



**Joint Submission to the Universal Periodic Review
40th Session, UGANDA
Submitted By**

SHE LEADS- CONSORTIUM-UGANDA

She Leads is a joint initiative of Plan International Netherlands, Defence for Children - ECPAT the Netherlands (DCI-ECPAT), The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), and Terre des Hommes the Netherlands (TdH-NL), under the Power of Voices Framework for the period 2021-2025. Equal Measures 2030 is a technical partner. The strategic objective of the She Leads program is to increase the sustained influence of Girls and Young Women (GYW) on decision-making and the transformation of gender norms in formal and informal institutions. This will be achieved through the attainment of three main outcomes: (1), Enhanced collective action and activism by GYW in a gender-responsive civil society, (2) Increased acceptance of positive social gender norms and (3) Political institutions at all levels enable meaningful participation of GYW in decision-making.

Submitting CSOs:

1. Terre des Hommes- Netherlands (TdH-NL)
2. Plan International Uganda (PIU),
3. The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET)
4. Girl-Up Initiative Uganda
5. Global learning for Sustainability (GLS),
6. Integrated Disabled Women Activities (IDIWA)
7. Trailblazers Mentoring Foundation (TMF)
8. Youth Advocacy and Development Network (YADNET)
9. Karamoja Women Umbrella Association (KAWUO),
10. Multi Community Based Development Initiative (MUCOBADI)

CONTACT:

Terre des Hommes Netherlands, Uganda Country Office,
Plot 2045, serule close, Kalinabiri, Road, Ntinda
P.O. Box 73435, Tel: 256 414 599 960

www.tdhnetherlands.org, [Twitter](#) - [Facebook](#) - [Youtube](#) - [Linkedin](#)

List of Acronyms

ICESCR	International covenant on economic social and cultural rights
ICCPR	International covenant on civil and political rights
UDHR	Universal declaration on human rights
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
SLC	She Leads Consortium
GYW	Girls and Young Women
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
UN	United Nations
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
CFM	Child and Forced Marriage (CFM),
(SVAYG	Sexual Violence against young girls
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
AU	African Union
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
(FGM/C	female genital mutilation and cutting
MGLSD	ministry of gender labour and social development the
NCP	National Child Policy
MOYCA	Ministry of Youth and Children Affairs
UDHS	Uganda Demographic and Health Survey
MOES	Ministry of Education and Sports
SEF	Sexuality Education Framework
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ODPP	Office of the Director of public prosecution (ODPP)
UPF	Uganda police force
TdH-NL	Terre des Hommes Netherlands
UPR	Universal Periodic Review

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

As already stated in other thematic cluster reports, Uganda was reviewed on 3rd November 2016 during its 2nd UPR cycle under the UN mechanism of the Universal state to state peer review in Geneva, it *received 226 recommendations, accepted 148 and noted 78 recommendations*. On these recommendations, there were nine (9) recommendations that targeted girls and women in Uganda SHE LEADS consortium (SLC) convened and agreed on the issues to focus on for the development of its thematic cluster report. SHE LEADS consortium generated information on the rights of girls and young women in Uganda. In the 2016 periodic review 148 recommendations were accepted and nine (9) of these targeted girls and women rights in Uganda. It is important acknowledging that the recommendations below are also being referred to by other thematic clusters specifically those working on women and youth cluster in Uganda;

1. *115.139 Continue to implement socioeconomic and development policies for safeguarding the rights of youth (Pakistan);*
2. *115.140 Continue to implement policies for the development of its people, including measures taken for equal opportunities for women and persons with disabilities in the economic and social development of the country (Pakistan);*
3. *115.142 Enhance the efforts made to improve the economic rights of the people (Ethiopia);*
4. *115.34 Enhance efforts to implement the National Action Plan on Women, in particular their participation and integration in the economy (South Africa);*
5. *115.50 Promote the participation of women in the process of national development (Angola);*
6. *115.56 Promote national efforts aiming at achieving gender equality and women's empowerment on the political and social level (Egypt);*
7. *115.51 Continue with efforts to advance the rights of women and combat discrimination against women and girls, in particular to achieve equal access to education and prevent girls dropping out of school (Mexico);*
8. *115.54 Take appropriate measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls as well as persons with albinism (Madagascar);*
9. *115.55 Continue to protect girls from all forms of discrimination and promote girls' rights and access to education (Pakistan);*

The SLC partnership is concern over the overwhelming human rights violations of girls and young women in Uganda and these include among others; - Discrimination against Girls and Young Women from meaningful participation in decision-making, Child and Forced Marriage (CFM) , Sexual Violence against young girls (SVAYG) , lack of Access to justice. The report examines the government's progress, gaps and also gives recommendations.

2.0 UPDATES FROM THE PREVIOUS REVIEW:

2.1 LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK GOVERNING GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN

2.2. State's Progress on ratification of regional and international instruments related to the rights of girls and young women in Uganda.

