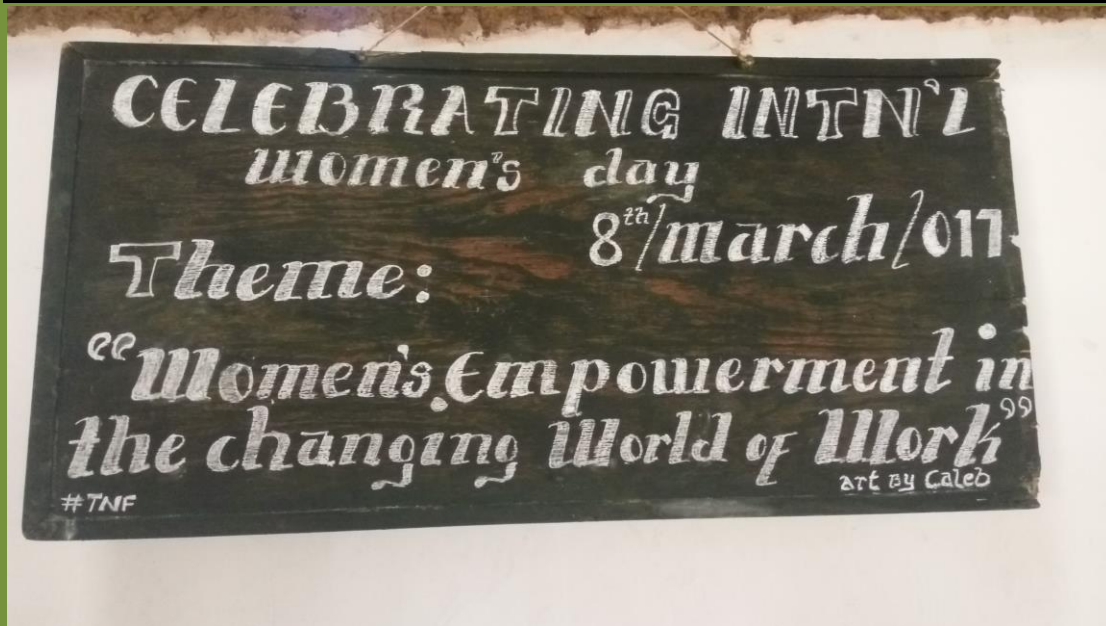


INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2017 REPORT



Introduction

Ruth Fund plans for Women's Day 2017 were to collect information from schools in Kyengera on their understanding of the theme.

Ruth Fund facilitated Excel Millennium High School to invite other schools to make presentations on the theme. Three schools St Mark Junior school, Cambridge Senior Secondary school and Excel Millennium High School the host, (out of five contacted) responded positively, attended and two made presentations. The message had gone out late and schools need time to organize.

The function was attended by over three hundred school children, and fifty six grown ups, women and youth-male and female. The main guest was the Woman Councillor Nabazziza Ward, Madam Agnes Amina Nalubinga. In attendance was Mrs. Mutumba Goretti an aspirant for the Women Council seat at local level representing the ruling National Resistance Movement. It was a non-partisan function that gave the Democratic Party leader a chance to share her achievements and challenges with every one present.

Proceedings of the Day

The celebrations of the day started at 10.00am with singing of the anthems that included the Uganda Women's anthem, that calls on women to get up and play their roles. The program then had different presentations on stage, ranging from mimes, songs, dances, fashion show and drama.

Most of the **songs** were in praise of a woman as a mother, who takes care of the family, works long hours, long days and rarely gets thanked.

In response to this message, Ruth Fund challenged the audience to think of other women who are not mothers and the challenges they face. The students were encouraged to complete school before becoming mothers .

The fashion show depicted creativity of casual, office, and traditional wear. The models showed how they could be creative using natural materials that are not expensive. The beads made out of beans, dresses decorated with natural flowers and leaves. The school girls emphasized that in the changing world of work, they were looking forward to being self employed and employers of other women in future.

