



**Remarks at Stakeholders Consultative Meeting on issues
around the Adolescent Girl for Central & Eastern Central
Region**

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Bishop Willis Teachers College, Iganga District
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The First Lady and National Champion for Adolescents, Hon. Janet Museveni
The Minister of Gender, Labour & Social Development, Hon. Janat Mukwaya
The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development,
Mr. Pius Bigirimana
The Executive Director, OAFRA UG, Mrs. Beat Bisangwa
Representatives from District Local Governments
Representatives from the Civil Society
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen
Dear girls, boys and parents.

My name is Rosa Malango

It is a great honour for me to join you all at this Stakeholders Consultative Meeting on issues around the Adolescent Girl for Uganda's Central & Eastern Central Region on the theme 'Accelerating Protection, Empowerment and Equal Opportunities for the Adolescent Girl.'

First, I would like to deeply appreciate, the First Lady of Uganda, Hon. Janet Museveni, the National Champion for Adolescents, for your tireless efforts to support the well-being and development of the girl-child in Uganda.

There is a saying that it takes a village to raise a child. Today all of us present are part of a village focused on investing in girls access to quality education, health, protection from violence. We want these girls to be girls today and strong, smart women tomorrow ready to contribute to the well-being of their families and the growth of Uganda as a nation on a journey to become a Middle Income by 2040.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The UN in Uganda (including UNFPA, UNICEF, UNAIDS, UNDP, UN Women among others) has developed an Adolescents and Youth Strategy (2017-2020), to help guide our support for adolescents and youth. It recognizes the role of adolescents and youth to drive sustainable development and seeks to link Uganda's experience to global frameworks to identify a wider group of partners.

We also have a *System-Wide Action Plan on Youth (Youth SWAP)* to help enhance the coherence and synergy of the United Nations system wide activities in key areas related to youth development. It builds on the specific mandates, expertise and capacities of individual United Nations entities, pulling the strength of the whole

United Nations system and providing a framework for integrating youth in the attainment of the SDGs by 2030. Our action plan focuses on five “overall goals”:

1. Employment and entrepreneurship
2. Protection of rights and civic engagement
3. Political inclusion
4. Education (including comprehensive sexuality education)
5. Health

The UN in Uganda Adolescent and Youth Strategy enables us to implement the global Youth-SWAP and respond to priority needs for adolescent and youth in country. We are giving priority to the most vulnerable adolescent segments, specifically the girl child, rural adolescents, conflict affected adolescents, adolescents living with HIV/AIDS and disabled adolescents.

Now let me say a few words to the girls,

Dear girls, each one of you is unique and you deserve respect and support. Some of you have suffered discrimination, others have experienced incredible violence and pain. We are here today to let you know that you are not alone. To encourage you to stand strong and help you understand the opportunities around you to overcome the challenges you face. We are here to raise awareness of your efforts and to increase the members of this village of supporters.

Dear boys, you are also very special. I encourage you to help protect your sisters.

Together we can change your lives!

Let's go through some of the information about your situation.

According to UNICEF, approximately 35% of girls drop out of school because of early marriage and 23% because of early pregnancy (UNICEF, 2015). This increases to 34% in the poorest households. In rural areas 24% of girls experience early pregnancy compared with 16% of wealthier households and 21% of urban girls (UNICEF, 2015). I have met some of these girls when I travel through the country and they have all asked me for help to go back to school, a safe place for their children and the chance to raise their families out of poverty in safety through skills and kits for new business.

I'm also worried about the HIV prevalence among young people which currently stands at 3.7% with young women and adolescent girls accounting for most of the new infections. A few weeks ago H.E. President Museveni launched the first ever

Presidential Initiative against HIV/AIDS as part of efforts to reduce cases and increase awareness. Let me share with you two key messages from this Initiative: first girls and boys -LOVE CAN WAIT please follow the ABC – please abstain and if something happens please test and treat yourselves. Second, men have the highest rate of untreated persons in the country – for the sake of your families and communities and for your own survival please abstain test and treat yourselves.

