



Women's
Probono
Initiative

Your rights, Your life

2022



REPORT

ANNUAL 2022
REPORT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acronyms	II
Message from the Executive Director	III
WHO WE ARE	IV
Our Vision	IV
Our Mission	IV
Our Values	IV
Autonomy of Women and Girls	V
Approaches to our work include the work	VI
OVERVIEW OF THE YEAR 2022	1
I. Supportive communities that work collectively to promote gender equity	1
a) Institutions and other stakeholders collectively and actively promote awareness about the rights of women and girls	1
b) Increased access to information about the rights of women and girls by communities in different parts of Uganda	5
c) Advocacy media engagements	6
II. Policies and legislation that address inequalities and the persistent violence against women and girls	14
a) Research studies that provides a better understanding of the context of women and girls, and changing trends/dynamics	14
b) Concerted advocacy campaigns conducted for more gender responsive policies and legislation	17
c) PIL Cases strategically selected and executed	17
III. Younger female lawyers and activists championing autonomy for women and girls, individually and as a part of women’s movement in Uganda	19
a) Empowering / holistic legal support services for WPI Clients	19
b) Mentoring young women lawyers at select Universities to value and advance autonomy for women and girls in Uganda	21
IV. WPI initiatives result in an increased number of women freed from violence and exploitation	22
a) WPI creative lawyering initiatives, including PIL to protect the rights of women and girls	22
b) Joint CSO Initiative to advocate for changes to policies and practices that exploit women and girls	22
V. Institutional development	23
a) People and Culture	23
b) Strengthening our systems and structures	27
CHALLENGES FACED AND LESSONS LEARNT	30
a) Challenges	30
b) Lessons	30
CONCLUSION	30
OUR ADVOCACY NETWORKS AND COALITIONS	31
OUR DONORS IN 2022	32

ACRONYMS

AGYW	Adolescent Girls and Young Women
CEHURD	Centre for Health, Human Rights and Development
CM	Child Marriages
CRVPF	Children’s Rights and Violence Prevention Fund
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CSMMUA	Coalition to Stop Maternal Mortality Due to Unsafe Abortion
DVA	Domestic Violence Act
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GFF	Girls First Fund
GNBU	Girls Not Brides Alliance -Uganda
HC	High Court
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
KPs	Key Populations
LGBTQI	Lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, queer, intersex
MHM	Menstrual health Management
MHU	Mental Health Uganda
MoGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
MOH	Ministry of Health
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
PEP	Post-Exposure Prophylaxis
PIL	Public Interest Litigation
PLHIV	Persons Living with HIV
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
TB	Tuberculosis
CATIPU	Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons Uganda
UGX	Uganda Shillings
UHRF	Uganda Human Rights Funds
UNAIDS	The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UWONET	Uganda Women’s Network
WPI	Women’s Probono Initiative

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It is with great pleasure that I present to you our annual report for the year 2022. It was a year of incredible growth for The Women's Probono Initiative. I am very grateful to all our partners, Board of Directors, friends and the WPI staff for the excellent work done all the years we have been in existence. Our commitment to advance gender justice through promoting autonomy, voice and influence of women and girls in legislation, policy and practice to the most vulnerable women and girls in society remains strong.

The WPI wishes to bridge a gap between the generation of feminists that built a body of law for women's participation in public spaces on the foundations of patriarchy to a space where women can exercise autonomy of life experiences that inform policy on the basis of their lived experiences that need no validation from men. We developed our strategic plan this year which customizes well-targeted, quality legal, advocacy and alliance strategies that get to both the heart of the barriers to justice that women and girls in vulnerable situations face and that also ensure a pathway for stronger legal standards and structural change.

Our accomplishment this year was not just limited to the strategic plan but also our advocacy in the areas of human trafficking in Uganda. In 2022, one of our clients had been facilitated to travel to Saudi Arabia by a labor company and the family received information to the effect that their daughter had developed mental illness due to her working condition and required urgent medical attention. To add onto that, her Saudi master had confiscated her travel documents and vowed that he would not let her come back. We engaged the labor company, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and Uganda Association of External Recruitment Agencies to have her repatriated.

All of the work and milestones we have accomplished were done while our staff, researchers and other team members worked on numerous studies and projects in an effort to meet our objectives in the strategic plan. As our team continues to meet the needs of the women and girls in Uganda, I want to thank everyone who has been involved and engaged with us for your unique contributions to where we stand today as an organization. Our future is bright thanks to your support. We look forward to continuing to work together in the coming years to ensure that women and girls attain gender justice in all sectors of their lives.

All the best,

Primah Kwagala



WHO WE ARE

WPI is a feminist organisation, started as a dream by two lawyers and has now grown into an organisation with 10 staff, that provides legal representation, feminist-legal empowerment programs, research and other forms of support. WPI's staff are mainly young women, who are using this space to challenge the status quo and/or narrative of gender equality, and using the law as a tool that can be used creatively to advance conversations, shift attitudes, change policies, legislation and practice.

Since our formation, WPI has handled over 1000 cases through legal representation, legal advice through our toll-free lines, community legal aid clinics and public interest litigation (PIL) for women and girls all over Uganda. WPI's activities aim to address the systemic injustices against women and girls, with a distinct focus on reversing discrimination on the basis of gender and sex. WPI has over the years had specific initiatives to address the denial of sexual and reproductive health and rights for sex workers, women living with HIV, and those unable to access health care and/or safe abortion. WPI also works with women refugees, female survivors of gender-based violence (SGBV) and human trafficking both in country and abroad. In addition to providing free legal representation, WPI aspires to serve as a knowledge hub for up-to-date information and analysis on various forms and causes of violence and exploitation of women and girls, and solutions to address this.

Our Vision

A just and equitable society where women and girls are free from all forms of discrimination and violence.

Our Mission

To advance gender justice through promoting autonomy, voice and influence of women and girls in legislation, policy and practice.

Our Values

1 Accountability: We are accountable to our clients, the communities we work with and to our partners.

2 Non-discrimination: We believe in the equality of all persons, and demonstrate this through our active implementation of diversity and inclusion in our clients and networks. As a feminist organization, we deliberately and consistently work to be an organization that values equity, celebrates diversity, and challenges all forms of discrimination. The work is aimed at challenging power relations by centering women's voices and agency. We, therefore, apply an intersectional lens in all our work. We believe women should be equipped to determine what justice is in their own terms.

