



UGANDA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION



THE 28TH ANNUAL REPORT ON THE STATE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS IN UGANDA IN 2025

SUBMITTED TO THE PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

**THE 28TH ANNUAL REPORT ON THE STATE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS
IN UGANDA IN 2025**

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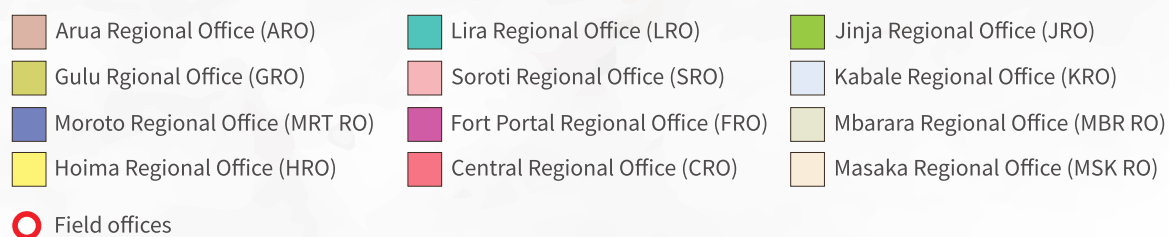
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Foreword

The Rt. Honourable Speaker of Parliament
Parliament of Uganda
P.O. BOX 7178
Kampala

Dear Madam,

RE: UGANDA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION 28TH ANNUAL REPORT TO PARLIAMENT

In accordance with Article 52 (2) of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) is mandated to publish periodic reports on its findings and submit annual reports to Parliament on the state of human rights and freedoms in the country. It is, therefore, in fulfilment of this mandate that the UHRC has the honour to present its 28th Annual Report on the state of human rights in 2025.

This report comprises 13 chapters on different thematic issues and areas that the UHRC monitored in the reporting period. These include: Human Rights Implications of the 2025/2026 General Elections in Uganda; The Right to Personal Liberty: Applicability and Implementation of the 48-Hour Rule; Corporal Punishment by Clan Leaders in Uganda: A Case Study of the Lango Sub-Region; Artificial Intelligence and the Human Rights Implications; Drug and Substance Abuse in Uganda; Mental Health and Human Rights Concerns; The Right to Health: Cancer and its Human Rights Implications in Uganda; and Human Rights Developments and Concerns in 2025.

Chapters 9-12 highlight UHRC Interventions in Complaints Management, including investigations and tribunal hearings; Interventions on Monitoring Human Rights; Interventions in Research, Education and Documentation; as well as Finance and Administration. Chapter 13 assesses Uganda's performance in Reporting Obligations to International and Regional Human Rights Mechanisms in 2025.

This Report, therefore, presents a carefully-conducted and useful assessment of the state of human rights in the country in 2025. It also gives an appraisal of previously identified challenges and recommendations and takes note of the progress made by the Government of Uganda in respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights.

We call upon Parliament, the Executive, and all institutions of the Government to consider and implement the recommendations contained in the report. We are fully convinced that implementation of recommendations will greatly enhance the protection and promotion of human rights in the country.

For God and My Country,

Hon. Mariam Wangadya
CHAIRPERSON, UGANDA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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Acronyms

ACFIM	Alliance for Finance Monitoring	CID	Criminal Investigation Directorate
ACHPR	African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights	CILS	Complaints Investigations and Legal Services
ACJHR	African Court of Justice and Human Rights	CNS	Central nervous system
ACME	African Centre for Media Excellence	COVID-19	Coronavirus disease (2019)
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child	CPS	Central Police Station
ACTV	African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims	CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
ADC	African Digital Compact	CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
ADHD	Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder	CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
ADR	Alternative dispute resolution	CESCR	Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
AFCON	Africa Cup of Nations	CSAM	Child sexual abuse material
AI	Artificial intelligence	CSO	Civil society organisation
APRM	African Peer Review Mechanism	D/ASP	Deputy/Assistant Superintendent of Police
AR	Arua	DIHR	Danish Institute for Human Rights
AU	African Union	DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
BFP	Budget Framework Paper	DPP	Director of Public Prosecutions
BHR	Business and Human Resources	DTR	Digital Transformation Roadmap
BVVKs	Biometric voter verification kits	EC	Electoral Commission
CAT	Convention Against Torture, Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	ECCMIS	Electronic Case and Court Management Information System
CCTV	Closed-circuit television	ECD	Early childhood development
CDOs	Community Development Officers	EOC	Equal Opportunities Commission
CED	International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance	FDC	Forum for Democratic Change
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	FHRI	Foundation for Human Rights Initiative
CEHURD	Centre for Health, Human Rights and Development	FIDA-U	Uganda Association of Women Lawyers
CERD	Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination	4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution
CG	Capital grant	FP	Fort Portal
CHWs	Community Health Workers	F/Y	Financial year
		GBV	Gender-based violence
		GCM	Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
		GFEAI	Global Forum on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence

GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit	JLOS	Justice, Law and Order Sector
GOU	Government of Uganda	KMP	Kampala Metropolitan Police
GRF	Global Refugee Forum	KLA	Kampala
GRO	Gulu Regional Office	LASPNET	Legal Aid Service Providers Network
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus	LC	Local Council
HMIS	Health Management Information System	LDCs	Library and documentation centres
HPV	Human papillomavirus	LGBTQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer
HRAPF	Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum	LINACs	Linear Accelerators
HRBA	Human rights-based approach	LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
HRC	Human Rights Committee	LRC	Law Reform Commission
HRD	Human rights defenders	LRO	Lira Regional Office
HRO-E	Human Rights Officer-Education	MAK-CAD	Makerere University Centre for Artificial Intelligence
HURINET	Human Rights Network	MDAs	Ministries, departments and agencies
HURNJ-U	Human Rights Network for Journalists-Uganda	MBR	Mbarara
IARC	International Agency for Research on Cancer	MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	MOFPED	Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	MOGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	MOH	Ministry of Health
ICRMW	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families	MOJCA	Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs
ICT	Information and communication technology	M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
ID	Identity card	MPS	Ministerial Policy Statement
IEC	Information, education and communication	NAPHR	National Action Plan on Human Rights
IMC	Inter-Ministerial Committee	NAPs	National Action Plans
IOM	International Organization for Migration	NCCP	National Cancer Control Plan
IRCU	Inter-Religious Council of Uganda	NCD	Non-communicable disease
ISO	International Organization for Standardization	NCDC	National Curriculum Development Centre
ITU	International Telecommunication Union	NCHRTD-U	National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Uganda
JJA	Jinja	NDA	National Drug Authority
		NDP (IV)	(Fourth) National Development Plan
		NGO(s)	Non-governmental organisation(s)
		NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
		NITA-U	National Information Technology Authority – Uganda

NMP	National Migration Policy	SPECT-CT	Sing photo emission computed tomography
NPA	National Planning Authority	SRT	Soroti
NPHC	National Population and Housing Census	SSP	Senior Superintendent of Police
NRM	National Resistance Movement	TB	Tuberculosis
NSGE	National Strategy for Girls Education	T/C	Trading centre
NUP	National Unity Platform	UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
OAS	Organization of American States	UCC	Uganda Communications Commission
OC	Officer in-charge	UCI	Uganda Cancer Institute
ODPP	Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions	UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights	UHRC	Uganda Human Rights Commission
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe	UCRNN	Uganda Child Rights NGO Network
PACE	Police and Crime Evidence Act	ULRC	Uganda Law Reform Commission
PBS	Programme-Based Budgeting System	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
PET	Positron Emission Tomography	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
POMA	Public Order Management Act	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
PPTA	Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder	UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
PWDs	Persons with disability	UPDF	Uganda People's Defence Forces
RDC	Resident District Commissioner	UPF	Uganda Police Force
RIA	Regulatory impact assessment	UN	United Nations
RPC	Regional Police Commander	UNBS	Uganda National Bureau of Standards
RSAs	Resident State Attorneys	UNSAI	Uganda National Self-Advocacy Initiative
RWC	Refugee Welfare Council	UPR	Universal Periodic Review
SAGE	Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment	UPS	Uganda Prisons Service
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals	UWA	Uganda Wildlife Authority
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence	VHTs	Village Health Teams
SIG	Special interest groups	WHO	World Health Organization
SIP	Strategic investment plan		

About The Uganda Human Rights Commission

VISION

A society that observes human rights.

MISSION STATEMENT

To protect and promote fundamental human rights and freedoms in Uganda for sustainable development.

CORPORATE VALUES

FAIRNESS

ACCOUNTABILITY

INTEGRITY

RESPONSIVENESS

PROFESSIONALISM

MANDATE

The functions of the Commission as per Article 52 (1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995, are as follows:

- (a) To investigate, at its own initiative or on a complaint made by any person or group of persons against the violation of any human right;
- (b) To visit jails, prisons, and places of detention or related facilities with a view of assessing and inspecting conditions of the inmates and make recommendations;
- (c) To establish a continuing programme of research, education and information to enhance respect of human rights;
- (d) To recommend to Parliament effective measures to promote human rights including provision of compensation to victims of violations of human rights, or their families;
- (e) To create and sustain within society the awareness of the provisions of this Constitution as the fundamental law of the people of Uganda;
- (f) To educate and encourage the public to defend this Constitution at all times against all forms of abuse and violation;

- (g) To formulate, implement, and oversee programmes intended to inculcate in the citizens of Uganda awareness of their civic responsibilities and an appreciation of their rights and obligations as free people;
- (h) To monitor the Government's compliance with international treaty and convention obligations on human rights; and
- (i) To perform such other functions as may be provided by law.

Article 52 (2) requires the Commission to publish periodic reports and submit annual reports to Parliament on the state of human rights and freedoms in the country.

Article 52 (3) states that in the performance of its functions, the Uganda Human Rights Commission shall:

- (a) Establish its operational guidelines and rules of procedure;
- (b) Request the assistance of any department, bureau, office, agency or person in the performance of its functions; and

- (c) Observe the rules of natural justice.
- Furthermore, Article 48 (1) of the Constitution grants the Commission an intervention role in situations where a State of Emergency has

been declared: “The Uganda Human Rights Commission shall review the case of any person who is restricted or detained under emergency laws.”

POWERS OF THE UHRC

Under Article 53 (1), the Commission has powers:

- (a) To issue summons or other orders requiring the attendance of any person before the Commission and the production of any document or record relevant to any investigation by the Commission;
- (b) To question any person in respect of any subject matter under investigation before the Commission;
- (c) To require any person to disclose any information within his/her knowledge relevant to any investigation by the Commission; and
- (d) To commit persons for contempt of its orders.

The UHRC may, if satisfied that there has been an infringement of a human right or freedom, order:

- (a) The release of a detained or restricted person;

Payment of compensation; or

- (a) Any other legal remedy or redress.

Independence of the Uganda Human Rights Commission

Article 54 states that the Commission shall be independent and shall not, in the performance of its duties, be subject to the direction or control of any person or authority.

Expenses of the Uganda Human Rights Commission

Article 55 provides that the Commission shall be self-accounting and all the administrative expenses, including salaries, allowances and pensions payable to persons serving with the Commission, shall be charged on the Consolidated Fund.

The Chairperson and other members of the Commission shall be paid such salaries and allowances as Parliament may prescribe.

Removal of a Member of the Uganda Human Rights Commission

Under Article 56, the provisions of the Constitution relating to the removal of a judge of the High Court from office shall, with the necessary modifications, apply to the removal from office of a member of the Commission.

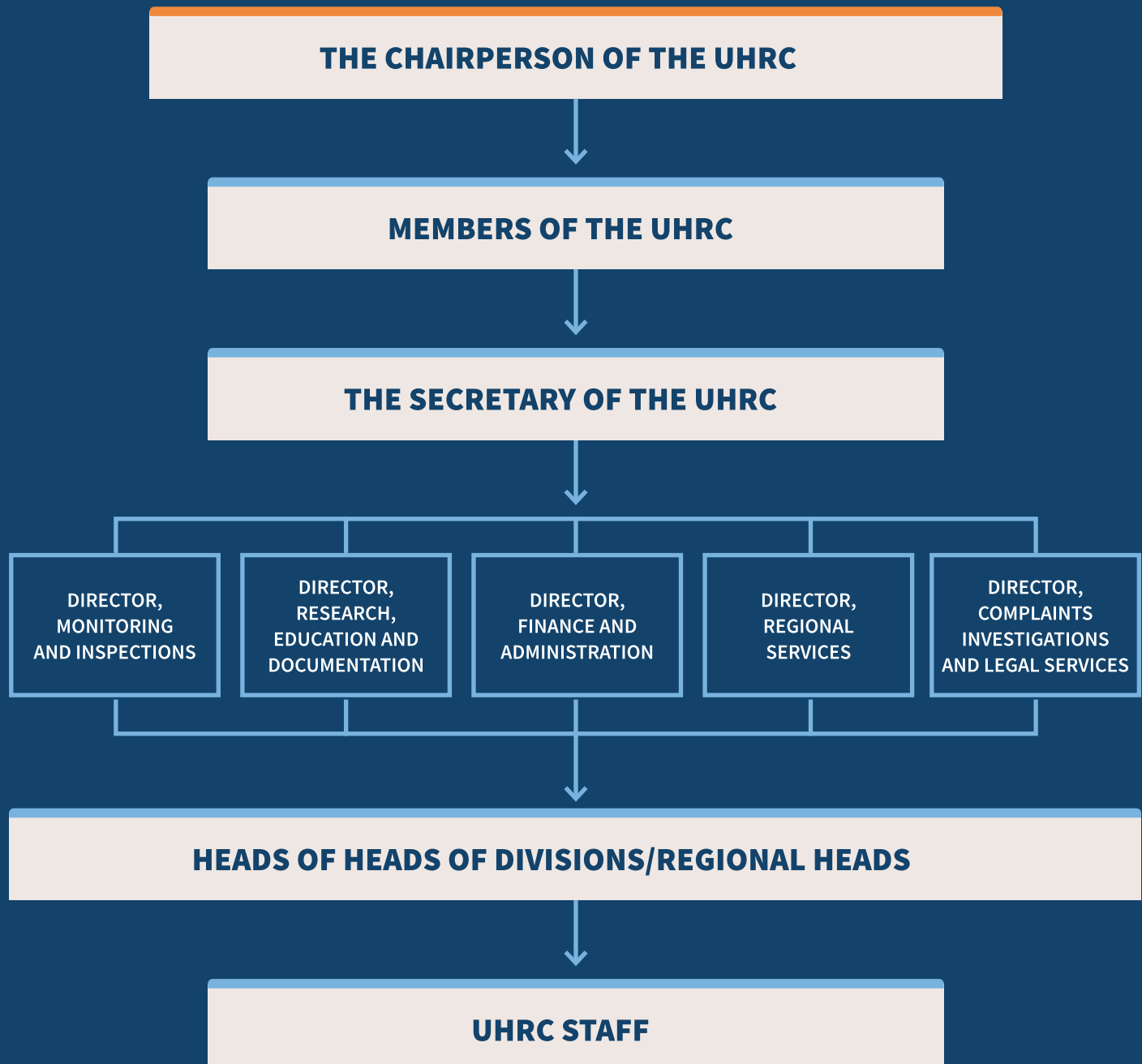
Staff of the Uganda Human Rights Commission

The Commission appoints officers and other employees in consultation with the Public Service Commission.

Other laws governing the Uganda Human Rights Commission

The laws that regulate and facilitate the performance of the functions of the Commission are the Uganda Human Rights Commission Act, 1997 and Uganda Human Rights Commission Rules of Procedures, 1998.

Uganda Human Rights Commission Organogram



Acknowledgements

The Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) is delighted to acknowledge another successful year in the discharge of its constitutional mandate. This mandate, dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights, has been advanced through a comprehensive array of initiatives. These include constructive collaboration with stakeholders and the public, systematic monitoring and research, effective resolution of complaints, and sustained efforts to safeguard the rights of vulnerable groups. Particular attention has been accorded to individuals requiring special protection due to age, disability, or socio-economic, political, and cultural circumstances.

The topics highlighted in the UHRC 28th Annual Report on the state of Human Rights and Freedoms in Uganda in 2025 include; the human rights implications of the 2025/2026 General Elections in Uganda; the right to personal liberty with emphasis on the applicability and implementation of the 48-Hour Rule constitutional requirement; corporal punishment by clan leaders in Uganda, with a case study of the Lango Sub-Region; artificial intelligence (AI) and its human rights implications; drug and substance abuse in Uganda; mental health and human rights concerns; the right to health with particular focus on cancer and its implications in Uganda; as well as broader human rights developments and concerns in 2025.

The report further underscores UHRC's interventions across critical areas, including complaints handling, monitoring of human rights, research, education and documentation, finance and administration, together with updates on Uganda's reporting obligations to international and regional human rights mechanisms.

In a special way, the Chairperson and members of the Commission are acknowledged for providing leadership, policy guidance and strategic direction which has been instrumental in the successful production of this report.

Appreciation is extended to the Directorate of Monitoring and inspections, drafts persons and members of the Editorial Board for their technical guidance. Members of the editorial board include; Hon. Crispin Kaheru (Member of the Commission), Hon. Jacklet Atuhaire Rwabukurukuru (Member of the Commission), Hon. Shifrah Lukwago (Member of the Commission), Hon. Lamex Omara Apitta (Member of the Commission), Hon. Col (Rtd) Stephen Basaliza (Member of the Commission) and Hon. Simeo Mwanga Nsubuga (Member of the Commission). Ms. Margaret Lucy Ejang (Secretary), Directors: Ms. Ruth Ssekindi, Ms. Pauline Nansamba Mutumba, Mr. Christopher Turigye, Mr. Kamadi Byonabye, Ms. Sarah Nakhumitsa, as well as Mr. Mukasa Charles, the Commission Planner, Ms. Hope Bagota, Senior Human Rights Officer, Ms. Priscilla Nyarugoye, Senior Human Rights Officer, Ms. Diana Akampereza, Senior Human Rights Officer Ms. Sarah Birungi , Human Rights Officer, Ms. Phiona Birungi Kemigisha, Registrar, Ms. Betty Enangu, Principal Human Rights Officer, Mr. Nicholas Ogwang, Principal Human Rights Officer, Ms. Christine Kabazira, Public Affairs Officer , Assistant Administrators: Ms. Anna Grace Akello, Ms. Ann Grace Timat, Mr. Jackson Odong.

The Commission further acknowledges and appreciates the contributions made by individuals and organizations during the Consultative process. The information that they provided helped to enrich and enhance this Annual report. These included the following; Dr. Daisy Nabasitu, ADPP, Head Human Rights Unit in the Office of the Directorate of Public Prosecution (ODPP), Ms. Lydia Nabiryo, Assistant Commissioner, Department Equity and Rights, Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development

(MOGLSD), SSP Dorothy Kyobutungi, Ag. CP Human Rights Department Uganda Police Force (UPF), Mr. Alfred Atahu, Head of Community Cancer Services, Uganda Cancer Institute (UCI) at Ministry of Health, Mr. Kenneth Okware Kalani, Ministry of Health. Ms. Dorothy Nakato, Executive Director, the Uganda National Self Advocacy Initiative (UNSAI), Mr. Kugonsa Enoch, Principal Legal Officer, Electoral Commission (EC), Mr. Mugarra Davis Program Manager Netherlands Institute for Multi-party Democracy (NIMD), Ms. Angela Nabwobwe Executive Director Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER), Dr. Kasirye Rodgers Executive Director, Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL), Mr. Ndifuna Mohammed Executive Director Justice Access Point (JAP), Ms. Owilla Abiro Mercy Progrm and Partnership Associate Africa Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC), Advocate Kenneth Muhangi, Partner KTA Advocates, Mr. Brian Sekayombya Principal Regulatory Officer-Medicines National Drug Authority (NDA), Dr. Brian Byamah B. Mutamba, Deputy Executive Director of Butabika National Referral Mental Hospital, Robert R Kirenga Executive Director National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders-Uganda (NCHRD-U). The Commission deeply appreciate all the assistance provided to the Commission in producing this report.

The Uganda Human Rights Commission would like to express its deepest gratitude for the financial support received from the Government of Uganda (GoU) for its invaluable financial support during the period under review which enabled the development of this annual report.

Yours faithfully,



Margaret Lucy Ejang

SECRETARY, UGANDA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Executive Summary

The 28th Annual Report of the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) presents Uganda's human rights and freedoms situation in 2025. The report covers both activities carried out and an assessment of human rights in the country in 2025. It is based on UHRC monitoring and documentation throughout the reporting year, complaints of human rights violations, and research on thematic human rights areas in 2025. The first eight chapters in the Commission's 28th Annual Report cover human rights concerns and implications in Uganda related to:

1. Human Rights Implications of the 2025/2026 General Elections in Uganda
2. The Right to Personal Liberty: Applicability and Implementation of the 48-Hour Rule
3. Corporal Punishment by Clan Leaders in Uganda: A Case Study of the Lango Sub-Region
4. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Human Rights Implications
5. Drug and Substance Abuse in Uganda
6. Mental Health and Human Rights Concerns
7. The Rights to Health: Cancer and its Human Rights Implications in Uganda
8. Human Rights Developments and Concerns

Other chapters cover the following:

9. Highlights of UHRC Interventions in Complaints Management
10. Highlights of UHRC Interventions on Monitoring Human Rights
11. Highlights of UHRC's Interventions in Research, Education and Documentation
12. Finance and Administration
13. Uganda's Reporting Obligations to International and Regional Human Rights Mechanisms in 2025

In the compilation of the report, the Commission referred to its findings during monitoring and inspections, as well as emerging issues during human rights education activities; information provided during interviews and the Commission's stakeholder engagements and consultative meetings; and, where relevant, references to secondary information. Below are the recommendations for each of the 13 chapters.

Recommendations

CHAPTER 01

HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS OF THE 2025/2026 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN UGANDA

1. The Electoral Commission of Uganda should strengthen the reliability and preparedness of the Biometric Voter Verification Kits by conducting comprehensive pre-election testing, deploying trained technical support teams at polling stations, and ensuring the timely delivery of functional backup equipment.
2. The Electoral Commission should strengthen voter education initiatives to ensure that voters clearly understand the correct way to mark ballot papers by simplifying ballot design and improving voter support mechanisms at polling stations.
3. The Uganda Communications Commission should adopt a targeted, proportionate, and time-bound approach to digital restrictions, ensuring that any limitation on access to online services during elections or emergencies is clearly justified and minimally disruptive.
4. The Uganda Police Force should ensure that all arrests and detentions during electoral periods strictly comply with the safeguards provided under Article 23 of the Constitution.
5. Law enforcement agencies should refrain from using excessive force during their operations.
6. The Electoral Commission should train its staff extensively, especially on the usage of the Biometric Voter Verification kits, to ensure their proper usage.

CHAPTER 02

THE RIGHT TO PERSONAL LIBERTY: APPLICABILITY AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 48 HOUR RULE

1. The Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs should advocate for statutory amendments that allow for the extension of detention periods in exceptional cases requiring more time for investigations.
2. The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development should ensure a substantial budgetary increase to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Police Force to facilitate the recruitment of more State Attorneys/Prosecutors and decentralisation of prosecution services, as well as investment in forensic investigation units to accelerate evidence gathering.
3. The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development should enhance the Judiciary's capabilities to strategically deploy additional judicial officers to high-volume jurisdictions, strengthen oversight through regular inspection of Police cells and conduct an intentional inquiry into detention timelines at the suspect's first appearance in court.
4. The Uganda Police Force should strengthen documentation and record-keeping¹, expand continuous training on human rights and constitutional obligations, and strengthen internal supervisory, oversight and disciplinary measures to hold officers accountable for unlawful detention.
5. The Uganda Police Force and Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions should strengthen alternative dispute mechanisms, including mediation, to provide timely resolution of disputes.

¹ Indicating accurate entry of arrest times.

CHAPTER 03

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT BY CLAN LEADERS IN UGANDA: A CASE STUDY OF LANGO SUB-REGION

1. The Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs and Parliament of Uganda should initiate a law reform process aimed at explicitly abolishing corporal punishment in all customary justice processes in Uganda.
2. The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development should allocate adequate funds to the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and Uganda Human Rights Commission towards strategic engagement of cultural institutions tailored towards capacity enhancement and mainstreaming of human rights-based approach principles into customary law practices in Uganda.
3. The Uganda Police Force, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, and the Judiciary should strengthen criminal accountability against clan corporal punishment in Uganda.

CHAPTER 04

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

The Ministry of Information and Communication Technology and National Guidance should:

1. Update the National Information and Communication Technology Strategy, including establishing a national oversight body to monitor the application of AI ethics and safeguards and implementation of relevant human rights standards and encourage the private sector involved in the development of AI to establish self-regulatory bodies that develop ethical guidelines for AI developers.
2. Enhance digital infrastructure connectivity and access to technological innovations through partnerships.
3. Address major structural impediments to accessing new and emerging technologies. Invest in education and training programmes to improve AI literacy among policymakers, developers, and the general public.
4. Promote the importance of family values and the protection of traditional social structures in digital content and regulations.
5. Support research initiatives, including human rights impact assessment studies focused on the ethical complications of AI, exploring ways to mitigate risks and enhance the positive impact of AI on human rights.

CHAPTER 05

DRUG AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN UGANDA

1. The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development should prioritise community and institutional sensitisation to uphold the right to health and wellbeing. This includes awareness campaigns in schools, workplaces, and communities aimed at preventing and detecting drug and substance abuse early, thereby protecting vulnerable groups from exploitation and harm.
2. The Ministry of Health should ensure the realisation of the right to access healthcare by strengthening treatment and rehabilitation services for individuals affected by drug and substance abuse. This obligation extends to making services available, accessible, and non-discriminatory, in line with Uganda's human rights commitments.

3. Parents and caretakers have a duty to safeguard the rights of children. They should provide guidance on the dangers of alcohol and drugs, and ensure physical, emotional, and financial support for children struggling with addiction, thereby protecting them from neglect and exploitation.
4. Uganda National Bureau of Standards should monitor and regulate the quality and quantity of alcohol produced in both formal and informal sectors to ensure consumer protection and reduce harmful products on the market.

CHAPTER 06

MENTAL HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS

1. The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development should increase the budgetary allocation for mental health services.
2. The Ministry of Health should prioritise the development and expansion of community-based mental health services across districts, ensuring that persons with mental illnesses can access care close to home.
3. The Ministry of Health should collaborate with the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Parliament and Uganda Law Reform Commission to review and amend Section 193 of the Penal Code Act, decriminalising attempted suicide.
4. The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development should allocate funds and implement community-based programmes that address the causes of mental illness, like poverty, abuse, trauma, substance use and social stressors.

CHAPTER 07

THE RIGHT TO HEALTH: CANCER AND ITS HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS IN UGANDA

1. The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with District Local Governments, Health Centre IVs and Regional Referral Hospitals should integrate routine cancer screening services into primary health care facilities across the country. The Ministry should also expand and sustain mobile outreach screening programmes targeting rural and hard-to-reach communities to promote early detection and timely referral for treatment.
2. The Government of Uganda, through the Ministry of Health and in partnership with the Uganda Cancer Institute, should accelerate the operationalisation, staffing, and full equipping of regional cancer diagnostic and treatment centres across the country, including dedicated paediatric oncology services. This will help decongest services at the Uganda Cancer Institute, reduce the urban-rural disparities in access to cancer care, promote earlier diagnosis and treatment, and ensure equitable access to quality cancer services for both adults and children in fulfilment of the right to health.
3. The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with Uganda Cancer Institute, and training institutions such as Makerere University College of Health Sciences, should increase investment in the training, recruitment, and retention of oncology specialists, including oncologists, oncology nurses, radiologists, pathologists, and radiotherapy technicians, to address the critical shortage of skilled personnel in cancer care.
4. The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with Palliative Care Association of Uganda and District Local Governments, should expand palliative care services to all districts. This should include strengthening supply chains to ensure a consistent and reliable availability of oral morphine and other essential pain-relief medicines for patients with advanced cancer.

