BUYENDE

Over 500 vulnerable mothers receive support from Vision staff

By Tom Gwebayanga

Over 500 single and teenage mothers in Buyende district were full of smiles as they received household items worth sh100m on Women's Day, courtesy of Naamala Women's Empowerment Charity (NWEC), a non-governmental organisation that was founded by Dora Namaala, a staff member of Vision Group.

The beneficiaries received soap, food, clothes, footwear, menstrual pads, Maama Kits, mosquito nets, handbags, match boxes and mineral water.

A 14-year-old teenage mother identified as Namaganda from Kiseege village in Buyende town council could not hide her excitement about the items.

"Since I delivered, no one has ever given me soap, not even my baby's father," Namaganda, who missed last year's Primary Leaving Examinations due to pregnancy, said. Her dream was to become a nurse.

She said her boyfriend abandoned her for fear of being arrested by the Police. "It is my parents who take care of me. They are the ones that bought the baby clothes, medicine and soap," she said.

Another 16-year-old mother of twins, identified as Babirye, hailed the charity for the support, saying that the donation had added value to her babies' lives.

"With this support, I will be able to take care of my babies for a while," she said. Aisha Nachola, a 35-year-old single mother and secretary of Situka Single Mothers' Foundation (SSMF) in Kagulu sub-county, thanked NWEC facilitators who arrived in the area a week before the event and skilled teenage mothers in catering, soap-making, hairdressing and baking. "The skills will help us to fight poverty," Nachola said.

The four-day activities were carried out under the theme; Empowered Women, Peaceful Universe.

The event was sponsored by Vision Group, Uzima Water, Prestige Uganda Limited, Namasuba Institute of Technical and Vocational Studies, Kiwami Vocational Mixed Senior Secondary School and St Eliza Nursing and Midwifery Training School-Jinja.

PHOTO BY TOM GWEBAYANGA



Single and teenage mothers during a health camp at Buyende district headquarters on Women's Day

CHILD MOTHERS GET SCHOLARSHIPS

Besides the items, over 30 child mothers were offered scholarships to study certificate courses at St. Eliza Nursing and Midwifery School, Namasuba Institute of Technical and Vocational Studies and Kiwami Vocational Mixed Secondary School.

The scholarships are aimed at empowering the beneficiaries to get a start in life.

Richard Kanyomozi, the Uzima Water marketing official, hailed NWEC for championing a cause that is in line with their aspirations.

HEALTH CAMP

The event went alongside the health camp where hundreds got tested for various ailments, such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, diabetes, high blood pressure, courtesy of St Eliza Nursing and Midwifery Training School, Jinja.

Those with advanced illnesses were referred to bigger health facilities.

DRAMA, MUSIC, GAMES

The event was spiced with sports and games that featured a bicycle race, competitions of walking with spoons loaded with eggs in their mouths, plus dancing contests from which competitors won big prizes.

HOW NWEC STARTED

Founded by Naamala, a *Bukedde* TV presenter, NWEC is a charity that seeks to empower vulnerable women and their children. Namaala said in her 28-year career as a journalist at Vision Group, she always encountered stories of vulnerable women and children, which made her think about changing the situation.

She said the idea to support child and single mothers was born 15 years ago. "I heard a number of bad testimonies. That forced me to start working towards helping vulnerable people," Naamala said.

She urged women to fight for their rights, noting that they can also be part of the nation's decision making.

"Giving birth is not a curse. A child mother can become a responsible citizen," Naamala said.