

### **Gender/MUK project...**

So they came and went – the once deprived girls who thought they would never make it to Makerere University. They studied, attained degrees and are now making headway in different careers. This would have been a far a way dream had it not been for the Gender Mainstreaming Programme Female Sponsorship Initiative, supported by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Our reporter **Carol Natukunda** asked them about life after university in 2007 and captured their intriguing stories.

### **Harriet Watsemwa, 25, Bachelor of Sciences in Education**

She graduated in 2006 and is already teaching at one of Uganda's prestigious schools - Trinity College Nabbingo. And she didn't go for your ordinary subjects, but Biology and Chemistry, which were for a long time the male's domain. She attributes that courage to the mentorship programmes organized by FSI which she regularly attended while at university.

"When you are a beneficiary of FSI, you just have your head up," Watsemwa says in a matter-of-fact tone, "you count yourself privileged, because you are. You learn to tell yourself "I can do it! Don't say, "It's for men, you can do it!"

### **Barbara Namanya, 25, Bachelor of Social Sciences**

The first born in a family of four, Namanya's world was a desperate one. She lost parents when she was still a small girl and had no dream of making it to university. Looking back today, she just can't believe that she is where she is today. She graduated two years ago and is now working at a local FM station in Bushenyi western Uganda.

"I thank FSI," is all she has to say, before staring up at the ceiling in a wistful manner. "Thank you, thank you," she can't express herself.

### **Susan Namuddu, Bachelor of Science in Quantitative Economics**

She comes across as an unassuming girl. But you can't really blame her. Her father died when she was just in Primary Two. Her mother was just a charcoal seller near their home in Bukoto, a city suburb. "Charcoal; can you believe it?" Namuddu reminisces and pauses. The pause is so long that you are afraid the interview is over. "Obviously," she adds, "Nobody was going to pay for me... Nobody knew a charcoal seller."

But she was wrong. FSI knew and appreciated people like her. And that has made her change her stance. Even though she hasn't got a permanent job yet, she is hopeful that she is going to be something big in future.

"I worked as a sales representative for DFCU on contract basis. That has ended and I am looking around for something else," she says with sense assertiveness in her voice.

### **Angella Ileuk, 27, Bachelor of Community Psychology**

"I didn't re-sit a paper. Everything was easy at campus, as long as I had fees and money for upkeep," Ileuk says. She graduated last year and is still job

searching. But, always and always, she is smiling. "Since I was able to step at university, I know I will get there." and this can only prove one thing – the fearless attitude that only the FSI instilled in her.

### **Monica Kataike 24, Bachelor of Arts in Education**

This girl has walked the line. She had already applied to join Kyambogo University, when her auntie tipped her of the FSI opportunities at Makerere University. She decided to give it a shot and forgot about seeking admission at Kyambogo. Her parents died when she was little – she has only a very faint idea of how they looked like. So when she won the FSI privilege, she didn't look farther. And now, she can laugh about her whole situation. "It is God, all this is God!" she exclaims. Not that she is already there – no. she is graduating in January 2009, but already she is moving places. She goes to every training opportunity for students and from there; she not only gets new skills, but also gets to interact with people who are already out in the field.

For instance, Enterprise Uganda, a local NGO normally arranges seminars for fresh graduates and teaches them entrepreneurship and business skills. And chances are, you are likely to find Kataike there. Why? "I cannot sit back and hope that opportunity will find me," she says, "I have to look for it."

Kataike also hopes to teach Literature and English subjects as well as do business alongside.

### **Judith Akao, 25, Bachelor of Community Psychology**

Dressed in a long beautiful Kitenge, you can tell that Akao is not your once ordinary university girl. As a project officer for Dokolo-based Community Seeking for Better Living, Akao has found herself as society's de facto counselor. The region was once a war torn area, and as people recover from their losses, they need someone to give them re-assurance that things will be okay.

"It is hard to convince most of them to believe in themselves," she says in a sad tone. "Some people also think I am too young to talk to listen to their problems. They think I should be older and bigger."