5. The Uganda Bureau of Statistics, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Uganda Cancer Institute, and academic and research institutions, should strengthen national cancer registries and improve routine data collection and analysis on cancer incidence, treatment outcomes, and mortality. Regular updates of national cancer statistics will support evidence-based policy formulation, implementation and monitoring of interventions aimed at reducing cancer-related morbidity and mortality in Uganda.

CHAPTER 08

HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS AND CONCERNS IN 2025

1. The Government should ensure that all cases of civilians that were being handled by the General Court Martial are expeditiously transferred to civilian courts.
2. The Parliament should expeditiously enact the Legal Aid Bill to facilitate equitable access to justice and fair trials for all citizens, especially the vulnerable.

CHAPTER 09

HIGHLIGHTS OF UHRC INTERVENTIONS IN COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT

1. The Commission should scale up the full automation of the complaints management system to improve efficiency in case registration, tracking, and follow-up. This will reduce reliance on manual processes and enhance the timely handling of complaints.
2. A structured archiving system should be established for files of cases that have been concluded. This will improve record management, facilitate easy retrieval of information when needed, and ensure proper preservation of institutional records.
3. Uganda Human Rights Commission should intensify public awareness campaigns about the admissibility criteria for complaints handled by the Commission. This will help reduce the number of inadmissible complaints and enable the institution to focus on matters within its mandate.

CHAPTER 10

HIGHLIGHTS OF UHRC INTERVENTIONS ON MONITORING HUMAN RIGHTS

1. The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development should increase funding to the Uganda Prisons Service and the Uganda Police Force to enable them to build better structures, have facilities suitable for human habitation, and stop overcrowding.
2. Uganda Police Force should completely phase out the bucket waste disposal system.
3. The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development should urgently restore dignity, safety, and hope at Kampiringisa National Rehabilitation Centre by improving infrastructure, sanitation, water, nutrition, security, staffing, and rehabilitation programmes, providing essential supplies for children, and developing a long-term strategy to strengthen juvenile justice and rehabilitation services in Uganda.

CHAPTER 11**HIGHLIGHTS OF UHRC'S INTERVENTIONS IN RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND DOCUMENTATION IN 2025**

1. The Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs should fast-track the tabling to Cabinet and approval of the National Civic Education Policy so as to guide harmonised, coordinated, adequately funded, continuous and countrywide civic education and address current challenges in the delivery of civic education.
2. The promotional mandate of UHRC, which focuses on the prevention of human rights violations and abuses, should be given adequate priority through enhanced funding by the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.
3. Parliament should operationalise Article 212 (d) of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda to clearly spell out how the Uganda Police Force should cooperate with other security organs established under the Constitution.

CHAPTER 12**FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION**

1. The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and the Parliament of Uganda should increase funding to the Commission to bridge the funding gap to enable it to fulfil its wide constitutional mandate, effectively ensure follow-up and outreach, public relations, coordination and collaboration with all partners, and reporting. Specifically, the Commission requires adequate funding:
 - Ease office operations in the Regional and Field Offices.
 - Enable elevation of Mbale City Field Office to Regional Office status and carving out of Mubende Regional Office from Kampala Regional Office as provided for under the UHRC Strategic Plan 2025/26 to 2029/30.
 - Fill the existing staff vacancies.
 - Expand regional presence by opening additional Regional Offices.
 - Increase its fleet size to cover the current deficit and enhance effective operations
 - Make the required substantial investment in information and communication technology to enhance the Commission's initiatives and innovations for better service delivery.
 - Fully automate all the Commission's business processes.
 - Boost human resource activities that support staff welfare, and overall operational effectiveness.
2. The Ministry of Public Service should review the staff structure of the Commission to facilitate the Commission's expansion to the regions.
3. The Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs should review the requirement of short-term staff contracts in order to enhance staff morale.

CHAPTER 13

UGANDA'S REPORTING OBLIGATIONS TO INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS IN 2025

1. The Government of Uganda should consider issuing standing invitations to UN Special Procedures Mandate Holders, such as for Persons with Albinism and food security, to validate progress in these areas and compound human rights compliance in these areas.
2. The Government of Uganda should ratify pending treaties, especially those signed; for example, the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance, 2006 and the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights regarding abolition of the death penalty.
3. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs should continue tracking and following up on the implementation of pending voluntary pledges like the National Action Plan on Human Rights and recommendations made by treaty bodies to enhance the promotion and protection of human rights in the country, especially the Hague Convention on Inter-Country adoption.

01

Human Rights Implications of the 2025/2026 General Elections in Uganda



1.1	Introduction.....	2
1.2	Legal and institutional framework governing elections.....	2
1.3	Overview of the 2025/2026 General Elections	3
1.4	Human rights concerns during the electoral period	6
1.5	Recommendations	16
1.6	Conclusion	16

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The conduct of periodic, free and fair elections is a cornerstone of constitutional democracy and the realisation of civil and political rights. The right of citizens to participate in the governance of their country either directly or through freely chosen representatives as guaranteed under Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and Article 13 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR).

At the national level, the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda vests sovereignty in the people under Article 1 and guarantees the right to vote under Article 59. Articles 60–62 establish the Electoral Commission (EC) as an independent constitutional body mandated to organise and supervise regular, free and fair elections.

Pursuant to Article 52 (1) (h) of the Constitution, the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) is mandated to monitor the Government of Uganda (GOU)'s compliance with international human rights obligations. In fulfilment of this mandate, the Commission monitored the 2025/2026 electoral cycle before, during, and after polling day, with particular focus on the enjoyment of civil and political rights.

While the electoral process reflected administrative progress, the UHRC documented several human rights concerns arising from the pre-election, polling-day, and post-election phases, as will be assessed in this chapter. The rest of the UHRC findings from the entire election process will be included in a Special Election Report.

1.2 LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK GOVERNING ELECTIONS

Uganda's electoral process is governed by a multi-layered legal framework comprising international, regional and domestic instruments.

1.2.1 International and Regional Standards

Uganda is a State Party to key human rights instruments that impose obligations relating to democratic governance and electoral integrity, including: The UDHR (Article 21); The ICCPR (Articles 19, 21 and 25); The ACHPR (Article 13); The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (Articles 17–19).

These instruments require that elections be periodic, genuine, conducted by secret ballot, and based on universal and equal suffrage. They also obligate States to protect freedoms of expression, assembly and association, which are indispensable to meaningful electoral participation.

1.2.2 National Legal Framework

At the national level, the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, in Article 1, talks about the sovereignty of the people and the power exercised through regular, free, and fair elections. Articles 71–72 regulate political parties and organisations. Article 59 guarantees the right to vote for every citizen aged 18+, and mandates the State to take the necessary steps to enable registration and voting, including the obligation to accommodate PWD. The constitutional framework is supplemented by: the Electoral Commission Act; the Presidential Elections Act; the Parliamentary Elections Act; the Political Parties and Organisations Act; and

the Public Order Management Act. Collectively, these laws regulate voter registration, candidate nominations, campaigns, polling procedures, dispute resolution, and the conduct of political actors and security agencies.

1.3 OVERVIEW OF THE 2025/2026 GENERAL ELECTIONS

The 2025/2026 General Elections were conducted within the constitutional framework of the Republic of Uganda and overseen by the EC.

The EC has a broad Constitutional mandate to ensure regular, free and fair elections, organise and supervise elections and referenda, compile and maintain the voters' register, demarcate constituencies, conduct voter education, hear and determine election complaints and declare results. It is required to hold presidential, parliamentary, and local government elections within specified timeframes generally within the first 30 days of the last 122 days before the expiration of the relevant term.

This mandate is primarily derived under Article 61 of the Constitution, which mandates the Commission to compile, maintain, and update the national voters' register; demarcate electoral boundaries; and ensure that electoral processes are carried out in accordance with the law. The Commission's work is further guided by several key statutes, including the Electoral Commission Act, the Presidential Elections Act, the Parliamentary Elections Act, and the Local Governments Act, which collectively establish procedures for the management of national and local electoral processes.

The 2025/2026 General Elections covered presidential, parliamentary, and local government positions. The EC reported 21,649,068 registered voters across 50,739 polling stations nationwide. The Table below shows the different elective positions.

Table 1: Elective Positions at a Glance

PRESIDENTIAL 1 seat - nationwide Elected by simple majority (50%+1), with a run-off if needed.	
NATIONAL PARLIAMENT 529 total seats	
353	Directly Elected MPs — one per constituency, first-past-the-post
146	District Woman Representatives — one per district, women-only candidates
30	Special Interest Groups (SIGs)
5	Youth (2 female, 3 male)
5	Persons with Disabilities (2 female, 3 male)
5	Workers
5	Elders (2 female, 3 male)
10	Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF/Army)
LOCAL GOVERNMENT 10,717 positions total	
146	District/City Chairpersons
2,191	Elected Councillors
71,214	Village Chairpersons
+ Reserved seats (women, youth, PWD)	

Source: Electoral Commission of Uganda



Staff of UHRC Gulu Regional Office preparing to observe Presidential and Parliamentary elections on Election Day. © UHRC

1.3.1 Human Rights Context of the 2025/2026 Electoral Cycle

The UHRC deployed 121 observers, comprising Members of the Commission and staff, to 990 polling stations across 78 of Uganda's 146 districts. Observation was conducted through the Commission's 12 Regional Offices located in Arua, Kampala, Gulu, Fort Portal, Hoima, Jinja, Kabale, Lira, Masaka, Mbarara, Moroto, and Soroti. Through this process, the UHRC observed areas of growth and concern, as highlighted below.

1.3.1.1 Timely Release and Revision of the Electoral Roadmap

The EC played a central role in the 2025/2026 elections by planning and scheduling the electoral timeline, managing voter registration and education, regulating political parties, coordinating election logistics, supervising polling and vote counting, and handling disputes. By providing clear guidance, ensuring transparency, and enforcing compliance with electoral laws, the Commission ensured an orderly and credible electoral process, fostering public confidence.

The UHRC commends the EC for the timely release and revision of the 2025/2026 Electoral Roadmap. Early publicising enhanced predictability, transparency and stakeholder preparedness. Adherence to publicised timelines contributed to administrative orderliness and reduced

uncertainty. It provided a significant advantage to key stakeholders, including political parties, candidates, CSOs, development partners, and voters, by allowing sufficient time for planning, voter education, resource mobilisation, and compliance with electoral timelines. This contributed to greater transparency, preparedness, and confidence in the electoral process.

1.3.1.2 Increased stakeholder engagement

The EC continuously engaged political parties, CSOs, security agencies and media actors through consultations and technical briefings on a larger scale than during previous elections. Changes to the road map were explained through press briefings and stakeholder meetings. Towards Election Day, press statements were issued on a weekly basis. This promoted transparency and fostered shared responsibility for peaceful elections.

1.3.1.3 Distribution of polling materials

Polling materials were delivered on time at the majority of polling stations observed, save for a few delays recorded in Kampala, Wakiso, and Mukono, with some materials arriving as late as 10:00 am. The Commission noted the persistent delays in the delivery of polling materials in Kampala and the surrounding areas.

1.3.1.4 Deployment of Biometric Voter Verification Kits (BVVKs)

The EC procured 109,142 Biometric Voter Verification Kits (BVVKs) from Sim Valley Company for UGX 268.38 billion.² The purpose of the BVVKs was to enhance transparency and electoral integrity, with each polling station designated at least two kits (primary and backup). Advance procurement and public demonstration of biometric verification technology represented a forward-looking effort to strengthen electoral integrity and reduce multiple voting. Public demonstrations enhanced public awareness and transparency.

1.3.1.5 Accessibility for vulnerable persons

The UHRC noted that the EC identified polling station locations that were accessible to all persons or voters, including older persons, PWD, expectant mothers, among others. For instance, the UHRC observed that elections were conducted in polling stations located on open grounds such as school compounds, churches, football fields, and other open flat grounds that were generally accessible. The UHRC, however, noted that in Moroto and Nakapiripirit, some areas were inaccessible, with voters walking long distances from the mountains to the lowlands to vote.

The UHRC further observed that the vulnerable persons, especially those who needed help, were supported by their personal helpers, while EC officials helped or assisted those who did not have personal helpers.

1.3.1.6 Management of the polling station by polling officers

The UHRC noted that there were about seven polling officials per polling station nationwide. They comprised of 1 Presiding Officer, 4 Polling Assistants, 1 Police Constable (for security and order) and 1 BVVK operator. Polling officials generally demonstrated professionalism by explaining voting procedures, identifying and recording the minimum number of voters (10)

required for poll opening, and relaying information from the EC.



Photos captured by the media showing the elderly and PWD casting their vote on Election Day. © New Vision



A polling agent at Magere Freedom Square verifies that the ballot box is sealed. © UHRC

² The Observer, 22 January 2026.

1.3.1.7 Polling day security

The security situation remained largely calm nationwide. The UHRC observed regular Police patrols around polling stations that did not interfere with voting. The deployment of multi-agency security personnel was visible and consistent with Article 212 of the Constitution. The conduct of security at each polling station was largely professional and non-intrusive.

Most security personnel were unarmed or lightly equipped. However, in a few areas of Kampala, Sembabule, and Mbarara, polling constables were observed carrying firearms. Each polling station was manned by at least two polling constables. The security personnel were largely professional and non-intrusive in the polling exercise.

The UHRC notes that careful calibration of security deployments remains essential to safeguard free participation.

1.3.1.8 Closing, counting, and tallying process

UHRC observed that vote counting and tallying were conducted in accordance with EC guidelines and procedures, in the presence of candidates' agents, voters, and observers. Tallying times varied across polling stations. Although most polling stations closed at 5:00 pm, counting and declaration of results extended beyond 8:00 pm at some locations. All candidates' agents present received copies of the declaration of results forms.

1.3.1.9 Increased political participation

The Commission observed a significant increase in the number of independent parliamentary candidates. While partly reflective of internal party dynamics, this development also demonstrates the exercise of the Constitutional right to stand for public office.

1.4 HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS DURING THE ELECTORAL PERIOD

While the elections were conducted within an established legal framework, the UHRC observed that several developments had significant human rights implications. These developments affected fundamental rights, including the right to life, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and association, the right to liberty, access to information, political participation, and equality before the law.

The analysis below highlights core human rights concerns and explains how they manifested across the electoral period.

1.4.1 Monetisation of Elections

Article 25 of the ICCPR, 1966, guarantees the right to participate in public affairs, vote, and be elected in genuine elections. The Parliamentary Elections Act, 2005, prohibits bribery and undue influence, which can include money inducements. Therefore, when candidates use money to buy votes or influence voters, they infringe on citizens' equal and genuine participation rights.

During the 2026 Ugandan general election cycle, the monetisation of politics was widely reported as a pervasive and corrosive feature, transforming the electoral process into a contest in which financial incentives heavily influenced voter behaviour and campaign dynamics. Analysts and political actors noted that winning candidates often needed substantial financial resources, with some estimates suggesting that candidates and parties required very large sums of money (i.e., hundreds of millions of Ugandan shillings) to be competitive in campaigns, especially for grassroots mobilisation and vote-getting activities.³

According to an analysis provided by Alliance for Finance Monitoring, the average campaign expenditure is approximately UGX 511 million for direct constituency Members of Parliament and UGX 256 million for District Woman Members of

3 'Elections 2026: Politicians need UGX 1bn to win' by Julius Odeke; 25 June 2025 (Observer Ug).

Parliament. A substantial portion of campaign funds is spent on logistics such as fuel, vehicles, posters, and billboards, as well as on cash donations and social contributions, including payment of constituents' medical bills and school fees. Most candidates rely primarily on personal resources to finance their campaigns.

The burden of monetisation of elections starts from the party primaries and continues even during the elective term of office, as elected leaders struggle to pay off debts accrued during campaigns. During the 2026 Ugandan general election cycle, candidates used substantial financial resources to influence voter behaviour and strengthen their campaigns. Money was spent on direct voter incentives such as cash handouts, food, and transport to rallies or polling stations, as well as on organising large-scale events, paying campaign agents, and producing promotional materials like posters, banners, and media advertisements. Candidates also leveraged funds to engage local leaders, support community projects, and form political alliances, while ensuring high voter turnout through logistics such as feeding supporters and arranging transport. These practices amplified the reach and visibility of well-funded candidates, giving them a significant advantage and highlighting how monetisation shaped the electoral process.

One of the presidential candidates, Maj. Gen. (Retired) Gregory Mugisha Muntu, warned that the excessive role of money excluded competent candidates who lacked resources and encouraged politics driven by cash rather than ideas, weakening democratic competition. Civil society and community leaders also decried the growing use of money in politics, noting that financial inducements and “brown envelope” cultures risked turning elections into auctions where voters expected material gain in exchange for support, a phenomenon that critics argued undermines trust in democratic processes.⁴

The monetization of elections where money is used to influence voters, candidates, and outcomes has serious implications for human rights. It undermines the right to political participation by giving unfair advantage to wealthy candidates and excluding capable but less-funded individuals, weakening principles of equality and non-discrimination. It also distorts the will of the people, compromising the right to free and fair elections as protected under democratic frameworks.

1.4.2 Use of Force



Gulu clashes between Hon. Robert Kyagulanyi and security operatives. © Internet

During the campaign period, reports emerged of violent dispersal of rallies and confrontations between security forces and supporters of certain candidates. There was security presence at all presidential candidates' rallies, although occasionally security at opposition political rallies was observed to play an intrusive role and in some cases contrary to the guidelines as issued by the EC.

While the State has a duty to maintain public order, enforcement actions must comply with constitutional standards governing the use of force. Media reports indicated the use of live ammunition, teargas, batons, water cannons, attack dogs and other forms of force against civilians attending or organising rallies.⁵

⁴ 'Kigezi Women Leaders Decry Use of Money in Politics' by Lukia Nantaba; 7 October 2025 (Nile Post).

⁵ <https://www.miragenews.com/turk-decries-ugandas-pre-election-crackdown-1582521/>.

On 6 December 2025, at Awere Grounds in Gulu City, there were clashes between supporters of presidential candidate Hon. Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu and security personnel as he attempted to hold a campaign rally in Gulu City. Media reports indicated that security forces attacked his rally venue in Gulu City and blocked him from accessing the area. This was followed by beatings, vandalism of campaign materials, and injuries to civilians. One civilian death was reported in related violence that day.

Following the clashes at Awere Grounds, the EC urged calm, emphasising the importance of peaceful political engagement and reminding all parties to respect the law and civic rights. In a statement issued by the Chairperson, Justice Simon Byabakama, on 7th December 2025, noted

“

a duly nominated Presidential candidate is free to traverse any part of Uganda to campaign, provided he or she is acting in line with the law and guidelines issued by the EC. If there is any disagreement on any matter on the campaign trail, the Commission appealed for dialogue, not violence and confrontation.”⁶

the EC Chairperson

Security agencies explained their actions as measures to maintain public order and enforce regulations governing political rallies. Local community elders condemned the violence, calling on both supporters of Hon. Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu and security personnel

to exercise restraint, prioritise dialogue, and avoid actions that could endanger the safety and cohesion of the Gulu community. They also encouraged mediation between political actors and authorities to ensure that future campaign activities proceed peacefully.

Following this incident, the UHRC Chairperson directed the UPF to investigate the matter and to hold those responsible security personnel to account. In her statement, she further condemned the use of excessive force, stressed the importance of upholding citizens’ constitutional rights to peaceful assembly and political participation, and called on all political actors and security agencies to exercise restraint. She also urged the EC and local authorities to work together to prevent future violations and to guarantee that campaign activities are conducted in a safe and lawful manner.

Similarly, on 27 November 2025, security forces used live bullets, tear gas, and water cannons while dispersing crowds of opposition leader Hon. Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, blocking access to the rally venue at Kamuli Umea Primary School in Kayunga district. Hon. Kyagulanyi, together with his team, was said to be in breach of traffic rules and to have disrupted traffic, and some of his supporters were said to have been on rooftops. During that time, an accident occurred.⁷



National Unity Platform (NUP) presidential candidate Robert Kyagulanyi. © Daily Monitor

⁶ Statement issued by the EC Chairperson Justice Simon Byabakama on 7 December 2025.

⁷ <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/special-reports/elections/2026-elections-violence-rocks-bobi-wine-kayunga-campaign-rally>.

Furthermore, the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) presidential candidate, Hon. Nathan Nandala Mafabi, also faced several confrontations with security forces during his campaign activities. The confrontations and standoff stemmed from attempts to restrict campaign movements, resulting in temporary disruptions of planned political gatherings.

One of the incidents occurred in Iganga Town in Eastern Uganda in October 2025, where security personnel from the UPF deployed along his planned campaign route and attempted to compel the candidate and his convoy to alter their planned route through the town. This led to a tense standoff between his campaign team and the officers before the convoy was eventually allowed to proceed with the campaign activities. A similar confrontation was reported a few days later in Jinja City, where the Police attempted to restrict his campaign convoy from accessing parts of the city centre during a scheduled campaign tour. Another incident occurred in Mbarara City, Western Uganda, in December 2025, when security forces reportedly blocked access to a venue planned for a campaign rally.

The disruption of a duly nominated candidate's campaign activities implicates the rights to freedom of assembly, political participation, and expression. While the Police cited disagreements over campaign routes, the reported use of force was disproportionate to the objective of maintaining public order.

The dispersal of assemblies must be lawful, necessary, and proportionate. Use of excessive or selectively applied force undermines public confidence and inhibits political participation.

1.4.3 The Right To Life

The right to life is enshrined in Article 6 of the ICCPR and Article 22 of the Constitution of Uganda. Specifically, Article 22 (1) states that, "No person shall be deprived of life intentionally, except in

execution of the sentence of a court in respect of a criminal offence under the laws of Uganda." This Article guarantees the fundamental right to life and outlines the conditions under which it may be lawfully taken, such as in cases of criminal punishment, but only through a legal process. One of the most serious human rights concerns arising from the 2025/2026 elections is the right to life.

Loss of life was also reported in the districts of Luweero, Amuria, Butambala, Sembabule, Bukedea, Mukono, Mityana, Wakiso, and parts of Kampala during election-related incidents.

On 26 June 2025, during the National Resistance Movement (NRM) party primaries in Sembabule, Fred Ssemuusi, a resident of Ntyazo village, was shot dead by soldiers as they dispersed a political rally Hon. Ssekikubo had convened at Kirega trading centre to drum up support ahead of the parliamentary primaries. The rally had turned chaotic at 5:00 pm on Thursday after Hon. Ssekikubo's supporters clashed with those of his rival Brig (Rtd) Emmanuel Rwashande.⁸

On 6 December 2025, at Awere Grounds in Gulu City, there were clashes between supporters of presidential candidate Hon. Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu and security personnel as he attempted to hold a campaign rally. One civilian death was reported in related violence that day.

In a related incident, on 1st January 2026, a civilian who was identified as Saidi Eteru was shot dead and at least five others were injured when soldiers identified as attached to Hon. Jeje Odongo's security detail opened fire at a gathering in Amuria District's Orungo County. This occurred during an encounter between supporters of Hon. Odongo and supporters of rival National Resistance Movement (NRM) flag-bearer Teddy Anyuk Osire. The Resident District Commissioner confirmed that the soldiers involved were part of Odongo's security contingent and that they fired on the crowd, resulting in at least one fatality and multiple injuries.⁹

⁸ 'MP Ssekikubo calls off rallies after UPDF soldiers kill NRM supporter'; Friday, 27 June 2025 (Daily Monitor).

⁹ 'Civilian shot dead as UPDF soldiers attached to minister open fire in Amuria'; Friday 2 January 2026 (Daily Monitor).



Chairperson UHRC together with the IGP and EC Chairperson at a press conference on elections and Human Rights. © UHRC

On 16th January 2026 in Butambala District, post-election violence was reported, which resulted in the deaths of seven individuals following clashes between security forces and civilians after polling day. The clashes started overnight after voting ended, and reports say security forces opened fire on a group of people who had gathered as vote counting was ongoing. At least seven people were killed, and several others were injured amid the violence. Dozens were later arrested in connection with clashes and alleged attacks on security personnel. The names of the deceased include Sarah Naggayi, Aisha Nabukenya, Milly Nampereza, Ruth Nakanjako, Nsamu Abdulnoor, Shafik Miiró and Davis Basaliza.¹⁰

Conflicting accounts emerged regarding the circumstances of the shootings. Opposition leaders alleged that security forces opened fire on civilians gathered at a private residence of Hon. Muwanga Kivumbi, while Police authorities maintained that security personnel responded to unrest involving attacks on a tally centre and Police facilities. Regardless of the differing narratives, the use of lethal force resulting in multiple deaths raised serious concerns regarding necessity, proportionality, and accountability.

In Luweero District, election-related violence resulted in the death of three civilians following protests over the handling of election results. The unrest occurred on the evening of 15 January 2026 in Luweero Town Council, after security personnel reportedly blocked members of the public from accessing the Luweero Islamic Primary School polling station, where vote counting was taking place. The move triggered protests from residents and supporters of opposition candidates who alleged a lack of transparency in the tallying process. Demonstrators reportedly erected barricades and burnt tyres along the Kampala-Gulu highway, leading to clashes with security forces. During the confrontation, security forces dispersed the protesters using tear gas and live ammunition. Three civilians, Sarah Nagayi (36), Ibrahim Sserubiri (18), and Robert Sseninde, were killed by gunfire, while 34 individuals were arrested in connection with the protests.¹¹

On 16 January 2026, election-related riots were reported in Mityana Municipality after the announcement of the results. Security forces intervened to disperse crowds, and one person was reportedly shot dead, and several others were injured.¹² According to the Wamala Regional Police Spokesperson, SSP Lameck Kigozi, said only three

¹⁰ 'MP Kivumbi charged with terrorism, remanded'; Friday, 23 January 2026 (Daily Monitor).

¹¹ <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/three-killed-34-arrested-in-luweero-protests-over-election-results>.

¹² 'Police Dismiss Claims of High Death Toll in Wamala Election Protests'; Wednesday, 21 January, 2026 (Nile Post).



Chairperson with the EAC observers. © UHRC

people died in isolated incidents across Mityana, Kiboga and Kyankwanzi, contrary to reports circulating on social and mainstream media suggesting a much higher death toll.¹³

On Wednesday, 4 February 2026, the ruling National Resistance Movement chairperson for Aligoi subcounty, Bukede district, died following a clash between supporters of rival candidates over alleged ballot stuffing during the LC3 (Local Councillor III) chairperson and councillor elections. Samson Wamimbi was allegedly attacked by supporters of independent candidate Ben Ecaat, who was contesting against NRM's Robert Khaukha for the LC chairperson seat.¹⁴

Any death arising from electoral processes triggers the State's obligation to conduct prompt, independent and transparent investigations. The recurrence of fatal incidents during elections underscores the urgent need to strengthen safeguards against excessive use of force.

1.4.4 Digital Rights

Access to information is protected under Article 19 of the ICCPR and Article 29 of the Constitution. Any limitation must satisfy the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality.

Two days before polling, the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) suspended nationwide public internet access. This action significantly affected freedom of expression, access to information, media reporting, and digital communication.

Whereas UCC justified the shutdown as a measure to prevent misinformation and protect national security, the broad and indiscriminate nature of the restriction affected approximately 17 million internet users and disrupted mobile money services relied upon by rural communities.

Human rights principles require that any limitation on freedom of expression and access to information be targeted, necessary and proportionate. The scale of the shutdown and the number of users affected suggest that the measure significantly interfered with citizens' ability to communicate, access information, and participate fully in the democratic process during the election period.

The following were the effects of the Internet shutdown.

- **Limited access to election information:** As a result of the internet shutdown, many voters could not access online news, making it harder to follow developments during the election

¹³ As above.

¹⁴ 'NRM Chairperson killed in Bukedea fight over alleged ballot stuffing'; Thursday 5 February, 2026 (Daily Monitor).

period. Journalists and election observers were also unable to upload reports or verify information online.

- **Disruption of media and election monitoring:** Journalists, CSOs, and election observers could not transmit reports, photos, or videos in real time, hampering their effectiveness in election reporting.
- **Economic disruption:** Businesses that rely on internet services, such as mobile money agents, online traders, and digital service providers, experienced interruptions in transactions and customer services.
- **Communication challenges:** As a result of the internet shutdown, citizens were unable to use popular messaging and social media platforms to communicate with family members, organise political activities or share information.

