

**Republic of Uganda**  
**Joint Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review**  
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**Refugees and Post Conflict communities**

**Joint Submission By:**

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## Executive Summary

1. The past five years (2011-2016) have witnessed the increased influx of refugees in Uganda. This is mainly caused by the instabilities around the Great Lakes region<sup>1</sup> and armed conflicts in East and Horn of Africa. Uganda is currently taking care of 646,465 refugees<sup>2</sup> both in refugee settlements and in urban areas. These comprise people fleeing violence and human rights abuses, mostly from South Sudan, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo, who now found protection and safety in Uganda.<sup>3</sup> This number of refugees and asylum seekers makes Uganda the third largest refugee host country in Africa<sup>4</sup>. A number of refugee settlements have been established to accommodate these big numbers<sup>5</sup>. There are however some refugees who prefer to live independently outside the settlements and in urban areas popularly known as urban refugees. Notwithstanding that the government of Uganda has put in place various mechanisms that aim at meeting its international obligations on ensuring that the rights of refugees are better respected and protected in the last four years, a number of challenges still persist.
2. This submission is based on primary data collected through nationwide consultations and focus groups discussions carried out between January and February 2016. Sixteen consultative meetings and ten focus group discussions were held in the districts of Kampala, Pader, Kitgum, as well as Adjumani and Kamwenge refugee settlements with members representing refugee communities, former Internally Displaced Persons, and host communities. The input was generated from a total of 186 participants, of which 109 were women and 77 men. The submission also benefitted from relevant secondary sources, such as the past and current projects of LWF Uganda and all submitting organizations as well as reports of partner organizations such as the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and various reports of government ministries, departments and agencies.
3. The key findings shed light on the situation of the rights of refugees and post conflict communities in Uganda, more generally, with particular attention on legal framework for refugees and asylum seekers, access to justice; the rights of children; right to education; rights of persons with disabilities; rights of women; and post conflict communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Congolese refugees continuously arrive at Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement [http://lwf.or.ug/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=110:congolese-refugees-continuously-arrive-at-rwamwanja-refugee-settlement&catid=42:news&Itemid=18](http://lwf.or.ug/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=110:congolese-refugees-continuously-arrive-at-rwamwanja-refugee-settlement&catid=42:news&Itemid=18)

<sup>2</sup> 2015 UNHCR country operations profile – Uganda Statistical Snapshot\* <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e483c06&submit=GO>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.opm.go.ug/departments/department-of-disaster-preparedness-management-refugees/department-of-refugees.html>

<sup>4</sup> Uganda hosts record 500,000 refugees and asylum-seekers Available at [www.unhcr.org/567414b26.html](http://www.unhcr.org/567414b26.html)

<sup>5</sup> 2015 UNHCR country operations profile – Uganda <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e483c06.html>

## **1. Legal Framework and human rights issues for Refugees and Asylum seekers**

4. The government of Uganda enacted a refugee legal and policy framework<sup>6</sup> which actors have described as facilitative<sup>7</sup>. This includes its ability to facilitate the enjoyment of human rights by refugees. To facilitate the implementation of the refugee legal and policy framework, the government of Uganda established under the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), the Directorate of Refugees, which works as the official government lead agency concerning various refugee issues. The Directorate works in conjunction with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other partners.
5. Whereas there are several players working to ensure that refugees in Uganda are accorded a smooth entry, both refugees and asylum seekers noted that the determination process is tedious and elaborate. Notwithstanding that the government of Uganda has established various registrations and reception centers the registration and verification exercise is tainted with some flaws which constitute serious delays and structural limitations making services inaccessible to the refugees or applicants.
6. Each registered household is issued with a Temporary Asylum seeker attestation which is renewable after three months from the date of issue and thereafter every month until a decision on the asylum application is made by the Refugee Eligibility Committee.<sup>8</sup> This process negatively affects the refugees' livelihood in as far as planning and seeking work is concerned, making many of the applicants waiting for over two years without being notified about the process or result of their application. The effect of this is asylum applicants face continued and unabated arrest, detention and in certain circumstances compulsory deportation especially those found without legal documentation.
7. While the government of Uganda has permitted some refugees to settle in places of their preferred choice, various services and amenities have not been extended to them as it is a policy of the government of Uganda to promote sustainable rural refugee settlements. This is reinforced by restricting assistance to basic needs (food, shelter, health care, education) only to rural settlements. The above policy is noted to be discriminatory to urban refugees, as it does not consider them in the provision of services to meet their basic human rights. Many for that reason continue to struggle daily trying to meet their basic needs.<sup>9</sup> This indirect discrimination is caused by structural impediments, over-reliance on settlements as the mainstay of refugee

