



The Republic of Uganda

UGANDA'S INPUT FOR THE UN SECRETARY GENERAL'S REPORT, 2022-2024

Introduction:

Uganda has generally scaled up interventions on prevention of violence against women and girls, especially having significantly faced the impact of COVID 19 Pandemic, increasing vulnerability of women and girls to all forms of violence and harmful practices. There is strengthened National, Districts and Sub County coordination to effectively implement multisectoral interventions that address violence against women and girls with focus on teenage pregnancy and child marriage. In addition, evidence generation and knowledge management is contributing to publicly available data, reported on a regular basis, on various forms of VAWG/HP (intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and harmful practices) at the country level as well as routine collection and publication of key types of administrative data on violence against women and girls, exploitation, and abuse of children, disaggregated by age and sex.

There have been efforts to increase awareness and understanding of the existing laws on ending VAWG and/or gender equality and non-discrimination by decentralizing legal awareness and legal aid interventions, including widely disseminating laws on ending VAWG and/or gender equality and non-discrimination at national, district and sub-district levels to all multi-sectoral stakeholders.

Despite these efforts, natural disasters such as floods and landslides in some parts of the country, drought and general insecurity in the Karamoja region, the influx of refugees in Kasese district due to the insecurity in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) continues to overstretch service delivery across all sectors and shift the debate and priorities from VAWG prevention to survival and environmental concerns.

Investing in innovation and technology to create safe online spaces, prevention, reporting and protection mechanisms:

The Uganda Vision 2040, identifies ICT as a fundamental aspect to foster Uganda's transformation into a modern and prosperous country. It outlines interventions under the ICT sector to uplift the most disadvantaged population. Relatedly the Third National Development Plan (NDP III), commits government to focus on promoting the use of ICT in the entire economy and society through: (i) deployment of secure, integrated and cross-sector infrastructure; (ii) developing and promoting the usage of quality communication and e-services; (iii) digital inclusion and citizen participation; (iv) ensuring standardization and inter-operability of systems; (v) enhancement of national cyber security; (vi) promoting innovation and commercialization of ICT products; and (vii) enhancing digital literacy and developing skills; among others. As result of these efforts a digital platform, SafePal app has been instituted to increase

reporting of GBV cases, in addition to scaling up the Toll free lines and National Gender based database.

Strengthening of laws, policies, regulatory frameworks and accountability:

A number of laws were enacted and bills presented by the Parliament of Uganda. These included; The National Social Security Fund (Amendment) Act, 2022, The Succession Amendment Act, 2022, The Markets Act, 2023, The Landlord and Tenant Bill, 2022, The Mining and Minerals Act, 2022, The Competition Act, 2023, The Employment (Amendment) Bill, 2022)

The newly enacted Succession Act, 2022 provides for a fairer distribution of property in instances that a person dies intestate. Specifically, it expanded the provision of distribution of property of an intestate to apply to both male and female dependents as well as to spouses in a marriage. It refined the definition of customary heir or heiress to remove discrimination. Strengthening the provisions for the distribution of deceased estates that address property security for women and girls protects them from Gender Based Violence related to asset grabbing. The Market Act, makes the city safer for women and girls and increases their mobility and access to markets and other public places as vendors and customers.

Four (4) bills were reintroduced to the floor in Parliament, namely the Marriage Bill 2022, Sexual Offences Bill, the Legal Aid Bill and the Employment Amendment Bill 2022. The Sexual Offences Bill seeks to enact a specific law on sexual offences for the effectual prevention of sexual violence; to enhance punishment of sexual offenders; to provide for the protection of victims during sexual offences trials; to provide for the extra-territorial application of the law; and to repeal some provisions of the Penal Code Act, Cap. 120, among other provisions. If passed, the Marriage Bill 2022 will criminalize a spouse who demands for a refund of gifts with a penalty of not less than one year imprisonment.