1.4.5 Civic Participation

Articles 19 and 22 of the ICCPR protect freedom of expression and association, which encompass the activities of NGOs and CSOs. The NGO Act, 2016, provides the NGO Bureau with the authority to regulate, register, and, in certain circumstances, suspend NGOs that violate laws or engage in activities deemed illegal or contrary to their mandate.

On 13 January 2026, two days before the general elections in Uganda, the NGO Bureau, a government agency under the Ministry of

Internal Affairs, ordered the suspension of several prominent rights, civic, and election-monitoring organisations. The suspensions affected organisations such as Chapter Four Uganda, Alliance for Election Finance Monitoring (ACFIM), Human Rights Network for Journalists-Uganda (HRNJ-U), National NGO Forum, National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders (NCHRD-U), Centre for Constitutional Governance, African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture

Victims (ACTV), and the African Centre for Media Excellence (ACME).

The suspension of these organisations by the NGO Bureau was officially justified on regulatory grounds. The Bureau cited alleged non-compliance with the NGO Act, 2016, operating without a valid registration, and engaging in activities considered political or outside their mandated scope. However, the timing of the suspensions just before polling day raised concerns among observers and civil society groups that the action was politically motivated, as these organisations have previously played an active role in elections and largely fall within the civil and political rights cluster.

1.4.5.1 Media restrictions

During the 2025/2026 general elections, there were reports of some media houses¹⁵ being excluded from covering Parliamentary sittings and specific individuals. The UHRC notes that such restrictions limit the rights of access to information and to press and media freedom, as provided under Article 29 of the Constitution.



Democracy dies in darkness. © Internet photo

¹⁵ Nation Media Group was banned from covering Parliamentary sessions in the run-up to the elections and advised to seek footage from the national broadcaster.

1.4.6 Malfunctioning of the Biometric Voter Verification Kits (BVVK)

In preparation for the January 15, 2026, elections, the EC's decision to procure Biometric Voter Verification Kits (BVVKs) and to plan for two kits per polling station was a forward-thinking initiative aimed at enhancing the accuracy and integrity of voter verification. The kits were intended to streamline the voting process, reduce instances of multiple voting, and modernise the electoral system. However, on polling day, the BVVKs functioned effectively in only a few districts, while widespread malfunctions across the country caused significant delays and disruptions.

Although the official starting time for voting was 7:00 am, in some districts polling commenced several hours later, with some stations opening only after 9:00 am. According to UHRC findings, most of the delays were attributed mainly to the malfunctioning of the BVVK. However, some delays were attributed to the late delivery of materials and other administrative challenges. In several instances, election officials were forced to revert to manual voter registers after biometric failures, further slowing the process and creating long queues that discouraged some voters from participating.

In response to the disruptions, the EC Chairperson instructed officials to use manual registers in many areas to ensure that voting could continue. While polling time was subsequently extended, the delays had already caused frustration and contributed to lower voter turnout. These events highlighted both the promise and the limitations of deploying technology in elections, emphasising the need for better testing, maintenance, and contingency planning for future polls.

1.4.7 Voter Turnout

The EC reported 21,649,068 registered voters, of whom 11,366,201 cast ballots for presidential and parliamentary candidates on polling day. This was at the 50,739 polling stations nationwide. While voter turnout during the 2021 “scientific” elections stood at 59.35%, it declined to 52.50% in the 2026 General Elections, a 6.85% decrease. Higher turnout was observed in rural areas than in urban centres, with particularly low participation in Kampala and Wakiso Districts. According to UHRC findings, factors contributing to low turnout included voter apathy and disillusionment, with many citizens expressing frustration over a perceived lack of competitiveness or a predetermined outcome. Technical and logistical issues, such as problems with biometric voter verification equipment and delays in opening some polling stations, also raised barriers to participation.

Table 2: Voter turnout 2006-2026

ELECTION YEAR	REGISTERED VOTERS	VOTES CAST	VOTER TURNOUT (%)	OBSERVATIONS
2006	9,095,603	5,469,125	60.2%	Turnout is relatively high; rural areas are more engaged than urban centres.
2011	12,022,200	7,529,000	62.6%	Slight increase in turnout; elections observed amid heightened political tensions.
2016	15,283,153	8,940,700	58.5%	Turnout declined slightly compared to 2011; urban voter participation was lower.
2021	19,610,000	11,630,000	59.35%	“Scientific” election with biometric verification; turnout stable despite pandemic challenges.
2026	21,649,068	11,366,201	52.50%	Decline of 6.85% from 2021; higher rural turnout, particularly low in Kampala and Wakiso; affected by BVVK malfunctions, delays, and other administrative issues.

Source: Electoral Commission

After the presidential and parliamentary elections, Uganda held local council (LC) and mayoral elections (e.g., LC3, LC5, councillor and mayoral polls), and the trend of low turnout not only persisted but worsened in many areas.



Vote counting at Boma Polling Station, Fort Portal Central Division, during the mayoral election. © UHRC

Voter turnout for LC III chairpersons, councillors, and other local posts was remarkably lower than the Presidential and Parliamentary polls, with some polling centres reporting only a handful of voters present even hours after voting materials were delivered. At some polling stations, there were reports of no voters at opening time, forcing officials to wait until the minimum number (10 registered voters) was reached to begin voting. Other local elections, such as for district chairpersons and mayors, saw similarly low engagement, with some stations having only a few dozen voters out of hundreds registered. Many voters attributed the lower turnout to working days. Decreasing voter turnout can signify deeper concerns of a lack of confidence in the electoral process.

1.4.8 Invalid Votes

The EC reported that 11,090,848 valid votes were cast, while 275,353 were invalid. This brings the total number of votes cast to 11,366,201, with invalid votes representing approximately 2.42% of the total. According to UHRC observations, many of the invalid votes resulted from incorrect marking of ballot papers or failure by voters to mark the ballot at all. Although the number of invalid votes remains significant, it reflects an improvement compared to the 2021 general elections, where 393,500 votes, representing 3.66% of the total votes cast, were invalid.

The reduction in the proportion of invalid votes suggests that there were some improvements in voter awareness and electoral processes compared to the previous election. However, the figure of 275,353 invalid votes remains considerably high, indicating that a large number of citizens who participated in the electoral process had their votes excluded from the final count. This points to underlying challenges such as limited voter education, difficulties understanding voting procedures, low literacy levels among some voters, or confusion caused by ballot paper design.

Table 3: Valid and invalid votes, 2006-2026.

ELECTION YEAR	TOTAL VOTES CAST	VALID VOTES	INVALID VOTES	INVALID VOTES (%)	OBSERVATIONS
2006	5,469,125	5,260,000	209,125	3.82%	Relatively high invalid votes, mainly due to incorrectly marked ballots.
2011	7,529,000	7,280,000	249,000	3.31%	Some improvement in ballot marking, but rural areas had higher rates of invalid votes.
2016	8,940,700	8,590,000	350,700	3.92%	Increase in invalid votes compared to 2011; partly attributed to voter confusion with ballot layout.
2021	11,630,000	11,236,500	393,500	3.66%	“Scientific” elections introduced biometric verification; invalid votes remained significant.
2026	11,366,201	11,090,848	275,353	2.42%	A reduction in the proportion of invalid votes suggests improved voter awareness, but underlying issues such as low literacy, ballot confusion, and inadequate voter education persisted.

Source: Electoral Commission

While the decline in the percentage of invalid votes is a positive development, the persistence of a relatively high number of invalid ballots remains a concern because it undermines the principle that every vote cast should count. In closely contested elections, such a number of invalid votes could potentially influence electoral outcomes.

1.4.9 Working conditions for polling officials and agents

During the 2026 general elections, polling stations across the country were set up in open spaces without adequate shelter. This decision was driven by the EC’s efforts to enhance transparency, following concerns that indoor polling stations in previous elections limited visibility and oversight. While the intention was to promote openness and reduce opportunities for manipulation, it exposed election officials and party agents to the scorching sun and harsh weather conditions for prolonged periods. Polling personnel typically began their duties early in the morning and remained on duty until late in the evening. The extended exposure to extreme heat, often under direct sunlight, posed serious health risks, including dehydration, heat exhaustion, fatigue, and overall physical strain. These conditions highlighted the delicate balance between transparency and humane working conditions in electoral management.



Election agents under the hot sun. © New Vision

1.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Electoral Commission of Uganda should strengthen the reliability and preparedness of the Biometric Voter Verification Kits by conducting comprehensive pre-election testing, deploying trained technical support teams at polling stations, and ensuring the timely delivery of functional backup equipment.
2. The Electoral Commission should strengthen voter education initiatives to ensure that voters clearly understand the correct way to mark ballot papers by simplifying ballot design and improving voter support mechanisms at polling stations.
3. The Uganda Communications Commission should adopt a targeted, proportionate, and time-bound approach to digital restrictions, ensuring that any limitation on access to online services during elections or emergencies is clearly justified and minimally disruptive.
4. The Electoral Commission should consider holding all elections on the same day to prevent voter apathy and low voter turnout for local government elections. However, in the event that this is not feasible, the Electoral Commission could consider organising general elections starting with the lower local council elections and progressing upwards to end with the presidential and parliamentary elections in order to sustain the voters' interest at all levels of elections.
5. The Uganda Police Force should ensure that all arrests and detentions during electoral periods strictly comply with the safeguards provided under Article 23 of the Constitution.
6. Law enforcement agencies should refrain from using excessive force during their operations.
7. The Electoral Commission should train its staff for a timeframe of not less than two weeks, especially on the usage of the Biometric Voter Verification kits, to ensure their proper usage.

1.6 CONCLUSION

The 2025/2026 general elections were conducted within a structured constitutional framework and demonstrated administrative improvements in planning and stakeholder engagement. Concerns remain, particularly regarding human rights and security in the context of elections. Strengthening accountability mechanisms, safeguarding digital freedoms, ensuring proportional security deployment, and enhancing public trust remain essential for future electoral cycles.

02

The Right to Personal Liberty: Applicability and Implementation of the 48-Hour Rule



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The right to personal liberty demands that no person be held arbitrarily, and that all stakeholders be held accountable when they fail to honour this obligation.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The right to personal liberty is central to the protection of human dignity, bodily integrity, and access to justice. This right ensures that a person who is arrested is promptly brought before a judicial officer in order that the court may decide without delay on the lawfulness of his detention and order his release if the detention is not lawful.¹⁶ This right ensures freedom from arbitrary arrest, unlawful detention, and unreasonable restrictions by the State.

Article 23 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda¹⁷ sets out specific circumstances under which personal liberty may be restricted. One of the cardinal safeguards in this Article is the requirement that any person arrested must be brought before a competent court as soon as possible, but in any case, not later than 48 hours from the time of arrest.¹⁸ The 48-hour requirement serves as a constitutional mechanism to ensure prompt judicial oversight, prevent arbitrary detention, ensure protection against abuse or cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment, coerced confessions, uphold due process, and promote public confidence.

This chapter analyses the implementation of the 48-hour rule and its impact on access to justice. This analysis arises from findings of UHRC monitoring visits, complaints received¹⁹ and adjudicated, as well as engagements with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP), Uganda

Police Force (UPF), Uganda Prisons Service (UPS), and CSOs working to promote access to justice. It also contextualises systemic challenges, identifies patterns of human rights violations, highlights promising practices, and proposes strategic recommendations.

2.2 LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

1.2.1 International legal framework

Article 9 (3) of the ICCPR provides that “everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest or detention. No one shall be deprived of his liberty except on such grounds and in accordance with such procedure as established by law.”

Further, Article 9 (3) provides that “anyone arrested or detained on a criminal charge shall be brought promptly before a judge or other officer authorised by law to exercise judicial power and shall be entitled to trial within a reasonable time or to release...”

Article 10 also provides that “all persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person.”

Article 14 (2) provides that “everyone charged with a criminal offence shall have the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law.”

¹⁶ Article 3 UDHR, Article 9 ICCPR.

¹⁷ Article 23.

¹⁸ Article 23 (4) (b).

¹⁹ The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995, as amended, Article 52 (1) (a) and (b).

General Comment No. 35 of the UN Human Rights Committee on the Right to Personal Liberty underscores that prolonged detention without judicial review is inherently incompatible with the right to liberty.²⁰ Paragraph 10 provides that the right to personal liberty is not absolute, but deprivation thereof must be carried out with respect to the rule of law.

1.2.2 Regional legal framework

Article 6 of the ACHPR²¹ provides that *“every individual shall have the right to liberty and to the security of his person. No one may be deprived of their freedom except for reasons and conditions previously laid down by law. In particular, no one may be arbitrarily arrested or detained.”*

Article 7 (1b and d) provides that *“every individual shall have the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty by a competent court or tribunal; and the right to be tried within a reasonable time by an impartial court or tribunal.”*

The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights has interpreted Article 6 to require that arrested persons be taken before courts within a reasonable time, and any delay must be strictly justified. By this, the final determination of unlawful detention is left to the courts to determine by reasons advanced by detention authorities.

The guideline on the conditions of Arrest, Police Custody and Pre-Trial Detention in Africa (Luanda Guidelines) provides that detention must always be an exceptional measure of last resort, and efforts should be made to divert minor crimes from the justice system.²² Further, they provided rights of an arrested person, which include the right to apply for release on bail or bond, to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest before a competent

judicial authority.²³ Under these guidelines, states are required to prescribe a detention limit of no more than 48 hours, extendable in certain circumstances by a competent judicial authority.²⁴

In line with these commitments in these instruments, Uganda has a duty to respect, protect, and fulfil safeguards relating to personal liberty, including the 48-hour constitutional limit.

1.2.3 National legal framework

Article 23 (1) provides that *“no person shall be deprived of personal liberty except in execution of court orders, upon reasonable suspicion that person has committed or is about to commit an offence, preventing the spread of an infectious or contagious disease, education and welfare of a person below 18 years, unlawful entry or expulsion from Uganda and under any other circumstances authorised by law.”*

Further, under Clauses 2 to 9, persons arrested, restricted or detained have a right to be kept in a place authorized by law, be informed immediately the reasons for arrest in a language he or she understands, his or right to a lawyer of their choice, be brought before court not later than 48 hours, right to apply for bail, compensation, and an order of habeas corpus.

Article 28 states that in the determination of civil rights and obligations or any criminal charge, a person shall be entitled to a fair, speedy and public hearing before an independent and impartial court or tribunal established by law. This Article illustrates the importance of expeditious investigations and timely disposal of a person, either by the Police or a court, to prevent breaches of fundamental rights.

20 United Nations Human Rights Committee (HRC), General comment no. 35, Article 9 (Liberty and security of person), 16 December 2014, CCPR/C/GC/35.

21 Of 1986.

22 Guideline 1 (a-c) and 6 (a).

23 Guideline 4 (a-b) and 7 (a).

24 Guideline 7 (b) (ii).

According to Article 23, the right to personal liberty is not absolute, but it should be harmonised with reasonable limitations. Article 43 (1) of the Constitution provides that “in the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms prescribed in this Chapter, no person shall prejudice the fundamental or other human rights and freedoms of others or the public interest.”

Pursuant to Article 212 (a-d) of the Constitution, the Police is charged with a mandate not only to maintain law and public order but to serve as a primary guarantor in the protection and promotion of fundamental rights and freedoms.

Section 25 (1) of the Police Act²⁵ provides that: *“a Police officer on arresting a suspect without a warrant shall produce the suspect so arrested before a magistrate’s court within forty-eight hours unless earlier released on bond.”*

In addition, the Criminal Procedure Code Act Cap 13 contains detailed procedures relating to arrest, custody, disposal or pretrial procedures and the initiation of criminal proceedings.²⁶ And, in order to safeguard fundamental rights, the Judicature Act Cap 13,²⁷ the Magistrates’ Courts Act Cap 16, and the Human Rights (Enforcement) Act 2019 entrust judicial officers with the duty to ensure that decisions and orders regarding detentions are made speedily when a person has applied and believes the detention is unlawful.²⁸ Sections 7 and 8 of the Further Human Rights (Enforcement) Act obliges courts to prioritise human rights issues once they arise during a criminal trial.

Additionally, section 15 (4) (a), (e), (f), (g) and (h) thereof provides for the unconditional release of a person unreasonably detained beyond forty-eight hours after arrest without being brought before

a competent court, the procedure leading to his or her detention was irregular or unlawful; (f) there are no justifiable reasons for his or her continued detention; (g) his or her non-derogable rights have been infringed upon; or (h) his or her continued detention amounts to a miscarriage of justice.

2.3 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE 48-HOUR CONSTITUTIONAL REQUIREMENT

The 48-hour requirement is designed as a protective mechanism to maintain the balance between the State’s interest in law enforcement and the individual’s right to liberty. It applies to all persons arrested and detained, irrespective of status.²⁹ It stresses that suspects must be presented before a court³⁰ and lawful detention can only continue with the evidence of a court order.³¹ It exists to ensure that the Police exercise their powers of arrest responsibly and judicial oversight within the 48-hour period protects suspects from abuse or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, coercion and unlawful detention. It serves as an early check on arrest legality. The rule also reinforces Article 28 (1) and (3) which guarantees the right to fair and speedy hearing before an independent and impartial court or tribunal, and the right to be presumed to be innocent until proved guilty or until that person has pleaded guilty. It requires transparency in Police operations,³² enabling suspects to apply for bail in court,³³ and ensuring that the prosecution promptly evaluates evidence before filing charges. Article 126 (2) (a and b) of the Constitution provides that “in adjudicating cases of both a civil and criminal nature, justice shall be done to all irrespective of their social or economic status and that justice shall not be delayed.”

²⁵ Cap 303.

²⁶ See, Sections 2, 5, 6, 10, 14, 15, 17, 18, 23, 42, 88 and 87.

²⁷ Sections 33 and 34 of the Act grant the High Court power to grant remedies and reliefs, including orders of Habeas Corpus.

²⁸ Section 3.

²⁹ Article 21 (1) of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda provides “all persons are equal before and under the law in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life and in every other respect and shall enjoy equal protection of the law.”

³⁰ Article 23 (b) (b).

³¹ Article 23 (1) (c).

³² Article 23(2 and 4) of the Constitution: “... to be kept in place authorised by law and...if not earlier released to be brought to court “as soon as possible...”

³³ Article 23 (6) of the Constitution of Uganda.



UHRC staff interact with the Police officers and members of the public regarding a suspect who had been beaten badly by the mob at Parombo Police Station in Nebbi District. © UHRC

2.4 FINDINGS

The Commission is mandated under the Constitution to investigate complaints of human rights violations and provide appropriate remedies, monitor places of detention, and make recommendations.³⁴

In 2025, the Commission registered 133 complaints alleging violations of the right to liberty, while 52% of the tribunal's awards were in matters of violations of the right to personal liberty.³⁵

The Commission observes that the right to personal liberty is often limited in highly volatile interfaces between the public and law enforcement officers. The Police uses its powers to maintain law and order, depending on the prevailing circumstances, especially in cases of law breaches. It is in such circumstances that arrests are made. Oftentimes, arrests are made upon the commission of a crime or upon suspicion of its commission, but without in-depth investigation. Suspects are often released, hence an increase in recidivism, heightened risks to victims' safety

and erosion of public trust in the justice system. The UHRC notes that quality investigations reduce cases of mob action, enhance court efficiency and protect innocent suspects/persons from arbitrary detention.

2.4.1 High levels of non-compliance with the 48-hour constitutional rule

Monitoring visits and the review of complaints received by the Commission in 2025 indicate that cases of violation of the right to personal liberty were the most frequently reported.³⁶ During inspections of places of detention, suspects were found to have been detained for between two and nine days beyond the constitutional period.³⁷

2.4.2 Preventive action against mob action

The UHRC found that the Police in the districts of Ntoroko, Bundibugyo, Hoima, Lira, were reluctant to release suspects on Police bond for fear of mob action by communities. Many suspects denied bond were habitual offenders, those arrested by communities for offences like incest, defilement, rape, theft, burglary, etc. The 48-hour limit was

³⁴ Article 52(1), (2) and 53(2) of the Constitution of Uganda.

³⁵ See, 23 *supra*.

³⁶ 35% of complaints registered were in regard to violation of the right to personal liberty.

³⁷ Some of the districts where suspects were found to have been over detained include the districts of Apac, Kyegegwa, Bundibugyo, Buhweju, Oyam, Dokolo, Bata T/C, Ogur, Aboke, Kole, Kwania, Amach T/C and Lira.



Hon. Mariam Wangadya, Chairperson, UHRC, Mr Lino Anguzu, Director of Public Prosecutions, and technical staff on a courtesy call to strengthen institutional collaboration in the protection and promotion of human rights. © UHRC

unfeasible because the Police had to guard against extrajudicial violence. As a preventive measure, prolonged detention undermines the principle of the presumption of innocence.

2.4.3 Over detention at police posts

The Uganda Human Rights Commission found that suspects, particularly those accused of cases murder, defilement, aggravated defilement, rape, robbery/aggravated robbery, and kidnap with intent to murder, treason, and terrorism, human trafficking, were often detained beyond the 48-hour constitutional limit. While police posts routinely refer capital cases to stations, delays persist, leading to prolonged detention. The Commission attributed this partly to a misunderstanding among some officers, who view the 48-hour rule as flexible depending on the offence. Police authorities, however, argue that the limit should be revised to allow exceptions for capital and complex cases that require more time for investigation.

2.4.4 Causes of non-compliance with the 48-hour rule

The Commission has noted the following challenges to compliance with the 48-hour rule.

a) Inadequate staffing of the ODPP

The office of the DPP faces a severe shortage of Resident State Attorneys (RSAs) to sanction files and prosecute cases at the district level.

Available RSAs cover multiple districts, yet suspects could not be produced before the court until files were perused and/or sanctioned. UHRC learnt that of 135 districts, 95 have ODPP, giving a coverage of 79%.³⁸ Many districts, including Bugweri, Iganga, Luuka, Bugiri, Kaliro, Terego, Madi-Okollo, Arua, Obongi, Omoro, Butebo, Buyende, Luuka, Namutumba, Bugweri, Kikuube, Hoima, Buliisa, Kiryandongo, Kibaale, Kakumiro, Kagadi, Ntoroko, Rukiga, Rubanda, Mitooma, Mbarara, Napak, Nabilatuk, Amudat, Karenga, Alebtong, Dokolo, Kwanja and Kole, did not have RSAs and prosecutors. The ODPP is significantly short of RSAs and prosecutors. This ODPP's staff deployment does not match the expansion of courts and Police stations in the country. This directly impacts constitutional guarantees such as the right to a fair hearing under Article 28 and the right to personal liberty. The ODPP faces greater challenges in prosecuting capital/complex crimes, as it must ensure that serious offenders are kept away from society and that the law is upheld. Another risk posed was the release of dangerous offenders, which compromised public safety. Expectations of the public and the state from the prosecution's office are so high that they cannot make mistakes.

The Commission found that where investigations were ongoing, a holding charge would suffice to present an accused in court. However, this approach has faced sharp criticism because it breaches the intention of Article 23 (4) (b) of the Constitution.

³⁸ Presentation By Hon. Lady Justice Jane Frances Abodo, the Director of Public Prosecutions, at The 25th Annual Judges' Conference on "A People Centred Approach to Justice: Administration of Justice Through the Lens of Stakeholders," 8 February 2024.

b) Operational challenges

Adequate funding is necessary to fulfil the Police's mandate. The UHRC found that many Police stations and posts, including Buhweju, Biharwe, Buvuma, Busana, Ndejje, Kiwoko, Kapeka, Nyimbwa, Rubirizi, Mitooma, Kasanda, Kigezi, Masafu, etc., said that investigations could not be completed within the permissible timeframe due to limited forensic capacity, lack of fuel, motorcycles, and vehicles to visit scenes of crime.

The UHRC established that investigations at Police stations, such as Kyegegwa, Kyakataka, Kyenjonjo, Katara, Masafu, Dabani, Osukuru, Purong, Koch Li, Ongako, Bobi, and Elegu, were frequently delayed due to a lack of motorcycles and vehicles to reach crime scenes. This was coupled with a lack of fuel, which was often supplied by complainants. This challenge has created public frustration, leading populations to adopt alternative mechanisms to resolve conflicts.

UHRC takes cognisance that investigating these crimes requires adequate time to collect evidence (including witness protection and coordination), forensics services or analytical laboratories, and experts or technical analysis of evidence, to enable timely disposal and a speedy trial for suspects. Currently, the directorate of government analytical laboratories faces a high case load, which is causing delays, breaches of constitutional rights, compromised chain of evidence, and, in most cases, denial of justice (for crimes committed in rural areas), as well as dismissal of cases by courts.

c) Systemic challenges

Poor coordination between the investigative and prosecutorial agencies and lack of adequate and modern investigative tools also make compliance with the 48 hours technically impossible, especially in complex cases such as terrorism, murder, rape and defilement.

Various Police authorities in Mbarara, Bundibugyo, Ntoroko, Bugogo, Buhweju, and Kazo Districts said that investigating offences such as murder, rape, aggravated defilement, aggravated robbery, kidnap with intent to murder, treason, terrorism and human trafficking, as well as homosexuality, takes more than 48 hours to be investigated, especially when collecting evidence. Many disclosed that they were aware of the constitutional provisions, but they could not release suspects on bond until the necessary evidence was secured to make a formal arraignment and remand from court.

These challenges largely contribute to non-compliance, which equally undermines public trust in the criminal justice system. This also facilitates bribery to facilitate investigations in which complainants have a strong desire to see the alleged perpetrators punished. The Judiciary, the ODPP, the UPF, and the UPS have all acknowledged these systemic challenges. For example, the Judiciary has recently operationalised five High Court circuits in Entebbe, Lugazi, Wakiso, Kumi, and Patongo, bringing the total to 29 across the country to improve service delivery. Unfortunately, the corresponding number of State Attorneys is yet to be provided for.³⁹

Currently, magisterial areas have increased from 82 to 157, and magistrates' courts increased from 396 to 696, all aimed at strengthening access to justice, reducing the distance and time people take to reach courts and enhancing efficiency. The Commission notes that this effort does not match the Police's and ODPP's capacity to work with the Judiciary to effectively administer justice.

d) Limited access to legal representation

Access to legal representation while in custody enables suspects to understand their rights even when in conflict with the law. It is, therefore, important that even suspects who are unable to afford a lawyer have legal representation and support, especially in securing a Police bond.

39 The DPP speaking at an engagement with the Chairperson of the UHRC indicated that to meet their current human resource requirements, they would require the recruitment of over 200 prosecutors.

The Pro Bono/Legal Aid Service Providers, including State briefs, Uganda Christian Lawyers Fraternity, FIDA-U, Legal Aid Project of the Uganda Law Society, Refugee Law Project, Justice Centres Uganda, Foundation for Human Rights Initiative, among others, provide this support but are overwhelmed by their caseloads. These legal aid service providers also face financial constraints, which may limit the scope of their interventions.

e) Poverty, ignorance and social barriers

UHRC observed that a large population in rural areas lacked awareness of their right to a Police bond. In some cases, refugees are held longer in detention due to challenges such as a language barrier and an inability to provide sureties.

f) Abuse of authority

The Commission also noted that in some cases, officers abuse their authority by demanding payment for a bond and threatening suspects deemed to be difficult or disrespectful. Suspects noted that they felt reluctant to challenge a powerful officer or individual, as it would lead to more harassment and compromise personal safety.

2.5 JUDICIAL INTERPRETATION OF THE 48-HOUR RULE

The Commission acknowledges that courts have consistently treated non-compliance with the 48-hour rule as a constitutional violation. As a result, several judgments have been passed in favour of litigants upholding their rights against unlawful detention. For example:

In Sserunkuma George William and Kalyesubula

Edward V. Attorney General,⁴⁰ the 1st and 2nd applicants were arrested and detained for four days at Jinja Road Police Station on allegations of trespassing on someone's land. They requested to be arraigned and they were told that they would be taken in due course. The applicants argued that when they were kept in cells, they were traumatised, and this violated their constitutionally guaranteed human rights contrary to Article 23 (3). Respondent counsel argued that the delay to take the applicants to court was occasioned by the need to ascertain relevant facts and securing a handwriting expert.

