Each beneficiary has her own tale. ARUWE brings the voices of the women to tell their own story of change.
Action for Rural Women’s Empowerment (ARUWE) is a non-profit NGO working with rural communities especially marginalized women, youth and children in rural Uganda. ARUWE envisions “A world in which women and children realize their full social, economic, and civic potential”. Our mission is to empower women to initiate and manage their socio-economic development processes through strengthening community participation, advocacy and service provision. ARUWE’s thematic areas include women socio-economic strengthening, sustainable healthy communities, education and lifelong learning, climate change resilience and adaption and organizational growth and development. ARUWE mainstreams gender and advocacy in its programmes.

ARUWE in 2015/2016 at a glance
This program aimed at improving the livelihoods of the vulnerable rural women farmers. As a result of several socio-economic empowerment interventions, over 650 rural women farmers realised increased crop yields due to using sustainable agriculture practices and having improved access to seed input of especially maize, beans and soy. This has improved their household food security and incomes. Women households now have two nutritious meals a day compared to two years ago. With the increased incomes, the women can now support their children and grandchildren access education, health services and among others. Some of the women are also participating in community leadership and decision making.

My name is Annet Akigoboye, a 74 year old farmer and grandmother taking care of 6 grandchildren. Due to the support from ARUWE’s programmes, my family’s food security and nutrition has improved. We now have three nutritious meals a day. From the seed support and trainings in sustainable agriculture, I am able to diversify my crop production to grow more crops including maize, cassava, bananas, sweet potatoes and vegetables. My crop yields especially of maize have also increased since I practice better agriculture methods that I learnt from ARUWE’s extension services. I now practice soil and water conservation including terracing, mulching and digging garden pits.

I also have surplus produce for sale from which I earn income to meet my household basic needs. Now that I consume vegetables every day, I testify that I no longer suffer from anemia and my sight is better.

53 year old Rovina Najjuma had this to say; “I am so grateful for the knowledge and skills I have acquired for vegetable growing. Coupled with the support in seeds, I have planted a variety of vegetables ranging from Nakati, Sukuma wiki, carrots, amaranthus and onions. On our market day i.e. Saturday, I am able to sell my vegetables and on average I earn Ugx4,000-6,000 (USD 2-3). With this, I am able to meet my household basic needs. Rovina is a mother and grandmother living in Gayaza west village taking care of 5 children and 10 grandchildren.”
Marketing farmers’ produce

Through the newly established partnership with Value Chain Entreprises (VACE) a company that purchases farmers produce with a social motive; 312 women farmers and other community groups were able to engage in collective marketing of their soy and maize produce. Additionally, the women were able to get better prices for the produce. As at April 2016, farmers received UGX 1,450 per kilogram of soy bean compared to UGX 1,300 in 2015. This was a fair price according to the current market prices for soy then. Beneficiaries were also given a premium.

Picture 1: L-R: Farmers weighing soybean at the collection center in Kibiga and workers loading soybean onto a truck in Kyankwanzi district. Below are farmers packaging soybean for collection in Kyankwanzi district.

Having access to profitable markets has improved incomes for women farmers. Women were able to meet some of their basic needs, send their children to school and increase their savings. However, there is need for additional support in postharvest handling and in value addition for women’s produce so that they can sell at higher prices and obtain more incomes. In the coming fiscal year (2016/17), ARUWE will focus its efforts on improving post harvest handling and value addition for rural
**Access to financial services**

ARUWE linked over 1,000 rural women farmers to Community Fund- Micro Finance Institution to access financial services. Women farmers were able to access capital and technical skills to invest in agriculture and set up alternative income generating business.

Through ARUWE partnership with Community Fund MFI, Abassa Ekimu special women group of 18 members was able to access a loan of Ugx 4,500,000 (USD 1,363) to purchase a maize shelling machine.

