

WOMEN'S PROBONO INITIATIVE (WPI)

# ANNUAL REPORT 2019



For the year ending 31st December 2019



**Women's  
Probono  
Initiative**

*Your rights, Your life*



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# Acronyms/Abbreviations

A	<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
	<b>ANC</b>	Antenatal Care
B	<b>BCC</b>	Behavior Change Communication
C	<b>CBD</b>	Central Division
	<b>CM</b>	Child Marriages
	<b>CMC</b>	Chief Magistrates Courts
	<b>CPR</b>	Contraceptive Prevalence Rate
	<b>CSOs</b>	Civil Society Organizations
F	<b>FGM</b>	Female Genital Mutilation
	<b>FP</b>	Family Planning
	<b>FPAU</b>	Family Planning Association of Uganda
	<b>FY</b>	Financial Year
G	<b>GBV</b>	Gender Based Violence
	<b>GFF</b>	Girls First Fund
H	<b>HC</b>	High Court
	<b>HRBA</b>	Human Rights Based Approach
I	<b>ICT</b>	Information & Communication Technology
	<b>IUD</b>	Intra-Uterine Device
K	<b>KCCA</b>	Kampala Capital City Authority
L	<b>LARCs</b>	Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives
	<b>LDP•</b>	Leadership Development Programme
M	<b>MARPs</b>	Most At Risk Populations
	<b>MDGs</b>	Millennium Development Goals
	<b>MISP</b>	Minimum Initial Service Package
	<b>MoGLSD</b>	Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development




<b>MOH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring & Evaluation
<b>PAC</b>	Post Abortion Care
<b>PEP</b>	Post-Exposure Prophylaxis
<b>PFC</b>	Programmes and Finance Committee
<b>PIASCY</b>	The Presidential Initiative on AIDS Strategy to Youth
<b>QoC</b>	Quality of Care
<b>RBA</b>	Rights Based Approach
<b>RBFP SD</b>	Rights-Based Family Planning Service Delivery
<b>RH</b>	Reproductive Health
<b>RHU</b>	Reproductive Health Uganda
<b>RSA</b>	Resident State Attorney
<b>SA</b>	State Attorney
<b>SDGs</b>	The Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SRH</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health
<b>SIFPO</b>	Support for International Family Planning Organizations
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
<b>STI's</b>	Sexually Transmitted Infections
<b>UGX</b>	Uganda Shillings
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Populations Fund
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>VCT</b>	Voluntary Counselling and Testing
<b>VHTs</b>	Village Health Teams
<b>WPI</b>	Women's Probono Initiative
<b>YEP</b>	Youth Empowerment Project

# Executive Director's Message

2019 was a year of incredible growth for The Women's Probono Initiative. Through our direct support to women and girls who have no access to legal representation, we hope to see a change in the way society views the girl child. I am very grateful to the Board of Directors and the WPI staff for the excellent work done to advocate for a Uganda free of violence and discrimination against women and girls.

In 2019, we consolidated our efforts to advocate against human trafficking through engaging stakeholders such as the Parliament of Uganda, Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development (MoGLSD) but most importantly ensuring that the victims of trafficking return home safely. Through the support of the Girls First Fund portal we were supported to preach the word to end child marriages and teenage pregnancies in Uganda. We were amazed by partners in Kalamba Subcounty that moved their leaders to find innovative solutions to wipe out the scourge of child-marriage. With these collective efforts by Access Youth Initiative in a youth led Community Based Organisation in Butambala District, we were able to support the drafting of a BYE-law to end child marriage in Kalamaba Subcounty Butambala district. We have equally been vigilant in producing Information, Education and Communication materials including a policy brief on child marriages and teenage pregnancies, handled cases to curb sexual and domestic violence among others.

Our commitment to serve the most vulnerable women and girls in society remains strong. In 2020, we shall grow to raise our efforts a notch higher.

I would like to thank the WPI staff, the government, our partners, donors and Board of Directors without whom none of this work would be possible.