The court observed that Article 23 (1) (c) was not open to justify continued detention after 48 hours, the option available was either to produce a person before court or release them on bond. Failure to produce a person within the prescribed time owing to incomplete investigations was grossly faulty and ought not to be raised at all. The court further observed that it was not correct to routinely arrest suspects before investigations are conducted, or a person could be charged and produced in court on prima facie evidence.

Courts have also affirmed that evidence obtained during unlawful detention may be excluded,⁴¹ and that individuals unlawfully detained may be entitled to compensation.⁴² Requests for extended time to investigate or collect evidence have often been unsuccessful.

The Constitution under Article 23 permits detention in circumstances including in execution of an order of court, or suspected to be of unsound mind, public health/safety, preventing unlawful entry, expulsion or extradition and any other authorised by law. This implies that the state, the Police or prosecution may present any other condition to justify detention. However, the same

⁴⁰ Misc. Cause 102/2021.

⁴¹ Section 15, Human Rights (Enforcement) Act, Cap 12.

⁴² *MBR-167-2009 (MUGABO JAMES -V-ATTORNEY GENERAL)* – Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC)/Mugabo James I v Attorney General (Complaint No. MBR/167/2009) [2025] UGHRC 14 (24 March 2025) – ULII, the Tribunal found that Mr Mugabo's detention at Kiboga and Rushere Police Station for 16 days was arbitrary and illegal as the state did not explain their actions. As such, general damages of UGX 6,000,000 were awarded for the violation of his right to personal liberty. Similarly, in UHRC/FPT/041/2012: *Turyamureba Esau –and–Attorney General, UHRC/FPT/43/2010: Mujuni Fred & Rugaju Augustine –and– Attorney General, UHRC/JJA/13/2018 Bakaki Yusufu –and–Attorney General, UHRC/SRT/132/2005: Woswama Fred & Musika Richard –and– Attorney General, Kirungi Simon, Kwikiriza Pergrin, Nsungwa Proscovia, Kyaligonza Fred –and– Attorney General(unreported), the Tribunal found that the complainants' detention beyond the constitutional limit was unjustified, arbitrary and illegal. The Attorney General was ordered to pay UGX 42,600,000 (Forty-two million, six hundred thousand Uganda shillings only) as damages.*

Article under Clause (4) (b) requires that persons arrested be brought before the court as soon as possible, but not later than 48 hours from the time of their arrest.

The Police Act under Section 25 (1) reiterates Article 23 (4) (b) and entrusts the Police with a duty to grant a suspect a bond upon request.

However, Section 25 (1) above does not apply to a person arrested in one Police area and is to be questioned in another area where the offence was committed. The time limit for the transfer of such a suspect is within 7 days of the offence being committed.⁴³ Further, the Act provides that if the above measures are not complied with, any person may apply to the magistrate within 24 hours, who shall order his or her release unless charges.⁴⁴

Section 14 of the Criminal Code Procedure Act Cap 122, provides “that a Police officer making an arrest without a warrant shall, without necessary delay and subject to the provisions of this Act as to bail, take or send the person arrested before a magistrate having jurisdiction in the case or before an officer in charge of a Police station.”

These sections of the Police Act and the Criminal Code Procedure Act present options to the arresting officer, which do not fulfil the requirements of Article 23 (4) (b) of the Constitution. Courts continue to reiterate that the Police and the prosecution have a constitutional obligation to respect the time-bound safeguards set in the law. Adherence to the 48-hour rule remains a mandatory constitutional duty.⁴⁵

2.6 APPLICATION OF THE 48-HOUR RULE IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS

To address the question of whether capital and complex crimes require extended investigation time, UHRC notes that various jurisdictions approach the matter differently.

a) United Kingdom

Section 41 (1) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE)⁴⁶ provides:

“...a person shall not be kept in Police detention for more than 24 hours without being charged.”

Subsection 2 (a) (i and ii) refers to the time the person is to be charged as relevant time or the time at which that person arrives at the relevant Police station, or the time 24 hours after the time of that person’s arrest. In cases where the person is arrested outside England and Wales, 24 hours start ticking the moment the person arrives at the first Police station in the Police area in England or Wales in which the offence for which he was arrested is being investigated or the time after that person’s entry into England and Wales.

Under Subsection 7, a person in Police custody who has not been charged must be released at the expiry of 24 hours, on bail, if the preconditions for bail are satisfied.

In addition, where further detention may be necessary, Section 42(1) of the Act provides that:

“Where a Police officer of the rank of superintendent or above who is responsible for the Police station at which a person is detained has reasonable grounds for believing that

- (a) the detention of that person without charge is necessary to secure or preserve evidence relating to an offence for which he is under arrest or to obtain such evidence by questioning him;*
- (b) an offence for which he is under arrest is an indictable offence; and*
- (c) the investigation is being conducted diligently and expeditiously, he may authorise the keeping of that person in Police detention for a period expiring at or before 36 hours after the relevant time.”*

⁴³ See, Section 25(2) of the Police Act.

⁴⁴ Section 25(3) of the Act.

⁴⁵ Article 23(4) of the Constitution.

⁴⁶ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1984/60/contents>.

This implies that the officer can only authorise (in their own authority) further detention for 12 hours to keep the person in Police custody. If the Police wish to extend the time, they should obtain authorisation from court. It also means that when authorising further detention for a suspect being transferred between Police areas, due regard must be given to the total distance and the estimated travel time required for the journey.⁴⁷ The suspect detained under these conditions is entitled to be informed of the reasons for further detention and to access a lawyer. Where a suspect has not been charged, he or she is entitled to be released on bail, regardless of whether he or she meets the conditions for release.⁴⁸

Further, Section 43 subsections 1 to 22 permit a Police constable to apply to a magistrate's court for a warrant of further detention of a suspect who has not been charged. The Police must satisfy the court that the detention is justified, such that:

- (a) the offence for which one is charged is indictable, investigations are being conducted diligently and expeditiously;
- (b) the detention without charge is necessary to secure evidence; or
- (c) preserve evidence relating to an offence for which he is under arrest or to obtain such evidence by questioning him.

The suspect must be produced in court for a hearing and must be represented. The hearing must be held within 36 hours of the application, and it must be proved that the application was made before that time. The court shall dismiss that application, and the person in custody shall be released if not charged, cautioned or notified of intention not to be prosecuted.

Furthermore, warrants of further detention may be applied for by a constable upon satisfying the magistrates' court that grounds are

justified, and the court may extend the period not longer than 36 hours or end later than 96 hours after the relevant time. Where a warrant is granted, it shall be endorsed with a note of the period of the extension, and where it is denied, the suspect shall, if not charged, be released, released on bail, cautioned or given a notice in writing not to be prosecuted. See: Section 43 of the Act.

Section 41(3) of the Terrorism Act 2000⁴⁹ requires a person detained to be released not later than the end of the period of 48 hours beginning with the time of his arrest. Once an application for extension is made by the Police, the magistrates' court can grant up to 7 days from the time of arrest and 14 days extension from the time of arrest.⁵⁰ Unlike Uganda, which applies a strict 48-hour limit for all crimes, the UK uses a flexible detention timeline. For standard offences, the UK limit is 24 hours, 36 hours, or 96 hours, but for terrorism, the detention period can be extended up to 14 days with approval from a judge. In Uganda, the 48-hour rule is absolute. And since terrorism cases must be tried by the Uganda High Court, the Police often rush to charge suspects to legally move them from Police custody to secure custodial remand.

b) India

The India Constitution under Article 22 (2) provides that:

"Every person who is arrested and detained in custody shall be produced before the nearest magistrate within a period of twenty-four hours of such arrest, excluding the time necessary for the journey from the place of arrest to the court of the magistrate and no such person shall be detained in custody beyond the said period without the authority of a magistrate."

The above Article does not apply to persons classified as enemy aliens or those arrested or detained under any law for preventive detention.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Subsections 2 and 3.

⁴⁸ Subsections 5, 6 and 10.

⁴⁹ Terrorism Act 2000.

⁵⁰ Paragraph 36(3) (b) (ii) of Schedule 8 of Terrorism Act and Section 57(1) of the Protection of freedoms Act 2012.

⁵¹ Clause 3 (a and b) of the India Constitution.

Further, Clause 4 of this Article bars any law on preventive detention from authorizing detention of a person for a longer period than three months unless an Advisory Board consisting of persons who are, or have been, or are qualified to be appointed as, Judges of a High Court satisfies themselves before the expiration of the said period of three months that there is in its opinion sufficient cause for such detention:

Clauses 5 and 6 thereof require that the person detained under preventive detention be informed as soon as possible of the grounds on which the detention order was made to afford him/her time to contest the order. However, the authority making such order is under no obligation to disclose facts he or she considers to be against the public interest.

In addition, Clause 7 places a duty on the Parliament to make law prescribing circumstances, the class or class of cases in which a person may be detained for a period longer than three months under any law providing for preventive detention without obtaining the opinion of an Advisory Board, the maximum period for which any person may in any class or classes of cases be detained under any law providing for preventive detention; and the procedure to be followed by an Advisory Board in an inquiry⁵².

The Indian law prescribes a 24-hour limit that explicitly excludes travel time and practical delays for court holidays, Uganda's Constitution sets a strictly inclusive 48-hour limit, although Section 25(2 and 3) of the Police Act provides for limits where the 48 hours is not complied with. In practice, Uganda's adherence to this 'absolute' provision is often undermined by logistical constraints and ongoing investigations.

c) Kenya

Article 49 (1) (f) of the Constitution of the Republic of Kenya, 2010, requires that of an arrested person be produced before a court *as soon as reasonably possible*, but not later than *twenty-*

four hours after being arrested; or if the 24 hours end outside ordinary court hours, or on a day that is not an ordinary court day, the end of the next court day; at the first court appearance, to be charged or informed of the reason for the detention continuing, or to be released on bond or bail, on reasonable conditions, pending a charge or trial, unless there are compelling reasons not to be released. Irrespective of the reason for the detention, Article 51 of the Constitution guarantees all detained persons fundamental rights and freedoms.

This standard has been observed by Kenyan courts, and strict adherence to the 24-hour requirement is emphasised, irrespective of the nature of the offence. For example:

In Patrick Muthii Muthoni -V. Republic [2018] KEHC 3824, the accused Patrick Muthii Muthoni was charged before the Principal Magistrate's Court Baricho, Criminal Case No. 589/2014 with the offence of gang rape contrary to section 10 of the Sexual Offences Act. The particulars of the offence are that on 6th/4/2014 at [particulars withheld] Falls in Mwea West Sub County within Kirinyaga County in association with others not before court intentionally and unlawfully caused their penis to penetrate the vagina of C M W.

During trial, the appellant pleaded guilty and he was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment. The accused appealed the conviction and sentence. One of the grounds was that the trial court failed to consider his constitutional rights violated under Article 49 (1) (f).

The court observed that there was no law that barred the prosecution of an accused person brought before court after expiry of 24 hours, because it was not designed to aid suspects avoid trials. The court further observed that allowing the appeal would be disproportionate and inappropriate since the delay was not too long to negate the accused's right to a fair trial under Article 50 of the Constitution. The court also noted that the accused's remedy lay in a claim for damages for the violations of his

52 Clause 7 (a-c).

constitutional right in a different forum.

In addition, Section 36 of the Criminal Procedure Code Act Cap 57 is to the effect that if a person is arrested for an offence other than murder, treason, robbery with violence, robbery, he may be released within 24 hours if it is impracticable to produce him before the court. Where a person is kept in custody, they should be taken to court as soon as practicable.

In support of the Criminal Procedure Code Act, the Security Laws (Amendment) Act 2014 permits a Police officer to apply to the court for an extension of time within which a suspect can be produced in court,⁵³ and if the court is satisfied that reasonable grounds for extension (such as protection of witnesses, complex investigations) are presented, grant a period not exceeding 30 days and a further period not exceeding 90 days.⁵⁴

The above case studies illustrate those laws of all four countries – Uganda, Kenya, the UK and India – provide for a short detention period of 24–48 hours. However, the extension period varies by country. In the UK and Kenya, the law allows judicially approved and supervised extensions within the Police station. India and Uganda’s laws focus on changing the suspect’s status to remand or preventive custody. This practice is led by charge first and investigate later, or in the interest of security or public interest, as illustrated by Articles 23 (1) and 43 of the Constitution of Uganda. While protecting public interest remains paramount, the law must evolve to provide procedural frameworks for serious offences, ensuring that lengthy investigations do not amount to a derogation of the right to personal liberty.

2.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance compliance with the constitutional guarantees on personal liberty, the Commission makes the following recommendations:

1. The Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs should advocate for statutory amendments that allow for the extension of detention periods in exceptional cases requiring more time for investigations.
2. The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development should ensure a substantial budgetary increase to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Police Force to facilitate the recruitment of more State Attorneys/prosecutors and the decentralisation of prosecution services, and investment in forensic investigation units to accelerate evidence gathering.
3. The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development should also enhance the Judiciary’s capabilities so that they can strategically deploy additional judicial officers to high-volume jurisdictions, strengthen oversight through regular inspection of Police cells and conduct an intentional inquiry into detention timelines at the suspect’s first appearance in court.
4. The Uganda Police Force should strengthen documentation and record-keeping⁵⁵, expand continuous training on human rights and constitutional obligations, and strengthen internal supervisory, oversight and disciplinary measures to hold officers accountable for unlawful detention.
5. The Uganda Police Force and Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions should strengthen alternative dispute mechanisms, including mediation, to provide timely resolution of disputes.

⁵³ Section 36(A) 2.

⁵⁴ Section 36(A) 7 and 10.

⁵⁵ Indicating accurate entry of arrest times.

2.8 CONCLUSION

The 48-hour rule remains one of the most critical constitutional safeguards of the right to personal liberty. It ensures effective judicial oversight, prevents arbitrary detention, and enhances the integrity of the criminal justice system. Although Uganda has established a strong legal and policy framework, persistent non-compliance with this rule continues to violate the rights of many suspects and weakens public trust in institutions.

As seen from various jurisdictions, exceptions to the strict application of the 48-hour rule may be necessary with justifiable reasons. There is, therefore, a need to provide for clear legal exceptions and procedural measures to prevent law enforcement officers from using discretion to infringe on the strict enforcement of the 48-hour rule as herein documented.

03

Corporal Punishment by Clan Leaders In Uganda: A Case Study Of The Lango Sub-Region



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Corporal punishment is the deliberate use of physical force to cause pain or discomfort as a form of discipline or punishment. It includes practices such as spanking, caning, or flogging, and can be applied in domestic, educational, or judicial settings..

3.1 Introduction

Corporal punishment, also known as body or physical punishment,⁵⁶ is the deliberate infliction of physical pain on the person of another, intended to cause some degree of pain, however light or discomfort, aimed at modifying certain undesirable behaviour.⁵⁷ The most common forms of corporal punishment include, but are not limited to, caning,⁵⁸ spanking,⁵⁹ flogging⁶⁰ and stocking.⁶¹ It may also involve kicking or burning plastic materials on someone's body parts, shaking, or throwing or scratching, pinching or biting, pulling the hair or boxing ears or forcing one to stay in an uncomfortable position or burning, scolding or forced ingestion.⁶²

In Uganda, corporal punishment was abolished, outlawed⁶³ and declared unconstitutional in the case of *Kyamanywa Simon Vs Uganda*⁶⁴ for being oppressive and repugnant as it contravenes Articles 24 and 44 of Uganda's Constitution. Despite the abolition, corporal punishment has persisted in some Ugandan societies, including the Lango Sub-Region, perpetrated by clan leaders under the authority of customary law. While the

right to culture is recognised under Article 37 of the Constitution, the enjoyment of this right is limited to less oppressive customary practices consistent with fundamental human rights and freedoms, human dignity and the Constitution.⁶⁵

Over the years, the UHRC has received complaints and also read media reports exemplifying the persistence of corporal sanctions by some clan leaders in the Lango Sub-Region with severe human rights consequences. It is against this background that UHRC considered this chapter in its 28th Annual Report to Parliament, highlighting the Lango Sub-Region as a case study. In drafting this chapter, the UHRC obtained and utilised information from the MOGLSD, consulted clan leaders and community members in Lango and the UPF, and reviewed complaints information internally available within the UHRC. This chapter consists of the introduction, the legal framework against the use of corporal punishment in Uganda; a situational analysis of corporal punishment in the Lango Sub-Region; UHRC's intervention; the human rights implications of clan corporal punishment; recommendations; and a conclusion.

56 Black's Law Dictionary, 11th Edition by Bryan A. Garner at Page 1490 defines corporal punishment as physical punishment inflicted on the body.

57 The Committee on the Rights of the Child in General Comment 8 of 2006.

58 Striking an individual's body for a number of times using a cane.

59 Striking an individual's buttocks, a number of times, using one's hand.

60 Striking an individual's body a number of times using a rubber or a leather whip.

61 Forcing an individual to be in a humiliating position in a public place for an extended period of time.

62 General Comment No. 8/2006 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

63 See Children Amendment Act 2016 and Penal Code (Amendment) Act 2007.

64 Constitutional Reference No 10/2000.

65 Objective XXIV of the National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy.

3.2 LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

Corporal punishment is torture or cruel or inhuman treatment or punishment, widely prohibited by many international, regional and national legal instruments and Judicial decisions.

3.2.1 International legal framework

The UDHR,⁶⁶ the ICCPR,⁶⁷ and the Convention Against Torture, Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)⁶⁸ all prohibit any form of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture declared that “corporal punishment is inconsistent with the prohibition against torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.” Similarly, the United Nations Human Rights Committee has concluded that the prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment contained in Article 7 of the ICCPR should be extended to corporal punishment, “including excessive chastisement ordered as punishment for a crime, or as an educative or disciplinary measure.”⁶⁹ In the case of *Osbourne v. Jamaica*,⁷⁰ the Human Rights Committee established that by carrying out a sentence of whipping with a tamarind switch, the State party had breached its obligations under the ICCPR, which obliges states to adopt measures aimed at holistic eradication of corporal punishment within their territory.

3.2.2 Regional legal framework

The African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR) guarantees the right to respect of human dignity inherent in every human person and prohibits all forms of degradation of man, particularly through torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment.⁷¹ In the

case of *Yassin Rashid Maige V. United Republic of Tanzania*,⁷² the African Court on Human and Peoples Rights held that corporal punishment contravenes Article 5 of the African Charter, which guarantees the right to human dignity and prohibits torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishment. Additionally, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) provides for every child’s right to be protected from violence and ill-treatment. The Children’s Charter further calls on states to ensure that children are protected from all forms of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment.⁷³

3.2.3 National legal framework

In Uganda, corporal punishment is not only unconstitutional and illegal, but it is also a criminal offence punishable by the law. The law bars any form of physical punishment that causes harm or discomfort, as they violate an individual’s human dignity and rights. Broadly, *Articles 24 and 44 of the Construction as well as section 3 of the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act, 2012* prohibit any acts of torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading forms of treatment or punishment in Uganda. In educational institutions, Section 106A of the Children (Amendment) Act 2016 explicitly prohibits the administration of corporal punishment in any institution of learning and imposes punitive sanctions for any form of corporal punishment against any child. In the criminal Justice arena, the Constitutional Court decision in the case of *Kyamanywa Simon Vs Uganda (supra)* declared the use of corporal punishment as a judicial sentence unconstitutional. Furthermore, *the Penal Code (Amendment) Act of 2007* abolished corporal punishment and repealed all provisions of the Act that authorised it as a form of sentence.

66 Article 5.

67 Article 7 of the ICCPR, 1996, ratified by Uganda on 21 June 1995.

68 Article 2 of the CAT, 1984, ratified by Uganda on 3 November 1986.

69 UNHRC, General Comment 20, Article 7 (44th session, 1992), Compilation of General Comments and General Recommendations adopted by Human Rights Treaty Bodies, U.N. Doc. HRI/GEN/1/Rev.1 at 14 (1994), 5; and UNHRC, General Comment 21, Article 10 (44th sess., 1992), Compilation of General Comments and General Recommendations adopted by Human Rights Treaty Bodies, U.N. Doc. HRI/GEN/1/Rev.1 at 14 (1994), 3.

70 *Osbourne v. Jamaica*, Communication No. 759/1997, Report of the Human Rights Committee, April 13, 2000, CCPR C/68/D/759/1997, § 9.1.

71 Article 5 of the ACHPR, 1981

72 Application No. 018/2017 delivered in September 2023.

73 Article 16 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

3.3 SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT BY CLAN LEADERS IN THE LANGO SUB-REGION

The Lango Sub-Region, located in Northern Uganda, encompasses the districts of Alebtong, Amolatar, Apac, Dokolo, Kole, Kwanja, Lira, Otuke, Oyam, and Lira City. It is predominantly the home of the Lango ethnic group, comprising 148 independent clans, each headed by a clan leader, the *Awitong*, who oversees marriage, community life, and dispute resolution. The Lango traditional justice system is a community-based, clan-centred, restorative, and reconciliatory mechanism focused on healing relationships rather than just punishing offenders. Presided over by clan leaders and elders, this system utilises rituals and mediation to resolve disputes and promote peace. It aims to reintegrate wrongdoers into society, offering a culturally grounded alternative to formal legal systems. Under this system, clan leaders, who are custodians of customary law, receive complaints of alleged violations of customary law, convene a community-based meeting to hear and determine guilt, and sanction the form and severity of the penalty. Subject to the nature of the offence in issue, the penalty may vary but usually ranges from payment of fines, compensation, restoration for light cases or corporal punishment for cases of severe violation, including adultery, practising witchcraft, disrespect for leaders/parents, elopement, incest, among others, collectively administered by energetic male youth.

3.3.1 Prevalence of corporal punishment in the Lango sub-region

The prevalence of corporal punishment by clan leaders in the Lango Sub-Region cannot be explained solely by available statistical information, but rather by a deep appreciation of the reasons behind the statistics. The Commission established that while physical punishment by clan leaders was, by 2025, persistently the most common, widely

practised, and socially ‘acceptable’ traditional method of enforcing discipline, maintaining social order and moral standards in the Lango Sub-Region, there was generally limited information regarding the number of cases of clan corporal punishment reported to formal institutions like the UPF and UHRC.⁷⁴ The Commission noted that perpetrators always threatened victims with more severe punishment, such as banishment or death, hence most cases were concealed.⁷⁵ Additionally, some victims reportedly feared facing criminal prosecution for their actions, while others reportedly perceived actions of corporal punishment against them as ‘legitimate’ even when outrightly inconsistent with statutory law, because clan heads occupy respected positions as custodians of tradition and arbiters of morality in society; as such, their authority was socially sanctioned.⁷⁶ Furthermore, the UHRC noted that most victims lacked knowledge of their rights and/or of the available legal protection mechanisms.⁷⁷ In addition to the above, the UHRC observed that the limited presence of formal justice systems in rural areas where corporal punishment was mostly administered, coupled with the distance to formal institutions, limited transport, and perceptions of bureaucratic complexity within them, discouraged reporting.

Consequently, the UHRC established that most cases of clan corporal punishment in the Lango Sub-Region were unreported, noting that the few reported cases were always triggered by media reports. Within the Police, limited reporting was exacerbated by the fact that the criminal register books and the Annual Crime Report lack specific provisions to capture and report disaggregated information on criminal cases arising from acts of corporal punishment by senior leaders.⁷⁸ Accordingly, all criminal issues arising from acts of corporal punishment by clan leaders were registered by the UPF following the general criminal nomenclature, rendering the retrieval of relevant information nugatory. Accordingly, North

⁷⁴ Interview with the Regional CID of North Kyoga, SSP Batte Daniel.

⁷⁵ Interview with Ongora Geoffrey, victim of clan corporal punishment.

⁷⁶ Interview with the Regional CID of North Kyoga, SSP Batte Daniel.

⁷⁷ As above.

⁷⁸ As above.

Kyoga Regional Police could only retrieve information for two cases of corporal punishment by clan leaders in 2024 and 2025.

Table 4: Cases of clan corporal punishment reported to the Police in 2025.

S/NO	NAMES OF THE VICTIM	RESPONDENT (CLAN)	FORM OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT ALLEGEDLY ADMINISTERED	CASE SUSPECTED OF HAVING BEEN COMMITTED	DISTRICT	DATE OF OCCURRENCE	HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS
1	Joel Okello	Bako Clan leaders, together with seven others	Beaten using sticks by nine people until he collapsed unconscious and died at his home ⁷⁹	Stealing a bicycle which belonged to one of the perpetrators	Amolatar	19/10/2025	Life
2	Akwir Annet & Opon Nelson	Oumolao Clan leaders	Each victim was caned 40 lashes ⁸⁰	Incest /sexual misconduct	Amolatar	17/11/2024	Physical torture

Source: UPF

3.3.2 Complaints of corporal punishment reported to UHRC

According to UHRC's complaints registers,⁸¹ a total of 10 complaints of allegations of corporal punishment by clan leaders had by 2025 been registered against 10 different clans in the Lango Sub-Region since 2010. Out of the 10 complaints, five involved allegations of practising witchcraft labelled against the victims; two involved allegations of incest, while the others involved allegations of assaulting the husband, abandoning marital home by eloping with another man and disrespecting parents (most of which constitute criminal offences under the laws of Uganda). Overall, 29 victims were involved, 18 of whom were male and 11 female victims, with 06 victims being persons below 18 years old.

Table 5: Summary of cases of corporal punishment by clan leaders registered by UHRC (2010-2025).

CASE NO. & NAME VICTIM(S)	RESPONDENT(S)	CLAN	ALLEGED CRIME & PUNISHMENT GIVEN	DISTRICT & DATE OF OCCURRENCE	HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS
1. Glu/10/2010 Anyeko Norah & Moro Thomas Vs Okii Amat Clan leaders	Anyeko Norah & Moro Thomas	Clan chief of Okii-Amat and clan youth	Accused of: Witchcraft, coupled with a refusal to attend a clan meeting Anyeko Norah was beaten with sticks on the buttocks until she urinated and defecated on herself, sustaining a fractured left forearm.	Oyam 2/02/2010	Physical torture and the right to a fair hearing.

⁷⁹ Also see New Vision of 20 October 2025 by Hudson Apunyo, Journalist@newvision.

⁸⁰ Perpetrators were arrested, arraigned in court, pleaded guilty, and were sentenced to 20 months' imprisonment on 25 November 2024. Also see Nile Post Accurate News Fast dated 22 November 2024 by Isaac Otwwi.

⁸¹ UHRC complaints registers for Gulu for the period 2010 -2023 and for Lira for 2023-2025.