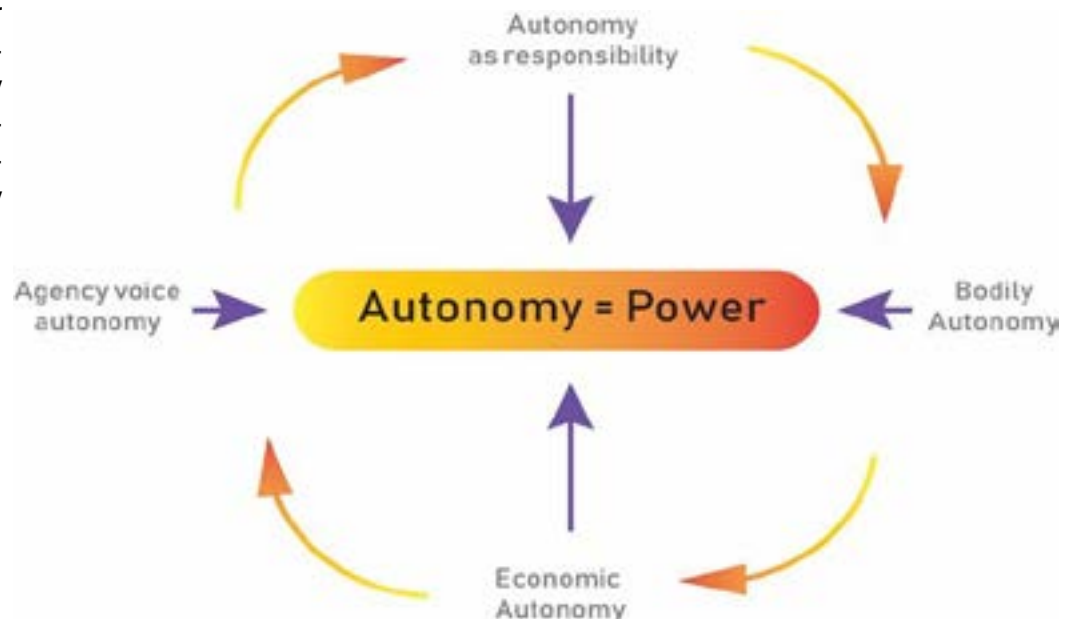
3 Dignity: We believe and uphold the dignity of all individuals, and particularly strive to create a workplace that will provide an environment in which all who encounter us are left feeling respected and treated in a dignified manner.

4 Transparency & Integrity: We are open and transparent in all we do, and in our communication. We are particularly keen to be transparent stewards of resources that are entrusted to us for our work. We also strive to build relationships based on trust and mutual respect. We trust that our clients, partners and staff will maintain their commitment to our mission and vision, and will be held accountable to high standards in this regard. We are our sister's keeper.

Autonomy of Women and Girls

WPI understands autonomy of women and girls as an all-encompassing concept that centres on ensuring that women and girls have the POWER to make decisions on all matters that concern them and their wellbeing. Specifically, the autonomy that WPI will champion is mainly comprised of four key elements:

- i. Agency and Voice Autonomy
- ii. Economic Autonomy
- iii. Bodily Autonomy
- iv. Autonomy as Responsibility.



Agency and Voice Autonomy

Encompasses the ability of every woman and girl to be able to take charge of their life stories, which requires challenging the culture that women, their initiatives and their rights are defined and/or seen through the lens of men. Women and girls should be able to inform and/or influence policy based on their lived realities, experiences and aspirations. Their voices should be heard, and their perspectives should be respected.

Economic Autonomy

At the core of power is the ability to own and control economic resources, in their various forms. The quest for economic opportunity for women should be safe and dignified- devoid of exploitation, violence and discrimination. Women should have access and control of economic opportunity and resources that will enable them make meaningful choices about their lives.

Bodily Autonomy

The right of a woman or girl to make independent decisions about her own body and reproductive functions. This is at the core of the right to equality and privacy, and includes intimate matters of physical and psychological integrity.

Autonomy as Responsibility

Autonomy comes with power, and any power should be managed and/or used responsibly- for the betterment of one's life, community and society at large. Ultimately, society is better off when women, men, girls and boys are able to live together, respect each other and together work for a more equitable and just world.

WPI notes that the intersection of vulnerabilities that make it difficult for women to exercise autonomy and should be a critical part of assessment and/or addressing autonomy. Women's life experiences make them susceptible to abuse and different challenges.

Approaches to our work

Our overall goal is to advance gender justice and challenge all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls in Uganda. The expected outcomes from interventions are to have:

- I. Supportive communities that work collectively to promote gender equity and protect the rights of women and girls with the following outputs:
 - a) Institutions and other stakeholders collectively and actively promote awareness about the rights of women and girls.
 - b) Increased access to information about the rights of women and girls by communities in different parts of Uganda.
 - c) Various forms of community groups established to promote the rights to women and girls.

- II. Policies and legislation that address inequalities and the persistent violence against women and girls with the following outputs:
 - a) Studies/Research that provides a better understanding of the context of women and girls, and changing trends/dynamics.
 - b) PIL cases strategically selected and executed.
 - c) Concerted advocacy campaigns conducted for more gender responsive policies and legislation.

- III. Younger female lawyers and activists championing autonomy for women and girls, individually and as part of collective efforts of the women's movement in Uganda.
 - a) Empowering/holistic legal support services for WPI clients.
 - b) Mentoring young women lawyers at select Universities to value and advance autonomy for women and girls in Uganda.
 - c) Developing a program of work on feminist lawyering for lawyers.
 - d) Increased feminist-litigation leadership/attorneys in Uganda.

- IV. WPI initiatives result in an increased number of women freed from violence and exploitation.
 - a) WPI creative lawyering initiatives, including PIL, to protect the rights of women and girls.
 - b) Joint CSO initiatives to advocate for changes to policies and practices that exploit women and girls.
 - c) Joint initiatives to advocate for improved funding to track and protect Ugandan women exported to provide domestic labour in the Middle East.
 - d) Research that captures voices of women with lived experiences on best practices to improve livelihoods of young women involved in care-work/ domestic labour.



OVERVIEW OF THE YEAR 2022

I. SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES THAT WORK COLLECTIVELY TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUITY

a) Institutions and other stakeholders collectively and actively promote awareness about the rights of women and girls.

1. Promoting access to justice for adolescents, young girls, and women in Kiryandongo

WPI is implementing a project Promoting Access to justice for adolescents, young girls, and Women in the Kiryandongo District aimed at addressing the challenge of Violence Against Girls during the COVID-19 pandemic in refugee settlements in the Kiryandongo district using legal tools. The institution continued to follow up cases of violence by setting up physical legal aid clinics in Kiryandongo refugee settlement aimed at addressing the legal grievances that young girls and women face.



Ms Elizabeth Achola during one of the physical legal aid meetings with some of the women in the Kiryandongo refugee settlement.

2. Strengthening community-led redress initiative for SGBV

The Women's Probono Initiative is implementing a Community-Led Redress Initiative for the SGBV project. The project aims at enhancing access to justice among adolescent girls and young women by strengthening linkages and collaborations between formal and informal justice systems in the targeted districts of Tororo, Butaleja, and Busia.

The Community-Led Redress Initiative for the SGBV project. The project aims at enhancing access to justice among adolescent girls and young women

3. Women's day celebration - Legal Aid Clinic in Kyotera District

On the 8th of March, WPI participated in a community activity in commemoration of the Women's Day in partnership with Dreams of the Tropical Youth Uganda. The Kyotera women's health run hosted over 7,000 school-going young people and community participants with the aim of imparting skills, providing health services and providing awareness services to individuals. The WPI team participated in the health run by providing legal aid services to the women and girls of Kyotera Community.



The Women's Probono Initiative team offering legal aid services in one of the communities in Kyotera, Uganda.

4. Training Girls First Fund (GFF) grantees about the legal framework for child marriages in Uganda

On 13th April 2022, we were invited to train GFF grantees on the legal and policy framework for Child Marriages. The training aimed at strengthening the GFF grantee's advocacy in ending child marriages by improving their understanding of the legal and policy framework for ending child marriages. The workshop also aimed at determining the participant's appreciation of the linkage between child marriages and social norms. The mode of training employed modules from the _SASA Together_ approach and existing Ugandan legal and policy references.