### **Allen Nsimire, 25 Bachelor of Computer Science**

She graduated in 2006 and works at Uganda's electricity company – UMEME as an I.T specialist. Although reserved, Nsimire's face lights up when talking about how FSI gave her hope to care about life once again.

### **Faridah Nakayima 24, Bachelor of Health Science**

Ever come across a typical Muslim family in a rural setting? That was Nakayima's tale of worry. Her father had more wives than she can remember. And each of these wives had many mouths to feed. At least her mother had eight children. But you can largely say that she has been a lucky girl. The Forum for Women

Educationalists (FAWE) paid her school fees right from primary school to secondary and then just as she thought it that was all, FSI was right there. "I think I would be married by now," she confesses, before explaining that in the Islamic faith, a girl is perceived mature as soon as she gets into adolescence. She is graduating next year and is already "looking around" for an opportunity.

### **Florence Nakate, 25, Bachelor of Secretarial Studies**

Her only worry is that people out there seem to want to take advantage of her vulnerable situation. When she graduated in February 2007, she acquired a job in a research company. But she was exploited to the edge. She was arrived at the office earliest, and left latest. Her daily allowance came only once in a while. But something inside her asked her to call it quits. And she did. She is now searching for something better.

"FSI taught us to believe in ourselves. Why allow someone to step on my head?" she asks. On the whole, however, she says she acquired some experience from the company such as refilling the cartridge of photocopiers and generally, improving her skill in writing.

### **Lilian Kabuga, 27, Bachelor of Science, in Agriculture and Land Use Management**

She is working with a community based organization that deals with training farmers on modern land use.

"There is a lot to learn from them, which can change society," is all this project officer has to say.

### **Sarah Namaganda, 28, Bachelor of Social Sciences**

Perhaps Namaganda is one of FSI's strongest epitomes. She is candid, thorough, and fearless – virtues that have placed her way up the pedestal. At 28, she is already the publisher of Pearl magazine, a tour guide for places around town. Born in a humble background in Bugiri district, Namaganda's parents were only peasants. When she graduated in 2004, she, like most fresh graduates walked from office to office in search of a white collar job. The first job she got was a sales representative of some private company. But it always seemed like she wasn't necessary. "I mean, they could tell me no money to pay me!"

And so she called it quits, opened up to her mother about the idea of being self employed, which she supported fully. As is always a mother's love, she secured her some little savings (about sh1m) and that is when she went into publishing the Pearl . It is a free copy, which survives advertising. She publishes as much as tour info as she can and then circulates it free of charge. She has not secured enough profit to help her open an office, so she works from home. And just as you begin to think that she has made it – Namaganda says she is looking for a job in the public service sector.

"At least I will be assured of a job, and the magazine will be my side income," she says. Go girl!

**Clara Samukoya, 28, Bachelor of Biomedical Laboratory Technology**

Remember Kawanda Research Institute? That place of researchers which is making strides in as far as developing new breeds of plants is concerned? So next time you hear of a new hybrid of Matooke, just know it has Samukoya's effort and skill!

She is working as a research assistant the center and at the same time using her savings to do a Masters in Biomedical Laboratory Technology.

"FSI gave me a foundation," she says, "I am building on it. We are the ones who are transforming the plant genes, the new technology" call her what you may, she has studied and is doing what she loves best, thanks to FSI.

**Moreen Nyakato 27, Bachelor of Business Administration**

She graduated in 2005. Her father died when she was just 10, and her mum is a housewife. Luckily, her Kampala based Auntie Marion Musunga looked after and paid all the expenses, until S.4 when another auntie took on the responsibility. She came learnt of the FSI while doing her A' Levels in a school which she refers to as "a third world school." Because she was the brightest kid, yet from a humble background, the headmaster Ambrose Ruyooka advised her to apply for the FSI opportunities.

Unlike other students who had been admitted on private sponsorship scheme, Nyakato didn't enroll for university until she was sure that FSI was sponsoring her. The lists of beneficiaries was released half way though the semester.

