# OUR VOICES, OUR POWER:
# ONLINE AND OFFLINE SAFETY AND SECURITY GUIDELINES FOR WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS (WHRDs) IN UGANDA

## Developed by

**The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)**

**The Women Human Rights Defenders Network Uganda (WHRDN-U)**

**The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)**

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# Safety and Security Guidelines for Women Human Rights Defenders in Uganda

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# How to use the Safety and Security Guidelines for Women Human Rights Defenders

The Safety and Security Guidelines for Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) is developed and disseminated by three core partners – UN Women, OHCHR and WHRDN-U in a simple, interactive, inspiring, user-friendly ease of navigation format. The guideline is available online in multilayered formats – website, PDF and soon will be available via a WHRDsApp.

It is a living document aimed at equipping WHRDs with capacities and skills to mitigate the impact of online and offline attacks against women human rights defenders. It offers practical tips that can be used by WHRDs to prevent gender-based attacks, criminalization of their work and enhance physical, emotional and personal security management.

# Preface

The guidelines stem from the understanding that Women Human Rights Defenders are seldom recognized, placing them at greater risk and leaving them outside existing protection measures. Aside from lack of recognition, WHRDs are the targets of specific gender-based forms of violence and discrimination.

The guidelines support the ongoing process of seeking to develop alternative protection strategies, and self-care to respond to the violence faced by WHRDs arising from their work and genders.

The guideline seeks to empower WHRDs by providing a set of hands-on tools and resources to help mitigate and respond to fears and attacks they face in their human rights defence work.

This guideline gives visibility to the role of women defenders in the promotion and protection of human rights, underscores WHRD's contributions as human rights work. Particular focus examines types of human rights violations affecting women defenders because of their gender.

The guidebook enhances understanding and awareness of the challenges women defenders face and serves as a tool to advocate for the protection. But its content will also be valuable to anyone who wants to expand their understanding of the challenges faced by women defenders. We hope that the guidelines provide WHRDs with ideas for creating their advocacy initiatives based on the reality in the environment in which they operate.

However, this publication is an essential step towards further strengthening protection measures to address structural violence and decide on the protection services necessary for WHRDs. This guideline is designed as a 'living document,' which will evolve.

Therefore, we are happy to present the *"Online and Offline Safety and Security Guidelines for Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDS) in Uganda"* to you.

# Acknowledgements

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), The Women Human Rights Defenders Network Uganda (WHRDN-U), and The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) gratefully acknowledge the contributions of a cross range of individual Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs), collectives and organizations to the development of this consolidated Guidelines. We appreciate WHRDs who took the time to not only share their stories of hope, resilience and breakthrough but provided invaluable information and insights into the development of these Safety and Security Guidelines for WHRDs.

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Finally, we are grateful to The European Union – United Nations Spotlight Initiative for funding the development of the Safety and Security Guidelines for WHRDs in Uganda.

# List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| ACHPR | African Commission on Human and People's Rights |
| AU | African Union |
| CEDAW | Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women |
| CERD | Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination |
| COVID-19 | The Novel Coronavirus Disease 2019 |
| CSOs | Civil Society Organisations |
| DEVAW | Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women |
| EAHRD | East and Horn Human Rights Defenders |
| EU | European Union |
| GBV | Gender-Based Violence |
| HIV | Human Immuno Deficiency |
| HP | Harmful Practices |
| IEC | Information Education and Communication Materials |
| LBQ/T | Lesbian, Bisexual, Queer and Trans-Diverse Womxn |
| LGBTIQ | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer |
| NGOs | Non-Governmental Organizations |
| OHCHR | The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights |
| POMA | Public Order Management Act |
| POMA | Public Order and Management Act |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SGBV | Sexual and Gender-Based Violence |
| SOB | Sexual Offences Bill 2019 |
| SRHR | Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights |
| SW | Sex Workers |
| UAF | Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights |
| UDHR | Universal Declaration of Human Rights |
| UN | United Nations |
| UN Women | The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women |
| UPR | The United Nations Universal Periodic Review |
| VAWG | Violence Against Women and Girls |
| WHRDN-U | The Women Human Rights Defenders Network Uganda |
| WHRDs | Women Human Rights Defenders |
| WSR | Women Situation Room |
| WWDs | Women with Disabilities |

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

UN Women is part of the UN Agencies that are implementing the European Union-United Nations global, multi-year Spotlight Initiative that focuses on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, harmful practices, and promotion of sexual and reproductive health rights. The Initiative is being implemented in partnership with the Government of Uganda, Non-Governmental Organizations, and Civil Society Organizations in 7 districts of Uganda including: Tororo, Kasese, Kitgum Amudat, Arua, Kyenjojo and Kampala.

The overall aim of the Spotlight Initiative is to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment, in line with Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development. It aims to address gender inequality and violence against women and girls (VAWG), including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and harmful practices (HP) of child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) and to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) working closely with civil society, the private sector, religious and cultural leaders, and academia. Pillar 6 of the Spotlight Initiative which UN Women leads, aims to create a strong, vibrant, inclusive and active women's movement in Uganda that engages on a wider range of issues and with non-traditional groups, reaches from national to local levels, and is held together by a shared set of core values, rather than a single issue or advocacy initiative. The vision is to see 'an inclusive and strengthened women's movement [constituted of women's rights groups, autonomous social movements, advocates, civil society organizations, including those representing youth and groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination/marginalization, religious and cultural leaders, the private sector and other stakeholders more effectively influence and advance progress on GEWE and VAWG, including SGBV/HP. The Spotlight Initiative recognizes that there has been a backlash against champions of women's rights who stand up and speak out in favor of women, this includes women in power and activists alike. The programme, therefore, seeks to protect the rights of these women and ensure that they can speak out without jeopardizing their safety.

One of Pillar 6 strategic partners under Spotlight Initiative is The Women Human Rights Defenders Network Uganda (WHRDN-U). It is a network of women that are active in human rights defense and play a critical role in promoting accountability and respect for international human rights standards.

It is against this background that UN Women, OHCHR and WHRDN-U undertook a process of development of Safety and Security Guidelines for Women Human Rights Defenders in Uganda. This was preceded by 3 regional trainings in Karamoja, Rwenzori and Arua for Women Human Rights Defenders at regional levels as a way to enhance their skills in human rights defense.

## 1.2 Objective of the Safety and Security Guidelines for WHRDs in Uganda

### 1.2.1 Overall Objective

The general objective of the Safety and Security Guidelines is to strengthen the capacity of WHRDs and mitigate the impact of online and offline attacks against WHRDs. The Safety and Security Guidelines for WHRDs in Uganda will also be used as basic safety tools for WHRDs in preventing and responding to attacks against them.

### 1.2.2 Specific Objectives

**i.** Enhance the knowledge of WHRDs by providing knowledge on preventing and mitigating gender-based attacks, criminalization of their work, as well as physical and personal security management.

**ii.** Offer practical strategies for enhancing WHRD's safety online and offline.

### 1.2.3 Why the Development of These Guidelines and Why Now?

In the purview of UN Women, OHCHR and WHRDN-U, it was important to develop the Safety and Security Guidelines for WHRDs because:

**a)** WHRDs and their networks face specific risks and are often targets of serious abuses as a result of their human rights work. Moreover, certain groups of WHRDs are also exposed to heightened risks due to the specific nature of the issues they are working on, the context in which they operate, their geographical location or because they belong to or are associated with a particular group. They, therefore, require enhanced protection from attacks at all levels.

**b)** UN Women's Human Rights-Based approach to programming mandates it to support processes that can lead to the full realization of women and girls' rights. As such, the development of such Guidelines is one of the processes contributing to the elimination of human rights violations, such as gender-based violence targeting women human rights defenders.

**c)** This Guideline will move WHRDs towards creating better networks and frameworks for the defence of their rights than any that have existed till now. UN Women, OHCHR and WHRDN-U expect that it will assist women human rights defenders to gain recognition for their work, defend their rights, challenge impunity, and seek justice and accountability.

**d)** Through this intervention, UN Women and OHCHR will contribute to strengthening the capacity of the Women Human Rights Defenders Network Uganda to ultimately be able to monitor and report human rights violations specific to Women Human Rights Defenders and engage in advocacy for corrective action.

**e)** Finally, it is worth noting that the full and meaningful realization of women's human rights is critical for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 5. Through these Safety and Security Guidelines for WHRDs, UN Women, OHCHR and WHRDN-U will contribute to the achievement of the SDGs in Uganda.

### 1.2.4 Weaving the Connections Between the Guidelines and Spotlight Initiative

The Guidelines feeds into the 3 Spotlight Initiative Uganda Project Objectives of:

1. Transfer to CSO to develop guidelines/tools for women human rights defenders in Uganda including online safety, and dissemination.
2. Transfer to CSO Network to support capacity building of women human rights defenders, including training on safe activism and online safety.
3. Transfer to CSO Network for core team support for women human rights defenders.

## 1.3 Conceptual Framework: The UN Human Rights-Based Approach and WHRDs

The Statement of Common Understanding specifically refers to a human rights-based approach to the development cooperation and development programming by UN agencies that is guided by:

1. All programmes of development co-operation, policies and technical assistance should further the realisation of human rights as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments.
2. Human rights standards contained in, and principles derived from, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments guide all development cooperation and programming in all sectors and all phases of the programming process.
3. Development cooperation contributes to the development of the capacities of 'duty-bearers to meet their obligations and/or of 'rights-holders to claim their rights.

While protecting WHRDs is important in all aspects, it is particularly important – and particularly challenging to manage due to the gendered nature of attacks – for some WHRD populations negatively affected by geographical location, gender, sexual orientation, political, cultural and power dynamics and for underserved people (like ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities) or socially marginalised and excluded people (like sex workers, LBQ/T womxn and other sexual and gender minorities). This is true for WHRDs interventions since many people are often targeted due to their intersecting diversities and oppressions and are unable to exercise autonomy over their bodies and are unable to make decisions.

As such, therefore, in ensuring the full implementation of human rights-based approaches in mitigating and protecting WHRDs from online and offline safety and security threats and attacks; due consideration must be taken to address the unique diversities and vulnerabilities within and amongst them. Table 1 below demonstrates.

## Table 1: UN Human Rights-Based Approach to Mitigation and Protection of WHRDs

| Human Rights Standard / Principle | Relevance to Protecting the Rights of WHRDs |
|---|---|
| Freedom from Discrimination (The right to equality and non-discrimination) | This right highlight the particular challenges faced by WHRDs who may be marginalized or face discrimination and stigma, or are violated and at risk of who they are and what work they do. They are also at risk of being attacked given their other various diversities such as race, colour, sex, ethnicity, age, language, religion, political or other opinions, national or social origin, disability, property, birth or other status. This, therefore, ensures that the inherent intersecting diversities within and across WHRDs aren't avenues for further violations and/or inaction. This helps to ensure that relevant regulatory frameworks, laws, policies and practices conform to human rights principles. Non-discrimination as a principal cut across all international human rights law and the principle is present in all major human rights treaties as well as a central theme of 2 core instruments: the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). |
| The Right to Participation and Inclusion | Given that every person and all peoples are entitled to active, free and meaningful participation in, contribution to, and enjoyment of civil, economic, social, cultural and political development in which human rights and fundamental freedoms can be realized. So, the active, fully informed participation of WHRDs in decision-making processes that affect them extends to matters relating to the enjoyment of their inherent rights. |
| The Right to Information | The right to information has implications for how the provision of information is regulated, including determinations about where the liability falls for inaccurate or false information. |
| The Right to Informed Decision-Making | The availability of accurate, accessible, clear and user-friendly information framed in non-discriminatory terminology is central to informed decision-making around strengthening capacities and building the agency of WHRDs to mitigate and manage the impact of online and offline attacks on their safety and protection. |
| The Right to Privacy and Confidentiality | Guarantees of privacy and confidentiality may need additional consideration for WHRDs |
| The Right to Accountability | Accountability includes that of the human rights sector as a whole, and regulation of the public, non-state and private sectors, and encompasses the legal and policy environment more broadly. It also includes a system of redress that promotes access to meaningful and timely justice in cases where rights violations and abuses have been meted onto WHRDs or where interventions may be neglected or in cases of impunity. |
| Accountability and Rule of Law | States and other duty-bearers are answerable for the observance of human rights (Including the rights of women). In this regard, they have to comply with the legal norms and standards enshrined in human rights instruments. Where they fail to do so, aggrieved rights-holders (in this case WHRDs) are entitled to institute proceedings for appropriate redress before a competent court or other adjudicators following the rules and procedures provided by law. |
| Indivisibility of the Rights of WHRDs | WHRDs aren't single-issue women – their identities, lives, work, and realities are interconnected so are their privileges, opportunities, violations and oppression. As such; therefore, interventions towards mitigating and protecting them should employ an intersectional approach because women's liberation is interlinked. |

**Source:** Extracted from ***The Human Rights-Based Approach to Development Cooperation Towards a Common Understanding Among UN Agencies***[3] and; contextualized for WHRDs in Uganda

[3] Accessed at: https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/6959-The_Human_Rights_Based_Approach_to_Development_Cooperation_Towards_a_Common_Understanding_among_UN.pdf

## 1.4 Scope of This Safety and Security Guidelines for WHRDs

The Safety and Security Guidelines for WHRDs in Uganda brings together recommendations, key considerations, case studies and good practices on women human rights defenders. These are outlined in Section 3 (Online and Offline Guidelines) and Section 4 (Practical Tips). They are meant to provide a guide to WHRDs in Uganda.

## 1.5 The Living Guideline Approach

In a fast-moving field and ever-changing volatile context that WHRDs in Uganda operate, a "living guideline" approach allows for continual review of new evidence to inform further versions of this Guideline.

This guideline will be updated frequently, on a rolling basis, and will be posted on dynamic, user-friendly and easy-to-navigate web-based platforms, PDF versions and social media Apps. The recommendations, good practices and key considerations presented in this publication build on this first published guideline and represent a subset of prioritized safety and security guidelines and practical tips for WHRDs. Over time, in subsequent versions, UN Women OHCHR and WHRDN-U aim for this guideline to gradually include a broader set of guidelines, tips and interventions.

This living guideline approach also facilitates the updating of existing guidelines as new evidence becomes available, and the inclusion of additional HRDs domains that may not yet be reflected. Future guidance on HRDs interventions will build on existing tools and guidance.

Section 7.3 offers more detail about the living guideline approach that will be employed to keep the Guidelines up-to-date and current.

## 1.6 Who is This Guideline Meant for The Target Audience and Users?

The Primary target users of these Guidelines are Women Human Rights Defenders (individuals, collectives, organisations, networks and movements) at national, regional and community levels that; face specific risks and gender-based attacks and are often targets of serious violations and abuses as a result of their human rights work. It is one of the many tools intended to enhance their understanding that regardless of whether they define themselves as activists or advocates if their actions strive towards the realisation of human rights, they are entitled to protection. The guideline feeds into the two core feminist principles: (i). Sisterhood and solidarity and; (ii), Individual and Collective care, wellness and healing justice – both principles oblige feminist work to integrate care one another, wellness, safety, security for selves individually as activists and collectively as organisations and movements.

The secondary target audience is: national and international policy-makers, researchers, programme managers, human rights activists and defenders working on preventing, mitigating and defending HRDs, donors and civil society organizations responsible for making decisions or advising on the protection and promotion of human rights.

This new guideline is also expected to support:

i. The provision of knowledge on preventing and mitigating gender-based attacks, criminalization of WHRDs work, as well as physical and personal security management.
ii. Expansion of a pool of resources within the HRDs sector on mitigating, managing and responding to gender-based attacks.
iii. People affected by the recommendations (as outlined in Section 6 below)
iv. Group education and user-friendly, valid and reliable online information resources.

