

# EMPOWERING WOMEN: TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

## The Case of Forum for Women in Democracy

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# Introduction



- Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) promotes gender equality through enhancing the capacities of women leaders and advocating for equitable distribution of resources.
- In 2009, FOWODE received support from the UNWomen FGE to implement a gender budget project. Our primary goal was to ensure that Ugandan women benefit from gender equitable distribution and resource utilization through the country's Budget Call Circular (BCC) - which states the amount of resources available for the financial year.

# Introduction



- provided alternative proposals on how resources could address the needs of poor women and men.
- We piloted this programme in 5 districts in Uganda for two years and at the end of the project we had begun to see **Ugandan women benefitting from equitable distribution of resources.**

# Why Invest in Women

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- ❑ Education coupled with empowerment is key to gender equality.
- ❑ Educating girls and women leads to higher wages; a greater likelihood of working outside the home.
- ❑ An educated woman will most probably be able to exercise choice ( lower fertility) which can lead to reduced maternal and child mortality.
- ❑ Generally better education = better health

# Why Invest in Women



- At the macroeconomic level, female education is a key source of support for long-term economic growth. It has been linked to higher productivity; higher returns to investment; higher agricultural yields; and a more favorable demographic structure.
- There is an obvious link between education and health outcomes.

## Assumptions

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- Our major assumptions under this project were that if government resources meant for the poor, the majority of whom are women, did not reach targeted beneficiaries, then poverty eradication efforts would have been wasted and indeed that allocating resources to women's needs leads to efficiency.

# Assumptions



- If more than half of the population in Uganda who are women have not benefited from government budgets equitably then gender inequality which is a key constraint to national development in Uganda (as per NDP) will not be reduced and therefore national development targets will not be achieved.

## How the project worked



- The project used a grassroots led approach as part of creating a space for GB activism and in order to reach the masses especially grassroots women.
- FOWODE mobilized, organised grassroots women into Village Budget Clubs (VBCs).

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- These clubs which were comprised of a core of 20 people (60% of whom are women) acted as pressure groups and also provided space for women to develop agendas for influencing the local government planning and budget process.

## How it worked



- The VBCs were trained in roles and responsibilities of citizens, Gender budgeting, budget monitoring and service delivery tracking
- The VBCs organised budget monitoring visits to service delivery points such as health centres, schools, and of agricultural and sanitation programs and others and found out their performance

## How it worked

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- VBCs shared the information with the wider community and invited duty bearers with whom they raised the issues
- The meetings provided the opportunity of duty bearers making commitments on how the issues raised would be addressed

## How it worked



- At the national level, we mostly engaged with Parliament and
- Held strategic meetings with PBO on how to effectively engage the budget process
- Partnered with PBO to conduct gender audits
- Did capacity building of MPs on gender budgeting and laid strategies for implementing gender budgeting in Parliament

## Some of our Results .....



Through our project, we were able to demonstrate that:

- 1. Increased participation of women in planning and budget processes makes corruption harder to sustain**
  - *In one of the districts, land that was originally intended for the construction of a health unit had been underhandedly sold to a business man. When the VBCs intervened, the land was eventually given back to the community and in the coming financial year the construction of the health centre will begin*

## Some Results.....



- 2. When women are trained in monitoring of service delivery service delivery improves. In one of the districts, expectant mothers were being charged for delivering in a health unit and service delivery was very poor. After the intervention of the VBCs the situation has now changed as testified by one of the mothers in the picture below.**

*Latigi Madelena aged 32 from Gulu district a mother of three delivered this baby girl in the picture above on 25/ November/2011 at 2:00am. She testified that, “she was well attended to and she got all the necessary requirements like the Polythene (kavera), cotton wool and the mid wife used their gloves unlike those days before the monitoring where an expectant was expected to buy the gloves. She also said there were two mid wives the day she delivered who all paid attention to her*



## Results.....



- 3. When women are given spaces to interrogate and debate about how resources should be shared, there is reduced wastage and improvement in service distribution**
3. The VBC in another district petitioned the District leaders and its Members of Parliament demanding for improved sanitation at a health centre and that the number of health personnel be increased. That health center now opens for 24 hours, drugs are available although not enough, new medical personnel have been recruited and a permanent shamba boy (cleaner) has been recruited.

## Results .....



3. **When women's capacities to demand for gender equality and equity are enhanced, Government's commitment to gender equality objectives become a reality.**
  - ▣ For example In April 2011, for the first time in Ugandan history, a gender mainstreaming policy was developed by the **Ministry of Public Service** and approved by the Cabinet to ensure that at least 30% of women will be involved in internal management and decision making processes and structures by 2016 (from a baseline of 22% in March 2011).

# Results

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- ▣ The **Ministry of Water and Environment** has allocated funds to support the construction of rain water harvesting tanks for women and disadvantaged groups, in water stressed areas of Northern Uganda especially in Kalamoja.
- ▣ The **Ministry of Justice** has formed a taskforce to ensure that gender is mainstreamed into all the Ministry's activities.

# Conclusion



Grassroots women's capacity to question and demand accountability from governments and their leaders cannot be underestimated.

## **When women:**

- Are aware of their rights
- Have skills and knowledge to participate in governance processes
- Collectively engage to challenge the status quo

# Conclusion



## Then:

- ❑ Corruption is harder to sustain
- ❑ Service delivery improves
- ❑ They make a meaningful, sustainable contribution to their families, communities which has an effect on national development
- ❑ Can translate into transformed families, societies and nations



*According to USAID, Aid programs that provide women opportunities to better education, health and wellbeing have affected far beyond a single individual.*



**Investing in Women Surely Pays !!**



Thank you!