Self-esteem and confidence as well as family planning where they were reminded to always go for check-ups and testing on HIV/AIDS.

A married mother of 8 kids, Namwase further said that the trainings are the foundation she is using to teach her children about disability. They helped Women with Disabilities attain community recognition and empowered them economically.

Namwase, with the consent of her husband, decided to have her tubes tied after the birth of her 8th child.

**Recommendations**

Girls and Women with Disabilities had the following recommendations, in case the project was to continue;

- Sensitization of parents on the education of Children with Disabilities to give them a better future than theirs
- Provision of Special Needs Education teachers in schools as well as specialized schools for Children with Special Needs
- Provision of a vocational skills training center
- Cash injections into the Savings groups for smooth operation
- Provision of Income Generating Activities and financial support to sustain them
- Training on commercial farming and saving
- Sensitization of Girls and Women with Disabilities on Menstrual Hygiene
Case stories from Gomba
Family Planning was a big component of the Sexual Reproductive Health Project. Women and Girls with Disabilities were taught on the methods of Family Planning, use and benefits. These are some of their stories.

Teopista Nabakoza
Teopista Nabakoza is a partially blind 25 years old woman with a physical disability with 3 children. She, like most girls with disabilities was unaware of Family Planning and its benefits towards them as Girls with Disabilities. The trainings on Sexual Reproductive Health Rights that she attended in Kanoni sub-county helped expand her knowledge on Family Planning and the methods available.
In the trainings; Teopista learnt from fellow girls and women with disabilities that majority were raped on the way to running errands for their parents without any sort of protection due to illiteracy. She considered the training on Family Planning timely for it offered them ways in which, they as girls with disabilities could protect themselves from Sexually Transmitted Diseases/Infections and unwanted pregnancies.
With the consent of her husband who didn't put up any objection over her use of Injectibles as a Family Planning method, Teopista has managed to give birth to a number of kids 3 (aged 7, 5 & 2) she feels she can ably take care of and practice commercial farming by selling beans and maize that she grows on her farm between the child spacing period.
Figure 15 Teopista Nabakooza seated on top of a sack of beans
Namwanje Josephine
A 35 year old, physically disabled woman with 5 children, Namwanje Josephine is well on the way to financial independence. Namwanje joined a savings group for women with disabilities that sprang out of the Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights trainings in Kanoni. She has been able to borrow and use her savings for sustainability especially on animal farming where she breeds hens for sell which have enabled her purchase iron sheets for her house.
On the issue of Family Planning, Namwanje revealed that; the training helped her stop having more kids and to focus on the ones she already had as her deceased husband never used to offer financial support. On top of that; he would speak ill about her in public until the rumors got back to her.
She used to be on InjectaPlan as a Family Planning method until the side effects like female dryness forced her to stop usage. She then went onto the Pill which she claimed was a better option for her and her current boyfriend who has no problem with her being on Family Planning.
Being on Family Planning has improved the quality of her life as she is now in position to pay more attention to her business of frying cassava and chapatts for sale to the school kids. This business has helped her purchase more iron sheets for her house and be in position to afford healthcare services when sick.
Namwanje advises fellow girls and women with disabilities to avoid unnecessary pregnancies as women with disabilities by using protection and also report to the police and local advocates in case of rape.
Figure 16 Namwanje Josephine with her last born outside their house in Kanoni, Gomba
Nakiyemba Rashida (Intellectual Disability)

Nakiyemba Rashida dropped out of school in P.4 due to a lot of teasing and mockery from students over her intellectual disability. At 36 years old with 5 kids, Rashida admitted to using Family Planning with the Pill being her choice of protection after suffering adverse effects from injectibles and the implant. Despite being on the Pill, Rashida wishes to have her tubes tied. The bad delivery she experienced with her last born not forgetting the lack of financial support from the father of her younger children who only visits her in the night being the reasons behind her decision.