While the term 'women human rights defenders' refers not only to women but also to other activists who defend the rights of women, this Guideline focuses particularly on the roles, risks, and vulnerabilities of defenders who are and identify as women. This book was written on the premise that men who defend women's rights do not experience the degree of stigma, violence, discrimination and disadvantage that women activists, lesbian, queer, or transgender advocates do.

## 1.7 Guidelines Development and Compilation Process

These Guidelines were developed in a that combined primary and secondary data collection participatory and inclusive methodologies. In the collection of primary data, a representative sample of 152 WHRDs from across Uganda were consulted as thus:

- 15 WHRDs were interviewed through key informant interviews (See Annex 1).
- 114 WHRDs in 3 Regions were consulted in Karamoja Region, Rwenzori Region and West Nile Region (See Annex 2).
- Case Studies from 23 WHRDs across the country were also harvested (See Annex 3).

## 1.8 Structure of the Guidelines

This Safety and Security Guidelines for Women Human Rights Defenders in Uganda is structured in Seven (7) major sections as summarised below:

**Section 1: Introduction** – Gives a background and rationale for the development of the guidelines

**Section 2: Context of WHRDs** – Elaborates the operating context and realities of WHRDs.

**Section 3: The Online and Offline Safety and Security Guidelines -** Presents the guidelines at individual, institutional/organisational and social movement level.

**Section 4: Privacy Toolkit for Online Safety –** Shares online privacy tips for WHRDs.

**Section 5: Practical Tips –** Shares tips and response mechanisms that WHRDs can utilize.

**Section 6: Recommendations and Actions** – Presents the recommendations to various actors.

**Section 7: Dissemination, Applicability and Updating Guidelines** – Makes propositions on how effectively the guidelines will be packaged, disseminated and keeping them a living document.

# 2 Context of WHRDs

The term "women human rights defenders" is understood as highlighted by Amy Dwyer[4] to mean women or non-binary individuals engaging in the defence of all human rights, or people of all genders defending rights related to gender, sexuality and bodily autonomy. They gather critical data on rights abuses, monitor the activity of duty-bearers and hold first-hand insights into shifts in human rights contexts that may result in destabilisation or further exacerbate conflict.

To address violations of women's human rights, women activists have worked courageously for the defence of their rights, and the defence of the rights of others and are thus called **women human rights defenders.** 'Women human rights defenders' include women active in human rights defence who are targeted for **who they are** as well as all those active in the defence of women's rights who are targeted for **what they do[5].**

## 2.1 Overview of the WHRDs Operating Context

**Pan-African and International Standards**

Uganda is a State Party to a cross range of regional and international human rights instruments. Key among are: The Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948), The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (DEVAW) 1993, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), 1966, The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1966, The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), The Convention of the Rights of the Child (1990), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and; The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979 - which was the first international legal instrument to recognize and articulate women's rights to freedom of expression, association, non-discrimination and non-violence. As well as 'soft law' such as: The Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development, The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) (1994), The Millennium Declaration (2000), The Yogyakarta Principles (2006), UN Resolution 68/161 – Protecting Women Human Rights Defenders (2013) and The UN Resolution 70/1 - 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development (The Sustainable Devt Goals).

At the Pan-African level, Uganda is a signatory to The African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACPHR) 1981 and The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003) that obliges the State to eliminate against all forms of

[4] Dwyer Amy (2020), '*Women Human Rights Defenders: Left Behind in the Women, Peace and Security Agenda',* **Policy Brief 02/2020.** Centre for Women, Peace + Security and LSE. Accessed 23rd August 2021 https://www.lse.ac.uk/women-peace-security/assets/documents/2020/PBS01Dwyer.pdf

[5] Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) (2007), **Claiming Rights, Claiming Justice: A Gude Book on Women Human Rights Defenders,** Chamgmai: APLWD and Oxfam GB

discrimination against women through legislative, institutional and other means and the integration of a gender perspective in their programs and legislation and "in all other spheres of life". In addition, Uganda is bound by: The Protocol to the African Charter on People and Human Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa of 2016, The African Youth Charter (2006), The AU Heads of State Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality (July 2004), The East African Community (EAC) Treaty (2000), The Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region ICGLR (2006), The ICGLR Kampala Declaration on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and; The Goma Declaration on Eradicating Sexual Violence and Ending Impunity in the Great Lakes Region (2008).

Further, at the African continental level, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights adopted ACHPR 376 Resolution on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders in Africa – ACHPR/Res.376(LX)2017 that obligations of States Parties under Article 1 of the African Charter and the relevant provisions of regional and international human rights instruments, including the obligation to guarantee the security of persons living in their territories, as well as the freedom of assembly, association, expression, and access to information of human rights defenders and their right to participate in the management and government of their country. These covenants, all propose an obligation to the protection of human rights specifically women's human rights.

**National Legal and Policy Context**

At the national level, these international commitments are domesticated in Chapter Four of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda stipulating the rights that people in Uganda should enjoy.

Key national laws and policies that protect the rights of WHRDs and promote their work are The Equal Opportunities Commission Act 2007, The Domestic Violence Act 2010 and its Regulations 2011, The Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act 2010 and its Regulations, The Employment Act 2006 and its Regulations, The Employment (Sexual Harassment) Regulations 2012, Penal Code (Amendment) Act 2007, The Penal Code Act Cap 120, The Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act 2009, The Land Act, Cap 227, The Magistrates Courts Act Cap 16, The Computer Misuse Act 2011 (clauses 23 on child pornography, 24 on cyber harassment, 25 on offensive communication and 26 on cyberstalking), The International Criminal Court Act 2010, The Children (Amendment) Act 2016, The HIV Prevention and Control Act 2014, The Human Rights Enforcement Act 2019, The Persons with Disabilities Act, Public Health Act, Food and Drug Act, and The Sexual Offences Bill 2019[6]. As well as policies such as The Uganda National

[6] The enacted Sexual Offences Bill 2019 (No. 32 of 2019, Bills Supplement No. 13), has a number of progressive provisions that can safeguard WHRDs and promote their work under the following clauses: Clause 4, which prohibits administering substance with intent to commit a sexual act; Clause 5, which prohibits sexual assault; Clause 7, which explicitly prohibits sexual harassment; Clause 8, which prohibits detention with sexual intent; Clause 9, which prohibits improper sexual activity with persons in custody; Clause 10 that prohibits sexual exploitation; Clause 13, 14 (1) (a), (b), and (d), that prohibit defilement and aggravated defilement; Clause 15 on procuring defilement; Clause 17 on householder permitting defilement; Clause 18 on supplying sexual content or materials to a child; Clause 19 on child prostitution; Clause 20 on child sex tourism; Clause 22 on child marriage; Clause 23, 24, and 25 which provide for the award of compensation and protective measures for victims of sexual violence and; Clause 26 that excludes evidence of a victim's character and sexual history.

Gender Policy (2007), National Policy and Action Plan on Elimination of GBV (2016), National Policy Guidelines and Service Standards for SRHR 2011, Uganda Population Policy 2008, National Youth Policy 2001, National Disability Policy 2008, HIV/AIDS and the World of Work Policy 2007, Reproductive Health Policy, National Health Policy, The Draft Adolescent Health Policy 2000. As well as strategies, frameworks and plans such as The 3rd National Development Plan (NDP III), Uganda Vision 2040, Social Development Sector Strategic Plan 2020/21 – 2024/25, National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan 2020/21 – 2024/25, The National Action Plan for Women, The National Action Plan on the UNSCR 1325, National Sexuality Education Framework (NSEF), Adolescent Health Guidelines and Service Standards 2012, Adolescent Girls Vulnerability Index, Standards and Guidelines for Reduction of Maternal Mortality and Morbidity due to Unsafe Abortions 2015, The Ministry of Health Guidelines to Implement the Policy on Prevention and Response to Sexual Harassment 2018, National Equity Plan and The National HIV Priority Action Plan for Key and Priority Populations 2020/2021 – 2022/2023 that all commit to eliminating GBV affecting women and girls (VAWG).

For online protection, Uganda has legislation such as The Computer Misuse Act No. 2 of 2011[7] that provides for the safety and security of electronic transactions and information systems; to prevent unlawful access, abuse to make provision for securing the conduct of electronic transactions in a trustworthy electronic environment. The country also has a Data Protection and Privacy Act of 2019 [8] and its accompanying Data Protection and Privacy Regulations of 2020[9] that aims to protect individuals and their data by regulating the processing of personal information by state and non-state actors, within and outside Uganda. This act protects the privacy of the individual and personal data by regulating the collection and processing of personal information; provides for inherent rights of the persons whose data is collected and the obligations of data collectors, data processors and data controllers; to regulate the use or disclosure of personal information and for a related matter.

At the same time, WHRDs are affected by a retrogressive legal and policy environment that is used to curtail the rights of WHRDs and/or subject them to violations. Retrogressive laws include The Non-Governmental Organisations Act 2016, The Public Order and Management Act of 2013, The HIV Prevention and Control Act, The Anti-Money Laundering Act of 2013 and the Computer Misuse Act of 2011. In addition, some WHRDs especially those that work on highly contested bodily autonomy and choice issues such as: sex workers, LBQ/T womxn and PLHIV are criminalized through retrogressive laws. A case in point is that Uganda has a restrictive legal and policy environment that criminalises same-sex relationships and sex work as defined in Sections

[7] NITA, (2011), The Computer Misuse Act 2011. Accessed 12th July 2021 at https://www.nita.go.ug/publication/computer-misuse-act-2011-act-no-2-2011 / https://ict.go.ug/2019/12/03/the-computer-misuse-act-2011/

[8] NITA, 2019: The Data Protection and Privacy Act 2019. Accessed 12th July 2021 at https://www.nita.go.ug/publication/data-protection-and-privacy-act-2019-0 / https://ict.go.ug/2019/03/01/data-protection-and-privacy-act-2019/

[9] Ministry of ICT and National Guidance (2020) Data Protection and Privacy Regulations of 2020, Accessed on 1st October 2021 at https://ict.go.ug/2020/08/20/data-protection-and-privacy-regulation-2020-2/

136, 137, 138, 139, 145 and 146 of the Penal Code Act (The Penal Code Act 1950, Chapter XIV—Offences Against Morality)[10]. This is further exacerbated in instances when sexual and gender minority WHRDs also belong to other intersecting identities e.g if they are PLHIV or drug users - face unique experiences of stigma, discrimination and violence. The 2019 PLHIV Stigma Index indicated that 33.65% of transgender participants, 24.24% of gay or bisexual participants, 28.78% of sex worker participants and 28.92% of persons who inject drugs had reported recent negative experiences related to their HIV status and identities[11]. Also due to the legal lacuna in abortion law manifested as the conflicting and restrictive interpretations of the abortion provisions under the 1995 Constitution of Uganda, the Penal Code Act and National Reproductive Health Policies, WHRDs that work on the right to safe and legal abortion as well as health care providers are often arrested and violated.

Additionally, issues of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) targeting some WHRDs especially women with disabilities and sexual and gender minorities like sex workers, transgender persons and LBQ womxn are largely neglected in existing SGBV interventions (even within WHRDs work) yet they are often targeted, violated and little redress. Moreover, the recently enacted Sexual Offences Bill 2019[12] has the potential to increase stigma, discrimination and violence against WHRDs in the following categories: girls and women, PLHIV, sex workers, transgender persons and LBQ womxn[13]. And, the mere fact that the SOB doesn't commit to consent and obliges corroboration in sexual violence cases opens a huge pandora's box for WHRDs who are often targeted with sexual violence as an expression of patriarchal control of women's bodies and instilling fear.

## 2.2 Online and Offline Attacks Targeting WHRDs in Uganda

Twenty years and counting since the UN General Assembly adopted by consensus the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders [14] and alongside the 10 resolutions affirming commitment to protect Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs); they continue to face gendered obstacles in their work shaped by patriarchal violence and societal norms.

WHRDs just like any other women are often violated with impunity due to several reasons key among these being: The flaws in the administration of the law, including physical access, training and orientation of judicial staff and delays in the delivery of justice – 'justice delayed is justice denied'. In addition, the differences in the burden of proof requirements that are given to

[10] The Republic of Uganda (1950). *The Penal Code Act, CAP 120* Entebbe: GOU

[11] NAFOPHANU et al. (2019) **The People Living with HIV Stigma Index: Uganda Country Assessment Report 2019**, pg. 42-48

[12] The Republic of Uganda (2019), **The Sexual Offences Bill, No. 32 of 2019, Bills Supplement No. 13,** Bills Supplement to the Uganda Gazette, Gazette No. 54, Volume CXII, 18 October 2019.

[13] The HIV Law Coalition (2021), 'The Sexual Offences Bill 2019: Position Paper on Its Effects on Communities' Kampala: UGANET, UKPC, ICWEA and CEHURD

[14] United Nations (1948). **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**. Accessed 23rd August 2021 https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights

women – for instance in cases of violations, there is an added burden of proof requirements that are given to women and assumption that women lie about being sexually violated. And, more generally, due to patriarchy; the low status accorded to women in society, power imbalances at personal and public levels. There is also inadequate knowledge and information on rights within WHRDs which affects their agency and ability to seek redress even when violated.

Women human rights defenders irrespective of what they do and pursue, be they demonstrating in on the streets, or providing legal aid, or doing advocacy for women or mobilising small groups of women at grassroots or national level, or engaging with international processes or making their presence felt on Twitter and Facebook, are persecuted, threatened and harassed – physically and verbally, online and offline. Many WHRDs continue their efforts to promote women's rights despite the risk to themselves and their families, physically as well as mentally. A classic rhetoric used against women human rights defenders involves attacking their identity as women that is often known as **"Women's Honor" –** that delved into the patriarchal notions of a good and bad woman. They are accused of being bad mothers or not being "real" women. Women's honour is called into question and they are labelled as promiscuous. Perpetrator's regard sexual violence as fair punishment for women who do not know their place.

WHRDs in Uganda are often targeted by security operatives, communities or other actors for who they are— because they are women as well as for what they do—because of their work of defending human rights and challenging patriarchal norms, values, practices, laws and policies. For example, laws such as the Public Order Management Act, (POMA) 2013 create a restrictive environment in addition to patriarchal norms, and all these tend to restrict the freedoms of WHRDs to do their human rights work. WHRDs are also exposed to different forms of violence and attacks because of who they are and the work they do in the field of human rights. They experience use gender-based verbal abuse based on their sex, the use of gender and sexual stereotypes to harm women human rights defenders' reputation, their image and also delegitimize their work. Even the use of digital technology and techniques has exposed them to new technology-related forms of violence and WHRDs are confronted with surveillance and censorship. Additionally, these new spaces have also not been spared by the government which has imposed laws to govern online spaces such as the Computer Misuse Act.

## WHRD Herstory: Nicknamed 'Defender'

I am nick-named 'Defender' in Arua District and wider West Nile Region because I fearlessly engage on a cross range of human rights defending work - especial the ones that attract a lot of push back such as SGBV and Governance.

One of my most profound experiences as was during the 2017/2018 re-election of the area Member of Parliament for Arua Municipality in the 10th Parliament after the murder of the area MP, the Late Hon. Ibrahim Yusuf Abiriga.

This was my first experience with post-election violence where I was caught in the line of fire and people around me were shot dead and yet no one was minding them. I was so concerned that I decided to meet the Resident District Commissioner and the District Police Commander to ask for a ceasefire and call for dialogue. This my action led to heightened personal insecurity and trolling from these law enforcement officials. After calling out the RDC and DPC in indiscriminate killing of people, a male boda-boda rider was used to trail me all the time… he at one time even tried to abduct me by forcing me to get on his boda-boda to take me to an undisclosed location…

I was saved by screaming so hard that my cries attracted bystanders upon realizing that the man was trying to kidnap me so he sped off.