CASE NO. & NAME VICTIM(S)	RESPONDENT(S)	CLAN	ALLEGED CRIME & PUNISHMENT GIVEN	DISTRICT & DATE OF OCCURRENCE	HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS
2. Glu/82/2014 Okello Samuel Vs Otikokin Clan leaders	Apita Yuventino, Okello Samuel, Abeja Anna, Akello Lucy, Ojok Isaac, Adong Nancy	Otikokin Clan leaders	Accused of: Witchcraft Yuventino was beaten using sticks, tied kandoya style and suspended on a tree upside down; fire was set beneath his body, severely burning him. Others were beaten on their buttocks and back.	Alebtong 9/12/2013	Right to life and physical torture, the right to a fair hearing.
3. Glu/01/2018 Akullu Susan Vs Mwa Clan leaders	Akullu Susan	Mwa Clan leaders	Accused of: Assaulting her husband Tied with ropes on the legs and hands overnight; beaten, kicked, and dragged on the ground, naked.	Oyam 21/05/2017	Physical torture.
4. Glu/149/2018 Ogwal Samuel Vs Ocukuru Ogora Clan leaders	Adong Joyce & Ogwal Samuel, Okullu Vincent & Ongora Geoffrey	Ocukuru Ogora Clan leaders	Accused of: Practising witchcraft Beaten 120 strokes and banished from their home village (1,000 miles away).	Oyam 29/10/2018	Physical torture and fair hearing.
5. Glu/77/2018 UHRC vs Okii-Teki Clan leaders	Omara John; Silphoroza Opio, Abeja Margaret & Opio Antonio	Okii-Teki Clan leaders	Accused of: Witchcraft Beaten by six youths using sticks on the buttocks and back.	Lira 23/09/2018	Physical torture and fair hearing.
6. Glu/113/2019 Okello Wilson Vs Mwonya Clan leaders	Okello Wilson, Ogwang Charles and Olap Vincent	Mwonya Clan leaders	Accused of: Undermining clan authority by reporting a defilement case being handled by the clan to the Police. Beaten on the buttocks.	Oyam 5/12/2019	Physical torture.
7. GRO/12/2021 Owiny Moris Vs Okii- Raki Okwerocobo Clan leaders	Owiny Moses & Opito Emmanuel	Okii-Raki Okwerocobo clan leaders	Accused of: Witchcraft Beaten with sticks, banished from their ancestral home, and huts set ablaze.	Lira 13/3/2021	Physical torture.
8. LRO/003/2023 Alwedo Santa Vs Mwa Otiratok Clan leaders	Alwedo Santa	Mwa Otiratok Clan leaders	Accused of: Abandoning the marital home and eloping with another man Beaten by five people using sticks (mostly on the buttocks and back).	Lira City 09/04/2025	Physical torture.
9. LRO/007/2025 Omara Tobby & Agong Jimmy Vs Apac Okwero-ngec Okwero-Ayita Clan leaders	Omara Tobby & Agong Jimmy	Apac Okwero- ngec Okwero- Ayita Clan leaders	Accused of: Indiscipline/lack of respect for parents Tied on the legs and hands using ropes; beaten using sticks, kicked and punched and cut with a knife.	Kwania 09/04/2025	Physical torture.

CASE NO. & NAME VICTIM(S)	RESPONDENT(S)	CLAN	ALLEGED CRIME & PUNISHMENT GIVEN	DISTRICT & DATE OF OCCURRENCE	HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS
10. LRO/008/2025 Okae Jonathan Vs Okarowok Wibye Acel clan leaders	Okae Jonathan, Omara Daniel, Atim Marion, Ayo Felix, Obote Eddy and Opio Justine.	Okarowok Wibye Acel clan leaders	Accused of: Lack of respect for clan authority Beaten with sticks.	Apac 09/05/2025	Cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Source: UHRC

3.3.3 Circumstances where corporal punishment was invoked

The Commission established that corporal punishment was used by some clan leaders in the Lango Sub-region under different circumstances, but mostly was invoked as a penalty for violation of serious cultural norms, including cases of practising witchcraft, incest, disrespecting the authority of cultural leaders/or parents, theft, etc., as detailed in the Table above.

In addition to corporal punishment used as a punitive tool, the UHRC also noted that body chastisement was used as an interrogation tool aimed at coercing the victims to confess to a particular cultural offence under inquiry. For instance, in the case of *GLU/77/2018, UHRC Vs Okii-Teki Clan leader*, it is alleged that the victims who were accused of practising witchcraft were first caned 40 strokes each during interrogation to compel them to confess to the allegation and to disclose the location of the charms before they were subsequently severely beaten as punishment for practising witchcraft. Additionally, in the case of *GLU/149/2018 Ogwal Samuel Vs Ocukuru Ogora Clan*, it is alleged that Adong Joyce, the second victim, was first beaten 40 strokes to solicit a confession from her for her alleged involvement in witchcraft practices.

Furthermore, corporal punishment was used to instil discipline and/or respect for authority, especially during clan meetings, where any unauthorised absenteeism or late arrival by any clan member resulted in severe disciplinary measures by the clan. In the case of *GLU/10/2010 Anyeko Norah & Moro Thomas Vs Okii Amat*, it is

alleged that victims were subjected to severe physical punishment by the youth because of refusal to attend a clan meeting convened by the clan chief. Similarly, in the case of *Glu/113/2019 Okello Wilson Vs Mwonya Clan*, the victims were allegedly beaten by the clan leader for allegedly undermining clan authority by reporting to UPF a defilement/incest case which the clan had already handled.

3.3.4 Forms of corporal punishment practised in Lango

The UHRC established that the most common form of physical punishment by clan leaders in Lango was collective caning using sticks, simultaneously all over the victim's body. The number of lashes varied depending on the nature and severity of the wrong committed, but usually ranged from 10 strokes for less severe violations of cultural norms to 120 strokes or more for a more severe violation.

Further, the UHRC noted that in other instances, cold water was poured on the victims' bodies during or before they were flogged to inflict more pain. For instance, in the case of *Uganda Vs Okwir James and others*, the clan leaders of Oumolao Clan in Amolatar District poured cold water on the bodies of Akwir Annet and Opon Nelson before they were beaten 40 lashes of the cane each on allegations of incest. In another case, *GLU/149/2018 Ogwal Samuel Vs Ocukuru Ogora clan leaders*, video evidence presented to UHRC showed that cold water was poured on the victims' buttocks during the administration of corporal punishment.

Other forms of corporal punishment used by clan leaders in the Lango Sub-Region included kicking, slapping victims, usually to supplement caning using sticks. In the case of *GLU/82/2014: Okello Solomon Vs Otikokin clan leaders*, it is alleged that Apita Yuventino (RIP) was severely burnt by fire in the midst of flogging. He was allegedly tied *kandoya* style and suspended on a tree upside down when fire was set below his body, severely burning 38% of his body. He also reportedly ingested smoke, which contributed to his demise two weeks later. Moreover, tying the hands and/or legs of victims or tying *kandoya* style using ropes was another form of body punishment employed by some clan leaders. In the case of *GLU/01/2018, Akullu Susan Vs Mwa Clan leaders*, where a female victim was allegedly tied on the legs and arms overnight and was beaten using sticks all over the body by clan youth on the allegation of assaulting her husband. Likewise, in the cases of *LRO/007/2025 Omara Bobby & Agong Jimmy Vs Apac Okwerongec-Okweroayita Clan leaders*, the victims were allegedly first tied using ropes before they were subjected to severe caning by the clan leaders. In that same case, Omara Bobby was allegedly cut on the left heel using a knife.⁸² In some cases, corporal punishment was followed by banishment or excommunication of the victims from their homes, as detailed in the Table above.

3.3.5 Victims of corporal punishment

The UHRC established that although clan corporal punishment could affect any person regardless of sex, age, social or political status in society, it noted that economically weak and less educated vulnerable women, children, PWD, and elderly persons were disproportionately affected since they lacked access to remedies or protection. The UHRC noted that, in some cases, fairly educated, financially empowered and socially reputable individuals were favoured, though alternative penalties such as payment of fines or monetary payment in lieu of strokes were also used.⁸³



A group of male youth of the Okii-teki clan collectively beating a clan member in Agweng, Lira District.
© Rupiny Newspaper.



Clan leaders of Oumolao Clan in Amolatar District subjecting victims to corporal punishment.
© Isaac Otwwi, Nile Post, Friday 22 November 2024

3.3.6 Perpetrators of clan corporal punishment in Lango

The UHRC established that clan corporal punishment in Lango was mostly carried out by clan leaders, who were primarily responsible for issuing clan orders. The orders so issued were then implemented by the clan security wing, locally known as askaris, composed of energetic male youth in communities, and were thus considered secondary perpetrators. In isolated cases, women leaders, while handling women's matters, also made orders for corporal punishment or actually participated in physical beating. For instance,

⁸² LRO/0072025 Omara Bobby and Agong Jimmy Vs Okwerongec-Okweroayita Clan.

⁸³ Interview with the 4th Deputy Prime Minister, Lango cultural institution.

in the case of *LRO/03/2023 Alwedo Santa Vs Mwa Otiratok clan*, it is alleged that the women leader of the clan in Omito ward in Lira City west actively participated in the administration of corporal punishment upon the victim.



An elderly person displaying traditional herbs to cultural leaders of the Okii-Teki Clan in Agweng, Lira district, during a clan meeting. © Rupiny Newspaper.

3.4 UHRC'S INTERVENTIONS TOWARDS THE ERADICATION OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN THE LANGO SUB-REGION

Supported by GIZ and in its routine engagements with the cultural institution and community in Lango, the UHRC continued to tackle corporal punishment during the year. Below are some of the noteworthy UHRC interventions implemented in the region by 2025.

1. The UHRC built the capacity of cultural leaders in the Lango Sub-Region on human rights and a human rights-based approach to the application of customary law.
2. In line with its constitutional mandate, the UHRC, in collaboration with the office of the Prime Minister of Lango Cultural Institution, reviewed the clan constitution to assess compliance with human rights standards and made recommendations for review of the laws.
3. Pursuant to its complaint management function, the UHRC has continued to receive,

register and manage complaints of alleged violation of human rights arising from clan corporal punishments, offering redress to victims as well as holding perpetrators to account for their actions, mostly through mediations.

4. In partnership with the UPF, the UHRC has followed up on some high-profile criminal cases against clan leaders arising from corporal punishment to ensure perpetrators are held accountable for their actions.
5. Targeting rights holders, the UHRC has continued to conduct human rights awareness programmes tackling the rights, duties and responsibilities of community members concerning the right to culture.

3.5 WHY CORPORAL PUNISHMENT HAS PERSISTED IN THE LANGO SUB-REGION

Despite the legal prohibitions and the strategic engagements of cultural institutions and the community, the use of corporal punishment by clan leaders has persisted in the Lango Sub-Region. The following reasons were advanced by the respondents.

3.5.1 Perceived effectiveness

Some community members perceive corporal punishment as swift, affordable, and decisive compared to prolonged formal justice procedures. Additionally, proponents of the vice argued that it helped address certain social and moral issues, such as witchcraft, adultery, incest, etc., perceived to have been softened by the formal law.⁸⁴

3.5.2 Weak enforcement of legal prohibitions against corporal punishment

While the laws provide for punitive measures against corporal punishment, the enforcement of the laws has been weak and sporadic to deter the continuation of corporal sanctions.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Interview with the 4th Deputy Prime Minister, Lango Cultural Institution, Mr. Ojwang George Opota.

⁸⁵ Interview with the Regional CID, North Kyoga.

3.5.3 Social cohesion and collective responsibility

Lango society traditionally emphasises collective responsibility. Corporal sanctions are sometimes justified as protecting communal morality rather than punishing individuals.

3.5.4 Formalisation of corporal punishment into clan ‘constitution’

While Article 246 (f) explicitly bars traditional or cultural leaders from exercising any administrative, legislative, or executive powers of government or local government, some clans had made a constitution with provisions specifically prescribing corporal punishment for certain customary crimes thus its administration became the dictate of the ‘law.’

3.5.5 Limited knowledge on human rights and legal protection mechanisms

Limited knowledge of the community on the rights and protection mechanisms against corporal punishment has often resulted in a lack of criminal accountability for actions of clan corporal punishment.

3.5.6 Hatred and need for revenge

In some cases, former victims consider it a chance to pay back for pain previously inflicted on them by others, even when they are quite sure of the suspects’ innocence.⁸⁶

3.5.7 Ambiguity regarding the limits of customary law

While the law explicitly prohibits corporal punishment in academic institutions and in judicial sentences, the law implicitly prohibits the use of corporal sanctions under customary law, and this has created confusion, especially in view of the common phrase “*what the law does not expressly prohibit, it allows.*”

3.6 THE HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Corporal punishment itself is a form of human rights violation, let alone the manner of its application by cultural leaders, which infringes on several other human rights standards stipulated under international, regional and national laws as detailed below.

3.6.1 Infringement of the right to freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

Article 24, read together with Article 44 of the constitution, totally prohibits any form of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment on any person, regardless of the circumstances. This prohibition is ringfenced by Article 7 of the ICCPR, Article 5 of the ACHPR, as well as section 3 of the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act (PPTA).⁸⁷

Section 2 of the PPTA defines torture as: any act or omission by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of any person, whether public official or other person acting in an official capacity or private capacity for such purposes as:

- (a) Obtaining information or a confession from the person or any other person;
- (b) Punishing that person for an act he or she or any other person has committed or is suspected of having committed or of planning to commit;
- (c) Intimidating or coercing the person or any other person to do or to refrain from doing any act.

Additionally, section 4 of the PPTA criminalises torture and prescribes severe punishments for any person who performs acts of torture upon another.

⁸⁶ Interview with victim of clan corporal punishment. Mr. Ongora Geoffrey.

⁸⁷ The Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act, 2012.

In the case of *Kyamanywa Simon V Uganda*,⁸⁸ their lordships declared that a criminal sentence of 6 strokes upon the appellant was inconsistent with Articles 24 and 44 of the Constitution and accordingly declared corporal punishment unconstitutional. While referring to the Judgement of His Lordship, Justice Oder JSC in the case *Salvatori Abuki Vs Attorney General*,⁸⁹ the Constitutional Court emphasised that the rights and freedoms prescribed in Article 24 are, by Article 44, made absolute. The Court observed that “...what may have been accepted as a just form of punishment some decades ago may appear to be manifestly inhuman or degrading today. The interpretation of Articles 24 and 44 of the Constitution raises a strong support for the view that imposition of corporal punishment is indeed degrading or inhuman and inconsistent with the civilised values pertaining administration of justice or punishment of offenders.” Accordingly, clan corporal punishment is a degrading or inhuman form of punishment which does not reflect the contemporary norms, aspirations and expectations of the people as it undermines bodily integrity and human dignity, regardless of intent or cultural justification.

3.6.2 Infringement of the right to life

The right to life is a fundamental, inalienable human right ensuring protection of all persons from unlawful killing by state or private actors, serving as the foundation for all other human rights. Article 22 of the Constitution provides that:

“No person shall be deprived of life intentionally except in execution of a sentence passed in a fair trial by a court of competent jurisdiction in respect of a criminal offence under the laws of Uganda and the conviction and sentence have been confirmed by the highest appellate Court.”

In the case of *Bindemeseze John Vs Attorney General UHRC/FP/69/2003*, Hon. Commissioner J.A. Omara, as he then was, observed that:

Article 22 of the Ugandan Constitution read alongside Article 6 of the ICCPR and Article 4 of the ACHPR leaves no doubt that the right to life is not absolute. There are circumstances when the taking of life may be lawful and therefore not a violation of the right to life. Any unlawful taking of life however amounts to a violation of the right to life.”

Thus, the UHRC observed that death resulting from clan corporal sanctions does not meet the prescribed constitutional conditions and procedures above. The UHRC noted that in most cases of death resulting from clan corporal punishment were extra-judicial in nature and, in some cases, corporal actions causing death were either meted out during ‘interrogation’ or after a disguised or sham clan ‘hearing’, devoid of principles of fair hearing, natural justice and good conscience. Consequently, any death arising from clan corporal punishments tends to conflict with and infringe the constitutional standard contained in Article 22 of the Constitution.

3.6.3 Infringement of the right to a fair hearing (absence of due process)

The right to a fair hearing is a fundamental pillar of justice and the rule of law, ensuring that individuals are treated fairly, reasonably, and with dignity by judicial or administrative bodies. Article 28 of the Constitution sets out the tenets of a fair trial as follows:

First and foremost, Article 28 (1) requires that the determination of civil rights and obligations or of any criminal charge be conducted by an independent and impartial court or tribunal established by law. Accordingly, in Uganda, all courts or tribunals except traditional or cultural ‘courts’ are formally established by law. Therefore, cultural structures lack jurisdiction to handle criminal cases such as witchcraft and incest, among others, and any attempt by cultural structures to handle any criminal cases results in a breach of due process and is accordingly null and void.

⁸⁸ Constitutional Reference No 10/2000.

⁸⁹ Constitutional Appeal No 1/1998, Supreme Court Unreported.

Secondly, Article 28 (3) (a) requires that every person charged with a criminal offence be presumed to be innocent until proven guilty or until the person pleads guilty. UHRC observed that the common practice of subjecting victims to severe beating during interrogation to extract confession or information by some cultural structures directly infringes the principle of presumption of innocence, as it assumes the victim was guilty from the onset. Additionally, Article 28 (3) (b) requires that the accused person be given adequate time and facilities for the preparation of one's defence, the right to legal representation and the right to appeal.

The UHRC observed that clan-based punishments often lacked clear procedural safeguards, as accused persons were, in most cases, dragged to the meeting unaware of the allegations against them and usually unprepared. The UHRC established that cultural hearings hardly accepted witnesses in defence. In some cases, defence witnesses were also subjected to bodily punishment. *In the case of Glu/149/2018, Ogwal Samuel Vs Ocukuru Ogora Clan leader*, one witness of the victim was allegedly beaten 10 strokes for attempting to defend the accused person. This undermines constitutional safeguards regarding the right to a fair hearing. Furthermore, while the human rights standards emphasise the right of appeal to a higher court, the UHRC established that clan sanctions were immediately and expressly executed without delay, negating the necessity of appeal.

1.6.4 Infringement of equality and freedom from discrimination

Article 21 (1) of the Constitution provides that all persons are equal before and under the law in social and cultural life and in every other respect and shall enjoy equal protection of the law. Sub-Article 2 prohibits discrimination against any person on the grounds of sex, social or economic standing or disability. The UHRC noted that the tendency to favour financially wealthy and socially reputable persons through alternative

punishments undermines the principle of equality, thus discriminatory.

3.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Elimination of corporal punishment by clans in Uganda requires a multi-pronged, sensitive approach that combines legal reforms, capacity development, dialogue, and awareness-raising, as well as strengthening criminal accountability processes. Therefore, the following strategic recommendations are considered appropriate.

1. The Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs and Parliament of Uganda should initiate a law reform process aimed at explicitly abolishing corporal punishment in all customary justice processes in Uganda.
2. The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development should allocate adequate funds to the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and Uganda Human Rights Commission towards strategic engagement of cultural institutions tailored towards capacity enhancement and mainstreaming of human rights-based approach principles into customary law practices in Uganda.
3. The Uganda Police Force, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, and the Judiciary should strengthen criminal accountability against clan corporal punishment in Uganda.

3.8 CONCLUSION

Eliminating corporal punishment by clans in Uganda requires coordinated action across legal, institutional, and community levels. By reforming laws to clearly prohibit such practices, investing in the capacity of cultural institutions to adopt human rights-based approaches, and strengthening accountability through the police, prosecution, and judiciary, Uganda can promote justice systems that respect dignity and fundamental rights.

04

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Human Rights Implications



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As Uganda navigates the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence, fairness, accountability, transparency, and non-discrimination demand urgent attention. As Ravi Narayanan notes, “Artificial intelligence is a mirror, reflecting not only our intellect, but our values and fears.”

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly shaping governance, business, service delivery, and security worldwide, reflecting a global movement toward digital transformation. Uganda is actively embracing AI technologies across sectors such as financial services, telecommunications, digital identity systems, media, health, agriculture, education, security surveillance, and e-governance. While these advancements offer significant potential for socioeconomic development and improved public services, they also raise critical concerns regarding the protection and promotion of fundamental human rights and freedoms enshrined in Uganda’s 1995 Constitution, regional human rights frameworks, and the various international human rights treaties to which Uganda is a State Party.

The increasing integration of AI must therefore be carefully scrutinised to ensure that it does not undermine the rights to privacy, due process, non-discrimination and freedom of expression. This chapter evaluates the human rights impacts of AI deployment in Uganda, highlights key areas

of potential risk, and offers recommendations to guide the responsible, rights-based development and use of AI technologies in the country, aligning with global human rights standards and best practices.

4.2 LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

4.2.1 International legal framework

The UDHR (1948) guarantees privacy (Art. 12), freedom of expression (Art. 19), and participation in governance (Art. 21). The ICCPR (1966) protects privacy (Art. 17), freedom of expression online (Art. 19), and peaceful assembly (Art. 21). The ICESCR (1966) recognizes rights to culture, work, and favourable conditions, relevant to digital inclusion and labour rights. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) protects children’s privacy and access to digital information (Arts. 16 & 17). The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) ensures women’s equal access to technology and protection against digital discrimination.

Figure 1: International instruments related to AI.

International Instruments				
UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (UDHR)	UN INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS (ICCPR)	UNESCO RECOMMENDATION ON THE ETHICS OF AI	UNESCO'S GUIDELINES FOR THE GOVERNANCE OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS	GLOBAL DIGITAL COMPACT (GDC) - UN
Article 19 on F.O.E which comprises the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas, by any means of communication. It provides a fundamental dictum that binds the conflux between technology (AI) as a facilitator and journalism as the trade	Article 19 of the ICCPR mirrors Article 19 of the UDHR on Freedom of Expression [F.O.E]; General Comment No. 34 on Article 19 extends to digital spaces.	Addresses ethical issues related to media & human rights (F.O.E, A.T.I) recognising that AI creates a new context for journalists. It supplies guidance for dealing with the issues created by the potential of algorithms reproducing/ entrenching existing biases	Member States' position on F.O.E, A.T.I and dealing with dis/misinformation and hate speech online through a human rights respecting multi-stakeholder approach	Commitment by UN member states to align their national digital policies with global norms furnishes sagacity on information integrity recognising that digital and emerging technologies facilitate manipulation of information in ways that are

Source: AFIC

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also provides guidance on the ethical use of artificial intelligence, emphasising that AI technologies should respect

human rights, avoid bias or discrimination, and ensure transparency and accountability in digital systems.⁹⁰

Figure 2: Other interventions.

OTHER INTERVENTIONS	Joint Statement on AI and Freedom of Expression by United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Representative on Freedom of the Media, the Organization of American States (OAS) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa ("Mandate Holders") (Brussels, Belgium on May 7, 2025 to mark World Press Freedom Day 2025)
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Source: AFIC

4.2.2 Regional legal framework

African Union Data Policy Framework (2022) and the African Union (AU) Declaration on Internet Governance encourage member states to integrate rights-based approaches in digital transformation.⁹¹

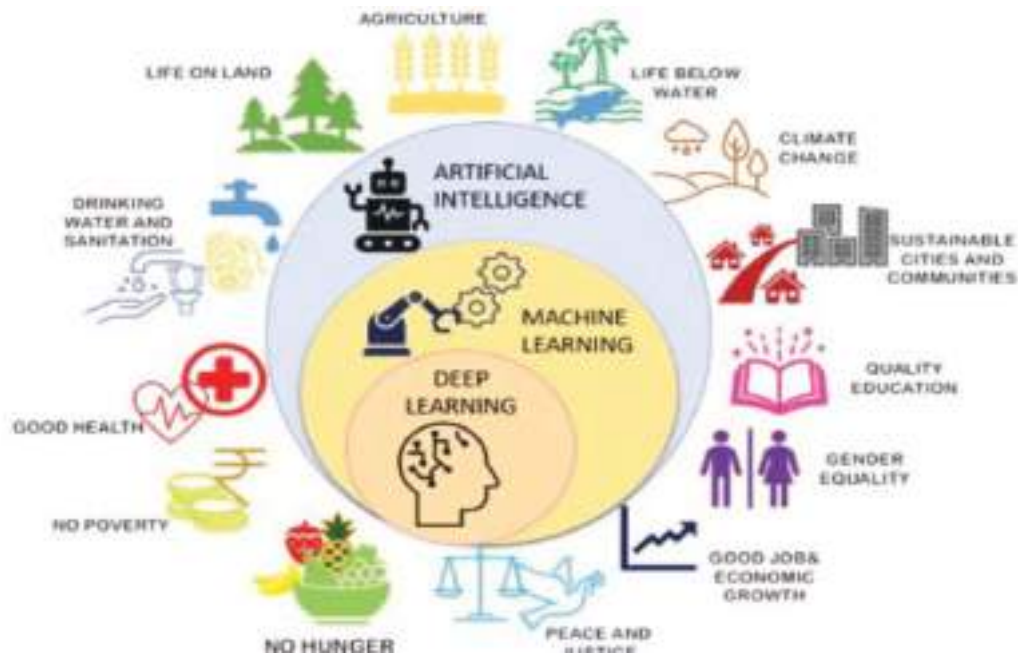
Pillar 8 of the African Digital Compact (ADC) calls for the development and adoption of AI as a core component of Africa's digital transformation agenda. The ADC recognises AI as a transformative and revolutionary technology with the potential to stimulate economic growth,

generate employment, and support sustainable development across key sectors, including finance, national security, health, education, and transportation. The ADC underscores the need to address the societal, ethical, legal, and security challenges associated with AI, while promoting responsible, inclusive AI ecosystems aligned with African priorities and development needs. It advocates establishing governance frameworks, standards, codes of conduct, and best practices to manage AI risks and accelerate its integration into sectors of high social and economic value.

90 UNESCO, *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*, 41 C/Resolution 24 (23 November 2021). <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381137> accessed 20 February 2026.

91 AU Agenda 2063.

Figure 3: Learning, AI and African development needs.



Source: AFIC

The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR) adopted Resolution ACHPR/Res.620 (2024) and Resolution ACHPR/Res.630 (2025) to strengthen human rights in Africa’s digital era. Resolution 620 emphasises equitable access to data as a tool for advancing human rights, transparency, and sustainable development, urging states to ensure public and private data are accessible while respecting privacy and ethical standards. Resolution 630 focuses on information

integrity online, calling on states and technology companies to uphold freedom of expression and access to information through transparent moderation, independent fact-checking, and accountability mechanisms. Both resolutions are relevant to Uganda, providing normative guidance to enhance data governance, digital inclusion, and responsible online content regulation in alignment with the country’s constitutional guarantees of access to information and freedom of expression.⁹²

Figure 4: Regional instruments.

Regional Instruments			
CONTINENTAL AI STRATEGY	AfCFTA DIGITAL TRADE PROTOCOL	TREATY FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE EAC	DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES ON F.O.E & A.T.I IN AFRICA (ACHPR)
The Strategy leaning towards harnessing AI for Africa’s development and prosperity provides 4 core capabilities that need to be built which influence increased use of AI across the board, even in journalism.	It promotes digital skills and infrastructure development within State Parties for digital trade, data governance with a trickle down impact on the newsroom which has become increasingly digital in terms of infrastructure	Article 5 on cooperation in research and scientific development paving the path for the discussion on technology and gender which includes cooperation for frontier technology like AI in journalism	Principle 39, requires States to ensure that the development, use and application of AI, algorithms and other similar technologies by internet intermediaries do not infringe on F.O.E under Article 9 of the African Charter

Source: AFIC

92 ACHPR/Res.620 (LXXXI) 2024 (17 November 2024) and ACHPR/Res.630 (LXXXII) 2025 (11 March 2025).

Figure 5: Key institutions in AI governance.



Source: UHRC

4.2.3 National legal framework

The main existing instruments in Uganda that relate to AI are as below.

Figure 6: Laws in Uganda relevant to AI.

National Level Policy Landscape				
THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA, 1995 AS AMENDED	THE COMMUNICATIONS ACT CAP. 103	DATA PROTECTION AND PRIVACY ACT CAP. 97	THE COMPUTER MISUSE ACT CAP. 96	COPYRIGHT AND NEIGHBOURING RIGHTS ACT CAP. 222
National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy (Objective XI) empowers the state to enable technological advances	Establishes the UCC, Minimum broadcasting standards and aligns itself with the Press and Journalist Act Cap. 100's first schedule on ethical broadcasting standards (Section 32)	Principles of data collection (Section 3), the Personal Data Protection Office (PDPO) (Section 4) and national security exception to the processing of data (Section 7(2)(b)(ii)) which may be subject to abuse by the authorities	Act and amendments prevent the abuse or misuse of information systems, covers hate speech (Section 26A) but lacks a specific penal provision for AI-generated mis/disinformation	Protection of literary, scientific and artistic intellectual works (articles, books, audiovisual works, sound recording and works of drawing/painting. Lacks specific AI provision and clear deliberation on fair use for training AI algorithms

Source: AFIC



National AI Taskforce members. ⁹³ © Nile Post News

Uganda has taken steps toward AI governance through the development of an upcoming National AI Strategy. This framework aims to ensure that AI aligns with national development priorities and societal values. Complementary initiatives include the proposed Ethical AI Framework and the establishment of a Data and AI Ethics Council to guide responsible innovation, promote inclusivity, and ensure compliance with emerging global standards.⁹⁴ The Digital Transformation Roadmap (DTR) emphasises a flexible, experimental approach to AI regulation, encouraging innovation while managing risks through pilot projects, institutional coordination, and stakeholder partnerships.⁹⁵

Importantly, the development of the National AI Strategy is informed by an AI readiness assessment undertaken by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), which evaluates Uganda's preparedness, institutional capacity and sectoral priorities. This evidence-based approach is intended to ensure that Uganda's AI governance framework responds to local development needs while aligning with emerging international standards.

