The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Uganda to the United Nations Office and Other International Organizations in Geneva, presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva, and has the honour to refer to the latter’s letter Ref. WRGS/COW/Res71/175 dated 22 September 2017, regarding the report of the Secretary-General on Child, Early and Forced Marriage, pursuant to the resolution of 71/175 of the United Nations General Assembly.

The Permanent Mission wishes to transmit herewith a letter dated 2 November, 2017, from the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development of the Republic of Uganda, submitting contributions and responses to the questions raised on the steps undertaken to end child, early and forced marriages which are to aid in preparing the said report of the Secretary General under resolution 71/175.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Uganda to the United Nations Office and Other International Organizations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva the assurances of its highest consideration.


The High Commissioner for Human Rights
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
GÈNEVA

Attach...
November 2, 2017

The High Commissioner for Human Rights
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
United Nations Office
CII 1211 GENEVA 10

Email: registry@ohchr.org
       couaffowafang@ohchr.org

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON CHILD, EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGE, PURSUANT TO THE RESOLUTION OF 71/175 OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Reference is made to your letter Ref. WRGS/COW/Res71/175 dated September 22, 2017 on the above subject matter.


This is therefore, to submit in the responses to the questions raised on the steps undertaken to end child, early and forced marriage.

Furthermore, the information provided by the Government of the Republic of Uganda can be made available on the OHCHR Website.

Benon Kigenyi
For: PERMANENT SECRETARY

C.C: Permanent Mission of Uganda to the United Nations
C.C: Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
FIRST REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 17/175 ON THE GIRL CHILD, EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGES
REPORT TO THE SG ON GIRL CHILD, EARLY & FORCED MARRIAGES PURSUANT TO RESOLUTION 71/175 OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

INTRODUCTION

1. The UN Resolution 71/175 on Child, Early and Forced Marriage which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 19th December 2016 is in line with the Government of Uganda’s commitment to protect and promote the rights of the girl child. Before this resolution, Government of Uganda had already made considerable progress in improving the status of the girl child by putting in place legal and policy framework as well as programmes in this endeavour as follows:

2. The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda Article 31 criminalizes child marriage and spells out 18 years as a minimum age at which men and women should marry. It prohibits forced marriage and provides for free consent of the man and woman to enter into marriage (Article 31(3). Article 33(6) prohibits laws, cultures, customs and traditions which are against the dignity, well fare or interests of women or which undermine their status.

3. The Penal Code Section 129 stipulates that any person who performs a sexual act with a child below 18 years commits an offence of defilement and is liable to life imprisonment on a death penalty if a child is below 14 years or the person is infected with HIV/AIDS or the culprit is a parent or a guardian or a person in authority.

4. Other Laws which protect the girls from early sex include the Anti Female Genital Mutilation Act (2009), the Domestic Violence Act (2010) and the Anti Trafficking in Persons Act (2010).

5. Regarding Policies and Programmes, greater opportunities for girl’s education have been created to delay marriages. These include Government Programmes such as UPE, USE and other initiatives like 1.5 points scheme for girls entering Universities and targeted scholarships for vulnerable girls. Gender in Education Policy (2009) pledged Government’s commitment to facilitate re-entry of girls who drop out as a result of teenage pregnancy and early marriage.

6. Other Policies for ending child marriage include the National Population Policy (2008) which identifies teenage motherhood as a major contributor to persistent high fertility and maternal deaths; the National Adolescent Reproductive Policy (2004; the Uganda Gender Policy (2007); the National Youth Policy (2016); the Elimination of Gender Based Violence Policy (2016); the Sexual Reproductive Maternal, Neonatal, Child and Adolescent Health (SRMNCAH) Strategy and Investment Case. Others include the Reporting, Tracking, Referral and Response (RTRR) Guideline and its Attendant National Action Plan on Violence against Children in Schools (VACIS).

7. This report on Resolution 71/175 is Government’s contribution to the Secretary General’s report on Child, Early and Forced Marriage. It is in accordance with the
Questions and Guidelines by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to the Member States.

QUESTION 1. WHAT ARE THE MEASURES TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LAST REPORT ON PREVENTING AND ELIMINATING CHILD, EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGE?