**Lillian Grace Asibazuyo,**
**Human Rights Activist and**
**Psychosocial Counsellor, Arua District**

Numerous organisations both nationally and internationally have highlighted the plight and need to protect human rights defenders, both in the Global North and South.[15] However even though all human rights defenders face threats from governments and society in general, women human rights defenders face specific threats compared to their male comrades as highlighted by the United Nations GA resolution on the protection of Women Human rights defenders. [16]

While international covenants and national laws and policies shield WHRDs and largely enable their work, the lived realities on the ground is far removed from the beautifully written prose in the separate UN and African Union resolutions on the protection of WHRDs. Statements of the African Union as analysed by the Report on the Situation of WHRDs in Africa[17] looks at the contents of relevant articles on the elimination of discrimination against women and the confirmation of their role in society. The Kigali Declaration builds on the commitments and instruments to recognize women as actors with equal rights in public life in African societies. Further, the 2004 Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa notes that "*low levels of women's representation in social, economic and political decision-making structures and feminisation of poverty impact negatively on women's ability to derive full benefit from the economies of their countries and the democratization process*".

## 2.3 The Push-Back: Gendered Attacks Against WHRDs

### 2.3.1 Categories of Threats, Risks and Attacks Targeting WHRDs in Uganda

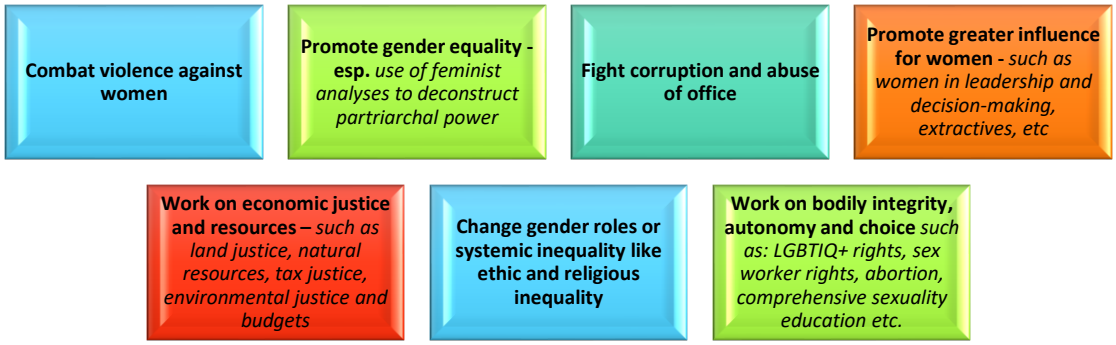
WHRDs and their networks face specific risks and are often targets of serious abuses as a result of their human rights work. Moreover, certain groups of WHRDs are also exposed to heightened risks due to the specific nature of the issues they are working on, the context in which they operate, their geographical location or because they belong to or are associated with a particular group. Also, the fact that the vast number of WHRDs work with limited support mechanisms and networks makes them more vulnerable. They, therefore, require enhanced protection from attacks at all levels. Although generally, WHRDs face attacks and violence, some are more at risk and are more targeted. Certain issues provoke their opponents more than others.

[15] Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2010). 'Promotion and Protection of all Human Rights, Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, including the Right to Development: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Margaret Sekaggya, Addendum,' A/HRC/13/22/Add.4. Accessed August, 21st 2021 http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/defenders/docs/A.HRC.13.22.Add4.pdf

[16] UN,2018: UN GA Resolution on the Protection of women human Rights Defenders. Accessed 1st July 2021 https://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/women/wrgs/pages/hrdefenders.aspx

[17] African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights,2012: "Report of the Study on the Situation of Women Human Rights Defenders in Africa." Accessed, 19th August 2021. https://www.achpr.org/presspublic/publication?id=19

Those that incite the most hatred, threats or violence are efforts to:




## Why They are Targeted

Generally, WHRDs working on these issues are targeted because these issues challenge the deeper construction of power and gender relations. The link between these issues is clear – they are all about changing structures and redistributing power. The work to improve women's situations and liberate people from narrowly defined gender roles goes hand in hand with efforts to combat corruption and increase women's power and influence in society. However, in a world where women are seldom included in decision-making or peacebuilding, such efforts to bring about a change of the status quo and power relations mean that people in positions of power (often men and a few women) will have to share – this makes WHRDs that are pushing for this being targets of hate, attacks, stigma and discrimination.

**Specifically, Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) are often targeted with particular forms of violence and harassment because:**

a) They are women – These human rights defenders are women and society feel it's okay to attack women with impunity.

b) WHRDs are often perceived as challenging traditional notions of family, gender roles, or deconstructs where power is located (like talking about land, money and other productive resources) like money and resources. As such, they generate hostility from State actors, the media, faith-based groups and non-State actors like spouses, intimate partners, families, clans, communities and the public.

> "WHRDs challenge patriarchal order in society… they challenge many of the things that men don't think women should and can speak about… they question power… they turn things anti-clockwise so become a target to be attacked… they get the pushback of patriarchal power excesses! "
>
> **Nicholas Opiyo, Human Rights Lawyer (Interview held 14/7/2021)**

c) Society has constructed a notion that women don't question and those that dare to question are often punished, stigmatised, isolated and excluded. That is how patriarchy a system of oppression operates.

d) Women human rights defenders working on issues of bodily integrity and choices such as sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are often among the first to come under attack because they work on difficult and highly contested issues. They challenge one of the deepest contestations in a patriarchal society – the right for women and girls to make choices over their bodies.

e) Society generally thrives on constructing images of weak submissive women (supposed to operate in the private sphere) and strong assertive men (supposed to operate in the public sphere). So, when WHRDs take on public space and start challenging they are violated – being pushed back into the private space.

f) Infantilisation (i.e) categorizing women with children – Society often lumps up women just like children i.e., having no right or capacity to make decisions, challenge power and always being punished for doing something outside what is allowable for people perceived to be in children/minors. Or even legal decision-making powers, voting rights or capacity to enter into contracts.

g) Violence is a tool to frighten women into silence and hold them back – because society knows women fear insecurity and violence but also many WHRDs and their families have negative experiences of

## WHRD HERSTORY

### Electoral Violence: The Women Situation Room (WSR)

**Betty Achana is passionate about working with women with disabilities. She is currently the Executive Secretary for National Union of Women with Disabilities (NUWODU). She shares a cased study of threats arising from her involvement in the Women Situation Room (WSR) in preparation for the 2021 general elections.**

*"In 2020, NUWODU with 15 other women rights organisations joined the Women Situation Room (WSR) to monitor elections in preparation for the 2021 general elections. At NUWODU we got plain clothed people who came to our organisation kind of like stalking and creating fear. They first came and asked to speak to the Executive Secretary but I wasn't around so they refused to speak to a designate. The following week they found my driver at the reception area who gave them a visitors' book and they signed as CID officers. Next time they came and when my PA told them I was away they indicated that I was in office and if they knew I was there and hadn't left. The 3rd time they came, they found me at the reception and I engaged with them told them I am not the Executive Secretary and the insisted I am the one and that they know me. They identified themselves as CID Officers who wanted to check our compliance, certificates and bank statements. I referred them to the NGO Bureau and told them to seek all that information there as it has been duly filed as due. They were rather disappointed, insisted that I should provide the information and threatened that if I refused 'they will deal with me accordingly'. One of the officers then opened a book to show me that they had done the same with other NGOs that are part of the WSR. I then asked them for a court order that instructs me and NUWODU to provide that information and they left so upset.*

*Since then, they kept coming and talking to other NUWODU Staff members, including intercepting some of them on their way home or outside the office. Thereafter I started getting strange phone calls from a stalker dialling from a Somali Cell Number. This caller would always call me and appear very familiar with my family, travel, movements nonetheless I had not shared this information with even people who were close to me… The final straw was when I abruptly travelled to my village and upon arrival the stalker called me and said 'Welcome to your village, it must have been such a long tiring drive!' I almost collapsed and have never been so scared for my life, I changed my phones, emails and got off other communication platforms and that's when the stalking stopped…. Not long after, UWONET and WIPC bank accounts were frozen… It's not a coincidence as these were also part of the WSR"*

**Interview & Case Study Held on 14th July 2021**

violence.

h) Lack of awareness of the contours and tools to use within WHRDs work within women human rights defenders themselves. This is through lack of appreciation of the layers of complexity in which WHRDs work; Adoption of approaches that open a huge number of risks; and the use of militant activism that doesn't engage the deeper-rooted power structures but just shames, expose and opens WHRDs to danger and frustration.

### 2.3.2 Vulnerabilities of Some WHRDs in Uganda

While all women human rights defenders face various attacks both online and offline, the attacks are often gendered – based along with patriarchal norms of what is tolerable for women and what isn't. As such, therefore, some WHRDs are more at risk of being attacked than others such as women journalists, women with disabilities, sexual and gender minorities and those that engage with deeper governance and resourcing issues. This was exacerbated with COVID-19.

*"The COVID-19 Pandemic opened multiple forms of oppression, violence and security threats for marginalised and socially excluded women. For instance, the pandemic opened new forms oppression with impunity for LBQ womxn... one recent case was when someone broke into a house of two lesbians and tried to rape them as a way to teach them to be 'good women'. The case was beyond burglary- it was a rape case yet the neighbours did not even respond to the alarm made, did not care to support the two women and even sided with the perpetrators... all because these women were lesbians!*

***Joan Amek, Rella Women's Foundation, Kampala District***

For instance, the attacks take another violent route when it comes to LBQ Womxn / Queer women (Lesbians, Bisexuals, Queer, Trans Diverse Persons). For example, a research study by Her Internet, on Technology-Assisted Violence[18] found that 80% of the respondents at least knew someone who had been harassed online. The violence that LBQ Womxn face ranges from outing, stalking, unwanted phone calls, 'corrective rape' and well-elaborated lies formulated at the intersections of homophobic patriarchal violence. Technology-assisted violence often results in the invasion of privacy and the legal remedies are also limited given the high rates of homophobia, lesbophobia, transphobia and the nature of technology like the use of Virtue Private Networks (VPN) that makes many abusers incognito. And more generally, VAWG has

*"Sometime back in 2015, someone incognito / that I don't know created a post on Facebook and tagged me as well as the Uganda Police Force, Uganda Prisons Service and other security agencies. Not long after, while I was travelling back home; I was attacked by a group of young men. They beat me to near death and left me with life-long trauma... I had to leave all my stuff in my house, seek evacuation and temporary relocation out of Uganda for close to 6 months. When I got back to Uganda, I moved houses and started a new life afresh. From then, I picked my lessons that whenever I suspect a security threat, I dont take things for granted"*

***Beyonce Karungi, Transgender WHRD, TEU Uganda***

[18] Elizabeth Kemigisha & Sandra Kwikiriza: ***"The trends and impact of technology assisted violence among Lesbian, Bisexual, Queer (LBQ) Womxn and Female Sex workers (FSW) in Uganda"*** Kampala: Her Internet 2020. Accessed 11th August 2021 https://bit.ly/38gXNtM

morphed with the growth of social media an online space – as the closure of civic space by the State has led to the massive growth of online spaces that has emboldened and empowered people. Though the empowerment may serve as an opportunity for WHRDs to speak their truth and share their work; it has opened them up for online and offline attacks.

At the same time, even within the WHRDs subgroup, many in Africa are struggling to overcome patriarchy and heteronormativity they have been conditioned in which view homosexuality as a transgression. This makes redress difficult even in instances that LBQ/T and Sex Worker WHRDs are violated. Therefore, legally and policy-wise, women's protection specifically heterosexual women's rights are protected. So why do WHRDs continue to experience attacks based on their work?

The environment in which WHRDs operate is characterized by incessant arbitrary arrests and detention, including judicial harassment, threats, intimidation, and inhumane and degrading treatment because of their activities. The case of Dr Stella Nyanzi merges both the online harassment that WHRDs face with the physical violence from the State as exhibited in the *"Pair of Buttocks Case"*, where she was imprisoned[19] for more than 6 months under the Computer Misuse Act, accused of insulting the person of the President. In the Facebook post, Nyanzi wrote

> *"I mean seriously when buttocks shake and jiggle, while the legs are walking, do you hear other body parts complaining? When buttocks produce shit, while the brain is thinking, is anyone shocked? When buttocks fart,*

## WHRD Herstory….

### Rising Repression and Closing Civic Space: The Office Break-Ins, Deregistration and Bank Account Freezing

**Helen Kezie-Nwoha is a Feminist with 'NO IFS and NO BUTS'. She is currently the Executive Director of Women's International Peace Centre (WIPC), an international women's right organisation based in Kampala, Uganda working on across range of issues under the wider theme of peace and conflict resolution. She shares institutional threats that WIPC has faced in 3 successive years.**

*"The last one was in 2020, Ooooh these office break-ins have become our reality operating as an NGO in Uganda! 2020 has been the 3rd break in with the first one being in 2017, followed by 2018 and in 2019. This last one was damning as they took everything – in as even removed the hard drives from all our office computers. Even the guard disappeared and he has never been found todate… It's like he vanished off the face of this planet! When we reported to police and the office security service provider nothing was done. When the State is involved, people disappear without a trace.*

*Our learnings are that we need to brace ourselves to work in a militarized repressive context and prepare our safety, security and backups accordingly. Our offices have been incessantly broken into partially due to the peace and security work we have been doing in the region in Burundi, DRC, South Sudan, Northern Uganda and Kasese Region of Uganda. And in Uganda we chair and host the Women Situation Room (WSR) that monitors elections -this makes us prone to being violated and attacked"*

*In 2020, our bank accounts were quietly blocked by the Government of Uganda without any notice or communication… we didn't even know that the WIPC bank accounts were blocked not until a number of people we had issued payments to had them declined by the bank. When we asked for explanation from our bankers, they indicated that the Government of Uganda through the Financial Intelligence Authority (FIA) had blocked our bank accounts to investigate whether as an organisation we aren't involved in money laundering and other subversive activities. But for us we know they were blocked because of the work we were doing under the Women Situation Room (WSR) that was mobilizing women and young people to be active participants in the electoral process… we were blocked because we were surfacing violations in real time… we were blocked because it was felt that as women's organisations it wasn't our place to engage in the electoral and governance process… in their purview as women human rights defenders our role was elsewhere – in homes, bedrooms and kitchens! This didn't stop at just blocking the bank accounts or office break-ins, but also being followed physically – imagine the kind of fear you feel knowing you are being followed or always looking behind you! It also included trolling online wherever we would post anything on the organisational or personal social media handles…*

*Over the years we have learnt to cope through a cross range of interventions such as: removing WIPC stickers on the office cars, change of routines and patterns, staff relocation to safe neighbourhoods, offsite backups up, tighter security protocols and create safe spaces to support each other… and of recent after COVID-19 we are thinking about offsite/virtual work modalities just like how UAF-A work… But it isn't easy and doesn't come cheap"*

[19] Alon Mwesigwa, The Guardian, 2017: "Jailed for Calling the President A pair Of Buttocks." Accessed, 26th August, 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/jun/19/jailed-for-calling-ugandan-president-museveni-a-pair-of-buttocks-activist-vows-to-fight-on-stella-nyanzi

> *are we surprised? That is what buttocks do. They shake, jiggle, shit and fart. Museveni is just another pair of buttocks. Rather than being shocked at what the matako said in Masindi, Ugandans should be shocked that we allowed these buttocks to continue leading our country."* [20]

Dr Nyanzi's case is emblematic of the shrinking online space for freedom of expression in Uganda.[21] The case study of Dr Stella Nyanzi foreshadows the state of internet freedom and the consequences for WHRDs who choose online activism specifically Radical Rudeness as a vehicle to insult the State into action.