WPI trained GFF grantees on the legal and policy framework for child marriages.



5. Training and sensitization of women and girls about Gender Based Violence and succession law

WPI carried out a legal empowerment program in Buyende Kitukiro, with the aim of offering free legal representation to women and girls that have suffered sexual and gender-based violence in order to promote women's rights. WPI in collaboration with Daughters of Hope mobilized about 160 participants at the widow's conference, an event that draws various women, especially widows to address challenges that they face. This presented an opportunity for WPI to partner with a grassroots organization in order to give legal solutions and empower women at the grassroots with knowledge on women's rights issues. The conference was attended by about 160 participants who were sensitized about women rights in regards to gender based violence, succession laws and highlights on some aspects of human trafficking. Ms. Bukirwa discussed the status of women in society and how these perceptions have fostered abuse of women and girls. She explained the concept of gender-based violence, gender roles and the various manifestation of gender-based violence. Participants shared some of their experiences of how society perceived them and the various forms of gender-based violence.

WPI in collaboration with Daughters of Hope mobilized about 160 participants at the widow's conference, an event that draws various women, especially widows to address challenges that they face.



Ms. Rahom Maria Bukirwa sensitizes community members on GBV and one of the participants shares her experiences.

Mr. Titus Asiimwe who led the discussion in form of a question-and-answer session. This mode of discussion enabled participants steer the conversation in the direction of their urgent legal needs and questions. The session covered mainly discussion on succession rights, how property is distributed in cases where the deceased dies intestate and testate. The issue of child neglect was also a pressing issue and participants were guided on the referral mechanism both formal and informal that can be utilized to access justice.

6. Hiking to break the stigma on Menstruation in Buyende District

We joined other MHM partners in Uganda to break the stigma of menstruation by taking part in a hike and community sensitization in Buyende District. The hike aimed to bring together partners to contribute to buying sanitary pads for vulnerable girls as well as engage them in our own experiences of Menstruation as a means of breaking norms and stigma. This was also to encourage young girls, and boys to stay in school.



Community sensitization in Buyende district.

7. Advocacy activities in commemoration of the international day of the girl child 2022

The Women's Probono Initiative joined the rest of the world in commemorating the 10th Anniversary of the International Day of the Girl Child (IDGC) which is commemorated on the 11th of October every year. We recognized that girls face a unique set of challenges and barriers that impede the realization of their aspirations and full potential.

The campaign provides an opportunity to strategize on solutions and good practices for ending violence against women and girls. The global theme for this year is and this year's edition ran under the theme 'Our Time is Now: Our Rights, Our Future' and it recognized that girls, in all their diversity, once given skills and opportunities can be change makers driving progress in their communities. We carried out the following advocacy initiatives to advocate for the re-entry of teenage mothers and pregnant girls into schools, and advocate for the passing of the EAC SRH Bill that addresses the SRH needs of adolescents, especially young girls and MHM in Uganda.

b) Public school engagement on how the stigma and shame associated with menstruation impact the mental health of school-going girls

WPI embarked on an activity aimed at spreading mental health awareness while addressing some of the challenges that girls go through especially around menstrual health and hygiene management. We organized a public-school engagement on 8th October 2022 at Matugga Hills Secondary School to discuss how the stigma and shame associated with menstruation impact the mental health of school-going girls as well as how positive masculinity can be effective in ending period stigma against girls in schools so as to avoid the mental health effects that come as a result of the stigma and shame. The methodology was an open discussion involving both the boys and girls to ensure that we don't stigmatize menstruation further by separating the girls from the boys.



8. WPI team engaging the girls and boys of Matugga Hills Secondary School.



Below are some of the responses shared by the participants.

“The first time I menstrated, I felt like I was sick, I spent the whole day in the toilet squatting thinking I was sick and there I something wrong,” - Anna

“Schools should involve boys in these conversations. Girls should also carry an extra sanitary towel in case another girl is in need of help.” - Kukiriza Edith

“The mood changes happen to girls in menstruation and boys should not react negatively but understand their situation, Secondly, girls are emotional in this period and should find a smart way of helping them” - Tumukunde Brian

c) Increased access to information about the rights of women and girls by communities in different parts of Uganda

1. Organized four colloquiums in 4 regions for state attorneys and prosecutors HIV-related legal services.

The Women’s Probono Initiative (WPI) received a grant from UNAIDS to implement a project entitled, “Colloquiums with Prosecutors and State Attorneys HIV-related legal services.” The project aimed at engaging state attorneys and prosecutors the in the adjudication of HIV/AIDs cases with an informed mindset. We engaged 75 State attorneys, prosecutors and police officers on HIV legal issues in Mbarara, Masindi, Arua and Jinja.

The main objectives of the project were to appraise State attorneys and prosecutors on new and emerging trends in litigation HIV-related cases and disseminate the toolkit for HIV-related legal issues for legal professionals to State Attorneys and Prosecutors.



8 a) State Attorneys and Police Officers being sensitized on HIV-related legal services and availed with the toolkit on HIV-related legal services

2. Skills training on making reusable sanitary pads in Kiryandongo District

On 1st and 2nd Dec 2022, we engaged 60 adolescents in a skills training activity of making reusable pads and bags. This stemmed from a Knowledge, Attitude & Perceptions (KAP) study we carried out in Dec 2020 on access to Justice for victims of violence in refugee settlements during the COVID-19 pandemic in Kiryandongo District where we found that refugees' monthly stipend had significantly reduced during the COVID-19 lockdown from 21,000/- to 19,000/- due to competing priorities on the side of the government. We also identified a shortage of supplies of necessities for women and girls, including soap and sanitary towels, and inadequate water supply since there's one borehole shared by 2 clusters and that it would be equally beneficial if the access to justice initiatives, we were providing to the community were merged with some skills trainings in making reusable sanitary pads. The training aimed to empower the girls and women with legal knowledge and practical skills on making reusable sanitary pads that will enable them to make a decent and dignified living to pursue justice and generate income to lead dignified lifestyles.



8.b.2) WPI team and the beneficiaries during the skills training in Kiryandongo Refugee settlement.

d) Advocacy Media Engagements

3. Strategy meeting on the EAC SRHR bill Public Hearings

The East African Community Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Bill, 2017 was not passed by the third Assembly since there tenure expired in June 2017 before the Bill could be passed. This Bill was saved and retained by the 4th Assembly. Through the support of the EAC secretariat the bill was redrafted and introduced to EALA Assembly. In order for the bill to be approved by the assembly it must go through public hearings to ensure that ideas and recommendations from partners are consolidated to improve the bill. In this regard, EALA set the date for a public hearing between 26th June to 3rd July to cover all six partner states.

It is based on the above that the Women’s Probono Initiative held a strategy meeting with the objective to consolidate submissions to the EALA committee from CSOs in Uganda and the expected outcome of the meeting was to have a consolidated position and strategy on how to participate in the EAC SRHR public hearings.

4. Social media campaign on the East Africa community SRHR bill

The Women’s Probono Initiative alongside other partners attended the public hearings of EAC SRHR bill that took place from 26th June to 3rd July 2022. WPI started social media campaign on the East African community SRHR bill WPI started in order to create more awareness about the bill.



