



5th March 2025

Press Statement Ahead of International Women’s Day 2025

Theme: Accelerate Action for Gender Equality

Greetings from the Inter-Faith Women of Uganda! We are happy to address you today regarding International Women’s Day under the powerful theme “**Accelerate Action for Gender Equality.**”

As the Inter-Faith Women of Uganda, we would like to thank the government of Uganda particularly H.E. the President of the Republic of Uganda for uplifting the status of women in society. We also thank our faith leaders for institutionalizing the women of faith.

As mothers we would like to address the nation about the following concerns:

1. Economic inclusion

While we appreciate the government's efforts to introduce economic programs aimed at uplifting women, some terms and conditions—such as those of the GROW project—remain inaccessible to many

ordinary women in Uganda. Requirements like land titles place an undue burden on women, many of whom lack property ownership.

As Inter-Faith Women of Uganda, we urge the government to relax some of these conditions to ensure more women can benefit from the GROW project loans. In some cases, we call for affirmative action to allow a more inclusive access to these funds. As women from diverse religious backgrounds, we are organized and ready to mobilize women at the grassroots level through our various associations to access these funds effectively.

2. The high cost of education and healthcare

Many single mothers and even married women are struggling to keep their children in school due to the exorbitant fees charged. Access to quality education has become increasingly costly, making it unattainable for many women. Similarly, healthcare is becoming more expensive, leaving ordinary women—many of whom live hand to mouth—unable to afford proper medical services.

The poor state of public health facilities further limits access to quality healthcare. For instance, a woman running a market stall often finds it difficult to afford specialized medical treatment.

We call for a structured dialogue on reducing the cost of education and healthcare to ensure that all women and their families can access these essential services.

3. Land grabbing

Whenever land grabbing occurs, women and children are the most affected. Displacement and dispossession strip them of land—a crucial factor of production—leaving many vulnerable and without a means of livelihood.

Although land laws exist to protect occupants, they are often ignored or poorly enforced. We urge the government to strengthen the implementation of these laws in a fair and just manner. Those responsible for land grabbing must be held accountable to ensure justice and protect vulnerable communities.

4. Inheritance law

Widowed women are particularly vulnerable when it comes to maintaining inherited property. Data suggests that approximately 40% of women in rural areas face property dispossession by in-laws following the death of their husbands, a practice that undermines their financial independence and security. The inheritance law needs to be popularized so that heirs don't sell inherited land/property. As Inter-faith Women of Uganda we undertake to popularize the law on inheritance.

5. Corruption

Corruption remains a major barrier to women's access to justice and essential services. In addition to poverty, corrupt practices hinder many women from obtaining legal support, leaving them vulnerable and without recourse when their rights are violated.

A particularly troubling issue is the struggle widows face in accessing their late husbands' death gratuities, especially when their spouses were government employees. Due to bureaucratic inefficiencies and corruption, many widows are subjected to lengthy, frustrating processes, often requiring them to pay bribes or navigate unjust obstacles to receive what is rightfully theirs.

We call on the government to strengthen transparency and accountability in public service delivery, particularly in the processing of benefits for widows and other vulnerable groups. Strict enforcement of anti-corruption measures is essential to ensure that women receive the legal and financial support they deserve without undue hardship.

6. Eroding values

While we appreciate the government's efforts in institutionalizing the family, we are deeply concerned about the growing erosion of moral and societal values. Many parents have, unfortunately, neglected their role in instilling discipline, integrity, and a strong work ethic in their children. As a result, we see an increasing number of individuals who aspire to earn large salaries without the willingness to work diligently. This attitude has contributed to widespread

corruption, poor work ethics, and greed, weakening the moral fabric of our society.

Strong families are the foundation of a just and prosperous nation. We therefore call upon religious and cultural leaders to intensify efforts in promoting moral values and guiding parents on effective parenting. Through community engagement, mentorship programs, and moral education, we can nurture future generations that uphold integrity, hard work, and social responsibility—values that are essential for the progress of our society.