*Primah Kwagala*





**OUR COMMITMENT  
TO SERVE THE MOST  
VULNERABLE WOMEN  
AND GIRLS IN SOCIETY  
REMAINS STRONG**



**DEVELOP AND PURSUE  
ADVOCACY GOALS AND  
LITIGATION STRATEGIES TO  
REFORM PRACTICES THAT  
TARGET AND PENALIZE WOMEN  
AND GIRLS WE SERVE**





# Who **We** Are

WPI is a nonprofit women led advocacy organization whose approach is to advance women and girls' rights through awareness creation for human rights, legal representation, research and knowledge sharing.

## SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN UGANDA



22%  
WOMEN

77.7%  
PRIMARY SCHOOL  
CHILDREN

82%  
SECONDARY SCHOOL  
STUDENTS

In July 2018, the Women's Probono Initiative (WPI) began providing free legal services to women who cannot otherwise access legal representation in Uganda. Given that Uganda is a patriarchal society, male-centered dominance at the workplace, in families and society at large has created special problems that make it difficult for women to report issues of abuse, violence, discrimination and social inequities that can otherwise be challenged in a free and democratic society.

For instance, national statistics in Uganda indicate that more than 1 in 5 women experience sexual violence and that at least 22% of women in Uganda report that they have experienced sexual violence (UDHS, 2016); 77.7% of children in primary schools and 82% of students in secondary schools have experienced some form of sexual violence (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2016).

In a 2019 report by the Uganda Parliament's Committee of Inquiry into allegations of sexual violence in institutions of learning in Uganda, the Committee noted that there is a culture of silence and norm not to report cases by women due to the belief that 'men cannot be rejected'. These traditionally entrenched beliefs are also projected in some discriminatory laws and practices such as the Customary Marriage Act, 1970 that legitimizes polygyny, inadequate systems to regulate medical service provision to women and children, social acceptance of domestic violence among others. In addition to providing free legal representation, WPI in 2019 served as a knowledge hub for research and knowledge management on women's rights, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), provision of free legal advice and engaged in impact litigation with a bearing on women and girls. This report, is just but a summary of what we are evolving to tackle in our communities in Uganda. Enjoy!



## Our **Vision**

A Uganda free of violence and discrimination against women and girls.



## Our **Mission**

To advance access to justice for girls through awareness creation, legal representation, research and knowledge sharing.



## Areas of **Focus**

- Women's health and human rights
- Sex and Gender-Based Violence
- Gender Responsive Budgets



## **The objectives** for which we are established are:

- To provide free legal services to women and girls who are suffering stigma, abuse, sex and gender-based violence in Uganda.
- To generate research and knowledge on the management of women's health in Uganda.
- To educate and empower women and girls about their rights and train them to be advocates for better policies that affect their wellbeing.
- To mentor young female lawyers and inspire them to aspire to greater heights in the profession and beyond.



## Approaches to our work

- Legal Representation
- Research and Knowledge Sharing
- Empowerment and Awareness creation of Human Rights



## Legal Representation

Our lawyers have the skills and expertise to provide:

- Direct legal representation
- Offer legal advice to walk-in clients
- Assess community needs and identify potential legal challenges
- Develop and pursue advocacy goals and litigation strategies to reform practices that target and penalize women and girls we serve



## Human Rights Awareness Creation

Our team has the expertise to:

- Train communities on their rights and responsibilities and in turn equip community members with knowledge and skills on how to seek redress within their communities
- Develop community-based mediation mechanisms that can be utilized outside court
- Document community practices that inform impact litigations and national advocacy campaigns



## Research and Knowledge Sharing

We are involved in research to inform national advocacy campaigns.

- Analysis of laws, practices and policies that have an impact on women and girls to inform the Impact Litigations and cutting edge advocacy initiatives.

