HER VOICE

NEWSLETTER

UGANDA WOMEN'S NETWORK

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Transforming unequal gender relations through collective visioning and action

MEAL Dept.



Inside the Issue

Special Edition #4-7-25

We are pleased to share key highlights of July 2025, reflecting our progress in advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE). We thank our partners, allies, and donors whose unwavering commitment drives transformative change, even amidst complex challenges.

A key milestone this period was the dissemination of findings from the Gender Assessment of JLOS services. UWONET convened a colloquium to present the findings, recommend legal and policy reforms, share best practices for improving access to justice for women and girls, and foster collaboration among justice actors for inclusive and equitable services. Participants included justice sector officials, legislators, women's rights organizations, development partners, legal aid providers, academics, customary justice actors, students, and advocates.

UWONET also strengthened women's participation in peacebuilding through district-level accountability forums. In partnership with ActionAid International Uganda, we hosted an influencing meeting on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) to shape Uganda's National Action Plan (NAP IV). The meeting reviewed the WPS Issue Paper, consolidating mid-term assessment findings from both the Ministry and UWONET. Additionally, we enhanced grassroots women's rights networks in Northern Uganda, amplifying their role in community peacebuilding and advocacy.

Together, we continue breaking barriers and building a more just, inclusive, and equitable society for all.

READ MORE

- *Strengthening Grassroots Women's Rights Networks in Northern Uganda*
- *Strengthening Women's Participation in Peacebuilding processes*
- *Dissemination of findings - Gender assessment of JLOS services*



STRENGTHENING GRASSROOTS WOMEN'S RIGHTS NETWORKS IN NORTHERN UGANDA

GULU & NWOYA, Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) E.D, Ms. Rita H. Aciro, made a strategic monitoring visit to Mission Uganda in Gulu and Invisible Hope Uganda in Nwoya. The mission aimed to assess partnerships, engage directly with district-based women's rights networks, and collect feedback to guide the review of UWONET's 2019–2028 Strategic Plan.

The visit reaffirmed UWONET's commitment to advancing gender equality through District Women's Rights Networks (DWRNs), which anchor the organization's work at sub-regional level. By collaborating with locally rooted Women's Rights Organizations, UWONET leverages community knowledge of social, cultural, and political dynamics to deliver interventions that are relevant, impactful, and sustainable.

Rita emphasized the importance of linking grassroots activism with national advocacy, ensuring that local priorities inform policy discourse. Through capacity building, mentorship, and resource sharing, UWONET has enhanced the institutional strength of district partners, positioning them as influential players in regional development agendas.

The partnership model prioritizes long-term sustainability over short-term project targets, fostering resilience and unity in Uganda's women's movement. The monitoring visit emphasized how localized engagement remains central to UWONET's mission of amplifying women's voices and driving inclusive change nationwide.



FACILITATED AN INFLUECING MEETING ON WOMEN PEACE AND SECURITY

On 18th July 2025, stakeholders gathered at Hilton Garden Inn in Kampala for an Influencing Meeting on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) aimed at shaping Uganda's National Action Plan (NAP IV). Organized by Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) in partnership with ActionAid International Uganda, the meeting reviewed the WPS Issue Paper, which consolidates mid-term assessment findings from both the Ministry and UWONET. Participants refined strategic priorities to guide the remaining period of NAP III and inform the upcoming plan, while also sharing reflections ahead of Uganda's commemoration of the 25th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

The forum also facilitated strategic dialogue on Uganda's current WPS landscape, identifying emerging challenges and generating actionable recommendations for national and local implementation. Attendees included government officials, district technocrats, local leaders, civil society actors, academia, climate justice advocates, Uganda People's Defense Forces, peace mediators, women leaders, politicians, media representatives, and activists, all united in reaffirming their commitment to advancing women's roles in peace and security.



Insights that inspire actions

WRITTER: ROLAND MUSASIZI - MEAL OFFICER

Mr. Emmanuel Omen, from ActionAid International Uganda, reaffirmed the organization's commitment to WPS agenda, aligning with national priorities and global frameworks such as SDGs 5 and 16 and UNSCR 1325. He acknowledged NAP III's focus on inclusive participation, protection, and women's leadership, but raised concerns over poor documentation, delayed reviews, and insufficient funding that hinder progress. Praising the Ministry of Gender and UWONET's leadership in assessing NAP III, he urged stakeholders to co-create a WPS agenda rooted in women's lived experiences, evidence, and collective action. He emphasized ActionAid's dedication to grassroots engagement, feminist leadership, and policy advocacy, calling for the convening to drive accountability, shared learning, and sustained coordination.





Ms. Perry Aritua, moderating the meeting, condemned the recent killing of a woman in Kamuli District linked to political rivalry, highlighting the urgent need to address electoral violence and protect citizens, especially women and girls. She urged continued advocacy for peaceful political processes and stronger systems to prevent such tragedies. Perry called on stakeholders to remain vigilant in tracking progress on national and global commitments, including the SDGs and UN Security Council Resolution 1325. She emphasized promoting women's participation in peace and security, strengthening partnerships, improving coordination, and ensuring accountability to achieve meaningful and lasting impact.

