



## International Labour Organisation marks 90 years

Supplement

# ILO to groom women entrepreneurs

**Monitor Reporter**  
Kampala

**I**nitial research and pilot studies in early 2000 saw the launch of Phase I of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Women's Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Equality (WEDGE) project. The project is funded by the Irish.

In 2005 Uganda joined seven other countries in Africa and Asia working with the ILO to address challenges of women entrepreneurs.

Today, the ILO-WEDGE project is in its third phase and will run through to 2012. This phase of the ILO WEDGE project was launched on April 24, 2009 by the Minister of Gender Labour and Social Development, Mr Gabriel Opio. This phase will focus on promotion of women's entrepreneurship and support women entrepreneurs to create decent employment, achieve women's empowerment and gender equality,

and work toward poverty reduction.

The overriding aim of this \$650,000 phase III of WEDGE is to build the capacity of local partners in women's entrepreneurship. Building on the tools and methodologies developed over the previous six years, the ILO WEDGE project will work with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development- MoGLSD, ILO constituents and partner agencies within the United Nations Family in Uganda to remove the obstacles that women face in starting and growing their businesses. This project phase will place a particular emphasis on building the capacity of governments and social partners to promote the interests of women entrepreneurs through building their capacity in research and advocacy. It will also work to build their capacity to work with local and national Business Development Service (BDS) providers to provide targeted and demand-led services to



Ministers Mr Gabriel Opio (L), Mr Charles Bakabulindi (2L), and Chairman General of NOTU Mr Wilson Owere (2R) cut a cake to mark the ILO 90th anniversary on April 24. COURTESY PHOTO

women entrepreneurs in Uganda. In line with the gender policies of both the ILO and Irish aid, the WEDGE project has sought to, and will continue to redress

existing gender imbalances in enterprise development through approaches and activities aimed specifically at women, while simultaneously working with ILO constituents to ensure that

all small enterprise initiatives address gender in their formulation and roll out. The ultimate beneficiaries of the ILO WEDGE project are women (and some men) entrepreneurs at all stages in the business cycle.

However, the project will not target them directly but rather work to build the capacity of their service providers, associations, and relevant government ministries.

It is intended to place a particular emphasis on women entrepreneurs whose businesses have growth potential as a more strategic way to create sustainable jobs and decent work.

Enabling more women to pursue enterprise growth through a more favourable support environment generates employment, empowers women and brings social and economic benefits to women and to society at large. The logic is that, in the medium to long term, giving support to these businesses is a better way to generate

sustainable employment and consequently reduce poverty. The ILO's core mandate also stipulates that the organisation strive for the creation of decent work, something that more stable and viable businesses are more likely to offer.

This is not to say that the ILO WEDGE project will cease to work with poor and particularly vulnerable women entrepreneurs. There will be a particular emphasis placed on targeting vulnerable groups of entrepreneurs, such as women living with and affected by HIV/Aids and women with disabilities.

As a specialised agency of the United Nations, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are central to what the ILO WEDGE project is aiming at.

The project is directly concerned with the first and third MDGs; "Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger" and "Promote gender equality and empower women" respectively.