Through the Spotlight Initiative collaboration with the Commonwealth Parliament Association in training 34 Members of Parliament (MPs) (20F:14M) on Gender, Power and GBV, was a partnership that extended beyond Ugandan CSOs to include an external actor. The knowledge and skills enhancement provided catalysed commitments to engaging VAWG discussions on the floor of Parliament. These were carried out during the 16 days of activism at Parliament, where some of the members led discussions on forms of VAWG, unpacked terminologies on VAWG and its root causes, and drew attention to the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) and its relevance to the 16 Days of Activism national theme for 2022. The training also provided the MPs with improved capacity to communicate with the media and internal audiences. The Uganda Women Parliamentary Association (UWOPA) Strategic Plan 2021-2026, which includes bill research, debate and lobbying was designed, printed and launched. The parliament scrutiny and communications training which was attended by 32 participants created a safe space for women MPs to air out the challenges they face while conducting business. In addition, the Uganda Law Reform Commission was supported to review the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) Implementation, and the Assessment Report informed the improvements in the implementation of the DVA among the duty bearers including the Police, courts and prosecution. This was facilitated through a draft DVA Step-by-step Guide.

The National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy, 2022/2023 – 2026/2027 is a holistic, comprehensive framework that reflects the global and national commitment of the Government of Uganda to end the practice of child marriage and other forms of violence against girls including teenage pregnancy

The Ministry of Gender convened pertinent coordination platforms that include the GBV Reference Group, the Medical Legal Technical Working Group, the GBV/VAC Covid -19 response platforms. The advocacy efforts of the Medical Legal Technical Working Group have yielded positive results that include the appointment of Medical Officers in 7 District Police Stations, which will enhance access to justice for survivors of GBV through strengthened quality of evidence.

Addressing negative social Norms and harmful practices:

Cultural institutions have adopted by-laws to reinforce the issue of bride gifts as opposed to bride price, such as the Tororo Bridal Gifts Ordinance which states that a person shall not demand for the refund of bridal gifts as a condition precedent to the dissolution of marriage, and whoever seeks to do so commits an offence. The MGLSD engaged cultural institutions in the drafting of Declarations and Council Resolutions that address different forms of GBV paying special attention to child marriages, FGM and HIV/AIDs. The Justice Law and Order Sector (JLOS) developed tools for informal justice systems to assist cultural institutions in their response to VAW; these tools include the Karamojong Cultural Principles and the Case Management Handbook for the KerKwaro Acholi.

The establishment of the Council for Traditional Leaders of Africa (COTLA) Uganda chapter and the development of the Operational Manual, Strategic Plan and its Charter was completed through collaboration by the Cross Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU) and the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD). COTLA Uganda chapter is anchored at the MoGLSD and constructively coordinates Traditional and Cultural Leaders in driving transformation and eradicating negative cultural practices, customs, and traditions.

Government through the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA) supported cross border collaboration between Kenya and Uganda to prevent, respond to, and conduct follow ups to track trafficking in persons (TIPs), including trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) The Ministry also trained 95 officials (25F:70M) on the legal frameworks relating to counter human trafficking, protection and the stream- lining of cross border referrals. The successes of the training by MoIA include enhanced victim identification as well as detecting, identifying, interdicting and disrupting trafficking networks.

Cultural leaders of Alur, Buganda, Busoga and Tooro conducted dialogue sessions on the exemplary cultural practices that address VAWG. This contributed to increased knowledge, and interests among community members especially among young people who formed self-support groups to mobilize young people for mitigating VAWG basing on gender responsive traditional principles. They were also trained to use social media to publicize the cultural resources that mitigate VAWG. The participants committed to utilize their existing social media platforms both at individual and institutional levels to disseminate and share information on cultural resources and how

they mitigate VAWG. Social media strategies were also developed to guide them as they publicize the different cultural resources on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. 100 copies of the Rutooro version of the Cultural Leaders' toolkit were printed facilitate better access to information on traditional cultural values by the young people.

The development of the monthly GBV perception dashboards contributed to increased collection on public perceptions on GBV and the development of evidence-based strategy and programming. To contribute to growing concerns about the availability of data and information on cross-border population movement along the Ugandan – Kenya Border, dash boards on cross border movement using the IOM displacement tracking matrix targeting four Flow Monitoring Points (FMPs), namely Malaba, Alakas, Abongai A and Loporokocha published details of populations cross border movement. This complimented the efforts of government and humanitarian partners to evidence-based discussions and decisions, and raised the profile of the protection concerns of women and girls regarding cross border movements for FGM, child marriage and TiP. A total of 48 communities/villages participated in public declarations of support for the abandonment of FGM, which represents a major milestone in the process of abandonment of FGM as it demonstrated change in social expectations around FGM. The rescue of 37 girls from potential cutting is illustrative of this milestone in mindset change. Four Male Action Groups (MAGs) were established in Tororo and Kampala districts which served as a platform for mobilizing, engaging with and reaching men and boys with messages on social norm change and gender-transformation.

