

**A NATIONAL GRASSROOTS WOMEN'S REVIEW REPORT**

**UGANDA PARALLEL REPORT**

**THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION (1995)**

**OCTOBER, 2019**

**COMPILED BY**

National Association for Women's Action in Development (NAWAD)

National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE)

Coalition on Girl's Empowerment (COGE)

### **National Association for Women's Action in Development (NAWAD)**

Established in 2009, NAWAD is a voluntary non-governmental women's organization that focuses on the family and the crucial role women play in their families, communities and the development of the Country. NAWAD works with and for grassroots women to transform their lives so that they can demand, claim and protect their economic and social rights. Her goal is to promote the fundamental human rights of women and young girls especially in relation to sustainable management of the environment and natural resources, health, and economic security while putting women at the forefront. NAWAD has been at a forefront in developing and strengthening a grassroots women led eco-feminist movement in Uganda to foster women's participation in development, amplifying their voices and advocacy. The eco-feminist movement focuses on collaboration and collective action, to influence decision making locally and in national development processes as well as promote the adoption of feminist livelihoods and energy alternatives in communities. As a movement, eco-feminism aims to organize and enable grassroots women to challenge oppression. Working within and with the women's movement and other agencies enhances collective capacity to build effective dialogues with local and national government, and civil society and ensures that women's rights are at the heart of every interaction. NAWAD's expertise in organising grassroots women's movement was key in leading and coordinating this project.

### **Coalition on Girl's Empowerment (COGE)**

This is a coalition that brings together all actors in civil society organizations at district, national, regional and international levels to empower girls to be able to influence policy and decision making, mobilize all girl's children especially adolescent girls and young women in Uganda for strategic support to propel girl's efforts to participate in the process of bringing

about positive social change. COGE's participation in this meeting brought in the rich experience of young girls, and the facilitation expertise of Ms. Orizaarwa Elliot, their country, coordinator.

### **National Association of Professional Environmentalists (NAPE)**

NAPE is a lobby and advocacy environmental organization committed to finding sustainable solutions to Uganda's most challenging environmental and economic growth problems. Formed in 1997, NAPE monitors government actions, conducts research, provides educational materials, develops science-based strategies, organizes affected communities, makes common causes with other civil society organizations and international organizations, and engages government to advocate for change. Through its Sustainability School Programme, NAPE has been training women activists in affected areas to voice their demands through advocacy, lobbying and media work. NAPE's participation in this meeting brought out women activists participation and voices.

### **Womankind Worldwide**

Womankind Worldwide (Womankind) is a global women's rights organization working with women's movements to transform the lives of women. Her vision is a world where the rights of all women are respected, valued and realized. Womankind supports women's movements to strengthen and grow by providing a range of tools including technical support, communications, connectivity and shared learning, joint advocacy and fundraising. Womankind brought financial and technical support to this project.

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**Patience Muramuzi (Mrs.)**

**Executive Director**

**National Association for Women's Action in Development (NAWAD)**

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>BPFA</b>	Beijing Platform for Action
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
<b>COGE</b>	Coalition on Girl's Empowerment
<b>FAWE</b>	Forum for African Women Educationists Uganda.
<b>GBV</b>	Gender Based Violence
<b>MGLSD</b>	Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development
<b>NAPE</b>	National Association of Professional Environmentalists
<b>NAWAD</b>	National Association for Women's Action in Development
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>OWC</b>	Operation Wealth Creation
<b>SAGE</b>	Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>VAW/G</b>	Violence against women and Girls

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Beijing Platform for Action is one of the most visionary agendas for the empowerment of women and girls, worldwide. The Beijing Platform for Action was adopted by 189 Governments, that committed to taking strategic, bold action in 12 critical areas of concern. The year 2020, marks 25 years since the Beijing Platform for Action, came into place. This will also be the 5th year of adopting the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The process of compiling the parallel report, included a mobilization of women from rural areas by NAWAD, COGE and NAPE. This was followed by a consultative meeting that aimed to capture their experiences on 5 thematic areas of Women, poverty and the economy; Education and training of women and girls; Violence against women and girls; Women in power and decision-making; and Women and the environment, of the BPfA. The participants were from various districts of Uganda.

Uganda has registered a significant progress in the last 24 years (1995 – 2019), in bid to empower women and girls. There is favorable legal framework on women's rights manifested in a number of international and regional frameworks that promote and protect women's rights that Uganda is a signatory to. At national level, the 1995 Constitution is considered to be one of the most gender sensitive in Africa.

Women's participation in politics and leadership positions has increased; for example, in 2011, a woman was elected Speaker of the Ugandan Parliament for the very first time. Women's economic empowerment is exhibited in women's active engaged in informal trade. The introduction of the Universal Primary Education Policy (1997) and Universal Secondary Education Policy (2007) has contributed to an increase in the numbers attaining girl child education.

However, gaps and challenges were also identified most of whom propelled by negative cultural attitudes and practices in different societies that have continued the marginalization of women. These gaps are further favored by inadequate implementation of laws and corruption.

Recommendations called for sensitization and education of young women and girls of their rights. Involvement of all stakeholders in promoting human rights was highly recommended. The participation of grassroots women in the Beijing +25 review consultative meeting was exciting and gave participants an opportunity to appreciate government's commitments to gender equality and women empowerment and to voice their issues of concern. Participants called for a bottom up approach to the domestication of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in an attempt to inclusively contribute to the realization of SDGs.



