HER VOICE

NEWSLETTER

UGANDA WOMEN'S NETWORK

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Transforming unequal gender relations through collective visioning and action

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Inside the Issue

Special Edition #4-25: April 2025



In this special edition (#4-25), we are proud to share key highlights from the impactful work carried out in April 2025 in the pursuit of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE). We extend our sincere appreciation to all our partners and supporters. Your unwavering commitment continues to inspire progress and fuel transformative change, even amidst complex challenges.

A major milestone during the month was launching the national women's manifesto 2026 – 2030. The launch brought together representatives from government, development partners, civil society, women's rights organizations, political parties, religious, cultural institutions, media, academia, the private sector, youth, and women in the private sector, amongst others. The Manifesto outlines clear priorities and demands that women across the country draw the attention of decision-makers, in elective and appointed, to address over the next five years.

UWONET also spearheaded several initiatives to promote GEWE, including Empowering GBV Survivors Through Kitchen Gardening Initiative and facilitating the validation of Uganda's 10th CEDAW Alternative Report. Additionally, advocacy campaigns and a Women Leaders' Summit were organized to amplify women's voices and leadership in local governance and community development.

Together, we continue to break barriers and shape a more just, inclusive, and equitable society for all.

READ MORE

- *Empowering GBV Survivors Through Kitchen Gardening Initiative*
- *Launch of the national women's manifesto 2026 – 2030*
- *Strengthening members knowldge on climate change and gender-responsive programming*

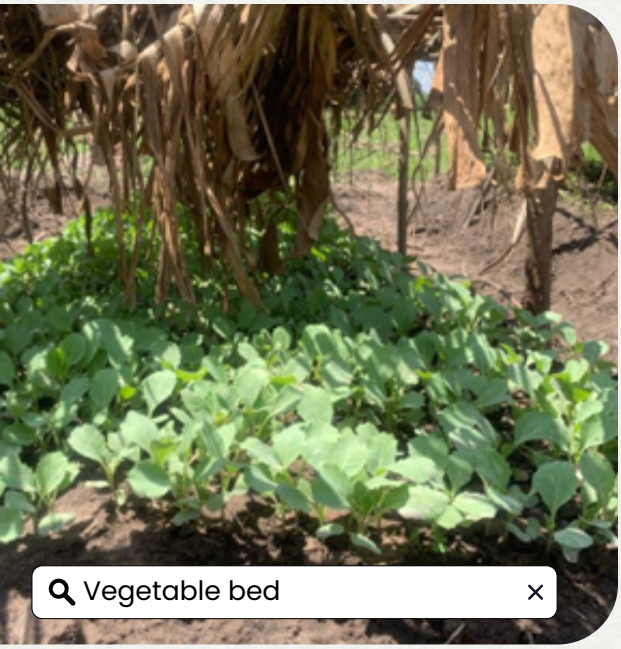


EMPOWERING GBV SURVIVORS THROUGH KITCHEN GARDENING INITIATIVE

In a bid to strengthen the resilience of survivors of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Namutumba and Kamuli district, Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) launched a kitchen gardening initiative aimed at promoting economic empowerment and self-reliance. The program equips survivors with the skills to grow their own food sustainably, not only for household consumption but also to generate income through the sale of surplus produce. The initiative is part of UWONET's broader strategy to foster economic independence among GBV survivors.

Training sessions focused on cultivation of commonly preferred vegetables such as cabbage, sukuma wiki, bugga, green pepper, tomatoes, and eggplants. These crops were selected based on the preferences expressed by the participants, ensuring relevance and practical application.A total of 60 participants benefited from the program, gaining knowledge and hands-on experience in vegetable kitchen gardening. The training was conducted at UWONET shelters, where a demonstration garden was also established.

The training combined theoretical instruction and hands-on practice. Participants learned about organic compost, pesticides, and fertilizers; nursery bed setup with proper measurements; seedling transplantation; and organic liquid fertilizer preparation. Practical sessions allowed them to apply this knowledge directly, boosting their skills and confidence in managing kitchen gardens effectively. Using materials such as green grass, cow dung, and other domestic animal droppings, women were encouraged to adopt composting as a sustainable farming practice.