In the #IstandWithHerCampaign, launched in February 2019, by the UN Human Rights to promote the work of Women Human Rights Defenders across the world as part of the commemoration of International Women's Day, WHRDN-U activist Brenda Kugonza shared the harassment she and many of her colleagues have received for their work. *"The reason is that as a WHRDs, you are labelled as an activist, a person who is promoting foreign values, a person who is tearing families apart etc. You face isolation, discrimination, and threats and even people close to you tell you such things as "hey Brenda, why can't you stop this kind of negative activism?". Some of us have been blackmailed, defamed and have faced a lot of hostility."* [22] The harassment through name-calling or even the physical torture that many WHRDs faces deter them and demoralize them from doing their work.

## 2.4 Patriarchal Manifestations of the Attacks on WHRDs

Within the current political climate in many African countries, for African women activists, these threats are magnified as their very existence goes against what the Patriarchal State as defined by Professor Sylvia Tamale. Within a patriarchal State, women are assigned gender roles and expectations, and being loud and assertive isn't an accepted character for women. Yet activism defends assertiveness and boldness if one is change society. A research report on the challenges faced by women in civil society in Africa published by CIVICUS highlights threats faced by WHRDs, such as threats from the State authorities like the Police and army enhanced by society in general, given the fact that WHRDs are viewed as a challenge to culture, tradition and a way of life.

> *"Through their work, many directly or indirectly challenge social stereotypes regarding the proper role and status of women. As a result, women activists not only face repression by governments, but also by their families and other community members. Ongoing armed conflicts on the continent place women at even further risk of violence. Courageous women civil society activists carry out their work amidst attacks on their reputations, threats to their families and their safety, as well as detention and severe gender-specific abuse and punishment."* [23]

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[20] Stella Nyanzi, 2017: 'Facebook Post' (27 January 2017)
Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/stella.nyanzi/posts/10154878225000053> accessed 28 August 2021.

[21] Solomon Rukundo, 'My President is a Pair of Buttocks': the limits of online freedom of expression in Uganda, *International Journal of Law and Information Technology*, Volume 26, Issue 3, Autumn 2018, Pages 252–271, https://doi.org/10.1093/ijlit/eay009

[22] UN Human Rights Office of the High Commission Kampala, 2019: "It is not time to give up - Uganda Women Human Rights Defender." Accessed August 26th ,2021. Accessed at: https://uganda.ohchr.org/Story/Details/18

[23] CIVICUS, 2011: "Report on the challenges faced by women in civil society in Africa." Accessed August 1st 2021. https://www.civicus.org/view/media/Challenges_Faced_by_Women_in_Civil_Society_in_Africa.pdf

The research report further applies a magnifying lens to how much of the African continent is governed by patriarchal power structures and governance models and that there are odds stacked against women both in the workplace and at home. Women in civil society have to fight an uphill battle against cultural norms used to exclude women from decision-making forums and downplay their voices. Women human rights defenders defying or speaking against these norms are seen as challenging the fabric of society itself.

The 2010 Human Rights Watch Report on the implication of activism for WHRDs mentions extreme vulnerability to the risk of sexual harassment and gender-based violence due to the nature of their work, particularly when challenging powerful elements in government or society. Furthermore, the report notes with concern that most WHRDs contacted in the study reported either themselves being victims of sexual harassment or gender-based violence or being privy to their colleagues or close associates experiencing the same.[24]

> *"The perpetrators vary from being police, military or other government officials to non-State actors such as religious and community leaders. Sometimes, WHRDs are harassed by their colleagues. In a worryingly large number of instances where WHRDs are victims, the perpetrators remain at large, further emboldening them or others to persecute WHRDs. A woman activist from Sierra Leone reported, "Lack of protection from abuse and intimidation is one of the biggest challenges marring our work. The government is very slow to respond to issues faced by women human rights defenders which exposes one to great dangers"*[25]

Just like the Human Rights Watch report, in a workshop carried out by the East and Horn Human Rights Defenders' project. One of the key findings was that attacking the reputations of women activists is a tactic by those opposed to their work. This tactic takes a further turn for WHRDs fighting for LGBTIQ+ rights and Sex workers as rumours are spread with the aim of defamation, hinging on sexuality baiting and spreading of rumours to turn the communities they serve against them by tapping into the widely held homophobic nature of Ugandan.

> *"We live in a patriarchal society… Women aren't expected to speak out! Or worse still its assumed that WHRDs are an appendage of males in their lives – fathers, spouses, brothers or even intimate others… Many WHRDs have reported that society often undermines their husband's ego through telling them that they 'married fellow men' or that 'question the kind of man they are who can't control their wives' . This in essence messes with the identity and sense of masculinity of spouses of WHRDs and in itself leads to intimate partner violence and VAW that WHRDs face from at personal and family levels"*
>
> **Interview and Case Study with Margaret Kulaba, 13th Jul 2021**

In social contexts where the status of women is considered inferior to that of men, this creates additional

[25] Human Rights Watch (2010). 'Defending Women in Kenya.' Accessed 10th August 2021. Accessed at: http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/04/19/defending-women-kenya

problems for WHRDs. *A woman activist from Kenya reported that "women and girls, as well as organisations who defend fellow women, are labelled lesbians, divorcees. Oftentimes, the name of the organisation is sought to be denigrated by calling it as an organisation training lesbian"*[26]

In 2019, a report by Frontline Defenders speaks of the plight of WHRDs in at-risk countries where 40 WHRDs were assassinated globally for advocating for the protection of human rights. During the same year, the UN Special Rapporteur on HRDs received 181 reports of abuse against WHRDs operating across 60 states, including accusations of being terrorists, raids on offices, deportation, surveillance, arbitrary arrests, asset freezing, enforced disappearances and femicide.

International networks such as Frontline Defenders continue to run tributes for WHRDs killed in action every year. The situation is particularly dire for WHRDs challenging the behaviour of authorities in conflict-affected contexts. In Libya, WHRDs have been subjected to arbitrary arrest, abduction and torture for criticising militias following the 2011 uprising. In Egypt, WHRDs were sexually assaulted for engaging in "deviant behaviour" by protesting security forces. In the digital era, WHRDs are also facing new and more sophisticated forms of online intimidation. The vast, transnational connectivity of the internet is enabling mass forms of slander and hostility to WHRDs across borders, making the removal of false or harmful content more challenging. WHRDs[27]

A 2018 report on WHRDs in Latin America drew attention to a cycle of impunity, including dismissal of complaints lodged by WHRDs, investigations conducted based on gender stereotypes and sexism within authorities.[28] A study conducted by the ACHPR found that violations against WHRDs are commonly justified, with both state (police, politicians, judges) and non-state actors (armed groups, communities and family members) enjoying impunity. WHRDs across all sub-regions of the continent continue lacking access to justice and reparations due to inadequate trials, loss of police records and delayed legal proceedings. Consequently, the unwillingness to protect rights defenders promoting unpopular women's rights extends beyond issues of sexual orientation and gender identity and also includes the

*"We work on land and economic justice for women, families and poor people… Our work generally challenges power at various levels and people know that we have information… We are often attacked and even have our offices broken into just to get access to the information or frustrate court cases… Even the Landlord evicted us from his premises!"*

***(Anonymous Key Respondent, Interview Held 13th July 2021)***

[26] East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP) (2009): "Report of Regional Workshop on Women and Minority Human Rights Defenders held on 12th – 14th October 2009 at Imperial Royale Hotel, Kampala, Uganda, EHAHROP". Accessed August 26th 2021. http://www.defenddefenders.org/documents/WHRD%20Report%20final%20version.pdf

[27] Front Line Defenders 2019, "Front Line Defenders Global Analysis 2019." Accessed August 12th 2021 https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/sites/default/files/global_analysis_2019_web.pdf

[28] Urgent Action Fund Latin America and Caribbean (2018)., **Impunity for Violence against Women Defenders of Territory, Common Goods and Nature in Latin America**" UAF: Bogotá, Colombia SBN - 978-958-58833-4-5

WHRDs Herstory

**The Battle of Apaa: The Politics of Nudity as a Resistance Strategy**

**Pamela Angwech heads GWED-G based in Gulu, Northern Uganda. She shares her experiences as a WHRD.**

The challenges WHRDs face range from physical attacks to security threats to stigmatizing of the WHRD, their family and friends. This stigmatization leads to social exclusion at community levels. For Pamela, her attacks and threats as a WHRD have been faced in various situations where she has stood up to be counted on a number of rights violations and abuses affecting women and men in Northern Uganda. Most of the violations she has faced are related to her quest to seek land justice (in Apaa, Palabek Refugee Settlement and Nyimu community). She shares Herstory on the Quest for Land Justice in Apaa, Amuru District, Northern Uganda. In Pamela's words:

*"The Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (UPDF) came with mark-stoned to place on the land in Apaa, dispossessing a total of 12,000 people. Women in protest of the forceful land dispossession undressed to protect their land. I was attacked by the district leadership through the security organs who asked me to write a statement alleging that I had mobilized the Apaa women to undress and perform a nudity demonstration. My attack came immediately after the nudity demonstration as I had previously organised a big meeting / conference and among the many participants had invited 4 of the 5 women who stripped naked and demonstrated in Apaa. After the conference these 4 women felt enough was enough and having previously lost their sons who had been gunned down by the UPDF while also demonstrating for the same land, decided to undress and demonstrate. The women were arrested and a cash bail of UX. 1Million each was demanded by court (totalling to UGX. 5Million). We were given only 1 day to raise the 5Million, and that was a lot of money to raise in so short a time but thank goodness we raised it from individual well-wishers and area MPs who also contributed and we were able to raise the cash bail and secure their freedom.*

**Interview & Case Study Held on 12th July 2021**

right to be free from domestic violence.

The African Commission's study on women's rights defenders reported allegations of women rights defenders being physically assaulted in police stations whilst assisting victims of domestic violence.[29]

## 2.5 Push-Back, Resistance, Learning and Possibilities

### 2.5.1 Resistance Strategies by WHRDs

Organising within a patriarchal society has often led to violence, Women Human Rights Defenders have found ways to circumvent this violence. For example, in some countries such as Colombia and Guatemala, protection programs developed include an evaluation of the main risks based on an analysis of the likelihood of aggression and its impact. The risk assessment is followed by a risk management phase, which involves strategic decisions on how best to deal with the different levels of risk. It is important to note that the protection programs do not focus on strictly objective risk measurements but an interpretation from the defender's perspective. This is well documented by the New Protection Manual for Human Rights Defenders by Protection International.

Other strategies used across Africa and the world as captured by Urgent Action Fund[30] include: artistic expression and collective healing; cross-movement building through creative coalitions and alliances; Advocacy and litigation; development of individual and community security plans; feminist movement building and online activism among others.

In Uganda, in extreme cases, women activists have also used misogynist's tactics and the politics of nudity like public stripping as an ultimate form of contestation

[30] Urgent Action Fund (2017) ***Feminist Resistance and Resilience: Reflections on Closing Civic Space***. Nairobi: Urgent Action Fund Sister Funds (UAF-Africa, UAF Latin America and UAF)

and resistance. Key examples are WHRDs, stripped to their bras protesting the treatment of Ingrid Turinawe, a female oppositional politician who had been aggressively arrested and publicly stripped in a video.[31] And Women of Apaa in Northern Uganda that undressed in the contestation of massive land acquisition by the state and private sector.

### 2.5.2 Lessons Learnt and Opportunities

In a research paper, published by the London School of Economics, Amy Dwyer proposes several opportunities for WHRDs in countries in transition to seize the moment that arises through democratic transition processes to propose reforms that can enhance human rights defenders' protection. Key among these is: Maintaining the momentum of your advocacy objective by making relevant linkages with regional and international human rights mechanisms and processes. In this case, a particularly important role was played by the African Commission, but equally the pressure from UN human rights bodies was instrumental in mobilising the goodwill of Governments and also utilizing human rights mechanisms and spaces such as the Universal Periodic Review, the African Commission Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Defenders, NHRIs, Line ministries and CSOs/NGOs. Another key learning opportunity is around alliance building with key like-minded stakeholders as well as maintaining open channels of communication with influential key decision-makers and interlocutors informed about the progress made, challenges and opportunities for further advancing the advocacy objective.[32]

With the shifts in demographics, there is an opportunity of educating communities and changing the legal language of rights. In a paper by Professor Sylvia Tamale titled "The Right to Culture and the Culture of Rights: A Critical Perspective on Women's Sexual Rights in Africa." Tamale rejects the idea that "culture" and "rights" are in opposition. By using examples from Uganda to illustrate the potential of creatively reworking traditional values and practices to overcome patriarchal control. She argues that much of what is seen as "culture" in contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa is largely a product of colonial interpretations and collaboration with African male patriarchs. She concludes that the social legitimacy "culture" enjoys across the African continent makes it a valuable avenue for gender transformation.[33] Tamale's idea creates an opportunity and possibility area for WHRDs to counter the patriarchal violence they face by interrogating and pushing back against what is considered culture by educating their communities and changing the legal language of human rights as practised by western feminists.

[31] The World 2012: Uganda: "Women strip to protest Ingrid Turinawe arrest." Accessed August 26th 2021 https://www.pri.org/stories/2012-04-23/uganda-women-strip-protest-ingrid-turinawe-arrest

[32] Amy Dwyer (2020) "Women Human Rights Defenders: Left behind in the women, peace and security agenda" **Women Peace and Security Centre, LSE**. Accessed 25th August 2021 https://www.lse.ac.uk/women-peace-security/assets/documents/2020/PBS01Dwyer.pdf

[33] Tamale, Sylvia. 2008. "The Right to Culture and the Culture of Rights: A Critical Perspective on Women's Sexual Rights in Africa." **Feminist Legal Studies 16 (1):47-69.**

### 2.5.3 Conclusion

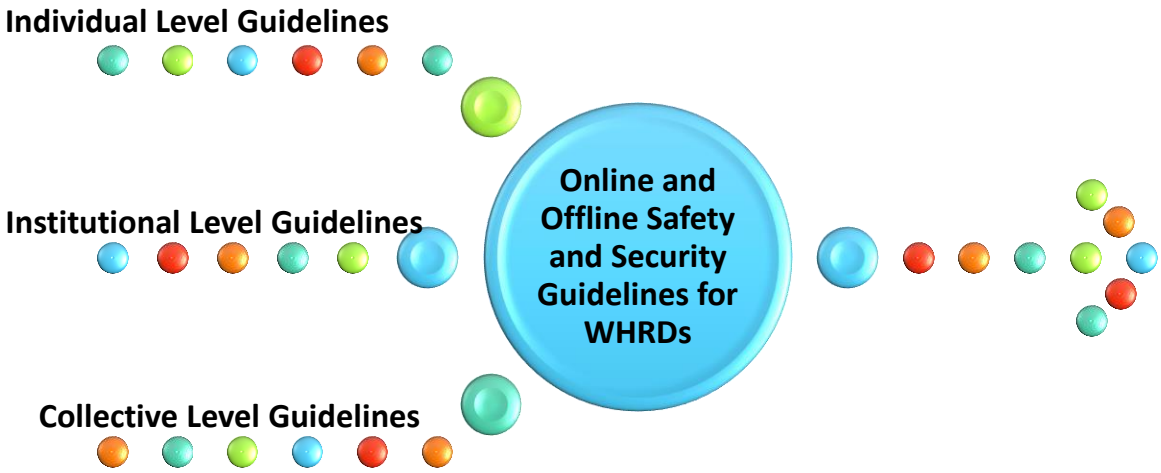
Notwithstanding the potential of various international and national laws and policies protecting women human rights defenders the lives of many remain entrapped in violence. One reason is that UN treaties and conventions have not been locally interpreted in a way that is responsive to African women's experiences of injustice is because of the disconnect with policy formulation and policy implementation and the failure for international bodies to issue stronger consequences for member countries that fall short of their agreements. An opportunity is to tap into the growing wave of Pan-Africanism and undertake a comprehensive discussion of the 2003 African Women's Protocol is valuable as recommended by Rebouché Rachel[34]. Rebouché proposes that research regarding the effectiveness of international legal instruments in mitigating gender discrimination should be discussed as the Protocol divides formal and informal employment without addressing how African women work. Following such protocol can sometimes mean that WHRDs falling the same hole of failing to recognize how their communities' function, therefore being accused of having a "foreign agenda."

