



UGANET Insights

Advancing Justice, Health, and Resilience

(January - March 2025)

Newsletter

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Dear Friends and Partners
of UGANET,

Welcome to the first edition of our newsletter, UGANET Insights! As we navigate the ever-evolving landscape of global health and justice advocacy, we are met with both challenges and resilience. One of the most pressing challenges has been the recent AID Freeze, which threatens to disrupt essential healthcare and legal aid services for Uganda's most vulnerable populations.

The U.S. Government's stop-work order on BPRM-funded programs has dealt a severe blow to our efforts, particularly impacting our legal aid work for women and girls, as well as people living with HIV (PLHIV) in



refugee host districts. With 1.4 million PLHIV in Uganda—1.3 million of whom rely on ART—the funding cut has created a dire gap in access to life-saving treatment, legal protection, and support services. This disruption has not only affected healthcare access but has also weakened the legal empowerment mechanisms that safeguard the rights of marginalized communities.

However, at UGANET, we are no strangers to adversity. Even in the face of these challenges, we continue to witness the unwavering resilience of communities, partners, and frontline workers as we mobilize to fill the gaps. From leading community dialogues and legal empowerment programs to pushing for increased domestic health financing, our commitment remains unshaken: No one will be left behind.

In this issue of our newsletter, we share powerful stories of resilience, showcasing the dedication of local leaders, healthcare workers, legal advocates, and community activists. Whether it's defending the rights of refugees, women facing violence, and PLHIV, advocating for sustainable healthcare solutions, or pursuing justice in landmark legal cases, UGANET remains steadfast in its mission.

While the AID Freeze may have temporarily halted funding, it has not frozen our determination. We stand strong with our partners, advocating for justice, dignity, and sustainable solutions that protect marginalized communities. The road ahead will be challenging, but together, we will overcome.

Thank you for standing with us. Your continued support fuels our resilience and strengthens our resolve to fight for a future where justice, health, and gender equality are accessible to all.

Warm regards,
Grace Nayiga
Executive Director, UGANET



The halt of PEPFAR-funded HIV programs, an initiative that has provided life-saving support to over 1.4 million people living with HIV (PLHIV) in Uganda, has left a significant gap in access to care, treatment, and support.

Uganda Refugee Resilience Initiative (URRI)



Strengthening Resilience & Justice for Refugees & Host Communities!

- UGANET is proud to be part of the Uganda Refugee Resilience Initiative (URRI), a four-year program (October 2024 – December 2028) dedicated to strengthening climate resilience, access to justice, and gender equality for refugees and host communities in Uganda.

In collaboration with Save the Children, AVSI, Kabarole Research and Resource Center, and other partners, we will:

- ~ Provide Free Legal Aid Services to marginalized groups, ensuring access to justice.

- ~ Advance Gender Equality & Women's Rights through advocacy, training, and behavior change programs.

- ~ Strengthen Local Leadership & Institutional Capacity to address GBV, climate resilience, and sustainable development.

- ~ Mobilize Communities through Activism, leveraging the SASA! Together methodology to challenge harmful social norms.

Together, we are building resilient, empowered communities that can withstand the challenges of displacement and climate change.





Press Conference – Safeguarding Uganda’s HIVResponse & Healthcare Workers

Urgent Action Needed: Protecting Uganda’s HIV Response & Healthcare Workers! ☒

Today, UGANET, alongside the CSO community, medical professionals, and extension workers, held a press conference addressing the devastating impact of the U.S. Government’s stop-work order on PEPFAR-funded HIV programs.

With 1.4 million People Living with HIV (PLHIV)—1.3 million of whom rely on life-saving ART—this order threatens access to treatment, livelihoods of over 2,500 healthcare workers, and the stability of Uganda’s HIV response.

We call on:

☒ The U.S. Government to immediately reverse this decision and prevent a public health crisis.

☒ The Ugandan Government to prioritize domestic health financing in the FY 2024/25 supplementary budget and FY 2025/26 national budget. Uganda must also honor the Abuja Declaration by allocating 15% of the national budget to health.

The fight against HIV is a shared responsibility. We must act now—lives and livelihoods are at stake!



Honoring Strength, Love, and Resilience This Women's Day at Kireka Rehabilitation Center

On International Women's Day, UGANET had the privilege of celebrating with the resilient and remarkable mothers of Kireka Rehabilitation Center—women who embody extraordinary strength, love, and resilience each and every day. These mothers, despite facing numerous challenges, continue to inspire us with their perseverance and dedication to their children.

