**OHCHR’s engagement with Local Governments**

**Kampala, 14 February 2019**

1. **Context of Uganda**

Uganda is a State Party to all the core international human rights instruments except the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. Uganda operates a decentralized system of government. Article 176 of the Constitution establishes the Local Government system which is further developed under the Local Governments Act, Cap 243. Under this system, people’s participation and democratic control is foreseen in the decision-making, including in the planning for and actual delivery of services. Additionally, under the National Development Plan II (NDP II) for 2015/16 – 2019/20, Uganda has expressed a commitment to realizing the Sustainable Development Goals.

1. **Effective methods to foster cooperation between local government and local stakeholders for the promotion and protection of human rights, including reference to local government programs**

Considering the important role Local Governments (LG) play in the actual implementation of international human rights commitments, especially at the local level, OHCHR in addition to what it does with the national government, has provided technical assistance to local governments. This support has been through capacity building, awareness raising and support to strengthening of mechanisms established for enhancing the protection and promotion of human rights.

In 2018, OHCHR in cooperation with the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC)[[1]](#footnote-1), trained LG officials in 45 districts on human rights-based approaches (HRBA), on gender and equity budgeting and programming with the view to enhancing their integration into the planning processes. Under the Gender and Equity Budgeting sessions, participants were sensitized about importance of reflecting the situation of groups with special needs such as women, youth, ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities among others into the LG planning and budgeting processes. Following these trainings, OHCHR received requests for additional support from these LGs to sustainably improve their capacity on the integration of human rights and gender issues in development projects and to ensure sustainable inclusive growth and development as provided for in the NDPII.

OHCHR also joined efforts by the Uganda’s National Planning Authority, the Uganda Human Rights Commission and the German Development Cooperation Office (GIZ) in trainings for district officials on Human Rights Based Approach to development planning and programming.

OHCHR provided technical support to the Equal Opportunity Commission to conduct public inquiries in the Mayuge district, following complaints of discrimination filed by individual workers and groups of persons against Mayuge Sugar Industries Limited (MSIL), Mayuge District Local Government and Mayuge Town Council. The tribunal held by the EOC resulted in some immediate actions, including compensation to some of the complainants, the delivery of work identity cards to all employees, development of a human resources manual, and the construction of proper toilets and a canteen.

OHCHR played a technical advisory role to the Justice, Law and Order (JLOS) institutions represented at the local government level responsible for the administration of justice. These institutions under the District Chain-linked Committees (DCC) have been pivotal to OHCHR’s engagement in addressing human rights concerns and demanding for accountability where there have been human rights violations. Particularly in northern Uganda and Karamoja sub-region, the DCC’s have provided important and useful human rights advocacy spaces. In these spaces, human rights concerns and other factors limiting administration of justice are jointly discussed and resolutions to specific issues identified. The DCCs have also provided a joint forum for instance for conducting collective monitoring in detention facilities and awareness raising regarding relevant human rights issues.

In seeking to advance progress on SDGs 3 (health) and 5 (gender equality), OHCHR has engaged with the Ministry of Health to increase capacity of district technical personnel and medical officers from Eastern Region with regard to human rights standards related to Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights and maternal health rights. The training also focused on strengthening local government capacities to prioritize maternal health interventions in local government plan; enhance the integration of maternal health rights issues in different departmental level priorities; and raise awareness on the technical guidance on the application of Human Rights Based Approach to reduce preventable maternal mortality.

OHCHR supported the Uganda Human Rights Commission to conduct joint monitoring field missions in northern and Karamoja Sub Regions. The monitoring missions equally provided an opportunity to engage in advocacy with the local authorities on pertinent human rights issues including access to justice, detention conditions, infringements on the right to integrity and human rights in the context of business interventions.

OHCHR has also strengthened the advocacy capacity of local human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, in order for them to be able to effectively and constructively engage with LG on human rights issues at the local level.

1. **Challenges**

Firstly, there is still the apparent challenge in ensuring, in practice, the active and meaningful participation of local communities in the planning and budgeting for local programs. As a consequence, groups at risk of discrimination are hardly included and their concerns not meaningfully or effectively heard.

Secondly, under Uganda’s decentralized model, allocation of financial resources is still reserved by the national government. In this regard, there has been a persistent complaint by the LGs of limited financial allocations by the national government, which ultimately affects the delivery of planned interventions.

1. A statutory body established to give effect to article 32 (3) of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda. The Commission is established with a view to give effect to the State’s constitutional mandate to eliminate discrimination and inequalities against any individual or group of persons. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)