



# MINISTRY OF GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

## MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER FOR GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT HON. MURULI MUKASA ON THE OCCASION OF MARKING THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY (IWD), 2016

**Theme: "Women's Economic Empowerment: A Vehicle for Sustainable Development".**

On the occasion to celebrate the International Women's Day 2016 today, I wish to take this opportunity to renew the commitment of the Government of Uganda to strengthening the economic empowerment in our country Uganda.

Every year, Uganda joins the rest of the world to commemorate the International Women's Day (IWD) on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March in recognition of the contribution and the different roles women play in the development process of our Nation.

This International Women's Day, we are highlighting the importance of women's economic empowerment and eradication of poverty as indispensable for attainment of gender equality and a prerequisite for achieving sustainable development.

The national celebrations are in Kampala at Kololo Airstrip. The theme selected for the national celebrations this year is **"Women's Economic Empowerment: A Vehicle for Sustainable Development"**. This year's theme is in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the world leaders on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The theme further draws the attention of all development actors in Government, Civil Society, Faith Based Organization and the Private Sector to re-examine the extent to which their programmes and policies have responded to the economic needs of women. The theme also re-emphasizes the National Resistance Movement (NRM) Government's commitment to women's empowerment in all spheres as stated in Vision 2040 and National Development Plan (NDP II) 2015/16-2019/20. It further implores all stakeholders to reflect on the economic status of women in Uganda today in terms of what has been done and what more needs to be done to attain sustainable development.

Ladies and gentlemen, economic empowerment is the capacity of women and men to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways which recognize the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth.

The selected theme also addresses the issue of Sustainable Development which refers to the ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. This simply means that meeting the diverse needs of all people in the existing and future communities, promoting personal wellbeing, social inclusion and creating equal opportunity which has been the driving force of the National Resistance Movement.

Empowerment of women economically involves putting capital in their hands and allowing them to earn an independent income and in this way contribute financially to their households, communities and the nation at large. This is fundamental for strengthening women's rights and enabling them to have control over their lives. It entails

supporting women to access economic resources and opportunities including jobs, financial services, property, productive assets, skills development and market information.

The Uganda National Household Survey report 2012/13 indicates that Uganda has a total labour force of 16.9 million and a working population of 13.9 million people. From this, 7.9 million are gainfully employed and 6 million people are engaged in subsistence production. Females constitute 45.4% of the gainfully employed population and 58% of people engaged in subsistence production. Only 13% of working women are in formal employment, compared to 27% of working men (UBOS 2013). The agriculture sector is the largest employer, with 71% of the economically active women and 62% of the men. The manufacturing and industry sector employs 23.0% of males and 18.8% of females.

Fellow Ugandans, considerable progress has been achieved over the past three decades the NRM has been in leadership in the area of economic empowerment in Uganda and these include:

**Policy and legal framework:** The NRM government has over the years promoted women empowerment in governance, education, politics and decision making, health and as well as adopting affirmative action strategies in some cases. This has been done by putting in place a number of gender sensitive labour laws, policies and regulations. These include the Constitution which upholds the principle of equality and protection of the economic rights of men and women with regards to employment opportunities, rights to safety and health and freedom from discrimination. The Uganda Gender Policy 2007, the Uganda National Employment Policy 2011 and other sectoral policies and programmes spell out strategies for women's economic empowerment. The laws in place include the Employment Act (2006), the Labour Unions Act 2006, the Workers' Compensation Act 2012 and the Occupational Safety and Health Act 2006. There are also Sexual Harassment Regulations of 2012.

Furthermore, a critical economic achievement for women has increased access to titled land. The Land Act of 1997 amended 2010, provides for women's ownership and control over land resources. A remarkable increase in land ownership has been registered, for instance, in 2011, 39% of women owned registered land either alone or jointly with spouses, an increase from 20% in 2009 and 7% in 1995. Women's participation in land administration has also increased.

The Government has signed and ratified key international frameworks for empowerment of women. These frameworks include the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) and the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which is the

international Bill of Rights for Women.

**Integration in the National Planning Framework:** Uganda adopted the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) in three phases Phase 2 and 3 incorporated a gender perspective in their implementation strategies which included infrastructure, security, health, education, agriculture, water and sanitation, which have the potential for getting both men and women out of poverty. When phase 3 expired in 2008, it was replaced by the National Development Plan (NDP I) 2010/11-2014/15 under the theme of "Growth, Employment and Social Economic Transformation for Prosperity". NDP I aimed at creating employment, raising average per capita income levels, improving labour force distribution, raising human development and gender equality indicators and improving the country's competitiveness to middle income country level. Also the Uganda Vision 2040 prescribes gender equality and women's empowerment through the National Development Plan (NDP II). NDP II recognizes the importance of women's economic empowerment and identifies it as one of the game changers for gender equality and women's empowerment.