The **drama** depicted the change in the world of work which necessitated the women to change as well. It brought out the following messages-A woman has to be innovative, creative, and enterprising. It showed women are still discriminated against when they are paid less than men for longer hours worked. It showed the challenges of office working mothers who are expected to do the family /home roles as well. How the office working woman gets expectations from husband, children, while the stay home woman is equally accused with “What were you doing the whole day?” The drama lesson was that division of labour in families was to be done equitably to give man and woman a chance to be involved in productive work. That shared responsibilities, communication and respect for each other would minimize domestic violence.

The discussion from the audience gave other suggestions like delegating work by working women, use of time saving machines and methods in homes. It was clear women who did not have sufficient education and skills had to go back to school or do functional Adult Education in order to manage in the current world of work.

The **speeches** from staff of Ruth Fund and the Guest of Honour and politician gave the following messages-

- Every woman has ability and potential but needs to be empowered to work with things around them;
- Never despise work;
- Educate all children and especially the girl child;
- Women and female adolescents who are not literate should register for Functional Adult Literacy classes in order to be confident in community, work places and to take opportunities of employment;
- Families should encourage/instil a culture of gender equality at home- boys can do what girls do and vice versa;
- Women need to learn to communicate in homes to create harmony; and make decisions that concern them.
- Women need to understand that the world of work is changing and should take opportunity to try out different skills and enterprises;
- Women and youth should know their rights and responsibilities;

- Women should not misuse empowerment by abusing spouses in front of children, and not taking care of children.

Messages to students

- Should put studies as a priority; be confident and work hard when still have chance and time;
- Should not despise work because it is a way of building skill otherwise will be poor in future.
- Should be innovative, trustworthy, self respecting to be job creators,
- Should remember that HIV/AIDS is still claiming lives, as 500 girls are infected with HIV every week (UJCC Report, 2017).

Results of the day-

- Entertainment and education through music, drama and mimes by the schools.
- Raised awareness on the concept of work, decent work, women's rights from speeches of Ruth Fund staff, the Guest of Honour-Counsellor Agnes Amina Nalubinga and from testimonies of women like Mrs Nyaika-Chairperson of the Elderly-Abakadde Abagalana Group.
- Students got informed on careers after school,
- Students showed skills and talent as they built confidence to operate in the changing world of work.

Pictures from the Day's Activities





Above-Part of the audience for the day.

left to right-Audience and a Senior two student giving a vote of thanks.



Mr. Richard Wekesa-Headteacher Excel Millennium High School giving words of appreciation.

Conclusion

The theme for 2017 was a good one for Ruth Fund, an organization that is concerned about women's rights, and whose values are *Non-discrimination, Respect of human rights, Participatory decision making, Transparency, accountability; Professionalism and integrity*. There is no way the theme could be handled in a way to be all inclusive of women of all classes, ages and social class.

Ruth Fund concluded that rural women are currently disempowered by many factors including work. Two thirds of illiterate people are rural women who are not in productive employment, are oppressed by cultures and practices that deny women rights in property ownership and inheritance.

Work is relative for rural communities. Work is interpreted as anything that is done and one expects payment. However, rural women work longer and harder on unpaid work in households and communities. Communities need to value women and girls' unpaid work, especially in working around the homestead taking care of children, elderly, the sick and people with disability.

Ruth Fund works in a community where women work in market places, stone quarries, in hotels/ eating places, bars and few work in agriculture because land has become scarce. Society keeps a blind eye on the working conditions in these jobs. There is no fair income, does not guarantee equal opportunities and treatment between men and women. There is no security and protection of workers and their families. In these places, there is hardly any prospect for personal development and social inclusion. It was no wonder that among the work people do in rural areas the above are rarely mentioned. Such work further isolates and marginalizes women and youth, at times leading them into dangerous practices like alcohol and drug abuse.

Follow up Action

The drama and Fashion show will be presented to more people in the community especially out of school youths for entertainment and learning. Ruth Fund will build up on the knowledge generated to support programs on social and economic development, health and confidence building in a bid to encourage school going youth to think about work in a wider sense, value self employment, and respect people doing manual decent work.

Ruth Fund will reach out to more women with information about work, and empowerment to build confidence and skills for self and youth in their families.

The report will be shared with local and national leaders to advocate for improvement in educational policies with emphasis on vocational skills building; to draw attention to unpaid care work and indecent work where many women are employed.