A Day of Celebration and Reflection: The theme of our celebration was rooted in acknowledging the immense power and grace of women who, often in the most difficult circumstances, find ways to keep going, keep loving, and keep nurturing.

Our Executive Director, Grace Nayiga, shared an uplifting



message that encapsulated the spirit of the day:

"True acceleration looks like this—finding strength in difficult times and sharing it with those who need it most." — Grace Nayiga, ED, UGANET.

The day was filled with love, support, and heartfelt recognition of the mothers' unwavering dedication to their children. Their journey is one of immense sacrifice and hope—qualities that make them the true heroes of their families and communities.

Struggles and Celebrating the Triumphs: We see these women not just for the struggles they face, but for the incredible love they give despite those struggles. We recognize their daily challenges, their devotion to their children, and their courage to keep moving forward. This Women's Day, we celebrated them—honoring their strength, resilience, and undying commitment to their families.

To the incredible women of Kireka Rehabilitation Center: may you continue to find joy in the moments with your children, witness the miracles you truly deserve, and continue to shine with your unwavering strength.

We also took this moment to recognize the dedicated staff at Kireka for their tireless work and compassionate support. The commitment of the UGANET team was crucial in making this day special, and we thank them for their heartfelt efforts and dedication.



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Community-Led Justice: Training Local Leaders & Paralegals

At UGANET, we believe that justice should be accessible to all, regardless of their location, status, or resources. That's why we've made it a priority to strengthen community-led justice systems by training local leaders, health workers, and paralegals across various districts. These groups are at the heart of their communities, and when equipped with the right knowledge and tools, they can play a pivotal role in ensuring that justice is both fair and accessible for everyone.

Our training programs are carefully designed to empower participants with a diverse set of skills that are essential for addressing local legal challenges. One key aspect of the program is conflict mediation. By teaching local leaders how to mediate disputes effectively, we ensure that communities can resolve conflicts peacefully and without resorting to more costly or time-consuming legal processes. This is especially important in rural areas where access to formal legal resources can be limited.

In addition to conflict mediation, the training equips participants with strategies to report human rights violations. Many marginalized communities face challenges in asserting their rights, often due to a lack of awareness or the fear of retribution. Through this program, local leaders and paralegals learn how to support individuals in reporting violations, navigate the legal system, and ensure that the voices of the oppressed are heard. This knowledge is crucial in empowering individuals to take action against injustices they may have previously felt powerless to

address.

The training also emphasizes how to connect marginalized communities to the legal support they need. This might involve directing individuals to the appropriate legal aid organizations, helping them understand their rights, or advocating on their behalf. By equipping local leaders with these tools, UGANET ensures that communities can access the resources they need, regardless of their socio-economic status. These community-based networks serve as vital lifelines for people who might otherwise go without legal representation or support.

By investing in the legal empowerment of local leaders, health workers, and paralegals, UGANET is contributing to a more just and equitable society. This grassroots approach ensures that justice doesn't just exist in the courts, but is also rooted in the communities where it's needed most. Through these efforts, we are fostering a culture of justice, accountability, and fairness at the local level, ensuring that everyone, regardless of their circumstances, has the opportunity to access justice.

Acknowledging the Struggles and Celebrating the Triumphs: We see these women not just for the struggles they face, but for the incredible love they give despite those struggles. We recognize

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Empowering Refugees: Legal Information Session for South Sudanese Refugees in Lamwo

In a collaborative effort aimed at ensuring the successful integration and empowerment of refugees, UGANET, in partnership with LWF Uganda and UNHCR Uganda, recently conducted an insightful legal information session at the Lamwo Reception Center. This session targeted newly arrived refugees from South Sudan, equipping them with vital legal knowledge as they prepare for relocation to the Palabek Settlement.

The session covered a range of crucial topics designed to help refugees understand their rights and responsibilities within Uganda. Attendees learned about their fundamental refugee rights, which



include access to legal protection, health services, and education, as well as their obligations under Ugandan law. The session also addressed key offenses and penalties, ensuring that refugees are aware of the legal framework that governs their stay and behavior in the country.

Moreover, UGANET and its partners highlighted the available referral pathways for legal and social support. Refugees were provided with important information on how to seek assistance in case they encounter legal or human rights challenges. By equipping them with this knowledge, the session aimed to create a sense of empowerment and foster a more informed refugee community.