Therefore, transcending the rhetoric of rights starts with recognizing, and organising within the local context as well as a change in the language of interpretation when it comes to the language of Human Rights.

[34] Rebouché, Rachel. 2006. "Labor, Land, and Women's Rights in Africa: Challenges for the New Protocol on the Rights of Women." **Harvard Human Rights Journal 19**:235-256.

# 3 Online and Offline Safety and Security Guidelines for WHRDs in Uganda

The Online and Offline Safety and Security Guidelines presented here focus at 3 levels:




a) **At an Individual Level** – To guide individual WHRDs across diversities of geography, class, age, ability, sexual orientation and gender identity, sector and other intersectional diversities.

b) **At Institutional Level –** To guide WHRD Organisations (NGOs, CSOs, CBOs, Social Enterprises and Companies) as well as their partners to put in place and/or strengthen institutional infrastructure and capacities for WHRD work and protection.

c) **At a Collective Level –** To guide the WHRD Movements and Collective for collective organising and action.

## 3.1 Guidelines for Preventing and Responding to Offline Attacks Against WHRDs

Major Offline threats and attacks targeting WHRDs in Uganda[35] include: Denial of access to services; Sexual advances from perpetrators and their agents; Physical attacks of WHRDs, their intimate partners, social support bases and families - like intimidation, slapping, quarreling, abusing and undermining one's integrity; Threats of divorce, separation, estrangement and family abandonment; Use of family and law enforcement to intimidate WHRDs; Blackmail; Emotional abuse like humiliation, gossip, and questioning a woman's ability. In addition, there is: Threats of accidents and poisoning; Death threats among WHRDs esp. women journalists are attacked and threatened with death; False accusations (smear campaigns) and; Threats of being bewitched. WHRDs also face bribery in the form of money, promotions, job offers to the WHRD or their family members in return for their silence or abandoning the matter being pursued. There is also labelling WHRDs esp. when representing and fighting the rights of sexual and gender minorities as well as the stigmatization, alienation and vilification at the workplace by fellow staff even within HRDs / WHRDs organisations, loss of work and; stigmatization at community levels. Feminist WHRDs also believe that burnout is a form of violence against WHRDs.

At institutional levels; many WHRDs organisations face Freezing of Bank Accounts; Delays in renewing their operating certificates by CAOs; URSB and NGO Bureau; Withdrawal of trading licensees by local authorities; Office break-ins and theft of equipment and information; Sexual harassment during the lockdown and at the workplace and; actual deregistration of organisations.

Therefore, the Guidelines to address these are:

### 3.1.1 Individual Offline Guidelines (For Individual WHRDs)

**Guideline 3.1.1.1: Gaining Recognition**

a) WHRDs commit to working towards creating better networks and frameworks for the defence of their rights than any that have existed till now. This will assist women human rights defenders to gain recognition for their work, defend their rights, challenge impunity, and seek justice and accountability.

**Guideline 3.1.1.2: Security Planning**

a) Develop individual security plans that include: having a fast dial number memorized, saving for and travelling with money in case of an emergency, and creating rapid response networks to augment their security.
b) Enhance accountability through creating a pool of supporting / network of community practice with other WHRDs.

[35] As established from Key Respondents in the 3 Regional Consultations and the National Level Interviews held between June and July 2021 (See details in Annex 2 and 3)

### 3.1.2 Institutional Offline Guidelines (For WHRDs Organisations and Groups)

**Guideline 3.1.2.1: Security Planning and Investments**

a) Developing, resourcing and implementing institutional security plans that include: hiring armed security guards at offices, participating and organising trainings on digital security, installing security cameras and sirens to secure office premises, developing emergency hotlines, and applying for grants to acquire medical and psychosocial support.
b) Provision of safe houses for WHRDs that provides a cross range of services and support.
c) Establish a clear security referral pathway for WHRDs under attack.
d) Undertaking regular security sweeps as a way to ensure that digital surveillance is minimized identify security breaches and determine that restricted areas are secure.
e) Develop a database of referral network (for legal, psychosocial, medical and social support) for WHRDs under attack.

**Guideline 3.1.2.2: Nurture Space to Break Silences, Organise and Strategise**

a) Provision of space for WHRDs to speak out, break silences, hold perpetrators accountable, call out abusers and embolden the victims and survivors to speak out, regain their voices and jointly organise.
b) Commit to nurturing workplace processes, organisational culture and resources that address sexual harassment through trainings, sexual harassment policies and ongoing engagement with the public sector.
c) Designing, tailor-making and mainstream an ongoing institutional WHRD Defender Program for structured for the specific issues/sector that the institution works. This program surfaces the real, perceived and anticipated attacks and how these can be mitigated and redressed.

**Guideline 3.1.2.3: Individual and Collective Care, Wellness and Healing Justice**

a) As a core feminist principle, the centrality of caring for self and collectively cannot be underscored. WHRD organisations need to ensure that WHRDs take time out to care for themselves.
b) Commitment to increase self-care practices in the organisational policies, practices, culture and everyday processes
c) WHRD organisations and networks to ensure activists do not become physically and emotionally overburdened by their work.
d) Appropriate adequate budgetary and human resources to self-care and wellness interventions of WHRDs.
e) Ensure political goodwill through the provision of the highest level of leadership within the institution to spearhead the self-care and wellness interventions.
f) Nurture and maintain safe spaces for WHRDs to retreat, reflect, heal, revive, recalibrate, and re-energize.

### 3.1.3 Collective Offline Guidelines (For WHRDs Movements and Collectives)

**Guideline 3.1.3.1: Robust Referral Mechanisms**

a) Development of a database of Referral Services for WHRDs (per region and national level)
b) Put in place and popularize a clear National WHRD referral Mechanism and Pathway.
c) Development and Dissemination of Referral Guidelines – Simplify, popularize and disseminate in user-friendly versions.

**Guideline 3.1.3.2: Progressive Social Movement**

a) Build a robust progressive social movement of WHRDs that prioritises their safety and security
b) Create Movement Safe Spaces for Women's Evacuation – a place to work, rejuvenate, heal and refresh
c) Support ongoing collective self-care, wellness and healing justice practices for WHRDs.
d) Create accountability mechanisms within the WHRDs Networks.

**Guideline 3.1.3.3: Resourcing for Collective Safety and Security**

a) Developing, resourcing and implementing community security plan and in case of an emergency, and creating rapid response networks in order to augment WHRDs security. Other measures include developing emergency hotlines and applying for grants to acquire medical and psychosocial support and provision of safe houses.
b) Design a gender-responsive WHRD Fund / Emergency Fund that addresses both institutional and individual WHRDs needs.
c) Institute Cross-Border Evacuation Grants and Programmes with other African WHRDs organisations.

## 3.2 Guidelines for Preventing and Responding to Online Attacks Against WHRDs

Major Online threats and attacks targeting WHRDs in Uganda[36] include Patriarchal abuse of women's bodies through revenge porn; Phone threats from unknown persons; Mudslinging and making someone appear socially less of a person online; Attacking WHRDs persona, sexual preferences and choices; Social media attacks through threatening messages; online trolling esp. on social media; Blackmail; Prank or threatening messages or death threats sent through SMS and WhatsApp; Phishing/spam/proxy accounts; Fake news; Hacking into accounts; Abuse of IP addresses; Sending threatening images (like a man holding a gun or pornographic content); Theft of web domains; Suspicion of accounts in case of hacking; Plagiarism and other forms of cyberbullying from bloggers and social media users. As well as, tagging one on social media; Hate Speech; Negative media portrayal about WHRDs as being promiscuous such as: Use of cartoons to describe women, Body-shaming of a woman – for instance photoshopping ahead of

[36] As established from Key Respondents in the 3 Regional Consultations and the National Level Interviews held between June and July 2021 (See details in Annex 2 and 3)

WHRD is taken and placed with Photoshop on a nude body and blackmail to share intimate images with the public.

Therefore, the Guidelines to address these are:

### 3.2.1 Individual Online Guidelines (For Individual WHRDs)

**Guideline 3.2.1.1: Appreciate Online Space and Protection Mechanisms**

a) Individual WHRDs shall take individual initiative and agency to understand how online space operates, the contours and frameworks for protection in online spaces and to inbuild safety and security and an individual level

### 3.2.2 Institutional Online Guidelines (For WHRDs Organisations & Groups)

**Guideline 3.2.2.1: Harnessing the Developments in Technology**

a) Devise avenues to address the limitations of social media infrastructure majorly used in online activism.
b) Given that digital transformation, post-COVID-19 has pushed man women and girls online, there is a need to design a response mechanism that can address the unique challenges and attacks that WHRDs will face in the digital era.
c) Scale up the use of online activism among WHRDs for mobilizing and organising
d) Scale up the use of technology for rapid response strategies

**Guideline 3.2.2.2: Development of Feminist Principles for WHRDs and Technology**

a) Reframe organising in the digital era to be able to adapt & guide WHRDs online
b) Develop, adopt, simplify, translate and popularize feminist principles that guide WHRDs online

# 4 Digital and Social Media Guidelines for WHRDs

## 4.1 Overview: Digital and Social Media Guidelines for WHRDs

The COVID-19 pandemic has left its imprint on the entire globe, from millions of deaths to changing working culture, societal behaviours. One of the impact areas has been a pivot to digital platforms such as zoom, and other communitive technology as opposed to person meeting to prevent the spread of the virus that comes with large numbers of people gathering with no social distance.

However, with the new demand for digital skills on how to use different communitive technologies, the parallel is needed to consider security when using social media platforms, especially for women human rights defenders. The inequalities of access to the internet[37] have also been enhanced, given that the use of the internet requires devices as well as data costs.
In Uganda, according to a 2015 Uganda Communications Commission survey[38] on Access and Usage of ICTs, only 44% of women-owned and could use a phone at any time compared to 62% of the men. Additionally, only 15% of women had used a computer or the internet in the last three months before the survey compared to 21% of the men that were interviewed.

Technology and the internet can be a great enabler for women but a lack of opportunities, skills and a fear of discrimination prevent many from using and creating digital tools and online content.

In line with the other abuses women human rights defenders face, social media bullying, stalking and harassment ranks high up, as the case of Dr Stella Nyanzi has shown. To address these abuses, we create this manual on how to use the different platforms to rip the maximum benefits while also protecting your security.

**Acknowledgement**

This Digital and Online Safety Toolkit is a collection and modelled from handouts from Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, women services network, and various other feminist organisations.

[37] https://africaninternetrights.org/sites/default/files/Peace_Oliver_0.pdf

[38] http://ucc.co.ug/files/downloads/20150130-UCC-access-usage-dissemination.pdf

## 4.2 Objectives and Intended Users of the Digital and Social Media Guidelines for WHRDs

### 4.2.1 Objectives of the Digital and Social Media Guidelines

***The objectives are:***

a) To suggest ways to women human rights defenders protect themselves while accessing the internet.
b) To suggest examples on how their safety can be at risk and how to avoid the risks.
c) To provide a list of relevant resources that are continuously updated alongside the ever-changing internet behaviours and legislation

### 4.2.2 Audience and Scope of the Digital and Social Media Guidelines

**Audience**

This toolkit is aimed at a wide range of audiences interested in the safety of women human rights defenders in their different areas of focus, from mining, land rights, economic justice to LGBTQIA++ to sex workers, to civil and political activism. **The primary target audience is women human rights defenders.**

**Scope**

*In scope:*

The toolkit has been designed to help WHRDs use particular social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Twitter as well as general online safety and privacy practices.

*Out of scope:*

This tool kit isn't designed to cover comprehensive safety for all social media platforms as there are ever-increasing and so are the different ways for homophobic patriarchal violence to morph itself on the different social media platforms.

This toolkit cannot encompass all the privacy complications and factors and their separate legislative frameworks.

This toolkit alone will not provide a comprehensive investigation of all the underlying factors driving or creating barriers to WHRDs accessing and using social media in Uganda.

## 4.3 Spyware, Computer Surveillance and Safety

Spyware that includes a variety of tools, apps, software programs has made it easier to stalk and abusing of WHRDs as the abusers can, track, monitor, and harass their victims.[39].

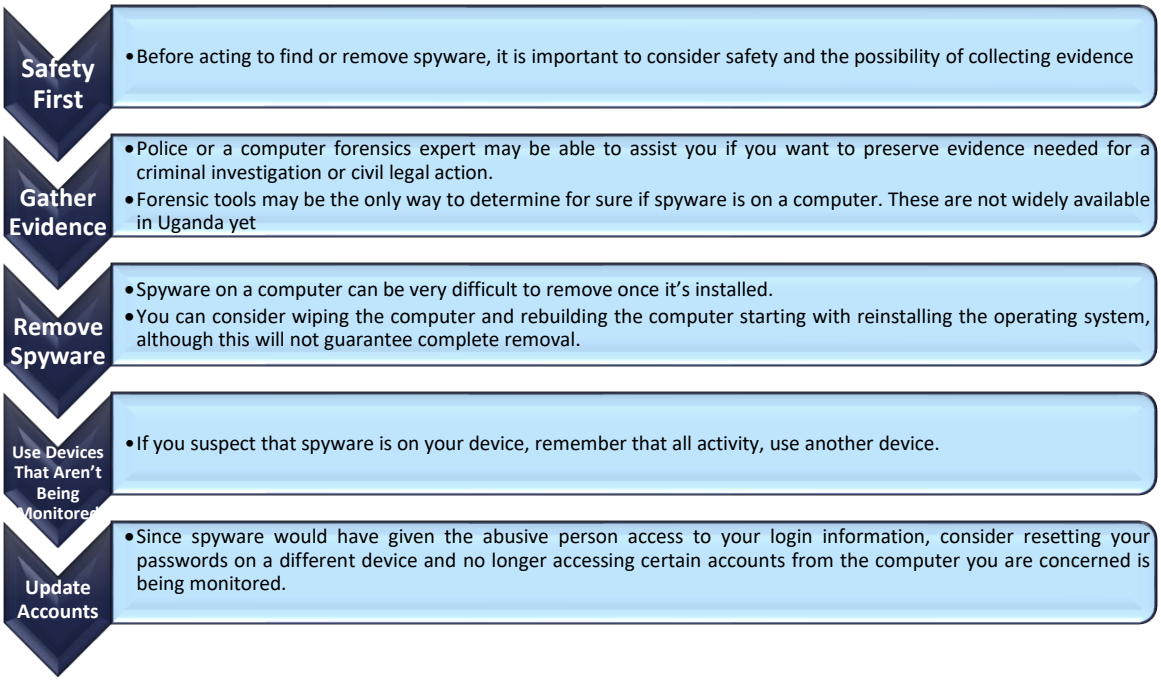
[39] https://techsafety.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/HDT_TSA_Computer-SpywareV2.0-1.pdf
\

### 4.3.1 How Do out Find Out if There is Spyware on Your Computer?

Detecting spyware can be difficult, one way to find out is if your computer easily freezers up and is suddenly slow. If you suspect that there might spyware on your computer, trust your instincts.