8.C.4) Some of the Twitter tweets on the EACSRHR Bill



8.c.4) LEFT: Maria Rahom Bukirwa (C), Communication and Advocacy Officer at WPI, and Dr. Jessica Nsungwa (R) during the spectrum radio talk show at Radio One.

RIGHT: Elizabeth Achola, a Program officer at WPI during the TV show on NTV Uganda

5. Radio talk show on Contraception awareness among the youth

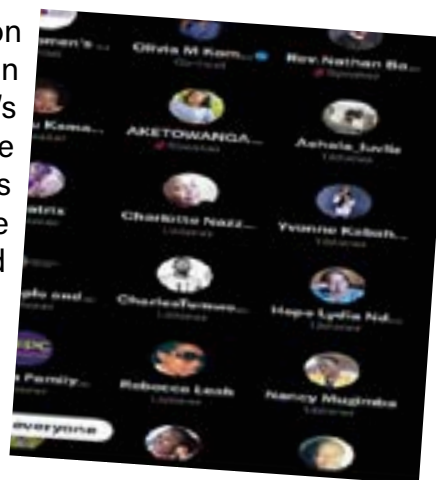
In honor of World Contraception Day that is celebrated on 26th September of every year to improve awareness about contraception, we implemented a communications campaign using the radio platforms aimed at empowering the youth on the use of Contraception. To reach a wide audience, we selected radio shows that are popular among the youth and middle class and reached both the literate and illiterate demographic. In this regard, one radio show was conducted in Luganda and the other in English. The selected radio stations were Radio One 90.0 FM and Akaboozi 87.9 FM. The shows also involved government and to this end, the government was represented by Dr. Jessica Nsungwa, the commissioner for maternal and child health from the Ministry of Health. A recording of the radio broadcast was made and documented for evaluation.

6. TV talk show on Contraception awareness among the youth

To broadcast the issue further, we also discussed the same on a Television Talk show on the 26th day of September 2022. The show was aired at 7:30am on NTV Uganda which is widely watched by majority of the people in Uganda. The detailed discussion can be found on you tube link via:

7. Tweet Space on Abortion Rights

In commemoration of International Safe Abortion Day, we held a tweet space on "Abortion Rights in uncertain times: An issue of women's reproductive justice." The purpose of the discussion was to demystify issues on access to safe and legal abortion and also sensitize people on the legal framework on abortion and its impact on women's health.



8.c.7) Screen capture of the tweet space poster and participation



LEFT: Press conference held on 9th of March 2022 with the CSM-MUA coalition members

RIGHT: Our officers Elizabeth Achola and Julia Kemigisha during the TV talk show on Urban TV and Family TV

8. Press - conference on the ruling staying miscellaneous cause no 32 of 2021

As part of the advocacy strategy, the Women's Probono Initiative with the support of the Coalition to Stop Maternal Mortality Due to Unsafe Abortion held a press conference at the Women's Probono Office to express dissatisfaction with the decision of court to have the proceedings stayed pending determination of Constitutional Petition No.25 of 2020 and Constitutional Petition No. 10 of 2017. The focal point of the statement was that the decision of the court to stay proceeding in Miscellaneous Case No. 32 of 2021 is an exacerbation of already existing barriers to safe abortion services in Uganda. Attached are the photos of the press conference and the link of some of the publications <https://www.kfm.co.ug/news/court-halts-hearing-case-on-amendment-of-abortion-laws.html>

9. TV talk shows on Family and Urban TV

Our officers Elizabeth Achola and Julia Kemigisha were honoured to be hosted on Urban TV and Family TV on 11th October 2022 to discuss the issues surrounding the celebration of the international day of the girl and what it means to the general public especially the girls and women deep in the rural areas. The full discussion and recordings can be accessed via our YouTube Channel and social media pages.

10. Media briefing on the SRHR Bill

We also held a Media briefing on the East African Community Sexual and Reproductive Health Bill, 2021 and why it's critical in promoting the rights of Girls. This took place at our Office in Ntinda where we hosted a group of journalists and other stakeholders to share with them different issues affecting the girl child and why it's vital that our voices are heard and policies changed. Our Officer Julia Kemigisha during the briefing noted that the Day of the African Girl Child gives us an opportunity to strategize on solutions and good practices for ending violence against women and girls. She stated that "On this day we recognize that girls face unique sets of challenges and barriers that impede the realization of their aspirations and full potential, we acknowledge that more work still has to be done to achieve gender equality and to advance their empowerment due to the COVID-19 pandemic which exacerbated their challenge to education, she observed." The detailed press statement can be accessed via our website: www.womenprobono.org

11.16 days of activism activities



Ms. Julia Kemigisha addressing the journalists during the media briefing on the East African Community Sexual and Reproductive Health Bill, 2021, and why it's critical in promoting the rights of Girls.

12. Press conference on 16 days of activism with FOWODE

On 25th November, WPI joined the rest of the global community to commence the commemoration of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence under the theme “UNiTE! Activism to end violence against women and girls”. In unity with like-minded CSOs, we joined FOWODE at their offices for a press conference to launch the 16 Days of Activism by making a call to the government and all key stakeholders to prioritize initiatives that advance women’s rights.

The presser was a call to action for all stakeholders to take the necessary interventions to advance women’s rights. An article in this regard was published by the media and can be accessed via:

<https://chimpreports.com/16-days-of-activism-women-push-for-increased-funding-for-gbv-response-prevention/>

13. TV talk show on 16 days of activism



Maria Rahom Bukirwa during the press conference to launch the 16 days of activism at FOWODE Offices, Ntinda

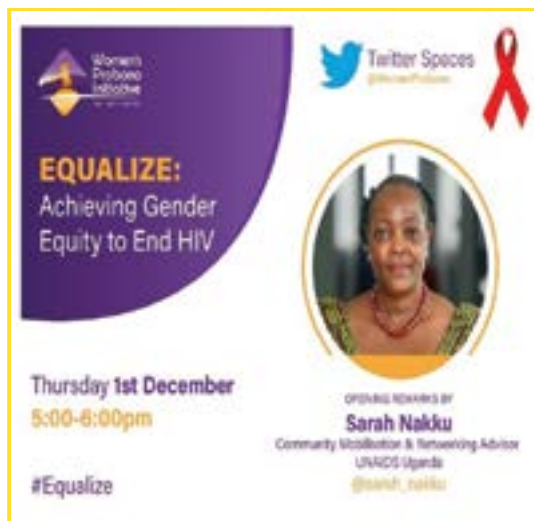
Our legal officer, Ms. Samantha May Agwero was honored to be invited to Family TV to speak about the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence against women and girls and its relevance in Uganda as country

14. Tweet space on World AIDS Day

As a member of the HIV- Law Coalition, WPI has had targeted interventions to contribute to the National HIV response and in commemoration of the World Aids Day, WPI organized a Tweet Space under the theme “Equalize: Achieving Gender Equity to End HIV.” The commemoration of the World Aids falls within the 16 days of Activism of Gender Based Violence and in line with the International thematic area, the tweet space was inclined to advocating for the rights of women living with HIV & addressing the glaring inequality gap.



Our legal officer, Ms. Samantha May Agwero during the TV talk show on Family TV.



15. Radio Talk show on Matrimonial Property Case

Following the judgment in *Ambayo Versus Aserua Civil Appeal No. 100 of 2015*, a serious discussion arose about the effect of this decision on the property rights of women during the dissolution of a marriage. Well as there were some progressive elements of the decision in recognizing contribution of a spouse during cohabitation, there were discriminatory nuances. Our officer was hosted on radio one to discuss the decision from a feminist perspective.



