



MINISTRY OF GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Statement on the occasion to mark the International Women's Day, 2020

Theme: "Celebrating 25 Years of the 1995 Constitution: Milestones on promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Uganda".

Venue: Malukhu Grounds, Mbale District.



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The President of the Republic of Uganda



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including those in rural areas who comprise 80% of the beneficiaries.

The Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP) which started in FY 2013/2014 has financed 20,159 projects reaching 241,799 beneficiaries; 110,322 are female youth, 46% of total beneficiaries.

By July 2019, the Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment (SAGE) had reached 149,091 older persons in the target areas; 60% (88,890) were female and 40% male (60,201).

Together with UN partners, Government also

established the Green Jobs Programme, targeting educated and uneducated women and youth, promoting environmentally-friendly and sustainable work.

Under this programme, women are empowered with tools to engage in Jua Kali enterprises; the manufacture of eco stoves, recycling, and garbage collection and tailoring among others. Besides that, Government is implementing the Graduate Volunteer Scheme (GVS), targeting job placements for youth, 50% of whom should be young women with graduate diplomas. The one-year volunteer placement with a host organisation equips young people with practical skills in their areas of study but is expanded to including tailoring, weaving, embroidery, knitting, shoemaking, and bakery to address the skills gap in the country.

ICT usage

ICT now an integral part of wellbeing. Ownership of cell phones improved from 13% among women and 29% among men in 2006/7 to 45.8% among women and 58.2% among men in 2012/13. Almost as many women as men owned a radio individually (43 percent and 42 percent, respectively).

As we celebrate the gains, we are equally reminded of the existing gaps and challenges. The country has considerably incorporated the principles and provisions of global and regional commitments on women's human rights in the national legal and policy frameworks. It has also set up institutional mechanisms to facilitate implementation across sectors, yet gender inequality is Uganda's key development challenge.

With a Gender Index Score of 50.6, Uganda ranks 107th out of 129 countries, according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2019 on Harnessing the Power of Data for Gender Equality.

Whereas women constitute 51% of the population; the gender development index value in Uganda is 0.878, reflecting human development in favour of the male, according to reports.

This calls for deliberate interventions to harness the existing opportunities to accelerate the intergenerational positive transformation toward gender equality.

Elimination of Gender Based Violence

The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, as the lead agency in the Social Development Sector, is implementing the National Policy and Action Plan on the Elimination of Gender Based Violence (GBV) in Uganda, the National Strategy on Ending Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy, the Referral Pathway for Response to Gender Based Violence cases in Uganda and the Guidelines for establishment and Management of GBV Shelters in Uganda, all geared at eliminating the vice of GBV and violence against women and girls. Whereas more women than men experienced physical violence in Uganda, it is important to note that the prevalence reduced from 59.9% in 2006 to 51% in 2016 (UDHS, 2016). Reporting of and response to GBV is still low; only 33% of women and 30% of men sought help to stop violence.

Conclusion

Uganda has made significant progress in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment attributed to the 1995 Constitution. The existing gender gaps present great opportunities for the Government of Uganda to accelerate gender equality and women's empowerment for sustainable national development.

Uganda today joins the rest of the world to commemorate the International Women's Day. Globally, the Day is being marked under the theme: "An Equal World is an Enabled World". This theme focuses on the obligation of the State and individuals to actively choose to challenge all forms of discrimination and stereotypes, address bias, broaden perceptions, celebrate women's achievements collectively and commit to take deliberate actions/ measures to accelerate positive change to wards gender equality and women's empowerment.

The theme selected for the national celebration is: "Celebrating 25 Years of the 1995 Constitution: Milestones on Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Uganda".

This year, 2020, marks 25 years since the promulgation of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda as well as 10 years of implementing the National Development Plans. The 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda with its gender responsive provisions, has guided the national agenda on women's human rights. Uganda has made considerable progress in incorporating the principles and provisions of global and regional commitments on women's human rights in national legal and policy frameworks as well as setting up the institutional mechanisms to facilitate implementation across sectors.

Gender equality is a core development objective as it enhances productivity and significantly contributes to the development outcomes.

As a Member State of the United Nations, the Government of Uganda made strong commitments towards the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment through adoption of several instruments. In particular the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966); the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) 1975; the Beijing Declaration (1995) and the Millennium Declaration (2000). The Sustainable Development Goal 5 commits all nations to promote gender equality and empower women. Besides, promoting gender equality and equity is central to the achievement of all other SDGs.

Providing women and girls with quality education, healthcare, decent work, access and ownership rights over property and technology, and equal participation in political and economic decision-making process has exhibited undisputed potential to lead to social, economic and environmental sustainability. With the Constitutional provisions as the cornerstones, several laws have been enacted to promote women's human rights in the country. They include: The National Women's Council Act 1993, Land Act 1998; the Domestic Violence Act (2010); the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act (2010); and the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (2009), the Persons with Disabilities Act as amended (2019) and the Child (Amendment) Act 2016.