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<sup>6</sup>Refugees Act No. 26 of 2006 available at [www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/88109/100647/F565203603/UGA88109.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/88109/100647/F565203603/UGA88109.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Uganda's progressive Refugee Act becomes operational available at <http://www.unhcr.org/4a3f9e076.html>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.opm.go.ug/departments/department-of-disaster-preparedness-management-refugees/department-of-refugees.html>

<sup>9</sup> Uganda: Urban Refugees Struggle to Survive <http://allafrica.com/stories/200806250107.html>

protection and assistance has hindered the broader involvement of municipal authorities in responding to protection and assistance needs of refugees in urban areas.<sup>10</sup>

8. There are also gaps in the registration of new born children. Whereas it is of right that all children born must obtain birth registration certificates, children born outside health centers find challenges in not only having their births registered, but also in being included in the family`s/ parents attestation. Notwithstanding that it is the sole mandate of the government of Uganda to register new born children (including refugee children) there have been reports among refugees of authorities exercising discretion to the detriment of the refugee family to include the new born children on the family`s attestation. This gap has had negative implications to the family from missing appropriate food ratios (especially those living in settlements) to other benefits that accrue to the family. This is exacerbated further in situations where children without birth certificates and whose age is difficult to prove become vulnerable to abuses such as defilement, trafficking, and recruitment into the worst forms of child labor. Without proof of age, children can be married off early and perpetrators of abuse cannot be pinned.<sup>11</sup>
9. Uganda has been applauded for having one of the best inclusive legal and policy frameworks governing refugees in Africa. Enacted in 2006, the Refugee Act provides for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. There is still however a gap in the law as it does not specifically dispense of the requirement of work permits. A number of urban refugees reported being treated as aliens in accessing work. Currently, refugees` access to work is limited as some employers require them to obtain work permits which are costly to acquire. While the self-reliance strategy in rural refugee settlements, requires settlement based refugees to cultivate plots of land in order to sustain themselves, it does not consider urban refugees in as far as no land is allocated to them leaving many on the fringes of exploitation while looking for work.

#### **Recommendations to the Government of the Republic of Uganda:**

- a. Speed up the registration and verification process of asylum seeker applications to formally determine their status within three months of application.
- b. Undertake strategies aimed at increasing and extending assistance to urban refugees, in particular increased access to basic services including employment, health care and educational opportunities.
- c. Ensure that the process of deporting rejected asylum seeking applicants is in a manner that does not violate international standards.

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<sup>10</sup> To be or not to be: Urban refugees in Kampala <http://www.urbanafrika.net/resources/urban-refugees-kampala/>

<sup>11</sup> Yiga Deo 2010 An Assessment of Child Protection Systems in Uganda

- d. Commence periodic monitoring and verification exercises to ensure all refugees in the various settlements are registered to access basic services.
- e. Expedite the process of ratifying and subsequently domesticating The Hague Convention on Inter Country Adoption to protect child refugees from being exploited through scam adoption processes.