Experienced trainers with a strong background in kitchen gardening and community-based agricultural practices were engaged. Trainers ensured effective communication and contextual relevance. Their familiarity with the region's soil types and preferred vegetable varieties enhanced the practicality of the training. Additionally, an agricultural extension worker participated in the training to provide technical support and ensure the sustainability of the initiative. **Sessions included;** Growing Vegetables and Fruits, What it takes to grow Vegetables, Taking care of soils, Starting a vegetable garden, Vegetable propagation, sowing and management.

Ms. Kampi Susan from Kamuli said;

"I've learned how to make a nursery bed with proper measurements. I used to plant seeds without knowing how a nursery bed should be made. I also learned that relying on men for financial support can increase gender-based violence. I now plan to grow vegetables for sale, so I can meet some household needs on my own."

Ms. Naome, a survivor from Kamuli, shared;

"I have been growing vegetables with my children, but the results were never appealing. I didn't know how to take care of them properly. I have all the materials needed for making manure and pesticides, but I didn't know how to use them. Now that I do, and I will put this knowledge to use."

Women learnt that; Neem leaves, Chili pepper, Garlic, Onions enhance the effectiveness of repellents, Wood ash helps combat soft-bodied insects.

The session also covered the preparation of liquid manure (green manure) using locally available materials to support soil fertility. In addition, women were taught how to make organic pesticides to protect vegetables from harmful pests and insects.





LAUNCH OF THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S MANIFESTO 2026 – 2030

In the last three decades, UWONET has coordinated the participatory development of the National Women's Manifesto led by Women's Rights Organizations (WROs) with overreaching goal of advancing Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment (GEWE) and national development across social, political and economic spheres. The National Women's Manifesto 2026–2030 highlights key gender concerns that continue to impede development and deny women and girls attain their full potential to live a dignified life. The Manifesto outlines clear priorities and demands that women across the country draw the attention of decision-makers, in elective and appointed, to address over the next five years.

Recognizing the evolving national and global context towards gender equality, the Women's Manifesto 2026 -2030 aligns with key development framework. It provides recommendations aimed at transforming the lives of women and girls, promote gender equity and ultimately foster national development. The Manifesto equally serves as a tool for collective voice and vision to influence development discourse and gender accountability.

Based on this, UWONET convened a half-day event to officially launch the National Women's Manifesto 2026–2030. The launch brought together representatives from government, development partners, civil society, women's rights organizations, political parties, religious, cultural institutions, media, academia, the private sector, youth, and women in the private sector, amongst others.

Insights that inspire actions

WRITTER: ROLAND MUSASIZI - MEAL OFFICER









Hon. Dr. Mutuuzo Peace Regis, Minister of State for Gender and Culture Affairs, delivered a keynote address outlining Uganda's progress in promoting women's rights and gender equality in social, economic, and political spheres. She highlighted legal protections like the Land Act, efforts to combat violence against women and girls, and achievements from affirmative action in national leadership. However, she noted underrepresentation of women at local government and senior civil service levels. Dr. Mutuuzo advocated for gender mainstreaming, shifting social norms starting at the household level, regular constitutional reviews, stronger political party advocacy for gender parity, gender-focused curriculum development, improved prison sanitation for women, and addressing electoral violence against female aspirants.

Julian Naluwooza, Program Coordinator at UWONET, presented the National Women's Manifesto 2026–2030 themed Her Voice, highlighting four key gender focus areas: Human Capital Development, Livelihoods and Climate Justice, Social Norms and Violence Against Women, and Information, Communication, and Technology. Developed through nationwide consultations, the manifesto serves as a unified advocacy tool for gender equality. It also addresses cross-cutting issues such as Women's Leadership, the Gendered Impact of Corruption, and Women, Peace, and Security, with specific demands aimed at shaping political agendas, government planning, and resource allocation ahead of the 2026 elections.

