

FROM WORRY TO JOY: Merewoma's Journey to Better Sanitation and Community Transformation



Merewoma and his family posing at their newly constructed Fossa Alterna

Merewoma David, a 42-year-old tailor and small-scale fuel seller, has lived and worked in Isagazirya village in Kagumba Sub County, Kamuli District, Uganda for the past 15 years. Despite living with a disability, he has managed to support his family of seven – including his wife and five daughters – through his tailoring business and fuel sales, earning about 30,000 Ugandan Shillings (UGX) on a good day.

Before the Sanitation and Hygiene Fund (SHF) project, access to basic sanitation and hygiene services in Isagazirya was extremely limited.

"There was very poor sanitation, and people were not paying attention to ensure that their sanitary facilities were clean and up to standard", he recalls. "This was largely due to negligence." The areas loose soils made matters worse – pits frequently collapsed shortly after excavation. "Every time it rained, I would worry. I knew I'd have to dig a new pit again," he says. "It was also embarrassing to host visitors because of the poor condition of the latrines," he adds.

Merewoma's situation changed significantly after meeting Paul Mugeru, a Sanitation Promoter on the SHF Project, who introduced him to new and improved sanitation products. Paul linked him to Mutaasa Zosmas, a mason trained under the project, who helped him construct a Fossa Alterna latrine. This latrine cost about 1.1 million UGX. Although Merewoma faced financial challenges at one point, he was able to secure a 400,000 UGX loan from Kyojja Tobona, a local village savings group.

This latrine has significantly improved sanitation in Merewoma's household and inspired others in the community to make similar improvements. "Previously, people did not take sanitation and hygiene seriously, but now there has been a shift; people have now become more mindful of their sanitation and hygiene," he says. For Merewoma, the impact has been transformative. "I no longer worry about where to take my guests, and am relieved that I don't have to dig a new pit every time it rains," he notes. "I like my new latrine because it suits the loose soil conditions here. It's permanent, odor-free, and doesn't attract flies unlike the ordinary latrines I had before." He further explains.

Looking ahead, Merewoma is hopeful about the future of sanitation and hygiene in Isagazirya. "The future is bright, I believe that our community will continue to transform, and everyone will eventually have access to a suitable latrine," he says. However, he emphasises that continued follow-up and some level of enforcement will be necessary to sustain the progress made under the SHF project.

The journey to universal sanitation is within reach – let's keep moving forward.

The Sanitation and Hygiene Fund (SHF) Project in Uganda aims to accelerate access to improved sanitation and hygiene services through market-based approaches across seven districts—Buikwe, Buyende, Kabarole, Kamuli, Kayunga, Luuka, and Kole—reaching approximately 2.35 million people. Running from April 2023 to December 2025, the project is led by Water For People Uganda in close collaboration with partners including the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Water and Environment, Ministry of Education and Sports, IRC, the Uganda Water and Sanitation NGO Network, Kampala Capital City Authority, Finnish Mondial, and the respective District Local Governments. Together, they are working to deliver sustainable and inclusive solutions, ensuring that no one is left behind.

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