Economically, Rashida is doing a lot better than some women with disabilities. She has a constant supply of customers in the children from neighboring schools that she sells to avocado. The steady flow of business has enabled her pay school fees for her children; as well as look after them medically. The support from her parents cannot go without mention. They built her a house in which she and her children live and when times get hard, financially, her mother steps in to support her grandchildren.

![Figure 17 Nakiyemba Rashida with her four children on the veranda of her home](image)
Babirye Mariam

Babirye Mariam attended the Sexual Reproductive Health Rights trainings and noted the importance of Family Planning to Girls and Women with Disabilities like herself. According to her, Girls and Women with Disabilities produce a lot of kids yet are unable to cater for them due to financial constraints. Being on Family Planning is not only beneficial to them personally but economically too. Unchecked multiple births tend to weaken the body thus making it hard to carry out income generating activities for sustainability. With Family Planning in place, sexually active Girls and Women with Disabilities are in position to practice child spacing by giving the body rest, and a chance to recover, as well as tend to businesses that may provide them with an income to cater for the children.

A single mother of 3 kids at just 28 years, Babirye mentioned that the trainings provided more knowledge on sustainability, rights awareness and economic empowerment than just Family Planning. They led to the formation of a savings group that has seen to the financial independence of Girls and Women with Disabilities and provided emotional support in times of need.

It is through the support from fellow Girls and Women with Disabilities and the trainings on Rights Awareness that Babirye learnt to stand up for herself and found the courage to approach the father of her children for financial support. Now, the father of her children lives up to his obligations and Babirye couldn't be any happier because being on Family Planning has given her freedom to give her children the attention they deserve by laying an enabling environment for their growth and development.
Nalunkuma Zaina

Nalunkuma Zaina is a 25 year old married woman with a physical disability. She attended the
sexual Reproductive Health Rights training in both Kanoni and Kabulasoke where she learnt about Family Planning and the importance of child spacing for Girls and Women with Disabilities.

On account of the training, Zaina revealed that she had put the lessons to use and is now using the implant. The rest period between one child and the next has enabled her to start earning an income from the vegetables she sells giving her a sense of fulfillment as a woman.
Figure 19 Nalunkuma Zaina preparing lunch for her children
**Nalusiba Sarah (Epileptic)**

Sarah is a 28 year old single mother with 3 kids suffering from epilepsy. The father of her kids used to throw her disability in her face forcing her to gather her kids and leave him. Left with no choice but to support her kids while at her mother's, Sarah started up a salon business to help with the financial needs of her family.

It was through this business that she heard about the Sexual Reproductive Health Rights trainings in Kanoni and attended out of curiosity. From the trainings; she learnt about disability, Family Planning, Economic empowerment and the motto that 'disability is not inability'.

Sarah narrated that the teachings on Family Planning saved them from using local herbs as Girls and Women with Disabilities. She later chose to use the implant as a method and has never looked back for 6 years. Regardless of its effects on her which include longer periods and overspitting, Sarah claims the benefits of being on the Implant outweigh the little discomforts she faces.

As a woman who had her 3 kids in a space of 3 years, being on the implant gave her a new lease on life and the determination to work hard and provide for her children. Her involvement in the training led to the discovery of the importance of Savings groups and as a business owner; Sarah has been able to acquire loans for her salon and expand.
Figure 20 Nalusiba Sarah plaiting the hair of a student at her salon

Evelyn Kakande
Evelyn Kakande is the grandmother and care-taker of 22 year old Maureen Nanteza, a girl with
mental health challenges. Being the care-taker of girl with a disability, Evelyn Kakande noted that it has been one of the most educational experiences of her life and attending the Sexual Reproductive Health Rights trainings with her granddaughter is one of those experiences. When her grand-daughter started dating and being sexually active; Evelyn sat the man down and told him about Maureen's condition, and went as far as to ensure the safety of her grandchild by taking both of them to the nearest hospital for HIV testing. She is so grateful for the trainings because they brought more than awareness and knowledge on disability which is still a sensitive issue in the community. The Savings group that she joined on behalf of her granddaughter as a trainer and client has been more than empowering. A crafts woman, she was asked to train Girls and Women with Disabilities in handcrafts like weaving and knitting mats but later branched out to animal farming by rearing pigs and also set up an herbal medicine shop for sustainability.

