



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women

MINISTRY OF GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Statement on the occasion to mark the International Women's Day, 2018

Theme: "Empowerment of Rural Women and Girls: Opportunities and Challenges"

Venue: Busuubizi Core Primary Teachers' College (PTC), Mityana District.



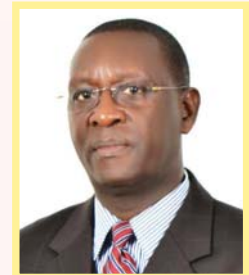
H.E. Gen. Y.K. Museveni
The President of the Republic of
Uganda



Hon. Janet B. Mukwaya (Hajati)
Minister of Gender, Labour & Social
Development



Hon. Peace Mutuuzo Regis
Minister of State for Gender
& Cultural Affairs



Pius Bigirimana
Permanent Secretary

As all Ugandans have come to appreciate and look forward to; we shall today, the 8th of March 2018, commemorate International Women's Day (IWD). This is the Day that we dedicate to taking stock of the progress made towards women's full and equal dignity as well as protection and promotion of their rights in all spheres of life as enshrined in our Constitution. On this Day we also recommit ourselves to further actions towards attainment of these goals.

The global theme for this year; **"Time is Now: Rural and urban activists transforming women's lives"** presents an opportunity to shore up the global movement for women's rights, equality and justice. At country level, the theme chosen for this year's commemoration is **"Empowerment of Rural Women and Girls: Opportunities and Challenges"**.

The theme recognizes the fact that women in both rural and urban setting are not homogeneous. Rural communities have unique challenges that require special attention.

According to the National Population and Housing Census Analytical Report, 2017, 76 percent of Ugandans are rural based and 24% are urban dwellers. Hence the majority of women and girls, who form 51% of the entire population, live in rural areas. One (1) in every 7 (seven) households obtain their livelihood from subsistence farming, with a majority (82%) of these households residing in rural areas. More rural households (90%) participate in agriculture compared to the urban households (46%).

This evidence shows us that rural women and girls in Uganda constitute a larger portion of the people whose activities yield economic production, care and support to families as well as engaging in community management activities. They also fuel local and national economies through their contribution to agriculture and rural enterprises. A large proportion of them are involved in agricultural work either as unpaid or contributing family workers. Therefore, the empowerment of rural women and girls is not only central to the well-being of individuals, families and rural communities, but also to overall socio-economic and inclusive development of the country.

Government has put in place legal and policy frameworks as well as interventions in various sectors which have created an avenue for creating a favorable environment for women and girls to realize their rights and potential.

The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995), as a cornerstone of all laws in Uganda, provides for the protection and promotion of the rights of women and girls in all spheres of life.

The Local Government Act, 1997 provides for women's representation in decision making at all levels of governance.

Because land is a key factor of production, The Land Act, 2010 Cap 227 and Land Policy (2013) contain provisions for security of tenure and safeguard of land rights of women and children. They outlaw discrimination against women and children in respect of ownership, occupation and use of land, and Section 40, provides for mandatory consent before disposal, mortgaging or transferring of land where the family derives sustenance.

Furthermore, the Public Finance Management Act (2015) provides for ring-fencing finance allocation for programmes for gender equality and empowerment of women.

As a flagship Programme for women's economic empowerment, the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP) managed by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development had by December 2017 disbursed a total of UGX 18,252,108,744 to finance 3,448 women projects across the country.

These projects have a total membership of 43,977 women directly benefiting from the funds.

The Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP) has financed a total of 13,107 projects supporting 163,130 beneficiaries, of whom 74,140 (45%) are female.

By end of 2017, the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment of Elderly Persons (SAGE) programme had benefited 153,221 older persons of which 91,277 (60%) are female and 61,944 (40%) are males.

Investment in health infrastructure across the country has improved accessibility of women to health facilities to obtain specialized services such as antenatal care, immunization, family planning, adolescent reproductive health services and HIV/AIDS care and counseling.

Regarding water and sanitation, over 78% of the households accessed improved water sources in

2016/17, an increase from 68% in 2012/13. Seventy seven percent (77%) households in rural areas had access to improved water sources compared to 80% in urban areas. Policies that support girls' education such as the Universal Primary Education (UPE), the Universal Secondary Education (USE) and the Gender in Education Policy have led to increased literacy rates, enrollment ratios in primary and secondary schools as well as attainment. Despite these milestones, there still exist challenges and gaps to be filled.

Women and girls in the rural areas comprise the majority of people living in poverty and experience multi-dimensional inequalities.

Rural women face challenges in terms of access to productive resources such as owning land, accessing agricultural inputs, water, transport, health care and education, financing and technologies for climate resilience. They also face disadvantages and exclusion rooted in the power inequalities associated with gender roles.

Rural women and girls continue to face serious challenges in carrying out their multiple productive and reproductive roles within their families and communities. Much of their labour remains unpaid and unrecognized, including their disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work. For example, rural women and girls spend more time and effort in collecting water and fuel, which compromise their education and income-generating opportunities.

There are still some customary, traditional and religious practices which discriminate against women

and girls and undermine the full implementation of some laws. Negative cultural practices like child and forced marriages, teenage pregnancies, Female Genital Mutilation continue to affect the girl-child. In spite of the existence of laws on children, awareness of these laws among people in communities is still minimal.

Gender inequalities that constrain women's decision-making power and participation in their households and their communities still exist and evidence shows that despite the progress made in tackling HIV and AIDS, prevalence is still high among women and particularly young women.

Appreciation goes to all stakeholders for their contribution to the process of women's empowerment and call on you to keep up the momentum.

As we commemorate this day, let us not forget to front and escalate those actions that bring more opportunities to rural women and girls, particularly;

- Extension of financial services, creating employment opportunities and ensuring land security.
- Prevent and respond to any kind of violence against women and girls.
- Scale up use of modern ICT tools among women. They play an effective role in exchange of critical information.
- Boost water, sanitation and healthcare services in rural areas, and lastly,
- Eliminate negative cultural practices that promote violence against women and girls such as child-marriages, teenage pregnancies, Female Genital Mutilation, unfair distribution of property and other forms of gender-based violence.



Minister Janet Mukwaya (in Hijab) and other Ministry officials inspect a UWEP-funded women's tree nursery project in Moroto Municipality during a monitoring exercise.

Wishing you all fruitful celebrations.