



## Joint Press Statement: 2016 16 Days of Activism Campaign

### ***THEME: Break the Silence, Break the Barriers! How Will You Make Education Safe for Girls?***

Every November 25<sup>th</sup> - December 10<sup>th</sup>, the International campaign against violence against women and girls (VAWG) unites activists, organizations and individuals across the world to raise their collective voices during the 16 Days of Activism Campaign on violence against women and girls.

This year's National theme is ***From Peace in the Home to peace in the Nation: Making education safe for all.*** Over the 16 days period the Domestic Violence Act Coalition will engage the communities under the regional theme; ***Break the Silence, Break the Barriers! How Will You Make Education Safe for Girls?***

The theme highlights that we need to break the silence, demand and implore policy makers, parents, schools, and institutions to make education safe for all, specifically girls and young women, by highlighting and breaking the structural barriers that discriminate women and girls throughout the education system right from the home, community, and the school setting including government policies and systems that impact girls' experience at school.

Everyone needs to take action in their own way every day to break the structural barriers in the education system as a fulfillment of the global efforts to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education as articulated in Sustainable Development Goal 4 and SDG 5 aiming to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by;

- Ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
- Eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
- Eliminating all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilations among others.

Violence against women/girls remains epidemically high in Uganda and hinders social and economic development, it prevents girls and women's equal participation at social, economic and political level, it is extremely costly to families, communities and nations, and it is a profound symbol of gender inequality and social injustice. Additionally, it is a public health concern; increases their risk of poor health and a driver for HIV/AIDS.

Currently in Uganda women and girls face violence at alarming rates. Reports indicate that<sup>ii</sup>;

- 95% of Ugandan girls are sexually abused during their childhood.
- Uganda ranks 16<sup>th</sup> among 25 countries with 16% are married off by the time they are 15 years and 53% by the age of 18.
- 59.6% of women from the age of 15 have ever experienced physical violence.
- 39% of women have experienced sexualized compared to 11% of men.

- The average age at dropout for girls is 13, indicating that girls' dropout at the time they are supposed to be completing primary school<sup>iii</sup>.
- Uganda has a very low primary survival rate of 33%, survival rate being the number of children starting together in primary 1, progressing through the cycle (Kenya is 84%, in Tanzania 78% and in Rwanda 81%).

We therefore call for real action and demand that;

1. Parents share the gender roles among the children (both girls and boys equally at home.
2. Ensure all girls are enrolled in school and remain in school till they complete higher level education by;
  - a) Removing policies that promote expulsion of pregnant girls,
  - b) Providing privacy/sanitation for girls in schools, etc)
  - c) As girls go to school eliminate the safety hazards they face including sexual harassment, rape, kidnapping.
3. Sexual violence cases form the bulk of cases clogging the Justice system owing to the complexity of the cases. We want specialized GBV courts to make justice faster.
4. Challenge the systems that reinforce negative stereotypes and power imbalances faced by girls. Ensure the curriculum and text books encourage and portray gender equality; Encourage girls and young women to participate as their male counterparts.
5. Effectively punish parents and teachers who sexually harass and abuse their children by revoking their teaching licenses.
6. Improve school environment: ensure privacy for girls, construct separate toilets and introduce alternative methods of disciplining children
7. Call upon the government to allocate funding towards implementation of the laws and policies.
8. Reach out to girls and women experiencing violence.
9. Teach girls and boys that women and girls have a right to live free from violence and access to opportunities.

This is the time to make policies and expressed commitments work for women and girls! CEDOVIP in partnership with the UWOPA, DV Act coalition, police, community activists and local leaders; will conduct activities like community dialogues, press conferences, door to door activities, in Kampala, the Busoga region Nakapiripirit, Apac and Kumi and through partners across the country to challenge our leaders to demonstrate their leadership by taking practical steps to end violence against women and girls.

Remember, small actions and words by every one every day can make a difference.

Join the activism! Demand action from your leaders.

Break the silence. Break the Barriers. Make education safe for girls!

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<sup>i</sup>Sustainable development goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Retrieved from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4>

<sup>ii</sup> Uganda Demographic and Health Survey 2011.

<sup>iii</sup> UNICEF's State of the World's Children 2013;