

# VOICE IN UGANDA NEWSLETTER

April 2020



**STORIES OF WOMEN  
EMPOWERMENT IN UGANDA**

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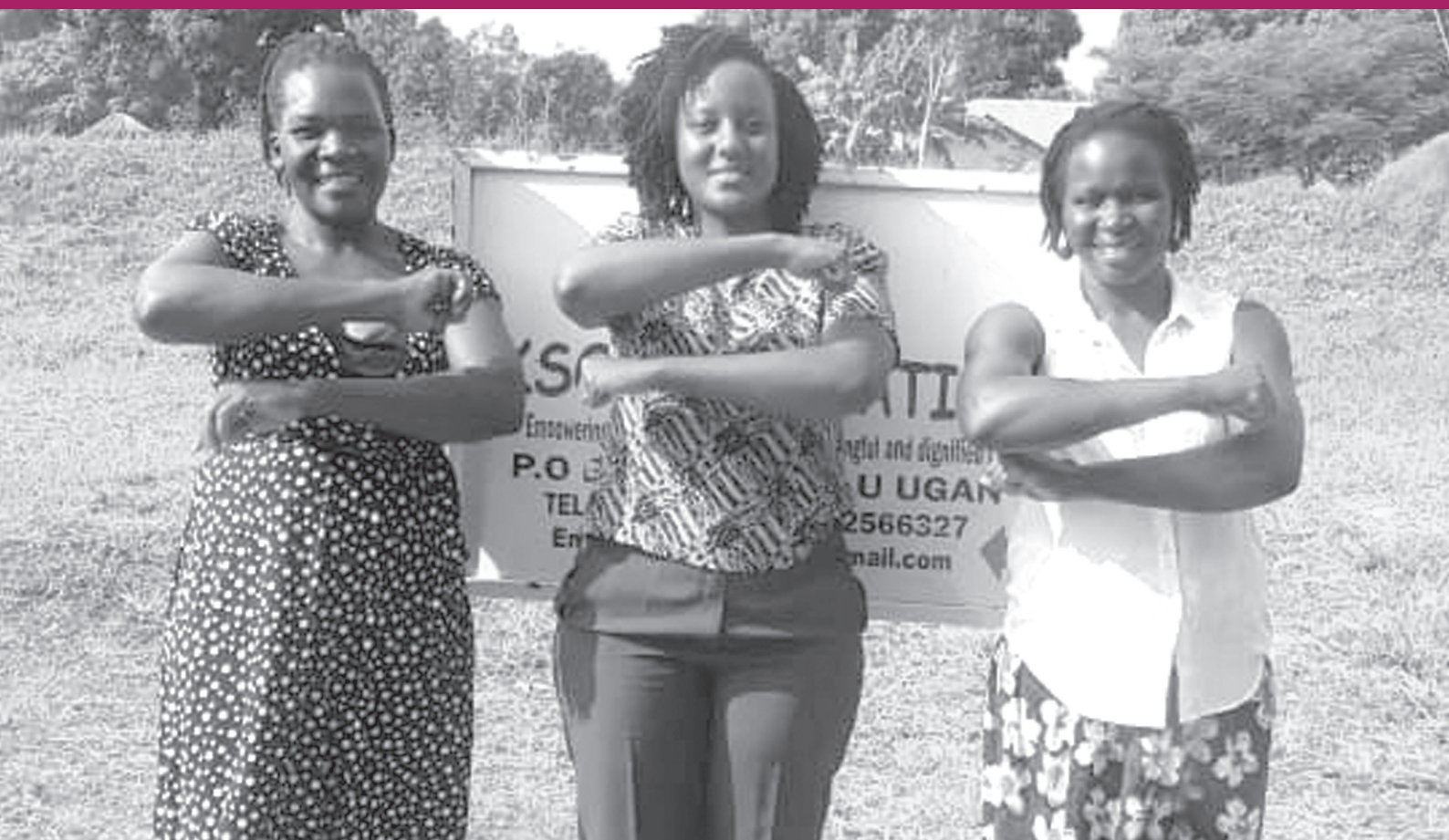
# INTRODUCTION

The period January to April 2020, has been characterized by a series of events in Uganda with the highlight being the **International Women's Day commemoration**.

