

21<sup>st</sup> March, 2018

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS STATEMENT

**A CALL TO TRANSLATE COMMITMENTS INTO ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS.**

**“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 recently released Uganda Demographic Health Survey of 2016, still shows high prevalence of violence against women and girls; 56% of women in Uganda have experienced physical violence at some point since the age of 15 years. One million Ugandan women (13%) experienced sexual violence in the last 12 months while 28% of women aged 15-49 have experienced sexual violence with Harmful Cultural Practices such as early/child marriage being prevalent in Uganda.

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) remains a global epidemic that should not be treated lightly given the grave impact it has on the wellbeing of women, girls, their families and the national economy. It is estimated that Violence against women costs Uganda 77.5 billion Uganda shillings annually in expenses and lost profits. Women who have been physically or sexually abused by their partners are more than twice as likely to have an abortion, almost twice as likely to experience depression, and in some regions, 1.5 times more likely to acquire HIV, and 4.5 times more likely to commit suicide as compared to women who have not experienced partner violence.

While government has taken significant steps to address the legal and policy gaps in preventing and responding to VAW/G including the 2016 National Action Plan on Eliminating Violence against Women and Girls, Domestic Violence Act 2010 among others, these are yet to translate into actual benefits for women and girls in their private and public lives.

VAWG remains on the rise largely due to harmful social and gender norms and practices that discriminate against women and girls, (like a man has a right to discipline a woman for ‘incorrect’ behavior) high poverty rates, lack of knowledge of the laws but most important is limited resource allocations in the National Budget to effectively establish and implement mechanisms to respond to cases of violence against women and girls to end impunity.

#### **OUR CALL TO ACTION**

The Domestic Violence Act coalition is cognizant of the President Yoweri Museveni’s public condemnation of violence against women and girls during his address at the International women’s Day celebrations in Mityana on 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2018 in which he cautioned about wife beating.

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**Members of the Domestic Violence Act Coalition:** Action Against violence Uganda(AAVU) • Action Aid Uganda (AAUI) • Action for Development (ACFODE) • Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development –ACORD • Akina Mama wa Afrika –AMWA • Anti Domestic Violence Coalition -ADVC • Association of women Lawyers in Uganda (FIDA) • Care International in Uganda • Center for Domestic Violence Prevention(CEDOVIP) • Center for Women in Governance -CEWIGO • Communication for Development Foundation Uganda (CDFU)•Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group(CSBAG)•Health Rights Action Group –HAG • Kamwokya Christian Caring Community- KCCC • MIFUMI project • Muslim center for Justice and Law • National Association of Women in Uganda- NAWOU • National Bahai Committee for the Advancement of Women -The Bahai Faith • National Union for Disabled People in Uganda- NUDIPU • OXFAM • Plan international • Platform for Labour Action -PLA • Raising voices • School of Women and Gender Studies- MUK • The Association for Rehabilitation and Re-orientation of Women for Development (TERREWODE) • Uganda Media Women Association -UMWA • Uganda Network on Law, HIV/AIDS and Ethics –UGANET • Uganda Women’s Network –UWONET • Women of Uganda Network –WOUGNET • Women and girl child Development Association (WEGCDA).

The Domestic Violence Coalition calls on the government to actualize its commitment to make women and girls lives safer and better by:

1. Ensuring that Government ministries in charge of health, justice, gender and internal affairs strengthen the national coordinating mechanism for preventing and responding to violence against women and girls. Government should make specific and sufficient 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.
2. Strengthen the national co-coordinating mechanism with sufficient authority and budget to develop, implement and monitor actions to address violence against women/girls. For example; the Department of Gender and Women Affairs has **only 11 staff members** and receives **only 1% of MGLSD overall budget**, of which only a portion is allocated to GBV programming (2017/18 Ministerial Policy Statement). Much of the 1% is allocated to the gender mainstreaming and economic empowerment programmes, rather than designated to GBV prevention or response. **Given the magnitude of the problem and the far-reaching economic and social consequences, the MGLSD must allocate time and resources to implement the NGBV Policy and address the critical issue of GBV.**
3. Parliament of Uganda expedites the passing of the Marriage and Divorce Bill, the Sexual Offences Bill to address the policy gaps in response to violence against women and girls so as to strengthen protection of women and girls from abuse and sexual exploitation.
4. All relevant government sectors speaking out and publically condemn violence against women and girls through issuing circulars to reaffirm commitment to zero tolerance to all forms of violence against women and girls.

As civil society organizations we remain committed to speaking out against all forms of violence against women and girls, supporting citizens to learn about the benefits of using the Domestic Violence Act, reach out to girls and women experiencing violence, and teach girls and boys that women and girls have a right to live free from violence. You too can.

Remember, small actions and words by every one every day can make a difference.  
Join the activism! Demand action from your leaders.

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