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

NAWAD, COGE and NAPE have compiled this parallel report in accordance with the guidance note from the UN Women NGO Guidance for National Parallel Reports during 25th anniversary of the fourth world conference on women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995). The report includes initiatives, actions and measures taken by the Government to advance women's rights from 1995 to date. Information on the initiatives and progress towards achieving women's rights under the 5 thematic areas of women, poverty and economy; women's education and training; violence against women; women in power and decision making and women and the environment, during consultative meeting with women from 30 districts across Uganda.

The report includes data and statistics from sources such as World Bank reports, Newspaper articles and the latest surveys conducted during the reporting period, such as Uganda Demographic and Health Survey, and other periodic studies conducted by Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) and online resources. The report is organized as follows:

Chapter 1: Overview of Uganda's situation in regards to Women's rights. Also, including the political and socio-economic context; legal and policy developments, existing challenges, and mechanisms in place for dialogue and support to the advancement of women.

Chapter 2: Overview of achievement and challenges since 1995 under each of the following thematic areas.

Chapter 3: Recommendations for each thematic area and conclusion.

# CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE WOMEN'S RIGHTS SITUATION IN UGANDA

## 1.1 THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

In regards to governance, Uganda has one of the lowest rankings. The Corruption Perceptions Index published by Transparency International in 2019 shows that Uganda ranked 149th out of 175 countries. Although basic policies, legal and institutional frameworks for improved accountability are in place, enforcement is lacking as evidenced by embezzlement of public funds in areas such as Universal Primary Education capitation grants, Ministry of Health drug procurement and management and funds earmarked for the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS), among other examples<sup>1</sup>.

The gendered dimension of corruption shapes how women live their daily lives given the socio-economic and political norms. Women frequently become the “shock absorbers” for their families when financial means are inadequate. They are particularly impacted by health sector corruption given ‘differentiated and greater needs for health services and broader inequalities that expose them to greater health needs; requiring special attention and care during pregnancies and delivery which often are expensive<sup>2</sup>. Poor health does not affect only the women but the entire family’s economic stability and empowerment as well as the ability to participate in leadership and influence decision making processes for gender responsiveness. The struggle to combat corruption has been weakened by the inconsistency of policy makers to review the auditor general’s annual reports and hence the need to put increased pressure on them to be more accountable and to play their roles effectively.

Uganda has also come up with several initiatives to increase women’s political participation in the country. Statistics since 1986 indicate a steady rise in female participation in political leadership. Despite this progress, the lack of transformative change in legislations, policies and programmes towards the

<sup>1</sup>Irish Aid 2014: Final report by evaluation and audit unit to secretary general on misappropriation of funds in the office of the prime minister, Uganda

<sup>2</sup>Women, Health and Corruption: Redefining Partnerships for Social Change, written by Kathleen GNOCATO, Anika Harford, Kailee JORDAN, Elizabeth SHELLY

lives of women raises pertinent questions regarding effective engagement and influence of women in politics. Women's participation in politics continues to be challenged by conceptual clarity on the roles of elected women leaders and their representation; and understanding the role of affirmative action. The introduction of affirmative action was not followed with civic education to enhance understanding of women leaders, thus presenting a challenge for women who seek to stand in direct seats in Ugandan parliament. Also, political parties are marred by weak organizational structures, and a weak link to societies that they are supposed to represent. This has created a system of political patronage that is masculine and gender blind. As per July 2014, none of the prominent political parties in Uganda had achieved a 50:50 representation of women as per the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2004) that Uganda is signatory to<sup>3</sup>.

According to the World Bank, Uganda's economy has recently grown at a slower pace, reducing its impact on incomes and poverty reduction. Average annual growth was 4.5% in the five years

to 2016, compared to the 7% achieved during the 1990s and early 2000s. The slowdown was mainly driven by adverse weather, unrest in South Sudan, private sector credit constraints, and the poor execution of public projects. However, the economy rebounded in the latter half of 2017, driven largely by growth in information and communication technology (ICT) services and favorable weather conditions for the agricultural sector. Real gross domestic product (GDP) growth was projected above 5% in 2018 and rose further to 6% in 2019. This outlook assumes continued good weather, favorable external conditions to boost demand for exports and an increase in foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows as oil production begins, and capital investments executed as planned<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup>See Article 2 (11) of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2004) as well as e Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality (adopted by the AU in July 2004), as well as the African Union Gender Policy, which under Commitment 1(3) restates the AU 50/50 Gender Parity Principle.

<sup>4</sup><https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/uganda/overview>

Reliance on rain-fed agriculture, however, remains a downside risk to growth, the poor's income, as well as export earnings. Tax collections are below expectations and fiscal pressures are rising<sup>5</sup>. Finally, regional instability and a continued influx of refugees could undermine exports and disrupt growth in refugee hosting parts of Uganda. Potentially intensifying conflicts in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), currently Uganda's 2nd and 4th top export destinations, could negatively affect the growth of Uganda's exports. Lower exports, taxes and overall growth, will have implications for debt sustainability and the current account.

In relation to social inclusion and equity, although poverty levels have declined over the years and Uganda is said to have met the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) target of halving the poverty rate by 2015, The Uganda National Household Survey (UNHS) conducted between May 2009 and April 2010 indicates that inequality between the rich and the poor has risen from 4.1 in 2005/06 to 4.2 in 2009/10<sup>6</sup>. It is important to observe that this increase was driven by significant increases in inequality of income in rural areas of the northern and North-Eastern regions. In addition, population growth rate at 3.2% per year is among the highest in the world and this is not matched with equal efforts to boost the quality (production and productivity) of life of the population<sup>7</sup>.

Uganda has taken major strides in mainstreaming gender in most national aspects and is a signatory to various international commitments. However, overall, women still lag behind men in a number of aspects, thus stressing the need to address the numerous constraints to gender equality. For instance, there are a number of cultural attitudes and practices that are biased against women and these hinder women's access to education, economic benefits, health services and decision-making.

