



Spotlight Initiative
To eliminate violence
against women and girls

JOINT PRESS STATEMENT FOR THE 2021 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM CAMPAIGN AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE HELD AT PARLIAMENT MEMBERS LOUNGE ON 25TH NOVEMBER 2021

THEME: “Orange the World: End Violence Against Women and Girls Now!”

Every November 25th to December 10th, the International campaign on ending violence against women and girls (VAWG) unites activists, organizations and individuals across the world to raise their collective voices during the 16 Days of Activism Campaign on violence against women and girls.

The campaign was first started by activists at the inaugural Women’s Global Leadership Institute in 1991 and has since grown into a global campaign. This year 2021, marks the 30th Anniversary of the Campaign.

This year’s National theme is **“Orange the world: End Violence Against Women and Girls Now”**. **The theme is the same as the global theme.** Over the 16days period, the Domestic Violence Act Coalition will engage the communities on various activities under the same theme. UWOPA will conduct many activities during the 16days of activism, today UWOPA has started with a press conference with call for actions by various stakeholders in Uganda.

The MOGLSD, CSOs and coalition members have lined up several activities starting with the National Launch on Friday 26th November 2021 in Oyam District, Kamdini Sub-county. We want the women and men in the public to also be aware of efforts being put in place and also take part in the fight against gender-based violence.

The theme highlights the need to break the silence, demand and implore policy makers, parents, religious and cultural leaders to make homes/communities safe for all, specifically girls and young women, by highlighting and breaking the structural barriers that discriminate women and girls right from the home, community, and the school setting including government policies and systems that impact girls’ experience at school.

Violence against women/girls remains epidemically high in Uganda and hinders social and economic development, it prevents girls and women’s equal participation at social, economic and political level, it is extremely costly to families, communities and nations, and it is a profound symbol of gender inequality and social injustice.

We all should take actions in our own way every day to prevent and respond to GBV cases within our reach. Speak against GBV, Act by reporting GBV cases. We demand that all stakeholders in the education sector must break the barriers in the education system as a fulfillment of the global efforts to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education as articulated in Sustainable Development Goal 4 and SDG 5 aiming to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by;

- Ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

- Eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
- Eliminating all harmful practices, such as Teenage pregnancies. child forced marriage and female genital mutilations among others.

Currently in Uganda women and girls face violence at alarming rates. Reports indicate thatⁱ;

- Ugandan girls are sexually abused during their childhood and this even worsened during the lockdown. The Uganda Police Crime report 2020 also indicated that over 14,000 cases of defilement were reported in 2020; 20 percent of children aged 13-17 had experienced emotional abuse. Violence against women and children deprives them their right to protection, safety and security, dignity and represents a substantial obstacle to equality between women and men. 59.6% of women from the age of 15years have ever experienced physical violence. It is important to note that 39% of women have experienced sexualized violence compared to 11% of men. The average age at dropout for girls is 13years, indicating that girls' dropout at the time they are supposed to be completing primary schoolⁱⁱ.
- The prevalence of all forms of GBV in Uganda remains unacceptably high. Data from the Uganda Demographic and Health Survey (UDHS) 2016 indicates that 56% of ever-married women and 44% of ever-married men have experienced spousal violence whether physical, sexual or emotional. National statistics show that over half of adult women 15-49 years have experienced violence and more than 1 in every 5 women 15-24 years have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime. According to the UDHS (2016) 51% of women and 49% of men neither sought help nor told anyone about the violence. Thus denying themselves the opportunity to access available support services.
- Estimates for violence against children also show that violence against the girl child is high at 59% for young females prior to age 19 years. Child marriage is still high in Uganda; 34 % of women 20-24 years were married or in union before age 18 and 7 % were married before the age of 15. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) remains widespread in Kapchorwa and Moroto where 13% and 52 % of girls and women aged 15–49 respectively have been subjected to FGM.
- The COVID 19 pandemic and the associated control measures, which created a lot of anxiety, stress and hardships to most family members and communities escalated cases of GBV. COVID-19 has exacerbated all the risk factors for VAWG, including unemployment and poverty and reinforced many of the root causes such as gender stereotypes and harmful social norms. It has been estimated that 11 million girls may fail to return to school because of COVID-19, thereby increasing their risk of child marriage.
- The Uganda COVID-19 Rapid Gender Assessment of 2020 presents data on the perceptions and incidence of GBV across the Country. The Survey established that physical violence (36%) was the form of GBV most likely to be identified by the respondents followed by denial of resources (18%), sexual violence (18%), child/forced marriage (16%), psychological torture (15%) and

sexual harassment (13%). Women (22%) were more likely than men (15%) to know someone who experienced denial of resources during the pandemic.

- The drivers of GBV in Uganda are documented in the 2017 study by MGLSD which identified poverty, caused by lack of economic resources; low literacy levels; unemployment, child support; cultural beliefs and norms, lack of respect for human rights; and women's economic dependency

We therefore call for real action and demand that;

1. Increase financing of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Prevention and Response interventions, across all Sectors and allocate specific resources linked to development outcomes for the same
2. Support women's economic empowerment including skilling GBV survivors on income generating activities, provide start-up capital and promote appropriate technology in enterprise development.
3. Religious, cultural and political leaders to speak about preventing gender-based violence whenever given opportunity in public gatherings.
4. Parents to share the gender roles among the children (both girls and boys equally at home).
5. Ensure all girls are enrolled in school and remain in school till they complete higher level education by;
 - a) Removing policies that promote expulsion of pregnant girls,
 - b) Providing privacy/sanitation for girls in schools, etc.)
 - c) As girls go to school, eliminate dangers they face including sexual harassment, rape, kidnapping.
6. Challenge the systems that reinforce negative stereotypes and power imbalances faced by girls.
7. Effectively punish parents and teachers who sexually harass and abuse their children by revoking their teaching licenses.
8. Call upon the government to allocate funding towards implementation of the laws and policies which focus on prevention and respond to GBV.
9. Reach out to girls and women experiencing violence by speaking to them and encouraging them to seek for help.
10. Teach girls and boys that women and girls have a right to live free from violence and access to opportunities.
11. Government and Civil Society Organization should scale up interventions for male engagement and involvement in GBV prevention and response.

Remember, small positive actions and words by every one every day can make a difference.

Join the activism! Demand action from your leaders.

Create an enabling environment for women and girls, ending GBV begins with you and me.

Make homes and communities safe for women and girls!

Thank you for being part of the press conference.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY

Sarah A. Opendi (MP Tororo)

Chairperson UWOPA

ⁱ Uganda Demographic and Health Survey 2011.

ⁱⁱ UNICEF's State of the World's Children 2013;

IN COLLABORATION WITH SPOTLIGHT IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

1. Uganda Women's Network (UWONET)
2. National Association of Women Organizations in Uganda (NAWOU)
3. National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda (NUWODU)
4. Women's Human Rights Defenders Network (WHRDN)
5. Center for Domestic Violence Prevention (CEDOVIP)
6. International Community of Women Living with HIV Eastern Africa (ICWEA)
7. Alliance for women Advocating for Change (AWAC)