

## UN Women

UN Women is the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls. UN Women operationalizes this through Flagship Programming Initiatives (FPIs) developed to achieve transformative results for gender equality and women empowerment. One such FPI is the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) programme through which UN Women, with funding from the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Uganda, aimed to achieve the following results:

- (I) Overall Policy: An enabling environment for implementation of WPS commitments is created;
- (II) Conflict Prevention: Women participate in and inform decision-making processes & responses related to conflict prevention;
- (III) Conflict Resolution: Representation and leadership of women is increased in formal and informal peace negotiations; and
- (IV) Peacebuilding & Recovery: The socioeconomic recovery & political participation of women and girls are promoted in post conflict situations.

As part of this programme UN Women supported the Government of Uganda through the Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development to develop the Third National Action Plan WPS 2021 – 2025.

For more information on UN Women's work in Uganda please visit <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/eastern-and-southern-africa/uganda> and follow us @unwomenuganda on twitter.



Norway in Uganda  
Royal Norwegian Embassy in Kampala



Photo credit: UN Women

## Makerere University Rotary Peace Center

Makerere University is the second top Research University in Africa with 90 percent of research publications in Uganda. The University hosts a number of globally recognized centers of excellence including the first Rotary Peace Center on the African Continent.

UN Women with funding from the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Uganda supported the Rotary Peace Centre to implement a project on strengthening the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Uganda with a particular focus on research and training. Through this partnership, Makerere University conducted a study on perceptions knowledge and implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Uganda. Results of the study have been used to develop training curriculum for the Judiciary, Parliament, Security sector, Local governments, CSOs, Religious and Cultural leaders on implementation of UNSCR 1325. For more information on the Rotary Peace Center at Makerere University please visit:

**Website:** <https://rpc.mak.ac.ug/>,

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/MakerereRotary>,

**Twitter:** <https://twitter.com/MakerereRotary>,

**LinkedIn:** <https://www.linkedin.com/company/makerere-university-rotary-peace-center/>

## WOMEN LEAD AND BENEFIT FROM PROTECTION

## POLICY BRIEF

<https://rpc.mak.ac.ug/> ■

# Introduction

This policy brief highlights findings of a study conducted in Uganda to establish perceptions and knowledge of UNSCR 1325, twenty years (20) years after the resolution was adopted. The policy brief focuses on Pillar number 2 of UNSCR 1325 that calls specifically for the protection of women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence, including in emergency and humanitarian situations, such as in refugee camps and settlements.

UN member states implement UNSCR 1325 through development of a National Action Plan (NAP). By 2021, ninety-eight (98) countries globally had formulated NAPs that would aid in the realization of the Women Peace Security agenda. Uganda has demonstrated this commitment on UNSCR 1325 through the development and implementation of the first National Action Plan (NAPI) 2008–2010, the second NAP 2011–2015 and now the third NAP 2021 - 2025. Additionally, different districts have formulated their local action plans and the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) is committed to aiding those districts that have not moved in this direction.

Uganda's NAP III WPS 2021 – 2025 aims at ensuring sustained peace and security through enhanced meaningful participation of women in peace and development processes. The NAP II provides a strategic framework, through the WPS agenda, to mainstream UNSCR 1325 into national development and peace strategies, with the focus on strengthening the effective roles of women in the achievement of long-lasting peace in Uganda (MGLSD, 2021). Specifically, Uganda's NAP III aims to: Prevent all forms of violence and promote peace within families, communities and the nation; Promote meaningful participation of women in leadership and governance at all levels; Strengthen the capacity of women to mitigate and prevent natural and human made disasters; and strengthen the institutional and coordination mechanism for WPS agenda at all levels.

# Methodology

The study was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative approaches to ensure that they augmented and complemented each other for optimal results. Additionally, desktop research on the resolution was undertaken to draw on how other countries were implementing and strengthening the resolution. Five thousand questionnaires were administered in twenty-five districts across all the mapped regions in Uganda. A total of 365 key informant interviews and 75 focus group discussions were conducted.

