



**Wednesday 04<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

**STATEMENT OF THE INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL OF UGANDA FOR THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2026**

**Kampala, Uganda:** The Inter-Religious Council of Uganda joins the Government of Uganda and the rest of the world to celebrate the International Women's Day 2026.

The International Women's Day is a celebration of the progress made towards women empowerment, celebrating women's achievements and raising awareness on the challenges that hamper the progress of women in all spheres of life.

The United Nations has guided that this years' celebration of the International Women's Day will focus on raising awareness on discrimination of women and taking action to forge gender parity under the theme: **Rights, Justice, action for all women and girls.**

In pursuit of the said theme the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda while working with its Inter-Faith Women Network of Uganda and the International Justice Mission, have hosted a *Dialogue on the Role of Inter-faith Women in Addressing Persistent Violence Against Women and Children in Uganda, Tracking Progress and Commitments in Partnership with the Inter-Faith Media.*

The theme of this year's International celebration, and that of our Dialogue reinforces the importance of equal rights and justice for women and girls, calling for action to dismantle barriers to justice and promote Gender equality. <sup>1</sup>

As women in Uganda celebrate the International Women's Day, the world still grapples with challenges pertaining to violence against women and children for example; nearly **1 in 5 girls** is sexually abused at least once in her life. Nearly **736 million women** have experienced physical and or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime. Worldwide, up to 50% of sexual assaults are committed against **girls under 16 years old**.

Additionally, violence against women in Uganda is a significant issue, with approximately 50% of women experiencing intimate partner violence in their lifetime, exacerbated by cultural norms and related health crisis.

According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, about **50% of women aged 15-49** have experienced intimate partner violence (IPV) or Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) at least once in their lifetime. In 2018, **30%** of women reported experiencing such violence in the last 12 months.

The demographic and Health Survey in 2022/2023 found that nearly **one in three women** in rural Uganda had been physically violated.

Additionally, the Survey Indicated **that 95% of Ugandan women** had experienced physical and sexual violence at some point in their lives, highlighting the prevalence of GBV in the Uganda.

The Survey further confirmed that **23% of women** reported experiencing physical violence, indicating a significant level of physical violence against women. More still **72% of the respondents** in the survey indicated that it is never justified for a

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.bing.com/ck/a?!&&p=03068aaa4e1b93cff1a657e8151b37eb6d7d14f8c4aff9d319b406f1b7ffa61JmltdHM9MTc3MTM3MjgwMA&ptn=3&ver=2&hsh=4&fclid=20cee677-bfea-68ed-2812-f456be7c6915&u=a1aHR0cDovL3d3dy5pbmRlem5hdGlvbmFsd29tZW5zZGF5LmNvbS90aGVtZS8&ntb=1>

man to use physical force to discipline his wife, reflecting societal attitudes towards GBV.

Only **14%** of the violence victims report their cases and **5%** of sexual violence victims do so. This low reporting rate is a significant barrier to justice for survivors of GBV.

According to the Uganda Police Force's annual crime report **2024**, gender-based violence, domestic violence and defilement cases that were reported and investigated increased compared to previous years.

Violence against women has recently taken new, more sophisticated forms. An increasing number of women are, for instance, reporting cyber-bullying and abuse through social media and smart phones.

We observe that in Uganda violence against women is on the increase despite the presence of laws and policies to protect victims and survivors.

We are further concerned that the consequences of violence against women are profound, affecting women's health, economic stability and social standing with women who experience violence often facing stigma and isolation, which deters them from seeking help. Public perception of GBV remains a critical issue, with many individuals still believing that certain forms of violence are acceptable.

Given the above persistent challenges highlighted herein we call for a comprehensive and holistic response to violence against women through the following recommendations.

1. There is need to equip the Judiciary with adequate resources and support necessary to expedite GBV Cases to reduce delays and challenges faced in survivors seeking Justice.

2. There is need for the Judiciary to prioritize hearing of sexual violence cases handling them in a trauma informed and survivor centered manner.
3. We propose that reporting and referral channels with CSOs, Faith Based Institutions, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and the Uganda Police Force be made accessible, strengthened and simplified with a focus on trauma informed approach to supporting victims.
4. We recommend that the Government, Development Partners, Religious and Faith Institutions support reformative and transformative actions on GBV through amplifying the provision of spiritual counseling, psychosocial support for victims of GBV and establish GBV Shelters which serve as safety nets and provide spaces to escape violence and receive support.
5. There is need for Uganda to develop a single unified strategy aimed at ending violence against women through the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.
6. Furthermore, while there are adequate laws in place to protect women, there is need for enforcement of Laws aimed at protecting women's rights and well being in Uganda, including the amendment of the Domestic Violence Act to harmonize offences and provide for more stringent penalties.
7. There is need for CSOs, Government, Development Partners and Faith Institutions to amplify free Legal Advice and Probono Services to meet the access to justice needs of the victims of violence.
8. Lastly continued efforts are needed from Faith Institutions, CSOs, and Government Agencies to raise awareness and change cultural perceptions on GBV.

The Inter-Religious Council of Uganda in partnership with the International Justice Mission, therefore, calls upon all stakeholders and actors to join in the fight against violence emitted on women and girls. We are committed to providing safe spaces for dialogue on GBV, enhancing the capacity of religious leaders to respond to violence against Women and Children and using our religious institutions as centers of creating awareness and supporting victims of GBV.

We wish you the best as you celebrate the International Women's Day.

Mrs. Florence Nassanga Musoke

*Chairperson, IRCU Inter-Faith Women Network of Uganda*

**FOR AND BEHALF OF THE INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL OF UGANDA**