Other interventions include the National Information Technology Authority (NITA-U), the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) strategy and the National Expert Task Force on 4IR, as well as the AI Task Force, composed of experts within the UCC.



Hon. Godfrey Baluku Kabbyanga (middle), Minister of State for ICT and National Guidance at the 3rd UNESCO Global Forum on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence (GFEAI), in Bangkok, Thailand. © ICT.go.ug ⁹⁶

4.3 SITUATION ANALYSIS

AI refers to computer systems designed to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, and decision-making.⁹⁷ These systems operate by analysing large datasets, identifying patterns, and generating outputs based on probabilistic predictions.⁹⁸ While AI presents transformative opportunities across sectors, it also raises significant human rights concerns,

⁹³ <https://nilepost.co.ug/news/299033/uganda-forms-ai-taskforce-to-guide-safe-use-of-emerging-technologies>.

⁹⁴ As above.

⁹⁵ Ministry of ICT and National Guidance, *Digital Transformation Roadmap 2023/24–2027/28* (Government of Uganda, 2023).

⁹⁶ <https://ict.go.ug/media/news/uganda-champions-ethical-ai-at-unesco-global-forum-in-bangkok>.

⁹⁷ European Commission, *Coordinated Plan on Artificial Intelligence* (2018).

⁹⁸ IBM, 'What is Artificial Intelligence' (2024) accessed 10 December 2025.

particularly regarding fairness, accountability, transparency, and non-discrimination.⁹⁹ Like Ravi Narayanan, “*AI is a mirror, reflecting not only our intellect, but our values and fears.*”

4.3.1 Artificial Intelligence: How does it work?

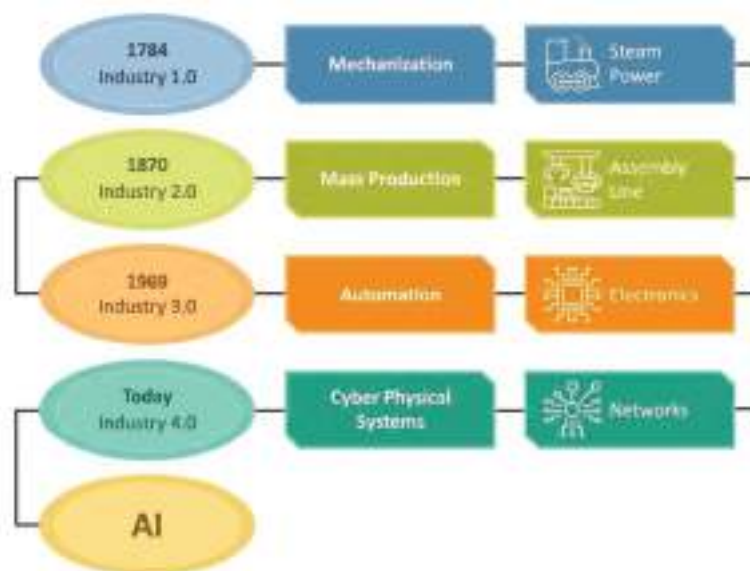
The term ‘Artificial Intelligence’ was coined during a 1956 workshop at Dartmouth College, where researchers set out to explore how machines could “use language, form abstractions and concepts” and solve problems previously reserved for humans, essentially, to enable machines to ‘think’ in ways analogous to human reasoning.¹⁰⁰ Early computer scientists were inspired by the structure of the human brain and questioned whether machines could be wired to function similarly to neurons.¹⁰¹ The human brain learns by strengthening or weakening connections between neurons based on experience. Drawing on this concept, researchers developed artificial neural networks, in which computers are trained

on large datasets and the strength of connections between artificial ‘neurons’ is repeatedly adjusted until specific inputs reliably produce appropriate outputs.¹⁰² Through this iterative training process commonly known as machine learning, computers learn from data, recognise patterns, and make predictions without being explicitly programmed for each task.¹⁰³

4.3.2 Functioning and risks of AI

AI systems rely heavily on the data on which they are trained. Where such data is biased, incomplete, or unrepresentative, AI may replicate or amplify existing inequalities and discriminatory practices. Additionally, many AI systems function as “black boxes,” limiting transparency and making it difficult for individuals to understand or challenge decisions that affect their rights. This lack of explainability poses risks to due process, accountability, access to justice, fairness and the protection of fundamental rights.¹⁰⁴

Figure 7: AI – The fifth industrial revolution.



Source: Piyush Singh “The Evolution of Industry from Revolution 1.0 to 4.0” LinkedIn Article

99 Owila Abiro Mercy, ‘Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Human Rights’ (Paper presented at the 28th UHRC Annual Report Consultative meeting 2025).

100 The Economist, ‘A Short History of AI’ (2024) accessed 10 December 2025.

101 As above.

102 As above.

103 As above.

104 Keneth Muhangi, ‘the CSO Perspective: AI in Uganda, Opportunities and Human Rights Implications’ (Presentation at the 28th Uganda Human Rights Commission Annual Report Consultative Meeting, 2025).

4.4 THE STATE OF AI IN UGANDA: CAPABILITIES AND READINESS

Uganda demonstrates moderate progress in AI readiness, with strengths in digital skills but notable gaps in infrastructure, internet access, and institutional capacity. Digital inequality remains a concern, as limited access to connectivity and low levels of digital literacy may exclude certain populations from benefiting from AI advancements, thereby exacerbating existing inequalities.

According to the AI Talent Readiness Index (2025) by Qubit Hub and Qhala, Uganda ranks 13th out of 54 African countries in overall AI Talent Readiness.¹⁰⁵ In specific pillars, Uganda ranks 16th in Data and Infrastructure, 12th in Digital Skills, and 19th in Government Readiness. These rankings suggest moderate progress in building AI-relevant capabilities, particularly in digital skills, while highlighting gaps in infrastructure and institutional preparedness that may constrain large-scale AI deployment.

From a data and connectivity perspective, national indicators present a mixed picture. Internet penetration stands at 63.7%, while the proportion of the population actively using the internet was reported at 16.5% in 2023/24.¹⁰⁶ Under the Fourth National Development Plan (NDP IV), the National Backbone Infrastructure extends to 57 out of

135 districts, reflecting ongoing but incomplete expansion of core digital infrastructure.¹⁰⁷ Broadband coverage in 2023/24 was reported at 76% for 2G, 72% for 3G, and 55% for 4G networks.¹⁰⁸ While these figures demonstrate progress in connectivity, disparities in access, affordability and quality of service continue to shape Uganda's AI readiness landscape. The proportion of the population that is digitally skilled was estimated to be 26% in 2023/24. According to the NDP IV, the most pressing shortages of highly skilled professionals are in high-tech fields such as artificial intelligence (AI).¹⁰⁹

4.5 OPPORTUNITIES

AI offers transformative opportunities to bolster human rights realisation across key domains. It democratises access to information and education through tools like local language models,¹¹⁰ dismantling barriers for underserved communities. In health,¹¹¹ AI enhances diagnostics, streamlines healthcare delivery, and expands medical services to remote areas. For public service delivery, it boosts efficiency, accessibility, particularly for PWD and governance transparency. Artificial intelligence also enables human rights monitoring via early warning systems, violation tracking, and data-driven accountability mechanisms.

¹⁰⁵ Qubit Hub and Qhala. AI Talent Readiness Index (2025).

¹⁰⁶ Uganda Communications Commission, Annual Communications Sector Report 2024 (UCC, 9 December 2025) <https://www.ucc.co.ug/download/ucc-annual-communications-sector-report-2024/> accessed on 17 December 2025.

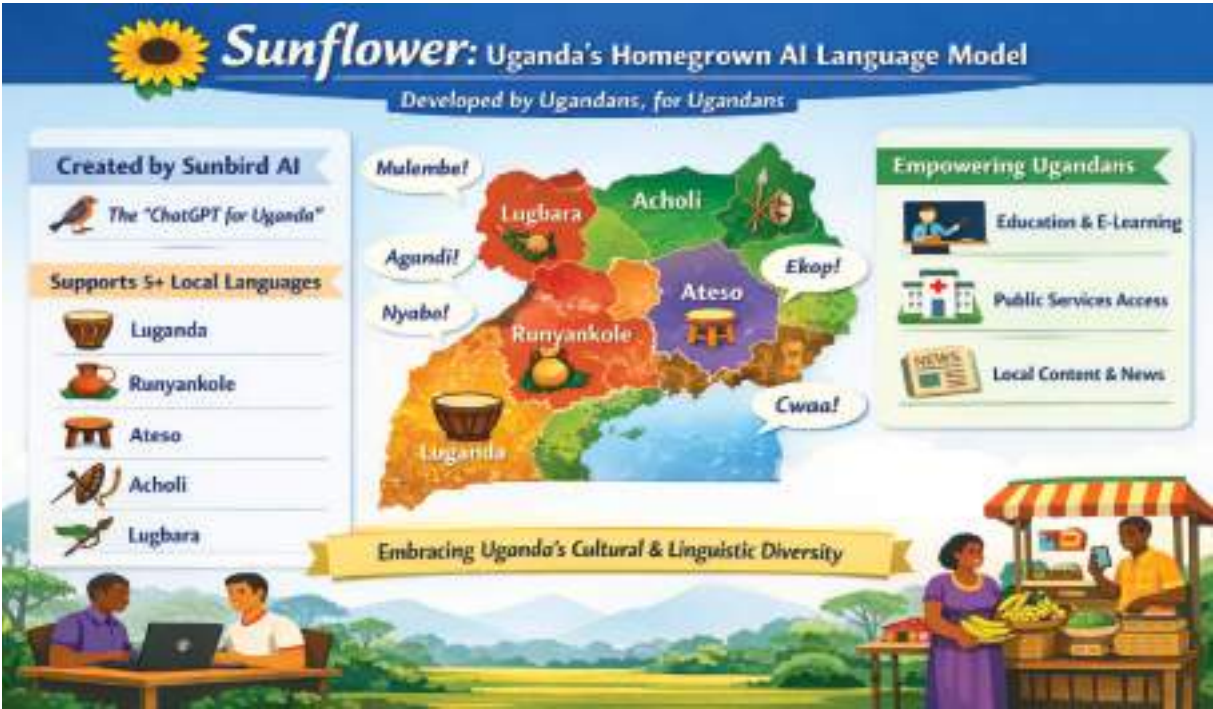
¹⁰⁷ Republic of Uganda, *Fourth National Development Plan (NDP IV) 2025/26–2029/30* (February 2025) <https://create.finance.go.ug/sites/default/files/2025-07/FOURTH%20NATIONAL%20DEVELOPMENT%20PLAN%20%28NDP-IV%29.pdf> accessed 17 December 2025.

¹⁰⁸ As above.

¹⁰⁹ As above.

¹¹⁰ <https://ict.go.ug/media/news/uganda-launches-an-artificial-intelligence-ai-language-model>.

¹¹¹ <https://news.mak.ac.ug/2025/11/government-of-uganda-reaffirms-commitment-to-ai-driven-innovation-in-health-and-development/>.



Uganda's sunflower App. © Ministry of ICT and National Guidance





Hon. Dr Monica Musenero, Dr Andrew Kambugu, Mr Ambrose Ruyooka, Dr Stella Kivila and Dr Rose Nakasi at 'The Future of AI in Africa's Healthcare' Conference on 6 November 2025. © Makerere University

4.6 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS OF AI

4.6.1 Right to privacy

The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has warned against AI systems violating human rights, advocating a moratorium on real-time remote biometric recognition in public spaces until compliance with privacy standards and the absence of bias are proven. Uganda's National Biometric ID programme, expanded after 2014, mandates facial scans for internet access, heightening risks of repression of human rights. Without stronger enforcement of the Data Protection and Privacy Act (2019), such deployments undermine public

trust and amplify inequalities.¹¹²

AI delivers benefits in public services and human rights monitoring, but introduces profound risks to privacy and surveillance. In Uganda, Huawei-supplied facial recognition closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems in Kampala, with over 2,500 cameras as of 2019, enable mass surveillance, predictive policing, and protest monitoring, often without privacy impact assessments or robust data safeguards, disproportionately impacting marginalised groups. These tools infringe on constitutional privacy rights under Article 27 (2) of Uganda's 1995 Constitution by processing sensitive biometric data without consent, eroding civil liberties and fostering discrimination.¹¹³

112 World Economic Forum, 'Best Practice for Facial Recognition in Law Enforcement' (2 June 2025) <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2021/10/facial-recognition-technology-law-enforcement-human-rights/> accessed 17 February 2026.

113 Unwanted Witness Uganda, 'Uganda's Facial Recognition Technology Threatens Privacy' (6 November 2018) <https://www.unwantedwitness.org/ugandas-facial-recognition-technology-threatens-privacy/> accessed 17 February 2026.

4.6.2 Non-discrimination and equality

AI systems, if not carefully designed and monitored, can perpetuate stereotypes and reinforce discrimination, undermining the principles of equality and freedom from discrimination. AI tools may inadvertently encode biases present in training data, resulting in outcomes that amplify hate speech, propagate harmful stereotypes, or produce offensive classifications.¹¹⁴ A notable example occurred in 2015 when the image-labelling feature in Google Photos misidentified black individuals as gorillas, highlighting the risks of racial bias in AI systems.¹¹⁵ Such instances underscore the urgent need for robust oversight, inclusive design practices, and accountability mechanisms to ensure that AI applications uphold human rights and do not entrench social inequalities. AI perpetuates biases from training data, leading to discriminatory outcomes in hiring, lending, criminal justice, and welfare. This includes algorithms that amplify racial/gender biases (e.g., poorer on darker skin).¹¹⁶

4.6.3 Freedom of expression and access to information

AI revolutionises communication but gravely threatens freedom of expression and access

to information through deepfakes, automated content generation, and misinformation tools. In Uganda, ahead of the 2026 general elections, AI-driven platforms have amplified disinformation campaigns.¹¹⁷ Deepfake videos targeting women politicians and activists similarly have fueled gender-based violence (GBV), harassment, and stigma, distorting public discourse during electoral processes. AI, while transformative, poses significant risks to freedom of expression and access to information. These technologies enable false narratives depicting public figures in compromising scenarios, allowing perpetrators to dodge accountability by claiming “it’s AI,” while eroding trust in media and democratic institutions. Citizens have similarly faced online harassment, ridicule, or defamation through AI-generated content, undermining their right to free expression and reputation. Moreover, AI-driven platforms have been exploited to spread fake news, amplify misinformation, and manipulate public opinion, eroding trust in legitimate sources of information.¹¹⁸ These dynamics highlight the urgent need for regulatory frameworks that balance innovation with the protection of individual rights and societal truth.



Machines using laptops.

¹¹⁴ <https://jolt.law.harvard.edu/digest/why-racial-bias-is-prevalent-in-facial-recognition-technology>.

¹¹⁵ BBC News, 2015.

¹¹⁶ <https://time.com/5520558/artificial-intelligence-racial-gender-bias/>.

¹¹⁷ As above.

¹¹⁸ CIPESA, ‘Uganda Steps Up Pressure on Social Media Critics Ahead of 2026 Polls’ (27 April 2025) <https://cipesa.org/2025/04/uganda-steps-up-pressure-on-social-media-critics-ahead-of-2026-polls/>, accessed 17 February 2026.

Figure 8: Deepfake growth in countries with elections in 2024.

Source: AFIC

Right to work and economic rights

AI-driven automation is increasingly reshaping the workforce across all sectors, leading to a growing reliance on machines at the expense of human labour. Routine and repetitive tasks in customer service, banking, manufacturing, and agriculture are increasingly being performed by AI systems, reducing the need for human employees. While this improves efficiency and lowers operational costs, it also contributes to widespread job displacement, particularly affecting young workers and those in informal or entry-level positions. As humans are replaced by machines, opportunities to gain a livelihood through traditional work diminish, undermining the right to work. The growing dependence on automated systems risks creating an economy where human labour is undervalued and marginalised, heightening

economic inequality and social vulnerability unless accompanied by targeted policies to reskill workers and ensure equitable participation in the evolving labour market.

4.6.4 Right to a clean and healthy environment

AI and related automation impose heavy environmental burdens, directly threatening the right to a clean and healthy environment enshrined in Article 39 of Uganda's 1995 Constitution. Data centres powering AI models consume vast amounts of electricity, often from fossil fuels, driving up national demand. In Uganda, where hydropower dominates but grid strain limits access, this spikes costs for households and small businesses, forcing trade-offs between energy and essentials while elevating carbon emissions

and pollution from backup diesel generators.¹¹⁹ Emerging AI hubs in Kampala and Entebbe, supporting government initiatives like health diagnostics and e-governance, exacerbate these risks without localised impact assessments, mirroring global trends where AI accounts for 2-3% of emissions by 2026. This undermines public health through air quality degradation and climate vulnerability in flood-prone areas like the Lake Victoria basin. Sustainable planning via Uganda's Energy Transition Plan, emphasising renewables, is essential to harness AI gains without compromising community wellbeing.¹²⁰

4.6.5 Right to education

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is taught at the Ordinary (Secondary) Level in Uganda.¹²¹ In recent years, several Ugandan institutions have introduced formal courses and programmes in AI for example, Cavendish University Uganda offers a Bachelor of Science in Data Science and Artificial Intelligence while Makerere University integrates an AI course within its Computer Science degree, as part of its renewed emphasis on AI and data driven research through its newly launched Makerere University Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Data Science (Mak-CAD). This expansion spells hope for innovation and skills development, but also triggers human rights considerations, particularly the right to education and equal opportunity.¹²²

AI offers transformative potential for education by expanding access through online platforms, personalised tutoring systems, and adaptive learning tools that bridge gaps in resource-scarce settings like rural Uganda. Yet, this promise is

undermined by stark digital divides: students without smartphones, stable internet, or electricity, prevalent in 70% of upcountry schools, face exclusion, widening inequalities under Article 30 of Uganda's 1995 Constitution, guaranteeing free basic education. However, deepening reliance on AI widens digital divides, excluding rural students without reliable internet, devices, or electricity, issues acute in areas like Karamoja, where connectivity lags, thus violating Article 30 of the 1995 Constitution's guarantee of universal basic education.¹²³ Automated assessments and biased algorithms further risk diminishing critical thinking, creativity, and human interaction essential for holistic development, while AI-generated content may propagate misinformation or cultural insensitivity in curricula.¹²⁴ AI-driven inequities in education demand urgent safeguards: digital infrastructure equity, teacher training, and algorithmic audits under the Education Act (2008) to ensure technology amplifies, rather than restricts, learning rights for all Ugandans.

4.6.6 Children's rights

AI offers powerful tools to bolster child protection online, such as algorithms that scan platforms for child sexual abuse material (CSAM), detect grooming patterns in chats, and automate reporting to authorities like Uganda's Child Helpline or Police CID. In Uganda, where mobile penetration exceeds 60% among youth, emerging AI initiatives under the National Children's Authority and Data Protection Act (2019) could enhance monitoring on apps like WhatsApp and TikTok, aligning with the Children Act (Cap 59) to safeguard minors from predators.¹²⁵

119 Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (Uganda), 'Energy Consumption in Uganda 2025' (31 October 2024) <https://development.finance.go.ug/knowledge-centre-reports/energy-consumption-uganda-2025> accessed 17 February 2026.

120 National Renewable Energy Platform (Uganda), 'Uganda Energy Transition Plan 2023' (2023) <https://nrep.ug/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/UgandaEnergyTransitionPlan-2023.pdf> accessed 17 February 2026.

121 National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC).

122 New Vision, 'Govt Moves to Introduce Inclusive AI Curriculum for Learners' (17 November 2025) https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/education/govt-moves-to-introduce-inclusive-ai-curriculum-NV_222850_032026 accessed 17 February 2026.

123 New Vision, 'Equip Students with Critical Thinking, AI Skills, VP Alupo Tells Tertiary Institutions' (5 March 2026) https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/education/equip-students-with-critical-thinking-ai-skil-NV_229288_032026 accessed 17 February 2026.

124 The Observer, 'Uganda Must Wake Up to the AI Revolution' (2 December 2025) <https://observer.ug/viewpoint/uganda-must-wake-up-to-the-ai-revolution/> accessed 17 February 2026.

125 Uganda DNS Forum, 'Responsible AI & Child Online Protection in Uganda | Safer Internet Day 2025' (YouTube, 12 February 2026) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OHLJkk5XUy8> accessed 17 February 2026 [youtube].

Conversely, AI enables the generation of synthetic CSAM deepfake images or videos of children in explicit scenarios, often defended as “not real” to skirt laws like the Computer Misuse (Amendment) Act 2022, which criminalises sharing child-related content without consent (up to 7 years imprisonment). This inflicts profound psychological trauma, reputational damage, and heightened vulnerability, especially amid low digital literacy in rural Uganda, where 40% of children lack parental online supervision.¹²⁶ Algorithmic flaws compound risks, biased detection may overlook local-language grooming or falsely accuse innocent users, eroding privacy under Article 27 of the 1995 Constitution, while unchecked tools amplify harms in under-resourced areas. Urgent reforms are needed to address AI-specific needs in child protection laws, and caregiver training and ethical audits are essential to prioritise safety over unchecked innovation.¹²⁷

4.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ministry of Information and Communication Technology and National Guidance should:

1. Update the National Information and Communication Technology Strategy, including establishing a national oversight body to monitor the application of AI ethics and safeguards and implementation of relevant human rights standards and encourage the private sector involved in the development of AI to establish self-regulatory bodies that develop ethical guidelines for AI developers.

2. Enhance digital infrastructure connectivity and access to technological innovations through partnerships.
3. Address major structural impediments to accessing new and emerging technologies. Invest in education and training programmes to improve AI literacy among policymakers, developers, and the general public.
4. Promote the importance of family values and the protection of traditional social structures in digital content and regulations.
5. Support research initiatives, including human rights impact assessment studies focused on the ethical complications of AI, exploring ways to mitigate risks and enhance the positive impact of AI on human rights.

4.8 CONCLUSION

While AI holds significant potential to advance socio-economic development and human rights in Uganda, its deployment must be guided by robust legal, ethical, and institutional frameworks. Ensuring transparency, accountability, inclusivity, and respect for fundamental rights is essential to prevent harm and maximise the benefits of AI. A human rights-based approach to AI governance will be critical in ensuring that technological progress contributes to equitable and sustainable development.

¹²⁶ New Vision, ‘Protecting Children in the Age of AI’ (8 February 2026). https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/blogs/protecting-children-in-the-age-of-ai-NV_227772_032026 accessed 17 January 2026.[newvision.co]

¹²⁷ As above.

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Drug and substance abuse in Uganda



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Drug and substance abuse in Uganda is not simply a health or criminal justice issue, it is a profound human rights crisis that erodes the dignity, health, and opportunities of millions, particularly youth who make up more than half of the population.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Substance abuse refers to the harmful or hazardous use of psychoactive substances, including alcohol and illicit drugs, often characterised by an over-reliance on addictive substances.¹²⁸ Drug and substance abuse in Uganda is not simply a health or criminal justice issue; it is a profound human rights crisis. The harmful use of alcohol and illicit drugs erodes the dignity, health, and opportunities of millions, particularly the youth who make up 75% of the population.¹²⁹ Poverty, unemployment, and weak social support systems leave young Ugandans vulnerable, and many turn to alcohol or drugs as a coping mechanism. What begins as escape from hardship often spirals into addiction, fractured families, lost education, and cycles of crime.¹³⁰ This silent epidemic has been met with punitive responses, arrest, detention, and punishment rather than prevention, treatment, and reintegration. Such approaches fail to address root causes and violate rights to health, education, and life. A rights-based response must recognise drug and substance abuse as a complex social and health challenge, requiring compassion, dignity, and accessible recovery pathways.¹³¹

This chapter looks at how widespread drug and substance abuse is in Uganda, what drives it, and the impacts it has on individuals and communities. It also examines government and community responses, while stressing the human rights side of the crisis.

5.2 LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

International Legal

At the international level, drug control is primarily governed by three key United Nations treaties: the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances, and the United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

Uganda has ratified these treaties and by becoming a party to these conventions, Uganda accepted legal obligations to control narcotic and psychotropic substances, limit their use to medical and scientific purposes, and criminalise illicit production, possession, and trafficking.

Regional legal framework

At the regional level, Uganda is also an active participant in African drug control frameworks. Uganda is a member of the African Union and therefore aligns with regional instruments such as the African Union Plan of Action on Drug Control and Crime Prevention.

5.2.1 National legal framework

Drug abuse in Uganda is regulated mainly under **the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Control) Act**, which criminalises the possession, use, and trafficking of illegal drugs, with strict

128 World Health Organization, 'Substance Abuse' http://www.who.int/topics/substance_abuse/en/ accessed 30 January 2026.

129 Uganda Bureau of Statistics, National Population and Housing Census 2024 Main Report (UBOS 2024).

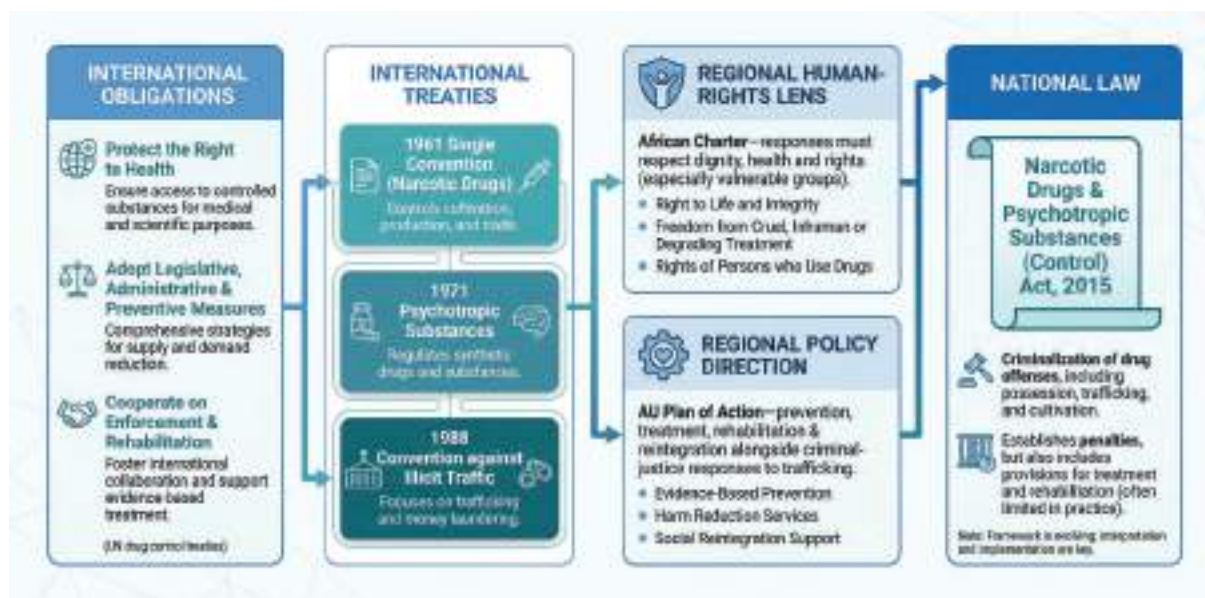
130 Uganda's new Narcotics Law will undermine access to healthcare for people who use drugs (International Drug Policy Consortium, 15 February 2024) <https://idpc.net/blog/2024/02/uganda-s-new-narcotics-law-will-undermine-access-to-healthcare-for-people-who-use-drugs> accessed 30 January 2026.

131 The silent epidemic of drug abuse in Uganda (Monitor Online, 12 January 2025). <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/the-silent-epidemic-of-drug-abuse-in-uganda-5004744> accessed 30 January 2026.

penalties such as fines and imprisonment. While the law is largely punitive, it also allows for medical use under license and provides for the rehabilitation of persons with drug dependence.

