



PRESS STATEMENT

Kampala, Sunday 8th March 2026

International Women's Day 2026: HRAPF stands in solidarity with Marginalised Women

Today, Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF) joins the world in commemorating International Women's Day 2026 under the theme “Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls.” This year’s theme calls for urgent and deliberate action to dismantle the structural, legal and social barriers that continue to deny women and girls equal access to justice.

This year’s commemoration comes at a time of intersecting and compounding crises affecting marginalised women in Uganda. Sweeping cuts in international aid, rising climate-related displacement, entrenched land tenure inequalities, an increasingly restrictive legal environment and a global rollback of women’s rights have converged to push the most marginalised women further away from safety, healthcare, and justice. These challenges are not isolated; they are manifestations of systemic exclusion that has consistently left many women outside the protection of the law.

Structurally excluded women, including female sex workers and LGBTQ women continue to bear the brunt of the injustices arising from Uganda’s criminal legal regime, which restricts access to justice, access to healthcare and other essential services. While the national HIV prevalence stands at approximately 5.1%, prevalence among female sex workers is estimated at 33–37%. This disparity is, in part attributable to the criminalization of sex work, which drives sex workers away from care and significantly undermines access to prevention, treatment and care services.

Criminalisation further exposes sex workers to violence from clients, law enforcement, and third parties, while deterring them from seeking essential health services. These challenges have been exacerbated by the abrupt freeze and proposed 66% cut to United States global HIV funding, including the PEPFAR programme. These cuts have, threatened the continuity of antiretroviral treatment, disrupted community outreach, and the closure of clinics serving key populations, with devastating consequences for sex workers living with HIV.

For women who belong to sexual and gender minority rights groups, Uganda’s Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023 has, over the past two and a half years, acted as an absolute barrier to accessing health, legal and social protection services. Fear of arrest, harassment, and violence has driven many further into invisibility. HRAPF’s monthly violations reports continue to document

cases of arbitrary arrest, forced evictions, physical, online and sexual violence and loss of employment.

On this International Women's Day, HRAPF calls upon the Government of Uganda to translate this year's theme into concrete and meaningful action. We urge the acceleration of legal and policy reforms including the decriminalisation of sex work, the decriminalisation and declassification of petty offences and the repeal of repressive laws such as the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023, which criminalise the lives and livelihoods of structurally excluded women. We further call on the Government to fulfill its obligation to guarantee access to justice and the right to health for ALL women and girls without discrimination.

HRAPF renews its commitment to standing in solidarity with marginalised women including female sex workers, LBTQ women, women living with HIV, and women facing land injustice. These groups remain among the most structurally excluded from the full enjoyment of rights and justice in Uganda. We call for decisive, sustained and transformative action to dismantle the legal, social, and structural barriers that continue to deny marginalised women dignity, safety and equality.

Human Rights for All

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