

HOW UGANDA HAS ENSURED INTEGRATION OF GENDER AND DIVERSITY INTO VICTIM ASSISTANCE EFFORTS

Dear Hana,

Thank you very much for offering the opportunity to Uganda to say a few words about our efforts and challenges in integrating gender and diversity into our victim assistance efforts.

Uganda ratified the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) on the 25th February, 1999 and it came into force in August 1999. Since then, Uganda has been implementing the Landmine Victim Assistance programs and activities without any discrimination on the basis gender.

Uganda also ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Convention on Elimination on all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Both of these conventions advocate for the rights of non-discrimination on the basis of gender and require governments to promote and protect the rights of women and men.

In fact, our work and research in Uganda has highlighted the need to integrate gender into our work for it to be effective.

We do this firstly through different legal and policy frameworks.

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

These include among others the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda which is the supreme law of the land. The objectives and Articles of the Constitution ensure:

- Fair representation of marginalized groups and obliges the State to ensure gender balance and fair representation of marginalized groups on all constitutional and other bodies.
- It also obliges the State to provide affirmative action in favour of groups marginalised on the basis of gender, age, disability among others.
- It emphasises the right to respect and human dignity, of all Persons with Disabilities and obliges the State to take appropriate measures to ensure that they realise their full mental and physical potential.
- It states that “women shall be accorded full and equal dignity of the person with men and that the State shall provide the facilities and opportunities necessary to enhance the welfare of women to enable them to realize their full potential and advancement.”

A number of other Acts and Policies also provide the framework for a human right-based approach to disability and to ensure that the needs of both women and men are taken into account, including:

- The Persons with Disabilities Act of 2020 which provide for the respect and promotion of the fundamental and other human rights and freedoms and *non-discrimination* in provision of services .
- The Local Government Act cap 243 of 1997 which provides for affirmative action on representatives of Persons with Disabilities including both female and male in local councils at various levels.
- The Equal Opportunities Commission Act which provides for the monitoring and evaluation of policies, laws, plans, activities, practices, cultures and norms to ensure their compliance with equal opportunities.
- The Uganda National Social Protection Policy 2015, which guarantees social security to its population and to provide assistance to people who are vulnerable either by age, social class, location, disability, gender, disaster or who do not earn any income in order to promote equity.
- The Uganda Gender Policy of 2007 which redresses gender imbalances as well as provides a guide to all development practitioners. The aim of this policy is to guide all levels of planning, resource allocation and implementation of development programmes with a gender perspective.

In our opinion, a strong legal framework is critical for the successful integration of gender.

- The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development together with the Equal Opportunities Commission strive to ensure that all the Ministries, Departments and Agencies have gender and equity inclusive budgets and a certificate of gender and equity compliance is issued to confirm this before their budgets are accepted and passed by parliament. This measure ensures that the needs of different persons including women and men with disabilities are taken care of basing on their gender unique challenges, needs and requirements.
- The different economic empowerment programs and other initiatives by the Government of Uganda have strict guidelines related to gender equity while

implementing these programs. These include the National Special Grant for Persons with Disabilities, the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Program, the Youth Livelihood Program and the Operation Wealth Creation Program among others. During implementation of all these programs, at least 30% of their beneficiaries have to be female. This enables us to reach our clients, including the Landmine Survivors.

Some key considerations from our experience are:

- The importance of addressing the most vulnerable, in this case women, through providing direct support through, for example, economic empowerment programs.
- The importance of ensuring that the unique needs of male and female landmine survivors are addressed and considered
- The need to promote human rights for all, including men and women
- And the need to ensure the elimination of discrimination against one gender, especially women

Uganda works to ensure that these legal frameworks and lessons learned are applied to victim assistance. In particular:

- Through training and allowing women and men landmine survivors to speak about their challenges and needs and encouraging them to participate in available programs
- Ensuring the Provision of medical services which focus on gender needs to help the male and female survivors to access the ones that suit and answer their needs
- Ensuring representation of women and men at the different levels of governance
 - Continued awareness creation on the unique opportunities for men and women as well their unique challenges
 - Inclusive programming for both men and women as well as affirmative action programs for women, who affected more negatively.
 - Innovations for reducing gender gaps in the private sector through partnerships with Private Sector Foundation and the Federation of Uganda Employers to ensure that Landmine Survivors get the opportunities to participate like all the others.

- The gender equity strategy which helps to guide the accountability systems so as to address the gender equality and equity at work
- Capacity development to ensure that all Ministries, Departments and Agencies; design, build and strengthen the budgeting and accountability guidelines
- Gender equality and women empowerment programs which have been strengthened further to ensure that the survivors both male and female benefit equally.

What we have learned through all of this is that:

- It very important to include the survivors and other affected community members, both women and men, in planning efforts because this makes it possible for them to voice out their concerns. For example during the EU sponsored National Dialogue, which organized by the Implementation Support Unit and the Ministry of Gender, women and men landmine survivors were brought together and their voices were heard.
 - Landmine survivors have different peculiar needs arising out of their particular gender and diversity needs that need to be given attention
 - Gender and diversity integrations leads to inclusive development
 - Women in some instances are still stigmatized and discrimination which limits their participation and also impacts their development

Thank you.