The government of Uganda has given high priority to improvement of the health status in the last 25 years, as evident in the development and implementation of the National Health Policy (NHP) I and the Health Sector Strategic Investment

<sup>5</sup>1 JANUARY 2020: The Independent by Julius Businge

<sup>6</sup>28 OCTOBER 2010: The Daily Monitor by Faridah Kulabako

<sup>7</sup><http://npcsec.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Ugandas-Transition-Towards-Population-Stabilisation.pdf>

Plan (HSSIP) I and II. Since then, GoU has tried to improve in the health sector status through access in which it has established health centers in different districts. The most interesting issue however is although access may be seemingly perfect, utilization remains a challenge. These facilities are characterized by high drug stock outs; very limited staffing compared to patient numbers (disturbing statistics: doctor to patient ratio (1:24,725), nurse/midwife to patient ratio (1: 11,000)<sup>8</sup> and notwithstanding the high absenteeism and wanting quality of staff; some of these facilities are operated by staff with lower qualifications compared to what the policy provides. Budget allocation to health has also significantly reduced over the years from 9.6 % in 2003 to 8.6 % in 2014/15 as opposed to the Abuja Declaration target of 15 percent thus suffocating affords to rejuvenate health delivery<sup>9</sup>.

## 1.2 LEGAL AND POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

Uganda has ratified several international instruments on the rights of women and has further adopted these in national laws and policies/initiatives.

**The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**, calls upon States parties “to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all spheres of life. Article 10 calls upon state parties to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women; Article 12 calls on States Parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning. Article 14 calls on States Parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, to ensure to such women the right; to participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels.

<sup>8</sup>12 MAY 2019: The New Vision by Jacky Achan

<sup>9</sup>2 FEBRUARY 2017: The New Vision by Admin

And finally Article 15 calls upon States Parties to accord to women equality with men before the law; States Parties shall accord to women, in civil matters, a legal capacity identical to that of men and the same opportunities to exercise that capacity.

**The UNSCR 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security** reaffirmed the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and stressed the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, as well as the need to increase their participation in leadership and decision-making.

**Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** The post 2015 development agenda especially, goal 3, 4, and 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, namely: Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages; Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; Achieve gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, embraces gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

**The 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda:** This is the supreme law, which provides a broad legal framework for the protection of human rights and equality between men and women. Article 21; provides for affirmative action to address any gender imbalances (Article 28); equal opportunities for men and women to realize their full potential (Article 30 and 32), and the foundation for the establishment of institutions to oversee or otherwise regulate the observance of fundamental rights and principles.

**The National Development Plan (NDP):** The plan emphasizes the transition of Uganda to a prosperous nation by 2015 with a critical focus on increasing access to quality social services. Achievement of this is centered on participation of the citizens particularly the marginalized groups, including women in the development processes coupled with accountable leadership.

Despite the conducive legal and policy framework for the promotion of women's rights and gender equality in Uganda, the rights of women are continuously violated and the marginalization of women continues in Uganda.

## CHAPTER 2: PRIORITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND SETBACKS

### 2.1 WOMEN, POVERTY AND THE ECONOMY

Women are engaged in gainful employment thus earning income to sustain their livelihoods. About 400,000 youths are released annually into the job market<sup>10</sup> and more women than men are employed in the informal sector. In 2014, it was estimated that the informal sector contributed to over 50% of Uganda's GDP and employ 80% of its labor force<sup>11</sup>.

Access to credit for rural women: Through the engagement of women in Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLAs) in different parts of the country women are able to save and acquire loans, to meet their basic needs and or pay school fees; Women save in groups for a given time, agree on a day to meet and share their saved money which helps them when in need. These VSLAs survive on the good will of members since there is no social security provided by government.

Economic empowerment of women through capacity building on entrepreneurship - Various organizations have played a key role in training women to start income generating projects like poultry, piggery, goat rearing and beekeeping among others. Some of the NGOs cited are Forum for African Women Educationists (FAWE) Uganda.

#### Challenges

Limited access to credit from financial institutions such as banks and microfinance institutions. This a general problem to most women because they are in the informal sector. The challenge widens especially for women with disabilities, as society has a negative attitude towards them. For these categories of women, the situation is worsened by the lack of collateral security as women are generally poorer than men in Uganda and do not own factors of production such as land, required in accessing bank loans. This also explains the lack of access to capital to start businesses.

<sup>10</sup>ACODE 2014: YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND JOB CREATION IN UGANDA: Opportunities and Challenges

<sup>11</sup>SIHA 2019: The invisible laborers of Kampala.

Limited ownership and control of productive resources like land by women. More than 80 % of land in Uganda is held under undocumented customary law<sup>12</sup> and this is controlled by men. Most women can only access and use this land but do not own it. The prevailing land laws do not commendably protect women's land rights. For instance, the Land Act requires spousal consent for land transactions, but it does not include an enforcement mechanism. The Land Act also requires the issuance of certificates of customary ownership, for protection of customary rights, but the certificate is issued in the name of the family head, typically a male, rather than the family as a whole. The Succession Act significantly limits widows' rights, entitling them to just 15 % of the deceased husband's estate, and even that is uncertain if the widow was not legally married to her late husband and or due to the limited control women have over such property.

Economic violence suffered by women, majority of whom till family land which they do not have control over. Men sell food crops which have been planted by women or demand all the money from the sale of the crops. Men grabbing the money that women get for credit from their saving schemes. Women cannot report their husbands to police for fear of being chased away from the home.

