



RUTH
FUND UGANDA
RURAL WOMEN AND YOUTH FUND UGANDA

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Our Core Values-

- Non discrimination,
- respect of human rights,
- participatory decision –making, transparency/ accountability,
- professionalism
- Integrity.

Our Mission; Is to provide support to rural women and youth to organize effectively to build linkages through which to claim and enjoy social, economic, political and environmental rights in developing Uganda.

Our Vision; Is to see rural women and youth lead lives of dignity, visible in plans and programs for human and physical development of Uganda.

About us

Ruth Fund Uganda is a women rights not-for-profit organisation established in February 2014, and incorporated as a legal entity, number 181292. It is registered as a Non-Governmental Organisation since early 2015.

On 4th September, the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer Wakiso and the District NGO Monitoring Committee approved that Ruth Fund Uganda could get an Operational Permit to offer services to the community formally. Thus on 7th December 2015, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development forwarded Ruth Fund Uganda to Secretary Non-

Governmental Organisations pending getting a certificate for appropriate action. With all the necessary documents in Ministry of Internal Affairs - S.5914/12254, Ruth Fund got ready to gear up work with communities with confidence.

Ruth Fund was formed by women, men and youth activists who were concerned at the continued marginalization, invisibility and denial of rights of rural women and youth.

It is against such backdrop that founders of Ruth Fund Uganda confidently registered the institution to bridge gaps of gender inequality, illiteracy, and lack of information among others.



Excel Millennium High School Drama Group during the Peace One day celebrations

Lessons and Experiences during our first year of existence

In November 2014, a feasibility study was carried out through interviews, secondary report reviews and mass media reviews. It confirmed the need for an organisation to;

- Interact and learn about the needs of rural women and

youth and determine action on areas that will have the greatest long term impact;

- Collect data on needs of rural women and youth for planning and advocacy;
- Carry out any activities that promote hu-

man/women's rights and enhance linkages between grass-root rural actors and national level actors in order to build strategic partnerships and synergy into the national women's movement.



Ms Alice Amango & Ms Ronah Kahigi with students of mother Joy Nursery and Primary

“Women experience hard life due to heavy work load as they work at the farm/ shamba, look after children and attend social/ care related activities within the community. They have no control over the farm-work although they do the planting, weeding, harvesting and the marketing of produce is in most cases done by men.” Ms Alice Mango, Chairlady Ruth Fund Uganda.

In February 2015, the study was validated. In addition to comments, questions and constructive input from various development actors present, Ms Sheila Nabacwa Muwonge from Foundation for Human Rights Initiative [FHRI] in her presentation *The Status of Women and Youth Rights in Uganda* confirmed there is a crisis of theory and practice of human rights in

Uganda. There are global and national human rights instruments, but no culture and value of rights in the country and especially rural areas.

The validation meeting concluded that Ruth Fund Uganda had a role to play to make women and youth rights a valuable part of their day to day lives, sensitize communities on their rights

and nurture their knowledge to make it a way of life.

The Community Reacts to our Entrance...

In July 2015, we opened a rural based office in Nabazizza- Kyengera.

This was intended to give the staff an opportunity to experience the reality of rural communities and meet and talk with community members to learn more about their needs.

Reactions from the community were;

- *Disappointment* for those who were brave enough to visit the office. They expected it to be a bank to lend them money, or a SACCO to collect and lend money or an organisation registering members for political purposes and benefits.
- *Mistrust* to the extent that some did not want to sign the visitors' book while

some women and youth were not confident with writing. They shared experiences that led to fatigue because of people / organisations that came to the village previously, took photographs but there was no follow up on promises made and therefore no benefits to the community.

- *Apathy/ Fatigue-'twabikowa'*. There are some individuals who had been trained in various areas by NGOs, government projects and felt there was nothing new any other organisation would bring. One of them advised that even the publications displayed in the office were useless as no one would

read them.

As Ruth Fund, we listened and noted the comments which were later discussed in a staff meeting. Over time, some community members visited the office again to learn about our objectives. The staff meetings and learning sessions provided an opportunity to think critically about the needs of the community, challenges and what Ruth Fund could do to make a contribution to building trust and raising awareness on women and youth human rights at the pace of the community.

Lessons Learnt;



There is a *class of women within the community with various skills*. Our Staff is establishing if this skilled group has human rights knowledge. There is apathy towards any activity that may entail training/*kusoma* so far.