Pictorial of the tweet space poster and participation

In light of the discussion, we also issued a press statement calling upon the government to make legal reform that takes into account emerging trends in marriage and divorce. The statement can be accessed via the link below: <https://womenprobono.org/press-release-on-matrimonial-property-rights-in-divorce-abayo-joseph-v-ase-ru-jackline/>



Maria Rahom Bukirwa, Communication and Advocacy Officer at WPI during the spectrum radio talk show at Radio One

16. #50k4Karamoja campaign drive (Distribution of food items in Kotido District)



WPI staff distributing food and other items to the different communities in the Karamoja region

The Women's Probono Initiative (WPI), on July 13, 2022, following media reports of massive and widespread hunger in Karamoja, decided to run a fundraising drive to urgently raise food and relief items for mothers. Following the long dry spells and the high crop failure, the people who are mainly pastoralists were left with almost nothing to feed on. The government's promise of an emergency fund was taking long to reach and yet people continued to die. Among the most at risk were the underfed HIV and Tuberculosis (TB) patients on strong daily drugs, lactating mothers who lacked a proper diet and young children. We managed to purchase and distribute 1.7 tonnes of food; 1000 kgs of Posho and 700 kgs of beans to 100 families in Kotido District.



WPI staff distributing food and other items to the different communities in the Karamoja region

It was a privilege and honor to have been part of a noble cause like this. In the face of an existential threat to our sisters in Karamoja, we didn't fold hands and look on but rose up to the challenge and did something, however small. The smiles and thankful grins of those women as they received relief items will last long in the memories of each of us and history will most certainly remember us.

II. POLICIES AND LEGISLATION THAT ADDRESS INEQUALITIES AND THE PERSISTENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

a) Research studies that provide a better understanding of the context of women and girls, and changing trends/dynamics.

17. Developed, translated and designed a policy brief on the gender-specific needs of women working in market spaces

The WPI has documented women's experiences working in markets during the pandemic and highlighted their rights to participate in the economy of the country as a whole. A policy brief was developed with the objective of appraising leaders in markets, policymakers, and the general public on the gender-specific needs of women working in market spaces.



Pictorial overview of the validation and dissemination meetings of the policy brief held at our office in Ntinda.

The policy brief was validated, designed and disseminated. This brief was translated into the local dialect (Luganda) by a professional translator to give it a bigger audience. A total of 1500 copies (500 English copies and 1000 Luganda copies) of the policy brief were distributed out to the general public with our major target audience being in markets. Priority was given to the markets of Wandegeya, Kalerwe and Nakawa which received 150 copies each of mainly Luganda copies. This can be accessed using the links below; <https://womenprobono.org/download/trials-and-tribulations-of-ugandan-women-in-the-market-place-during-the-covid-19> <https://womenprobono.org/download/abakyala-be-uganda-mu-butale-mu-kiseera-kyekirwadde-kya-covid-19/>

Validation and dissemination of the policy brief on the gender-specific needs of women working in market spaces

WPI held a validation and dissemination of the findings of the said brief during a meeting with market women, Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs), public and the media. The launch was done at the Women's Probono Initiative offices and took place on March 14, 2022 at 2:00pm. Copies of the brief for both Luganda and English were shared with the members' present. A total of 1500 copies (500 English copies and 1000 Luganda copies) of the policy brief were distributed out to the general public with our major target audience being in markets. Priority was given to the markets of Wandegeya, Kalerwe and Nakawa which received 150 copies each of mainly Luganda copies. The remaining copies were distributed to the rest of the markets in Kampala

18. Updated the Fact sheet on the legal and policy Framework on Child Marriages.

A fact sheet was developed with the objective of appraising the general public on the legal and policy Framework on Child Marriages.

<https://womenprobono.org/download/fact-sheet-on-the-legal-and-policy-landscape-on-child-marriages-in-uganda/>

19. Research on documenting experiences of women with multiple disabling conditions during Covid-19 in Uganda.

WPI in partnership with A48 Initiative based in Kenya is doing research titled documenting the experiences of women with disabilities during Covid-19 in Uganda and Kenya with the aim to give a voice to women with multiple disabling conditions by identifying the challenges they faced during this period and develop a policy guidance document on women with



Ms. Achola Elizabeth and Ms. Yvonne Kabaheesi during some of the research interviews in Mpigi and Jinja Districts

multiple disabling conditions and emergencies. With this research, we hope to articulate the specific needs and challenges the women and their caretakers (as separate entities) faced during covid-19 and also articulate if the government response during this period was adequate, accessible, necessary or timely to these women with disabling conditions,

As part of the research, we met and interviewed a few selected women and their caretakers in August and September 2022 in Mpigi, Jinja and Kampala districts. The Covid-19 pandemic programming done by the Government was focused on able-bodied people, people living with disabilities, more so women and girls were left on the peripheries to fight for access to services without consideration for their unique vulnerabilities. We want to document the resilient stories of women and girls living with disabilities throughout the Covid- 19 pandemic and demonstrate the unique challenges they faced from their own voices. It is our hope that by publishing their stories we shall embolden the duty-bearers to prioritize programming through a disability-friendly lens.

20. Documented Article on “Abortion in Uncertain Times: Working in Alliance to Protect Access to Safe Abortion in Uganda”

As an ally and advocate of women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights, on the International Safe Abortion Day, we shared a blog post on the year’s theme, “Abortion in uncertain times. We focused on the power of alliances to protect access to safe abortion in Uganda. The article is accessible on our website via the link below.

<https://womenprobono.org/abortion-in-uncertain-times-working-in-alliance-to-protect-access-to-safe-abortion-in-uganda>

21. Developed and designed a toolkit for making reusable sanitary pads

The purpose of the toolkit is to provide girls and women with the skills, knowledge, and access to resources that they need to launch into sustainable Income generating activities as well as to give clear guidance and steps on how to make reusable sanitary pads in order to create more and better skilling opportunities for young people as a source for future use. It includes modules on menstruation, menstrual hygiene and management options and steps on making reusable sanitary pads. A copy of this can be accessed on our website via this link: <https://womenprobono.org/toolkit-on-making-re-usable-sanitary-pads-in-uganda/>

22. Newspaper article on research done by WPI on mental health.

“Failing to provide basic health services, social support services, including counseling and rehabilitation, as well as failure to prosecute the perpetrators violates the rights of women with mental health disabilities.” See the full article via: <https://t.co/HfK31lQYwb>

23. Documented blog Article titled “The Plight of Women with Disabilities during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya and Uganda”

As an ally and advocate of women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights including mental health, we shared a blog post on the year’s theme, “Make mental health and well-being for all a global priority.” The article was posted in commemoration of World Mental Health Day (October 11) and we focused on the challenges that women living with disabilities faced during the pandemic thereby calling upon the state to prioritize hiring more psychiatrists and psychologists to be stationed at all regional referral hospital in Uganda. The article is accessible on our website via this link: <https://womenprobono.org/the-plight-of-women-with-disabilities-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-in-kenya-and-uganda/>

WPI’s Mental Health Day (11 October 2022) message: Government of Uganda should prioritize recruitment of more psychiatry professionals to be stationed at all regional referral hospital.