8. This report marks Uganda’s first submission to the Secretary General on Girl Child, Early & Forced Marriages pursuant to resolution 71/175 of the UN General Assembly. It details Government’s current efforts to address and respond to these issues since the adoption of the Resolution.

QUESTION 2. WHAT ARE THE MEASURES ADOPTED TO ADDRESS THE ROOT CAUSES, SYSTEMATIC AND UNDERLYING FACTORS SUCH AS POVERTY, INSECURITY, LACK OF EDUCATION OF CHILD, EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGE INCLUDING HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS?

Early and Forced Marriage

9. In Uganda, implementation of Resolution 71/175 is based on the National Strategy to End Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy, which was launched by Government in 2015. The strategy was informed by results from a study on the Adolescent Girls Vulnerability Index Report (AGI)\(^1\) which was done in 2013. The study revealed regional disparities in the vulnerability for girls aged 10-19 including to child marriage and teenage pregnancy. There was also a formative research on child marriage which brought to the fore the root causes and key drivers of the practices.

10. The strategic interventions of the Strategy include:

- Improving the legal and policy environment to protect children.
- Generate evidence for programming.
- Change community’s behaviors and social norms.
- Increase access to quality protection, education, reproductive health services and other opportunities.
- Empower girls and boys with comprehensive and appropriate information on life skills.
- Establish and strengthen implementation structures and systems.

11. The activities since the adoption of the Resolution have mainly focused on the implementation of the strategy. The strategy has been disseminated widely and implementation of the strategy currently targets 55 districts out of the 116 districts focusing mainly in areas of high prevalence of early and forced marriages such as Karamoja region.

---

\(^{1}\) The adolescent multilevel vulnerability index is based on an ecological approach to vulnerability. Vulnerability is a relationship between the actions of an individual girl and the context in which she lives (Sameroff & Chandler, 1975). Risk factors are present at the level of the individual girl, her household, the community in which she lives, and even broader political, societal and historical influences. The most vulnerable adolescents are those that experience risk factors at multiple levels of influence. All the indicators that were selected for inclusion in the index are based on extensive research on adolescence. The indicators touch on common themes of poverty, household and family structures, region and communities, housing conditions, education, employment, sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and family formation (marriage and parenthood).
12. At the district level, within the framework of decentralization, there is a positive trend. Over this Financial Year (FY) 2016/2017, approximately 30 district local governments out of the 56 where the national strategy on ending child marriage and teenage pregnancy is being implemented, allocated local resources towards implementation.

13. Social norm changing initiatives have been rolled out throughout the communities; community leaders and members are signing personal pledge cards to end child marriages; community action plans are being implemented and comprehensive community mobilization is taking place.

14. Sensitization of service providers such as teachers, health workers and community development officers as well as police is on-going.

15. Programmes on girl and boy empowerment have been initiated in eastern and Karamoja regions which has the high prevalence of teenage pregnancies. Empowerment and livelihood clubs have been established for girls in schools in this region. Dialogues and campaigns on ending child marriage and teenage pregnancy which started in 2015 is continuing under the theme “let girls be girls, books before babies”.

16. In addition, a Multi Sectoral Communication for Development Strategy for Adolescent Girls (2017) has been developed. The purpose of the strategy is to support and strengthen parenting and family functioning, making communities safe for children and youth, promoting involvement of in and out of school, activities as well as providing adolescents with opportunities to build social and emotional competence.

17. The First Lady who is the champion of the Adolescent Girl Child in the country is spearheading dialogues on the adolescent girl including ending child marriages.

Poverty

18. To end poverty, Government’s emphasis and strategy is on household wealth creation particularly amongst those households at risk of poverty. Hence Government has put in place programmes to enable each household to put in place an investment to generate income and for basic needs (food, shelter, and clothing) as well as generate savings for improved livelihoods. These programmes include:

- Operation Wealth Creation (OWC) through which households access affordable agricultural planting and breeding stock.
- Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP) where women who cannot access formal credit are provided affordable credit and entrepreneurial skills for starting and managing business enterprises.
- Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP) which targets unemployed young men and women by providing affordable credit and entrepreneurial skills for starting and managing business enterprises.
- Mobilization of communities to establish Savings, Credit and Cooperative Organisations (SACCOs) and Village Loans and Saving Associations (VLSAs) through which communities pull resources and loan each other in order to improve their livelihoods.
Education

19. Government has continued to implement Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE) as well as other initiatives like reservation schemes for girls on entry into Public Universities.

