

Could you give us a brief sketch of your professional background?

I am a Ugandan with thirteen years of experience in policy, programme planning and training in the areas of Trade Policy, Gender and Energy Policy and Programmes, Social Service Delivery, Institutional Strengthening, Gender Analysis and Mainstreaming in Social Sectors, Decentralisation and Governance, Environment and Shelter, Human Rights and Conflict Resolution. This has included both short- and long-term assignments. I am a lecturer and gender trainer in the Department of Women and Gender Studies at Makerere University. My involvement in both university and NGO work has enabled me to undertake capacity enhancement activities within the government sector, NGOs and community-based organisations. I have also conducted research, carried out planning, training, policy formulation and monitoring programmes for governments, civil society organisations and private companies at national and international levels.

My training and work for a PhD in Gender Studies, at the African Gender Institute of the University of Cape Town in South Africa, enabled me to critically assess and look for ways of ensuring that trade policies for the export of horticultural products responded to gender concerns in Africa. Access to energy-consuming post-harvest handling technologies is a key need within the value chain for these products. The Masters Degree in Social Policy and Administration (with a specialisation in Women in Development) that I worked on at the University of Nottingham in the UK enabled me to learn how to analyse, plan for and monitor social and other sector policies and programmes where energy, water and transport are needed to improve the livelihoods of all people. My Bachelors Degree in Sociology and Social Administration, from Makerere University in Uganda, has provided a wonderful basis for all that I am working on at the moment.

You have been involved in various networking initiatives. Could you outline them for us?

At present, I am the Chairperson of the East African Energy Technology Development Network (EAETDN), a regional energy network of organisations and people in East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda) working on the issues of energy, gender, environment and sustainability in development. I also participated in establishing women's rights and human rights training and advocacy work in Uganda that focus on designing strategies to address the discriminatory practices faced in daily life. I participated in establishing the Uganda Women's Network, the Council for Economic Empowerment in Africa and the East African Sub-regional

Meeting **ENERGIA** Members



May Sengendo

ENERGIA Regional Network Coordinator for Africa

Interview by Chesha Wettasinha

Support Initiative (EASSI), all of which are involved in planning, implementing and advocating for economic policy reform and for women's right to participate in and benefit from development.

You were Gender Advisor and Focal Point for Uganda at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. What has been your role in the follow-up?

As a follow-up activity, I have provided technical services in the areas of formulating National Action Plans (in Eritrea), planning National Gender Policies (Uganda and Mauritius), formulating guidelines for integrating gender in selected sector policies and programmes, and building capacity through training technical officers in government ministries, and the staffs of donor organisations (UNDP) and NGOs. ENERGIA resulted from the deliberations on gender and energy after the Beijing Conference, and my participation in its work is another contribution to implementing such actions.

Since April 2005, you have been the Regional Network Coordinator (RNC) for ENERGIA in Africa. What encouraged you to take on this role?

As the contact person for ENERGIA in Uganda, my main interest in taking on the position of RNC is to ensure that the network is strengthened in Africa. There is a great potential for the network in Africa and I am committed to contributing my expertise and experience to building it up. There is a

great need to coordinate energy activities in the African region in order to contribute to sustainable development. In addition, I am sure my experiences as RNC will enable me to make use of my practical and theoretical skills to enhance teaching, research, policy as well as project planning, implementation and monitoring activities in Africa from exposure to activities in different countries.

What are your plans for the ENERGIA network in Africa?

At present, I am providing technical support to the EU-funded TIE-ENERGIA project which focuses on gender and energy training in twelve countries and gender audits of energy policy and programmes in three (Botswana, Kenya and Senegal). As a follow-up to this training and the gender audits, I hope to stimulate the network members to document country-level experiences to show how skills enhancement and gender-responsive policy planning lead to improved effectiveness of policies and projects and to the empowerment of women. I also hope to guide and facilitate the National Focal Points in using the results of the gender audits to advocate for gender-responsive policy planning, implementation and monitoring in their own countries. Establishing demonstration/pilot projects that illustrate the linkages between gender, poverty and energy is also an activity that is planned.

How do you as a woman balance this enormous amount of work with your role as a wife and mother?

This is a good question as it concerns the way women have to balance work and family. I have a very supportive husband who contributes his share to work in the home and in caring for the children. We take time to sit down together and discuss our work plans and how these fit in with the family schedules. Good communications and planning in good time help us to cope with work and family. I should also add that the university offers family-friendly working conditions which help me to balance my roles as a working mother. ■

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