**Wealth Creation Programmes:** The government has put in place several programmes to empower women economically. The UNHS 2012/13 indicates that the proportion of working population engaged in substance production is 36.9% male and 49.4% female. The statistics show that more women are engaged in agricultural production. In 2001 Government put in place the National Agriculture Advisory Services (NAADS) to specifically address constraints of limited access to agricultural information, knowledge and improved technology among rural poor farmers the majority of whom are women. This has in turn increased women's access to agricultural extension services, labour- saving and value addition technologies for commercial agriculture.

Government through the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development is implementing several economic empowerment programmes that benefit women. These include The Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP) which targets at least 30 percent female beneficiaries. The National Women Council operates an income generating grant that has benefited over 800 women groups in 112 districts. The Promotion of Children and Youth Programme (PCY) provides entrepreneur and vocational training and re-tooling to vulnerable children and youth especially the female youth to empower them economically. The Social Assistance Grants Empowerment (SAGE) extends modest cash transfers through the Senior Citizens Grant (SCG) for older persons aged 65 years and above (60 years in Karamoja). SAGE beneficiaries receive Uganda shillings 50,000 every two months and the Programme is reaching 120,279 persons (43,938 males and 76,341 females).



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In 2015, Government committed funds for the Implementation of a 5 year programme, the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP) under the coordination of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. The aim of the Programme is to improve access to financial services by women entrepreneurs and equipping them with skills for growth, value addition and marketing of their products and services. UWEP will empower Ugandan women for economic development through provision of interest free loans for group enterprises.

Even with the achievements so far realized, we need to address the unfinished issues and these include;

**Culture and tradition:** In most societies in Uganda, expectations about attributes and behaviour appropriate to women or men are shaped by culture, tradition and history. The general pattern is that women have less personal autonomy, fewer resources at their disposal, and limited influence over the decision making processes that shape their lives. There is therefore need to come up with strategies that can strengthen women's ability to formulate and advocate for their own rights so that they can ably participate in economic development.

**School dropouts:** There is high dropout rate for girls especially in upper primary classes. Girls' completion and performance is affected by social cultural factors such as high teenage pregnancy, early marriages and negative cultural practices like Female Genital Mutilation.

**Access to financial services:** In Uganda as in other developing countries, accessing financial services especially credit is difficult for women. The Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) and Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOS) that are currently providing credit services and funding to women tend to give limited amounts that carry very high interest rates.

**High maternal mortality rate:** 19 women die in Uganda daily due to pregnancy related complications, 44% are young mothers between the ages of 15-24. The current mortality ratio is 438 per 100,000 live births and this is far above the MDG target of 131 per 100,000 live births.

**Parental responsibilities:** Fellow Ugandans, balancing parental responsibilities with work is a big challenge particularly for women.

Unpaid care contributes to economic growth through a labour force that is fit, productive and capable of learning and being creative but it also drains the market of its (mostly female) work force. It has been estimated that if care work were assigned a monetary value it would constitute between 10% and 39% of GDP

### Way forward.

Over the three decades, there has been commendable progress for economic empowerment of women. However, there are still some challenges that hinder women economic empowerment and these can be addressed through:

**Reproductive and sexual health:** Improving women's health strengthens their economic empowerment. Access to sexual and reproductive information and services, including information about HIV transmission increases women's chances of completing education and breaking out of poverty. This also reduces rates of child marriages.

**Financial services:** Provision of financial incentives for school going girls especially those in upper primary school. Realizing that education is one of the most powerful tools for women's empowerment, providing financial incentives for girls to attend and complete school is key for their economic empowerment. Education provides women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence they need to seek out economic opportunities. Key measures include building schools close to remote communities, ensuring that schools have quality teacher both female and male.

Establishing women friendly financial services which include affordable interest rates, alternative collateral other than land and reducing the procedures of accessing loans in order to encourage women to venture into economic activities.

Fellow Ugandans, the government of Uganda is committed to realizing women economic empowerment for the good of our communities. As the theme goes, Women's Economic Empowerment is indeed a Vehicle for Sustainable Development for our nation Uganda.

For God and My Country