Land grabbing for purposes of investing by Government, such as sugarcane growing. A case in point is the Apaa land in Amuru district<sup>13</sup>, which saw the displacement of many families in the name of investment. Also, sugarcane out growers, in eastern Uganda, are using all the land for sugarcane and leaving none for food crops, thus exposing the family to food insecurity and malnutrition.

Land grabbing and unfair land compensation by government (land is undervalued) especially in areas where investors have an interest. There have been cases in Hoima and Bullisa district, where many people were unfairly compensated and others displaced from their land.

<sup>12</sup><http://www.focusonland.com/countries/womens-customary-rights-in-uganda/>

<sup>13</sup> 14 FEBRUARY 2019: The New Vision by Eddie Ssejjoba





*A participant from Hoima sharing her experience on land grabbing*

Climate change affects agricultural production, particularly crop yields. The Agriculture sector in Uganda is experiencing climate change effects manifested through, frequent and intense prolonged dry spells, droughts, floods, increase in temperature and higher incidence of pests and diseases. This has resulted into shifts in farming seasons, which has led to loss and damages, and ultimately contributed to the low agriculture performance. These effects are predicted to increase in magnitude and intensity, thus, further constraining agricultural production and people's livelihoods. Therefore, sustainable agricultural production in the future will highly depend on a climate resilient agriculture sector, with an effective planning and integrated implementation approach.

Damage of crops by animals in areas situated next to national parks. For instance, in Nwoya district, animals from the Murchison Falls National Park destroy crops, and communities report but are not helped by relevant authorities. Uganda Wildlife Authority, a government institution responsible for the national parks, has not done much to help these communities.

Lack of employment has led to an increase in human trafficking. Youth unemployment stands at between 64% and 70%, and about 400,000 youths are released annually into the job market to compete for approximately 9,000 available jobs.

About 30% of the youths who are institutionally qualified in Uganda are unable to find jobs, and the situation is even worse for semiskilled and unskilled youths<sup>14</sup>. Youths who remain unemployed or underemployed and do not exploit their full potential, are often associated with high incidences of drug abuse and gambling and majority are exported to provide labour in Arab countries where they have met gross human right abuses and human trafficking. This is worse for women and girls who offer their labour for export.

Government programmes meant to economically empower women, are not benefiting a majority of the rural women due to corruption and mismanagement of funds. According to 2012 report<sup>15</sup> by Irish Aid, €4 million of funds provided by Irish Aid, intended for the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP) in Northern Uganda, was misappropriated within the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM).

Negative cultural norms and values that have affected education of girls. In the rural areas, many girls are dropping out and getting married due to negative cultural beliefs that a woman's place is in marriage, which negatively affects their chances of completing their education.

## 2.2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

Government has provided free primary education since 1996 and free secondary education in 2007. Enrollment in primary education has increased since then. Gender parity has been achieved at primary level with increased enrolment of both boys and girls. Similarly, statistics from the Ministry of education and Sports indicated that the secondary school scheme had particularly increased public-school enrolment for girls from poorer households. The proportion of girls in the sample area attending public schools increased from 10.6% in 2005 to nearly 15% in 2009. There has also been inclusive education for pupils and students with special needs.

<sup>14</sup> ACODE 2014: YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND JOB CREATION IN UGANDA: Opportunities and Challenges

<sup>15</sup>Irish Aid 2014: Final report by evaluation and audit unit to secretary general on misappropriation of funds in the office of the prime minister, Uganda

Senior women and male (school counselors) teachers have been introduced in primary and secondary schools to provide guidance and counseling to pupils and students, especially the girls who are faced with a number of challenges compared to the boys. Some of these include: dealing with menstruation; time consuming household chores and long distances to schools, among others.

The affirmative action policy which awards 1.5 extra bonus points to any Ugandan girl qualifying to enter public universities, (to increase their chances of being admitted into a public university) has increased the number of female students' enrollment in public universities. The policy increased the percentage of females at Makerere University and other public universities from 25 % in 1989 to 46% in 2010<sup>16</sup>.

Business, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (BTVET) has been established in various districts and women have been encouraged to acquire vocational training. It aims at shifting from the traditional academic teaching to skills development.

Promotion of Adult education and literacy. The Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) programme, which is delivered by the Ugandan Government with assistance from various NGOs, was designed to be a literacy programme that would focus on linking literacy to people's livelihoods and needs. As a result of the FAL programme, rural women have learnt how to read and write; reading the children's report cards; reading health reports and book keeping in business.

Sexual reproductive health education is being provided in schools thus helping girls learn how to manage menstruation among others, which is one of the main reasons for school going girls dropping out of school. Also, teenage mothers are being given a second chance to education after giving birth.

<sup>16</sup>14 JUNE 2010: The Monitor (Kampala) By Patience Ahimbisibwe



*The chair person of NAWAD Board of Governors highlighting progress achieved and challenges met in education and training of women and girls.*

## **Challenges**

High poverty rates among Ugandans means that many are not attending school because they cannot afford to buy even basic school requirements such as books and uniforms. Uganda is one of the poorest countries in the world with poverty rates standing at 19.7 % in 2013. The 2016 poverty assessment report indicated a significantly reduction in poverty levels between 2006 and 2013, with the number of Ugandans living below the poverty line decline from 31.1 % in 2006 to 19.7 % in 2013. However, the actual poverty situation on the ground is tragic with the different regions registering extreme poverty levels.

Children with special needs, face a number of challenges that affect their education. The start of Universal primary education in 1997 by the government of Uganda put in place integrated education. Children with disabilities are accessing education through the mainstream schools. However, they are faced with many challenges in accessing special education in Uganda. These includes: lack of good physical infrastructure; lack of educational materials, difficult access to classrooms, and teachers are not trained or motivated to teach these students.