Voice rallied behind the government of Uganda to celebrate women's achievements under the theme; "An Equal World is An Enabled World" which was adopted locally to: "Celebrating 25 years of the 1995 Constitution: milestones on promoting gender equality and women empowerment". UNAPD participated in the National commemorations and highlighted salient needs of persons with Disabilities. Similarly, as part of the Voice global campaign **#Each for Equal**, Voice in Uganda captured voices of women across the country to highlight their priorities towards women's empowerment.

Voice also took off time to celebrate women taking leadership in empowering fellow women in Uganda and shared several other stories of women's empowerment including; Mutual support groups, a platform to empower domestic workers; Kazo Angola Elderly Association, a strong voice and pillar for elderly peri-urban women, Empowering women groups through participatory theatre approach.

On the downside, Uganda confirmed the first case of COVID-19 on March 21<sup>st</sup> 2020 and since then, the number of cases have risen. In response, the Government of Uganda is implementing a social distancing campaign to reduce rapid community transmissions **#stayhomestaysafe**. Voice shares with you key facts about COVID-19 and how you protect yourself from the virus.





## UGANDA NATIONAL ACTION ON PHYSICAL DISABILITY (UNAPD), A VOICE UGANDA GRANTEE COMMEMORATES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2020

As the world commemorates the international women's day, UNAPD was thrilled to be part of National Celebration with the theme: "Celebrating 25 years of the 1995 constitution: milestones on promoting gender equality and women empowerment" at Malukhu Playground Mbale District headquarters.



UNAPD rights holders in a group photo with the sign of An Equal World is an Enabled World before the matching on the D-Day

The Pre-event health camp was held on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2020 at the district headquarter which saw women with disabilities mobilized by UNAPD to access Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) Services such as cancer screening, HIV testing and counselling, Gender Based Violence services and Family Planning. A total number of 52 women of different disability categories received services provided by Reproductive Health Uganda.



On set is a health worker assisting a person with disability (A little person) to sign on the consent form.

*"As a person with disability am happy that the reception given to me by the nurses was well, they even had to seek my consent first, I have never seen this happen, they explained to me thoroughly about SRH and asked me to decide on my own". Thank you UNAPD for bringing me to have this services, **Rights holder.***



A group of women with hearing impairment pose for a photo with the sign of An Equal World is an Enabled World after receiving SRH services.



A Man with hearing impairment along with his wife being helped by a sign language interpreter at the health camp

UNAPD also worked with mainstream partners like Reproductive Health Uganda (RHU) team in the health camp to mobilize women, men and young people with disabilities to receive SRH services.

▼ Dr. Jackson Ayeko the in charge RHU Mbale had this to say in an Email to UNAPD "Thank you so much UNAPD for joining us, as you saw your coming was key towards the success of the health camp, we are reaching many clients as RHU"

▼ Whereas on the eve of IWD, UNAPD held a talk show at Open Gate FM as part of awareness creation on disability and access to Sexual Reproductive Health Services. Among the Discussants was the Assistant District Health Officer in Charge of Maternal and Child Health in Mbale sister Kisolo Stella who gave highlights

on the women's day commemoration with much emphasis on women with disabilities. She called upon health workers to make services inclusive and change their attitudes towards women with disabilities so that everyone equally and ably enjoys such services fully whether with or without a disability.



*On the left is UNAPD chairperson Mbale Action on Physical Disability and Ms. Alice Nandutu, Project Assistant UNAPD based in Mbale discussing the salient needs of persons with Disabilities and on the right Sister Kisolo Stella Assistant District Health Officer (ADHO) in charge of Maternal Child Health (MCH) explaining the need for all women to participate in women's day commemoration.*



# WOMEN'S VOICES AS WE COMMEMORATE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

During the month of March, Voice joined the global campaign to amplify voices of women in a bid to attain their rights. The linking and learning team bring you the voices of the various rightsholders and grantees on what this theme means to them.



