

YOUTH SUBMISSION

17 May, 2019

REACH A HAND UGANDA

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Reach a **hand**

young people for young people

INTRODUCTION

Reach A Hand Uganda (RAHU) is a youth led organization based in Uganda focusing on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention as well as livelihoods and skills development for young people.

We have (and still) carry out women empowerment programs for example community and intergenerational dialogues, outreaches and mass media campaigns aimed at creating awareness about women and girl child violence happening in Uganda including but not limited to child marriages, teenage pregnancies, sexual and gender based violence and intimidation in healthcare settings / youth friendly health services.

The submission therefore, is built upon RAHU's 10 years of experience conducting national advocacy in Uganda and at a regional level (Africa). The submission will highlight the mistreatment and violence against women during reproductive health care in Uganda.

The submission addresses questions 1 and 4 of the call for input.

CASES OF MISTREATMENT AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN UGANDA

INTIMIDATION IN HEALTHCARE SETTINGS/YOUTH FRIENDLY HEALTH SERVICES

Many young women and girls in need of reproductive health services in Uganda either shy away from seeking the services or be denied access to sexual and reproductive health services for a variety of reasons.¹ Reports have consistently shown how existing health providers can be biased and may not be feel comfortable serving sexually active young women.² Most young women on the other hand, feel uncomfortable accessing existing services because the way the services are set up do not meet their needs.³ Another major barrier to access of reproductive health services for the youth in many Ugandan communities is that many communities feel that unmarried youth should not be sexually active and therefore should not have access to reproductive health services.⁴

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

Despite the enactment of [the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation \(FGM\) Act, 2010](#) a law that criminalizes all activities related to FGM in Uganda, it continues to be carried out in the remote eastern rural areas and support for the practice in the different communities remained strong.⁵ RAHU notes with concern that women and girls who do not undergo FGM are often ostracized by their community. Efforts must therefore be made to scale up sensitizations to challenge the norms and cultures that support this harmful practice. We must also do more to end stigma and advance gender equality in all spheres of life for example through effective implementation of acts that limited victims of FGM to seek justice. .

SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

SGBV remains one of the biggest challenges affecting women in Uganda. In October 2018, UNHCR reported that a total of 425 (37M, 388F) incidents of Sexual and Gender Based Violence were reported from 13 refugee

¹ https://www.rutgers.international/sites/rutgersorg/files/PDF/Advocacy_Uganda_0.pdf

² <http://reachahand.org/story/rahu-youth-centers/>

³ https://www.rutgers.international/sites/rutgersorg/files/PDF/Advocacy_Uganda_0.pdf

⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17970462>

⁵ [https://www.28toomany.org/static/media/uploads/Law%20Reports/uganda_law_report_v1_\(may_2018\).pdf](https://www.28toomany.org/static/media/uploads/Law%20Reports/uganda_law_report_v1_(may_2018).pdf)

hosting districts.⁶ Kisoro and Kampala districts, reported the highest incidents of sexual violence (Rape and sexual assault)⁷. Some of the contributing factors to this include ineffective laws such as the Penal Code (Amendment) Act 2007, the Domestic Violence Act 2010, the Sexual Offences Bill and the Marriage Bill which do not address key aspects of VAW. None of these laws criminalise marital rape, for instance. Harmful practices such as child marriages and teenage pregnancies remain prevalent and socially acceptable in certain parts of the country.⁸

VIOLENCE AGAINST TRANSWOMEN

Transgender women in Uganda face a lot of challenges.⁹ These range from human rights violations characterised by violent public attacks, illegal arrests and detention by the police, infection HIV/AIDS and other STIs, stigma and discrimination in seeking health care and other social services, illegal school dismissals, inequality, house evictions, parent/ family neglect, unemployment, ignorance and limited knowledge on human rights poverty among other challenges¹⁰.

ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS IN PLACE TO ENSURE REDRESS FOR VICTIMS OF MISTREATMENT AND VIOLENCE

POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR ADDRESSING MISTREATMENT OF WOMEN IN UGANDA

While Uganda is a signatory to the international agreements that require governments to put in place policy and legal framework for addressing VAW, there is no specific law addressing violence against women and children in particular SV. However, there are some provisions in the following legislation addressing injustice arising out of sexual violence.

- The 1995 Constitution of Uganda
- The Penal Code Act CAP 120
- The Children Act CAP 59
- The Divorce Act CAP 249
- The Probation Act CAP 106 of 1964.
- The Local Council Courts Act Acts Supplement No 5
- Uganda Human Rights Commission Act CAP 24

Much as these laws attempt to provide addresses where mistreatment of women can be handled, special laws and guidelines need to be put in place. This will promote centralised ways on how effectively issues of mistreatment of women and girls can be handled.

6

<https://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/unhcr-uganda-sexual-and-gender-based-violence-sgbv-thematic-report-october-2018>

7

<https://reliefweb.int/report/uganda/unhcr-uganda-sexual-and-gender-based-violence-sgbv-thematic-report-october-2018>

⁸ http://www.unicef.org/uganda/NATIONAL_STRATEGY_ON_CHILD_MARRIAGE-PRINT_READY.pdf

⁹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/30328785>

¹⁰ <https://www.nswp.org/members/africa/transgender-equality-uganda>

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