



**THE ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY WOMEN, UGANDA LIMITED (AUWU)**

**P.O.BOX 7062 KAMPALA, UGANDA**

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**REPORT ABOUT THE CELEBRATIONS OF THE 2021 WOMEN'S DAY HELD**

**AT ST MARY'S HIGH SCHOOL KATALE BUNAMWAYA ON FRIDAY 26/03/2021.**

**THEME: COVID-19 PREVENTION AND CONTROL IN SCHOOLS**

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## **INTRODUCTION.**

On Friday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2021, members of the Association of University Women Uganda were hosted by St Marys High School Katala, Bunamwaya situated in the country side eight (8) kilometres away from Kampala the capital city of Uganda. The school is a private enterprise that raises funds through school fees paid by parents and guardians. One of the directors of the school is the Vice President of The Association of University women Uganda limited.

The aim of the visit was to celebrate the 2021 women's day by sensitizing girls and women about career paths and their gender rights. Although our major target group was the female learners, we found it a good opportunity to sensitise the boys about gender parity and the need to treat girls and women as their equals. The audience was made up of teachers, senior three (3), senior five (5) and senior six (6) learners. The other classes were still under covid lock down and senior four (4) had completed their examinations and gone back home.

The Association invited some three student teachers from the School of Education to be part of the guest speakers at the women 's day celebrations. By the end of the programme, we were proud to hear from the students that the visit was invaluable to them because the career talks that touched on the role of science education, health and sex education and the Makerere University students face to face inspirational discussion was not common in schools. According to the days programme, various speakers made presentations as here below summarised.

## **SUCCESS STORIES OF THE AUWU (1960 TO DATE)**

As part of the association's goals and objectives of up- lifting and helping girls and women advance in society, the president Ms. Juliet Katali outlined the success stories that included the following:

- Career guidance in secondary schools to educate young women about the various career paths.
- Developing vocational skills for school girls and women. We are grateful to the American association Of University women who donated sewing machines to train women and give them tailoring skills and craft making.
- Started a successful project on growing indigenous vegetables in limited space in urban areas.
- Identifying various needy but academically sound students who have received scholarships from IFUW and individuals.
- Helping each other with funding proposal writing skills.
- Keeping together as women of valour
- Participating in civil education for women interested in political affairs and elections.
- Identifying girls from hard to reach and remote districts of Uganda to be sponsored for University education by Graduate Women International (GWI).

### **PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF COVID IN SCHOOLS**

At this critical time of the Covid -19 pandemic, the association members couldn't have any better if they did not sensitise schools about their role in preventing and controlling the virus. The presenter Ms. Rebecca Nanfuka talked at length about the following **Key messages about Covid-19**

- What is Covid-19?
- Symptoms, how it is spread, who is most at risk?
- Role of learners on transmission of Covid-19
- Incubation period
- Check list for prevention of Covid-19
- Special recommendations for schools to keep safe

### **GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

After the above presentations, learners were given the opportunity to **interact in groups** with various visitors including Ms Mary Nyanzi from Mukono University who demonstrated to the learners the importance of science by relating it to the learner's day to day lives.

The student teachers and at the same time student leaders at Makerere University (Makerere Education Students Association, MESA): Faith Atim, the minister for Anti- sexual harassment affairs in the School of Education talked about sex education and HIV dangers. The MESA president Mr Ashraf Muwonge and Mr Byakika the Deputy speaker MESA inspired the students by talking to them about balancing social life and education and also the challenges of co-existence of boys and girls in co-educational schools. They also talked about disciplined minds and other leadership skills which could help them become influential leaders in society.

### **Major issues raised about science teaching and learning: the students pointed out that;**

- In choosing career options most learners are influenced by their parents and peers regardless of their personal academic abilities.
- Most of the learners hate science subjects (maths, Physics, Chemistry and Biology) due to a number of reasons: some learners disliked their teachers because they were too fast for the learners to comprehend, some students had a natural bias against science, especially girls the

school doesn't have adequate science equipment to do regular experiments, Secondly for the girl child there is lack of female role models handling sciences.

- The Ugandan curriculum offers 12 subjects at the ordinary level of education and 3 at the advanced level. Students thus fail to concentrate on what they wish to study in future.
- Most learners wanted to pursue the traditional professions of becoming doctors, lawyers, accountants etc. but feared mathematics and science.
- Computer science required a lot of practice but the school does not have enough (only 13 for 300 students in the school) to enable the learners to have regular hands on. The students themselves did not have personal laptops to use after school.

**Guided by the counsellor: Ms Mary Nyanzi encouraged the students:**

- To try and cope with the curriculum because there was no choice about that.
- To love science because it adds value to individuals
- To take optional subjects (fine Arts, Agriculture, local languages, Technical drawing) seriously because all of them help determine what one can become in future.
- Students doing art should note that it requires some science knowledge to mix colours for their drawings etc.,
- Computer science is the new trend and way to go. It provides additional skills to all other subjects and provides more employment opportunities

**PERSONAL HYGIENE AND SEXUALITY**

As mentioned before learners love to hear from the young generation so the student leaders from Makerere University played a big role in counselling and mentoring both girls and boys about hygiene and sexuality.

**Major issues raised about personal hygiene and other Teen age challenges amidst Covid-19.**

- **Sanitation** is important for a healthy mind. Therefore, learners especially the boys were advised to bathe every morning, wash their socks and under wears on daily basis.
- Noted that girls from humble back grounds whose school fees were paid by relatives had more challenges like lack of sanitary pads, uncertainty about their future because they were mistreated and at times sexually abused by the relatives and yet had nobody to confide in.
- **Absentee parents** who claimed they were busy trying to make ends meet consequently failing to give essential attention to their children.
- **Infections:** advised that on top of getting medical treatment, putting out personal effects like underwear to dry in the sun was another way of keeping away infections.
- **Peer pressure to take Drug abuse** should be avoided because it leads to addiction, mental illness and school dropout.
- **HIV prevention amidst Covid-19** should not be ignored. Victims of HIV should ensure getting medication as prescribed and all learners should go for voluntary testing to establish their status. Abstinence while still at school was the best option.
- **Coping with social life and studies.** Choose the right friends with whom you can discuss your problems and get encouragement to move in the right direction. Being contented with what one

has is the way forward. Many female learners had fallen victims of sexual harassment and death due to befriending various men for personal gain.

- As an educated person try to fight against backward cultural values like being booked for marriage at an early age.
- Build self-esteem to show the difference between an educated and an uneducated person.
- Create networks to look for funding opportunities.
- Boys lamented that they felt demoralised when emphasis is put on girls only. They too want parenting and counselling. Due to the absentee parents, and broken families most boys struggle to exist in society but this challenge is not realised by many parents and teachers.
- The boys and girls were also disgruntled about their talents in sports and other fields being nurtured and promoted but nobody seemed to recognise this need.

**In summary:**

The women's day celebration by the Association of University Women of Uganda was a success.

- The talks on science education, Covid-19, sex education and hygiene were all very relevant and interesting.
- ST Mary's High School Katala Bunamwaya also benefitted by the open criticisms about the school. What others say about us usually inspires us to make a change. Most Private schools in Uganda still have a challenge of funding and now with the after-effects of covid, they have to struggle even more.
- Although students had issues to raise, it was evident that they were generally facilitated with the basic necessities at school. The school has a library, has some laboratories and computers which we hope will be multiplied with time.
- We look forward to getting more members to read through publicity by GWI. Thank you.

The Association of University women Uganda, LTD

26/03/2021.