20. The Revised Gender in Education Policy (2009) was launched on the International Day of the Girl Child on 11th October 2017 by the First Lady of the Republic of Uganda. The Policy aims to achieve gender parity in access, participation and pass rates across all sub sectors in education by 2030; increase women in employment at all levels; increase resources for gender mainstreaming and create gender responsive planning environment in order to reduce violence against children.

Security and Humanitarian Settings

21. Uganda is Africa’s largest refugee hosting country and has progress approach to refugees and humanitarian crisis. The Policy emphasizes provision of humanitarian assistance and organized settlement for refugees. Service delivery in health, education and markets is integrated into the host communities.

22. Regarding GBV, violence against children (sexual and child marriages) in the humanitarian settings, emphasis is on capacity building of service providers. For example, in 2017, 167 Government officials in humanitarian setting were trained in utilization of psychosocial support guidelines, 198 workers that is clinical officers, midwives and doctors were trained in Clinical Management of Rape (CMR). Male action groups and peer educators in 18 districts were trained in community dialogues and over one million people were covered.

23. Reproductive health kits were procurement and utilized in prevention of GBV in refugee settings, 7,000 dignity kits were procured and utilized by new mothers, and HIV testing kits were procured and supplied in health facilities. 2,273 hygiene kits were procured for girls in drought affected districts and humanitarian districts for use by the most disadvantaged girls.

24. Tents for youth only and women only spaces were installed in refugee settlements and utilized to provide psychosocial support to women and young people. Delivery beds were procured and distributed to new refugee settlements to facilitate deliveries.

25. All refugee host districts have functional coordination systems and mechanisms for prevention and response to GBV. All refugee settlements have functional women and girls spaces.

QUESTION 3. WHAT PROGRESS HAVE BEEN MADE IN THE ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS AND POLICIES TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY, PROHIBIT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS, REPEAL DISCRIMINATORY PROVISIONS AND ERADICATE HARMFUL PRACTICES? WHAT CONCRETE ACTIONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO MONITOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ALL MEASURES?

26. The Uganda Gender Policy has been revised to guide all programmes which promote Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) in Uganda, as well as align it to 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
27. A Gender Policy for Police has been formulated and incorporates Gender Based Violence (GBV) issues in the Police interventions.

28. Government of Uganda enacted the Public Finance Management Act to legalize Gender and Equity Budgeting (GEB). The Act requires that Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) allocate resources on gender equality and women’s empowerment as well as other equity issues including the children’s rights. All sectors are requested for compliance before resources are allocated to them. To implement the Act, a National Gender and Equity Budgeting Capacity Development Plan was launched in June 2017 with the aim of establishing and improving national capacity within Government MDAs to take lead on integration of gender and equity in public financial management. GEB training manual, curricular and assessment tools are in place and used by training pool gender and equity budgeting trainers (26 trainers) and assessors.

29. To repeal discriminatory provisions, Government has focused on the Evidence Act to ease prosecution of sexual offences. A task force was put in place and has compiled a report with clear gaps and recommendations faced by victims and actors along the referral path way such as health, psychosocial, safety and security and legal median. The next step is to amend the law.

30. In Defence, the Uganda People’s Defence Forces Gender Working Group was established with clear reporting channels. The institution has put in place medical facilities for management of GBV cases and their own court system to ensure GBV cases are disposed off promptly to provide timely justice to survivors.

31. In the Justice Law and Order Sector, a Gender Bench Book was formulated to guide judicial officers to understand gender in administration of justice and barriers that women and girls face in access to justice. GBV special sessions have been piloted and a policy brief on institutionalizing GBV special courts is in place and used for advocacy to establish special courts for GBV cases. The Judiciary is actually in the process of establishing these courts.

32. GBV survivors, most of whom are young women and girls continue to receive medical-legal and psychosocial services in the seventeen (17) GBV shelters spread throughout the country. Also at these centres, temporary accommodation, security and safety and basic necessities are provided.

33. Government has put in place mechanisms for reporting child marriage such as Uganda Child Help Line which is a 24hour services to receive cases of child abuse and offer referral services. There is Reporting, Tracking and Response (RTR) Guidelines in place to support this service.