**WPI HAS BEEN AT  
THE FOREFRONT OF  
ADVOCACY FOR POOR  
WOMEN THAT HAVE  
BEEN TRAFFICKED**



# 2019 Milestones

## 1 Registration as a Non-Government Organisation (NGO)

WPI was issued a certificate of registration and permit to operate as a national NGO located in Kampala District in May 2019. This was a great milestone for us having worked for over a year as a company limited by guarantee. We are overjoyed to be able to reach all Ugandans with our legal services.

## 2 Repatriation of the Late Namukaya Pauline's Remains to Uganda

On 5<sup>th</sup> December 2018, the late Namukaya Pauline Florence a resident of Kamuli District, was recruited and exported to Saudi Arabia through Empowerage International Limited-an agency licensed to export domestic labor to Saudi Arabia by MoGLSD. The family tried to establish contact with their daughter, sister and mother in vain. Through unknown sources, they received information that Pauline was sent to work with a family who were mistreating her. This Saudi Arabian family, it is alleged, took her to a hospital in Saudi Arabia and abandoned her there. After several weeks she was sent to a police station and ultimately a detention center where she met her unfortunate death. Attempts to get information on her whereabouts and cause of death had been fruitless. Agents of MoGLSD and Empowerage International Limited confirmed the death of Pauline however with no medical examination as to what led to her death.

On 10<sup>th</sup> July 2019, WPI received instructions from the late Pauline's family to inquire into the circumstances under which Pauline died since the cause of death was not clearly established. WPI on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2019 wrote to the Speaker of Parliament and the Minister for Gender, Labor and Social Development appealing to them to implore the Saudi Arabian Government to release the body of Namukaya Pauline to her family. Our efforts were successful as the late Pauline's remains were returned to Uganda and her family accorded her a befitting burial.



### 3

## **Repatriation of Sylvia Nandawula to Uganda from Saudi Arabia**

On Tuesday 30th July, 2019, we were contacted by Sylvia's family to help secure her return from Saudi Arabia. Ms Nandawula's exportation was facilitated by Verdant Pastures Agency (U) Ltd, a labour export company located in Rubaga – Kakeeka. The family had received information that their daughter was ill and required urgent medical attention. Several requests by the family to have her returned had been ignored by the company which then went ahead to issue threats against the family. We engaged the exportation company and the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.

Subsequently, on 6th September 2019, Nandawula Sylvia was expatriated back to Uganda following the intervention of different offices as she had been reported to be ill and required urgent medical attention. Upon her arrival, the agency company took the required initiative to tend to her medical needs in Entebbe until she was discharged on 8th September 2019. We followed up and continue to follow up with Sylvia to ensure that she regains her health and gets the necessary support she needs and we are happy to report that her health has greatly improved from the time she was discharged upon her return, thanks to the collective efforts of the WPI team as well as the other partners that helped make this possible.

### 4

## **Enforcement and Protection of human rights of Nayiga Josephine**

On the 10th day of December, we were contacted by the family of a one Nayiga Josephine who had been recruited and facilitated to work as a housemaid in Jordan through a labour export agency in Uganda known as VBC Labour Exports Ltd in Kampala in April 2019. The family received information to the effect that their daughter and sister had not been happy for a while at her place of employment due to harsh and abusive working conditions and wished to return home since she feared for her life. The family insisted that they had last heard from Ms. Nayiga Josephine about four (4) months before approaching us and that they had repeatedly approached the Agency offices to get any information about her whereabouts or health condition since her telephone lines are were all off and unavailable but this had been futile.

WPI on 11th December 2019 wrote to VBC Labour Exports Ltd appealing to them to provide information detailing the living conditions and health status of Nayiga Josephine as well as her employment details as well as explain to the family why Nayiga's lines of communication had been cut off. The agency replied to our letter a few days later with details of Nayiga's health and living conditions which were satisfactory, as well as new contact numbers that she could be reached on. To

confirm their report, we contacted Nayiga Josephine using the same contacts from the Agency and she confirmed to us that she was doing fine and we should assure her family of the same, which we did.

