



**Margaret Kayombo** is a member of a committee that advocates for grandmothers' rights in Rukiga District in Western Uganda. Since joining ROTOM, the community-led organization that supports the committee, she has been an enthusiastic and engaged contributor. Margaret is active in community exchange visits, raising awareness and collaborating with other grandmothers across Uganda, and takes part in grandmothers gatherings, including the national gathering in Entebbe (2015) and most recently, the International Grandmothers Gathering in Kmpala (October 2023).



Every day, Margaret gives back to her community in practical ways that may go unnoticed. But for some grandmothers in her community, Margaret and her peers are an integral part of a vital lifeline. Through ROTOM's support networks, grandmothers have better access to healthy food and nutrition. They are informed about their health and rights and have built a community of mutual care to fend off isolation and loneliness. *"They are now part of my family."* — Margaret Kayombo

When Margaret first joined SLF partner ROTOM, through their small farm program, they supported her to raise a goat. When the goat produced five kids 18 months later, Margaret was able to gift one to another grandmother through ROTOM's network. She sold two of the remaining goats and purchased land for 800,000 Ugandan Shillings (approximately \$277 CAD).

The Reach One Touch One Ministry (ROTOM), Uganda identifies the gender-based inequality that is the cause of so much misery, believes in the importance of education especially for girls, and celebrates the courage of the grandmothers to ensure their grandchildren's needs are met. Founder Kenneth Mugayehwenkyi, after being educated in Canada and the US, came back to Uganda for a visit in 2003 and, horrified by "the tidal- wreck of old women and orphaned grandchildren", established ROTOM and gave up his dream of moving his family to North America. With the help of the SLF, ROTOM gradually ensured medical care and food security for the grannies and education for the children and built brick houses for the grandmothers most in need of shelter. It's one of the best of the "granny stories". Now that the children have grown, the grannies are empowered and continue to hold communities together. Grandmothers with ROTOM have joined grandmothers across Uganda, the African continent and internationally, to advocate for social justice and issues affecting older persons. They are now leaders in their communities and on local and national councils. We see a growing movement: grandmothers are supporting and advocating for one another, becoming agents of change throughout the African Continent. These grannies are community heroes.

The ROTOM School, started in 2018, (<https://youtu.be/6ZRw6nQEwQo>), takes a holistic and classical approach to enhancing the educational, spiritual, emotional, health, and social skills development of the children it serves. The school educates seniors' vulnerable grandchildren with the hope that they will turn into responsible, creative and dignified leaders in their families and communities. While at the school, the children also receive regular medical check-ups and treatment whenever they fall sick and are provided with nutritious meals. Several of their graduates are already realizing this hope and adding to the resources available to support their family and community.

Information from: SLF Grass Roots 2008 and the ROTOM website: <https://reachone-touchone.org/>

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