34. Government also put in place the National Gender Based Violence Database (NGBVD). This is an online management information system which enables actors responding to GBV to safely collect, store and generate analyze reports in real time.

35. In addition to NGBVD and Child Help Line, SafePal\(^2\) a web based platform and mobile application was created to ensure that young people confidentially report cases of sexually violence and get linked to the nearest service providers for help. Service providers include Health Centres, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Judiciary, GBV Safe Shelters, Police

\(^2\) An innovation developed by young people with technical and financial support from UNFPA
and District Local Governments. CSOs provide social support; judiciary offers education and mediation; referral for medical support while GBV safe shelters help to house the victims.

36. Since the majority of the victims are young people requiring the same services, the NGBV and Child Help Line have been harmonized to create Sauti Help Line.

37. Efforts have continued to engage communities to adopt Declarations on Abandonment of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Religious leaders of various denominations have exhibited high level commitment and cascaded interventions in communities on abandonment of FGM in the six (6) FGM practicing district. For example, religious leaders under their umbrella Organization, the Inter Religious Council organize annual marathon as advocacy of abandoning the practice.

38. In addition, Standard Operating Procedures on FGM have been developed and are used by the practicing districts. In the same vein, the Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV) Desk was established and is functional in Kapchorwa district.

QUESTION 4. WHAT MEASURES HAVE BEEN UNDERTAKEN TO PROMOTE GIRLS AND WOMEN'S AUTONOMY AND BUILD THE CAPACITY OF OTHER STAKEHOLDERS TO PROMOTE SOCIAL NORMS THAT SUPPORT GENDER EQUALITY?

39. The Government of Uganda, with support from partners such as UNICEF-UNFPA Global Program to accelerate action to End Child Marriage (GPECM) promotes autonomy and capacity building of stakeholders. For example the following has been achieved:

40. Over 168,050 adolescent girls and boys (aged 10-19) in 55 targeted districts actively participated in several programs supported by the global programs, including the Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA) clubs, community dialogues, formal and non-formal education and acquired skills in financial literacy and mentored and provided with SRH information, HIV testing services and birth registration services.

41. A total of 48,586 adult individuals have been engaged in community dialogues on ending child marriage, resulting in community leaders, religious and other leaders making public commitments/announcements to support ending child marriage and teenage pregnancy in their communities.

42. Over 16,000 parents, leaders and community members signed pledge cards to support initiatives aimed at ending child marriage in their communities; keep their adolescent girls in school and provide necessary scholastic materials and menstrual hygiene supplies for their adolescent girls and protect them from child marriage.

43. More than 200 communities have declared abandonment of FGM in FGM practicing communities in Sebei and Karamoja regions. The U-Survey report on FGM indicated that at least 91% of the population do not support continuation of FGM/C and only 9% girls and women supported continuation of FGM/C. This is because of:

- Awareness reaching over 82,509 people on the dangers of FGM/C and the positive attributes of abandonment, dissemination of the law, increase dialogue on FGM/C in public domain. For instance, FGM/C education interventions for in and out of school targeted 15 secondary and primary schools in the project area with 8,068 (5,140 girls and 2,898 boys) school children and 193 teachers reached.
44. Recent studies suggested a decline in the practice among the practicing communities. For example, the U-Survey preliminary report (UBOS, 2016) showed Bukwo at 28%, Kween 21%, and Kapchorwa 13% down from a high of 50% in the Sebei region and a decrease from 95% to 67% in the Karamoja districts. The declining trends can be attributed to the changing social norms in practicing communities, for instance and 91% not supporting the practice. There have been decreasing number of FGM/C cases over the years that is to say from 971 cases in 1990, 903 in 1992, 621 in 2000, 595 in 2004, to only 24 in 2016.

45. There has been high level political commitment to FGM/C abandonment: (President & Speaker of Parliament, MPs, district leaders to support FGM abandonmenet activities). Consequently, over 60 mutilators reformed & preaching against FGM/C and supported to form groups for alternative income. Several cutters have transformed and are now advocates for FGM/C abandonment. For instance, a group of over 25 former cutters have formed a change group involved in sensitizing communities against FGM in Nakapiripirit District.

