

SYNOPSIS FOR INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL 2017

THEME: Empowering Girls: Emergency Response and Resilience planning.

1.0 Background

International Day of the Girl Child is an international observance day declared by the United Nations; it is also called the *Day of the Girl* and the *International Day of the Girl*. October 11, 2012, was the first Day of the Girl. The observation supports more opportunity for girls and increases awareness of gender inequality faced by girls worldwide based upon their gender. This inequality includes areas such as right to education/access to education, nutrition, legal rights, medical care, and protection from discrimination, violence against women and unfree child marriage.^[1] The celebration of the day also "reflects the successful emergence of girls and young women as a distinct cohort in development policy, programming, campaigning and research.

International Day of the Girl Child also increases awareness of issues faced by girls around the world. A bigger percentage of the global development initiatives do not include or consider girls, and their issues become "invisible." More than 62 million girls around the world have no access to education. Worldwide and collectively, girls ages 5 to 14 spend more than 160 million hours more on household chores than boys of the same age do. Globally, one in four girls are married before age 18. The Day of the Girl therefore helps to raise awareness not only of the issues that girls face, but also what is likely to happen when those problems are solved. For example, educating girls helps reduce the rate of child marriage, disease and helps strengthen the economy by helping girls have access to higher paying jobs.

Uganda will join the rest of the world to commemorate the international Day of the Girl Child. The theme for this year is *Empowering Girls: Emergency Response and Resilience planning*. The National event will be held in Kyenjojo district and will be graced by the Minister of Education and Sports; First Lady and the National Champion for Adolescent girls.

Adolescence (10-19) is a time of transition involving multi-dimensional changes: biological, psychological (including cognitive) and social. These changes occur simultaneously and at different paces for each adolescent within each gender. Girls generally face disproportional risks and consequences in this transition phase of their lives from multiple vulnerabilities. Girls' and boys' needs often diverge from this point.

Adolescent girls are a vital section of the population and their empowerment and protection has broad ranging effects. Adolescent girls represent 51% of the total adolescent population and this is approximately 4.3 million in number. 71 percent of 10 to 14 year old girls and 64 percent of 15 to 19 year old girls who have never been to school are in the poorest quintile. There are significant disparities between adolescent girls and boys with the former lagging behind in most of the socioeconomic and health indicators. Nationally, 14.7% of 15-19 year old girls are neither in school nor working, as compared with 2% of similarly aged boys. According to the UDHS (2011) pregnancy rate among adolescents stands at 24%, sexual

debut is estimated at 16.7 years, 15% girls are married by the age of 15 and 49% by age 18. This increases their risk of contracting HIV (prevalence rate estimated at 4.9% among girls) and exposes them to other negative health consequences (fistula, unsafe abortion, maternal mortality, STIs). Other risk factors for adolescent girls include early, and forced marriages; gender-based violence; female genital mutilation; low access to information and services for HIV&AIDS, sexual, reproductive health, protection and health in general.

Adolescent girls in conflict and emergency are even more vulnerable. Every 10 minutes somewhere in the world, an adolescent girl dies as a result of violence. Gender based violence often spikes in humanitarian and displaced settings, subjecting girls to sexual and physical violence, child marriage, exploitation and trafficking. Girls are also 2.5 times more likely to be out of school than boys during conflict compromising their future prospects for work and financial independence as adults. Health services critical to girls' wellbeing, including sexual and reproductive health services and information, maternal care and provisions for menstrual health and hygiene are often scarce or insufficient in crisis situations.

Girls who stay in school, marry later and delay childbearing; often have healthier children; are able to earn better incomes that benefit themselves, their family, community and nation.

Hence focusing on adolescent girls is the best investment to break intergenerational poverty and improve the status of Uganda's 1,672,517¹ adolescent that live in Poverty.

When adolescent girls are empowered, it benefits all. Empowered girls grow into empowered women who can care better for themselves and their families, increase their earning potential, serve as active and equal citizens and change agents, and spur economic growth for

2.0 The Legal and Policy aimed at improving and empowering the adolescent girls in Uganda.

Existing National policy frameworks and strategies for interventions targeting adolescent girls within Government sector programs include;

- Universal Primary Education Policy
- Universal Secondary Education Policy
- the Adolescent Health Strategy,
- The Gender in Education Policy,
- National Strategy for Girls Education
- The National Action Plan on Violence Against Children in School,
- the 2015 Ugandan Social Institutions Gender Index by UBOS,
- the National Strategy to end Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancies,

School Health initiatives among others. In addition, the Government of Uganda launched the AU Commission campaign on Ending Child and Forced Marriage.