Over 1,389 men and boys were engaged through Male Action Groups in the programme areas and in turn, as champions for change on gender norms, they played active leadership roles in mobilizing and engaging other men and boys in open discussions and dialogues to address harmful masculinities and promote gender-transformative results. Also, the provision of 15 bicycles to male champions to facilitate GBV risk mitigation, prevention and response outreach enabled them to extend awareness creation on GBV and FGM in communities, leading to 220 Karamojong men to publicly denounce harmful cultural practices and adoption of positive cultural practices such as men sharing in household responsibilities and mobilizing under-aged married girls to return to school. For instance, 20 girls (in Amudat) were rescued from forced and early marriages and taken back to school.

Existence of the simplified version of the FGM law, which was disseminated to 34 “high-risk” sub counties in Uganda. MGLSD with support from UNFPA, developed a training-of-trainers manual to prepare community facilitators to carry out dialogues on the FGM law at the grass-roots level. 500 Local law enforcement officials and community-level advocates were trained to enforce the legislation. Strengthened partnership through the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU) facilitated four inter-generational dialogues with different social networks (women, men, girls and boys). Cultural institutions also conducted dialogues with clan leaders¹ and communities for social norm change to end GBV, Child marriage and Harmful

Measures to addressing VAWG

¹ e.g. Tieng Adhola, Lugbara Kari, OBR, Karamoja Elders Association, Ker Kwari Acholi

Uganda has over 23 GBV safety shelters scattered across the Regions, utilized across districts. The safe shelters provide safe space for survivors of GBV, Counselling services, financed treatment of survivors, offer legal services and follow up cases in courts of law. To date, a total of 79,695 (**68,538 females and 11,157 males, 444 persons with disability**) GBV survivors in the last 5 years have accessed a package of support services through the GBV Shelters. A total of **68,141 (61.1%)** of the cases were resolved through mediation, court rulings, referral and counselling.

The SASA! Model was rolled out in four refugee communities (Kyaka, Imvepi, Rhino and Kampala) and improved GBV reporting, use of referral pathways, and addressed negative cultural practices and harmful social norms, use of power in relationships, and community policing. A quick assessment of the SASA community mobilization approach in a sample of community members by a civil society organization, UGANET found a positive shift in knowledge and attitude towards men's use of power over women at household and community levels.

The implementation of the support phase of SASA! Progressed through mentorship of the community activists, focusing on how to identify topical VAWG issues for dialogue, mobilization of influential community members to participate in the dialogues and referral of cases to relevant authorities. These dialogues provided opportunities for enhanced access to information and services, especially for the marginalized and most at risk women and girls.

Two protection safe houses in refugee camps of Imvepi (1) and Rhino (1) were supported with maintenance and repairs, benefitting 39 (32F:7M) GBV survivors. GBV survivors and those with protection risks were able to get temporary shelter in the protection safe houses. Three one-stop centres each in Rhino, Imvepi, and Kyaka are under construction, and once completed, will provide GBV survivors with comprehensive case management at one location and reduce the trauma of repeating the report to different service providers at different locations. This conducive environment will encourage survivors to report their cases and receive services in a timely and coordinated manner.

The psychological first aid provided by the Spotlight to 1,286 (196M:1090F) refugees and asylum seekers with psychological challenges was instrumental in reducing and managing anxiety, which can manifest as VAC. Referrals to basic services within the settlements also enabled the beneficiaries to adapt and build resilience, and in turn contributing to positive coping mechanisms. A rapid gender analysis revealed that females were more open about their Mental Health and Psycho Social Support (MHPSS) related challenges, especially in cases of sexual abuse. In contrast, males were less likely to open up about trauma and abuse. Women and children were also more responsive to the various services as compared to adult males. This information was availed to the protection cluster to guide their interventions while

Expanding services to support survivors and improving access to justice:

Through strengthening of multi-sectoral coordination platforms, the advocacy of the Medical Legal Working Group resulted in a policy directive on the appointment of Medical Officers for all district Police stations which improved evidence quality and enhanced access to justice for survivors of SGBV. The Ministry of Gender Labour and

Social Development National Child Helpline (SAUTI) was supported to receive, refer and handle VAC and GBV cases, and in turn SAUTI strengthened the case management functions of the District Local Government.