*UNAPD: An equal world is an enabled world when PWDs can access sexual and reproductive health rights and services*



*CERID in KOBOKO ALI\_ONJI village savings and lending association: "an equal world is an enabled world" when we stand together in harmony in our families....*



*Kazo Angola Elderly Association and URAA: Each for Equal is when older persons have equal access health care services*



*DOWA/Platform for Labor Action: An equal world is an enabled world when domestic workers have access to decent work*







*LUTINO ADUNNU: Each for Equal means women's empowerment for transformation*



*GWIDO: An Equal world is an Enabled World when we have life skills and can earn a living*



*WADAKUCHINGWA PARU VSLA: "An equal world is an enabled world" - when we are empowered socially and economically- -Parombo Town council, NEBBI*



*KSO Foundation: An Equal world is an enabled world when you offer your shoulder to others to lean on*



*GWED-G: Each for Equal means: Having the confidence to lead and influence change in communities.*



# CEREBRATING WOMEN TAKING LEADERSHIP IN EMPOWERING FELLOW WOMEN IN UGANDA

In our efforts to empower women facing extreme marginalization, we often forget those who take leadership to make it all happen. Below are stories of women leaders who have taken a lead role in uplifting the status of women in Northern Uganda.

## The Discovered Voice

**Ms. Shilla Adyero**

Executive Director of LUTINO ADUNU



A community-based organization working with Voice to transform lives of rural women groups through VSLA and financial literacy as a means of improving household incomes in Nwoya District.

*Voice has empowered me to actively listen to my community and jointly craft workable solutions to our community problems. I have also worked consistently with the vulnerable women and community members in empowering them with knowledge and sustainable skills to improve their wellbeing. As a result, community members have asked me to run in the 2021 election for Woman Member of Parliament representing Nwoya District in Uganda. This dedication*

*and hard work that I have demonstrated in amplifying many voices of vulnerable women signal the leadership skills needed in a true leader. With the support from my community, I feel supported and compelled to be a voice and an advocate for my people. Politics will be new to me, but the confidence the community has in me, gives me the strength and determination to stand tall as a woman advocate, she narrates.*

## Hope for the Voiceless

**Betty Arach**

Project coordinator



With Destined Women, implementing the Child mothers' Rehabilitation and Empowerment project funded by Voice in Omoro District.

*In my community, there is a negative perception about child mothers; who are considered of less importance in society. They are often treated to verbal insults, harassment, and assault, making them to live in fear and isolation with no access to adequate information regarding their rights. Voice has allowed me to interact with the child mothers and better understand their situation.*

The project has opened doors for the vulnerable young mothers as the only hope for the voiceless in their communities. Through this program, Betty has led efforts to raise awareness on gender and child rights, empowered women with life skills including bead making, hair dressing and tailoring, record keeping, saving and leadership. Through this work, Betty has grown into a confidant to the young girls and delights in empowering them to take charge of their lives.



## Don't Judge a book by its cover

### Ms. Judith Agnes Okot



A woman with dignity, love, care, integrity and a drive to achieve in life.

*As a single mother of three girls, am forced to be the mother, father and everything to these children. So don't judge me because you are not capable of doing what I do. It's not always a woman's choice to be a single mother, So don't judge me. What distinguishes me from the crowd is that I am a dreamer, capable of doing what a normal family does. On Women's Day this year, my elder daughter Trinity said to her younger sister, "Maama is so special to me". She says so because I provide what a normal family does for their children. This has made me passionate to work with women in my situation because I believe and know that they are the most vulnerable beings in the world.*

At KSO Foundation, we are partnering with Voice to empower vulnerable women in our community including commercial sex workers. Working with these special women has attracted criticism and stigma from the community but this has not deterred my efforts in defending their rights. I happen to know their story and why they choose this job as means to sustain their families. Don't judge them because you too have a responsibility and role to play in their lives. Be a shoulder for these women to cry on, all they wish for is to stay out of the street and join better economic activities to sustain their families. They are human beings, and humanity begins with you and me.

## Gaining Confidence to embrace leadership

### Sandra Anena



I work with Gulu Women Economic Development and Globalization (GWED-G) as the program officer Gender Equality and Women Leadership under the Voice project "Influencing change for women voices and rights in Acholi sub region"

*When I joined the Voice project, I felt this was an opportunity for me to expound on my passion in defending and empowering vulnerable women but also build on my career. However, I wondered and always asked myself "how will I manage working with high profile women in leadership positions especially the politicians in Gulu and Omoro District? I was shy, lacked confidence in myself, I felt young and feared being challenged. I totally lacked the skills of public*