# Findings from the Study

Whereas ensuring that women are physically shielded during times of the conflict and violence is key, it is critical that women are involved in protection initiatives and that socio-cultural barriers that deter women from being involved are addressed. Even though many stakeholders are committed in the protection of women during the times of conflicts and violence, women have continued to

## PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Helen Nambalirwa Nkabala (Ph.D)

## CO - PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

Samson Barigye (Ph.D)

Veneranda Mbabazi (Ph.D)

Charlotte Karungi Mafumbo (Ph.D)

Nansubuga Elizabeth (Ph.D)

Kanakulya Dickson (Ph.D)

Isaac Tibasiima



## Government and Development Partners

03

Stakeholders, especially government and non-government stakeholders should ensure the provision of safe and private spaces to guarantee the safety and confidentiality of women, girls and children affected by all forms of violence in particular sexual and gender-based violence.

04

Government and development partners should strengthen the relevant criminal justice system structures to ensure easy access to services for victims of sexual and gender-based violence, particularly women and girls.



## Socio-cultural and Religious Institutions

05

Cultural and religious institutions should ensure that social cultural and religious norms, values, practices, and perceptions are aligned to human rights standards. This may include: traditional leaders to using their influence to address cultural practices that continue to reinforce unequal power relations.

06

Religious, cultural leaders and donor agencies need to create safe spaces for women where they can be offered and can offer psychosocial support services.



## Academic Institutions

07

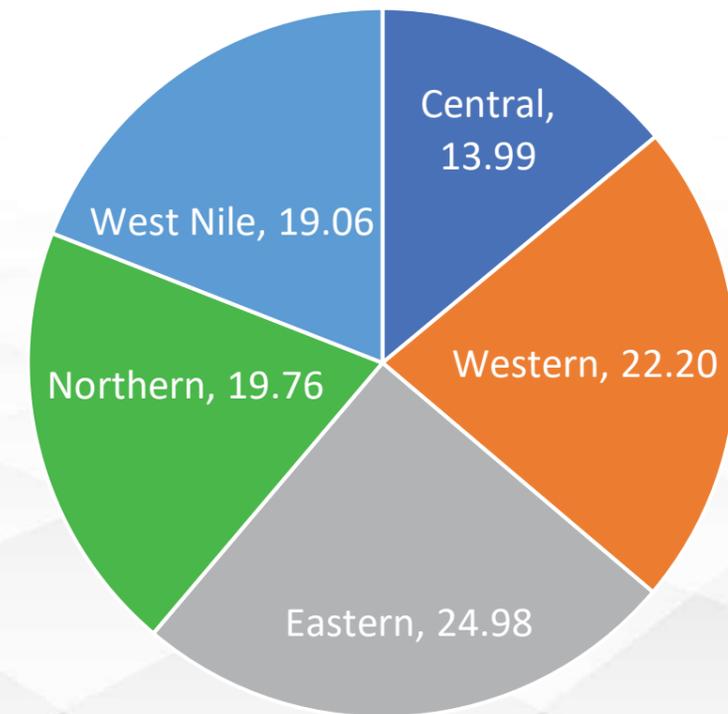
Makerere University Rotary Peace Center together with other departments and institutions of higher learning should continue building women's capacity and all other players as well as provide evidence based data as a critical contribution to the realisation of OUTCOME 1 of NAP111 (NAP 2020:20).

suffer gender-based violence, domestic violence, sexual abuses such as rape and defilement. Compared to their male counterparts, women continue to be underrepresented in the protection initiatives that are intended to build peaceful societies. Moreover, women and girls have less economic opportunities. Less economic opportunities for women have negative implications on women's lives, as they perpetuate unequal power relations in families and keep women in subordinate positions. This limits women's involvement in peacebuilding processes because they need to seek approval from their husbands. The low levels of education amongst girls compared to boys, forces them to get married at an early age or to engage in sex work as was reported mostly in West Nile and Eastern Uganda. This predisposes them to violence especially sexual gender-based violence.

