



### **8th March – International Women’s day**

The place of the women in the world- case of the women in Uganda

At the beginning of this year 2013, Ugandans, especially females, were excited when feminist and civil society activist Winnie Byanyima sprang to one important global helm. She was appointed the Executive Director of Oxfam International. This is a confederation of 17 organizations working together to find lasting solutions to poverty and injustice. Similarly, last year two other prolific Ugandan women rose in international stature. The East African Legislative Assembly hoisted Margaret Zziwa to its Speakership, making her the first woman and Ugandan to occupy that seat. The other is Margaret Mungherera, who was elected as President of World Medical Association (WMA).

In the Ugandan socio-political context, women have surpassed many limitations to get to the top. For instance, Rebecca Kadaga, Christine Ondo and Maria Kiwanuka are at the helm of Parliament, the health and finance ministries, respectively. Women have also ascended to influential positions in corporate companies and in the civil society. To level further the socio-political turf for women, the Government has signed and ratified several international, regional and sub-regional instruments aimed at promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Despite such judicious policies and gestures from the Government to uplift the socio-political stature of women, there are limitations to this progress – the journey ahead for women is perhaps much longer than what they have walked so far. Although some women have sailed through to the top, majority of women in Uganda are still wallowing at the lowest rungs of society.

In most corporate entities, most women are mid-level managers; no matter how hard they work they don’t succeed improving their professional status. Concerning motherhood, especially those in rural areas, women keep on being dismissed or discriminated when pregnant, despite various interventions from the Government.

Looking at education, the school drop-out rate for girls is higher than that of boys. In many regions undergoing a pregnancy test is the prerequisite for being accepted at the secondary school. If the test is positive, the girls are not accepted. As a result the enrolment of women into higher institutions of learning is still lower than that of men.

There is an inter-connection or positive correlation between social or individual development and quality of education. Therefore, if more women are to wield power and influence, more should access quality education, especially higher education. For that matter an educated woman is an empowered one, thus the ability to overcome obstacles of progress such as poverty, disease, ignorance, Human rights abuse/violation and inhibiting customs or traditions.



The Catholic Workers' Movement (CWM) in Uganda supports the government program by organizing women groups and helping empower them through constant education. This is ideally seen as a continuous holistic process, with cognitive, psychological and economic dimensions in order to achieve emancipation. Given the complexity of society interrelations, one has to systematically think about the strategies and concrete proposals for future action, if one hopes to achieve such a goal.

In our societies, there is a gender division of labor which dictates the kind of training one acquires. If one talks about women's empowerment, it is important that women have access to the different training opportunities previously denied them. This therefore means:

- Preparing our women for jobs that are usually not open to them.
- Providing income generating projects that are market-oriented (not welfare-oriented projects)
- Training capable female leaders at all levels in the movement.

CWM Uganda is driving towards this goal by helping its' women members basing on these objectives below:

- Helping the women to develop self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Guiding them to be able to have the ability to negotiate and make their own decisions.
- Helping raise the awareness of their civil rights and responsibilities.
- Providing skills for income generation.
- Encouraging them to actively participate in community/society more effectively.
- Preparing them to be good women leaders.

For the women in CWM Uganda, this is possible because when they are together in their group meetings, they are provided with space and time to share ideas and learn from one another, they are also educated with the basics, like Adult literacy education (read and write), home management , basic cooking skills and basic business knowledge. Thus the group provides to the women a fertile ground for the empowering process. Through these programs the women are able to carry out income generating activities therefore improving on their household incomes.

As we celebrate this year's International Women's Day the World Movement of Christian Workers (WMCW) invites everyone to celebrate the fruits of great struggles and fraternity of women worldwide without forgetting that we still have a long way to achieve real equality and respect for women in our societies. In this we urge all stakeholders to promote the creation of Women's desks to help empower the women in groups and to support the empowerment process. When you empower a woman the Nation is empowered. Therefore, it is necessary to end violence against women, ensuring their right to lifelong learning and equal opportunities!

**For the General Secretariat of the WMCW**  
Janet and Betina