## **2. Access to Justice**

10. Both adult refugees and children in contact or conflict with the law due to mainly ignorance of the law, find various challenges in accessing justice. The result: many refugees prefer to settle disputes using various traditional mechanisms and through fines which are nevertheless illegal in Uganda`s context especially as regards criminal offences. Those who seek to use the legal justice system are faced with long distances between the settlements and the law courts which makes physical access to justice unattainable as many cannot afford transport to the courts, or even follow up on their complaints or cases as and whenever they are due for hearing in court. The result has been many refugees being denied justice.
11. Many children have ended up sharing cells with adult suspects at police posts due to the poor pre-trial detention facilities and the lack of access to legal representation that are child friendly. This coupled with the absence of the family and children`s court in close proximity within the settlements (including absence of remand homes in the regions) exposes children in conflict with the law to many hardships.

### **Recommendations to the Government of the Republic of Uganda:**

- a. Establish separate holding centers and remand homes for children in conflict with the law within the settlements and the different regions.
- b. Ensure children attain access to justice in a quick and efficient way, including undertaking trainings for staff that handle children in conflict with the law, in child protection mechanisms.
- c. Establish and fully equip a family and children`s court in every refugee settlement.
- d. Undertake continuous legal awareness among refugees to curb ignorance of the law among refugees.
- e. Provide legal representation and court interpreters for refugees in conflict with the law.

### 3. Rights of Children

12. LWF Uganda and the submitting organizations applaud the work so far done by the government of Uganda to ensure that all children in refugee settlements exercise their full rights. Interventions have mainly taken the form of ensuring that the right to education is fully realized<sup>12</sup>. The submitting partners however note with concern that there still exist other commitments towards the two Optional Protocols<sup>13</sup> that are yet to be domesticated as well as the ratification of the Hague Convention on Inter Country Adoption.
13. Government interventions to support vulnerable families and households are enshrined within the Social Sector Investment and Development Plan (SIDP). Through the SDIP, the government seeks to enhance the capacity of the people and protection of the vulnerable by instituting effective support programs for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) and children in vulnerable families. The implementation of the OVC policy and its attendant Strategic Program Plan of Investment has also contributed to reaching out to children without parental care. Despite these efforts, little or no formal interventions, if any have been directed to child headed families or unaccompanied minors in the refugee settlements. Many on attaining the age of 18 years or before attaining the age drop out of school to look after their siblings.
14. The government of Uganda is applauded for establishing reception, shelter and feeding centers specifically for unaccompanied minors and orphans within the refugee settlements.<sup>14</sup> Whereas these centers provide shelter and act as a home for the unaccompanied minors, many of the minors upon attaining the age of 18 years notwithstanding that they are still in school are often transferred into their own homes, thus increasing the number of child headed families. This exposes the said children to various challenges including dropping out of school, sexual abuse, fending for the family among others.
15. Urban refugee children continue to face peculiar challenges. Services like access to education, access to health facilities have continued to elude them. This is especially due to their societal status as urban poor. Many live with their families in abject poverty; equally face discrimination at various service centers due to language barriers, lack of identification and income inequality. The monetization of many of the urban services has left urban refugees in destitution as many cannot afford the subsidized primary education as well as health services yet little has been done to

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<sup>12</sup> LWF Uganda applauds the commitment shown by the government of Uganda through the ratification of a host of child related covenants and instruments including The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, The ILO Convention 182 and 138, the Optional protocols to the UNCRC, the Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities and its protocol, CEDAW, among others

<sup>13</sup> The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the PO-CRC-CAC

<sup>14</sup> LWF; A new family for orphans of conflict available at <https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/new-family-orphans-conflict>

address these issues, in spite of their broad implications for especially urban refugee children.<sup>15</sup>

### **Recommendations to the Government of the Republic of Uganda:**

- a. Urgently ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Right of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OP-CRC-CAC).
- b. Institute a comprehensive policy framework supported by adequate financing of the Birth Registration Bureau to engender a sustainable birth and death registration program in refugee settlements that shall be able to record children born outside health centers with ease and free of charge.
- c. Put in place measures directed to protect and support child headed families and unaccompanied minors in the refugee settlements.
- d. Integrate urban refugee children in programs that guarantee access to basic services like education, health among others