Long distances to schools affect school attendance and performance. In most rural districts in Uganda, the commonest means of transport is walking or cycling. The road infrastructure in most rural areas in Uganda is poor with few vehicles plying these routes. This coupled with a high level of poverty, limits expenditure on transport. Students and teachers get to school very tired from walking or cycling and the teachers are too fatigued to teach and students too tired to learn.

Quality of Universal primary education is poor. The massive enrollment of boys and girls has led to increased pressure on the existing inadequate infrastructure and human resource to deliver quality education. According to the Ministerial Policy Statement for the Education Sector for FY2016/17, the proficiency rate at primary six level continue reducing to 39.4% and 38.3% from 45.2% and 40.8% in 2012 for numeracy and literacy respectively.

Poor school retention and high school dropout rates. The introduction of Universal Primary Education in Uganda in 1997, increased school enrolment of both boys and girls in lower primary school but the dropout rates are high for girls. According to the Ministerial Policy Statement for the Education Sector for FY2016/17, though the survival rate from primary 1 to 7 has gradually improved, out of the 10 students enrolled in UPE, only 3 of them survive dropout till primary 7<sup>17</sup>.

The Affirmative action policy of awarding an extra 1.5 bonus points to girls, to qualify to enter public universities, is insufficient in addressing equity issues, especially in science-related courses. The surge in female numbers has been almost exclusive to humanities, with virtually no change in female intake in science subjects.

<sup>17</sup><http://parliamentwatch.ug/everything-wrong-with-upe-and-how-to-solve-it/>

## 2.3 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Establishment of the Child and Family Protection Unit (CFPU) in 1998, in the police in Uganda has helped to handle domestic violence cases. Its purpose is the investigation of all cases related to the abuse of children and women's rights. Establishment of Gender Based Violence (GBV) shelters funded by Government and other NGOs. At least 10 GBV shelters have been established in different parts of Uganda. This is to provide temporary accommodation for protection as well as security for survivors. It is also where survivors are provided counseling, psychosocial support, Legal aid, Case management; representation in courts of Law, rehabilitation and resettlement of survivors to the most comfortable and safe environment. These were managed by action Aid Uganda, Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) and MIFUMI.

Recruitment of Gender and Probation officers at district and sub county levels. These have been recruited at different levels and act as channels of referral to make sure cases of violence against women and girls are handled. S/he will also support the review of the district development plans and budgets to ensure that they are gender and equity responsive. Advocacy and awareness creation by women rights organizations on violence against women e.g. annual 16 days of activism against GBV activity series help raise awareness on GBV in the communities. Some of these organizations are: Action Aid Uganda, center for Domestic Violence Prevention (CEDOVIP), Uganda Women's Network, among others. Speaking out on violence against women through social media platforms in a move to create awareness on VAW such as domestic violence and cyber violence against women are some of the activities conducted during the 16 days of activism against GBV.

Enactment of laws such as the Domestic Violence Act 2010. Through the efforts of the Domestic Violence Coalition, advocacy on the bill, led to enactment into Domestic Violence Act and Policy. The law aims at providing protection and relief of survivors of domestic violence.

## Challenges

Negative cultural attitudes and practices in different societies have continued the marginalization of women. In many societies in Uganda, violence against women has been normalized with women acting as gate keepers to such cultures e.g., in many societies, it is believed that if a man does not beat you, he does not love you. Patriarchy is still deeply entrenched in the societies. This manifests itself through unequal power relations resulting into violence against women.

Limited ownership of property such as land by women. This implies that women are vulnerable to eviction from land and cannot use land as collateral security. They are also not assured of earning income or food security from the crops they grow on such land.

Inadequate implementation of laws on domestic violence. The Domestic Violence Act 2010 was passed but failure by Government to implement through increasing the percentage of the national budget to directly address this, has led to persistent increase in violence against women. According to the 2018 Annual Crime Report, there was a decrease in the volume of crime by 5.2%, between 2017 and 2018, however, there was an increase in homicides, and sex related crimes. This is worsened by corruption while survivors of violence seek justice, for instance bribery in the police with perpetrators going free .



*Some of the participants presenting work from group discussions about violence against women and girls*

## 2.4 WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

The Government has provided an enabling environment through policies and frameworks in place to support women's participation in leadership. This has seen women's participation in politics and leadership positions increase over time. For example, since the signing of the BPfA Declaration, Uganda has registered having had a woman vice president in her history and in 2011, a woman was elected Speaker of the Ugandan Parliament for the very first time. Appointment of women in key leadership positions has also proved that women can make it and this has provided role models for other women. For instance, Ms. Jenifer Musisi former Executive Director of Kampala; Ms. Allen Kagina, Executive Director of Uganda Revenue Authority; Ms. Doris Akol Executive Director of Uganda Revenue Authority.

Women's economic empowerment is exhibited in women's active engaged in informal trade. The introduction of the Universal Primary Education Policy (1997) and Universal Secondary Education Policy (2007) has contributed to an increase in the numbers attaining girl child education. Through the affirmative action policy established in 1997, Women representation is at 34% in Parliament and 40 % in local councils<sup>18</sup>.

### Challenges

Negative cultural attitudes towards women's involvement in leadership. Women's traditional role in the home has made it difficult for them to get involved in leadership, as they have the burden of the triple gender role as women. This explains why only 33 women out of 426 members of Parliament are on direct seat (other than affirmative action seat) in Parliament.

The Participation of women in political leadership in Uganda has increased over the years. The numbers however have not yielded a lot of results. Women's low literacy levels and failure to speak English, and yet it's the language used to conduct council business, affects their performance in political leadership particularly at local council level.