The installation of audio-visual system links in five High courts and Family Division enhanced the functionality of child-friendly justice procedures in handling VAC and GBV cases involving child witnesses and victims. The training of 62 (44F:18M) judicial officers (62 prosecutors, police officers, Defence Counsel, and Probation and Social Welfare Officers) in plea-bargaining processes ensured that victims are consulted before a sentence is agreed upon and increased their participation in the process. There was a notable increase in the use of trauma-informed and victim-centred approaches during SGBV sessions in 2022. Of note was the prioritization of cases of children, provision of refreshments during sessions, utilization of child friendly spaces and improvising where they are not available, using anatomical dolls to prevent re-victimization of victims and the use of closed sessions.

40 police officers (15F:25M) comprised of scene of crime officers, crime investigators, child and family protection unit, prosecutors and medical officers have enhanced knowledge and understanding in management of forensic evidence ranging from evidence collection, packaging, labelling, preservation, storage and transportation. This has contributed to improved quality and integrity of forensic evidence submitted for analysis by police officers, enabling speedy prosecution and availing stronger evidence. The training provided to 266 police officers (176M:90F) on effective investigation of VAWG cases improved their interviewing skills, their ability to fill PF3A forms, identify the immediate needs of survivors and refer them to various service providers for ancillary services. There is an improvement in the quality of cases submitted to the Directorate of Public Prosecutions, enabling more efficient prosecutions.

Efficiencies in prosecution were further boosted through increasing the number of evidence collection vans with cold storage units, resulting in the timely delivery of exhibits and reports, and a profound improvement in the quality of evidence submitted to the laboratory for analysis. Consumables procured range from DNA extraction, quantification, Polymerase Chain Reaction and separation and detection kits. These have been used to process cases on rape, defilement, child neglect and child stealing. The procurement of 18 crime scene cameras improved investigation officers' capacity to collect, analyze and present acceptable visual electronic evidence.

The legal aid mobile call centre supported 100 clients (68F:32M) and the Legal Aid Open Days reached 1,921 (422M:582 F) in two districts. These legal aid initiatives benefitted 2,367 vulnerable survivors including those in remote areas, who were enabled to access services in real time. The SAUTI National Child Helpline (CHL) was supported to receive, refer and handle VAC and GBV cases, and was integrated into the DLG Case management functions. A total of 7,685 (4,482F: 3,048M and 155 gender unknown) reported cases of children received multisectoral support. The multi sectoral case management services provided by the social service workforce²

² Comprised of Para-social workers, Social Welfare Officers, Community Development Officers and the Probation Officers

benefitted 6,295 (2,152M:4,143F) cases through the identification, resolution, referral and follow up on the various VAWG and VAC issues³.

Generating Data and research:

The Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development worked with Government counterparts to review the multiple systems used to collect VAC/GBV data⁴. Findings revealed duplication of data and indicators with different data collection tools and inability of government to sustain these systems beyond the support of development partners. Subsequently, the review informed development of a costed roadmap to develop a government owned and harmonized MIS that collects routine administrative data on violence against children and women.

Support was provided for the update and automation of VAWG tools for Uganda Police Force, Judiciary and Office of the Director for Public Prosecution. These were rolled out in tandem with staff capacity building in the use of the tools. A participatory process targeting 6 JLOS institutions⁵ produced recommendations that included the development of a Compendium of Concepts and Definitions on GBV, and harmonization of the Coding Systems. As part of the 16 Days of Activism, national, regional, and global conferences such as the Annual Gender Statistics Forum (AGSF), policy dialogues and the Annual National SDG Conference for data users were organised. This has contributed to promoting the production, analysis and use of VAWG/GBV data through the development of national thematic analytical reports, briefs and factsheets on gender equality and the SDGs.

The Citizen Generated Data (CGD) Guideline/Toolkit was developed to support generating alternative data to complement official statistics. CSOs contributing to addressing GEWE and GBV have integrated activities on the development of CGD in their programming, with plans under way for capacity enhancement to facilitate the process.