"I was on tension. I had missed a lot, so I photocopied handouts and read like there was no tomorrow," she says. And she passed with an Upper Second Degree. Today, this energetic, zealous girl is an operations officer with Barclays Bank. "The pay is fair. I was lucky. In fact I am the only one in my family who has studied up to this level."

**Esther Akiteng, 23, Bachelor of Information Technology**

"Sometimes there is hope, sometimes; you feel it is too much... You don't feel there is a way out of something."

That is how Akiteng can summarise her childhood misery. In fact, by the time she learnt of FSI, this orphan girl was operating a telephone booth in order to put the next meal on the table for her six siblings. And today, she can't believe how far she has come – she is a lecturer of Information Technology at Busoga University . She will graduate in January 2009.

**Ritah Nabiryo, 24, Bachelor of Industrial Fine Art**

Looking at her walking up and down with a big digital camera hanging on her neck to her chest, you would take her for one the freelance photographers in

town. But no, Nabiryo is a graduate who is doing what she loves – taking pictures and earning a living at Propix Studios. She has no parents, and she is the eldest of the five children.

**Sharon Atuhaire, 25, Bachelor of Science in Education**

So you thought teaching is a dull job? Wait until you talk to Atuhaire. This girl smiles all the time when talking about her profession. But most importantly, she smiles even broadly when talking about FSI. “It makes you believe in yourself,” Atuhaire says, adding that she teaches Biology and Chemistry at Makerere Highway Secondary School.

**Kituyi Deborah Wabwoba, 25, Bachelor of Science in Quantitative Economics**

Her father died. Her mother is sickly and her health keeps on deteriorating day by day. “Life is hard, pretty hard,” she says. One of her biggest decisions after university was choosing a place to work. She could have gone back to her home village in Mbale, so she could be nearer to her ailing mother. But again, her job as a credit officer of Mednet Micro Finance would make her gullible. The villagers would rush to her in hope that she could give them support. So she chose to stay at the company’s headquarters in Kampala.

“FSI taught us to make sacrifices along the way, as long as they are for the better,” Wabwoha says.

**Fatuma Nansubuga, 28, Bachelor of Agro Business Management**

She was in church one Sunday morning when a young woman stood up to give her testimony, about how God had been good to her that she got sponsored under the FSI at Makerere University. Her parents were only peasant farmers from Bulere village in Mukono district.

The curious Nansubuga couldn’t believe her ears, as she listened to the testimony. So after the service, on she followed this testifier to get more details about FSI. And she applied, and was admitted. Today, she is working with the National Agricultural Advisory Services. She also has a side business dealing in ladies garments

**Christine Laker, 25, Bachelor of Arts in Arts**

“I declared all the facts about me. I didn’t lie to them.” That is what Laker has to say when asked about her winning strategy to be taken on. Her family was in Kitgum and she had no idea she would make it to Kampala. Although she has not graduated yet, she is aggressively looking around for something to do.

**Enid Kadama, 27, Bachelor of Urban Planning**

She has a small job – so she says – but doesn’t want to reveal further than this. Nonetheless, she is grateful to FSI for making her what she is today.

### **Medius Tumwebaze 28, Bachelor of Community Psychology**

Somehow, we always think that in-laws are harsh and unfriendly. But sometimes, they are well intended. At least that is Tumwebaze's story. "My sister in law came and told me about FSI and told me to get more info about it." moreover, that was the time when her sponsor had been imprisoned. In fact, if it were not for FSI, she admits she would be married with countless children by now!

And under FSI, she learnt to be patient and appreciative of life's challenges. It is why she doesn't regret being a volunteer with Watoto Children's center – an orphan support group in Kampala. "I am earning a lot."

### **Agnes Ayupo, 28, Bachelor or Population Studies**

What comes to your mind when someone tells you that she comes from Kaberamaido? Doesn't it make you think that is some arid place, without any educated person? Well, you are wrong. At least Ayupo can attest to this. She works as a social health educator in Abim, with a non governmental organization known as Samaritan Path International. Her work involves going deep in the villages that were formerly war torn in northern Uganda to instill a sense of hope to the displaced people.