![Figure 21 Evelyn Kakande displaying her merchandise at her home in Gomba](image)

**Nakazibwe Basie**
25 year old Nakazibwe Basie attended the Sexual Reproductive Health Rights training in Kanoni and Kisoga sub-counties. She learnt about the benefits of financial independence, family planning and encouraged to have children as Girls and Women with Disabilities but stay cautious
of HIV/AIDS.
The trainings brought her in close proximity with fellow Girls and Women with Disabilities who made it possible to form a Savings group which has greatly contributed to her financial independence.
Basie used the transport refund from the trainings to purchase animals for rearing, medicine and also grow beans and maize for sell. The Savings group has enabled her to obtain loans at a fair rate and invest in her farm.
Figure 22 Nakazibwe Basie (Epileptic) at her home in Gomba
Namubiru Florence

Namubiru Florence is 31 years of age, physically disabled and a mother of 8 children. The trainings she attended on Sexual Reproductive Health Rights taught her so much on Family Planning and the preventive measures necessary to curb HIV/AIDS.

Florence admitted to not being able to do without the trainings because of the lessons she got on economic empowerment through savings groups, the friends she made who advise her when necessary and the Family Planning methods that have helped her in terms of child spacing and pregnancy.

Although she used to be around women who used Family Planning, Florence used to ignore their advice and use because of the negative effects on the female body. Little did she know that people are affected differently by different methods? She has been on the implant for 1 and a half years and admits to a positive change in lifestyle as a result.

The biggest change of all is the rise in her self-esteem. She’s now able to communicate with community members and face the negative language towards her disability head on.
Figure 23 Namubiru Florence in front of her home in Gomba
Namatovu Jane
A partially blind woman with 4 kids, Namatovu Jane lives the saying, ‘disability is not inability’ because she has been able to sustain a pancake frying business despite her disability. At 40 years of age; Jane was appreciative of the Sexual Reproductive Health Rights trainings for they taught her that a disabled person is no different from an able-bodied person. She got to learn more about Family Planning and protection, the creation of a savings group and culture, knowledge on economic empowerment as well as rights awareness through the trainings. These enabled her in the decision making when it came to having kids. The power of choice over when to have kids or not is one she most grateful for because without Family Planning, she may not have been in position to cater for all her 4 kids.
Recommendations
The Girls and Women with Disabilities from Gomba District made the following recommendations, if the project was to continue:

1. National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda should involve spouse in the sensitization of the community about disability and Sexual Reproductive Health Rights of Girls and Women with Disabilities
2. The trainings on Sexual Reproductive Health should be extend to other sub-counties
3. National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda should provide vocation skills trainings in hair-dressing, catering, knitting and tailoring
4. National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda should provide materials for the trainings in vocational skills as most Girls and Women with Disabilities are too poor to afford the necessary requirements yet interested in the trainings
5. There is a need for trainings in financial literacy to ensure the sustainability of financial independence and economic empowerment for Girls and Women with Disabilities
6. National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda should provide cash injections in Savings groups for Women and Girls with Disabilities. Their low income isn’t enough to sustain the group profitably
7. More trainings on life skills and Sexual Reproductive Health are needed as most Girls and Women with Disabilities do not know about Family Planning
8. National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda should carry out group exchanges between Girls and Women with Disabilities from their areas of operation to share knowledge, experiences and advice as Women with Disabilities
9. The Local Advocates should be empowered and involved in capacity building trainings for they have been instrumental in the community’s acceptance of Persons with Disabilities
10. National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda should provide revolving animals for financial sustainability of Girls and Women with Disabilities.