

Giving Women a Voice in Local Government



Photo: Gofrey Egulwa

Women members of local councils attend a workshop to gain confidence in public speaking and to effectively represent the needs of their constituents.

Affirmative action is the law in Uganda's local governments. Although women are members of local councils, their voices are often not heard because they are either overshadowed by their male peers or they lack the experience, confidence, and knowledge of the governing process. Through its support of decentralization, USAID provides training to a variety of audiences about the functioning of local governance and how to make it work for the needs of the community.

One training session provided 106 women members of local councils with information on what their roles and responsibilities are as council members, how to gain confidence in public speaking, and how to represent their constituents' interests at council meetings. Women were asked to share their local council experiences and to participate in mock council debates to improve their presentation skills. They were encouraged to assume an active role in the local council planning process through participating constructively in discussions and debates, providing policy-related data, and ensuring that their positions and concerns are reflected in local council decisions and development plans.

As a result of the training, over 80% of the women council members attend and participate in meetings on a regular basis. The women are enthusiastic about representing their constituencies and voicing their concerns – in some areas women's attendance is higher than their male peers. Women's voices are clearly being heard as their ideas, concerns, and recommendations are documented in minutes from various Sectoral Committee meetings. Women's activities are now included in local council budgets. These female representatives support and motivate each other to rise to the challenge – providing an example for women throughout Uganda.

Photo & Caption