

EMBRACING THE POWER WITHIN

One woman's self-discovery
sparks a community change



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FATUMA KATIKATI (43YRS) A shop attendant married with 5 children, a community activist CDFU project from Jumbe village, Jumbe ward, Amudat district.



Power dynamics in many families are a problem in this part of Uganda, often favouring the men. In Amudat district, 43-year-old Fatuma Katikati, a resident of Jumbe village, considers herself lucky to have received training from Communication for Development Foundation Uganda (CDFU), which helped her realise that things could be different in her own home. She realized that there is power within her to change the trajectory of her life. After the training, she took on a community activist role in Jumbe.

Married for over 12 years, Fatuma and her husband Mark Nangiro Katikati did not make decisions together. Mark was the sole decision maker and as per custom for Pokot women, Fatuma never questioned her husband's decisions. In their culture men are superior to women. But after the training, she realized that she had power within to contribute to the family's wellbeing and development.

The training instilled confidence in Fatuma. Using the skills she learned she spoke with her husband and convinced him to shift the family kraal from a distant area and put it under her care, and closer to home. The husband, won over by his wife's confidence and wise contribution, also gave Fatuma a house in Amudat



town council where she now runs a shop. Fatuma is now able to raise income from the animals at home and earn some money from the retail shop she runs in Amudat town.

“We no longer wait for him to come in case we run out of sugar or salt,” Fatuma says.

Being chosen by the community development officer to attend the training was the best thing that could happen to Fatuma because it gave her a voice and empowered her in the community. In fact, even the known stubborn men of Amudat listen to Fatuma and actively seek her counsel on many matters in their homes and community. Being a polygamous family, Fatuma’s husband has also changed his attitude towards his other wives, extending to them the same opportunities for financial empowerment as he did with Fatuma.

As Fatuma embraced the power within herself to cause change in her community, her husband continued to notice this and became her biggest supporters. Their wider family has recognized the change in her, and her husband has declared in support of his wife, that women in their family will not be subjected to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

In the community, the effect of Fatuma’s efforts is such that

women can now contribute ideas in public meetings, and more community activists continue to engage locals and leaders.

Fatuma’s grocery shop now also acts as her office, with women from the area finding it a convenient location to go and consult with her about their challenges. She in turn advises them on the steps to take and uses the space for planning various positive courses of actions.

Using her own example, Fatuma helps women to learn how to embark on income generating projects thus making them less reliant on men’s handouts, which usually put them in vulnerable positions.

There are some disturbing issues that prevail and that require tackling. For example, some men still batter their wives, and in some instances even inviting other men to join in the battering; a kind of mob battering of one woman. The work is great, and these practices need to be wiped out. While many other practices are on the decline, the training of traditional and religious leaders would go a long way to improve the situation. Once women realise the power within themselves to actively liberate themselves and other people, so much good can happen in this village.