## 5 Bye-Law on Child Marriage

WPI also drafted a bye-law to end child marriage and teenage pregnancies for Kalamba Sub-county in Butambala District, Central Uganda. On 18th July 2019, we were approached by Mr. Ibrahim Kakinda, Team Leader of Access Youth Initiative Uganda (A GFF Partner) to support the sub-county to draft a bye-law that is legally binding to members of the community. We drafted the bill and gave it back with guidance on the stages of consultation it ought to pass through prior to its implementation. We are able to measure success of this bye-law by keeping a copy of the draft bye-law shared and communication of guidelines we have shared with Mr. Ibrahim who is directly leading implementation of the advocacy activities in Butambala District.

## 6 Offering legal services to Girls First Fund (GFF) Grantee Supported Community Based Organizations (CBOs)

We handled 12 cases of Sexual and Gender Based Violence against women and girls to four (4) CBOs. The specifics are as below;

### a) Two (2) Girls rescued from marriages

Two girls from the same family aged 14 and 16 had been married off by their parents to adult men. The school heads notified GEF that in turn alerted us to intervene. We met the family, engaged Police and the two girls were rescued from their marital homes and counseled to go back to school or join vocational institutions to acquire some skills before they could consider the marriages. On 9th and 10th September, WPI legal officers met the family, GEF officials, the Police and district officials to appraise them on the status of child marriages in the law and Government's strategy to end child marriages by ensuring all girls are kept in school. The girls were encouraged to go back to school or join a vocational institute with support from GEF. The police recorded the cases as defilement and pledged to bring the perpetrators to book. Minutes of these meetings were taken and resolutions for advocacy and

follow up implementation were taken by GEF and WPI. A registration of participants in the meeting was taken and pictures recorded too. Contacts of district officials were also recorded and monitoring of the girls' progress at the vocational institute run by the district is being done by GEF.

**b) Three (3) sexual violence cases in Mpigi district (Central Uganda), perpetrators arrested and committed to court for trial**

We received two cases of defilement from Mpigi Women with Disabilities (a GFF Partner). We were able to investigate, report to Police and had the files forwarded to court for prosecution. The culprits (perpetrators) were identified and arrested. We are watching brief (attending court & appearing alongside designated state attorneys) to ensure that justice is served. We have made copies of court files and are following up on the trials.

The third case involved an alleged rape of a woman with albinism. We made investigations, had the case reported to Police but later discovered that even though there was a rape, the victim had developed a relationship with the perpetrator, they had a child whom the perpetrator's family was supporting. The victim thus demanded a public apology and some money. The perpetrator and his family paid the money and the case was closed.

## **7 Contributed to CSOs efforts in writing CSO position paper on ICPD+25.**

We led the writing and presentation of the CSO position paper to the UNFPA Country Director in Uganda. At the meeting held at Hotel Africana in Kampala, as a priority, we encouraged Government to provide appropriate sexual education to youths in and out of school as a mechanism to prevent child marriage and teenage pregnancies in Uganda. We also emphasized the need for an enabling legal environment on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights for women and girls such as a School Health Policy, an adolescent health policy to address young people's concerns, availability of contraceptives to sexually active young adults among others.



Litigation Surgery for cases on Mental Health

## 8 Developed a policy briefing paper on legal responses to ending child marriage and teenage pregnancies in Uganda.

The policy brief tackles the legal and policy landscape on child marriage, teenage pregnancy and gives recommendations on how to curb the same. It can be accessed online at: <http://womenprobono.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/HANDBOOK-LAYED-PDFplaced.pdf>

## 9 Attended meeting to contribute to messages by Government to end child marriages in Uganda.

The meeting was held by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD) on Tuesday 17th September, 2019 at Piato Restaurant in Kampala.

We evaluated and pre-tested messages developed by stakeholders with support from World Vision – Uganda. It was generally resolved that images to be used should be gender sensitive, targeting families, duty bearers, girls and boys equally to stay in school till they reach an agreeable age to marry as warranted by law.

