Statement of the Domestic Violence Act Coalition on Zero Discrimination Day and International Women’s Day 2020

Kampala, 6th March 2020

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press,

This week has two days that remind us of our responsibility as individuals, communities, duty bearers- from government, civil society and the private sector to use our power to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls in Uganda, as a pathway to achieving social, economic and political cohesion and development across board.

March 1st is observed as Zero Discrimination Day, a worldwide event calling us to celebrate everyone's right to a dignified life, regardless of gender, sexuality, nationality, race, disability or even illness. The focus this year is on challenging the discrimination faced by women and girls in all diversity, raising awareness and mobilizing action to promote equality and empowerment for women and girls.

March 8th is International Women’s Day when the world comes together to honor women’s rights and achievements across the political, economic, social and cultural spheres. This year’s national theme is “Celebrating 25 Years of the 1995 Constitution: Milestones on Promoting Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Uganda”

Despite the recognition given to women and girl’s rights, dignity and worth on the abovementioned days, in Uganda and the world over, women and girls’ potential and self-determination in all spheres of life continues to be hindered due to discrimination and violence.

One of the most prevalent forms of discrimination in Uganda today is Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG). Violence against Women is “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.” (DEVAW 1993)

Under the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) gender based violence is recognized as a form of discrimination that impairs or nullifies women’s enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms such as the right to life; not to be subject to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; to liberty and security of person; to equal protection under the law; and to the highest standard attainable of physical and mental health.

These International instruments have been ratified and domesticated by Uganda, as such the Government of Uganda has an obligation to the Women and Girls in this Country - an obligation to “exercise due diligence, to prevent, investigate and, in accordance with national legislation, punish acts of violence against women, whether those acts are perpetrated by the State or by private persons”.

Although the Uganda government has enacted some laws and put in place policies to address discrimination and violence against women (the Domestic violence Act, The Prohibition of Trafficking in persons Act, the Prevention of Female Genital Mutilation Act, the National Gender Policy and the National Action Plan on Gender Based Violence, among others). The Women and Girls in this country especially those facing multiple vulnerabilities such as refugees, HIV Positive women and women with disabilities, remain unsafe and do not enjoy the full protection of the Law.

For more information, please contact: Center for Domestic Violence Prevention: Plot 16 Tufnell Drive, Kamwokya. P.O Box 6670, Kampala. Tel/Fax: 0414531249, Email: info@cedovip.org, website: www.cedovip.org, Face book: www.facebook.com/CEDOVIP, Twitter: @CEDOVIPuganda.
Violence against women and girls remains pervasive and unabated in Uganda, with 56% of women in intimate partner relationships experiencing physical, sexual and emotional violence from their partner (2016 UDHS). Research further shows that women who have been subjected to violence by their partners have greater chances of having a low birth weight baby, are at much greater risk of depression, and more likely to have induced abortions and are also more likely to be living with HIV.

In a country where 1.4 million people are living with HIV, women in particular are disproportionately affected. HIV prevalence is almost four times higher among young women aged 15 to 24 than young men of the same age.¹

The exacerbating factors for women and girls include violence against women and a lack of access to education, health services, social protection and information about how to cope with these inequities and injustices. Indeed, young Ugandan women who have experienced intimate partner violence are 50% more likely to have acquired HIV than women who had not experienced violence.²

Therefore, as the Domestic Violence Act Coalition, we call upon the press, individuals, communities and the Government of Uganda to fulfill its obligation to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and girls by:

The Press

Learn more and create awareness about VAWG, discrimination, gender inequality and its intersection with HIV and other multiple vulnerabilities faced by women, report objectively on these issues to portray their seriousness and the devastating impact they have on women and girls, communities and the country at large and the need for action.

Government

- Allocate resources for the implementation of the Domestic Violence Act, Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act and the Trafficking in Persons Act and other Laws and Policies aimed at addressing discrimination and violence against women
- Address structural and resource barriers such as HIV testing kits and drugs stock outs, inadequate human resource to offer testing and treatment services and the lack of qualified health workers trained to meet the specific needs of women and girls.
- Invest in VAWG prevention to address the social and cultural norms that perpetuate VAWG and hold perpetrators accountable through enforcement of the Domestic Violence Act, Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act and the Trafficking in Persons Act.
- Address institutional and structural access to justice barriers and access to essential services negating the full enjoyment of the right to safety and dignity by refugee women and women with disabilities.

Members of Parliament

Enhance the safety and protection of women and girls through the passing of the Sexual Offences Bill, The Marriage and Divorce Bill, The Employment Amendment Bill and the Succession Amendment Bill.

Community members

Treat women and girls with dignity and be deliberate about creating a supportive and inclusive environment for women and girls of all diversity in your community.
