

## THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMISSION (EOC) JOINS THE REST OF THE WORLD IN CELEBRATING THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Today marks 106 years since the International Women's Day was first celebrated across the globe in 1911. In Uganda, the day is earmarked to recognize women's contribution to the economic, political and social spheres of life as well as take stock of the progress made so far in advocacy of women's rights.

The Equal Opportunities Commission joins Government, Civil Society, local and International partners to commemorate the Day under the national theme, **"Women's empowerment in the changing world of work."** The intent of the Commission is to underscore the achievements it has made towards improving the empowerment of women in Uganda as well as reflecting on their struggle for equal opportunities for women.

Uganda has made steady progress in ensuring that women are supported to realize their potential and women empowerment has been a key consideration of the national development agenda. This has increased the number of women in taking up decision making positions in public and private sectors and consequently improved their welfare. Government's enhancement of women participation in decision and leadership positions is reflected in the increase of women representation in Parliament and their assumption of administrative positions both at local and national levels.

According to the World Bank report (2014), there has been a steady increase in women's participation in the labour market from 60.9% - 75.4% in Uganda. This is attributed to the free trade movement, increased number of educated women, women empowerment and the rapid expansion of the market that have created unprecedented opportunities for women to access paid work. All this has been made

possible by Government's commitment towards women empowerment through the various laws, policies and legal frameworks. Article 33 (1), (4) of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda accords women full and equal dignity with men and gives them the right to equal treatment with men including equal opportunities in the social, economic and political activities.

The Commission has equally taken on the mantle to empower women through its awareness and education campaigns. These awareness campaigns conducted among rural and urban women in regard to their rights have been used by women to access resources and services which enhance their cognitive performance, social inclusion and independent living. Section 14 (1) of the Commission's Act also provides for the Commission to monitor and ensure policies, laws and cultures are compliant with equal opportunities and Affirmative Action in favor of marginalized groups.

Upon this, the Commission assesses Ministerial Policy Statements and Budget Framework Papers of all Government Sectors, Ministries, Departments and Agencies to ensure they are gender and equity responsive. This is also in tandem with the Public Finance Management Act (2015) which enforces Gender and Equity budgeting. The Commission further through its Alternative Dispute Resolution and Tribunal mechanisms conducted across the country, has resolved and concluded a magnitude of complaints relating to discrimination and marginalization of women in employment among others.

It is however important to note that despite the various government interventions to enhance women's empowerment and emancipation, women still meet a number of challenges in the changing world of work in

the formal, informal, seasonal and part-time work establishments. This has been majorly as a result of sophisticated technology, cultural norms, social beliefs and practices which have continued to deny women decent employment, economic privileges, access to friendly credit and assets and ability to utilization of resources and money and thus fueled domestic violence. Furthermore, in the evolving world of work, marginalized groups such as women with disabilities, migrant workers and young female youths among others continue to be excluded and segregated in the labour market due to the weak regulations and discriminatory practices in the places of work. These not only disadvantage women in the labour market but reinforce the status of women as secondary workers given the double jeopardy.

Discrimination against women in both the formal and informal sectors in form of denial of employment and access to benefits, dismissal and threats to persons in their employment is an offence and not acceptable according to the Equal Opportunities Commission Act 2007 under Section (31), (a), (b) which is also detrimental to the fulfillment of Uganda's Vision 2040 and the spirit of the Sustainable Development Goals of leaving no one behind in the development process.

It is against this background that the Commission urges the women of Uganda to file complaints of discrimination and marginalization and will be expeditiously addressed as by law established.

As we celebrate this International Women's Day, the Equal Opportunities Commission renews its commitment to elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and calls upon all Ugandans to invest in women and promote women's rights for equitable and sustainable development

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