In addition to relief from having to travel long distances to access maize shellers, the group’s income has increased as a result of fees from external clients. The entire community benefited from the initiative of this women group. The community can shell maize at reduced prices i.e. from UGX 4,000 to UGX 3,500.

**Promoting land rights awareness**

Following sensitization in land rights awareness, over 404 rural women farmers are now aware of their land rights and responsibilities as well as national land instruments.

“This intervention directly impacts our work as farmers because land is our main resource for production. Having land security enhances our socio-economic development”, said Margaret Namuli, a community paralegal.

However violation of property and land rights in form of evictions, excess land fees still remains a challenge especially for the widowed women and OVC. There is need to strengthen community based land structures as well as educating communities of the national land instruments to enable them claim their rights.

Other general challenges include poor and fake seed inputs, dependence on seasons which are characterized by prolonged droughts and heavy rainfalls as well as high illiteracy rates among women farmers limit meaningful involvement in the entire agricultural chain.
Under this thematic area, ARUWE promotes renewable energy technologies including eco-friendly bio gas, solar energy and energy saving stoves as well as agriculture and advocacy for policy implantation in climate change. Given the numerous household chores that rural women engage in such as collecting water & firewood and cooking, it is essential to support them in labour saving technologies. During the last year, ARUWE supported five vulnerable households with bamboo biogas plants to provide home based energy. The five plants served as demonstrations for other interested community members to adopt. Additionally, ARUWE in partnership with Community Fund- MFI introduced a solar energy loan product to support households with solar panels for improved lighting. 54 households benefited from this solar initiative. Furthermore, 20 households were supported to construct energy saving stoves to reduce deforestation. Beneficiaries reported positive changes in their lives as a result of the technologies including spending less time preparing meals as a result of readily available cooking energy, children attending school in time rather than collecting fire wood before going to school, proper lighting for children when doing school assignments, engaging in other productive activities such as businesses due to less time spent in preparing meals, increased crop yields resulting from availability and application of manure from both bio slurry and the compost, and improved lighting at night. The beneficiaries also pointed out the need for other households to benefit from the technologies.

Nuriat Namatovu, 40, from Ssekamalya village said “I used to spend very long periods of time searching for firewood especially during the rainy season but with my newly acquired biogas, it takes me less than an hour to prepare a family meal. I now have adequate time to attend to my shop as well as meet with friends”.

Nuriat preparing tea on her bio gas cooker
Teopista Nabuuso, 55 from Nakabiso village noted “I was relieved of searching for firewood. I used to spend almost an entire day looking for firewood from a distance of about 4 kilometers but with the biogas, my family has timely meals, and the children are able to attend school in time and play with friends instead of spending long hours looking for fire wood.” She adds that she looks forward to constructing a toilet to improve her household’s sanitation and increase the supply of manure into the biogas digester.

For these five bio gas beneficiaries, having access to a bio gas cooker has reduced the strenuous activities embedded in preparing meals for their families. They reported that they have more time to engage in other economic activities. Promoting simple household labour saving technologies is one of the ways to create an enabling environment for fostering women socio-economic development.

**Innovation**

ARUWE links WASH to biogas technology where by gas plans are connected to pour flash latrines. ARUWE constructs water harvesting tanks by using bamboo rather than brick which are environmentally unfriendly.

ARUWE has now introduced climate change and WASH loans to communities.
Efforts to build sustainable healthy communities were geared towards accessibility, availability and utilization of better health services. These included maternal health care, HIV/AIDS services, sexual reproductive health and rights and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in households, schools and wider communities.

**Maternal health care, HIV/AIDS and sexual reproductive health and rights**

ARUWE embarked on increasing awareness of the rights based approaches to health service delivery among local leaders, health workers, community health structures, women and youth groups. The beneficiaries are now more aware of the definition and principles of human rights, the scope of human rights, limitations on human rights, the right to health, community participation as well as redress mechanisms for rights violations. Emphasis was put on the fact that human rights work in relation to fulfillment of responsibilities. This program reached approximately 2100 people.
“I have clearly understood some of the key principles of the rights based approach which include equality and non-discrimination, participation of stakeholders, indivisibility, the rule of law and the “AAAQ” framework which refers to availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality of health care facilities, goods and services.” said Saveri Twagira, secretary for health, Mulagi Sub County.