As the refugees prepare for their relocation to Palabek Settlement, this session is part of a broader effort by UGANET to ensure that refugees are not only safe but also informed and equipped to navigate their new lives in Uganda. The partnership with LWF Uganda and UNHCR Uganda continues to be pivotal in supporting refugee communities through initiatives like these that foster resilience, dignity, and justice. UGANET remains committed to its mission of providing access to justice for all, including vulnerable populations like refugees, and will continue working alongside its partners to promote legal awareness, human rights, and social inclusion.



Bridging Gaps in Justice: Legal Empowerment for Refugee Women in Yumbe

In Yumbe District, UGANET, in partnership with local refugee communities, recently conducted a series of legal empowerment sessions aimed at supporting refugee women facing significant challenges such as land disputes, gender-based violence (GBV), and discrimination. These sessions were designed to equip women with the necessary tools to navigate Uganda's legal system and advocate for their rights.

The initiative came in response to the growing need for legal awareness among refugee women, who often face a lack of access to legal resources, particularly in areas relating to gender-based violence and land ownership. By providing these women with the knowledge and confidence to engage with the legal system,

UGANET is helping bridge the justice gap that many refugees encounter.

Key Outcomes of the Sessions:

Legal Knowledge for Advocacy: Refugee women who participated in the sessions gained essential legal knowledge, enabling them to better advocate for their rights. They now have a clearer understanding of the legal frameworks that protect them and the steps they can take to challenge injustice.

Ongoing Support from Local Legal Officers: As part of the initiative, local legal officers were engaged to provide continued support to the women. This ensures that the legal empowerment doesn't stop with the sessions but continues with accessible guidance whenever needed.

Navigating Uganda's Legal System: Refugee participants were also equipped with practical tools to navigate Uganda's legal system, helping them confidently address issues related to land, GBV, and discrimination.

This program is a vital part of UGANET's broader mission to ensure justice for all, regardless of their status or background. By empowering refugee women, UGANET is not just helping them overcome immediate challenges but is also fostering long-term social change. These women are now better positioned to defend their rights and contribute to building stronger, more resilient communities.

As UGANET continues to advocate for refugee rights, we stand by the belief that justice should have no borders. Together, we are ensuring that refugee women know, claim, and exercise their rights with confidence.



Breaking Barriers: HIV Legal Literacy & Advocacy in Kasese

In a bold step toward addressing the ongoing challenges in HIV service access and human rights protections, UGANET recently led a crucial legal literacy and advocacy mission in Kasese District. The mission aimed to identify and address systemic barriers hindering access to HIV treatment while empowering local communities to advocate for their rights.

Through a series of community dialogues and interactive sessions, UGANET brought together local stakeholders, including leaders, healthcare providers, and people living with HIV, to discuss the pressing issues affecting the region's HIV response. These



conversations were pivotal in uncovering obstacles in both the legal and healthcare systems, and in creating actionable solutions that can make a real difference on the ground.

Key Outcomes of the Mission:

Identifying Systemic Barriers to HIV Treatment: One of the main goals of the mission was to highlight the challenges people living with HIV face when seeking treatment. From inadequate healthcare infrastructure to stigmatization and discrimination, these barriers prevent many individuals from accessing the care they need. Through community dialogues, UGANET gathered valuable insights on these issues, which will inform future advocacy efforts and policy interventions.

Educating Local Leaders on Human Rights Protections: A central aspect of the mission was educating local leaders about their role in protecting the human rights of people living with HIV. These leaders play a critical role in fostering a supportive environment for those affected by HIV, ensuring that policies and actions are in line with human rights standards.

Developing Policy Recommendations for Better Health Service Delivery: Based on the insights gained from community discussions, UGANET has developed a set of policy recommendations aimed at improving health service delivery in Kasese. These recommendations focus on enhancing access to HIV treatment, reducing stigma, and ensuring that the rights of people living with HIV are safeguarded.

The mission in Kasese marks a significant step toward strengthening Uganda's HIV response. UGANET's commitment to human rights and legal literacy ensures that communities are better informed and equipped to address the challenges they face in accessing HIV services. Empowering local communities with knowledge and advocacy skills is key to creating lasting change, and UGANET remains steadfast in its mission to ensure that everyone, regardless of their HIV status, has access to the care and support they deserve. A stronger HIV response starts with empowered communities!



Sport for Justice, Health, and Climate Action!

In a dynamic and innovative approach to advocacy, UGANET recently partnered with Youth Sport Uganda to conduct a transformative two-day training aimed at empowering youth through sport. The training, led by our Head of Partnerships & Trainings, Jennifer Falal Rubanga, and Advocacy & Strategic Litigation Associate, Precious Atuhiire, focused on using sport as a tool for raising awareness on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and climate action. Youth Sport Uganda is a pioneering initiative that recognizes the power of sport in creating social change, and UGANET's collaboration sought to further this mission by equipping young people with the



necessary knowledge and tools to advocate for their rights and the environment.