Uganda's legal framework on alcohol and drugs is fragmented. Only 14.6 % of Uganda's districts have ordinances regulating alcohol, and enforcement is inconsistent. Nationally, repeated attempts to pass comprehensive alcohol control laws have failed.¹³²

Figure 9: Uganda's Legal Framework For Drug Control.



Source: UHRC

The **National Drug and Health Products Authority Bill, 2025**, seeks to modernise Uganda's regulation of medicines, medical devices, cosmetics, and nutritional supplements by replacing the outdated National Drug Policy and Authority Act of 1993. It addresses gaps in the current law, such as the lack of regulation for pharmacies in health units, vaccine lot releases, drug recalls, illegal premises, and the exclusion of cosmetics, devices, and supplements. The Bill proposes establishing a strengthened authority with powers to oversee drug registration, manufacturing, distribution, import/export, pharmacies, vaccine lot releases, clinical trials, and pharmacovigilance, while also regulating medical devices and cosmetics containing harmful substances.

The **Alcoholic Drinks Control Bill (2016)** sought to regulate sales, packaging, and consumption, but was rejected. In 2023, the Bill was reintroduced in 2024 banning sachets, restricting sales hours, and prohibiting online sales. Parliament rejected it, citing financial implications and duplication of existing laws. Critics noted it ignored illicit alcohol, which accounts for 65% of consumption.¹³³ Uganda continues to rely on outdated statutes like the Enguli Act (Cap 86) and Liquor Act (Cap 93). Meanwhile, the **National Alcohol Control Policy** sets out prevention and treatment goals but suffers from limited enforcement.

¹³² Uganda Alcohol Report 2022.

¹³³ *Alcohol Control Bill rejected: Key reasons behind parliament's decision - The Observer.*

The **Anti-Narcotics Unit of the Uganda Police Force** actively intercepts illicit drugs at border points and disrupts domestic distribution networks, including those that infiltrate schools, but its approach remains largely reactive and punitive. Enforcement efforts emphasise arrests and seizures rather than prevention, leaving rehabilitation and reintegration underfunded and underdeveloped. This creates several challenges: border pressures continue to strain capacity, schools remain vulnerable to drug networks, and individuals struggling with addiction receive minimal support, highlighting a systemic gap between enforcement and long-term solutions.

| Health facilities

Uganda's public health system addresses drug and substance use disorders primarily through regional referral hospitals, which provide psychiatric consultations, detoxification, counselling, and treatment for withdrawal symptoms.¹³⁴ Severe or complex cases are typically referred to Butabika National Referral Mental Hospital in Kampala, the country's main public facility dedicated to drug and alcohol dependence.¹³⁵ Butabika's Alcohol and Drug Unit offers specialised services including psychiatric assessment, psychotherapy, and both inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation.

Over time, regional hospitals such as Gulu, Mbarara, Mbale, Arua, Fort Portal, and Hoima have expanded their mental health departments

to manage substance-related conditions, though resources remain limited.¹³⁶ Private and faith-based centres like Serenity Centre Uganda and Free Hearts Uganda supplement public services, but stigma, costs, and the scarcity of specialised facilities continue to restrict access.¹³⁷ Strengthening regional mental health services, expanding community-based programmes, and improving referral systems are essential to meet Uganda's growing challenge of drug and substance abuse.¹³⁸

5.3 SITUATION ANALYSIS

5.3.1 Prevalence of Drug and Substance Abuse

Uganda has one of Africa's highest alcohol consumption rates at 12 litres of pure alcohol per person annually.¹³⁹ Over 60% of adults take alcohol, and 70% of youth (12–24) have tried alcohol or drugs, with 40% using regularly.¹⁴⁰ First use often occurs between ages 13–15, increasing risks of addiction and mental illness.¹⁴¹ At Butabika National Referral Mental Hospital, 40% of admissions are linked to substance abuse.¹⁴² In Kampala's informal settlements and urban towns, substance use is often a way to cope with poverty, unemployment, and stress.¹⁴³ The burden is heavy on health services too. At Butabika National Referral Mental Hospital, 4 out of 10 mental health admissions are linked to drug and substance abuse. Consequently, alcohol use contributes

¹³⁴ Refer to the mental health chapter 7.

¹³⁵ Butabika National Referral Mental Hospital, 'Alcohol and Drug Unit' <https://www.butabikahospital.go.ug/medical-services/alcohol-and-drug-unit-adu> accessed 12 March 2026.

¹³⁶ Ministry of Health, Uganda National Mental Health Policy (Ministry of Health 2010).

¹³⁷ As above.

¹³⁸ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Rapid Assessment of Drug Use and Treatment Services in Uganda (UNODC 2018).

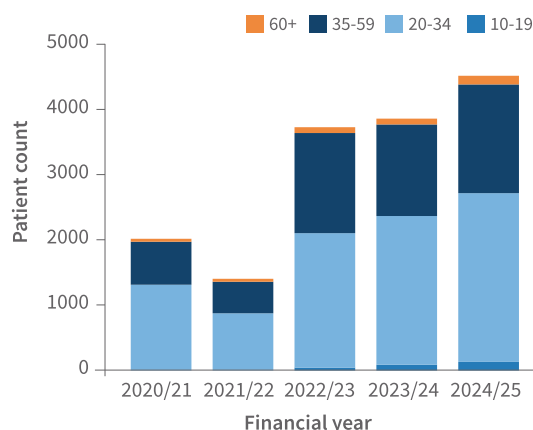
¹³⁹ World Health Organization, World Health Statistics 2023 (WHO 2023) – Uganda's alcohol consumption and comparative data referenced in WHO and related reports accessed via WHO AFRO releases and media summaries on WHO rankings accessed 30 January 2026. (WHO | Regional Office for Africa).

¹⁴⁰ Tonny Abet, '1.2 million Ugandans struggle with alcohol use disorder – government' Daily Monitor (26 October 2023).

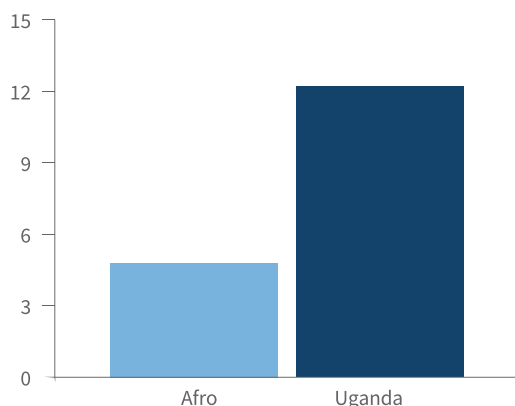
¹⁴¹ Uganda Youth Development Link, Trends in Youth Substance Use in Uganda (UYDEL 2025).

¹⁴² Byamah B Mutamba, 'Alcohol and Substance Use Disorders in Uganda: Emerging Trends, Human Rights Implications and Response Strategies' (presentation delivered at the Uganda Human Rights Commission 28th Annual Report Consultative Meeting, Butabika National Referral Mental Hospital, 15–16 December 2026).

¹⁴³ The State of Uganda Population Report 2025 "Mental Health: A silent emergency."

Figure 10: Snapshot of Butabika hospital admissions 2020-2025.

Source: Butabika National Referral Hospital

Figure 11: Alcohol consumption in Uganda compared to other African countries.¹⁴⁴

Source: WHO

significantly to health, social, and crime-related harm in the country.¹⁴⁵ To truly protect Uganda's future, drug and substance abuse must be viewed not just as a crime but as a human challenge that needs compassion, dignity, family support, and opportunities for recovery so that young people can reach their full potential.¹⁴⁶

“

I started drinking at 14. At first, it was just for fun with friends, but when I dropped out of school, it became the only way to forget my problems. Now I want to stop, but there is nowhere to get help.”
- A high school student in Kampala.

Uganda is ranked as the highest per capita consumer of alcohol in Africa and reported among the leading countries globally in per capita consumption, with some global rankings placing it within the top five alcohol-consuming countries worldwide.

5.3.2 Drug and substance abuse evolution

Patterns of use are also changing. While alcohol and tobacco remain common, young people are turning to cheaper, less regulated substances like shisha, codeine cough syrups, and pharmaceutical pills. In West Nile, youth have even discovered unusual local substances: Azangi leaves that make someone drunk when carried in a pocket, snakeskin that is smoked, Seed 36 whose black seeds cause intoxication (and madness if overused), and mixtures like dry paspalum with groundnuts that are smoked for a high as well as grey hair. These practices show how desperation and curiosity fuel dangerous experimentation. The growing availability of synthetic and wild substances has worsened the crisis, linking drug use to rising crime, violence, and exploitation.

144 World Health Organization, World Health Statistics 2023 (WHO 2023) – Uganda's alcohol consumption and comparative data referenced in WHO and related reports accessed via WHO AFRO releases and media summaries on WHO rankings accessed 30 January 2026. (WHO | Regional Office for Africa).

145 World Health Organization, Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health 2018 (WHO 2018). <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241565639> accessed 30 January 2026.

146 Uganda Harm Reduction Network – Policy and Advocacy (Uganda Harm Reduction Network, 2025). <https://ugandaharmreduction.org/> accessed 30 January 2026.

Between 2017 and 2024, narcotics-related cases rose by 154%, and the trend continues. Uganda's drug problem is not just about numbers; it is about young lives at risk, families under strain, and communities losing their strength.¹⁴⁷

“

We have lost our son while he is still alive. He is addicted, and every time he is arrested, he comes back worse. What we need is treatment, not prison.” - Parent of a substance abuser.

5.3.3 Cost and affordability

Alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs are affordable and easily accessible in Uganda. Alcohol is sold almost everywhere, in both towns and villages. Small sachets of strong spirits, even though restricted by the GOU, have often been sold for as little as UGX 200–1,800, making them affordable even for people with very little money. Beer is also within reach: a pint of local draught beer costs between UGX 3,000 and 12,000, while imported brands range from UGX 6,500 to 18,000. Cigarettes are similarly accessible, with a pack costing around UGX 8,000.¹⁴⁸

Other substances like khat (locally called *mairungi*), which is chewed as a stimulant, are widely available in markets at low prices depending on the amount and quality. Because these substances are cheap and everywhere, people from all walks of life across all age groups, can easily access them. This affordability is one of the main reasons why alcohol and drug use continues to spread across Uganda.

5.3.4 Commonly Used Substances

In Uganda, people use a wide range of substances. The most common include alcohol, marijuana, tobacco, and khat (*mairungi*). But many young people also experiment with more dangerous drugs such as heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine (locally called *ice*), ecstasy, and synthetic products like *kuber*. Others turn to unusual substances like aviation fuel, benzene-based alcohol, prescription medicines with high alcohol content, and even industrial adhesives.¹⁴⁹ The Commission warns that drug and substance abuse is not just a health issue; it affects many basic rights guaranteed under Uganda's Constitution. These include the right to health, education, personal security, family life, work, and development. In other words, when drug abuse spreads, it harms not only individuals but also families, communities, and the nation's future.¹⁵⁰

The table below illustrates the commonly reported categories of drugs and substances used or abused in Uganda, the contexts in which they are consumed, and the key associated concerns.

¹⁴⁷ Uganda Police Force, Annual Crime Report 2024.

¹⁴⁸ Uganda Alcohol Policy Alliance, *Alcohol Consumption and Availability in Uganda* (UAPA 2023); World Health Organization, *Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health 2018: Uganda Country Profile* (WHO 2018); Ministry of Health Uganda, *National Policy to Reduce Alcohol-Related Harm* (MOH 2019).

¹⁴⁹ As above.

¹⁵⁰ Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995, Articles 20, 22, 24, 30, 31, and 34.

Table 6: Drugs and substance use/abuse in Uganda.

SUBSTANCE CATEGORY	EXAMPLES IN UGANDA	COMMON CONTEXTS OF USE/ MISUSE	KEY CONCERNS
Stimulants	   	Khat (Miraa); Methamphetamine ("Ice"); Kush, cigarettes, Shisha, marijuana, Cocaine, Kuba, Ecstasy, Molly, Vapes, Grasses, Grey Hair, Amphetamines; High-caffeine energy drinks 	Youth in urban areas, students, youth, sports, music, transport, construction and boda-boda industry; nightlife settings Increased risk-taking, dependence, mental health disorders, violence School-based substance abuse
Central Nervous System (CNS) Depressants		Alcohol (sachet alcohol, waragi, local brews –malwa, tonto, ajono); Benzodiazepines (Diazepam, Alprazolam); Codeine-based cough syrups; Inhalants (petrol, glue, paint thinners)	Slums and informal settlements; street-connected children; nightlife; self-medication Addiction, overdose, impaired judgment, GBV and school dropout
Opioid Analgesics	 	Tramadol; Morphine (medical diversion); Codeine; Heroin Manual labourers; youth; health-facility diversion; urban drug markets, middle class and students. People often abuse tramadol and morphine by taking them in high doses or mixing them with other substances to get a quick 'high', which can lead to addiction, overdose, and serious health problems.	High addiction potential, overdose risk, criminal justice involvement

SUBSTANCE CATEGORY	EXAMPLES IN UGANDA	COMMON CONTEXTS OF USE/ MISUSE	KEY CONCERNS
Synthetic opioids	Metonitazene, protonitazene, isotonitazene, and etonitazene	Youth and young adults in urban and rural communities. Synthetic opioids are man-made drugs designed to mimic natural opioids like morphine, but they are often much stronger and more dangerous; people abuse them by swallowing, injecting, or mixing them with other substances to get a powerful 'high', which greatly increases the risk of addiction, overdose, and death	Overdose, dependence, mental health disorders, violence

Source: National Drug Authority (NDA)

Table 7: Common synthetic opioids.

DRUG	MEDICAL USE	HOW IT IS ABUSED	RISKS
Fentanyl	Strong painkiller, often for cancer or surgery patients	Taken illegally in pills, powders, or mixed with other drugs	Extremely potent; high risk of overdose and death
Tramadol	Moderate pain relief	Swallowed in high doses, crushed and snorted, or mixed with alcohol	Addiction, seizures, and respiratory depression
Methadone	Used in opioid addiction treatment and pain relief	Misused by taking more than prescribed or mixing with other depressants	Overdose, slowed breathing, dependency
Buprenorphine	Treatment for opioid dependence	Misused by injection or taken without prescription	Low
Oxycodone	Prescribed for severe pain	Taken in excess or crushed and snorted	Addiction, overdose, respiratory failure

Source: National Drug Authority (NDA)

5.3.5 Drug and Substance Abuse Among Learners and Youth in Uganda

Drug and substance abuse have increasingly emerged as concerns within secondary schools in Uganda, with some substances being disguised in consumable products that appear harmless to learners. In recent years, law enforcement agencies have reported cases where narcotic substances are mixed with food items such as cookies, biscuits, pancakes, bread products, and cooking ingredients, making detection difficult within school environments. In 2022, the Anti-

Narcotics Department of the UPF arrested four suspects involved in producing and distributing snacks laced with marijuana to students in schools located in areas such as Kira Municipality, Bugolobi, and Kulambiro in the Kampala Metropolitan Area.¹⁵¹ Investigations revealed that the substances were mixed with baking ingredients and other food products and packaged to resemble ordinary supermarket products. The case came to light after a secondary school suspended several students who had ordered the snacks for consumption during a school party.

¹⁵¹ Uganda Police Force, '4 Suspects Arrested for Selling Drug-Laced Cookies/Snacks to High School Students' (20 June 2022) <https://upf.go.ug/4-suspects-arrested-for-selling-drug-laced-cookies-snacks-to-high-school-students/>, accessed 12 March 2026 (Uganda Police Force).

According to Police statements, the packaging resembled normal food items, making it difficult for learners to distinguish them from ordinary snacks until after consumption.

The concealment of drugs in edible products presents a significant challenge for school authorities responsible for safeguarding the welfare of learners. Adolescents between the ages of 13 and 20, who constitute the majority of secondary school students, are particularly vulnerable due to peer pressure, curiosity, and limited awareness of the long-term health consequences associated with substance abuse.¹⁵² Some schools have responded by strengthening internal monitoring systems, such as stricter inspections of food brought onto school premises, heightened supervision during school events, and engagement with parents and local authorities where drug use is suspected.

Figure 12: Anti-drugs message: “Remember that your body has no spare parts so don’t spoil it.”



Source: UHRC

In certain instances where drug consumption is suspected, schools have reportedly referred students for medical screening, including toxicology tests, to confirm the presence of narcotic substances and guide counselling interventions.

Beyond disciplinary measures, many schools are increasingly emphasising psychosocial support, recognising that repeated exposure to narcotic substances can lead to dependency, behavioural changes, and declining academic performance. The normalisation of drug consumption among adolescents also raises broader child protection concerns relating to the right to health and development. Awareness on this issue was raised during the 3rd National Prefects Conference held in Kampala, Uganda, on 25 July 2024 at Hotel Africana, which focused on drug abuse and its impact on mental health. The event was run in partnership with UNESCO, the Drugs Hapana Initiative and Butabika Hospital, among others.

5.3.6 Drug and Substance Abuse in Institutions of Higher Learning

Drug and substance abuse is not limited to secondary schools but also manifests in institutions of higher learning.¹⁵³ Universities/tertiary institutions have reported challenges related to alcohol misuse, cannabis consumption, and the use of other psychoactive substances among students.

The transition from secondary school to university often coincides with increased independence, exposure to new social networks, and reduced parental supervision, which may contribute to experimentation with drugs and alcohol. Students who develop substance dependence frequently experience adverse effects, including poor academic performance, absenteeism, disciplinary sanctions, and mental health challenges. These concerns have prompted universities to implement awareness campaigns, counselling services, and partnerships with health professionals aimed at prevention and rehabilitation. However, the effectiveness of these interventions varies depending on institutional resources and the availability of specialised support services.

152 ‘Drug Abuse in Schools Spiralling Out of Control’, Daily Monitor (Uganda), <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/drug-abuse-in-schools-spiralling-out-of-control-3860148>, accessed 12 March 2026 (Monitor).

153 https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/news/under-the-influence-drug-abuse-in-uganda-as-h-NV_209032



Students at the 2024 conference on drug abuse awareness. © UNESCO

5.3.7 The Link between Crime, and Drug and Substance Abuse

In Uganda, drug and substance abuse is closely linked to crime, especially among young people in towns and surrounding areas. Police and prison reports show that many offenders involved in petty theft, burglary, assault, and disorderly conduct are regular users of alcohol, marijuana, and other substances. For some, dependency drives them to commit crimes just to sustain their addiction, creating a cycle of arrest, detention, and reoffence.

In poorer communities, substance abuse is often tied to survival-driven crimes. The growing availability of narcotics in informal settlements and border districts has also fuelled GBV, gang activity, and juvenile delinquency. Data from the National Drug Authority shows rising cases of substance use disorders among adolescents, highlighting the urgent need for prevention and rehabilitation.¹⁵⁴

“

We arrest the same individuals repeatedly for drug-related offences. Without rehabilitation options, the cycle continues.” - Law enforcement officer.

While punishment remains the main response, experts stress that this alone is not enough. A more holistic approach is needed, one that combines community awareness, mental health services, and economic empowerment. Tackling drug abuse in this way would not only reduce crime but also protect human rights, strengthen families, and give young people a chance to build better futures.

¹⁵⁴ NDA presentation at the 28th Annual Report Consultative meeting.

Table 8: Drug abuse and youth crime.

STAGE	STATISTIC	DETAILS/NOTES
1. Drug abuse	38%	Youth arrests linked to drug-related offences
2. Crime involvement	62%	Violent crimes committed under the influence of drugs
3. Social impact	40%/33%	Gang-affiliated youth arrests; school dropouts among offenders
4. Repeat offences	29%	Youth rearrested within the same year
5. Regional hotspots	Kampala & Wakiso	Highest overlap between drug abuse and youth crime

Source: *Uganda Police Force Report 2024*

5.3.8 Emerging Trends in Drug and Substance Abuse

Uganda’s national trends mirror global shifts in drug markets, where synthetic drugs are expanding rapidly because they are cheap to produce, easy to hide, and hard to detect.¹⁵⁵ Of particular concern worldwide is the rise of highly potent synthetic opioids like fentanyl and nitazene analogues (metonitazene, protonitazene, isotonitazene, etonitazene), which carry extreme overdose risks and severe health consequences.¹⁵⁶ In East Africa, the region is increasingly both a transit corridor and a growing consumer market. Uganda’s location in the Great Lakes region, porous borders, expanding transport networks, and growing urban centres have increased exposure to trafficking routes and new psychoactive substances.¹⁵⁷ Areas once used mainly for transit are now becoming consumption points, especially among urban youth and vulnerable populations, showing how global drug market changes are directly shaping local realities.

5.3.9 Causes of Drug and Substance Abuse in Uganda

Causes of drug abuse are the direct reasons why someone starts or continues using drugs, such as biological factors like family history or genetic vulnerability, psychological struggles

like depression,¹⁵⁸ anxiety, or trauma, and social pressures like peer influence, broken family relationships,¹⁵⁹ or living in environments where drug use is common.

- (a) **Health problems** can both lead to and worsen drug abuse: people living with chronic illness, untreated pain, or mental health challenges like depression, anxiety, or trauma may turn to drugs or alcohol as self-medication, but over time this use damages the body, weakens the immune system, harms the brain, and deepens addiction, creating a cycle that is very hard to escape.
- (b) **Psychological factors**, including depression, anxiety, trauma, stress, low self-esteem or difficulty coping with life or other mental health challenges.
- (c) **Social factors**, such as peer pressure, family conflict, poor parenting, or exposure to environments where drugs are commonly used.
- (d) **Curiosity and experimentation**, especially among young people seeking new experiences.
- (e) **Lack of proper guidance or supervision**, particularly in childhood or adolescence.

155 As above.

156 UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *World Drug Report 2025: Key Findings* (UNODC 2025) https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/WDR_2025/WDR25_B1_Key_findings.pdf accessed [30th January 2025].

157 International Narcotics Control Board, *Annual Report 2024* (INCB 2025) (press release on synthetic drug spread) <https://www.ungeneva.org/en/news-media/news/2025/03/103969/rapid-expansion-synthetic-drugs-reshaping-illicit-markets-un-anti> accessed [30 January 2025].

158 *The Impact of Alcoholism, Substance Abuse and Addiction in Ugandan Families* (Michael Silwany Child Foundation) <https://www.michaelsilwany.org/the-impact-of-substance-abuse-and-addiction-in-ugandan-families> accessed 30 January 2026.

159 *Understanding Drug Abuse: Causes, Effects, and Solutions* – Yasa Foundation <https://yasafoundation.org/understanding-drug-abuse-causes-effects-and-solutions/> accessed 30 January 2026.

5.3.10 Drivers of Drug Abuse in Uganda

Drivers of drug abuse are the wider social, economic, and environmental pressures like poverty, unemployment, weak regulation, social inequality, and cultural norms that shape the conditions in which people live. They don't directly cause drug use, but they create stress, vulnerability, and easy access that make it more likely for individuals and communities to fall into substance abuse. These include:

- (a) Poverty.
- (b) Unemployment.
- (c) Weak regulations.
- (d) Cultural norms and beliefs.
- (e) Social inequality and marginalisation.
- (f) Peer pressure.
- (g) Lack of access to education.
- (h) Breakdown of community structures.
- (i) Urbanisation and overcrowding.
- (j) Media influence and glamorization of substance use.

5.4 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

5.4.1 Right to Education

The Commission observed that drug and substance abuse threatens children's rights to protection, education, health, and development. Schools and institutions of higher learning reported increased cases of absenteeism, declining academic performance, and suspensions linked to substance use.

“

We are losing very bright children; some begin with smoking and end up escaping school altogether.”

A primary school head teacher in Wakiso narrated

“

It starts as something small among friends... but by the time you realise it, you cannot stay a day without using something.”

A youth respondent in Jinja District stated

The right to education is also impacted, with reports of school absenteeism, poor academic performance, and dropout among learners. Substance abuse has been linked to increased exposure of children and youth to violence, exploitation, and neglect, undermining their rights to protection and development.

The Commission further notes that responses to drug and substance abuse have largely remained enforcement-oriented. While law enforcement plays a critical role in addressing illicit drug trafficking, predominantly punitive approaches risk reinforcing stigma, discrimination, and social exclusion of persons who use drugs. Such approaches may discourage individuals from seeking health and social support services, thereby exacerbating human rights vulnerabilities.

The Commission emphasises the need for a comprehensive, rights-based response that balances law enforcement with prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, harm reduction, and community-based interventions. Strengthened regional cooperation and coordination among duty bearers remain essential in addressing the evolving nature of drug and substance abuse in Uganda.

5.4.2 Increased Crime Rate Among Youth

The UHRC has found that more young people are getting into conflict with the law because of rising drug and substance abuse. This surge is putting huge pressure on an already strained justice system, and the default response, criminalising drug use, affects young people and vulnerable communities the most. Many face limited access to legal aid and punishments that don't fit the situation. The Police also highlight the link between drug use

and petty crimes like theft, break-ins, and GBV, and young people who use drugs are often targeted by criminal networks. At the same time, prisons and remand homes are overcrowded and struggling to provide basic medical care, counselling, or meaningful rehabilitation. Therefore, there is a need for a different approach that treats drug dependence as a health and social problem, not just a crime. Combining public health measures, harm reduction, and real rehabilitation with law enforcement.

“

Many young people engage in serious crimes such as rape, defilement, robbery, and theft, often under the influence of drugs or alcohol, and in some cases as a way to finance their habits. This pattern highlights the urgent need for preventive measures, rehabilitation programmes, and community support to address both substance abuse and youth crime.”

- A law enforcement officer.

5.4.3 Right to Health

Alcohol and illicit drugs contain chemicals that affect the whole body and mind. When young people abuse these substances, it can overstimulate the brain and sometimes lead to mental illness, making treatment for both mental health and drug problems urgent. Substance abuse affects their right to the highest attainable standard of mental and physical health, leaving them more likely to miss out on care and support. Drug and substance use also speeds up brain development in children and youth, pushing them toward adult behaviours too soon and making it easier to pick up risky habits. The UHRC found that alcohol is linked to serious illnesses like cancers and HIV, and users also risk exposure to depression, high blood pressure, trauma, infertility, hallucinations, and

heart disease. These risks show why prevention, treatment, and support are needed early and for everyone.

District health offices in Wakiso, Mbale, Arua, and Gulu have reported a noticeable rise in drug-induced mental health complications, including cases of psychosis and severe dependency. Rehabilitation centres across these districts have expressed concern about limited bed capacity and a shortage of specialised personnel trained in addiction treatment, which constrains their ability to respond effectively. At the same time, the growing presence of new psychoactive substances (NPS) has compounded the problem. The NPS include industrial solvents, narcotic cough syrups, synthetic opioids, and locally known mixtures such as *mabise*, *bombo*, and *kawungeera*. The spread of these substances has intensified health risks, particularly among young people, and placed additional strain on already overstretched health systems. This trend underscores the urgent need for expanded treatment infrastructure, specialised training for health workers, and stronger community-level interventions to address both the medical and social dimensions of substance abuse.

“

We are overwhelmed. Many of our patients are young people struggling with addiction, but we lack trained personnel, rehabilitation facilities, and essential medicines.”

- A health worker.

The Commission notes that the growing prevalence of drug and substance abuse significantly undermines the enjoyment of human rights in Uganda, with the right to health especially affected due to limited access to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and harm reduction services. Health facilities have reported mounting strain in responding to substance-related conditions, including mental health challenges and overdose

cases, underscoring the need for stronger health and rights-based approaches to drug control.

5.4.4 Loss of Life

Alcohol and drug abuse directly undermine the right to life, as they contribute to accidents, including fatal road crashes. In 2024, more than 2,800 Ugandans under 35 years died in road crashes, with alcohol consumption and reckless driving identified as key causes.¹⁶⁰

5.4.5 Weak Regulatory Enforcement of the Law on Drug Abuse

Narcotics and drug-related cases in Uganda continue to show a widening gap between charges and convictions, with prosecutions often slowed by weak investigations, limited evidence, and procedural delays.¹⁶¹ This imbalance highlights the need for stronger diversion programmes, treatment options, and rehabilitation services, including drug courts that emphasise treatment rather than punishment. At the same time, enforcement under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (2024) remains critical, particularly given the challenges posed by sophisticated counterfeit drug networks and corruption. Illegal and fake drug supply chains have become increasingly complex, sometimes aided by corrupt officials within regulatory bodies, making it difficult to track and disrupt distribution.