b) Concerted Advocacy Campaigns Conducted for more gender responsive policies and legislation.**24. WPI's Intervention in the discriminatory directive given by Kampala International University regarding the female students**

Over the past few years, we as an institution have built our capacity to have an efficient team of activists who are able to gender mainstream their responses and have visibility in the wider CSO circles of like-minded organizations. WPI has spearheaded advocacy campaigns where it has called out institutions for systemic discrimination and issued statements on gross women's rights violations. In November this year, WPI learned of an internal memo issued by Kampala International University's Western Campus, School of Nursing Sciences, mandating all female nurses and midwives to undergo a pregnancy test at a fee of UGX 5,000. This memo issued by the office of the Dean of the School of Nursing Sciences further restricts any female who fails to undertake the test from sitting for their Uganda Nurses and Midwifery Examinations. We were able to write a letter to the university asking they rescind the discriminatory memo as it is a violation of women's rights. The press release calling out the discriminatory action can be accessed via our website at: <https://womenprobono.org/press-release/>

The Memo was withdrawn and it was brought to our attention that the Health Guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education were the basis for the universities action. We are currently in the process of having a discussion with the Commissioner Health Education and Training to have these guidelines revised. Our advocacy outcomes can be accessed via the link: <https://twitter.com/WomenProbono/status/1590618959107145731?s=20&t=sj6eanxbgN1uSOrDhHCwVQ>

c) PIL Cases strategically selected and executed**25. Filing of the S&G case at the East African Court of Justice (EACJ)**

On Thursday May 12, 2022, the Women's Probono Initiative filed a reference in the East African Court of Justice (EACJ) against the Attorney General of Uganda. The case is challenging the Uganda government's withdrawal of the 2015 Standards and Guidelines on reducing Maternal Morbidity and Mortality from unsafe Abortion. The reference was supported by affidavits of Beatrice Kayaga and Dr. Simon Kayondo. Attorney General has 45 days within which to respond to the reference.

26. Legal strategy meetings on the S&G case.

a) The Women's Probono Initiative filed Miscellaneous Cause No. 32 of 2021, in the High Court and it challenges Uganda Government's failure to provide access to safe and legal abortion services to women and girls that need them. On Friday 4th March 2022 the Court made a ruling on the Preliminary objection that was raised by the Attorney General to have the proceedings in Miscellaneous Cause No. 32 of 2021 stayed pending determination of Constitutional Petition No.25 of 2020 and Constitutional Petition No. 10 of 2017. The Women's Probono Initiative held two follow-up legal strategy meetings to strategize the way forward and get insights from other legal minds.



Legal experts during the legal strategy meeting

b) The Women's Probono Initiative filed a reference before the East African Court of Justice arguing that running a country without guidance on where women and girls who legally qualify for safe abortions can access them is contrary to principles of rule of law and good governance contrary to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights



Ms. Primah Kwagala, Ms. Beatrice Kayaga, and Mr. Patrick Murungi leading discussions during the litigation surgery

vide; Articles 6, 7, 8 and 121 of the EAC Treaty. The Attorney General responded to the Reference after 45 days. WPI on that note convened a litigation surgery with a few select lawyers with vast knowledge and experience in legal processes before the East African Court of Justice and Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights to discuss the most appropriate response to the Attorney General.

c) Community research on Menstrual Health Management case
We undertook community research to gather statistics of MHM in Uganda, publications on MHM by different stakeholders, what the government is doing about the situation, existing gaps, best practices from other countries and to also identify any potential parties to the public interest litigation case we intend to file compelling the Government to provide sanitary towels to school going girls in Uganda. As the old adage goes justice must not just be done but must be seen to be done and this research attempts to articulate the understanding of MHM in Uganda and make recommendations on how to access to SRHR services for school-going girls can be made smoother for them. One of the key activities in PIL is the creation of partnerships and collaborations so as to be part of a coalition. We met with other different MHM stakeholders in the country including MOES, AFRIpads, Irise Institute East Africa, Girls Rights Advocacy and Raising Teenagers Uganda. I also interviewed some of the children at Kireka home for children with special needs.

III. YOUNGER FEMALE LAWYERS AND ACTIVISTS CHAMPIONING AUTONOMY FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS, INDIVIDUALLY AND AS A PART OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN UGANDA

27. The European Union Human Rights Defenders Award 2022.

This year's award was presented to Ms. Primah Kwagala who was chosen as the winner in recognition of her outstanding recent work to advance human rights, particularly women's rights during a ceremony on 1st June at the residence of the Ambassador of Belgium in Kampala. The EU Human Rights Defenders (HRD) Award is an annual accolade recognizing the achievements of an individual Human Rights



Ms. Primah Kwagala received the winner's award during the award ceremony held at the residence of the Ambassador of Belgium in Kampala.

Defender who has made an outstanding contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights in Uganda. Receiving the award, Ms. Kwagala paid tribute to her fellow nominees and called for everyone to imagine a gender-equal Uganda. She said: "I strongly believe the world can be diverse, equitable, and inclusive. We can achieve a world where difference is valued and celebrated. Together we can forge women's equality. Collectively we can all #BreakTheBias"



a) Empowering / holistic legal support services for WPI Clients

28. Provision of legal aid and services to women incarcerated at Kigo and Luzira prisons

We have provided legal aid and advice to over 150 women in need of criminal defense at Kigo and Luzira women's prisons with the aim of ensuring that 90% of women on remand access legal aid services in both prisons and a reduction in the number of female prisoners on remand and decongestion in the said prisons. Due to this work, we have gained the trust and support of the women incarcerated and Court authorities as incorruptible free legal aid lawyers. We are now recognized by the prisons as being consistent and very impactful with the work we are doing. We have managed to build rapport and partnerships with the responsible persons to ensure that the project activities are implemented fully and successfully. We have also provided free legal advisory services, legal skills training, and representation to 84 inmates at Kigo and 38 inmates at Luzira prisons, a total of 122 cases. 54 women have been freed from incarceration so far.

150^{women} in need of criminal defense at Kigo and Luzira women's prisons received legal aid and advice from WPI



One of the pictures taken from the evening of gratitude at Kigo Women's Prison

29. Facilitating referrals

Earlier this year, Jacqueline Asimwe of CivSource Uganda brought to the attention of the Women's Probono Initiative a case of a girl with a mental disability in the district of Mbarara who had been burnt by her mother. The matter was reported at Mbarara central police. The mother was arrested but later released because the victim had no one to take care of her. The WPI followed up on the case and ensured the survivor received treatment and psychosocial support as the case against the mother is being litigated. WPI liaised with Action aid to keep the victim at their shelter in Mubende temporarily as she received medical attention. We later picked the survivor and transferred her to Butabika National mental referral hospital private ward where was treated for twelve days. We then handed over the survivor back to her parents after orienting them on how to live with a person living with mental illness.



Noor receiving treatment at the mental health hospital

b) Mentoring young women lawyers at select universities to value and advance autonomy for women and girls in Uganda.

30. Recognized at PILAC's 10-year anniversary as a key partner in provision of legal education



On 15th November 2022 WPI was honoured to be invited to the Public Interest Law Awareness Clinic for their 10-year anniversary at Makerere University Law School. WPI was part of the legal aid team and provided legal awareness to women living with disabilities. We were honoured to be recognized as a key partner in the consolidation and transformation of legal education. WPI has over the years hosted legal interns from the clinical legal education (CLE) class under PILAC. Our ED also serves as a guest lecturer in the CLE class and has greatly contributed in mentoring and sharing knowledge with emerging young professionals.

