

The Uganda Police Force: On the Front-Lines of Ending Impunity and Protecting Survivors of Gender- Based Violence

Intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and other forms of gender-based violence (GBV) remain rampant throughout Uganda, not only violating the human rights of victims, but also severely undermining the nation's economic and social development and security.

The Government of Uganda has put in place impressive laws and policies to protect the rights and interests of women and girls – including the Domestic Violence Act 2010, the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act 2010, the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act 2009 and the National Policy on the Elimination of Gender Based violence– however implementation remains limited and abuse rampant. Reporting of GBV remains low, investigations poor, and legal cases experience dismissal more often than conviction, resulting in impunity for many GBV-related crimes. Survivor support services remain extremely limited and uncoordinated. Many communities and duty-bearers continue to believe that GBV is acceptable, silencing survivors and pressuring them not to report the abuse or seek help.

There are myriad complex reasons as to why GBV remains so pervasive – ranging from negative cultural and gender norms, to limited understanding of the law and critical gaps within the administration of justice and institutional weaknesses. **A critical reason why Uganda has been unable to curb these abuses is the failure of sectors to adequately fund the interventions necessary to implement the law, ensure accountability for perpetrators, prevent and respond to GBV, and provide critical support services.**

56% of ever-married Ugandan women (age 15-49) experience spousal violence¹

One million Ugandan women (13%) experienced sexual violence last year²

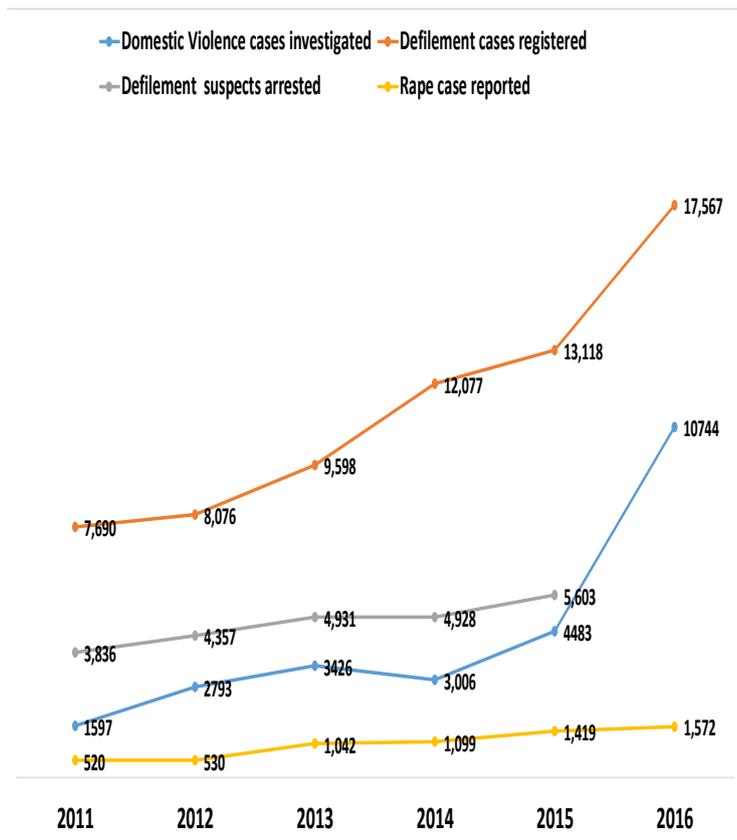
1 Rape case reported to the Uganda Police Force every 6 hours.⁴

49% of women and 41% of men believe a man is justified to beat his wife for specific reasons¹

GBV costs 77.5 billion UGX annually in expenses and lost profits.³

The fourth JLOs Strategic Development Plan has among its strategic objectives to promote gender equality and equitable access to justice. These strategic outcomes need to be translated in to action for the benefit of vulnerable women and girls.

Sector Priorities in the National GBV Action Plan



UPF Annual Crime Reports⁴

The number of GBV cases reported and investigated by the police continues to increase annually, without a corresponding increase in budget allocation for GBV prevention and response. In 2016, the UPF investigated over 40,000 GBV cases. Despite GBV accounting for a substantial share of annual reported crimes, there is inadequate prioritization given to enforcing GBV laws. In 2015, only 42% of reported defilement cases were investigated and arrests made.⁵

Through national, regional and global policies and agreements, Uganda has committed to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, recognizing that this is a prerequisite for sustainable national and social development. The Uganda Police Force (UPF) plays a critical role in GBV prevention and response, particularly in the National Action Plan on the Elimination of Gender-Based Violence (“NGBV Plan”) priority area of **ending impunity for GBV**.

Under the NGBV Plan, as well as National Development Plan II, the UPF is required to commit adequate resources to implement enumerated GBV-specific interventions. However, the UPF budget fails to disaggregate resources for GBV prevention and response activities from general police interventions, or adequately mainstream gender-responsive approaches into existing budgets – leaving significant gaps in meeting its obligations under the NGBV Plan.