Ms. Rita Aciro – Lakor, Executive Director of UWONET, welcomed dignitaries, partners, and stakeholders to the official launch of the National Women's Manifesto 2026–2030 emphasizing the need for collective commitment to advance the women's rights and gender equality as a cornerstone of Uganda's development, acknowledging both progress and ongoing challenges in areas such as political participation, economic empowerment, and addressing violence against women and girls. She reflected on the historical journey of the manifesto, which began in 1996 and has evolved each election cycle. Ms. Rita stressed that the National Women's Manifesto is a document that will be used to amplify women's demands, hold leaders accountable, and align national efforts with global gender priorities.

Panel Discussions focusing on Priority Areas



Understanding the Digital Gender Divide: Sandra Kwikwiriza from Her Internet, a feminist led organization, noted that the digital divide for women goes beyond access; it is shaped by systemic exclusion, cultural norms, economic inequality, and safety concerns that limit women's participation in technology. In Uganda, only 19% of women are connected to the internet, leaving many without access to critical support, health information, and opportunities. Additionally, the threat of online violence deters many women from engaging in digital spaces.



Dr. Mary Ssonko Nabachwa presented Key barriers affecting education of women and girls include low primary school completion rates, with only about 30% of students finishing this level, a shortage of female teachers, and limited parental support. Cultural practices such as early marriages and teenage pregnancies further hinder girls' education, while poor school infrastructure, especially inadequate sanitation and menstrual hygiene facilities, exacerbate the problem. Poverty also plays a significant role in limiting school attendance and retention.



Social Norms and VAW/G: Dr. Angela Nakafeero, Commissioner for Gender and Women Affairs at the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, provided an overview of prevailing social norms, emphasizing that many of them, especially those rooted in male superiority, are deeply entrenched and harmful to the well-being of women and girls. To reduce VAW/G, she proposed several strategies: community engagement to raise awareness, facilitating public debates to drive mindset change, promoting actions that support the well-being of women and girls, and supporting early adopters of positive social norms.



Role of women leaders and their role in driving social change: Hon. Rashida Butambala, LCV Chairperson of Butambala District, shared her personal experiences and highlighted the challenges faced by women leaders at lower levels of leadership. These include restrictive social norms and practices, lack of representation, limited opportunities, difficulties in balancing work and personal life, inadequate mentorship for young women leaders, VAW/G during electoral processes, and the "Pull Her Down" syndrome, which fosters disunity among women leaders.







VALIDATED THE UGANDA'S 10TH CEDAW ALTERNATIVE REPORT

On April 4, 2025, a critical validation meeting for Uganda's 10th Alternative Report to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was held at the Golden Tulip Hotel in Kampala. Convened by a coalition of civil society organizations (CSOs), the meeting brought together stakeholders from government, academia, and development sectors to ensure the report accurately reflects the lived experiences of Ugandan women and girls.

The session served to finalize the civil society shadow report before submission to the CEDAW Committee, offering an evidence-based critique of the government's progress and gaps in implementing gender equality commitments. These shadow reports are essential in holding governments accountable and spotlighting marginalized voices often left out of state narratives.

Dr. Brenda Akia, Uganda's elected member and Vice Chair of the CEDAW Committee, delivered a keynote emphasizing the crucial role of civil society in the CEDAW process. She highlighted the impact of CEDAW in prompting real change, such as the release of detained migrant women and improved legal aid access. However, she warned of patchy national implementation of international frameworks, urging continuous civil society engagement beyond reporting.



Key challenges identified include systemic gender inequalities in land rights, political participation, financial access, legal protections, and reproductive autonomy. Legal frameworks exist but are poorly enforced, especially for women with disabilities, survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), and elderly women. Cultural norms and stereotypes further exacerbate these issues.







Participants criticized social protection programs (YLP, UWEP, PDM) for their inaccessibility and flagged exclusionary policies in marriage and land rights. The failure to ratify the CEDAW Optional Protocol was highlighted as a barrier to filing formal complaints internationally. The emergence of General Recommendation 40 on political participation was seen as a timely advocacy tool for pushing 50:50 gender parity in leadership ahead of Uganda's upcoming elections.