31. Female lawyers fireside convos

The Women's Probono Initiative in partnership with the female lawyer's committee of the Uganda Law society hosted monthly fireside Convos. These online conversations that happened from December 2021 to November 2022 hosted over 300 women and girls from the legal profession. Various female lawyers from different fields of specialization were hosted to inspire not only young female lawyers but also university students. Some of the speakers hosted included: University professor -Sylvia Tamale, Registrar General Mecry Kainobwho,Ruth Sebatindira and our very own Executive Director Primah Kwagala.

IV. WPI INITIATIVES RESULT IN AN INCREASED NUMBER OF WOMEN FREED FROM VIOLENCE AND EXPLOITATION.

a) WPI creative lawyering initiatives, including PIL to protect the rights of women and girls.

32. Repatriation and Handing over a survivor of human trafficking back to her family.



Our Officer Mr. Asimwe Titus hands over Victoria to her parents after she was expatriated from Saudi Arabia

One of our clients had been facilitated to travel to Saudi Arabia on 26th June 2021 by a labour company called Atlas Impex Limited. The family received information to the effect that their daughter had developed mental illness due to her working condition and required urgent medical attention. Her Saudi master had confiscated her travel documents and vowed that he would not let her come back. WPI engaged the labour company, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and Uganda Association of External Recruitment Agencies to have Victoria repatriated. She was finally repatriated on 13th June 2022 and handed over to her parents.

b) Joint CSO initiative to advocate for changes to policies and practices that exploit women and girls

33. 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. In February WPI engaged in a Television Talk-show on whether the laws in Uganda are sufficient to fight Human Trafficking. The general Public was sensitized on the laws and policies that aim at preventing trafficking and as well as punish the perpetrators.

V. INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

a) People and Culture

WPI is known as a Feminist organization that is inspired by intentionality and a sense of urgency to build a culture of inclusion, innovative and functional systems and structures that align with our vision and mission. This institutional development has also been achieved through partnerships and collaborations.

34. Uganda rapid response team security training

The Women's Probono Initiative (WPI) with support from Strategic Issues & Research Council (SIRC) convened a meeting for the Uganda Rapid Response Team. The three-day workshop was held from 20th -22nd April 2022 at the Lake Victoria Serena Golf Resort and Spa. The meeting was attended by about fourteen partners who work on issues of comprehensive sexual reproductive health. The objective of the meeting was to undertake an assessment of the personal security status and needs of the Uganda RRT members and devise strategies to bolster their physical and online security. The workshop also explored the status of opposition footprint in Uganda and how the Rapid Response Team can intervene as well as developing a road map for continued security capacity building for the Uganda Rapid Response Team members.

35. AJWS-AGYW partner convening

The Women's Probono Initiative (WPI) with support from The American Jewish World Service (AJWS) convened a meeting for the AJWS partners working on Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) issues. The purpose of the meeting was for partners to share and learn the programmatic approaches used by AGYW partners in Uganda. The workshop also explored how AGYW SHR interventions incorporate gender transformative approaches and barriers experienced in their work. <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/16rgMqQh4Ek5Du8FP7C4EqA7sept8CUO8?usp=sharing>.

36. UHRF grantee leaders and partners' symposium

The Symposium aimed at organisational managers, key stakeholders, and the local donor community, was conceptualised to facilitate experience sharing, collective learning, and reflection on issues concerning community systems strengthening. Our legal officer made a presentation highlighting the current legal environment risk factors for LGBTIQ+ and female sex worker led organisations and its impact on the work of grantee partners.



Our Officer Maria Rahom Bukirwa making a presentation during the Symposium

37. CSMMUA regional exchange learning meeting

On Friday 23rd April, 2022 WPI was part of CSMMUA Regional Exchange learning meeting to promote cross-learning from Kenya on the registered success and milestone in litigation and advocacy for equitable access to SRHR services including access to safe and legal abortion.



Ms. Elizabeth Achola with the other CSMMUA partners in Uganda sharing updates on the S&Gs court case filed by WPI at the EACJ in Arusha during the CSMMUA Regional Exchange learning meeting held at Golf Course Hotel in Kampala

38. Launch of Legatum project in Bushenyi

We were honoured to be part of the grantees under Legatum to attend the launch of Uganda's access to justice program. This took place in Bushenyi, Western Uganda. The reason the launch happened in Bushenyi was due to many reasons like Bushenyi having one of the highest numbers of incarcerated persons, high rates of overcrowding is overwhelmingly alarming in Bushenyi prisons and there are no legal aid service providers there as well. WPI was one of the organizations being supported in the program and we shall be providing legal representation to female inmates in Luzira and Kigo prisons in Kampala.



39. Launching event for an intergenerational and creative Uganda Feminist Movement

The Ambassador of France in Uganda HE. Jules-Armand ANIAMBOSSOU hosted the event that gathered key stakeholders from the development community, media and CSOs for a dialogue and networking cocktail and WPI was honoured to be part of this event as a feminist organization. To continue supporting the effort of the Ugandan feminist society, the Embassy of France in Uganda launched an initiative aiming at



Primah Kwagala (not in picture) speaks during the launching event for an inter-generational and creative Uganda Feminist Movement event

financing the activation of the innovative ideas discussed during the Generation Equality Forum that took place in Paris in 2021. The programme, entitled 'For an intergenerational and creative feminist movement' was allocated a budget of 500,000 euros over the next two years (2022-2023) through France's Solidarity Fund for Innovative Projects instrument (FSPI). The discussions at the event focused on intergenerational creative feminist movement building and provided an opportunity to analyse the progress and efforts of organisations towards affirmative action. We were represented by our ED, Primah Kwagala and Elizabeth Achola.

40. Became members of the Period Equality Network Uganda (TPEN)

In September 2022, WPI's request to join the Period Equality Network Uganda (TPEN) in East Africa whose membership is open to non-government organizations, institutions, and individuals (young women, human rights activists, feminists, youth, academia, women's rights activists, and gender advocates) was approved and we are officially members. The vision is - 'A world in which women and girls achieve their potential unlimited by periods' - particularly those dealing with women's rights issues at national, sub-regional and regional levels. We are currently working on a public interest case to compel the government of Uganda to provide menstrual hygiene products to school-going girls and partnerships are very useful to build support and get allies.

41. Membership of the Equity Plan Steering Committee

We were appointed to be a part of the National Steering Committee for the co-ordination of multi-sectoral and multi-partner efforts for breaking barriers and achieving equity in access to HIV, TB and Malaria services in Uganda. As a member of the steering committee of the Equity plan, WPI was part of the team representing CSOs at the Mid-term review of the National Strategic Plan to Reduce Human Rights Related Barriers to HIV, TB and Malaria Services in Uganda. The objectives of the meeting were:

- a) To undertake a comprehensive review of progress to-date for the implementation of the Equity Plan;
- b) To share successes, challenges, lessons learnt and best-practices for programmes to reduce equity barriers to HIV, TB and malaria services;
- c) To review progress in terms of coordination and accountability for stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Equity Plan;
- d) During the one-week engagement government agencies, MDAs and CSOs had opportunity to share about their work that contributes to the national response.