*speaking especially when working in the community.*

*Voice project is an inspiring project as it requires one to facilitate trainings, mentorship and coaching of district women leaders in leadership skills, public speaking and caucusing. This made me unlearn my behavior and learnt new strategies of matching up to the project demands. Over time, through the different project engagements, my self-esteem has been built, gained confidence to professionally speak, communicate and network with high profile leaders but also empower members of the lower local government with knowledge and sustainable skills.*

## MUTUAL SUPPORT GROUPS, A PLATFORM TO EMPOWER DOMESTIC WORKERS

In Uganda, the Employment Act 2006 does not recognize “domestic workers” because homes are considered private premises and therefore cannot be inspected by labor officers to enforce the act. Similarly, the constitution of the Republic of Uganda does not have specific provision tackling the work done by domestic workers in Uganda. In this case, discretion is left to employers to exhibit their utmost integrity to treat domestic workers as human beings. It is the responsibility of the employer to ensure that there is a fair and decent working environment for a domestic worker.



*Domestic workers sensitization during formation of mutual support groups*

Since domestic workers are not regulated in Uganda, they quite often get exposed to hazardous and exploitative work that is harmful to their health, physical and mental, spiritual, moral and social development. The lack of a minimum wage for domestic workers in Uganda leaves many to be exploited by their employers who often pay meagre monthly wages ranging between 10,000 Ugshs and 50,000 Ugshs which is often paid late or not at all.

Platform for Labor Action(PLA) in partnership with Voice are making interventions to improve the welfare of domestic workers in Uganda. Some of the interventions at hand are; Advocating for a minimum wage commensurate with the level of effort and paid on time, conducive work conditions with sick and vacation pay, access to health care and paid sick days or paid time off and creating Mutual support groups to enable domestic workers come together for social support, economic empowerment and to gain a collective voice in advocating for fair work conditions.

Since 2019, PLA has worked with local authorities to mobilize and sensitize domestic workers in

Kampala. Domestic workers are educated about their rights and responsibilities and available support services and supported to form mutual support groups. These groups of approximately 30 domestic workers largely women help to undertake the following support services to their members;

- ▼ Mediation between the employer and employee in case of conflict
- ▼ Extending counselling services to members
- ▼ Educating members and the community at large about the rights and responsibilities of domestic workers

The interventions of mutual support groups have greatly improved the wellbeing of domestic workers in the suburbs of Kampala and the surrounding Wakiso District. Many women and young girls working as domestic workers feel empowered to negotiate fair wages and reasonable work conditions with their employers.





**Ms. Nambogo Olivia (21- year old domestic worker in Kira division, Wakiso District)**

I had spent 6 months without pay by my employers. I became desperate and almost quit my job until I was referred by a friend to the domestic workers mutual support group. The

leaders of the group counselled me and talked to my employers about my responsibilities, the rights of domestic workers and the potential repercussions of not paying my wages. Through this intervention, I was paid my arrears of 180,000 Ugshs.

The group has a savings scheme where we each contribute 2,500 Ugshs per week which is given to each member per week. This has allowed me to mobilize resources that I have invested in income generating activities. I have also acquired skills of making handcrafts. The support and counselling have improved my own attitude towards work and my employer is more supportive than before.

**Ms. Munina Eva, Women's leader and secretary for women's affairs LC1, Kiira division, Wakiso District**



We have educated the community about how to handle domestic workers. We use existing platforms

such as "Senga" sessions, which are counselling sessions for the married people and local council meetings to deliver the messages. We have made it a requirement for the community to report new domestic workers so that we can get to know them and protect them from harm. We also encourage them to join mutual support groups where they are supported and empowered.

## KAZO ANGOLA ELDERLY ASSOCIATION, A STRONG VOICE AND PILLAR FOR ELDERLY PERI-URBAN WOMEN

Kazo Angola Elderly Association is one of the Older Women's Associations supported by Uganda Reach the Aged Association (URAA). Through its Voice funded project; Understand and Challenge Ageism, URAA works with a network of older persons associations across the country to form a strong and collective Voice in advocating for the rights of older persons. The group has mobilized resources to build their office in Kawempe Division, a rental unit and plastic chairs for hire by events organizers.