Mabel Turyakira a VHT noted “I have learnt that it is my responsibility to participate in planning and budgeting for health and other social services in my community”.

Florence Kemirembe a YPE said “I thank ARUWE for sensitizing us about human rights and the right to health in particular. I now know where to report human rights violations especially in health”.

Due to community and ARUWE efforts through the Advocacy for better health project supported by USAID/PATH, the Health Unit Management Committee (HUMC) for Mpigi Health Centre IV was instituted and HUMC members for health centre 111 in four sub counties including Mpigi town council, Muduuma, Kamengo and Kiringente in Mpigi district were oriented in their roles and responsibilities. This in turn improved health service provision as HUMCs play an important role in ensuring proper accountability of resources allocated for health service provision.

In addition, 55 community health educators, 20 community agriculture trainers and 5 community paralegals were able to improve their efficiency in community work due to improved mobility resulting from the bicycles ARUWE supported them with.

School menstrual hygiene promotion

50 female students from St Joseph SSS Vumba, Kyankwanzi district were supported with reusable sanitary pads. Students were also equipped with knowledge in good menstrual hygiene practices.
WASH for Vulnerable Households

Fourteen (14) grandmother households were supported with rain water harvesting tanks of 3,000 to 6,000 liter capacities. ARUWE employed green technologies using bamboo for the construction of the tanks. The beneficiary households are now able to access clean and safe water. Their household hygiene has greatly improved since they have enough water for drinking, bathing, maintaining clean utensils, clothes and houses. This has improved people’s health. The intervention benefited 78 household members.

Bernadette Muzizima, 59, from Kiyuuni village said, “I now have clean water for drinking, washing and cleaning. I am settled and at peace now that I can access water within my home compound. I used to walk a distance of 2 Kilo Metres to the well and 2 kilo meters from the well but my new water tank has solved the problem of walking long distances in search of water”

Night Nakitende, 75, from Mugereka village noted that she now has enough water to even irrigate her vegetable garden. This was not possible before with the 2.5 Kilo Metres distance she and her grandchildren used to walk to access water.

“Having a water tank at my home has enabled me to reallocate the time I spent on collecting water to other equally rewarding activities such as attending my group meetings and weaving. This has contributed to my socio and economic growth”, reported Jovia Kakembo.

WASH for schools

Pupils of Bwezigoolo primary school standing in front of their 20,000 litre Ferro cement tank.
418 pupils in Kibooba primary school, 314 pupils in Bwezigoolo primary school and 340 students in St Joseph AID Society School Kigando were able to access clean and safe water with the support of 20,000 liter Ferro cement tanks.

School children were able to concentrate on both academic work and extracurricular activities with the extra time available to them as a result not having to spend hours collecting water for school use. There was also reduction in school expenses incurred on collecting water and treating water related diseases for school children. Additionally, school children were equipped with knowledge and skills in proper hygiene practices which fostered a positive self image and esteem among them.

In 2016/17, ARUWE will focus on household water supply systems and community gravity flow water systems. It will also empower communities with knowledge and skills to engage and influence duty bearers and decision makers to improve access to safe and clean water and sanitation facilities in communities.
New classroom block at Kasubi Community Primary School

ARUWE in partnership with its funding partners supported Kasubi Community Primary School in Gayaza Sub County with a two classroom block. Through the initiative, pupils have been provided with a good and healthy study environment which will foster their academic performance.
“Having a new school structure has further motivated us to demand our school examination number from the Ministry of Education and Sport. We believe that in 2017, we will have our first Primary Leaving Examinations done at the school premises. In this way, our pupils will not have to move to different schools to seat for their exams”, said the head teacher.