42. Female Leaders UNiTE reception at the Netherlands Ambassador’s residence

WPI was represented by our officers at the High-Level Networking reception, female leaders UNiTE in preparation for the 16 Days of Activism. Different female leaders in various institutions gathered at the Netherlands Residence to discuss strategic partnerships and showcase some of the work done to combat violence against women and girls.



Ms. Maria Rahom Bukirwa representing WPI at the High-Level Networking reception held at the Netherlands Residence in Kampala

43. Girls Not Brides Uganda Summit 2022

WPI was represented at the 5th National Girl Summit held at Hotel Africana. The theme of the Summit was ‘Children Need a Society free from Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy’ following the influx in the statistics of the young girl child being subjected to child marriages. WPI also delivered a presentation on the legal framework protecting the girl child from early marriages together with an officer from CEDOVIP.



Our officer Ms. Julia Kemigisha made a presentation on the legal framework protecting the girl child from early marriages during the summit

The presentation centered on the laws that define child marriages, the national, regional and international framework that has played a key role in safeguarding the girl child from early marriages and teenage pregnancies. It also entailed the Advocacy gaps left by the laws and possible solutions to bridge the gap, one of which was limited awareness of these laws hence the need for sensitization. The audience was interested in follow-up questions after the presentation which showed the level of interest in the topic. In conclusion, the Summit was interactive, educative especially from the presentations and other guest speakers such as Hon. Jessica Alupo whose speech stood out as she talked about how the girl child is not emotionally, physically or mentally prepared to become a wife.

b) Strengthening our systems and structures

44. Annual and bi-annual planning staff retreats

We started off the year with a staff retreat to reflect on the milestones achieved in the previous year and re-strategize on how to implement activities of 2022. This was also an opportunity to carry out team-building activities and later on in June we held the bi-annual staff retreat to reflect on the milestones achieved in the first half of the year, review our annual work plan and re-strategize on how to implement the remaining activities in the annual work plan. This was also an opportunity to understand the importance of incorporating well-being into institutional activities.



WPI staff participating in the staff retreats held at Rain Forest Lodge in Lugazi, Uganda

45. Development of a 5-year strategic plan for the WPI

We have been able to get development consultants to support the process of designing a strategic plan for the next 3-5 years. The plan covers and defines the long-term goals, and smart objectives for the future in line with the organization's vision and mission. So far we have completed all three stages of the strategic planning process. Stage 1 of the Strategic planning process entailed a workshop with staff to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the organization. It also involved analysis of the Civil Society Environment and the competitors. The first phase was undertaken in a workshop that was held on November 17, 2021 at the WPI offices. Stage 2 of the process involved identifying the theory of change. The theory of change analyzed the vision and mission of WPI and ways of dealing with structural inequities that make women vulnerable to violence and discrimination. This second phase workshop was held on December 3, 2021 at the WPI offices. We are now writing the final pieces to the plan prior to Board presentation of the plan later this year.

46. Capacity building workshop for researchers documenting stories of women living with disability



Ms. Elizabeth makes a presentation during the workshop while the other participants listened in.

The workshop was held on the 22nd of July at the Women's Probono Initiative Offices and it started off with self-introductions of the members present a background was given to the project and its importance to advocating for the rights of women with disability. One of the things noted in the workshop was that women with disability have faced challenges of invisibility and control and the project we are undertaking of documenting their stories aims at portraying the intersectionality of women living with Disability and the necessity of their voices to be heard. This will be done by reaching out to them and seeking their experiences on what happened during COVID. In the end we aim to create spaces where their voices are heard so that the public is aware of the systemic injustices that they face.

47. Renewal of our Legal Aid Certificate

The Women's Probono Initiative seeks to bridge the gap between the supply and demand sides of justice by providing free legal aid services across civil, criminal and human rights to women, while at the same time empowering individuals and communities to claim their rights and demand for policy and social change. To ensure that it carries on its mandate, WPI obtained the Legal Aid Certificate for 2022.

48. Safety and Security Training for WPI Staff

The Women's Probono Initiative held a security and safety training for its staff to enable them manage, and prevent contemporary security threats. The Objectives of the training was to undertake an assessment of the personal security status and needs of the Uganda WPI members and devise strategies to bolster their physical and online security.

49. Ending the year with a bang!

As the year came to an end, we organized an end-of-year Christmas photo shoot that was held at the office to wind up the year as this is always a great way to bring workers together in an informal environment as well as a get-together at Golden Tulip Hotel in Kampala. These were both aimed at delivering value to our work this year and getting us focused on the goals for the year ahead.



WPI staff having a cozy get-together dinner at Golden Tulip Hotel in Kampala

CHALLENGES FACED AND LESSONS LEARNT

a) Challenges and mitigation measures

- i. Persistent corruption in our judicial system. Unfortunately, some judicial officers frustrate clients unable to pay money through court clerks by denying them bail, and acquittals even in the absence of legal reasons otherwise.
- ii. Shrinking Civic Space: We are currently facing a challenge in terms of the political environment which is not conducive for operation. Government of Uganda is targeting NGOs that are working on contentious issues, so we might be targeted although that risk is quite low. How we mitigate this challenge is by ensuring that the institution follows the statutory obligations such as Filing tax returns with the URSB and the NGO bureau and registering with financial intelligence authorities, among others.
- iii. Transportation: Many of the administrative challenges are being handled but we still face the challenge of transportation to upcountry courts and implementing work outside Kampala. We have realized a greater need for an Institutional car to enable us to cut costs to ensure we can reach all women that need our services.

b) Lessons learned

We have learned several lessons including;

- i. We have learned that it is important to have a security plan and conduct a risk assessment for every project. Collaborating with organizations doing similar work and media houses is key to amplifying advocacy messages to promote women's and girls' human rights in Uganda. This helped us mitigate the risks by ensuring that the programming approach addresses all the anticipated challenges.
- ii. Consistency in what we're doing is very important for us to prove to the women that were not just recording their cases for donor reports and publicity and even if the cases are many and the lawyers are not able to physically be present at court during all the hearings, working alongside Judicial officers, the State Attorneys, and sureties/family members and friends are also very helpful and impactful to the client seeing that they have very limited access to phones.

CONCLUSION

We are excited about this year and looking forward to reaching more milestones. We anticipate being more active and impactful this year. Therefore, we commit to continue making contributions to policy reform, and pursue justice for women and girls that have suffered violence in Ugandan.

For more information about our work, please visit our website www.womenprobono.org or reach us at our toll-free line (0800220645).

OUR ADVOCACY NETWORKS AND COALITIONS



Coalition to Stop Maternal Mortality Due to Unsafe Abortion



Uganda Coalition Against Trafficking in Persons



Domestic Violence Act (DVA) Coalition



Period Equality Network East Africa



Uganda Women's Network



HIV Law Coalition



Girls not Brides Alliance-Uganda



Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Alliance - Uganda



Constitutional Petition No. 16 (Maternal Health Care) Coalition

OUR DONORS IN 2022



Girls
First
Fund



2022



REPORT

WOMEN'S PROBONO INITIATIVE

Plot 9, Suuna Road-Ntinda, Kampala

P.O. BOX 8052, Kampala, Uganda

Tel: +256 (0) 800220645

Email: info@womenprobono.org

Email: wpiugandaltd@gmail.com

URL: www.womenprobono.org