46. Enforcement of the law has increased reporting, arrests & prosecutions of FGM/C cases. There is also increasing number of girls running away from mutilation with over at least 813 girls rescued from FGM/C since 2011 from within the country and across the borders.

47. FGM/C in Uganda is localized and practiced mainly by communities bordering Kenya and Uganda who are ethnically closely related and therefore need for cross border programming. Cross border advocacy meetings involving communities and leaders were conducted resulting into joint cross border memorandums and strategies to accelerate FGM/C abandonment, and promotion of girl child education among others.

QUESTION 5. WHAT CONCRETE ACTIONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE PROTECTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS AT RISK AND THE SURVIVORS INCLUDING INSECURE CONTEXTS?

48. The Domestic Violence Regulations (2011) Section 22(7) mandates the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development to develop Guidelines for operationalization and management of GBV shelters. In accordance with the Guidelines for establishment and management of shelters in Uganda of 2013, a number of NGOs have established GBV shelters. Currently, there are 17 shelters spread throughout the country. The shelters provide temporary accommodation to victims and survivors. Victims also get emergency care or first aid as well as counseling and legal services. The shelters also facilitate the process of integration into school and save family environment. Evidence shows that the majority of the cases reported in these shelters are of young teenage mothers.

49. Uganda Police Force established a Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) Department which investigates GBV cases which are criminal in the country. This is alongside the Child and Family Protection Unit (CFPU) which arbitrate cases which are domestic in nature.

50. As indicated in Section 4 of this report, all refugee settlement have safe spaces for women and girls in the humanitarian settings.

51. Boarding facilities for girls in some FGM practicing communities have been established as safe spaces for empowering girls as well as protecting them from the practice.
52. Regarding accountability mechanisms, the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) has integrated sexual reproductive health and rights into existing human rights monitoring, tracing and accountability mechanism and tools which includes addressing GBV and harmful practices. The Commission has also established ten (10) regional offices and a Right to Health Unit at the Head Office and all the staff in these units are trained in sexual reproductive health rights.

53. It has been established that large infrastructure projects can also increase risks of Violence Against Children (VAC) and GBV including child labour, forced and child marriages, defilement, sexual exploitation, rape among others. To protect women and children in communities where these projects are implemented, Government with support from World Bank is putting in place a series of measures to respond and protect child survivors and those at risk of sexual violence in project areas. The interventions include provision of minimum package of services for child survivors of sexual violence such as training of health, police and judiciary staff on child friendly services for survivors of sexual violence, improving case management systems, supporting psychosocial counselling services and strengthening community structures for referral of survivors and those at risk. Communities are also supported with life skills and gender transformative training for adolescent survivors and economic empowerment interventions.

QUESTION 6. WHAT KINDS OF DATA HAVE BEEN COLLECTED AND WHAT KINDS OF RESEARCH HAVE BEEN CONDUCTED?

54. Data for tracking progress of implementation is generated from administrative data, regular and periodic surveys as well as issue based specific researches. Administrative data is collected from the Child Help Line, the NGBVDB and SafePal which have been reported on in Section 3 of this report. Different actors such as Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and UN Agencies collect data from interventions under purview.

55. The regular surveys which provide data include the Uganda Demographic and Health Survey (2016), Population and Housing Census (2016), Uganda National Household Survey (2017), among others.

56. Formative Researches have also been done and these include the Adolescent Health Risk Behaviour Study, the National Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health Assessment, Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), the Adolescent Girls Vulnerability Index and the U Survey on FGM/C. With support of UNFPA, Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development supported 11 cultural institutions to conduct socio-cultural studies and developed policy briefs to address harmful practices including child marriage.

QUESTION 7. WHAT ARE THE PERSISTING CHALLENGES AND GAPS IN ELIMINATING OF THE PRACTICE? HOW COULD SUCH CHALLENGES AND GAPS BE OVERCOME?

57. The major challenges that Government continues to tackle include:
   - Prevail upon families and traditional communities to stop child marriages under the pretext of parental protection of their daughters against early sexual encounters and pregnancy in order to keep the family’s dignity.
The issue of poverty where parents encourage or force their daughters to get married in order to get pride price is being tackled through Operation Wealth Creation Programmes and other Credit Schemes that the Government has put in place.