

# BREAKING THE BIAS WITH LWANYAGA TEOPISTA

Mityana District has 9 sub counties, 59 parishes and 743 villages. This district is where Lwanyaga Teopista was born. As we celebrate Women's Month, Whave Solutions would like to appreciate Teopista.

Teopista is 62 years old, married to Lwanyaga George William whom she met in 1978, together they raised seven beautiful children.

Growing up in rural Mityana was not easy for her because water was a problem. Young girls in her community would walk long distances to fetch water, carrying heavy clay pots on their heads. For Teopista, her family had cows, therefore she had to fetch water for the cows every morning. She always tried to do this before going to school, but the duty interfered with her education because often the water source would be broken, so she had to walk much further. By the time she got back it would be too late to go for her classes.

*Photo: Lwanyaga Teopista is a leading member of the Water committee of her community Kanyanya in Mityana. She helps children at the pump and she helps the men understand fees must be paid in advance to make sure the pump works every day, so teenage girls can attend school instead of fetching water, and everyone's health is protected by safe water available in the community.*



Many years down the line, Whave Solutions held a sensitization meeting in her village regarding access to clean and safe water. This piqued her interest in becoming a pump caretaker, an important position in a new community water committee, trained by Whave Solutions. She wanted the lives of the young girls and women in her community to be different from hers. The suffering needed to stop.

Being a pump caretaker has enabled Teopista to know and understand the needs of those in her community. This comes at a great advantage when her presence is needed in the committee budget conferences, where she can factor these needs in and advocate for a better life. In addition, she is able to serve vulnerable people by arranging for them to get water directly at home.

This does not mean it has been roses and sunflowers always. Teopista faces challenges as a pump caretaker when young children sent to fetch water are not strong enough to operate the pump so she finds she is needed at the pump all the time. Secondly, she has become aware of the domestic violence caused by a bias the men have, always expecting women and girls to fetch water and being reluctant to pay fees to make sure the pump is always working. This is a bias Teopista is trying to break, so that the men become more helpful fetching water and understand better the importance of a nearby pump working all the time, so that the girls have time for school and women have time for taking care of the family garden and their children.

March is here, and as we all celebrate the women around us that we love, and those that inspire us to do and be more, Teopista celebrates her five daughters that endlessly make her proud, and the prime minister, Hon. Nabbanja Robinah, who continues to encourage every woman to believe in themselves.

Out of her experience as a leader in women development groups, Teopista encourages all the women in the county to believe in themselves and stop self-pity, by saying, "since I am a woman, I cannot achieve". She further encourages her fellow women to be hard working and to save money, to develop their families.

Having Teopista as part of the Whave Solutions family is a blessing in disguise. She never ceases to amaze us with her continuous determination to want better for herself, and for those that are within her reach. On this Women's Month, we celebrate and thank you for working towards breaking the bias.