Human dignity is at stake as some individuals and families live for each day. This manifests in youth and men who seek for hand outs, and accept corruption without shame. The hopelessness is manifested in many; a young woman with a 10 month baby does not know where to look for solace as family distance themselves from her and push her into a violent relationship in-

Some of the Ruth Fund Staff

stead; a 35 year old woman who was widowed at 19, gave up her 5 children to grow up in a charity home is still homeless and not able to bond with her girls who are bitter because of living as orphans. Many have taken on alcohol/ drug use for solace. Where does one go for social support?

Ruth Fund Uganda did not ignore "rumours" that 19 girls aged below 9 years were defiled over a period while they attended to different chores. This was after another report that a female was raped and the rapist walked away with her clothes. To Ruth Fund Uganda, this was violence with impunity. When a member of the community was asked if he was aware of the incident he laughed it off and said the girl had consented to the act, but because the male had taken drugs he had misbehaved.

On December 30th we organized a meeting on alcohol/drug abuse. It was held amidst fear of rejection but confident that it would be useful because there was limited information on how to deal with drug abuse as it is a criminal offence in Uganda.

Due to increased fear and insecurity, only 6 people (men) attended the meeting. Effects of drug use were discussed. A follow up meeting was recommended to build consensus and to have voices of youth that play pool / Ludo, those that work in quarries and markets as they are some of the drug users/ abusers.

Trust and respect for institutions, organizations and government are decreasing, but also at individual level between men and women. Details on this can be viewed in our reports.

Low self esteem, confidence among youth, especially female youth and women. This is partly due to low literacy levels manifested verbally in lamentations like '*abasoma*' and fear to visit office. Those who approach the office fear to enter while the few who have come for training as volunteers attended just for one day. The numerous child mothers, gender based violence, single mothers are evidence of limited information on life skills.

It is easy to say, but what experience did Ruth Fund Uganda have to start on the work?

Our Programs: Rights of Rural Women Ranked

Rights of rural women as shared by (WWSF-Women's World Summit Foundation) were ranked in order of priority rights' needs of the community in a training on human rights for staff and Volunteers in November 2015. However, only male volunteers completed the training as the 2 female youth did not turn up. There absence is a challenge to

Ruth Fund on how to bring them on board and raise their interest in human rights.

The Quiz results indicated how limited information denies rural communities opportunities to enjoy their rights and living in dignity. There are feelings of inadequacy because of low education levels, which in turn mean limited finances for many. This translates into low self confidence, as com-

monly heard in phrases-*abasoma* referring to the educated as more privileged, and probably implying those who are not educated are not entitled to human rights.

Government policies are not translated into action, neither are they known to people who should benefit from them. The Uganda Constitution provides for all rights. The Women's Manifesto 2016-to 2021 highlights the gaps in women's lives where they do not lead lives of dignity -a challenge for Ruth Fund Uganda.

Responses as interpreted and analysed manually

	Right	Comments/reaction
1	Health, well being and education	All scored and ranked as priority needs. However safe water was least urgent. Discussions indicated there is limited knowledge on safe and clean water a prerequisite for health and well being
2	Decision making	This was next in priority but not decision-making at household level, an indicator of the state of women, youth, and girl child safety and rights
3	An end to violence	Ranked third last in priority-could it have been different if responses were from women?
4	Adequate housing and peace	These were ranked the same, but there were different interpretations of what these rights mean.
5	Clean environment	Not understood by the respondents
6	Economic development	Meant different things to respondents. It raised interesting discussion for instance that money without character and education leaves a gap in enjoyment of rights
7	Holding leaders accountable	This was not identified as a priority inspite of on going political campaigns.
8	Development as a women's right/ mitigating climate change/ ICT	limited knowledge and information on how these impact on the individual and community well being
9	Land and inheritance	This was not considered a priority-probably because these were male respondents who are sure of inheritance however small

Acknowledgements

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us to Ministry of Internal Affairs. We will continually consult with government offices to improve the situation of rural women and youth in Uganda.

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and Primary school and Excel Millenium High School who shared knowledge through drama, poetry and songs at the 21st September 2015, PEACE ONE DAY International celebration and members of the community who attended the function.

Lastly, we are grateful to Women Fund Tanzania (WFT) for watering the idea of a Fund and making it real, Mama Cash Netherlands for stimulating the dream by suggesting that we do a Feasibility Study that informed our further thinking, and World Neighbors Nairobi for a visit to our offices in December 2015.

The beginning has shown there is work to be done, but it will not be business as usual. Rural women and youth will have their voices heard.

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