## **4. Right to Education**

16. The submitting stakeholders applaud the efforts by the government of Uganda in putting in place measures to ensure that all children in Uganda including refugee children access education.<sup>16</sup> These efforts aim at ensuring that the child's right to quality education is met. This has been achieved through a number of ways including making early learning compulsory and free, provision of child protection officers concerned with child affairs at the various administrative levels including in refugee settlements and centers. The government has also developed policies such as the Universal Primary Education and universal secondary education to guarantee the child's right to education. However major challenges still exist in ensuring that all children in the refugee settlements attain the best form of education. Major challenges include congestion in classes due to the high teacher/pupil ratio standing at 1:81; the deteriorating quality of education; the lack of inclusive education for children with disabilities among others. All these issues/ challenges need to be addressed to ensure that refugee children attain the best quality elementary education.

17. The recruitment of and inclusion of refugee teachers has helped to bridge the various indirect and invisible gaps to ensure that refugee children continue with school.

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<sup>15</sup> URBAN REFUGEE EDUCATION IN UGANDA: A solution from the non-formal education sector sites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic1203150.files/Panel%204%20-%20Not%20Business%20As%20Usual/80828217\_50865568\_\_10865557\_Uganda\_UrbanRefugees\_Policy.pdf

<sup>16</sup> LWF: A new family for orphans of conflict available at <https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/new-family-orphans-conflict>

However, there is indirect discrimination of remuneration between refugee teachers and Ugandan nationals. Other concerns and challenges include the escalating high school dropout rates, the deteriorating quality of education, the lack of transitions (pre-year) for refugees joining Ugandan schools and children joining secondary schools. These ought to be addressed to ensure that all refugee children attain their right to education.

18. Notwithstanding the existence of an enabling legal and policy framework that ensures access to education, refugee children in particular still face various legal and structural impediments in attaining access to higher education. The legal guarantees to the right to education accorded to refugees limits the extent of its exercise to only primary education. This is notwithstanding that the government of Uganda has passed a policy that offers free secondary/higher education. This does not take into consideration the plight and position of refugees. Many of the children come from families burdened with abject poverty, whose parents can neither afford the high costs of secondary education nor afford vocational training. This has fundamentally curtailed their right to education and constitutes a continued denial of access to higher education for refugee children. Such policy is not only discriminatory but also contrary to Uganda's developmental educational goals as a whole.

#### **Recommendations to the Government of the Republic of Uganda:**

- a. Amend education policies to guarantee the access to higher secondary education by child refugees.
- b. Construct and equip vocational and higher learning schools in the refugee settlements to enable all children equal access to education like their counterparts including children with disability impairments.
- c. Enact and institute an absolutely free education policy that eliminates indirect costs of school education for refugees like school uniforms, school meals among others.
- d. Address the indirect discrimination faced by refugee teachers in remuneration.

#### **5. Rights of Persons/Children with disabilities**

19. Uganda has ratified and domesticated the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). It does not however recognize the legal capacity of persons with mental disabilities as stipulated in the CRPD. The 1995 Constitution of Uganda and other statutory provisions allow indirect discrimination based on mental disability, for example, as criteria for removal from public office. Refugee communities equally continue to discriminate against persons with mental disabilities based on their cultural beliefs and superstitions. The effect has been the continued illegal



incarceration and confinement of such persons in homes, tied on trees, denied shelter and food, among others.

20. The total population of children between the ages of 0-17 living with disabilities in Uganda is estimated at 205,000<sup>17</sup> representing two percent of all children. Children with multiple disabilities including those in refugee settlements who lack the necessary support from their parents and guardians. This is attributed to limited knowledge and skills by parents to look after children and persons with disabilities especially to enable them in learning. The situation is exacerbated by the lack of or inadequate physiotherapists at the health centers to assist such children to cope under such conditions. Like at the health centers, notwithstanding that the government of Uganda promotes inclusive education, many schools have no special needs teachers. Coupled with the above, there are limited teaching aids for the visually impaired students/ pupils and hardly any materials for other disabilities. The curriculum design does also not consider the specific needs of children with mental disabilities and children with hearing impairment among others. This situation does not facilitate a child friendly environment. Instead it promotes increased school dropout rates for Children with Disabilities.

