

UGANDA'S WOMEN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT APPROACH ATTRACTS GLOBAL ATTENTION AT CSW69



Hon. Betty Amongi Ongom, Minister of Gender, Labour, and Social Development and Hon. Mutuuzo Peace Regis, Minister of State for Gender and Cultural Affairs with other participants during a high-level discussion on Uganda's Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) initiatives at CSW69 in New York.

By Joshua Kyalimpa

“What tips can you give us in Nigeria to start a Women Economic Empowerment Programme like yours in Uganda?” asked Abidemi, Chairperson of a Network of Women Organisations in Nigeria. She was among the participants at a well-attended side event organized by Uganda’s Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development (MGLSD) and the World Bank on the sidelines of CSW69.

There was already an awe mood inside the room following the opening remarks by Hon. Betty Amongi Ongom. She captivated participants as she pitched Uganda’s various Women Economic Empowerment (WEE) initiatives,

many of which are spearheaded by the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development. She highlighted key government programs such as the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP), the Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP), and the Generating Growth Opportunities and Productivity for Women Enterprises (GROW).

The panel, featuring John Ssendendo, Project Coordinator for GROW, and Caroline Rukundo, Supervisor for UWEP, helped pigment Uganda’s WEE story with compelling statistics and inspiring beneficiary success stories. Commissioners Alex Asiimwe for Labour, Industrial Relations, and

Productivity and Dr. Angela Nakafeero for Gender and Women Affairs moderated the discussion, applying their vast knowledge to ensure the session’s objectives were met.

The discussion aligned with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), also known as "Beijing+30," which underscores the significance of women's economic empowerment in achieving gender equality. The platform advocates for equal access to economic resources and opportunities while challenging discriminatory practices. By the end of the session, there was a consensus that Uganda has made significant strides in WEE.

However, panelists, including Rita Achiro, Executive Director of the Uganda Women Network, emphasized that more work is needed to eliminate harmful social norms that hinder progress. These include beliefs such as women being unable to inherit clan land or serve as heirs to their fathers—norms that continue to reinforce gender inequality. Held at the United Nations Headquarters, the event focused on Uganda’s WEE efforts, particularly through GROW and UWEP.

Conference Room E was filled to capacity as government delegations, development partners, civil society representatives, and students listened attentively to Uganda's success story.

Serena Cavicchi, Senior Social Development Specialist and Task Team Leader for GROW at the World Bank, praised Uganda's approach, stating that no program matches GROW in its comprehensive support for women entrepreneurs. She described it as "unarguably the best women entrepreneurship program in the world" and commended Uganda's government for prioritizing women's economic empowerment.

"It's revolutionary because it addresses all the obstacles that hinder the growth of women enterprises. This model could be the solution to the challenges of women's economic empowerment," she noted.

In her closing remarks, the Minister of State for Gender and Cultural Affairs, Dr. Mutuzo Peace Regis, expressed her optimism about dismantling patriarchy in all its forms within our lifetime. She drew inspiration from the young people in attendance who are actively engaging in critical issues like economic empowerment.

*The conversation on WEE will continue at another side event, **Empowering Women, Transforming Economies: Success Stories from Africa**, scheduled to take place at the Millennium Hotel UN Plaza, New York, on Monday.*

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