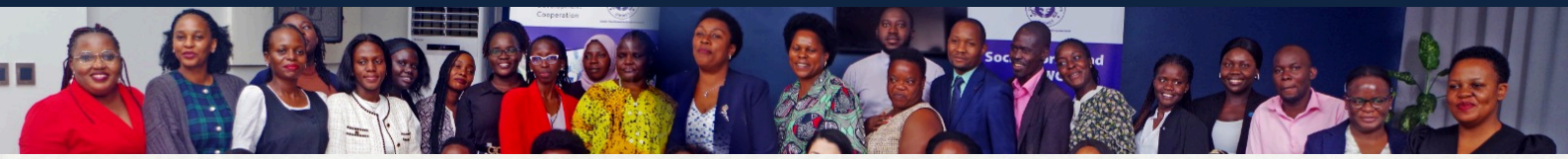
An issue paper consolidating findings from two mid-term assessments of Uganda's Third National Action Plan (NAP III) on Women, Peace, and Security (2020–2025) traced Uganda's conflict history from independence, highlighting women's growing role in peacebuilding and gains such as increased female participation in mediation, disaster preparedness, and awareness of laws and policies. It also outlined persistent challenges, including limited resources, cultural barriers, politicization, and climate-related conflicts, and offered recommendations to strengthen implementation, accountability, capacity building, and community-level engagement.



DISSEMINATION OF FINDINGS – GENDER ASSESSMENT OF JLOS SERVICES

On Tuesday, 6th, 2025, UWONET organized a colloquium to disseminate findings of the gender assessment of the JLOS services, recommend legal and policy reforms, share best practices in improving access to justice for women and girls, and promote collaboration among justice actors for inclusive and equitable services. The event convened a diverse group including justice sector actors, legislators, women's rights organizations, development partners, legal aid providers, academics, customary justice actors, students, and advocates.

Mrs. Rita Aciro the executive director of UWONET noted the organization's critical role in promoting access to justice through community-based approaches. She highlighted the establishment of advisory centers and shelters in Namutumba and Kamuli districts (Busoga region) in 2013, which offer wholistic support to survivors of Gender-Based Violence (GBV). The land for these facilities was provided by the respective Local Governments. Beyond service provision, Rita noted that these shelters also serve as data collection hubs to inform policy. The data collected directly feeds into national systems, including the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), and strengthens UWONET's advocacy work. This evidence base has enabled UWONET to contribute meaningfully to national policies and initiatives such as the National Development Plan, the Education Policy, and the National Women's Manifesto.





Dr. Katja Kerschbaumer the Head of Office of the Austrian Embassy Development Cooperation in Uganda commended UWONET for convening the Justice Colloquium on Gender-Responsive Access to Justice. She highlighted the relevance of the theme, noting its alignment with broader efforts to promote Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE).

She underscored the value of bringing together diverse justice actors, emphasizing that such collaboration is vital for ensuring inclusive and meaningful access to justice. Dr. Katia also addressed the persistent challenge of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Uganda, describing it as a deeply entrenched issue requiring collective and sustained action. She stressed the importance of public awareness to ensure individuals are informed about their rights and available avenues for redress.



Persistent challenges for women and girls access to justice includes: levels of education, expensive and complex justice system, limited trust in the formal justice system, geographically distant justice service locations, limited access to technological infrastructure, corruption in the justice system, cultural norms and stereotypes, limited gender mainstreaming and sensitivity in the justice system, sexual harassment

Success Story: "A notable success story emerged from one of the sub-counties where UWONET is actively working: a widow with a disability was forcibly evicted from her land by a relative who deemed her too old and unproductive. Her daughter reported the case to local informal justice actors, who had previously received training in mediation. Working in collaboration with formal justice actors, they launched an awareness campaign on land rights, referencing the 2022 property-related bill to educate the community especially women on their legal entitlements. Through a structured mediation process, the woman regained ownership of her land and is now supported by the community to cultivate it. This case was documented by Light for the World International and later received an award from NUDIPU for championing women's land rights and disability inclusion."







STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN PEACEBUILDING PROCESSES

UWONET organized district-level accountability forums in Kasese, Yumbe, Kotido, and Kitgum to reinforce commitments under the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda and follow up on the March 2025 midterm assessment of the National Action Plan (NAP III). The forums brought together women's groups, men, local leaders, cultural and religious leaders, and civil society to review action plans, share progress, and address barriers to women's participation in peace processes.

Key challenges identified included limited political will, cultural norms/exclusion (e.g., Akiriket gatherings), domestic violence, low self-esteem, levels of education, negative mindsets, lack of resources, and safety concerns. Participants proposed strategies such as community sensitization, promoting shared domestic roles, legal protection, economic empowerment, psychosocial support, increased women's involvement in development programs, and resource mobilization from both government and NGOs.

Presentation of Action Plans and Progress Updates

The previous action points were thoroughly reviewed with participants, and group-wide recommendations were agreed upon.

- Technocrats – Conducted community sensitizations.
- Peace Mediators – Created awareness, handled individual GBV cases, conducted two radio talk shows, presented women, peace, and security issues in council meetings, established a cross-border peace network (Turkana and Karamoja), and encouraged women to contest in the ongoing elections.
- Cultural Leaders – Conducted three awareness sessions in Lomus, Panyangara, and Lopuyo in Kotido district.
- Religious Leaders – Identified peace actors and mobilized communities through church announcements.
- CSOs – Organized community dialogues, aired radio jingles twice a week, held two radio talk shows, identified 20 karachunas as champions in Rengen and Nakapelimoru sub-counties, conducted community sensitizations, and mapped women peace mediators.