### **Recommendations to the Government of the Republic of Uganda:**

- a. Promote affirmative action for children/ students with disabilities to enable access quality education.
- b. Recruit at least 5 special needs teachers in each primary and secondary school to provide access to education for all children with special needs.
- c. Recruit at least 1 physiotherapist in each lower health units and the settlement centers to support children/persons with multiple disabilities.
- d. Speed up the process of amending the Mental Health Act in order to improve on the lives of persons with mental disabilities taking into consideration the fundamental rights and freedoms alluded to in the CRPD.

## **6. Rights of Women**

21. Uganda has ratified and domesticated all major treaties protecting women's rights. The rights are however not fully protected. The full realization of women's rights has been hampered by some cultural and traditional practices among the refugee communities. At the national level, the 1995 Uganda Constitution protects and guarantees a wide range of human rights including women's right to equality and freedom from discrimination and economic rights among others. The constitution under Article 33(6) outlaws any 'laws, customs or traditions which are against the dignity, welfare or interest of women'. However, customary laws and practices have continued to exist side by side largely due to the lack of political will to confront issues of inequality and discrimination in a holistic and comprehensive manner.

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<sup>17</sup> UBOS 2006 cited in SOS, 2008, MGLSD OVC Status Report June 2010

22. Uganda continues to grapple with providing for the basic needs of refugees like health needs, sanitation facilities, shelter and food. These needs particularly affect women; who inevitably shoulder the burden of conflict in ensuring continuity; where everything is shattered.<sup>18</sup> While a number of interventions are in place to ensure refugee women's safety and security, many gaps of a structural nature still exist. Discrimination is deeply rooted in the various cultural settings among the refugees settlements which many still hold onto. Most refugee women in the settlement shoulder the primary responsibilities for childcare and family care including fending for the family and engaging in subsistence cultivation to supplement the various government and UNHCR provisions. These negative cultural practices have increased social discrimination of women refugees in the settlements.
23. Regarding violence against women, Uganda has made strides in developing a legal and policy framework as well as putting in place various mechanisms, institutions and plans that aim at tackling domestic and gender based violence against women. The 2006, Domestic Violence Act aims at punishing perpetrators of domestic violence. Local councils are given the mandate to try cases of domestic violence; set fines for perpetrators; and penalize the partner in a domestic relationship who injures or endangers the health of the other. It is also illegal to deny a partner the economic or financial resources to which they are entitled. While these are great strides in the fight against domestic violence in Uganda, interventions addressing domestic and gender based violence against refugee women are not conclusive. A number of refugee women still experience domestic related or gender based violence<sup>19</sup>. Close to 78 per cent<sup>20</sup> of refugee women both in settlements and urban centers continue to experience domestic violence, mostly at the hands of men. The Police Crime Report for 2013<sup>21</sup> shows an increase in reported cases of domestic violence nationally. Over 3426 cases of domestic violence were investigated compared to 2793 cases in 2012 giving an 18.4% increase in instances of domestic violence.
24. On sexual and reproductive health rights of refugee women, LWF Uganda and submitting partners acknowledge the significant investment by the government in the health sector through the construction of new health centers, rehabilitation of existing health facilities, improvement in medical supplies and equipment which have improved quality and access to health care services in the refugee settlements. Coupled with the above, the government has adopted a number of policy measures to ensure the right to health specifically for women.<sup>22</sup> A National Health Policy and Health Sector Strategic Plan with emphasis on equity of access to health care especially for the most vulnerable groups including women and the poor<sup>23</sup> have been put in place. This is aimed at reducing further the instances of maternal mortality especially in refugee settlements, and ensuring that various health services are extended to all refugee settlements.