Some cultural practices continue to reinforce unequal power relations in families which are exposing women to gender-based violence and sexual abuse. Even in communities where women were economically empowered, they still suffered domestic violence as husbands forcefully took all the money.

The survey results indicated that promoting women's participation across all pillars remains an important imperative of the WPS agenda. From the analysis of responses, there are indications of women's participation in the protection pillar in all the surveyed districts as indicated in the pie chart below. Despite the challenges they experience, there was consensus among the respondents that as nurturers, protection is innate to women and that they have done a phenomenal job.

### Regions' Levels in Protection Pillars



The eastern districts of Kamuli and Mayuge and Adjumani in West Nile posted the highest percentages of women's engagement in this pillar at 78.3, 76.7 and 74.5 percent respectively, while Ssembabule, Kampala and Bundibugyo were at the bottom with 60.1, 61.5 and 62.2 percent respectively. The study noted that women's engagement in the pillars corresponds with the level of civil society activity in a district, the status and nature of conflicts and population needs.

# The role of women in protection in Uganda

According to this study, women have the potential to effectively participate in protection initiatives. However, for effective implementation, communities and all stakeholders in general need to play their role. It should be noted that there have been policies and strategies put in place to guarantee the success of the WPS agenda, especially the protection pillar. These include: The National Policy on Elimination of Gender Based Violence in Uganda (2015); Provision for affirmative action for women in politics and both Universal Primary Education and Universal Secondary Education. In advancing their protection, women need to ensure that their physical security needs are addressed. On the other hand, relevant stakeholders need to ensure that women are particularly physically shielded from violence during times of conflict. The assessment emphasized the need for security agencies, NGOs, donors and civil society organizations to play their roles in advancing the protection of women.

In establishing the women's role under the protection pillar in the study districts, three themes emerged; women's role as protectors is intrinsic to women; women as protectors also need to be protected and lastly, women as protectors have a phenomenal role to protect both girls and boys and sometimes their fellow women and the men. Therefore, the role of women in protecting others, vulnerable groups or otherwise during and after the violent conflict was said to be indispensable. This is in line with NAP III priorities which call for good governance being enhanced at all levels and the strengthening of systems and structures which will aid the implementation and coordination of the NAP III.

The following factors were hindrances to women in protection activities:

- 01 socio-economic factors and systemic issues:** 66% and 70% cited socio-economic and systemic issues as key barriers to accessing protection services. The lack of resources and the high costs of accessing justice were cited by respondents as hindrance to accessing protection services for women. Whereas duty bearers recognize the importance of support services for survivors e.g., shelter, these services were not available due to resource constraints.
- 02 Socio-cultural barriers:** During the Focus Group Discussion, respondents highlighted how the desire to adhere to cultural and religious values that shun divorce and economic dependency predisposes women to a life time of violence, as they persevere to maintain their marriages. The study observed that child marriages which are particularly high among refugee communities were being used by some families for economic reasons while in many rural communities, girls who experienced sexual violence were also likely to be married off to perpetrators after a negotiated settlement.
- 03 Inadequate reporting mechanisms to address women protection concerns:** The study noted that the lengthy, back and forth court procedures discourage women from reporting SGBV because of the associated costs in terms of emotional stress, time and money. In the FGDs, both men and women mentioned that it was very difficult for a woman to get justice from police or courts of law because women lack the economic resources to seek justice.
- 04 An unfavorable operating ecosystem (environment):** There is political interference and lack of a conducive environment that stop women from being open about what happens to them.



## Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study makes the following recommendations in order to strengthen and accelerate the role of women under the protection pillar:



### Government

01

In order to facilitate the participation of women and girls in the protection pillar, there is need to review policies and legal instruments to ensure there are provisions for protection of women, girls, children and vulnerable groups in peace and security.

02

Duty bearers should work with religious and traditional institutions, among others, to ensure that the social and religious norms and practices in place do not undermine the role of women in protection of women and girls. This is alignment with NAP III Outcome 2.2.