Girls and boys, parents, leaders, I have another message for you. Please respect life regardless of gender, religion or ethnicity. You must be champions of peace. The issue of violence against young women is one of the most widespread human rights violations in the country, with 56% of women aged 15-49 having experienced physical violence at least once since age 15. I pledge to campaign discourage violence in all its forms. I invite all parents and leaders to join us.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Uganda has made significant progress in putting in place legal and policy frameworks, with support of the UN System in Uganda, to address gender inequalities and discrimination, which has created a more enabling environment to improve the well-being of the girl child.

Adolescent and youth-specific issues are mainstreamed in the National Development Plan II, though a lot more needs to be done to ensure this sub-group is integral to the financing and monitoring frameworks. The *National Youth Policy* in Uganda adopted in 2016 with a stated goal “to enable the youth to enhance their competencies for improved participation in national development.” Government programmes like the Universal Primary Education (UPE) have closed gender gaps in school enrolment by 93.0%, as reported in the 2015 Uganda MDG progress report and both the Constitution of Uganda as well as the recent Amendment of the Children’s Act promote equality and protects girls.

Uganda’s commitment to the rights of the Girl Child is further reflected in the Government’s ratification of global and regional conventions and declarations that prohibit discrimination and violence and promote the protection of girls. These include the UN Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC) and the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Yet, despite a favorable legal and policy environment, there are still significant challenges in realizing the rights of the Girl Child, in particular, the rights of Adolescent Girls. We pledge to sustain our support to complete the child policy order review.

Now what does that mean for you girls?

It means we all have a role to play to ensure that you girls are able to become members of a productive workforce and healthy families. We need you to believe in your potential and improve the opportunities for you to learn and grow.

I will conclude by making a few commitments to support

I want you to keep the following goals in mind every day:

1. We pledge to support education; Look for opportunities to improve your access to quality education and completion of schooling; vocational training or formal education are all valid and key; use technology to learn vocational skills; brothers learn with your sisters and engage your parents.

2. **How can I stay healthy?** Learn as much as you can about where you can get counselling and access to health services including on nutrition and hygiene as well as HIV/AIDS prevention, care and treatment services. Stay healthy for your sake and your family. Parents, cultural leaders and religious leaders, we will support your efforts to translate into local languages good practices.

3. **Say no to violence.** Form groups to help prevent violence and protect yourselves. Boys become part of anti-violence groups; share information about respect and how to identify bullying; create support groups to help inform authorities and the adults around you when you suspect girls are experiencing violence; help make sure girls receive prompt protection, services and access to justice; pledge to support efforts to protect and promote adolescent girls.

4. **Participate in civic activities with your communities.** Engage your elders to learn about the impact of improving living standards for you – it will help improve the quality of life of your families in the future including theirs; you are future nurses, doctors, teachers, district chairpersons; I pledge to support these efforts by mentoring girls; disseminating your message of hope.

5. Create a “village” of supporters. Today we are all here as part of your village of supporters. What are you going to ask us to do to help improve your lives? Do you know how a Parliamentarians can help? Have you identified key asks for the UN system? What are you asking the Government to focus on? How would you like your Champion to further assist you? Are there any companies you think should be part of this village and if so to do what? I pledge to sustain our support to this dialogue and look forward to its extension across the nation.

This is about your life. Your voice and role is key. Let us hear your voice!

Honourable First Lady, thank you for inviting us to be part of this important effort. This is an incredible journey. We look forward to being part of this community led dialogue.

To Uganda, I want to recognize the Government’s leadership in helping to create the SDGs and demonstrating that local values are global values. By protecting and empowering adolescent girls, we are empowering Ugandan families and communities. This is the only way to achieve sustainable development and leave no one behind.

Last Friday the world came to Uganda to recognize our leadership in helping refugees and Uganda communities hosting them. today’s campaign can benefit from solidarity.

On behalf of the United Nations System in Uganda I would like to reiterate our commitment to work with all of you to support the acceleration of efforts to support the rights of adolescent girls in Uganda.

To you girls, I pledge our unwavering support to efforts to improve the quality of your life!

I Thank You