<sup>18</sup> Isis Wicce (2014), Forced to flee: Voices of Congolese Women Refugees in Uganda

<sup>19</sup> LWF intensifies the fight against Gender-Based Violence in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement  
[http://lwf.or.ug/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=106:lwf-intensifies-the-fight-against-gender-based-violence-in-rwamwanja-refugee-settlement&catid=42:news&Itemid=18](http://lwf.or.ug/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=106:lwf-intensifies-the-fight-against-gender-based-violence-in-rwamwanja-refugee-settlement&catid=42:news&Itemid=18)

<sup>20</sup> Uganda: New Law On Domestic Violence Good But Attitude Change is Vital available at <http://allafrica.com/stories/201004160338.html>

<sup>21</sup> Uganda Police Force Annual Crimes and Traffic/ Road Safety Report 2013

<sup>22</sup> Life-saving water delivered to South Sudanese refugees in Uganda  
[http://lwf.or.ug/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=129:life-saving-water-delivered-to-south-sudanese-refugees-in-uganda&catid=42:news&Itemid=18](http://lwf.or.ug/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=129:life-saving-water-delivered-to-south-sudanese-refugees-in-uganda&catid=42:news&Itemid=18)

<sup>23</sup> DISH 2007.

25. Notwithstanding the progress made, there still exist gaps in the health sector that limit women`s full enjoyment of sexual and reproductive rights. These gaps hamper the refugee women from attaining the highest quality of health services. Uganda continues to have deteriorating reproductive indicators with women dying from preventable and treatable diseases, pregnancy and child-birth complications among others. The health care delivery system has been highly dependent on both external funding and special initiatives confined to geographical areas, population groups or health interventions. High on the list of gaps is the limited drug supplies at the health facilities and the continued lack of adequate trained personnel which greatly impacts on the right to access to health services by refugees. Also of concern are the poor budget allocations for the health sector contrary to government commitments under the Abuja Declaration to earmark 15% of the national GDP to the health sector.

### **Recommendations to the Government of the Republic of Uganda:**

- a. Undertake measures that aim at improving the health care system in Uganda and in particular in the refugee settlements to ensure that all refugees attain the highest level of access to health services.
- b. Implement the Abuja Declaration and increase funding to the health sector to ensure functional and accessible health services, as well as guarantee improved remuneration of medical personnel.
- c. Increase the supply of essential drugs in all health centers.
- d. Review the current drug distribution and management systems with a view to decentralizing drug distribution bearing in mind that refugees have no money to purchase prescribed drugs from drug shops.
- e. Make provision for neo natal and post natal services to all expectant refugee mothers at all health facilities mandatory and free of charge.

## **7. Refugee Host Communities**

26. The refugee host communities in the districts of Kamwenge and Adjumani continue to provide a hospitable and conducive environment to the establishment and existence of refugee settlements. Host communities live side by side in harmony with the refugees and share a number of basic services with the refugees. There are however various challenges faced by host communities. Many of the host communities complain of discrimination at the health centers, especially in attaining referrals as such services are sponsored and exclusively for the refugees.

27. Women and children in the host communities face peculiar challenges. Many of the women face domestic violence at the hands of abusive men due to cultural discriminatory attitudes and practices live in abject poverty. Women walk long

distances to access health centers as many live detached from the refugee settlements where such services are established.

### **Recommendations to the Government of the Republic of Uganda:**

- a. Make provision for supply of fuel for ambulances at the health centers to enable all expectant mothers' access health centers in a timely manner to reduce the high mortality rates.
- b. Put in place mechanisms that aim at curbing domestic and sexual based violence within the communities.
- c. Increase the supply of essential drugs for both refugees and host communities at the health centres.