If you suspect you are being stalked or monitored, be aware that: Attempting to look for spyware on your computer could be dangerous since the abuser could be alerted to your searches immediately. Spyware enables abuses to know about your website visits access as well as your passwords online. It can be installed remotely, if someone has accessed your computer, it can take the shape of opening an email sent, that will automatically install a background app or software to spy on you

### 4.3.2 Responding to Spyware on Your Computer




### 4.3.3 How to Prevent Spyware on Your Computer

## 4.4 Safety and Security on Twitter

With the growth of online communities and organising, coupled with narrowing physical space to organising; social media like Twitter is a space of WHRDs organising that opens up opportunities and at the same time violations.

### 4.4.1 Choosing Whether to Have Public or Private Twitter Account

When you first join Twitter, your Tweets are public by default, which means anyone can potentially see what you Tweet.

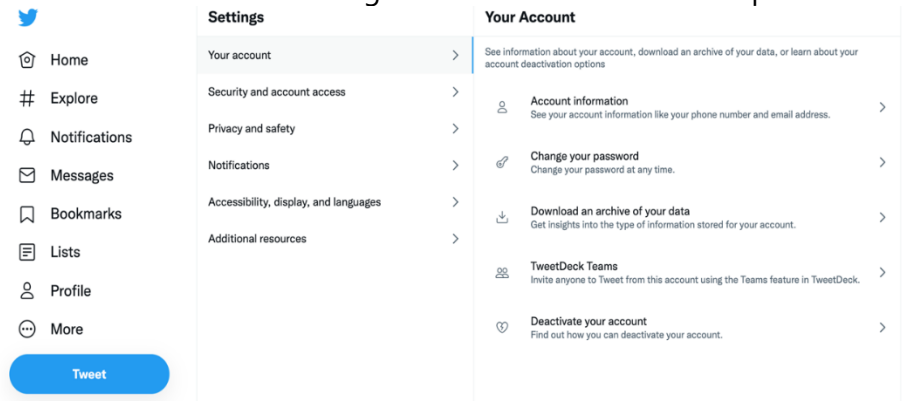
You choose to have a private account through the following tips.[40]

a) **Username -** When signing up for a Twitter account, you can choose a username that is not directly associated with your real name, which allows you to remain more private on the platform. You may change your username at any time by visiting your "Account" settings.
b) **Using Profile Photos -** When using photos, you can choose to have a different photo of yourself, this is another option if anonymity is your goal. However, this wouldn't work for organisations, since the whole point is for the organisation to have some visibility. For organisations, you can remove a location, if and when you feel targeted and trolled.

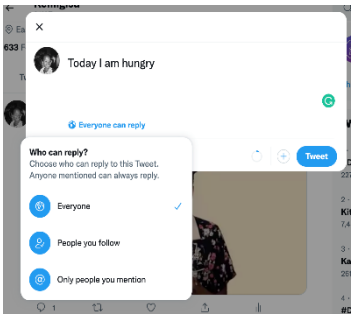
[40] https://help.twitter.com/en/safety-and-security/account-security-tips

c) **Tagging on Photos -** Photo-tagging is another option you can disable if you don't want people identifying you. You can manage your photo-tagging preferences from the start by updating your "Privacy" settings.

d) **Location Privacy -** Location privacy can be critical to maintaining safety. By default, Twitter has the location sharing feature turned off. For example

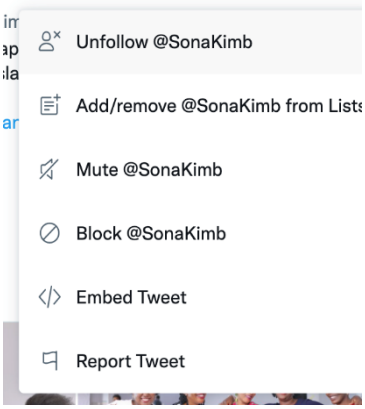



e) **Define Who you Respond to -** Twitter also allows you to limit who you are in conversation with, by turning on your "who can respond to this tweet" option on your Twitter. For example:




### 4.4.2 Reporting Mechanisms for Abusers on Twitter

If someone is threatening, harassing, or causing you to fear, one of the first things you can do is document it. Documentation will be especially helpful if you decide to involve law enforcement. Twitter has mechanism you can use to report, block, mute, unfollow and also mange you own privacy.




Anyone can report abuse for both accounts as well as particular users. Twitter allows you to block, unfollow, report accounts – when you go to the Settings and Click Privacy and Settings. For example,

## 4.5 Safety and Security on Facebook

Every day people share their personal stories on Facebook, always remember that the things you share can be screenshots and reshared with everyone even after you delete a post.[41]

[41] https://help.twitter.com/en/safety-and-security/account-security-tips

### 4.5.1 Ways to Protect Yourself on Facebook

a) **Unfollow -** You Unfollow a person, Page or group directly if you suspect that they could be harassing you or leaking your posts by simply hovering over "Following" (on a profile) or click "Following" (on a Page or in a group) near their cover photo and select "Unfollow."

b) **Unfriending -** Unfriending is also another option you can do this by simply going to their person's profile, hovering over the "Friends" button at the top and selecting "Unfriend." If you choose to unfriend someone, Facebook won't notify the person but you'll be removed from their friend's list.

c) **Blocking** - Just like Twitter, Facebook also allows you to Block users. This will prevent them from starting conversations with you or seeing things you post on your profile. In addition, people you block can no longer tag you, invite you to events or groups, or add you as a friend. Blocking is reciprocal, so you also won't be able to see things they post or start conversations with them.

d) **Report Abusers -** Another option is to report the account harassing you, Facebook includes a link on nearly every piece of content for reporting abuse, bullying, harassment and other issues.

## 4.6 Safety and Security on WhatsApp

It is important to understand that even social media and communication apps like WhatsApp a certain level of personal data is shared with the company or companies behind them. Recently WhatsApp notification signalled users would have to opt-in to a privacy policy update by February 8, 2021. WhatsApp under Facebook has monetized the platform, the new privacy measures require access to more personal data.

### 4.6.1 Ways to Protect Yourself on WhatsApp

a) **Enable Two-Step Verification** – The Two-step verification is offered by many apps and is well worth using, especially since it essentially ensures no one else can log into your

app or device but you. Activating this feature in WhatsApp is relatively simple and takes only a few seconds.[42]

***How to enable two-step verification on WhatsApp:***

- Open your WhatsApp Settings. Select Account. Choose the "Two-step verification menu." Next, tap "Enable" and create a six-digit passcode.
- You'll need to enter this periodically and whenever you register WhatsApp on a new device.
- Enter an email address should you forget or lose your code.

**b) Block Unwanted Users –** Click your right-hand side of WhatsApp a Dropdown menu will indicate and you can block a user – they can't access you and you can't access them.

**c) Request Account Information -** You can also request for your account information and WhatsApp will provide a report of your WhatsApp account information and settings.

**d) Turn off Recipients -** You can turn off the receipts and that way, way people don't know whether you are online or not.

**e) Mute and Exit Toxic, Security Threatening and Abusive Groups –** Gather the energy to mute of even leave spaces that cause physical, emotional and other forms of violence to you.

## 4.7 Safety for Your Phones, Tablets, Laptops and Personal Computers

Because of the increased NGOs, break-ins in Uganda as well as the different cases of activist's devices being robbed. Here are some tips to protect yourself and the devices.

- Begin by putting a passcode on your phone. If your phone gets stolen or you lose it, it'll make it a bit harder for others to get into your phone.
- Always turn off your location settings. Especially if you use apps like Uber and google maps. Remember to always go to your location settings and turn them off. You can do the same for your laptop.
- Turn off your Bluetooth if you are not using it as Bluetooth allows your phone to connect to other devices and this can lead to someone accessing your images, your car, printer. Some devices allow you to set a code and password before someone connects to your devices.
- Always check your privacy settings regularly, most devices allow you to check privacy controls, see which apps have access to different permissions like location, camera, microphone.
- Always review the apps you download
- To further maximise your privacy, consider using a virtual number, such as Skype or Google Voice or a throwaway number, so you don't have to give out your actual phone

[42] https://africa.businessinsider.com/tech-insider/3-helpful-whatsapp-security-tips-for-protecting-your-data-on-the-voice-and-messaging/tsrfhbw

number. A virtual phone number will also allow you to screen calls and make calls/send texts from the virtual number.

- If you can, try not to store your personal information on your phone, the less sensitive information you have, the less likely someone else can access it.
- Always use an anti-virus, it would be better if you use a paid-for antivirus.

# 5 Checklist of Practical Tips for Online and Offline Safety Measures

## 5.1 Practical Tips for WHRDs Collectively

**Practical Tips for Offline Safety Measures: Collectively**

1. Create and sustain spaces of support like District WHRDs at the district level and Regional WHRDs Networks at the Regional levels
2. Alliance Building with like-minded actors including: progressive male engagement movements, duty bearers, political leaders, community leaders and other NGOs at district, regional, national and global levels
3. Report and follow up cases with police
4. Feed into various levels of the networks that start from grassroots to other levels
5. Undertake evidence-based advocacy and engagement. Interventions should be knowledge-based get the facts and knowledge
6. Have clear interpretation of the legal frameworks that are available for use
7. Move in groups as a security measure
8. Report and/or expose perpetrators
9. Undertake regular check-ins with each other as a collective – to sustain a community of practice and support mechanisms
10. Media houses should keep records of listeners who call or send messages to the radio stations
11. Offices should have passwords in computers to protect the information, avoid access to information by strangers
12. Practice sisterhood and solidarity - Whatever happens to you, get a friend and share with.
13. WHRDs should check on fellow WHRDs and friends every time.
14. WHRDs should avoid going to lonely places without being accompanied.
15. Whatever happens to you, share with someone – open up! Silence festers abuse and violations Try to network with others by informing them before you leave to monitor violation and abuse.
16. Exercise confidentiality & safeguard the privacy of WHRDs
17. Seek for temporary safety and relaxation until situation comes to normal
18. Undertaking solidarity campaigns

**Practical Tips for Online Safety Measures: Collectively**

1. Responsible use of WhatsApp, Facebook and other social media for strategising
2. Manage location settings when undertaking events
3. Seeking permission of WHRDs before taking pictures and posting them online
4. Improve digital security for institutions and groups
5. Undertake regular update of software and security systems
6. Safeguard WHRDs data in the custody of the collective (databases, phone numbers, email, addresses, etc)

## 5.2 Practical Tips for Individual WHRDs

### Practical Tips for Offline Safety Measures: For Individual WHRDs

1. Be conscious of your security at all times – be alert at all times
2. Do not use the same route, entrances and exits
3. Always have some cash on you!
4. Always have some airtime / call credit / data bundle on your phone
5. Report cases of attacks and risks as well as following the cases up
6. Have whistleblowers in various places
7. Join networks for solidarity for better progress
8. Undertake referrals to different institutions and mechanisms because they have various duty
9. Self-care and wellness, refresh yourself *'WHRDs need psychosocial counselling and wellness, so we need to go for counselling and for better health'*
10. Enroll for Therapy if and when needed – it's not a reflection of weakness but a political act of caring for self
11. Safeguard all evidence and undertake monthly / fortnight offsite cloud backups of documents
12. In instances of threats to personal safety and security report a case to relevant authorities
13. Know the provisions of the law
14. Be confident and assert oneself
15. Nurture and sustain partnership with law enforcement and other duty bearers
16. Learn to walk away when you sense that situations may degenerate into compromising your safety and security – this also applies to online spaces when you need to know when to disengage in that online battle
17. Create a pool of loyal supporters to loop into online trolling and battles – these beat off the violators
18. Be exemplary to the community
19. Be cautious of the security and be unpredictable i.e not using the same road / don't create a routine
20. Be careful who you wine and dine with after-hours
21. Control access to your sensitive information to certain people
22. Inform the police of the information to be aired out and if blackmailed don't play along report to police
23. At all costs, avoid sexual advances intimate partner relationships with perpetrators or their agents

### Practical Tips for Online Safety Measures: For Individual WHRDs

1. Avoid unnecessary WhatsApp groups
2. Record every call
3. Avoid posting messages with hate speech
4. Be cautious of people sending you friend requests on social media
5. Know the circle of your friends on Facebook and WhatsApp
6. Save and screenshot threatening messages.
7. Utilize the existing reporting mechanisms available for social media – Twitter, Facebook, etc to report violators and trollers
8. Learn to walk away when you sense that situations may degenerate into compromising your safety and security – this also applies to online spaces when you need to know when to disengage in that online battle
9. Install and use passwords on phones, computers and social media platforms
10. Regular change of passwords
11. Be careful in sharing pictures and avoid sharing nudes with intimate partners
12. Manage Location Settings on the phone and social media - Don't let bad people following us know where we are and photos showing your locations.
13. Be sensitive on the kind the information you share on the convectional and social media
14. Call / inform a friend when going out to the field or to a rescue mission
15. Once in a while unplug off technology – 'technology detox' from the phone, social media, email etc

## 5.3 Practical Tips Shared at Regional Level: Karamoja Region

Women Human Rights Defenders in Karamoja Region shared the following ways in which the WHRDs themselves at regional level can prevent and respond to attacks targeted at them.

**Table 2: Tips and Strategies from Karamoja Region**

| Tips for Preventing Attacks – Karamoja | Tips for Responding to Attacks - Karamoja |
|---|---|
| 1. Building good relationships among WHRDs and with duty bearers<br>2. Maintaining Confidentiality<br>3. Work as a network/ protection network<br>4. Effective communication<br>5. Having the facts/ full information/evidences<br>6. Strengthening the networks among WHRDs<br>7. Avoiding bribery / corruption | 1. Informing the nearest person whom you confide in<br>2. Retreating / Pulling out if one's safety and security is at stake<br>3. Reporting to police and any other relevant offices/ NGOs<br>4. Referral to other offices or individual who can help WHRDs<br>5. Informing other networks for support<br>6. Taking one's security seriously<br>7. Information sharing should be confidential<br>8. Avoid unnecessary visitors<br>9. Be security conscious; movement how and where<br>10. Communicate to other defenders or office<br>11. Be quick to make decisions when you sense danger<br>12. Seek for audience when people are attacking you |
| | |

## 5.4 Practical Tips Shared at Regional Level: Rwenzori Region

Women Human Rights Defenders in Rwenzori Region shared the following ways in which the WHRDs themselves at regional level can prevent and respond to attacks against them.

**Table 3: Tips and Strategies from Rwenzori Region**

| Tips for Preventing Attacks – Rwenzori | Tips for Responding to Attacks - Rwenzori |
|---|---|
| 1. Undertake prior preparations before a mission<br>2. Group Movements to manage personal safety<br>3. Partnership with law enforcement like police and LDUs<br>4. Individual selfcare and wellness collective care and collective care for each other<br>5. Walking and working in groups<br>6. Keep your privacy to immediate people as you leave and travel<br>*7.* Manage social media like when doing status updates in real-time – *'not everyone should know your movements'*<br>8. Make calls to the relevant organisation that | 1. Report to authorities for physical and cyber attacks<br>2. Seek court action<br>3. Network with other WHRDs, share information and learn together<br>4. Document the incidences – when it happens, what happened etc<br>5. Report violations to law enforcement<br>6. Access medical facilities like post-rape services, morning-after pill and PEP<br>7. Seek counselling services<br>8. Seek legal services in case of needing<br>9. make a strong consolidated network as Rwenzori from grassroots to national level<br>10. Solidarity visits to WHRDs - Let's get time to visit |

| Tips for Preventing Attacks – Rwenzori | Tips for Responding to Attacks - Rwenzori |
|---|---|
| might be of help when you get an attack'<br>9. Use social media in case of an attack and take photo, post it n social media and spread far and wide to mobilize and inform others<br>10. Alert our immediate friends and family when attacked<br>11. Dressing code – study your environment and dress appropriately<br>12. Identification– Always carry along IDs, uniforms, etc so that people know<br>13. Be knowledgeable about human rights and what you are pursuing<br>14. Measure when and where you identify yourself – some places<br>15. Have first-hand information about the victims and the case before engaging | each other for psychosocial support and counselling<br>11. Ensuring confidentiality of information<br>12. Safe social networking through so many platforms such as WhatsApp Groups<br>13. Seeking protection from relevant authorities in case of attacks<br>14. Use the helpline<br>15. Training on digital and physical security – esp. how to manage your phones and password protection<br>16. Mapping specific offices and spaces that you go to as WHRDs in case of threats or violations<br>17. Document our stories and sharing them |
| | |

## 5.5 Practical Tips Shared at Regional Level: West Nile Region

Women Human Rights Defenders in West Nile Region shared the following ways in which the WHRDs themselves at regional level can prevent and respond to attacks against them.