Members of Kazo Angola Elderly group at their office in Kawempe Division, Kampala

Ms. Sekiwunga Teo, the chairperson of Kazo Angola Elderly Association shares the benefits of belonging to this group -

*"We now have a bigger voice as older persons because of our connection with the wider group of older persons associations in Uganda. Voice has given us a platform to advocate for issues affecting elderly women such better health care for older persons. Personally, I have gained confidence to articulate the issues of older persons at Local council meetings and when I speak people listen to me. We are now an example in the community and many young people look up to us for guidance."*

*"I have enjoyed social support from my fellow older women in this group. Sometimes I fall sick, but my colleagues comfort me and even offer some economic support like money to buy food and pay medical bills... in sorrow and happiness they are always there for me. Through the group meetings, I have gained several skills including poultry keeping, saving and writing a will", narrates Ms. Kizanye Nurru a member of the Association.*

Despite this empowerment, the women observed that they are still grappling with several economic hardships since majority are widows and are also looking after orphans. They too have a responsibility to support their sick and bed-ridden members.

## EMPOWERING WOMEN GROUPS THROUGH PARTICIPATORY THEATRE

Bulungi Bweka Dyangoma is a majority women's group found in Kigando subcounty-Mubende district. The group is among those trained and engaged by the Voice funded Teen to Teen project implemented by SORAK Development Agency to sensitize communities on the rights of youth, girl child education and persons with disabilities through participatory theatre.



Members of Bulungi Bweka Dyangoma

Ms. Kyomukama Proscovia, the group leader narrates her experience of participating on the Teen to Teen campaign.

*"We have earned the confidence of the families, community and the subcounty leadership who rely on use to sensitize the community. This has challenged*



*me and my fellow women in the group to be exemplary parents who take charge in meeting our children's school needs and not leaving the entire burden to our husbands".*

The group has also started a piggery project after receiving a cash prize of 500,000 UGX. The prize was earned after

winning the 'out of school' participant category in a competition with 7 other women groups and 12 primary schools. The group is looking towards raising funds from the sale of piglets which in turn will be invested in tents and public address system and to further their catering business.

## VULNERABLE MOTHER SEES LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL: HER VULNERABLE DAUGHTER GAINS SECONDARY SCHOOL BURSARY

Hasifa Nabatanzi is a 41 year old single mother of 5 children and a resident of Bukomansimbi village, Nangabo LCI in Kiyita parish found in Nabingoola Sub-county in Mubende district. When the **Teens 2 Teens project** came in Nabingoola sub-county in 2018, her daughter was one of the competing teens from Kirume public primary school. Children presented songs, poem and drama play with messages on the benefits of education especially for girl child and children with disability.



Nabatanzi says ; ***"Seeing my daughter (Birungi Fatuma) on stage making wonderful performance was like a dream, tears fell into my eyes with the message she was portraying and the actions she was doing,.....from that day I saw a new talent I had never seen in her.."***

Because of the daughter's talent, she was able to secure a bursary at Kibuli Modern High School for secondary education having been cited by the head teacher of the same school during music performance. Ms Nabatanzi asserts that the burden was reduced because for now she only has to support her 4 siblings.

***"Seeing my daughter studying from Kampala is like a dream. The SORAK music competition made me realize that my daughter has a unique talent that I never knew about. In fact, I called her and she told me that she was selected to record a song for the school they are about to release"... "Yes I may be poor but I see a bright future for my daughter, she wants to be a doctor and I believe she will be..... nothing in this world is impossible as long as you keep faith and courage"***



# Facts about COVID-19 Pandemic



The World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a Global pandemic. The virus first appeared in Uganda in March 2020 among people who had recently travelled to other countries and to date the number of cases is above 30. In response, the government has declared a lock-down of the country to prevent rapid transmission through social distancing with a campaign **# stayhomestaysafe**.

**Below are the key facts you should know about COVID-19 and how to prevent and manage it.**

## What are the common signs and symptoms?

- Most times, COVID-19 starts with fever (when your body temperature goes above the normal range of 36–37° Celsius or 98–100° Fahrenheit), tiredness, and coughing.
- Some patients may have aches and pains, stuffed up or runny nose, sneezing, sore throat or diarrhea.
- Some people become infected but don't have any symptoms and don't feel unwell. But they can still spread the virus to others.
- Around 1 out of every 6 people develop difficulty breathing and need medical care.
- Older people and those living with HIV, TB, high blood pressure, heart problems, cancer or diabetes are more likely to develop serious illness. They are also more at risk of dying from the disease.

