

Women shatter gender barriers in Uganda's fish farming industry

By [Pearl Amina Karungi](#)

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In a groundbreaking turn of events, women in Bugiri District, Eastern Uganda, have defied societal norms and broken into the traditionally male-dominated fish farming industry.



Source: Supplied

Through the Women Economic Empowerment Programme launched by UN Women, these women have not only mastered the art of fishing but also revolutionised their economic prospects.

Rose Nakimuli, a resident of Bugiri, vividly recalls her journey into fish farming.

"When I was selected to be trained in fish farming, I embraced the opportunity. I approached it as a job," Nakimuli says with determination.

With the support of the UN Women project, she learned the ins and outs of aquaculture, swimming, and fishing, becoming a skilled fish farmer. Today, she proudly feeds her family and earns a decent livelihood from her newfound expertise.

Nakimuli is one of 1,400 women trained in fish farming.

The programme, initiated in 2019, has set ambitious goals to enhance women's income security, promote decent work, and empower them with economic autonomy by 2025. The success achieved in the fish farming industry in Bugiri District stands as a shining example of the program's impact.

With funding from the Government of Sweden and Standard Bank, UN Women partnered with the Bugiri District Local Government to support rural women in fish farming activities on the waters of Lake Victoria.

As a result, 28 cages brimming with Tilapia fish now stand as a testament to the women's unwavering dedication and determination.

Amina Nakiranda, the project's production manager, explains that it went beyond teaching women how to fish as the

programme also equipped them with essential business management skills.

"Before this programme, many of us struggled with small businesses selling fresh produce or silver fish in local marketplaces," Nakiranda reveals.

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Source: Supplied - Amina Nakiranda, the project's production manager.
Photo credit: Isabella Wabwire/UN Women

The cage fish project goes has strengthened the women's capacity in governance, financial literacy, and the entire fish value chain. Inspired by their achievements, the women established a private company called "Women Economic Empowerment Bugiri (WEEB)."



Source: Supplied - Judith, member of the board of WEEB. Photo credit: Pearl Karungi/UN Women.

Immaculate Were, the CEO of WEEB, proudly highlights the transformational journey of these women. "Although 85% of the beneficiaries are illiterate, they have become specialists in various aspects of fish farming, including feeding, harvesting, preservation, marketing, and trading," Were remarks, adding that "Once a woman gets wealthy, that's wealth for the whole nation."

The project has also made significant strides in improving gender relations at the household level. With women contributing to the family budget and gaining financial independence, gender-based violence has notably reduced.

Judith, a WEEB executive board member, shares her experience: "The project has reduced gender-based violence because we no longer sit home and beg our husbands for everything. We are no longer burdens; the project has empowered us."

Beyond individual success stories, the fish farming project has made substantial contributions to the national GDP. With an impressive production of 508.5 tonnes of fish, the women have generated sales worth UGX 4.3bn (approximately \$1.15m).

The project's impact extends further, with UN Women providing essential support, including accommodations for working women, daycare services for their children, and necessary resources such as shelters, fish nets, life jackets, and a refrigerated truck for convenient market access.

"Thanks to UN Women, today we feel like heroes," Nakimuli adds. " Even the men view us as heroes, because fishing used to be a man's job and we are excelling in it. It also gives us income to cater for our households."

The journey of these resilient women serves as an inspiration, proving that with support and determination, barriers can be shattered, and new horizons can be explored.

Source: [Africa Renewal](#)

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