Uganda is party to the various regional and international human rights instruments such as; International covenant on economic social and cultural rights, international covenant on civil and political rights, convention on the elimination of domestic violence against women (CEDAW). Uganda is also party to international covenant on the rights of the child and African Union (AU) Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child and all have been incorporated into Ugandan law by virtue of the Children Act 1997, the country is also party to the African commission on human and people's rights and its charter on human and peoples right , Uganda has ratified the African Youth Charter (AYC) which provides direction to national policies, programmes and actions in favor of youth development.

2.3 Uganda's progress towards the domestication of regional and international instruments related to the rights of girls and young women

Under this sub-theme, it is important to acknowledge that the youth and women thematic clusters might have made reference to the same progress by the state as SLC notes below. Discrimination on the basis of sex is outlawed under the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995 (as amended). Also, the Constitution provides for affirmative action in favor of marginalized groups, including girls and women (*Articles 31, 32 and 33*). Article 21 (1) of the Constitution guarantees equality of all persons under the law in all spheres of political, social and cultural life, and the enjoyment of equal protection by the law in all aspects. Similarly, Uganda has taken positive steps to align its laws to fit gender equality. These include among others; the Local Governments Act (Cap 243) and the Land Act (Cap 227).

The constitution of the republic of Uganda 1995, also spells and restricts child marriages and defines a child as anyone below 18 years. Similarly, the government of Uganda passed 'National Sexuality Education Framework 2018 to guide the teaching of Sexuality Education and Development and dissemination of related materials in schools being party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) that spells government obligation in promotion and protection of child right. The Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act 2010 was enacted in March 2010 and states that female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C) is an offense in which removal of part or all parts of the external female genital for non-medical reasons and the practice of FGM/C is prohibited, and the domestic violence act 2010 is an act that provides for the protection and relief of victims of domestic violence in the country. The government of Uganda through the ministry of gender labour and social development (MGLSD) enacted the National Child Policy (NCP) 2020 as Government's Constitutional mandate on the welfare of children/young girls

3.0 KEY EMERGING HUMAN RIGHTS ADVANCES RELATING TO GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN IN UGANDA-2016-2021

3.1 Discrimination against Girls and Young Women from meaningful participation in decision-making

¹ The state of youth rights in Uganda 9th, July, 2021

As already alluded to by the youth thematic cluster¹, SHE LEADS is specifically concerned over the continued discrimination against young girls and young women in government processes and national programmes. The key processes such as National Development plan III, budget and policy consultations preclude girls and young women (GYW) participation. In addition, discriminatory social norms keep GYW from accessing and effectively participating in decision-making spaces. The domestic care responsibilities at household level, for instance, is unfairly distributed at 4.8 hours spent by girls and 3.8 hours by boys². There is also inadequate understanding of the concept of GYW participation and its application as well as general skepticism about the notion of empowering them. There is limited evidence-based data on the status of GYW participation in key Government processes.

Recommendations:

- The Ministry of Youth and Children Affairs (MOYCA) should expedite the implementation of policies and laws related to non-discrimination and participation of GYW by putting in place GYW structures to participate in key national processes such as Girls parliaments and National Girls Desks.
- The Government should review all policies, programs and laws that are discriminatory to improve on the coordination of ministries working towards girls and young women rights.
- The Government should conduct research on participation of GYW in government processes to provide evidence for their consideration in key decision-making.
- The Government should task the Uganda Human Rights Commission to provide a status report on the involvement of GYW in key government processes.

3.2 Child and Forced Marriage among young girls

Child and forced marriages among young girls are still a big threat in Uganda. In Uganda, 8.9 million girls aged 10–19, especially those that live in the rural areas, and among the less educated and low-income households are at risk of harmful practices, including child marriage and female genital mutilation. Thirty-four per cent of women aged 25-49 were married before the age of 18, according to the Uganda Demographic and Health Survey (UDHS) 2016. Current evidence shows that 25 per cent of the 1.2 million pregnancies recorded in Uganda annually are from teenage mothers, with more than 300,000 pregnancies ending in unsafe abortions. Only 1 in 5 of girls aged 15-19 are currently using any modern contraceptive method, with the risks of maternal death 28 per cent higher among teenage mothers hence lowering their participation in governance. According to the resident district commissioner for Kamuli, he stated that at least 187 Primary Seven pupils in Kamuli District got pregnant during the Covid-19 induced lockdown, the Resident District Commissioner has revealed³.

¹ The state of youth rights in Uganda 9th, July, 2021

² Oxfam (2018) Gender Roles and the Care Economy in Ugandan Households

³ <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/180-p7-pupils-in-kamuli-get-pregnant-in-lockdown-rdc-3324056>

Recommendations:

- The Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development should fast track the implementation of policies and programs targeting GYW such as the National Strategy to End Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy in Uganda.
- The Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) should operationalize and speed the implementation of the Sexuality Education Framework (SEF) in schools to help empower young girls in knowing their sexual rights and in making informed political decisions

3.4 Sexual Violence against young girls and Young Women

Uganda Demographic Health Survey, 2016 noted that, 40.4 percent of 20-49-year-old women were married by the age of 18, 11.6 per cent were married by the age of 15 and 1 in 4 teenage girls (15-19 years) are pregnant or have a child. Similarly, the violence against children survey 2018 shows that 1 in 3 (35 per cent) of girls experienced sexual violence during their childhood; 3 in 10 girls and 4 in 10 boys experienced physical violence and 8 in 10 girls experienced emotional violence. A total of 14,134 cases of Defilements were reported to Police i.e 10,413 were defilement while 3,721 were Aggravated Defilement (Uganda police crime report, 2020).

