

A Renewed Voice: Mary Mugenyi's Journey Back to the Polls

Mary Mugenyi, a 55-year-old resident of Kiyuya Village in Masindi District, had long given up on voting. For three consecutive election cycles, she chose to abstain, disillusioned by the empty promises of leaders who failed to deliver once in office. One such leader had pledged to create jobs for her children and to improve the Kautirya–Kiyuya road, a lifeline for the local farming community. Neither promise materialized. Instead, the road worsened, forcing buyers to meet farmers at their homes, offering lower prices for their produce, and leaving the community struggling.

On April 5, 2024, Mary participated in a Civic Engagement Baraza held at Kiyuya Catholic Church in Pakanyi Sub- County. The gathering, focused on voter education ahead of the 2026 elections, gave citizens the opportunity to voice their concerns to local leaders. Mary openly voiced her frustration over broken promises, which led to her loss of interest in participating in elections. She highlighted how leaders repeatedly ask for votes but fail to deliver on their pledges once in office. Her words captured the disillusionment of many.

A guest speaker, Mr. Abubakar Lubwama, the Assistant Election Administrator from the Electoral Commission of Masindi, responded in a way that struck a chord with Mary. He shared insights into the electoral process, explaining the rights of voters and the power they hold to demand accountability from elected leaders. Mary realized that her expectations had been misplaced—leaders were not there to offer personal favors, like jobs, but to serve the community as a whole. Lubwama encouraged voters to focus on candidates' manifestos, urging them not to be swayed by empty promises or bribes.



Mary Mugenyi sharing her dissatisfaction with leaders who fail to deliver. This was during the civic engagement baraza on 4th April 2024 at Kiyuya Catholic Church Masindi District.

For Mary, this was a turning point. She left the baraza with a renewed sense of civic responsibility. Determined to reclaim her voice in the electoral process, she vowed not only to vote in the 2026 elections but also to mobilize her community to do the same. She is on a mission to encourage fellow citizens to be more engaged, to demand accountability, and to believe in the power of their vote to bring about positive change.

To date, FOWODE has conducted civic awareness and conscientized over 78,000 women, men, youth and people with disabilities to take actions to protect their rights and fulfil their civic duties.