## **10 Participated in radio talk show to disseminate information on keeping girls in school as a measure to end Child Marriage in Uganda.**

Ms. Primah Kwagala was hosted on 94.8fm, XFM a radio station that broadcasts across Uganda to a large youth demographic to discuss the status of Teenage pregnancies in Uganda on 23<sup>rd</sup> June, 2019. Ms. Kwagala emphasized the necessity for Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in and outside schools for young people to be able to make informed decisions regarding when to have sexual relations, necessity for enabling laws and policies to support SRHR service provision that is youth friendly and retention and re-entry of girls that have conceived whilst in school. A recording of the radio broadcast was made and documented for evaluation.

## **11 Hosted the 'Busoga Health Forum under the Auspices of Obwa'Kyabazinga bwa Busoga'**

The Women's Probono Initiative in partnership with The Auspices of Obwa'Kyabazinga bwa Busoga' held a meeting on Saturday 20th July, 2019 at the Metropole Hotel. The outcome of the meeting proposed a Busoga Health Forum which works with the Obwa'Kyabazinga bwa Busoga and other actors to contribute towards a better Busoga. The key areas of priority concern were: Keeping the Girl Child in school, Male involvement in Health and Development, Family Planning, Sanitation, Hygiene and Nutrition. This continues to yield great progress in the Busoga region as many young girls have been sensitized on their rights as well the essence of keeping in school, many male professionals and local area leaders have come on board to join the fight and steer this in the right direction.

## **12 Support to women with Domestic Violence Issues.**

On 29<sup>th</sup> June 2019, we offered legal help to a single mother of 5 children who was being maliciously arrested for theft of a 50-inch television and a radio. We moved swiftly to the scene and stopped this arrest. The lady moved to Bukoto police station to face her accusers. The Police then arrested her and transferred her that very evening to Kira police station in Kampala. We followed up this case and secured her police bond on 3<sup>rd</sup> July and thereafter, we successfully pushed police to drop the malicious charge.





Sensitization in Buyende District



Litigation Surgery for cases on Mental Health



**WE ANALYSE LAWS, PRACTICES  
AND POLICIES THAT HAVE  
AN IMPACT ON WOMEN AND  
GIRLS TO INFORM THE IMPACT  
LITIGATIONS**



# Public Interest Litigation & Advocacy Initiatives

## **Public Interest Case Challenging death of infants at an unregistered medical facility in Jinja district.**

This case was filed in January 2019 challenging Ms. Renee Bach and Serving His Children (SHC) to hold them to account for violation of rights of poor, illiterate mothers who were duped to believe that Renee Bach and her facility Serving His Children was a hospital by agents of Renee and SHC. In this public interest case filed before the Jinja High Court by WPI and two mothers, we sought declarations against Renee and SHC to the effect that running a facility that was not licensed to provide medical services violated the human rights of unsuspecting, illiterate and vulnerable members of the community.

The case received wide media coverage and can be accessed at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/07/03/africa/renee-bach-lawsuit-uganda-intl/index.html>

### **i) Advocacy against human trafficking of domestic workers especially women in Uganda**

WPI has been at the forefront of advocacy for poor women that have been trafficked from rural Uganda to urban areas in promises for work but instead end up in sexually exploitative work. We have also handled cases against recruitment firms sending domestic workers (mostly women) to the Middle East. Our work involves advocacy for government to put in place regulations to implement the anti-trafficking laws, representing domestic workers whose employers and or recruitment agencies are abusing their work. We have been able to ensure that girls that have died in Saudi Arabia are repatriated to Uganda and those suffering abuse are brought back to their families.

See a link to our press conference marking the World Day against Human Trafficking here: <https://www.softpower.ug/women-pro-bono-lawyers-call-for-more-funding-to-fight-human-trafficking/>

**ii) Advocacy on women's health rights and litigations against sexual violence**

We have done research and are currently working with the Validity Foundation to file strategic impact litigations to challenge the government's failure to provide psychosocial support and community mental health support services in primary health care facilities in Uganda for women with mental disabilities that have suffered sexual abuse. We have cases against Gulu Local District Government and the Attorney General of Uganda for deliberately failing to provide resources to put in place a policy on mental health among other demands.

