



ACCELERATE ACTION TOWARDS ADVOCATING FOR PROGRESSIVE LAWS AND POLICIES ON THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

[KAMPALA 08.03.25] As the world celebrates International Women's Day 2025 under the theme, "**Accelerate Action**," the Women's Probono Initiative (WPI) joins the world demanding immediate and decisive steps to advance women's rights. Today, we honour the resilience and achievements of women while confronting the pressing challenges that impede gender equality.

Despite some advancements, women and girls in Uganda continue to face persistent inequalities and systemic injustices that hinder their full and meaningful participation in their social, economic and political life. Uganda currently has one of the highest fertility rates in Sub-Saharan Africa of 4.5 children for every woman of childbearing age according to the 2024 National Population and Housing Census final report.

Furthermore, the maternal mortality ratio has increased from 180 to 207 deaths per 100,000 live births with 41,222 women aged 15-49 dying 12 months before the 2024 National Census night. Gender-based violence remains a pervasive issue, with the 2024 Annual Crimes Report revealing that 75% of domestic violence cases involved women and girls. This not only perpetuates cycles of poverty and fear but also hinders societal participation and progress.

The advancement of women's and girls' rights in Uganda is under threat due to regressive legislation. Of particular concern are the Marriage and Sexual Offences Bills currently under debate in Parliament. The Marriage Bill proposes allowing civil marriages to become polygamous, which could undermine women's autonomy and equality within marriage. The Sexual Offences Bill seeks to criminalize sex work, potentially increasing violence against sex workers by denying them legal recourse. While these laws create an opportunity to fortify women's rights, the regressive clauses in these bills represent a significant rollback for gender equality in Uganda.

This year's theme for International Women's Day is a resounding call for governments, policymakers, communities, and individuals to go beyond rhetoric and take bold and urgent steps to dismantle systemic barriers that continue to hold women and girls back. Specifically, we call for the enactment of the Marriage and Sexual Offences Bills of 2024 with the recommendations made by the Women's Movement in Uganda.

WPI reaffirms its unwavering commitment to advancing the rights, dignity, and empowerment of all women and girls in Uganda.

The time for action is now. For all women and girls in Uganda, we cannot afford to wait.

For more information about WPI's activities, please visit our website at www.womenprobono.org and our social media pages @womenprobono,wpi.Uganda et al or contact us on our toll-free line +256 (0) 800-220645 or email Maria directly at; mariab@womenprobono.org and copy info@womenprobono.org

About WPI: The WPI is a feminist non-profit organisation with a reputation of boldly advancing equity, challenging discrimination and violence against women and girls, through advocacy and creative lawyering.