Education and Training

The Education 2030 declaration articulates a continued vision of achieving inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all. The Sustainable Development

Goals confirm and amplify the strong connection between gender equality and education: SDG Target 4.5 specifically call for the elimination of gender disparities in education and equal access for all. Achieving gender equality in education requires that girls and boys, women and men access and complete education cycles and are empowered through education.

Uganda has achieved gender balance on pre-primary enrollment at 49.5% for boys and 50.5% for girls. The primary education enrolment increased from 49.9% for girls and 50.1% for boys in 2008 to 50% for both girls and boys in 2015; and completion from 47% for girls and 51% for boys in 2008 to 72% for both girls and boys in 2015. Secondary education net enrollment rate stands at 81.1%, 83.5% for girls and 82.3% for boys (UBOS 2019). Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) performance index at 42.2%; girls at 39.7% compared to boys at 44.5%; transition rate to Senior Five (S5) is 30%; 25.9% for girls compared to 33.6% for boys while the performance index at the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE) is 59%; 62% for girls compared 59% for boys.

The enrolment of girls in business, technical, vocational education and training (BTVE) institutions increased from 31% in 2008 to 46% in 2016 (UBOS 2019) while females' enrolment into tertiary education increased from 43% in 2008 to 44.2% in 2015.

Literacy level is one of the major determinants in reducing poverty levels. Literacy rate of females and males improved from 51% and 70% in 1997 to 69.9% and 77.5% in 2016 respectively.

Health and Reproductive Right

The implementation of health-related laws has made it possible for Uganda to register progress in improving the health of women and the general population. For instance, the infant mortality rate reduced from 81 per 100,000 births in 2000 to 54 per 100,000 births in 2015; maternal mortality rate reduced from 505 in 2000 to 336 in 2019.

Total fertility rate drastically reduced from 6.9 in 2000 to 5.4 in 2019 while deliveries in health facilities increased from 37% in 2000 to 73% in 2015. Married women's use of contraceptive methods doubled in 1995 and 2011 from 15% to 35%. The percentage of Health Centres IV (HC IVs) conducting caesarean section increased from 24% in 2000 to 45% in 2015. The recent investment in the 450-bed specialized women and neonatal hospital at Mulago National Referral Hospital was a huge score for the women.

Uganda is still struggling with teenage pregnancies and motherhood. This remains exceptionally high at 25% and has considerable implications on the child-mothers' lives and those of their children. This partially explains the high infant mortality rate despite its aggregate reduction over the years.

Women in Decision-making

The Local Government Act (Cap 243, Section 2c) establishes a democratic, political and gender sensitive administrative set-up in Local Governments. This is where Government has significantly increased its focus to promote women's full and equal participation in decision-making in all areas of public, political and professional life.

There are 33 Senior Ministers, 12 of who are women (36%) compared to 21% in 2004. Out of 46 Ministers of State, 14 are women (30.43%). Within the Opposition shadow cabinet, eight out of 39 shadow ministers (20.5%) are women.

The 10th Parliament has 157 female Members of Parliament (MPs), 116 of whom are District Women legislators. The percentage of female representatives in Parliament now is 34.86%.

The 10th Parliament featured two female leaders of the Opposition for the first time and the Speaker for the 9th and 10th Parliaments has been female. Increasingly, women are leading parliamentary committees, with 11 committees out of 28 being chaired by women. Women make up 46% of Chairs of the standing committees and 41% of standing committee vice chairs.

In 2016, women constituted 45.7% of all district councillors. Within the Judiciary, women constitute 44% of judges in the High Court, 36% in the Court of Appeal and 44% in the Supreme Court.

Nevertheless, there are still gaps in Public Service where women account for 39.8% of the staff in all the 21 Ministries compared to 60.2% of men. Also, the majority of the women employed in the public sector hold lower ranking positions (U8 to U4 in mainstream public service). This calls for more effort to achieve equity.

Employment

To promote decent work for women, Article 33(3) of the 1995 Constitution provides for the protection of women and their rights. It takes into account their unique contributions to society in the form of unpaid care work and, where applicable, their status as mothers in the community.

Article 40 of the Constitution empowers Parliament to enact laws, ensuring safe working conditions for all. Article 40(4) provides that employers shall accord women protection during pregnancy and after birth.

The Government has also ratified various international human rights conventions, including multiple ILO Conventions that protect the rights of workers.

The Occupational Safety and Health Act (2006), the Employment Act (2006), the Employment Regulations (2011), the National Employment Policy (2011) and the Employment and Sexual Harassment Regulations (2012) all aim to ensure decent, remunerated employment for all persons, including women.

The employment laws further provide for women entitlement to maternity leave of sixty working days, on a fully paid basis and with the right to return to their jobs.

Economic independence

To ensure that women are economically and financially independent, Government is implementing various initiatives including; the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP) which begun in FY 2015/16 to avail women with interest-free credit as well as skills development and marketing support.

By close of January 2020, the Programme had financed 10,922 projects with 135,873 direct women beneficiaries,