2.0 Harnessing the Opportunities for Girls

In order to seize the opportunities above, the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) within the framework of the Inter Ministerial Committee and the National Task Force on Adolescent Girls calls upon sectors/line ministries and partners to:-

- 1. Count adolescent girls and make them count:** The Ministry pledges and encourages coordination with relevant ministries and the bureau of statistics to collect, analyze, and use data on adolescent girls to advocate for, develop and monitor evidence-based policies and programmes that advance their well-being and realize their human rights.
- 2. Educate adolescent girls:** Ensure adolescent girls have access to quality education and complete schooling, focusing on their transition from primary to post-primary education and training, including secondary education, and pathways between the formal and non-formal systems.
- 3. Improve adolescent girls' health:** increase their access to information and integrated health services including HIV and AIDS prevention, care and treatment services.
- 4. Keep adolescent girls free from violence and harmful practices:** Prevent and protect girls from all forms of gender-based violence and harmful practices including child marriage and FGM, abuse and exploitation, and ensure that girls who experience violence receive prompt protection, services and access to justice;
- 5. Promoting adolescent engagement:** Ensure adolescent girls gain leadership and other life skills and promote their meaningful participation in decision that affect their lives;
- 6. Ensure adequate living standards for adolescent girls:** Scale the provision of social protection services in order to strengthen the resilience of adolescent girls and promote skills development and economic opportunities for adolescent girls;

3.0 Events to mark the International Day of the Girl 2017 in Uganda

The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, together with the Ministry of Education and Sports Ministry of Health and Development Partners have organized a series of activities with the aim to draw public attention to issues of adolescent girls in Uganda which will include:-

3.1 A children's symposium in Kyenjojo District

With participation of selected children from districts across the region, children's symposium is expected to run from 7th October to 10th October 2017 in Kyenjojo.

The children will also attend the main event on 12th October, 2017.

The main objective of the symposium is to give children especially girls a chance to dialogue on their own issues-what they want and need to make progress for themselves and the world, and to amplify their voices through interactions with decision-makers. Their inputs, ideas and vision will inform a children's memoranda that will be presented to the Chief Guest on the IDGC 2017 in Kyenjojo

3.2 Stakeholder dialogues on male involvement in Kyenjojo District

This dialogue will be held on 10th to 11th October, 2017 in Kyenjojo.

The main objective of this dialogue is to provide a platform for men, women, adolescent girls and boys, CSOs, District Local Government staff and other relevant stakeholders to discuss adolescent girls and boys development challenges and ways of more engagement of male figures in the upbringing of the girl child.

The commitments from all stakeholders from the dialogue will form part of memorandum that will be presented to the Chief Guest during the breakfast meeting and National Celebrations on 12th October, 2017.

3.3 Girl take over

Children will be identified and mentored to take on positions of key influential persons in the country and take on their responsibilities for a few minutes.

This is aimed at encouraging the girl child to get the feel of those positions and inspire them to work hard to achieve high levels of decision making and causing positive change that affect their lives.

3.4 The IDGC run on 6th October, 2017

The IDGC run 2017 will target partners working with girls, girls and boys from schools in and around Kampala, girls in the corporate world, men, women and young people including children who have a contribution towards the girl's equality agenda. The run focuses on all girls and women from different spheres of life to be a part of this Run.

The run proposed starting point is MGLSD for a distance of 5 - 10 KM The route for the run is yet to be determined.

The objective of the run is to among others;

- Mobilize local, National, private and public entities to understand and prioritize Girls issues and provide the space.
- Provide a platform for supporting adolescent girls to participate in decision making on the issues that concern them.

3.5 International Day of the Girl Child October 12, 2017 – Kyenjojo

- i. The Children will present their Memorandum to the Chief Guest on this day during the Breakfast meeting that will be held in Kyenjojo at the district headquarters.
- ii. The Chief Guest will there after officiate at the main celebrations at district playground.