<sup>18</sup>Daily Monitor: Is affirmative action working for women? 6th March 2015



Monetization of elections. This affects women's full participation in political leadership because most women are more economically disadvantaged than their male peers for various reasons, mainly due to discrimination and marginalization. Women have to cover a whole district to solicit votes for the affirmative action seat in Parliament and yet the men represent a constituency within the district (which is smaller in size). The challenge with this is that, the amount of allowance given, does not take into consideration this difference in area coverage. This implies that women are over strained in their leadership role and require more resources to effectively and efficiently perform, something that is further stretched by their domestic and reproductive roles in their homes.

There are loopholes in the law that affects women's participation in political leadership. For instance: The law requires that civil servants who wish to run for political posts need to resign their jobs, a provision that hinders many qualified women including teachers and nurses from contesting for political leadership positions .



*Participants during group discussions on thematic areas of the meeting*

## 2.5 WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The climate crisis is already impacting some of the poorest and most vulnerable women in Uganda. On top of generations of colonialism and poverty, now women face destruction and dispossession of their most basic resources in the form of land, water, and forest grabbing and polluting for extractive and dirty energy projects, agribusiness and more. Most of the women, are reeling from the injustice while the power of transnational corporations and local elites only gets stronger. Women have been disproportionately affected by environmental injustice, climate change, disasters and the exploitation given their role as stewards of nature and care takers of their communities. This is especially so for peasant and indigenous women and female workers.

Climate justice is a really important concept for grassroots women. The Bududa mudslides and rain over pours, hot sunshine in Isingiro, over flooding in various districts in 2019 were some of the deadliest weather events in recent years, but they are not the only ones impacting the people and women in Uganda. Persistent drought in Southern and Western Uganda, rising conflicts over natural resources and population displacements, increased incidence of malaria among others are other deadliest events facing the people of Uganda. The development pathways that the state is following involve the same old models of extractivism, oil and gas exports, export-oriented development with no consideration of the poorest and most vulnerable people in the country, only the elites.

On the other hand, we are facing a scourge of false solutions and new terrains of extractivism. The rich countries who do not really want to reduce their emissions, instead have invented many false solutions to pretend to compensate or offset their emissions. These schemes coming into as carbon trading, REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation), 'green economy', soil carbon sequestration, natural climate solutions like GMOs, and geoengineering are grabbing more community lands and increasing the dispossession, while not actually reducing emissions. These false solutions are not only exacerbating the climate crisis but also worsening the social and environmental injustices being faced by communities most especially women.

The extraction of oil in the Albertine region in districts such as Hoima and Buliisa, has led to destruction of land, thus altering food security and agriculture. Communities in the Albertine region dependent largely on crop agriculture, livestock rearing, hunting, fishing and forestry, all of which are impacted by oil exploration and drilling.

The oil industry activities are associated with various environmental impacts, including water and air pollution, land loss and degradation. Women in this meeting reported significant fears about their children's safety and health as a result of environmental impacts. It was also mentioned that scant attention has been paid to gender dynamics in the environmental impact assessments (EIAs) conducted by Government so far. Women confirmed that gender was not a specific area of focus in the terms of reference developed for EIAs.

Ecosystems are destroyed as a result of large-scale deforestation. In districts such as Kalangala, large scale deforestation for purposes of investing in Palm oil by companies like BIDCO led to water sources being destroyed. As a result, women are walking long distances in search of water which exposes girls and women to sexual abuse by plantation workers. The entry of large-scale extractives industries to generally rural geographies in Uganda inevitably accompanied by mega 'infrastructure' investments roads, railways, pipelines, ports and the very necessary energy and dam projects brings great hardship to the majority of peasants, indigenous peoples, rural dwellers and women. The impacts on land and water the major communal resources from which people, women specifically, create livelihoods for families and communities and on people's health and women's unpaid labour are so grave that the overall costs of mineral and oil extraction have outweighed the benefits, principally enjoyed by the local and ruling elite, corporates and investors. All of these costs are gendered, meaning women are carrying these costs because of pre-existing gender inequalities mainly structured around an unequal division of labour in which women are taking primary responsibility for subsistence and care, two realms which receive little state support and investment.

Dangers of displaced women and girls, for women this is traumatic experience that many never able fully overcome. About half of refugees in Uganda are women and girls. Reasons for fleeing include violence, displacement or natural disasters, as well as forced marriages and many forms of violence forced upon them by families and partners in many areas of Uganda. Yet when they flee women are subjected to sexualized and gender-based violence. There has been a high risk that their protection as they flee are abused by human traffickers, other refugees, male relatives. Reports from the meeting indicated smugglers & human traffickers working together to force displaced women into prostitution.

Also, the increased use of mercury in the mining of gold in Moroto and Mubende districts, possess appalling health consequences, such as mental disability, emotional instability, insomnia, neuromuscular problems, infertility, headaches and many other host of sicknesses<sup>19</sup>.

Oil exploration and exploitation have had direct economic, social and cultural impacts on local communities. Oil activities have reduced women's access to traditional livelihood resources. Women and men, girls and boys, play specific economic roles in their families and communities. The oil sector, therefore, has had unique and gender-differentiated impacts on their livelihoods. For instance, the loss of food crops from surveying land has had specific and disproportionate consequences for women because they tend to play a greater role in food crop cultivation and are responsible for ensuring household food security. This factor has made women less engaged in income generation and salaried employment, where they generally lack qualifications. Compensation was given for the crops affected by exploration activities rather than for land surveyed, which did not adequately compensate for the long-term damage to women's livelihoods.