7. The Marriage Bill, 2024

The current Marriage Bill 2024, which seeks to criminalize cohabitation, should take into account the underlying social and economic factors that have contributed to its rise. As Inter-Faith Women of Uganda, we believe that one of the key reasons for the increasing prevalence of cohabitation is the high cost associated with formalizing marriages. Expensive wedding ceremonies, traditional marriage requirements, and excessive bride price demands by some parents have made it difficult for many young couples to marry legally. As a result, many opt for cohabitation as a more financially viable alternative.

Rather than criminalizing cohabitation, we call for a thoughtful and inclusive dialogue to address these socio-economic barriers to marriage. Cultural and religious institutions should work together to promote affordable and meaningful marriage practices that do not

place an undue burden on young couples. Strengthening economic empowerment programs for youth and addressing societal expectations around marriage costs will also be key in ensuring more couples can legally marry without financial strain.

We urge policymakers to reconsider a punitive approach and instead foster a supportive legal framework that strengthens families while respecting the realities faced by many Ugandans.

8. Parenting /Balanced Upbringing of Boys and Girls

We note with concern the imbalance in the upbringing of boys and girls in our society. While significant efforts have been made to prepare and groom the girl child, the same level of attention is often not given to the boy child. This has led to a gap in personal development, where many young men grow up unprepared for their responsibilities, leading to neglect of duties or, in some cases, the abuse of power as heads of families.

A well-balanced society requires that both boys and girls receive equal guidance, mentorship, and life skills to navigate the realities of today's world. **Parents, educators, religious and cultural leaders must work together to instill strong values, discipline, and a sense of responsibility in both genders.** Boys need to be mentored to become responsible men, just as girls are guided to become empowered women. Neglecting the boy child today creates challenges for families and communities in the future.

We therefore **urge families, schools, and community leaders to take a more holistic approach** to parenting, ensuring that both boys and girls receive proper counselling, life skills training, and mentorship. Only through balanced upbringing can we cultivate a generation of men and women who contribute positively to their families and society.

9. Electoral violence and commercialization of elections

Finally, we have noted with concern electoral-related violence in the Kawempe North by-election. We believe such violence discourages women from exercising their democratic rights, creating an environment of fear and exclusion.

Additionally, we are troubled by the high cost of participating in elections, which disproportionately affects women, who are more likely to face financial hardships. The high nomination fees, campaign expenses, and other costs make it difficult for many ordinary women to compete. Unlike men, who generally have better access to property and financial resources, women often face significant barriers to owning or selling property to finance their campaigns. As a result, the commercialization of elections is disenfranchising many women, limiting their political participation and representation.

CALL TO ACTION

If we are to achieve Accelerated Action for Gender Equality everyone should play their role more effectively.

Religious leaders

- a. We call upon religious and cultural leaders to intensify efforts in promoting moral values and guiding parents on effective parenting.
- b. Religious leaders should play their prophetic role in guiding that nation and speak up against vices like violence, and corruption that are holding our country back.

Government

- a. As regards to commercialization of elections we call upon government to reduce the cost of elections by making appropriate laws that favour all especially women.
- b. For electoral violence, we urge the state to create free and fair environment that allows women to freely participate in elections. Let's make our elections peaceful.
- c. Reduce the cost of education in order to secure the future of our children.
- d. Improve the status of health facilities and build more affordable specialized public health centres.

Parliament

- a. Enact laws that protect and serve all Ugandans.

Conclusion

The journey towards full gender equality in Uganda has seen commendable progress, yet significant challenges persist. Today, we call upon the government, civil society, and every Ugandan to join us in this transformative movement. Let us work together to remove the barriers that hinder our women from realizing their full potential, thereby creating an equitable, prosperous, and just society for all.

On this International Women's Day, we stand united in our vision for a Uganda where every woman and girl enjoys the rights, respect, and opportunities they rightfully deserve.

Mrs. Florence Nasanga Musoke, Chairperson

Inter-Faith Women of Uganda

IRCU Board Member