**iii) Campaign to end teenage pregnancies and child marriages in Uganda.**

We have a partnership with the Girls First Fund and Girls Not Brides coalition to provide legal support to CBOs working to end child marriages in Uganda to draft byelaws specific to districts and sub counties' commitments to end child marriage. We drafted byelaws for CBOs in Wakiso and in Mityana district and as well support CBOs to ensure child marriage perpetrators are prosecuted or held to account in ensuring they keep girls in school.

**iv) Representing indigent women to get bail and right to customary property through community outreach projects.**

We have represented indigent women charged with malicious and frivolous charges to get bail and educated communities in Buyende in respect to land and property rights of widowed women in their communities.

**v) Provision of free legal aid to women on domestic relations**

We operate a daily open-door legal aid clinic for women and girls to walk in and ask for legal advice, representation and support in mediations regarding labor disputes, domestic relations including sharing of properties, divorce proceedings, maintenance, custody cases and domestic violence cases to mention but a few.

## **vi) Litigation Surgery**

On 15th April 2019, WPI in partnership with Validity Foundation held a litigation surgery for cases on mental health. The purpose of the litigation surgery was to discuss cases on mental health and develop an advocacy plan for the litigation process.

## **vii) Public Interest Case challenging the sexual violence against women receiving treatment in Butabika National Referral Mental Hospital in Kampala.**

This case was filed on 8th October, 2019 at the High Court, Civil Division in Kampala against the Attorney General, Dr. Basangwa David (Executive Director of Butabika Hospital) and Dr. Juliet Nnakku (Deputy Executive Director at Butabika). The women allege that when reports of rape and sexual violence by fellow patients and staff of Butabika against female patients were forwarded to the administration of Butabika, no investigations were done nor were there any reports made to police, no emergency medical interventions such as provision of Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP), emergency contraception to prevent pregnancy or psychosocial support in or after discharge from Butabika was given to them as is the normal practice in treatment of survivors of sexual violence in Uganda.

## **viii) Export labour case of the late Sylvia Mutonyi**

On 9th December 2019, we received instructions from the family of the late Sylvia Mutonyi who was recruited and exported to work as a housemaid in Saudi Arabia on/around the 21st May 2018 through Raama Africano (U) Limited, an agency which is licensed to export domestic labour by the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development and a member of the UAERA (Uganda Association of External Recruitment Agencies).

Exactly a year later on 21st May 2019, Raama Africano (U) Limited's partner agency in Saudi Arabia Saad Bin Dajam Recruitment Office reported that she had passed on and that the death was by natural causes. However, the family received information that their late daughter, sister and mother had been very ill and had undergone harsh and cruel treatment from her former employers in Saudi Arabia



and they sought to verify the exact cause of her death. The Police at Kibuli Metropolitan Police Station in Kampala have in their custody the postmortem report of the late Sylvia which was conducted in Mulago Hospital upon the arrival of her remains in Uganda on the 13th day of September 2019. On 9th December 2019, we wrote to the Director CID Kibuli Post Station Kampala requesting his office to furnish us with the above said Post Mortem Report but we have not yet got a reply to date. We are still following up on the matter and we shall not stop until the family has been given the justice they deserve.



Sensitization on child marriages of girls in Kasese district



Creative Commons meeting

# Conclusion

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We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has supported our cause, especially our partners for believing in our work and supporting us in achieving our aims and mission. It is because of this support that many young women and girls' lives all over the country have made positive turns. This was our first year in operation and we appreciate the commitment of everyone especially the WPI team in not giving up and ensuring that positive change is made and achieved throughout the country. We continue to serve and make access to justice easier for all our clients who are being deprived of their rights.

Thank you for all the support!



Busoga Health Forum



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OUR WORK, please visit our website [www.womenprobono.org](http://www.womenprobono.org)  
or contact us on +256 (0) 200 909061

Our donors and partners in 2019