Recommendations:

- The Government should fast expedite the process for the enactment of the sexual offense bill which should adequately provide protection to girls in Uganda
- The Government of Uganda should progressively increase funding to the justice, law and order sector as a percentage of the national budget to strengthen implementation of the existing policies and laws that protect girls and young women in Uganda.
- Government needs to enact national legislation to domesticate all international standards that have been ratified

3.5 Access to justice by sexually abused young girls in Uganda;

Sexual abuse against young girls in Uganda has sought for help but are not helped due to various factors including limited compliance to regional and international human rights mechanisms. In 2017, 14,567 defilement cases were reported to the Uganda police force (UPF) , up from 7,690 in 2011. Similarly, out of 1,594 rape cases and 7, 618 defilement cases referred by the UPF to the Office of the Director of public prosecution (ODPP), 57% were sanctioned because they had sufficient evidence. This scenario has continued to promote impunity among the perpetrators of sexual violation against young girls in Uganda. According to the police crime report, in 2020 14,134 cases of defilement were reported to police and

10,413 were defilement while 3,721 were aggravated defilement. Surprisingly, by the end of 2020, only 5,745 cases were taken to court and out of which 794 cases secured convictions, 22 cases acquitted, 168 cases were dismissed and 4,761 are still pending in court due to limited number of judges and budgets to expedite the hearings of such cases.

Recommendations:

- The Government of the republic of Uganda should expedite efforts toward implementation of national and regional mechanism that enable access to justice by young girls that are sexually violated
- The Government of Uganda should ensure that national law provides for access to justice for children where their rights are violated.
- The Government of Uganda should progressively allocate resources towards effective implementation of laws that protect young girls from sexual violence
- The Government of Uganda should increase the number of judicial officers to effectively manage case backlogs in Uganda.

3.6 Physical and mental Bullying of girls and young women in schools:

Bullying has continued to take place in all levels of educational institutions in Uganda, where thousands of children are insulted, picked upon and demoralized by being called a colorful plethora of derogatory names. Bullying is an abuse and mistreatment of someone vulnerable by someone stronger, more powerful in this case, at school young girls are always bullied by strong boys in the same level or above the class that the bully is. It has been estimated by research that the bullying epidemic has worsened even more over time due to the increased diversity of beliefs and cultures. The fear of being bullied has pushed around 160,000 students into staying at home instead of attending school⁴. As a matter of fact, bullying has also paved the way for the concept of homeschooling. The dangerous part about bullying is that victims of this act are 2-9 times more likely to consider suicide as a means of escape. A recent United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) report on school violence and bullying has telling revelations. The report discloses that bullying in school has devastating effects, with victimized children finding it difficult to concentrate in class, sometimes missing classes, avoiding school activities, anger management, low self-esteem, playing truant or dropping out of school altogether. Beyond physical bullying is emotional bullying which is expressed in forms of making fun of others with sexual jokes, comments or gestures. “Some bullies observe the emotions of others and take advantage. It is very hard

⁴ <https://www.ugandaeducation.info/career-options/career-guide/bullying.html>

to identify but it is very common in school environments,⁵

Recommendation:

- The Government of Uganda through the ministry of education and sports should expedite the implementation of all policies that directly protect children from being bullied at home, in school and within the community.
- The Government should open up school youth corners to provide counselling to victims of bullying

4.0 REFERENCES:

- 1) ICESCR is an **international human rights** treaty adopted in 1966- It ensures the enjoyment of **economic, social and cultural rights**, including the **rights** to: education.
- 2) https://www.achpr.org/public/Document/file/English/achpr_instr_charterchild_eng.pdf
- 3) [https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7789-treaty-0033 - african youth charter](https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7789-treaty-0033_-_african_youth_charter)
- 4) <https://www.hrcug.org/publications>
- 5) <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/180-p7-pupils-in-kamuli-get-pregnant-in-lockdown-rdc-3324056>
- 6) Oxfam (2018) Gender Roles and the Care Economy in Ugandan Households
- 7) [National Youth Policy Popular Version.pdf 2016](#)
- 8) [https://convention+on+the+elimination+of+domestic+violence+against+women+\(CEDAW:](https://convention+on+the+elimination+of+domestic+violence+against+women+(CEDAW:)
- 9) https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Uganda_2005.pdf
- 10) <https://www.google.com/search?q=African+Union+Charter+on+the+Rights+and+Welfare+of+the+African+Child&oq=African>
- 11)
- 12) <https://www.un.org › about-us › universal-declaration>

⁵ <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/education/bullying-a-vice-that-must-be-kicked-out-of-schools-1857236>