Meeting findings indicated a correlation between Uganda's oil industry and certain forms of violence and socially exploitative practices. Indeed, the development of extractive industry was associated with 'boomtown' effects: increased investment accelerates modernization and monetization of the local economy,

<sup>19</sup> 8 DECEMBER 2016: Oil in Uganda by Action Aid

which can destabilize social relations by creating powerful new incentives. Women participants in the meeting commonly identified a connection between the industry and increased prostitution, domestic violence, and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) as well as alcoholism. Related to this, women mentioned casual laborers engaging in sexual relationships with girls as young as 13 years old in Buliisa district. Women also described girls forming relationships with oil workers, becoming pregnant, and dropping out of school as a result.

Climate change has affected the agriculture sector which supports the livelihood of the majority population, with agriculture employing 70% of Ugandans. Climate change is manifested through extreme weather conditions of drought and heavy rains. This affects agricultural yields, food security, and livelihoods. Similarly, commercialization of agriculture has also led to increased fertilizer use, which affects the soil production in the long run.

Despite the role women play in conserving the environment and in agriculture their access to productive resources is still limited than that of male counterparts. Nearly 3 quarters of land holders are men. When they are owners' women tend to have smaller plots. They won less livestock than men and have more restricted access to trainings, extension advice and other financial services. The restrictions on land ownership of women has resulted into limited possibilities to access credits since collaterals are standard.

## CHAPTER 3: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter highlights some of the recommendations made under each of the thematic areas of focus, for further actions:

### 3.1 WOMEN, POVERTY AND THE ECONOMY

The Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development should sensitize and educate young women that are seeking employment abroad, about the dangers of human trafficking.

The Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development and The Ministry of Foreign affairs should enforce the law on human trafficking through mechanisms such as establishment of offices or tools such as helplines through which laborers working abroad can report human rights abuses and access justice.

The Government should strengthen enforcement of the land Act and Land Policy thus supporting women to actualize their right to not only access but own land. Land is a critical factor of production and it is required as collateral security while seeking to acquire loan to start or expand businesses.

The district Local Governments should monitor Government programmes, so as to curb down corruption. The Government programmes intended for women and men in the communities are not benefiting them because of misappropriation of funds, and nepotism. Also, Operation Wealth Creation (government agricultural programme) should be decentralized from district to lower council level, to enable better provision of services.

The Government should consider providing social protection for the elderly and persons with special needs such as those who are blind. The Government has been providing the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE) for senior citizen older than 65 years, but this has only been targeting 14 districts out of 134 districts.

The district Local Governments should formulate by-laws to enable out growers of sugarcane in Buikwe and Jinja districts, reserve part of land for food crops to avoid hunger and to promote food security. Functional by-laws also need to apply to other large co-operations working in Uganda whose activities directly or indirectly lead to violation of human and women rights; they should be held accountable. The government should avail an enabling environment for this to be implemented.

Investing in and ensuring meaningful participation of women and girls in productive sectors, particularly agribusiness and agricultural value chains, to increase wealth and reduce poverty.

Reform the customary and statutory laws that impede women's access, control and ownership of land and other productive resources to facilitate their full participation in economic activities.

Invest in progressive taxation, mobilization of domestic resources, curbing illicit financial flows, gender-responsive budgeting, corporate accountability and uprooting corruption, in addition to the implementation of debt reduction.

### **3.2 EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS**

Some of the Practical solutions and recommendation highlighted include:

The Government should provide transport for school going children to promote school attendance and address the challenges of long distances to schools. The Government Policy is to have a secondary school in every sub county but that is not the reality on ground. Students have to walk long distances to school and this affects attendance.

The Ministry of Education and Sports should enforce and implement policies on sexual harassment happening in schools. Many girls are dropping out of school due to defilement and sexual violence related cases in school settings.

Civil Society Organizations working towards empowerment of women, should equip women with negotiation skills and communication skills to be able to combat domestic violence in the home. Being a patriarchal society, women do not make decisions and the unequal power relations results into conflict in the home

The government should provide social protection for child headed households. These exist in Northern districts of Uganda due to the war that existed for over 20 years that claimed many household heads; and those increasing especially in the districts of Rakai where the HIV/AIDS epidemic led to high loss of lives leaving behind child headed families.

The Government and Civil Society Organizations (CSO) should recognize and award with medals or prizes to women who work tirelessly, to support/mentor other women and girls. This can be through intergenerational dialogues between young women and older women and the older women can act as role models to other women and encourage women to dare to challenge the status quo.

The Ministry of Education and Sports should budget for emergency sanitary pads in schools. Girls are dropping out of school and absenteeism is because of poor menstrual management. Many girls in rural areas cannot afford sanitary pads.

Investing in education, training, science and technology for women and girls to promote their equal access to employment and eliminate occupational segregation.

### **3.3 VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS**

Some of the Practical solutions and recommendation highlighted include:

Women and girls should be sensitized on their rights and existing laws. This is to enhance knowledge and create awareness among women and girls, thus enabling them to have information on where to seek help in case of violence.

Engage cultural and religious leaders at grassroots levels to spread peace and denounce violence against women and girls. Communities respect religious and cultural leaders.

Through sensitization, Civil Society Organisations should empower grassroots women/ girls to speak out about violence against women. This will help address the normalization and reduce the tolerance to violence against women.

The Government should strengthen her programs to economically empower women through her economic empowerment programmes. One of the causes of violence against women is poverty. Although Government policies, programmes and opportunities exist, in the private sector, women don't have access to information, and the process of applying for financing is competitive and bureaucratic. When they have access to information they are most likely to have control of the proceeds.



The Government should establish and provide funding to run existing Gender Based Violence (GBV) shelters. These shelters provide emergency services such as legal aid services, medication and psychosocial support for survivors of GBV.

