

# Statement on **Sexual Harassment** and **Assault** in Education Institutions in Uganda

We, the undersigned organizations and individuals are concerned about the recurrent allegations in the media of sexual violence against students, particularly female students, in educational institutions at all levels across the country. Despite the existence of laws<sup>1</sup> and policies, sexual harassment and assault of women and girls continues to happen with impunity in Uganda because the laws are yet to be meaningfully implemented.

Teachers have legal and ethical responsibilities towards students. For example, The Children (Amendment) Act 2016 makes it mandatory for teachers to report any matter which affects the wellbeing of children under their charge. Thus, it is imperative that the Ministry of Education and Sports ensures that school administrators and teachers abide by the national laws, regulations, policies, and procedures pertaining to sexual violence that is systemic and widespread.

This is the time to make existing policies and expressed commitments work for girls! We the undersigned organizations are committed to protecting students from sexual violence in schools, educate the various stakeholders about their responsibility to act, and engage civil society and the public to discuss emerging issues. We, therefore, demand that:

1. The Ministry of Education and Sports expedites the investigation of the Kibuli Secondary School allegations. If it is found that the head teacher has committed serious misconduct, the school administrator must be dismissed and prosecuted.
2. The Ministry of Education and Sports should not transfer school administrators and teachers who commit sexual offences against their students but rather revoke their licences or strike them off the official register of teachers. The Ministry should create a register for all teachers found guilty of sexual offences.
3. The Ministry of Education and Sports issues a circular to all schools in the country (both primary and secondary) reaffirming its commitment to zero tolerance of sexual harassment. The Ministry should provide guidelines to the schools on how and who to report sexual violence to. Adherence to the guidelines should be part and parcel of the Ministry's supervision and inspection of schools.
4. The Ministry of Education and Sports at all levels implements and enforces policies and legislation that strengthen prevention of and response to sexual harassment and assault in schools. The Ministry should support schools to address the culture that permits sexual violence to happen unabated. This includes reviewing training curriculums for teachers to address sexual harassment and equip students with skills of identifying and reporting it.
5. Parliament of Uganda expedites passage of the Sexual Offences Bill to strengthen protection for women and girls from sexual abuse and exploitation. The Education (Pre-Primary, Primary and Post-Primary) Act of 2008 must be amended to include measures against sexual harassment and assaults.
6. The Government of Uganda provides funding for services and programs to aid survivors of sexual violence. Survivors of sexual violence are often adversely affected by the violence but get very little or no support to recover from the trauma, stigma and other related negative effects.
7. That Government ministries in charge of health, education, gender and internal affairs strengthen the national coordinating mechanism for preventing and responding to sexual violence against women and girls. Government should make specific budgetary commitments in the 2018/19 budget in fulfillment of its obligations to guarantee the protection of women and girls from inhuman, cruel and degrading treatment in their private and public lives.

Finally, we the undersigned organizations and individuals, call upon the Government of Uganda through its representatives and agencies to use every opportunity to speak out and publicly condemn violence against women and girls in all its forms. We further urge members of the public to break the silence and always report cases of sexual violence to the authorities so that action can be taken. If you or someone you know needs any support, you can contact the Local Councils (LCs), the Uganda Police, the Toll-Free Uganda Child Help Line 116 (Sauti 116), the Probation and Welfare Officers and the undersigned organizations, among others.

<sup>1</sup> Legal instruments on sexual harassment and assault include: The Constitution of Uganda; The Children (Amendment) Act 2016; The Education Act 2008; The Domestic Violence Act 2010; Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation Act 2010; the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act 2010; The Employment Act 2006; and the Penal Code Act CAP 120, among others.

**Organizations and individuals party to this statement:** Uganda Parliamentary Women's Association (UWOPA) • World Vision International • Raising Voices • Action Aid Uganda (AAUI) • Action for Development (ACFODE) • Center for Domestic Violence Prevention (CEDOVIP) • Foundation for Integrated Rural Development (FIRD) Uganda • Joy for Children • Kaana Foundation for Outreach Programs • Children's Chance International (CCI-Uganda) • Elevate Education • Food for the Hungry • Concern for the Girl Child • Diakonia • Uganda Society of Disabled Children (USDC) • Uganda Child Rights NGO Network (UCRNN) • Plan international • Gulu Women's Economic Development & Globalization • Sylvia Tamale, Lecturer, School of Law, Makerere University



World Vision



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