The discussion extended to overlooked sectors like sports and media, where institutional biases continue to limit women's leadership. Participants emphasized the need for inclusive justice systems, stronger accountability, better data, community-level sensitization, and the amplification of grassroots voices.

The validation marked a collective resolve to use the report as a strategic advocacy tool, pushing for deeper reforms that dismantle entrenched gender inequalities and ensure Uganda fulfills its obligations under CEDAW.







STRENGTHENING MEMBERS KNOWLDGE ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE PROGRAMMING

UWONET coordinates the women's movement in Uganda, advocating for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE). The network has documented significant achievements in challenging gender inequalities and influencing policy. As an active national advocacy network of Women's Rights Organizations, UWONET recognizes the ongoing need to engage its membership through coordination, information sharing, and joint fundraising. This engagement is essential to strengthen the network and sustain its strong voice in influencing policy and demanding accountability. In line with this, UWONET conducted a two-day training for members, partners, and allies on climate change and gender-responsive programming. The training aimed to enhance their capacity to advance GEWE in a changing context.

Session discussions

Gender and Climate Change; This session centered around the nexus between climate change/adaptation and gender representation in climate change efforts at different levels. Gender significantly impacts climate action, as women and girls face greater exposure to climate risks and limited access to resources like land, finance, and decision-making. Climate disasters worsen gender inequalities, increasing poverty and gender-based violence, especially during displacement. Women are 14 times more likely to die in extreme weather and constitute 80% of climate-displaced people. Inclusive climate solutions require gender analysis, equal participation, and empowerment. Climate justice demands fair treatment and prioritizing vulnerable groups. In regions like Uganda, women farmers face land inequality and climate hardships. Gender-responsive strategies include securing land rights, climate finance access, climate-smart agriculture, and inclusive governance.



The **group discussions** explored various gender-related themes through exercises and institutional analysis, focusing on rural and urban settings, with a strong emphasis on gender division of labour, access to resources, power dynamics, and institutional inequalities.



Group One conducted a task analysis in a rural, low-income household, focusing on the daily division of labour between men and women. Women were found to engage in labor-intensive domestic and agricultural activities from early morning, often without monetary compensation or societal recognition. In contrast, men performed paid labour or participated in social activities. This division is deeply influenced by traditional gender roles, socialization, and unequal access to resources. Climate change further exacerbates these disparities, as women face increasingly harsh environmental conditions while sourcing water, firewood, and food, highlighting the pressing link between gender inequality and climate justice. The group emphasized the need to critically evaluate both positive and negative impacts of environmental changes on women's labour and livelihoods.



Group Two focused on access to and control over resources, analyzing disparities using the gender division of labour tool. While both men and women require similar agricultural resources, men have significantly greater access to land, credit, and technology. This gap is reinforced by entrenched cultural norms and patriarchal systems that privilege male ownership and decision-making authority. As a result, women face considerable barriers to economic participation, training, and technological advancement. Official data from the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) and the Ministry of Agriculture illustrate this stark imbalance, underscoring the structural nature of the issue.



Group Three engaged in a power analysis exercise, sharing personal experiences of power and powerlessness. One participant recounted a successful fight against bribery in a defilement case, and another narrated how they navigated restrictions during a COVID-19 lockdown. Conversely, a profound sense of helplessness was described in a situation involving domestic abuse, highlighting the emotional toll of gender-based violence and the challenges faced by those advocating for justice. The discussion concluded with strategies for transitioning from powerlessness to empowerment, emphasizing the role of agency and support structures.

Conclusively, the two-day capacity enhancement session equipped participants with critical knowledge and tools to integrate gender-responsive strategies into climate change and broader development programming. It emphasized the urgent need to address the disproportionate impact of climate change on women, highlighting existing inequalities in resource access and decision-making. Participants gained practical insights into conducting gender analysis, designing inclusive climate adaptation strategies, and implementing effective monitoring and evaluation frameworks.