## **8. Post Conflict Communities**

28. Having played a critical role in ensuring that the region of northern Uganda experiences enduring peace, a number of initiatives such as the Peace Recovery Development Program for Northern Uganda (PRDP) and the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) were initiated. The PRDP project is a comprehensive plan by government to eradicate poverty and improve the welfare of the people in Northern Uganda, following the 20 year old war between the Lord's Resistance Army and Ugandan government.<sup>24</sup> However, macro-economic policies and stability have been achieved at the expense of horizontal and vertical inequalities in post conflict communities<sup>25</sup>. Many communities in the post war conflict areas still lag behind compared to other regions and are dependent on the support from other actors who supplement government interventions.<sup>26</sup>
29. The pre-occupation with macroeconomic stability and investment competitiveness has relegated social welfare, social security, and human development issues to the backyard of policy and official thinking. As such, there are very few and limited official intervening programs that would be of benefit to especially the women and children in the post conflict areas. Considering themselves as marginalized and forgotten, the communities of Abam Village Palabekgem, Sub County in Lamwo District, Layik East, Amida Sb County Kitgum District and Akwara Village Ogole Parish Lapul Sub County, and Kanakoko West both in Pader District still face challenges in accessing basic services. Going by the phrase 'the forgotten People' many decry of the absence of government structures and facilities in the area which has deprived them of basic services like access to schools, and health centers- to which children and patients have to trek long distances. The children suffer from the nodding disease a mysterious ailment characterized by seizures, nodding of the head,

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<sup>24</sup> See Omony Bosco: IDP Returns and Settlement, available at <http://www.bosco-uganda.wikispaces.net/IDP+returns+and+resettlement>

<sup>25</sup> FOWODE. Equal by right the Uganda women's agenda 2010 - 2016

<sup>26</sup> Every Drop Counts: Community Buy-In in Water Projects in Northern Uganda  
[http://lwf.or.ug/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=95:every-drop-counts-community-buy-in-in-water-projects-in-northern-uganda-&catid=42:news&Itemid=18](http://lwf.or.ug/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=95:every-drop-counts-community-buy-in-in-water-projects-in-northern-uganda-&catid=42:news&Itemid=18)

mental retardation and stunting, which affects thousands of children in the region, leading the government to draw up a wide-ranging response plan.<sup>27</sup> The children are faced with school drop outs, defilement and shattered future. Specific interventions to curb further spread and treatment of the disease have not been exhaustive. This exclusion and marginalization has led to various rights of the communities being not met. Coupled to the above, the communities are faced with problems associated to land grabbing and forced illegal evictions orchestrated by state and non-state agents. This has exposed many of the poor families to hardships on returning from war, and have had their lands illegally acquired by powerful and wealthy politicians and multilateral companies.

30. Despite their substantial economic and social contributions to recovery process, women in the above communities are still experiencing hardships. Many still grapple with gender based and domestic related violence at home. The cultural setting continues to position women as subordinate to men. Women shoulder the primary responsibilities for family and childcare as well as engage in subsistence cultivation or economic activities to support their households. The most debilitating to this form of gender equality and non achievement of equality by women has been the continuing influence of patriarchy and culture which continues to hold sway over the status and rights of women in post conflict communities. The girl child is equally faced with various challenges. Bullied on the way to school, and home, girls are faced with a day to day sexual based violence, by boys and men. The result has been dropping out of school into early marriage, due to the slow pace or lack of law reforms with respect to discrimination.





### **Recommendations to the Government of the Republic of Uganda:**

- a. Undertake specific interventions in the Districts of Amuru, Nwoya, Pader and Lamwo as post conflict areas to reduce the escalating incidents of land grabbing.
- b. Compensate all victims of land grabbing and curb forced evictions or unlawful acquisition of land by state agents and non state actors.
- c. Fully equip health centres with adequate drugs and other equipments that are relevant to the needs of the patients.
- d. Investigate and treat all children suffering from nodding disease and improve their welfare.

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<sup>27</sup> Tackling Nodding Disease; <http://www.irinnews.org/report/95021/uganda-tackling-nodding-disease>

## Annex 1: Some Logos of the Submitting Organizations

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|---------------------------|--|
| Lutheran World Federation |    |
| Finn Church Aid           |   |
| Refugee Law Project       |   |
| C.O.W Foundation          |  |