The NGBV Plan requires the UPF to lead and adequately fund the following critical strategic actions:

- Investigate, apprehend, and detain suspects/perpetrators in a timely manner, while handling them in accordance with the law and with a focus on deterrence;
- Provide security for GBV victims/survivors and inform survivors of available services;
- Build the capacity of police officers to prevent and respond to GBV, through continuous professional trainings on GBV laws, policies and trends;
- Strengthen police curricula, policy and procedures to ensure that survivors have timely access to justice;
- Sensitize communities on how to protect themselves from GBV, the implications of GBV, and the need for men and boys to engage with the process; and
- Record and manage GBV data and statistics.

Recommended Sector Priorities 2018/2019

Fast track the Creation of a GBV Directorate in the Uganda Police Force

To effectively combat GBV, the UPF should create a GBV Directorate elevating the existing Child and Family Protection Unit (CFPU) and Sexual Offences Unit, combining GBV prevention and investigation under one directorate. This elevation to directorate will allow the combined units vote on the police budget and access the human and financial resources that are critical to the effective prevention of and response to GBV. The UPF pledged to create such a directorate in the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) Ministerial Policy Statement for 2017-18.

The proposed directorate should be given urgent consideration, as it has been in discussion for several years and the delay is undermining the national effort to curb GBV and implement the Domestic Violence Act and NGBV Plan.

Prioritize the Investigation and Detention of GBV Perpetrators

The timely investigation, apprehension, and detention of those suspected of GBV offences is solely the mandate of the UPF, and essential to end impunity and protect survivors. Currently, the UPF budget fails to specifically allocate resources to these critical interventions. The majority of the police budget designated for GBV interventions is allocated to community awareness through community policing. Although many public and private institutions focus on community awareness, only the police have the law enforcement mandate and authority to investigate and restrain perpetrators.

Police resources should be targeted at strengthening the Directorate of Criminal Investigations and Crime Intelligence (CIID) to enhance this unique role in the overall prevention and response framework, focusing on equipping police officers and stations to effectively carry out GBV-related investigations to facilitate the successful prosecution of suspects. This includes effectively institutionalising training of police officers to handle GBV investigations.

Resource the CFPU and Sexual Offences Unit

The CFPU is the least staffed department of the Police – with only 645 police officers to cover 121 districts⁴ – and no independent budget. Many police posts and stations lack the workforce to respond to the growing rates of GBV. The allocation of insufficient resources to CFPU and CIID (including motorcycles, fuel, facilitation for medical workers, forensic kits, airtime, and office space) drastically hinders their ability to conduct investigations, prevention and response activities, and fulfil their mandate. As a unit with no budgetary votes, funding is often diverted away from GBV and into other areas.

The CFPU and Sexual Offences Unit (and subsequently the GBV Directorate) urgently require an increase in police officers, particularly female officers, and financial resources to fulfil their mandates.

Designate specific budget for GBV prevention activities

The UPF's GBV response efforts are primarily subsumed within the general Community Policing budget and are often deprioritized. Community Policing tends to emphasize other crimes, thereby limiting the amount of time and resources dedicated to GBV prevention.

To achieve the UPF's stated goal of increasing the percentage of reported domestic violence cases investigated and concluded (from 40% to 83%) through community policing,⁴ the UPF must designate specific funding and set specific targets for GBV-related community policing initiatives.

Strengthen Coordination and multi-sectoral Responses to GBV

One reason for the low prosecution rates for GBV cases is the lack of adequate medical evidence. Joint solutions between UPF, ODPP, and Ministry of Health are needed to address the challenges caused by the lack of evidence currently collected, as a result of insufficient financial, human, and technical resources, and the reluctance of medical officers to examine victims, complete the required police form (PF3), and testify in court.

Strengthening coordination response mechanisms, training, and support between the UPF, MoH and Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions during each stage – from initial examination through to trial – is critical to improving low prosecution rates.

Streamline Systems for Collection and Reporting of GBV Data

The NGBV Plan and the JLOS SDP IV require UPF to systematically collect, gender-disaggregate, and provide timely reports on cases of GBV. However, there is a lack of uniformity in method, types, and procedures for collecting, analyzing, and the timely reporting of gender-disaggregated case data within the JLOS sector.

Resources are needed to streamline and harmonize data collection systems and methods across JLOS institutions to ensure timely reporting of gender-disaggregated data.

Fast Track Endorsement of and Implementation of the Gender Policy

The Gender Policy provides a framework for gender mainstreaming in the UPF and promotes gender responsiveness in the provision of policing services and GBV responses.

The UPF should fast track the endorsement of the Gender Policy and allocate resources for its implementation.

References

- 1 Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Uganda Demographic and Health Survey 2016, Kampala, Uganda.
- 2 Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2016 Ugandan Demographic and Health Survey, Kampala, Uganda, and Calverton, Maryland, USA.
- 3 Center for Domestic Violence Prevention (CEDOVIP). 2012. Economic Costs of Domestic Violence in Uganda. Kampala, Uganda.
- 4 Uganda Police Force. 2012, 2013, 2014 Annual Crime and Traffic/Road Safety Reports. Kampala, Uganda; Bi-annual crime report June 2015; Preliminary 2016 Annual Crime Report.
- 5 Office of Directorate of Public Prosecution: Case Statistics 2012 /13 -2016/17