"People talk with a lot of bitterness. They have trauma, and I have to be strong and tell them that there is a way out."

### **Allen Natukunda, 25, Bachelor of Development Studies**

FSI came to her at the right time. This skinny girl from Kanungu lost both of her parents.

"God is a wonderful God," she says, "Out of no where I was reading newspapers, then I landed on an FSI ad, and now here I am."

She is now a banking officer from Uganda Microfinance. She prays that the Carnegie sponsorship scheme lives longer to help most disadvantaged children.

### **Florence Nakasuja, 27, Bachelor of Computer Science**

Her mother retired due to a deteriorating sight. Her father was only operating only a small shop. So just where would the tuition fees come from? "Long live FSI," she sighs.

Nakasuja was born in a family of eight, and she even feels it would have been a lot more difficult if FSI hadn't supported her through university education. For it is that degree that has made her someone – she is an ICT assistant at Africa 2000 Network

### **Christine Namwau, 26, Bachelor of Social sciences**

She graduated in 2005. While at university, she was always mentored by the officials at the Gender Mainstreaming Department, who always told her to take care of herself. And so upon her graduation, she decided that she would pass on this message – which had enabled her to get through university – to other youths. So until earlier this year when she got a job as the Women Program

Officer of Uganda Women Concern Ministry, Namwau was doing voluntary work, which involves awareness on HIV/AIDS for the young people.

**Mariam Babirye, 23, Bachelor of Arts in Economics**

Her life has been as throbbing as it is exciting. Her mother is only a pancake seller in Kamuli. She is the only person who has made it to university in her family. And she calls herself a torch.

She remembers the time the officials from the Gender Mainstreaming Department went to ascertain whether indeed, she deserved the scholarship.

"We didn't have chairs in our small house. And we had to borrow. When they sat down, the fleas were all over," Babirye laughs.

But she has promised her mother that she is going to build a better house for her. She is teaching at a rural secondary but has done several job interviews at the top banking institutions in Uganda. "FSI is a miracle," she says. The way it is though is that she has come a very, very long way from Kamuli. She is no longer – by any stretch of imagination – that ordinary girl from Kamuli, who had her mouth agape the first time she set foot in capital Kampala .

**Susan Kavuma, 27, B. Electrical Engineering**

She graduated in 2005. "But it was going to be difficult," she says. "Mum wouldn't have afforded it."

Perhaps it is such a background that has told her that it is okay to be where she is today. She is an electrical engineer at UMEME.

"It's challenging working in a male dominated world. But I love the challenge," Kavuma says.

**Susan Apio, 25, Bachelor of Population Studies**

She only graduated last year, but she is already dreaming big by the day. "I can do things on my own and I am paying fees for my sister at university," she says. Apio works with World Vision Uganda in Kitgum.

**Olivia Nakiganda, 23 Bachelor of Science in Population Studies**

She hasn't got something yet in her line of profession, but at least she knows she has to be versatile to make it in life, to develop a career. And so, she is teaching Maths and Demography in one secondary school in Kampala. "Sometimes, things turn out negative but God can see you through," she says.

**Zaituni Nantumbwe 27, Bachelor of Food Science and Technology**

She graduated in 2005, and is working with Britania industries – the Ntinda-based factory for biscuits and packed juices. The Luweero born girl makes heads turn. You just need to look at her poise, to know that FSI indeed instilled a sense of confidence in her.

**Racheal Nakibuule, 24, Bachelor of Urban Planning**

The one thing this bubbly young woman has to say is to advise other girls to “hang in there.” “They should never lose hope. They should have courage. They should pray,” she says, adding that she is working with Kiira Town Council.

**Marcerine Namazzi, 27, Bachelor of Environmental Management**

She is working as a community based trainer at the Masaka District Union of Persons with Disabilities. “When you go through FSI, somehow you make it life. You cannot be as cowardly as you used to be before you joined university. Those people are just a game!” she concludes. She graduated in 2006.