With support from the Spotlight Initiative, the functionality of the harmonized data visualization portal linking GBV/SRH/Census mapping data enabling harmonization of data from various existing systems including National Gender Based Violence Data system, Police, and Health was enhanced. This was consolidated with the training of 130 Geospatial system (GIS) and Information Technology experts to populate and link the GBV indicators under census mapping to enable the enumeration of GBV cases by type, service accessed and referrals. This type of data is key in enhancing evidence-based planning, advocacy and decision making for GBV prevention and response. The review of the systems used to collect VAC/GBV data enabled the MoGLSD to work with Government counterparts to harmonise data from Child Helpline, OVCNIS, GBV database, Remand Homes MIS and to develop a costed roadmap for harmonized MIS that collects routine administrative data on violence against children and women.

³ Child neglect, sexual violence, physical violence, child abandonment, child labour, children in conflict with the law, defilement, children that lost their mothers at birth, cases of malnutrition, child battering, early marriages, child labour, issues of parentage requiring DNA.

⁴ Child Helpline, OVCNIS, GBV database, Remand Homes MIS, etc.

⁵ Office of Public Prosecution (ODPP), Uganda Police Force (UPF) and Uganda Prison Services (UPS), Judiciary, Directorate of Government Analytical Laboratories (DGAL) and Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD)

There has been increased capacity in the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) and Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD) which is expected to contribute towards closing the national data gaps and use of quality data to inform policies and programs to end VAWG. It will also aid in tracking the SDGs.

Using data from the Rapid Gender Assessment (RGA) survey that was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, a paper titled “Vulnerability to violence against women or girls during COVID-19 in Uganda” was submitted to BMC Public Health for publication⁶.

The Uganda Bureau of Statistics developed the SDG meta data handbook, which is a guide to MDAs on data collection, compilation, reporting and monitoring on all SDG indicators, including those on SDG 5. The tools for UDHS-7 were also finalized to include GBV data from refugee settlements, and the development of the Computer Assisted Programming (CAPI) Application, and Data Quality Assurance. The 7th Uganda Demographic and health Survey (UDHS-7) is expected to strengthen monitoring of SDGs and national development framework’s indicators and inform development of plans, programmes and policies for addressing GBV/VAC, SRHR and HP. The inclusion of refugees in the UDHS-7 data collection module was a major achievement towards full inclusion of refugees in national official data production in Uganda.

Lessons learnt

- i. Addressing Mental health and Psychosocial Support needs among asylum seeker and refugee women, men, boys and girls is a strong basis for resilience the success of attaining other needs.
- ii. Strong coordination between partners ensures more all-round support to asylumseekers and refugees and prevents individuals receiving similar support from different partners, hence improved and more effective interventions.
- iii. The digitization of GBV, related Gender Statistics and Data through the on Gender Statistics Web – Based Portal has increased the use of the data for monitoring of National Development Plan (NDP III) and update of SDG Indicators and National Priority Gender Equality Indicators (NPGEIs).
- iv. Partnerships are worth the investment for synergy and enhanced coordination & harmonisation of data management. For example, JLOS-UPF, Judiciary and ODPP are recognised and participate in webinars, technical working Groups on GBV/VAWG data producers and have strengthened collaboration with UBOS and engage directly for technical backstopping.

Opportunities

- i. There is a wave of male champions in parliament that are boldly speaking up against violence against women. A deliberate action plan to organize these men could benefit existing efforts in eliminating VAWG.

⁶ Bukuluki et al. BMC Public Health (2023) 23:23 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-022-14951-7>

- ii. The National Development Plan program-based approach to programming and budgeting presents a real-time opportunity for prioritization of mind set change, social norm changes for negative practices, institutional capacity building and implementation of exiting GBV policies and legal frame works.
- iii. The introduction of the Parish Development model to improve household incomes presents an opportunity for women’s active participation in economic activities broadening their choices and ability to influence decisions.
- iv. Willingness of Government to mainstream Gender in programs and budgets at all levels as part of implementing PFMA 2015 (Amended), section 3.
- v. With focus on harmful practices, in particular child marriage and female genital mutilation, opportunities exist for building the knowledge and skills of implementing partners on foundations and characteristics of well-designed social norms change programmes.
- vi. Strengthening of administrative data management in the Justice, Law and Order Sector especially in the Judiciary, Uganda Police Force and Office of the Directorate of the Public Prosecution has informed development of a Business Case on VAWG Administrative data development that has underpinned Capacity building and advocacy processes as well as benchmarking by other countries. Uganda has been included in the VAW Administrative Data Global Technical Guidance initiative by HQ.