The Government should increase budget allocations to the Family and Child Protection Unit of Police, at which cases of violence against women and girls are reported. The Police does not have adequate resources to follow up cases of domestic violence and to provide survivors of sexual violence with Police form 3A.

The Government should facilitate and fasten enactment of existing Bills into laws. An example of this is the Marriage and Divorce Bill into an Act. Unfortunately, the Marriage and Divorce Bill formerly that seeks to address some of the issues such as domestic violence, has been pending enactment for over 40 years now. The government should also pass the Sexual Offenses Bill into law to fight against sexualized violence, sexual harassment and marital rape.

Eliminating all discriminatory laws, practices, negative stereotypes and social norms that are based on culture and not aligned to international and constitutional commitments to human rights.

Eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls as a prerequisite for gender equality and women's empowerment.

### **3.4 WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING**

Some of the Practical solutions and recommendation highlighted include:

Empower women economically to enable them compete favorably in elections. Successful campaigns require both human and financial resources and yet women are mostly economically disadvantaged because they are less likely to own assets compared to men.

Civil Society Organizations should continue providing capacity building programs for potential women candidates competing for leadership positions at district and national level. This also should target women leaders in parliament to enable them get skills to drive a gender agenda in parliament.

### 3.5 WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Some of the Practical solutions and recommendation highlighted include:

A National Action Plan for Gender and the Extractives will help guide government in developing policy, programmes and legislation that will do a better job of addressing challenges facing women affected by and hoping to benefit from Uganda's oil sector. A strong and transparent monitoring and reporting system – including collection of gender-disaggregated data will strengthen the likely impact of this plan.

Women's property rights should be better protected by national legislation. In the context of natural resource conflict and aggressive forms of land speculation in Uganda's oil regions, vulnerable groups such as widows, divorcees, women in cohabitation and children need greater legal protection. Government should build the capacity of local councils and district land boards to respond to gender needs when managing land conflicts.

Community development officers (CDOs) already have a mandate to encourage underprivileged social groups to take part in decision-making and to raise community awareness of existing legislation on gender and child rights, among others. On top of this, local women and girls must be protected from the misconduct of outside company workers by prioritizing community development and probation offices in local government budget allocations. The capacity of local governance institutions should be strengthened in order to enforce national laws against trafficking, SGBV and defilement of minors.

Terms of reference for EIAs need to take into consideration the gender dynamics of the environment, including specific indicators to address gender inequalities and the divergent needs and experiences of men and women, boys and girls. They require gender-disaggregated data, and should pay due attention to the socio-economic, socio-cultural and psychological aspects of environmental damage.

The government should create an enabling environment for CSOs to sensitize farmers on agro ecology practices that are environmental friendly that promote sustainable agriculture.

Government should pass the climate change bill into law. This Bill seeks to maintain the eco system threatened by population pressures and erosion that affects all those who depend on natural space. It will provide a framework for enforcing climate change adaptation actions.

Government should increase investment in environmentally friendly and climate mitigation and adaptation projects such as irrigation to address the challenge of food insecurity as a result of climate change.

### **3.6 OTHER GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE;**

Strengthening and repositioning gender machineries as key drivers for the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action with appropriate capacity and resources to deliver on their mandate.

Improving and scaling-up social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Implementing the women, peace and security agenda, United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) (S/RES/1325) and related resolutions.

Closing sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive statistical and analytical gaps to ensure gender-responsive planning, budgeting and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

Improve the collection, analysis and use of data disaggregated by sex, age, disability, together with gender-sensitive data;

Exploit the collection and use of complimentary data for measuring and monitoring the 2030 Agenda.

Utilize real-time data for gender-responsive planning, programming evaluation and reporting.

Invest in information and communications technology and other relevant technologies to enhance data collection, analysis and use.

Strengthen national statistical systems to generate, manage and disseminate gender-responsive data from, and across, different data ecosystems, especially where data sets are fragmented and isolated.

Strengthen the collection and use of disaster-related gender statistics, to better assess the needs of women in crisis situations.

Invest in research and academic institutions to generate evidence-based impact-evaluation research to inform the needs and good practices relevant to women and girls.

Build partnerships to strengthen the capacity of countries in undertaking data collection and statistical analysis.

Harness information and communications technology to facilitate birth registration and the acquisition of legal identity, including in rural and remote areas.

Accelerating the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 3 on universal health and well-being for all, to reduce the prevalence of disease in women and girls, and to mitigate the disproportionate burden of care affecting women.

Ensure universal access to good-quality health care, including testing and treatment for HIV and AIDS, and sexual and reproductive health.

### **3.7 CONCLUSION**

Although, the report focused on 5 thematic areas, it is crucial to note that it shows that there has been some progress in the implementation of the BPfA. Participants expressed their gratitude towards the Ugandan government's progressive efforts to realize the BPfA commitments especially in the area of women, power and leadership. However, there are still some gaps that need to be addressed. It is crucial to note that the grassroots women were not prioritized at the time of the Fourth World Women's Conference and yet the thematic areas remain relevant to them. The participation of grassroots women in the Beijing +25 review consultative meeting was exciting and gave participants an opportunity to appreciate the genesis of government's commitments to promote gender equality and women empowerment and to voice their issues of concern. This report provides a rich feedback as it reflects their realities, experiences and needs in their specific areas. Participants however, called for a bottom up approach to the domestication of the BPfA commitments in an attempt to inclusively contribute to the realization of the SDGs. Localization of BPfA and a consultation review meeting like this ensures that the outcome of the forthcoming review and appraisal reflects their reality, needs and voices.