Key Training Highlights:

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Awareness: Participants explored the impact of GBV on youth, particularly how it affects young women and girls in marginalized communities. Through discussions and role-playing exercises, the training emphasized the importance of creating safe spaces and the role youth can play in eradicating GBV in their communities.

Sexual & Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR): UGANET facilitated sessions on SRHR, focusing on how young people can better understand and assert their rights regarding sexual health. These sessions provided the participants with vital knowledge on how to make informed decisions about their health, access services, and advocate for improved SRHR policies.

Legal Frameworks for Youth Advocacy: A key component of the training was understanding the legal frameworks that support youth advocacy. The participants were introduced to national and international legal instruments that protect the rights of young people, equipping them to engage in advocacy efforts that push for policy changes that prioritize their needs.

This training marked a significant step in empowering young people to be active changemakers in their communities. By linking sport with justice, health, and climate action, UGANET is paving the way for future leaders who are not only equipped to address urgent social issues but are also inspired to take action in their own spheres of influence.

Young people are powerful changemakers—and through sport, we are equipping them with the tools to lead!



UGANET is thrilled to announce a new partnership with Frontiers Energy to launch a two-year Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention and response project in the Kyondo and Kyarumba Sub-Counties of Kasese District. This collaboration aims to tackle GBV through survivor-centered approaches and innovative community engagement strategies, addressing a critical need in these areas.

Project Overview: The project, which will be driven by our newly appointed Gender Officer & Legal Assistant, seeks to address and prevent GBV while ensuring that survivors receive the support and justice they deserve.

Key Focus Areas:

Managing GBV Cases: The initiative will manage 41 identified GBV cases using survivor-centered approaches, ensuring the rights and dignity of survivors are upheld throughout the legal and social support processes.

Community-Based GBV Prevention Campaigns: Engaging the community through comprehensive campaigns to increase awareness about GBV, challenge harmful gender norms, and promote healthy relationships and respect for women and girls.

Engaging Men as Allies: One of the innovative aspects of the project is engaging men and boys as allies in the fight against GBV. By encouraging their active involvement, we aim to create a broader culture of respect and mutual accountability in the community.

Inception Meetings and Stakeholder Engagement: UGANET's Executive Director, Grace Nayiga, led a team to Kasese for the Project Inception Meetings, where they met with key stakeholders and community leaders to lay the groundwork for the project's success. The collaboration between UGANET, Frontiers Energy, and the local community marks an essential step toward ending GBV and ensuring justice for survivors.

Community-Driven Approaches: The project will utilize the SASA! Methodology, a community-led approach designed to challenge the power imbalances that sustain GBV and encourage healthier, more respectful relationships. The methodology focuses on shifting attitudes and behaviors through a process of reflection, learning, and action, ultimately creating sustainable social change.

Looking Forward: This partnership reflects UGANET's ongoing commitment to advocating for gender equality, protecting the rights of survivors, and preventing violence in all its forms. Together, we are creating an environment where GBV is no longer tolerated, and where every individual, regardless of gender, is empowered to live free from violence.



UGANET Honored for Championing Gender Equality at the Annual Empower Her Awards

On March 6, 2025, UGANET was recognized for its unwavering commitment to gender equality at the prestigious Annual Empower Her Awards Dinner, held at Africana Hotel. This award celebrates organizations that actively create policies, training programs, and institutional structures to support women in leadership and decision-making processes.



UGANET's recognition underscores its dedication to dismantling systemic barriers that hinder women from assuming leadership roles. Through strategic initiatives, policy advocacy, and capacity-building programs, UGANET has consistently fostered an inclusive work environment where women can thrive professionally and ascend to top management positions.

Receiving this award is a testament to UGANET's continuous efforts in driving gender justice and equality in Uganda. By championing women's rights and promoting equitable workplace policies, UGANET remains at the forefront of the fight for gender-inclusive leadership. This milestone not only acknowledges past achievements but also reaffirms the organization's resolve to continue advocating for a future where women have equal opportunities to lead and influence decision-making at all levels.

As UGANET celebrates this achievement, the organization renews its commitment to empowering women, ensuring that gender-responsive policies remain a fundamental part of its advocacy and operational framework. The award serves as both an honor and a motivation to push further towards a just and equal society for all.



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