

migrated to the city to find better opportunities while many of the girls got married before becoming adults. But the boys who left the village never looked back on reaching town. Even when life was hard and turned them into paupers, they saw no reason to return home.

Recently, Matovu fell sick and died. That is when many of them first made a return to the village to attend his burial. But as soon as the last nail was hammered into Matovu's casket, a war over his property ensued.

Sharing of property in Buganda is usually done at the last funeral rites, but Matovu's children were impatient.

After taking their share of Matovu's property, they turned the heat to their stepmother, Nakalembe and

where on their land. They also asked her to vacate their late father's house and find another man to marry or return to her parents' home.

Nakalembe being broke and illiterate suffered silently running to no one for help. She even feared to go to the area LC for help. Soon, Nakalembe ran out of food and resorted to begging from her neighbours. Her step children continued harassing her until when she succumbed to the pressure and fled from her late husband's home.

Nakalembe's mother is an elderly widow, living in Nakisunga, Mukono and struggles to find food, some days going without a meal. Nakalembe has become an extra-baggage for her mother, but just like many other mothers, she is not about to send her daughter away.



The plight of the rural woman is still real, despite the woman emancipation drive

Away from Nakalembe, another woman was camping at City Hall, asking city authorities to arrest her husband who had chased her away from home. The unidentified woman claimed she returned home late from a SACCO meeting and her husband turned her away accusing her of having been with her lovers.

Compared to Nakalembe, this woman knew where to run for help. But still the two still lag behind. But women in urban centers are more liberated. Recently, a group

of women in Kampala took to the streets protesting against men who were undressing women in miniskirts. The women Parliamentarians also joined them to condemn the habit of undressing women. None of the rural women joined.

Today, women in Uganda have joined the rest of the world to celebrate the International Women's Day in commemoration of the achievements registered in the recent decades by women. In Uganda, the ruling National Resistance

to do for a living hence remaining behind," she said.

Nkonge noted that it's also hard for the few liberated woman to pull their colleagues. "The backlog of women to pull in rural area is too big for prominent women," she noted.

Nkonge further blamed men for keeping rural women in the sorry state. She noted that under normal circumstances, men would be pulling their wives but that many are not.

"Men are poor and leave the responsibility of looking after the families to women. Some men even grab the little their wives have saved and take for Waragi, leaving them poorer and hopeless," she said.

Nkonge said there is need to empower female youth to prepare them for big offices, although she noted ageing women were not retiring for youth to replace them.

COMMUNITY LIBRARY LIFTING WOMEN OUT OF POVERTY, GIVING LITERACY SKILLS

By George Bitu

Excited villagers line up the murrum path singing with joy as visitors converge at Nambi Community Resource Centre (NCRC).

Some grab sweaters from children and head-scarves which they tie around their waists to dance to the rhythms. The chanting reverberates across the Kagoma valley attracting the attention of the quiet neighbourhood.

For the seven years, the communal facility has been in existence, the locals had not witnessed an event of this nature hence the excitement.

When the 61 representatives of over 50 communally managed resource centres across the country finish their registration, they enjoy a lunch meal prepared by village women.

The Uganda Community Libraries Association that brings together 55 community-based libraries across Uganda has since its inauguration in 2007, held three annual conferences.

Hence it somehow explains the ecstatic response of members of NCRC in Jinja district who now have an opportunity to host the fourth annual conference at their rural location in Igombe village.

This centre was opened by Speaker of Parliament Rebecca Kadaga on February 4, 2007.

According to Justin Kiyimba, the NCRC director, the Nambi Resource Women's Group that benefits from the library mainly adult literacy classes and handicraft making skills chose to do the catering work for the conference.

"This gesture helped the women to sharpen

their catering skills as well as boost their group's account with money which would have been spent on hotel-provided food," he says.

Prof. Kate Pary, the UgCLA board chairperson said that good record-keeping was instrumental in getting and keeping international donors affiliated to individual libraries.

"Do you have year planners or calendars, sign-in sheets and evaluation forms that are up to date?" Pary asks saying that these are some of the key indicators of a well-run library.

She observed that UgCLA serves as a mediating organisation that ensures that the international links are not misused for selfish goals.

Pary urged librarians to make individual facilities more user-friendly with both the educated and non-educated benefitting.

"I am impressed with NCRC where all the villagers find a sense of belonging. Those who cannot read get skills in handicrafts or even do catering and provide meals," Pary said.

She advised the members to write books in their local languages that may help attract those who cannot use English as a mode of communication.

Victoria Ssekitoleko, former agriculture minister praised the librarians for struggling to enforce a reading culture nationwide.

"It is impressive that you are not limiting yourselves to archaic book reading practices but also using ICT and e-learning to enforce knowledge gathering," Ssekitoleko said.

As the visitors left for home, their socioeconomic impact on the small village of Igombe and NCRC in particular remained evident and may persist for years to come.