Improved sanitation facilities at Busi Parents Primary School

Through construction of an EcoSan latrine at Busi Parents primary school, 380 pupils now have access to safe sanitation facilities. The waste from the facility is used as fertilizer for the school garden from which the school gets vegetables for the pupils’ meals.

ARUWE recognizes and appreciates the many factors that contribute to school retention and improved performance for school children. In the coming year, ARUWE will target its efforts towards community engagement in literacy attainment and school retention. ARUWE will also promote hands on skills such as tailoring, baking and computer skills to enable rural young people create jobs.
Having concluded its five year plan of 2011-2015, ARUWE engaged in a strategic planning process to prepare a strategic plan for 2016-2021. The process was supported by the Stephen Lewis Foundation, the African Women’s Development Fund and USAID/PATH/ Initiatives Inc. who provided technical assistance. The planning was participatory and consisted of discussions with and contributions from stakeholders including ARUWE’s board of directors, the staff and community representatives. ARUWE redefined its mission, goals and core programs. In addition to its already existing project areas in the central region of Uganda, ARUWE extended its services to North Eastern Uganda to improve women's livelihoods.
RUWE's programs Manager, Agnes Mirembe, was supported by Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund to participate in the 60th UN CSW gathering in New York in March, 2016. Agnes had the opportunity to present in several meetings organized to advance women’s economic rights.

Every year, thousands of women rights activists travel to New York from all over the globe to participate in high level discussions and a multitude of parallel events on women rights at the Commission on the Status of Women. The 2016 theme was “Women’s empowerment and its link to sustainable development”. This meeting provided a platform for ARUWE to advocate for women’s humans rights focusing on its interventions.

Agnes said, “Presenting at the UN Commission on the Status of Women was such a golden opportunity for ARUWE because it gave us a unique chance to share the organization experiences concerning grass root women empowerment and development; with a high level audience including representative of member states of the UN, UN bodies who are key influencers and decision makers, non-state actors like civil societies and other development partners. ARUWE got an opportunity to voice out grass root women’s views and share its contributions to women’s sustainable transformation and development.”
ARUWE’s focus in 2016/2017

1. Building a strong farmers’ cooperative for collective procurement of farm inputs, storage and marketing to increase farmers’ incomes.
2. Establishing a community learning Centre for agriculture innovations with a mother-child approach
3. Promoting household labour saving technologies to enable women to participate more in socio-economic activities.
4. Promoting male inclusion at household and community levels in women focused development initiatives.
5. Strengthening capacity of community structures to advocate for qualitative and quantitative social services.
6. Strengthening ARUWE’s internal systems for improved and strategic delivery of services for all the stake holders.

ARUWE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE - APRIL 2016

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<tr>
<th>NAME OF FUNDER</th>
<th>INCOME IN UGX</th>
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<tr>
<td>Action Water - UK</td>
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<td>Ecological Christian Organization - Uganda</td>
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<td>Wheels 4 Life- Canada</td>
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<td>Pilot light Foundation- USA</td>
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<td>TwawezaUwezo</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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## EXPENDITURE PER CORE PROGRAM

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<td>Women socio-economic empowerment</td>
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<td>Climate change resilience and adaptation</td>
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<td>Education and lifelong learning</td>
<td>195,108,910</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
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We appreciate the partners that have generously contributed to the cause of improving the livelihoods of rural women. Action Water – UK, African Women Development Fund Organization – Uganda, Emerge Poverty Free, Virginia Gilder Sleeve Fund – Canada, Stephen Lewis Foundation, Hunger Program – USA, TwawezaUwezo, Swiss hand+ Zero cap, USAID / PATH as well as Women in Europe for a common future are our generous partners that contributed to the cause of empowering the rural women in Uganda.

ARUWE BOD, staff and beneficiaries.
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From ARUWE BOD, staff and beneficiaries.
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