**Table 4: Tips and Strategies from West Nile Region**

| Tips for Preventing Attacks – West Nile | Tips for Responding to Attacks – West Nile |
|---|---|
| 1. Creating a mass community awareness / build a critical mass of WHRDs at community levels<br>2. Building capacity of other women through dialogues and caucuses<br>3. Identifying women and train them on women's rights, gender, human rights, WHRDs work as to groom them as champions at community level<br>4. Creation of WHRDs journalist to air out WHRD issues to reach public quickly<br>5. Creation of male champions to complement the work of WHRDs<br>6. Joining WHRDs Networks for solidarity and support<br>7. Knowledge of the law and asserting oneself<br>8. Form selves into a network at the regional level as West Nile – at District and Regional Networks for better support locally:<br>- Create West Nile WHRD networks<br>- Create District WHRDs at the district level | 1. Gathering energy and guts of walking out and quitting toxic intimate partners relationships and marriages Involve security personal in our work<br>2. Having self-confidence<br>3. Expanding individual and collective knowledge bases on human rights, gender and HRDS work<br>4. Reporting and tracking with police on any threats and attacks<br>5. Documenting and reporting cording attacks<br>6. Sanctioning media to police and court with evidence and facts<br>7. Tap into existing psychosocial support and counselling to get energized and energy to move on |
| | |

# 6 Recommendations and Key Considerations

## 6.1 Recommendations from International Best Practice

Cognizant of the fact that WHRDs operate within a patriarchal society that privilege that gives male power and separates the public and the private worlds. The system constructs 'gender' through a binary lens of male, female and assigns them separate roles. Assigning female roles within the private sphere which are attributed lesser value-creating and perpetuating inequality. WHRDs need to approach their work through an intersectional lens as patriarchy privileges heterosexuality, establishing sexual hierarchies and marginalizing sexual and gender identities that do not fall within this power dynamics, which also include WHRDs who identify as either Queer or as Sex Workers, therefore not falling into the seduction of the patriarchal system is key for all WHRDs in Uganda.

A guidebook on Women Human Rights Defenders published by the Asia Pacific Forum recommends the following methods for WHRDs all over the world.[43]

1. Develop holistic protection packages for WHRDs to sustain themselves, their organisations and wider movements. These should recognise differential and intersectional needs and be properly institutionalised.
2. Conduct more systematic documentation and analysis of trends in WHRD violations – including publicly and privately, by different actors - to tailor responses.
3. Combat impunity by processing complaints made by WHRDs promptly, guaranteeing thorough, independent investigations of reports of violence against WHRDs, and ensuring effective remedies for WHRDs, including reparations.
4. Sensitise and build capacity among officials, including law enforcement agencies, government representatives, judicial staff and security forces, to carry out impartial, fair investigations without victimising WHRDs. These should be documented and free from prejudices.
5. Ensure National Human Rights Institutions have the resources, freedom and mandate to document and monitor attacks on WHRDs and to investigate and disseminate findings in a responsible manner.
6. Review and reform legislation that harms or restricts WHRDs and domesticate international commitments to protect WHRDs. These should explicitly recognise the intersectional challenges faced by WHRDs, including those from religious and ethnic minorities and the LGBTI community.
7. Ensure responses to the COVID-19 pandemic uphold international human rights law, including protection of civic space, freedom of assembly and information for WHRDs to carry out their work.

[43] Sunila Abeysekera, Mary Jane Real, Julie de Rivero, et al (2007), **Claiming Rights, Claiming Justice: A Guidebook on Women Human Rights Defenders**, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) ISBN: 978-974-7348-92-7

## 6.2 Recommendations to WHRDs, UN Women, OHCHR and Other Partners

### 6.2.1 Recommendations for WHRDN-U

In order to support the effective utilisation of the Safety and Security Guidelines, it is recommended that The Women Human Rights Defenders Network of Uganda (WHRDN-U) undertakes the following:

a) Establish a clear referral pathway for WHRDs and popularize its pathway and who to contact in case they face threats, attacks and violations.
b) Establish a National WHRDs Complaints mechanism – that centralizes and used the complaints to seek justice, engage with communities, law enforcement and perpetrators and undertake advocacy.
c) Foster safe networking spaces for WHRDs esp. those that work on highly contested issues such as: sex work, sexual and reproductive and rights, LBQ/T, land justice, natural resources and extractives defenders who are working on contextually charged issues such as women's rights, sexuality and reproductive justice, land grabbing and extractive industries. This will also allow for alliance building across various movements
d) Expand online activism to enable for countering closing physical and social civic space.
e) Increase and broaden policy influencing at both bilateral and multilateral levels to address the risks faced by WHRDs.
f) Prioritize ongoing security training and put in place internal institutional safety and security measures for the membership of WHRDN-U Network since most are under surveillance and prone to attacks.
g) Equip WHRDs with up-to-date knowledge and skills on HRDs work including knowledge of new ICT tools and options to enable them better organise in the new world order of virtual organising as occasioned by COVID-19.
h) Put in place a WHRDsApp that connects WHRDs across Uganda as a platform for networking, support, information sharing, learning and documenting of good practice as well as acting as an alert post for WHRDs under attack.
i) Increased trainings and engagements with various stakeholders on the issues of rights for women and girls which need to be brought to the forefront as serious matters.
j) Identify resources to publish, disseminate and use for advocacy the case studies / stories of WHRDs generated as part of the process of developing these Safety and Security Guidelines for WHRDs.
k) Recognizing the broader risk to the work of WHRDs, specifically in the digital era, no data is highlighting the prevalence of technology-assisted violence against these communities in Uganda as lack as the lack of mechanisms and solutions to this problem. As such, therefore, there is an urgent need to interrogate the unique experiences of technology-assisted violence, specifically targeting WHRDs in Uganda in order to inform the development of contextualized and responsive strategies aiming to mitigate their risk levels of while using technology.
l) Put in place an emergency fund to address personal WHRDs and organisational levels (for membership of WHRDN-U).

### 6.2.2 Recommendations for UN Women, OHCHR and Other Funding Partners (Incl. Emergency Support Organisations)

a) Support recommended actions that further the rollout, implementation and effective utilisation of these Guidelines.
b) Against the backdrop of intensifying violence directed towards WHRDs, it is recommended that UN Women, OHCHR and other funding partners invest resources in putting in place an Emergency Fund that addresses the unique gender arracks and intersecting nature of the violations that WHRDs face
c) Emergency support grant-makers review their regulations and support so as to be gender-responsive to the unique realities of the violations targeted at WHRDs.
d) Prioritize support for self-care, wellness and healing justice for grantees for WHRDs esp. those working on highly contested issues and are at risk of violations and burnout - like those that work on GBV, SRHR, boldly autonomy and choice, economic justice, extractives and civic space.

### 6.2.3 Recommendations to WHRD Networks, Organisations, Wider CSOs

a) Institute internal institutional WHRDs programmes and interventions aimed at: enhancing institutional safety mechanisms, safety protocols and staff capacities.
b) Mainstream WHRD safety and security best practices across all aspects of organisations (policies, programmes, resource mobilization, work culture etc).

### 6.2.4 Recommendations to State Actors, Non-State Actor and Communities

a) Enact enabling laws that curb violence targeted at WHRDs – this includes repealing retrogressive provisions in laws such as POMA, Computer Misuse Act, Penal Code and Sexual Offences Bill that are often used to violate WHRDs.
b) Address impunity at institutional and community levels

# 7 Dissemination, Applicability and Updating the Guidelines

## 7.1 Dissemination

### 7.1.1 Dissemination Plan and Mechanisms

This Guideline will be available online and offline. The Dissemination Plan will include workshops, briefings, webinars and tweet chats targeting different stakeholders at national, sub-national and lower levels. Online, it will be available at the UN Women, OHCHR and WHRDN-U websites and on the Interactive WHRDsApp Platform to be developed by WHRDN-U that links WHRDs across Uganda to create a community of practice. Offline, the publication will be translated into local languages, popular pocket-versions of the IECs produced and disseminated. Translated versions will be disseminated through the WHRDN-U membership at national, regional and district levels and; during meetings organized or attended by staff of the 3 implementing partners (UN Women, OHCHR and WHRDN-U). In all the publications, an effort will be made to ensure that they don't produce unexpected outcomes like increasing risks and threats to WHRDs.

### 7.1.2 Community of Practice

It is recommended that a community of practice is established to support the rollout of the Guidelines. The community of practice will be platform that enables for increased stakeholder engagement on the safety and security of WHRD. It will also be a space to share and learn within and amongst WHRDs and allies – sharing research and evidence, tools, case studies, good practices and new developments. It will also enable for the dissemination and continuous review of the Guidelines. The Community of Practice will also be a space to equip WHRDN-U members with the knowledge tools and skills to mitigate and manage online and offline attacks targeting WHRDs. It will also provide an emergency response mechanism that is critical and needed by WHRDs in Uganda.

The community of practice on safety and security of WHRDs is open to anyone interested in or working on protecting and promoting the rights of WHRDs in Uganda. UN Women, OHCHR and WHRDN-U would encourage the cross-sectoral interdisciplinary stakeholders to participate in the community of practice. Suggested participants would include but not be limited to: WHRDs at various levels, HRDs, emergency support mechanisms, digital security activists and experts, civil society organisations/collectives and groups, individual activists, funding partners, policymakers and progressive duty bearers among others.

## 7.2 Applicability

### 7.2.1 Anticipated Impact of the Guidelines

Effective implementation of the Online and Offline Safety and Security Guidelines, Practical Tips and the Recommendations outlined in this document will likely require reorganization within WHRDN-U. It will require specific tailormade resourcing and financing to establish the

institutional framework needed to implement the propositions and/or support WHRDs collectives, groups, organisations and individuals to develop required institutional structures, processes, cultures and support mechanisms to integrate the Guidelines in their lives, work and institutions. It will also require translation of the Guidelines into local languages, development and dissemination of popular versions and utilising both online and offline platforms for dissemination and reaching out.

The anticipated potential barriers to effective implementation and harvesting of required impact may include:

- The rising rates of impunity, misogyny and normalised violence against women and girls that disproportionally affects women, girls and WHRDs are more so occasioned by COVID-19.
- Lack of understanding among WHRDs about the need to utilise the new learning and adopt the recommended guidelines and practical tips.
- Inadequate financial resources to effectively implement the guidelines.
- Lack of human resources within WHRDN collectives, groups and organisations with the necessary expertise and skills to implement, supervise and support recommended guidelines.
- Lack of infrastructure to support the intervention at the level of WHRDN-U as the hub for women human rights defenders organising in Uganda.
- Lack of effective gender-responsive referral mechanisms, integrated services and care pathways that meet the unique needs of WHRDs in instances of violations and abuses.
- Lack of information management systems designed to document and monitor recommended practices and gather the evidence needed to inform regular update of the Guidelines.
- Lack of enabling supportive laws, policies and regulations to support safe and effective implementation.

Given these potential barriers, a phased approach to adoption, adaptation and implementation of the guideline may be needed. Also, putting in place specific response mechanisms for each of the anticipated barriers may go a long way to minimize the risks that they may pose.

### 7.2.2 Monitoring and Evaluating the Impact of the Guidelines

Given the target and user and audience for this Guidelines, UN Women, WHRDN-U and OHCHR will ensure that the monitoring, evaluation and learning systems are practical and not complicated to enable for gathering useful and current information that will be used to measure the uptake, use and impact of the Guidelines. UN Women, WHRDN-U and OHCHR will also utilise the institutional MEAL / Impact Assessment Frameworks to track progress. Outcomes of the MEAL will continuously inform the reviews of the Guidelines to make them a living document.

## 7.3 Updating the Safety and Security Guidelines

This Safety and Security Guidelines for WHRDs uses a living guideline approach and will be placed on an Interactive WHRDsApp Platform to be developed that links WHRDs across Uganda as well as on the UN Women, OHCHR and WHRDN-U Websites. The Guidelines will be an open-

source document available on the websites for download. When Guidelines are updated, they will be labelled as such and will always display the date of the most recent update. Each time there is an update, an updated PDF version of the guideline will be available on the UN Women, OHCHR and WHRDN-U websites to facilitate access where the internet is not reliably available. Furthermore, there will be a feedback option for users, to help WHRDN-U to identify recommendations that may need an update or further clarification.

The living guideline approach will allow the review and integration of new research evidence, to ensure that the Guidelines are current and responsive to the ever-changing volatile and shrinking civic space they operate in. The rapidly evolving nature of WHRDs work and the volatile operating context calls for a continual review of the literature. An update to this Safety and Security Guidelines for WHRDs in Uganda guideline will likely be needed within 18–24 months of the dissemination of this version, to accommodate either new evidence on existing recommendations or to develop new recommendations based on emerging evidence and shifts in the environment.

All technical products developed during the process of developing this guideline – including the transcribed interview data, case studies, regional training materials, handouts and reports and draft versions of the Guidelines will be archived for future reference and use.