## How does COVID-19 spread?

- People can catch COVID-19 from others who have it.
- The disease spreads easily from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs, talks or breathes out.
- These droplets can land on objects and surfaces like tables, rails, clothes, beds, chairs etc. Other people then catch the virus if they touch these objects or surfaces and then touch their eyes, nose or mouth without washing their hands.
- People can also catch COVID-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person with the disease. Therefore, it is important to stay more than 2 meters away from other people, especially if they are sick.

## What could i do to protect myself and others from COVID-19?

- Stay home as much as possible to avoid contact with others who might have COVID-19 or avoid infecting others if you get the disease. If you have a fever or cough, it is especially important that you stay home, well away from others.
- Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer to kill or remove viruses that may be on your hands.
- Maintain at least 2 meters distance between yourself and other people, especially if they are coughing or sneezing. When someone talks, coughs or sneezes they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain the virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including the Corona virus if the person has it.
- Avoid shaking hands and hugging. When you touch someone, who has COVID-19, you can get the virus on your hands or you may breathe in droplets from their nose or mouth. And, remember, most people do not show signs of the disease for several days but can spread the virus.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth. Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Then, your hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and make you sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow, tissue or handkerchief when you cough or sneeze. This will stop droplets from reaching others nearby. Be sure to discard the used tissue immediately in a dustbin or burn it and wash your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based sanitizer. Handkerchiefs should be washed with soap and ironed at least once a day.
- People with flu-like symptoms should use face masks to cover the nose and mouth and stay in a well-ventilated room. People caring for those with COVID-19 symptoms should also wear face masks. This will protect others from coming into contact with the virus.

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces like doorknobs/handles, car doors, elevator buttons, taps, toilet seats, tables, chairs, etc. with regular household disinfectants or soap and water. This will protect people from getting the virus on their hands if they touch these objects.

## What should I do if I get sick?

- If you have a fever or cough, it is especially important that you stay home, and keep your distance from other people at home. If possible, wear a mask.
- If you develop difficulty breathing, visit a health facility immediately. If possible, call a toll-free help line: 0800-100-066, 0800-203-033, 0800-303-033, 0800-220-333, 0800-200-600 or short code 919 and alert them about your condition. They will guide you on what to do.

## Are there medicines or vaccines that can cure or prevent COVID-19?

- Currently, there are no medicines to treat COVID-19. There is also no vaccine to protect us against COVID-19.
- However, there is research taking place in several countries to develop medicines and vaccines against the disease.

## Should I wear a mask to protect myself?

- Only wear a mask if you have coughing, sneezing, running nose or have COVID-19 or are looking after someone who may have COVID-19.
- Disposable face masks can only be used once. If you are not ill or looking after someone who is ill then you are wasting a mask. There is a world-wide shortage of masks, so the Ministry of Health and WHO urges people to use masks wisely.
- The best ways to protect yourself and others against COVID-19 are to clean your hands often, cover your cough with the bend of elbow, handkerchief or tissue, keep a distance of at least 2 meters from other people, and stay at home as much as possible.



### Where can I get tested for COVID-19?

- Uganda has very few tests for COVID-19, so testing is only available for people who have symptoms and have been in contact with someone who has COVID-19. If you meet these requirements, then you should visit a health center near you, and they will be able to direct you to a testing facility if needed.

### Will eating mangoes and other vegetables protect you from COVID-19?

- It is good to eat vegetables and fruits because they will help strengthen your immune system so you can fight the disease better if you get it. But, eating mangoes and vegetables will not protect you from getting COVID-19.

### If you drink a lot of alcohol, will it protect you from COVID-19?

- This is not true. In fact, drinking a lot of alcohol can make your body weaker and less able to fight the disease if you get it.
- The best ways to protect yourself and others against COVID-19 are to clean your hands often, cover your cough with the bend of elbow, handkerchief or tissue, keep a distance of at least 2 meters from other people, and stay at home as much as possible.

For more information, call the Ministry of Health toll-free numbers:

**0800-100 066, 0800-203-033, 0800-303-033, 0800-220-333,  
0800-200-600, or dial the short code 919.**

Residents of Kampala should call

**0204-660-816, or 0800-990-000.**

For more Information please visit; [www.voice.global](http://www.voice.global)