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# Annexes

## Annex 1: List of Key Informants Interviewed - Development of Safety and Security Guidelines for WHRDs

| # | Name | Organization | Location |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Helen Kezie Nwoha | Women International Peace Center (WIPC) | Kampala |
| 2 | Pamela Angwech | Gulu Women Economic Development & Globalization (GWED-G) | Gulu |
| 3 | Florence Masuliya | Tusitukirewamu Group-Bwaise (TuWG) | Kampala |
| 4 | Beatrice Rukanyanga | Kwataniza Women's Farmers' Group | Hoima |
| 5 | Beyonce Adyeri | Trans Equality Uganda (TEU) | Kampala |
| 6 | Ssenfuka Warry Joanita | Freedom and Roam Uganda (FARUG) | Kampala |
| 7 | Diana Natukunda | Women's Organization Network for Human Rights Advocacy (WONETHA) | Kampala |
| 8 | Margaret Sentamu | Uganda Women Media Association (UMWA) | Kampala |
| 9 | Betty Balisalamu | Women with a Mission (WWM) | Mbale |
| 10 | Joan Amek Eoju | Rella Women's Foundation (RWF) | Kampala |
| 11 | Betty Achana | National Union of Women with Disabilities (NUWODU) | Kampala |
| 12 | Maclean Kyomya | Alliance of Women Advocating for Change (AWAC) | Kampala |
| 13 | Margaret Kyemba Kulaba | Anti-Domestic Violence Center (ADOVIC) | Jinja |
| 14 | Jay Abang | Health and Rights Initiative (HRI) | Lira |
| 15 | Nicholas Opiyo | Chapter 4 Uganda | Kampala |

# Annex 2: List of WHRDs Consulted in the 3 Regions (Karamoja, Rwenzori and West Nile)

## 2.1: Karamoja Region

| # | Name | District | Organisation / Women's Collective |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Chepundon Mary | Moroto | ABLE HANDS FOUNDATION |
| 2. | Oloka Francis | Moroto | OHCHR |
| 3. | Amiya Shannon | Moroto | KAWUO |
| 4. | Mudong Margret | Moroto | NWOFP |
| 5. | Sophie Nangiro | Moroto | KWIM |
| 6. | Ataa Jesca | Moroto | NARWOA |
| 7. | Aguti Stella | Moroto | KAWUO |
| 8. | Leese Josephine | Moroto | HERITAGE F.M |
| 9. | Chemutai Joyce | Moroto | UBC |
| 10. | Nambuya Fiona. C | Moroto | ATEKER |
| 11. | Aanyu Susan | Moroto | ETOIL A KARAMOJA |
| 12. | Pulkol Irene | Moroto | V.S.H |
| 13. | Akuu Betty | Moroto | COUNCILLOR |
| 14. | Chepoghisyo Janet | Moroto | WPDDI |
| 15. | Atuko Patricia Tukei | Moroto | UGANDA LAW SOCIETY KOTIDO & MOROTO |
| 16. | Airu Petra Epogu | Moroto | KAWUO |
| 17. | Jennifer Kadondi | Moroto | KABOONG |
| 18. | Chemusungon Linah | Moroto | MALTAMA |
| 19. | Lemukol Susan | Moroto | KAWUO |
| 20. | Sagal Henrica | Moroto | MEDIA FM HERITAGE |
| 21. | Lopuka Mary Gorety | Moroto | BRAC-U |
| 22. | Apio Mystica | Moroto | KAWUO |
| 23. | Jesse Beatrice Okot | Moroto | RWOFT |
| 24. | Alosikin Merab. I | Moroto | NAWOO |
| 25. | Cheruto A Pauline | Moroto | AMUDAT DLG |
| 26. | Naduk Betty | Moroto | ST. MONICA |
| 27. | Chepar Pauline Sura | Moroto | SANAY |
| 28. | Kapchesit Betty | Moroto | KAWUO |
| 29. | Naduk Betty | Moroto | KOMURIA |
| 30. | Akuu Betty | Moroto | NAPAK |
| 31. | Cherut A Pauline | Moroto | AMUDAT DLG |
| 32. | Brenda Kugonza | Moroto | WHRDN-U |
| 33. | Aballo .H. Flavia | Moroto | WHRDN-U |
| 34. | Chelain Dorcus | Moroto | NUWODU |

## 2.2: Rwenzori Region

| # | Name | Hosting District & Location | Organisation / Women's Collective |
|---|---|---|---|
| 35. | Musoki Elizabeth | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | KASESE DISTRICT LOCAL GOV'T |
| 36. | Zaninka Penninah | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | UOBDU |
| 37. | Kabaliisa Rhoda | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | Matogo Lostland |
| 38. | Nbhatina Grace | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | BATWA |
| 39. | Digoli Edreda | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | BATWA |
| 40. | Kajumba Gorret | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | V.O.T FM |
| 41. | Akolebirungi Belinda | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | RFPJ |
| 42. | Kansiime Bernadete | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | CBF |
| 43. | Biira Cindrella Moreen | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | JCU |
| 44. | Kahunde Rose Kabagani | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | KWHSI |
| 45. | Karungi Rachael | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | KRCFM |
| 46. | Siruhukwa Mbambu Idah | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | BAWID |
| 47. | Kabaculezi Kawamala Jesika | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | DFM |
| 48. | Harriet Nyakaisiki | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | L&L MINISTRIES |
| 49. | Masika Saudia Molly | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | KASESE BUPWIDA |
| 50. | Kabagenyi Peluce | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | KADWOD |
| 51. | Kabagenyi Sarah | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | BWADA |
| 52. | Mbabazi Esther | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | WHRDN-UG |
| 53. | Atuhairwe M Joy | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | LIGHT M |
| 54. | Musumba Harriet | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | DEV'T FM |
| 55. | Bonabana Aida | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | UBC-VOB |
| 56. | Namatovu Zabibu | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | WOMEN MINER |
| 57. | Kalumba Nulu | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | MINING |
| 58. | Kyakuhaire Robinah.A. | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | MINING |
| 59. | Nakafeero Doreen Kisakye | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | WHRDN-U |
| 60. | Kyobutungi Moreen | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | KWHSI |
| 61. | Jackline Bwenge | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | V.I.A |
| 62. | Mbanbu Jolly Muhyana | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | CEGE |
| 63. | Mbindule Morine | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | MACWOLA |
| 64. | Biira Zainab | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | MACWOLA |
| 65. | Kabugho Neverlss | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | UJK |
| 66. | Nasakaa Halima N | Fort Portal, Kabarole District | SALT MINING |

## 2.3: West Nile Region

| # | Name | Hosting District & Location | Organisation / Women's Collective |
|---|---|---|---|
| 67. | Akademia Wandibba | Arua, Arua District | OHCHR |
| 68. | Ayikoru Holda | Arua, Arua District | IDLG |
| 69. | Buti Pauline | Arua, Arua District | OBUNGI DLG |
| 70. | Opar Jackline | Arua, Arua District | LOCAL GOV'T |
| 71. | Goro Grace | Arua, Arua District | KDWC |
| 72. | Drakura Nancy | Arua, Arua District | KWKA/AWAC |
| 73. | Javier Senjuan | Arua, Arua District | UN OHCHR |
| 74. | Lillian Grace Azibazuyo | Arua, Arua District | MADI &WESTNILE DIOCESE |
| 75. | Ocotoko Mercy Monicah | Arua, Arua District | ADBWA |
| 76. | Amviko Caroline | Arua, Arua District | ADBWA |
| 77. | Adrupio Irene Appi | Arua, Arua District | ADLG |
| 78. | Akot Viola | Arua, Arua District | LEGACY CHILDREN F. |
| 79. | Awadifo Doreen | Arua, Arua District | HEAR INTERNATIONAL |
| 80. | Adokwun Emmanuela | Arua, Arua District | NDNGOF |
| 81. | Maditkwo Grace | Arua, Arua District | ACTION AID GBUS |
| 82. | Oroma Prisca | Arua, Arua District | ALUR KINGDOM |
| 83. | Chandiru Scovia | Arua, Arua District | ALIONGI WOMEN INN |
| 84. | Moriku Janet | Arua, Arua District | AULUGO M |
| 85. | Aol Nancy | Arua, Arua District | RADIO AMANI |
| 86. | Adong Sarah | Arua, Arua District | WAN LUO WESTNILE |
| 87. | Ropani Sauda | Arua, Arua District | PICOT |
| 88. | Dokini Doreen | Arua, Arua District | INDIVIDUAL |
| 89. | Kyampaire Christine | Arua, Arua District | RADIO TBS MOYO |
| 90. | Bileru Knight | Arua, Arua District | MEPRO |
| 91. | Kwinocwiny Molly | Arua, Arua District | CUWEDE |
| 92. | Nassolo Oliver | Arua, Arua District | WHRDs |
| 93. | Amuiko Sarah | Arua, Arua District | RADIO PACIS |
| 94. | Abalu Stella | Arua, Arua District | MARACHA DISTRICT L.G |
| 95. | Aeru Beatrice | Arua, Arua District | OBONGI |
| 96. | Jurua Brenda | Arua, Arua District | ADJUMANI DISTRICT |
| 97. | Ankolo Jean Longo | Arua, Arua District | ARUA DISTRICT |
| 98. | Dri Boroa Stephen | Arua, Arua District | ARRH |
| 99. | Mami Maimuna Keko | Arua, Arua District | ARUA, ARRH |
| 100. | Biregema Stella | Arua, Arua District | LIFE CONCERN (LLCO) |
| 101. | Adiru Gladys | Arua, Arua District | RHEMA FOUNDATION |
| 102. | Giramia Patricia Joy | Arua, Arua District | HELP DISABLED CHILDREN EXCEL |
| 103. | Pax Shakari | Arua, Arua District | RICE WN |
| 104. | Vita Betty Leo | Arua, Arua District | MOYO OLG |
| 105. | Adiru Emily Sheena | Arua, Arua District | ICE |
| 106. | Giramia Patricia Joy | Arua, Arua District | HELP DISABLED CHILDREN EXCEL |
| 107. | Pax Shakari | Arua, Arua District | RICE WN |
| 108. | Vita Betty Leo | Arua, Arua District | MOYO OLG |
| 109. | Adiru Emily Sheena | Arua, Arua District | ICE |
| 110. | Nakafeero Doreen Kisakye | Arua, Arua District | WHRDN-U |
| 111. | Namakula Ruth (Babysitter) | Arua, Arua District | WHRDN-U |
| 112. | Atimango Evelyne | Arua, Arua District | ACRES OF HOPE |
| 113. | Patrick Amon | Arua, Arua District | OHCHR |
| 114. | Area Joyce | Arua, Arua District | JOURNALIST |

# Annex 3: List of WHRDs Case Studies

| # | Name | District | Association / Organisation / Women's Collective | Area of WHRD's Focus |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Edreda Dingolo | Bundibugyo District | Batwa Indigenous WHRDs | Ethnic Minority Rights / Stateless People |
| 2. | Jacky Sange | Kween District | Benneth Community Lobby Group | Ethnic Minority Rights / Stateless People |
| 3. | Robinah Tibakanya | Hoima District | Individual WHRD | PLHIV/AIDS |
| 4. | Dorcus Chelangat | Adumat District | National Union of Women with Disabilities (NUWODU) | Women with Disabilities / Female Genital Mutilation |
| 5. | Zainabu Namatovu | Mubende District | Mubende Women Gold Miners Association Limited | Natural Resources and Extractives |
| 6. | Rose Kahunde | Kasese District | Kasese Women Health Support Initiative | Sex Work |
| 7. | Madihawo Grace | Nebbi District | ActionAid GBV Shelter | Gender Based Violence |
| 8. | Mami Maimuna Keko | Arua District | West Nile Rainbow Initiative (WERAIN) | Key Populations (KPs) |
| 9. | Adong Sarah | Zombo District | Television Presenter and Human Rights Defender | Journalism and Sports |
| 10. | Lillian Grace Asibazuyo | Arua District | Human Rights Activist and Psychosocial Counsellor | Psychosocial Support |
| 11. | Mercy Monica Ochotco | Arua and Maracha Districts | Visually Impaired Young Woman Activist | Women with Disabilities |
| 12. | Betty Balisalamu | Mbale District | Women with a Mission (WWM) | Women, Adolescent Girls, Sex Workers and Injecting Drug Users |
| 13. | Florence Masuliya | Kampala District | Tusitukirewamu Group Bwaise (TuWG) | Gender Based Violence |
| 14. | Jay Abang | Lira District | Health and Rights Initiative (HRI) | Lesbian, Bisexual and Queer Womxn |
| 15. | Pamela Angwech | Gulu District | Gulu Women Economic Development and Globalization (GWED-G) | Peace Building and Conflict Resolution / Land Justice |
| 16. | Betty Achana | Kampala District | National Union of Women with Disabilities (NUWODU) | Women with Disabilities / Governance and Rule of Law |
| 17. | Helen Kezie-Nwoha | Kampala District / International | Women's International Peace Centre (WIPC) | Peace and Conflict Resolution |
| 18. | Beyonce Karungi | Kampala District | Transgender Equality Uganda (TEU) | Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Persons |
| 19. | Margaret Ssentamu | Kampala District | Uganda Media Women's Association (UMWA) | Women and the Media |
| 20. | Diana Natukunda | Kampala District | Women's Organisation Network for Human Rights Advocacy (WONETHA) | Sex Workers |
| 21. | Warry Biggie Ssenfuka | Kampala District | Freedom and Roam Uganda (FARUG) | Lesbian, Bisexual and Queer Womxn |
| 22. | Margaret Kulaba | Jinja District | Anti-Domestic Violence Center (ADOVIC) | Gender-Based Violence and Land Rights |
| 23. | Macklean Kyomya | Kampala District | Alliance of Women Advocating for Change (AWAC) | Sex Workers, PLHIV/AIDS and Minors in Sex Work |
| 24. | Joan Amek | Kampala District | RELLA Women's Foundation | LBQ Womxn & Refugees |

# Annex 4: Key Informant Interview Guide (For National Level Interviews)

## DEVELOPING ONLINE AND OFFLINE SAFETY AND SECURITY GUIDELINES FOR WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS (WHRDs) IN UGANDA

**Background of the Assignment**

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), Women Human Rights Defenders Network Uganda (WHRDN-U) and The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) recognize that there has been a backlash against champions of women's rights who stand up and speak out on the issues affecting women and girls. Therefore, this programme seeks to protect the rights of these women and ensure they can speak out without jeopardising their safety. As such, therefore, the 3 clients are desirous of developing Safety and Security Guidelines for Women Human Rights Defenders in Uganda to enable them mitigate, manage and address online and offline threats, attacks and violations.

**General Objective of the Assignment**

The general objective of the consultancy is to develop guidelines for strengthening the capacity of WHRDs and mitigate the impact of online and offline attacks against WHRDs. The guidelines will be used as basic safety tools for WHRDs in preventing and responding to attacks against them.

**Specific objectives**

- Enhance the knowledge of WHRDs by providing knowledge on preventing and mitigating gender-based attacks, criminalization of their work, as well as physical and personal security management
- Offer practical strategies for enhancing WHRD's safety online and offline.

**Interview Questions**

1. **Attacks Targeting Women Human Rights Defenders**
    a. What are the Online security threats, risks and attacks that WHRDs face?
    b. What are the Offline security threats, risks and attacks that WHRDs face?
    c. What is the Impact of these gendered attacks (i.e: how do these how do these affect WHRDs)?
    d. In your view, why are WHRDs targeted in Uganda (i.e why the gendered attacks)?

2. **Response Mechanisms**
    a. Suggest practical safety and security protection measures that will help prevent attacks against WHRDs Uganda (i.e suggest ways in which these offline and online threats, risks and attacks can be addressed).
    b. In what ways can WHRDs effectively prevent and respond to attacks against them?

3. Imagine you were asked to *Develop Online and Offline Safety and Security Guidelines for WHRDs in Uganda*
    a. What are the 3-5 priority guidelines/principles that you would include?
    b. What practical tips on online and offline safety measures would you include?

4. As a WHRD, is there a personal story / Case Study you can share where you were under attack? If so, can you briefly share it?

5. Any questions / recommendations you have for us?

# Annex 5: Focus Group Discussion Guide (For Regional Consultations)

## DEVELOPING ONLINE AND OFFLINE SAFETY AND SECURITY GUIDELINES FOR WOMEN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS (WHRDs) IN UGANDA

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**Background of the Assignment**

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), Women Human Rights Defenders Network Uganda (WHRDN-U) and The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) recognize that there has been a backlash against champions of women's rights who stand up and speak out on the issues affecting women and girls. Therefore, this programme seeks to protect the rights of these women and ensure they are able to speak out without jeopardising their own safety. As such, therefore, the 3 clients are desirous of developing Safety and Security Guidelines for Women Human Rights Defenders in Uganda to enable them mitigate, manage and address online and offline threats, attacks and violations.

**General Objective of the Assignment**

The general objective of the consultancy is to develop guidelines for strengthening the capacity of WHRDs and mitigate the impact of online and offline attacks against WHRDs. The guidelines will be used as basic safety tools for WHRDs in preventing and responding to attacks against them.

**Specific objectives**

- Enhance the knowledge of WHRDs by providing knowledge on preventing and mitigating gender-based attacks, criminalization of their work, as well as physical and personal security management
- Offer practical strategies for enhancing WHRD's safetyonline and offline.

## The Focus Group Discussion Questions

1. Identify the offline and online security threats, risks and attacks that you as WHRDs in your region face.

2. Suggest practical safety and security protection measures that will help prevent attacks against women human rights defenders in your region? (i.e suggest ways in which these offline and online threats, risks and attacks can be addressed).

3. In what ways can you as WHRDs in your region to prevent and respond to attacks against you.

4. Imagine you were asked to *Develop Online and Offline Safety and Security Guidelines for WHRDs in Uganda*, what are the 3-5 priority guidelines/principles that you would include?