“

We recognise the growing crisis, but regulation alone is not enough. We must invest in prevention, treatment, and community awareness.” - Anonymous.

The 2024 Act also introduced provisions for the legalisation of marijuana under regulated conditions, adding another dimension to Uganda’s evolving drug control landscape. Collectively, these

issues underscore the urgency of strengthening enforcement, improving judicial processes, and expanding health-centred approaches to drug abuse.

“

Drug dependence is a health condition, not a moral failure. Criminalising users only deepens marginalisation and violates their dignity.” - A human rights defender.

“Harm reduction and community-based rehabilitation remain underfunded, yet they are the most effective tools for addressing substance abuse sustainably.”

- Community leader.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development should prioritise community and institutional sensitisation to uphold the right to health and wellbeing. This includes awareness campaigns in schools, workplaces, and communities aimed at preventing and detecting drug and substance abuse early, thereby protecting vulnerable groups from exploitation and harm.
2. The Ministry of Health should ensure the realisation of the right to access healthcare by strengthening treatment and rehabilitation services for individuals affected by drug and substance abuse. This obligation extends to making services available, accessible, and non-discriminatory, in line with Uganda’s human rights commitments.

¹⁶⁰ <https://www.newvision.co.ug/category/news/alcohol-abuse-reckless-driving-fuelling-youth>.

¹⁶¹ <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/oped/editorial/let-s-do-all-we-can-to-stem-drug-abuse-5003182>.

3. Parents and caretakers have a duty to safeguard the rights of children. They should provide guidance on the dangers of alcohol and drugs, and ensure physical, emotional, and financial support for children struggling with addiction, thereby protecting them from neglect and exploitation.
4. Uganda National Bureau of Standards should monitor and regulate the quality and quantity of alcohol produced in both formal and informal sectors to ensure consumer protection and reduce/eliminate harmful products on the market.

5.6 CONCLUSION

Drug and substance abuse in Uganda is not solely a law-and-order problem; it is a multifaceted social and health challenge with clear human rights implications. A balanced national strategy that combines targeted law enforcement against organised crime with expanded, rights-based public health services, youth empowerment and social protection will better protect human dignity and reduce harm.

06

Mental health and Human Rights Concerns



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Mental health is inseparable from human rights. When individuals are denied access to treatment, subjected to inhumane conditions, or stigmatised for conditions beyond their control, their dignity as human beings is at stake.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The right to health is recognised globally as a fundamental human right. Mental health is determined by a range of socioeconomic, biological and environmental factors. The World Health Organization (WHO) constitution states health as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.¹⁶² Mental health is therefore an important component of the right to health. It is also important to note that mental health is more than just the absence of mental disorders or disabilities, but it is a state of wellbeing in which an individual realises her or his own abilities to cope with the normal stresses of life, in order to be productive and make a contribution to their community.¹⁶³

In 2025, the UHRC focused on mental health because persons with mental health conditions remain highly vulnerable to stigma, discrimination, neglect, and human rights violations. According to the Mental Health Act Cap 308, “mental illness means a diagnosis of a mental health condition in terms of accepted diagnosis criteria made by a mental health practitioner or medical practitioner authorised to make such diagnosis and for purpose of this definition mental health conditions include but are not limited to depression bipolar, anxiety

disorders, schizophrenia and addictive behaviour due to alcohol and substance abuse among others.”¹⁶⁴

According to *the 2025 State of the Ugandan Population Report*, one in four Ugandans, both adults and children, are struggling with a mental health disorder. Additionally, data from the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) 2024 report indicates that approximately 12% of Ugandans, equivalent to about 3.7 million people, are facing probable mental health challenges. This underscores the urgency of addressing mental health as a national human rights concern. The right to mental health requires that care is available, accessible, affordable and of good quality. This requires the existence of sufficient services which are within reach for all without discrimination, and at a cost that is not inhibitive. These services must also meet medical and ethical standards, ensuring dignity and effective support for those in need.

This chapter assesses mental health from a human rights perspective and highlights the human rights concerns around mental health in Uganda, with special focus on Butabika National Referral Mental Hospital and regional referral hospitals of Fort Portal, Jinja, Arua, Mbarara, Masaka, Lira, Moroto, Kabale, Soroti, Mbale, Kapchorwa General Hospital, Hoima and Gulu.

162 The Constitution was adopted by the International Health Conference held in New York from 19 June to 22 July 1946, signed on 22 July 1946 by the representatives of 61 States and entered into force on 7 April 1948.

163 World Health Organization.

164 See the Mental Health Act.

6.2 LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

Uganda has signed and ratified several treaties and conventions that promote the right to health both at the international and regional levels. In addition, at the national level, Uganda has enacted laws that promote and protect the right to health, including mental health.

6.2.1 International Legal Framework

The right to health is recognised globally as a fundamental human right. Article 25 (1) of the UDHR affirms everyone's right to an adequate standard of living, including medical care. Similarly, Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) obliges states to ensure the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The WHO Constitution (1946) first articulated the right to health and mandates the WHO to promote it. General Comment No. 14 (2000) further clarifies states' duties to respect, protect, and fulfil this right.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) extends comprehensive human rights protection to PWDs, including those with mental health conditions. Article 1 defines disability broadly, covering physical, mental, intellectual, and sensory impairments. Uganda, as a party to the treaty, is therefore obligated to respect and protect the rights of persons with mental health conditions.¹⁶⁵

6.2.2 Regional Legal Framework

At the regional level, Article 16 of the ACHPR and Article 14 of the ACRWC both affirm the right of every individual to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

6.2.3 National Legal Framework

At the national level, the 1995 Constitution affirms the right of PWDs to respect and human dignity, and mandates the state and society to ensure that all citizens can realise their full mental and physical potential.¹⁶⁶ It also prohibits all forms of torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, and provides for offences and penalties related to such violations. In addition, the Mental Health Act, CAP 308, is the primary legislation governing mental health care. It replaced the old Mental Treatment Act, 1938.¹⁶⁷

The Constitutional Court in *Center for Health, Human Rights and Development (CEHUD) and Iga Daniel versus Attorney General*, Constitutional Petition No. 64 of 2011 declared that the words 'idiots and imbeciles' that appear in section 119 of the Penal Code Act contravene Articles 20, 21(1), 2), (3), 24 and 35 of the Constitution by reason of their being derogatory, dehumanizing and degrading. The Court accordingly struck the words from the section.

6.3 SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

According to 2025 data from the WHO, mental health challenges have reached their most dramatic increase in recent history. More than one billion people are living with mental health disorders, with conditions such as anxiety and depression inflicting immense human and economic tolls.¹⁶⁸ The report further states that the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic led to a 26% rise in anxiety and a 28% increase in depression rates within just one year. Today, 301 million people struggle with anxiety disorders, and 58 million of them are children and adolescents. More than 280 million people worldwide face depression, including 23 million young people.¹⁶⁹

In Africa alone, 150 million people are living with

¹⁶⁵ United Nations. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 1, 2006. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.htm>

¹⁶⁶ Article 35, 1995 Constitution.

¹⁶⁷ It was repealed.

¹⁶⁸ *Over a billion people living with mental health conditions – services require urgent scale-up* accessed on 20 February 2026.

¹⁶⁹ *Global Mental Health Statistics 2025: WHO Uncovers Crisis | Leal Mind* accessed on 17 February 2025.

mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and substance use disorders, affecting individuals in every country and community. Suicide is also a major concern, with a regional age-standardised suicide rate of 11.5 per 100,000 population. Alcohol consumption rates exceed 10 litres per capita in some countries, further exacerbating mental health risks.¹⁷⁰

6.3.1 Youthful Population

Uganda has a predominantly young population, with about 73% being youth. There are persistently high levels of youth exclusion; more than half of young people aged 18-30 are not in employment, education, or training.¹⁷¹ This demographic is particularly susceptible to mental health difficulties due to a variety of social determinants, including a higher propensity for risk-taking behaviours, rural-to-urban migration, unemployment, and the pervasive influence of social media and other digital platforms that often foster unrealistic life expectations. Despite increased online connectivity, many young people continue to experience loneliness, isolation, and a sense of social disconnection.

6.3.2 General Psychological Distress

According to the National Population and Housing Census (NPHC) 2024, there were 3,773,915 persons aged 10 and above with probable general psychological distress, equivalent to 12% of the population and reported mental health cases rose by approximately 71% between 2021 and 2024.¹⁷² It should also be noted that epilepsy is both a neurological and a mental health condition, as it affects both the brain and the nervous system. The prevalence of epilepsy in the general population is estimated at around 1%, while the age-specific prevalence rate among children below 15 years is estimated at 2%.

Data from the NPHC 2024 shows that probable depressive disorder was the most common condition (7.8%), with slightly more females (8.1%) reporting it compared to males (7.4%). Probable suicidality, on the other hand, was the least prevalent condition (0.9%).¹⁷³

According to UBOS, variations by sex revealed that among individuals aged 10 and above, females experienced a slightly higher rate of probable general psychological distress (12%), compared to males(11.5%).¹⁷⁴ In every form of psychological distress, the percentage of females affected exceeded that of males.

Table 9: Prevalence of probable mental health conditions in Uganda

INDICATOR/CONDITION	OVERALL (%)	FEMALES (%)	MALES (%)	NOTES
Probable mental-health challenges	12.00%	—	—	≈ 3.7 million people
Probable general psychological distress (age 10+)	12.00%	12.40%	11.50%	Females consistently higher than males
Probable depressive disorder	7.80%	8.10%	7.40%	Most common condition
Probable suicidality	0.90%	—	—	Least prevalent condition

Source: UBOS Report, 2024

170 As above.
171 National Planning Authority Report on Mental Health - Silent Emergency 2024.
172 Ministry of Health Uganda, Health Management Information System (HMIS) reports.
173 Disability Monograph Based on NPHC 2024.
174 As above.

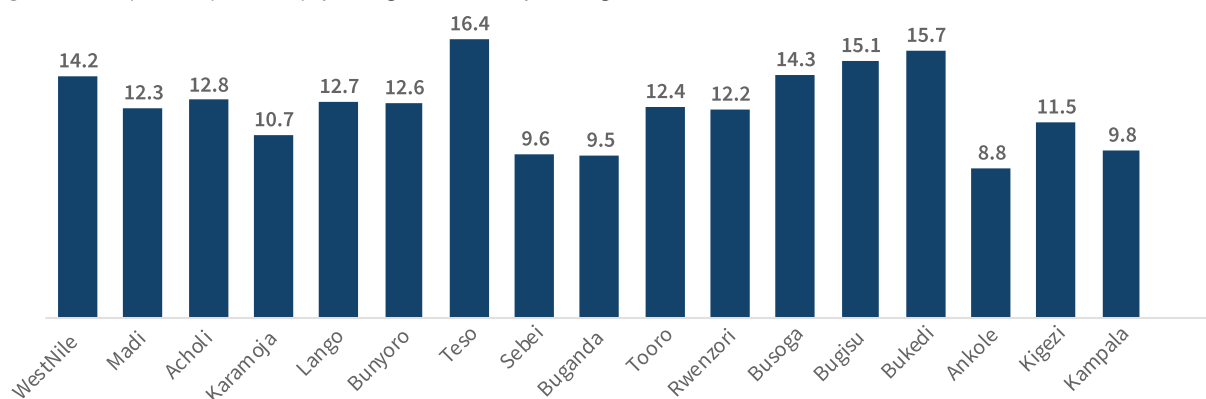
6.3.3 Sub-Regional Prevalence Rate of Mental Illness in Uganda

According to UBOS, probable general psychological distress was most prevalent in the **Teso Sub-Region (16.4%)** and least in **Ankole (8.8%)**. The UBOS report, however, did not provide explanations for these variations, as it primarily focuses on quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Insights from the **UHRC** shed light on some of the underlying factors contributing to mental health challenges in the region. At **Soroti Regional Referral Hospital**, the mental health facility reportedly handles **300-400 patients per week**, reflecting a significant burden on

available services. Most individuals with mental impairments are **youth below the age of 35**, with the highest prevalence among **drug addicts**, followed by cases of **depression** and **accident-related impairments**.

The UHRC findings identify several contributing factors to psychological distress, including **poverty, substance use, genetic predisposition, job-related stress, family conflicts, accidents, exposure to trauma, and early pregnancies**, highlighting the complex interplay of social, economic, and personal factors affecting mental wellbeing in the region.

Figure 13: People with probable psychological distress by sub-region.



Source: UBOS

6.3.4 Causes of Mental Illnesses in Uganda

According to a National Planning Authority (NPA) report on mental health, depression, anxiety, trauma-related disorders, substance and drug misuse, and psychosocial distress are affecting millions of Ugandans, including approximately 23% of children and 24% of adults, as well as large numbers of adolescents and young people navigating school pressures, unemployment, and social uncertainty.¹⁷⁵ Mental illness does not arise from a single cause but results from a combination of biological, individual, psychological, and socio-economic factors.¹⁷⁶ In Uganda, underlying

causes of mental illness in people stem from traumatic or stressful events, genetic or biological factors, neglect, psychological or physical abuse, bereavement (loss of a loved one, loss of property or loss of a job), harassment and oppression, physical injuries such as brain damage, poverty, isolation, poor housing, failed relationships, and illnesses like severe malaria and other non-communicable diseases, among others.¹⁷⁷ Old age also presents specific mental health challenges, including neurocognitive disorders such as dementia.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ National Planning Authority Report, Mental Health - Silent Emergency, 2024.

¹⁷⁶ What_you_need_to_know_about_Mental_Health.pdf, <https://www.health.go.ug/cause/what-you-need-to-know-about-mental-health/>, accessed on 2 February 2026.

¹⁷⁷ As above.

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Dr Mutumba B., Butabika National Referral Mental Health Hospital.

Another key cause of mental health challenges among children is the violation of their rights to proper parental care, guidance, and protection, which are essential for building discipline, resilience, and the ability to cope with life's challenges.

“

Poor parental upbringing of children, such that some children who grow up with excessive love and no parental guidance, too much freedom in decision making, excessively abundant uncontrolled financial expenditures, unmonitored lifestyles tend to develop mental-related issues in life as they were not properly prepared and mentored to face the realities, disappointments and pressures of the world.”

- Isoborwa Vicent, Hoima Referral Hospital.

6.3.5 Signs and Symptoms of Mental Illness

In general, the common signs and symptoms include persistent sadness or depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure in most activities, changes in sleep or appetite, fatigue, difficulty concentrating or making decisions, excessive worry, fear, or anxiety, feelings of guilt or hopelessness, mood swings, social withdrawal, changes in behaviour or personality, and difficulty functioning in daily life.¹⁷⁹

In some cases, such as psychotic disorders, there may be hallucinations, delusions, disorganised thinking or behaviour, and cognitive impairments. Symptoms vary depending on the specific disorder, as seen in depression (persistent low mood, loss of interest, fatigue, and thoughts of self-harm), anxiety disorders (excessive worry, restlessness, and physical symptoms such as palpitations or nausea), schizophrenia (hallucinations, delusions, disorganized speech, and negative symptoms such as social withdrawal), and neurodevelopmental disorders such as attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), which is characterised by persistent patterns of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity that interfere with functioning at school, work, or in social settings.

It should be noted that everybody experiences mental health problems, but not necessarily mental illness. Experiencing one or more of these symptoms does not necessarily indicate a mental disorder; a diagnosis is typically considered when symptoms are persistent, severe, and significantly interfere with daily functioning.¹⁸⁰ However, when mental health challenges or problems are not identified early and addressed, they can progress into mental illness such as depression, anxiety or other forms of mental illness. These conditions affect people across all age groups, including children, adolescents, adults, and older persons.

¹⁷⁹ World Health Organization, *Mental disorders*. WHO. 2025. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-disorders> accessed on 6 December 2025.

¹⁸⁰ World Health Organization. *Schizophrenia*. WHO. 2025. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/schizophrenia> accessed on 6 December 2025.

6.4 THE UGANDAN GOVERNMENT'S INTERVENTIONS REGARDING MENTAL HEALTH

6.4.1 Mental Health Governance, Policy and Legislation

Until 2019, mental health care services were governed mainly by the Mental Treatment Act of 1964. Under the Act, mental health services consisted largely of the institutionalisation of people with mental disorders. The Act did not provide for preventive care in regard to community-based mental health care services. The Mental Health Act of 2019, CAP 308, which came into force on 18 February 2021, introduced community mental health services, new referral and admission procedures and significantly strengthened protection of the rights of people with mental health conditions, including the introduction of a requirement for consent to treatment. In addition to these and other important regulations, the Act sought to address the issue of stigmatisation by the use of more sensitive language about people with mental health conditions. The Act also established the Uganda Mental Health Advisory Board to monitor its implementation. The Commission notes that the revision of mental health legislation is an important step towards strengthening mental health in Uganda.

Despite stronger legal protections, the main challenge is putting them into practice. Many parts of the Mental Health (Amendment) Act, CAP 308, are not yet supported by clear regulations, guidelines, or enforceable standards. In addition, some sections or provisions of the Act require regulations for proper enforcement. For instance, Part III of the Act, which focuses on treatment and admission of persons with mental illnesses, requires guidelines on voluntary and involuntary admissions.



Soroti Regional Referral Hospital. © UHRC

6.4.2 Data Systems

Mental health is integrated into Uganda's Health Management Information System (HMIS), which captures daily data on 36 categories of disorders. Some of the mental health conditions captured include depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, substance use, epilepsy, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The Commission notes that by systematically capturing daily data on these conditions, the health system can identify and address disparities in access to mental health services, ensuring non-discrimination and equality in care.

6.5 HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS AND CHALLENGES RELATED TO MENTAL HEALTH

In Uganda, mental health services are mostly limited to referral-level hospitals, while lower-level health centres often lack functioning mental health units. Community-based services are weak, and local governments have unclear responsibilities and limited resources for mental health. These challenges are worsened by underfunding, which restricts the ability of national and regional mental health units to expand services, hire trained staff, and reach underserved communities. Below are some key human rights concerns related to mental illness.

6.5.1 Equality and Non-discrimination

Persons with mental health conditions often face neglect, stigma, discrimination and sexual violence. The CRPD reaffirms the rights of PWDs to equal recognition before the law.¹⁸¹ The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995 and the Persons with Disabilities Act emphasise equality and non-discrimination based on any grounds, and this should be protected and promoted by all. However, findings by the UHRC indicate that patients with mental health conditions are discriminated against not only by society but also by some medical personnel, who are supposed to provide support.

In Jinja, a woman reported that she had been unable to get married because she had previously sought mental health services. Many men in her community feared marrying her due to misconceptions about her past mental health condition. This situation illustrates how stigma and misunderstanding surrounding mental illness can negatively affect the social lives, relationships, and opportunities of people who seek mental health treatment. Similar experiences were reported in Lira District, where mental illness was associated with family separation. Spouses often allegedly abandon partners with mental health conditions,

perceiving them as violent, unproductive, or incapable of fulfilling family roles. Such attitudes deepen social isolation and weaken family support systems that are critical for recovery.

In Kabale District, it was reported that some patients are abandoned at hospitals by their relatives or brought in by Police without family support. In many communities, a preference for prayer and spiritual interventions over medical treatment further limits access to appropriate care and reinforces stigma toward mental health conditions.

Within the Lango community in northern Uganda, individuals living with mental illness are often stigmatised and singled out in derogatory ways. As a result, many are excluded from Government support initiatives such as the Generating Growth Opportunities and Productivity for Women Enterprises (GROW) Programme, Emyooga, and the Parish Development Model, limiting their opportunities for economic empowerment and social inclusion.



Mr Otim Anthony of UHRC (right), Mr Okwir John Van, head of the Mental Health Unit (third from right), and other staff pose for a photo in front of the Mental Health Unit at Lira Regional Referral Hospital after the interactions. © UHRC

181 See Article 12.

6.5.2 Right to Legal Capacity

The CRPD recognises the right of PWDs to enjoy legal capacity and to be provided with necessary support to exercise the same.¹⁸² The right to legal capacity means that every person has the right to be recognised as a person before the law and to make their own decisions, regardless of disability, mental illness, or psychosocial condition. Since mental illness affects the mental state of individuals, the medical staff usually make decisions for them, which are in the best interest of the patients, or seeks consent from immediate relatives or guardians. Some of the patients the UHRC interfaced with said their consent was never sought. In many cases, treatment decisions are made by medical staff, particularly where the patient is considered a danger to themselves or the community. The lack of a substantive psychiatrist in some facilities, therefore, affects

the management of patients' legal and medical decision-making processes.¹⁸³ In many situations, relatives often provide consent on behalf of the patient.

6.5.3 Availability of Mental Health Care

The Commission noted that the availability of mental health care was affected by a lack of infrastructure and a shortage of mental health workers. There are 80 psychiatrists in the country, equivalent to 0.1 psychiatrists per 100,000 population; the estimated ratio of mental health nurses is 2.24 per 100,000; 0.04 psychologists and 0.04 social workers per 100,000 population, respectively. Severe workforce shortages were observed across multiple regional referral hospitals, severely limiting their capacity to provide adequate mental health care.

Table 10: Summary of observed mental health workforce shortages (by facility).

FACILITY	KEY MENTAL HEALTH CADRES AVAILABLE (AS REPORTED)	KEY GAPS/ISSUES HIGHLIGHTED
Moroto Regional Referral Hospital	None reported for specialist cadres	No psychiatric doctor, psychologist, or sociologist on staff
Kabale Regional Referral Hospital	Not specified by cadre	Extremely low staffing
Jinja Regional Referral Hospital	Not specified by cadre	Low staffing levels
Arua Regional Referral Hospital	Not specified by cadre	Severe understaffing
Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital	1 Principal Psychiatrist; 2 Senior Psychiatry staff; 1 Psychiatry Clinical Officer; 1 Nursing Officer; 1 Assistant Nursing Officer; 5 enrolled Nurses	Workforce described as 'small'
Butabika National Referral Mental Hospital	Psychiatrists: 12 actively practicing (out of 14 available), approved are 35	Far below the approved psychiatrist staffing level
Masaka Regional Referral Hospital	Visiting psychiatrist (from Mbarara) weekly	No resident psychiatrist; insufficient mental attendants and security personnel
Fort Portal Regional Referral Hospital	13 total staff: 1 psychiatrist; 6 nurses; 1 occupational therapist; 1 social worker; 4 clinicians	No clearly defined staffing structure: staffing appears limited
Hoima Regional Referral Hospital	Mental health facility was severely understaffed, with only 12 staff members instead of the 36 required to run the facility adequately	They required at least 36 staff
Soroti Regional Referral Hospital	1 psychiatrist (female); 3 facility coordinators (facility administrators)	No other specialist/team details provided

¹⁸² See Article 12 of the CRPD.

¹⁸³ This challenge was noted at Masaka Regional Referral Hospital.

FACILITY	KEY MENTAL HEALTH CADRES AVAILABLE (AS REPORTED)	KEY GAPS/ISSUES HIGHLIGHTED
Mbale Regional Hospital	2 facility managers; 1 facility coordinator; 1 administrator; 1 security guard; 2 cleaners	No specialist reported
Gulu Referral Hospital	The facility has most of the staff required except a clinical psychologist and an occupational therapist	No clinical psychologist and occupational therapist. The general staffing level was low
Kapchorwa General Hospital	1 facility manager (female); 1 psychiatric clinical officer; 4 nurses	Very small team

Source: UHRC



A UHRC Official and Dr Masaba David in charge of the mental unit Mbale Regional Referral Hospital inspecting the male ward. © UHRC

6.5.4 Limited Funding for Mental Health

Uganda allocates approximately 6.1% of its national budget, equivalent to UGX 5.8 trillion, to healthcare annually (Health Alternative Policy Statement, FY 2025/2026). However, mental health consistently receives less than 1%¹⁸⁴ of the total health budget, far below the WHO’s recommended minimum of 5%. This underfunding directly impacts mental health units at regional hospitals, where insufficient budgets limit staffing, infrastructure, and service delivery, leaving many patients without access to care. As a result, many Ugandans with mental health disorders do not receive treatment.

For instance, at Butabika National Referral Hospital, the hospital receives UGX 21.8 billion but operates at a deficit of UGX 22 billion, with critical funding gaps for specialised medicines, infrastructure, training, and food. Specifically, the hospital requires approximately UGX 4 billion for specialised medicines, UGX 5 billion to complete the retaining wall, UGX 1 billion and 2 billion to maintain building infrastructure and machines/equipment respectively, UGX 1.5 billion for specialised training, and UGX 2.4 billion for other non-wage costs.

184 Uganda’s overall health sector budget has increased in recent national budgets. For example, the health sector received approximately UGX 5.87 trillion (about 8.1% of the national budget) in the 2025/26 financial year.

6.5.5 Availability of Essential Mental Health Medicines

Essential medicines are those that effectively and safely treat the priority health-care needs of populations. They are selected based on their public health relevance, evidence of benefits and harms, and considerations of cost, affordability, and other relevant factors. The World Health Organization identifies several medicines as essential for the treatment of mental and behavioural disorders. These include chlorpromazine, fluphenazine, haloperidol and risperidone for psychotic disorders; amitriptyline and fluoxetine for depression; carbamazepine, valproic acid and lithium carbonate for bipolar disorder; diazepam for anxiety; and nicotine replacement therapy for disorders related to psychoactive substance use.

However, the Commission observed that the availability of several essential medicines remains inconsistent across many public health facilities in Uganda. Many patients interviewed by the UHRC reported frequent shortages of medicines at regional referral hospitals, which undermines the continuity and effectiveness of treatment.

At Butabika National Referral Mental Hospital, while many essential medicines are generally available, stocks of specialised medicines such as Risperidone, Quetiapine, Lamotrigine, Bupropion, Naltrexone, Methadone and Buprenorphine are often insufficient. This limits the ability of healthcare providers to fully respond to the diverse treatment needs of patients.

Similar shortages were reported in regional referral hospitals. At Hoima and Lira Regional Referral Hospitals, staff indicated that certain medicines, particularly injectable drugs and Carbamazepine, frequently run out before the next supply arrives. Patients at Moroto Regional Referral Hospital face similar challenges, with interruptions in the availability of medicines affecting the continuity of care and slowing their recovery.

At Arua Regional Referral Hospital, mental health medications typically last only three weeks, creating repeated gaps in treatment that can worsen patients' conditions. In Kabale Regional

Referral Hospital, clinicians attempt to manage stock-outs by prescribing alternative medications. Although this ensures that patients receive some form of treatment, the alternatives may not always be equally effective or suitable for every patient. At Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital, medicine shortages sometimes prevent patients from receiving any medication at all.

These recurrent stock-outs and limited supplies point to broader systemic challenges in the procurement, supply, and distribution of mental health medicines across the health system.

6.5.6 Accessibility of Essential Mental Health Medicines

In addition to challenges in availability, accessibility to mental health medicines remains a major concern for many patients. Even when medicines are prescribed, patients often face financial and logistical barriers in obtaining them. The Commission noted that patients across several facilities reported being asked to purchase medicines from private pharmacies whenever hospital stocks are depleted. Patients interviewed by the UHRC expressed concern that these medicines are often out of reach. As one patient noted, *"The medicines are quite expensive for some of us, even if we are working."*

At Jinja Regional Referral Hospital, patients reported that when medicines are unavailable in the mental health unit, they must buy them from private pharmacies. For many individuals and families, these additional costs create a significant financial burden and may lead to delayed or interrupted treatment.

Similarly, at Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital, when medicines are not available in the facility, patients are forced to purchase them privately if they can afford to do so. For those without sufficient financial resources, this effectively denies them access to necessary treatment.

These barriers to accessing medicines place patients at heightened risk of relapse, prolong suffering, and increase the emotional and financial strain on individuals and their families.

6.5.7 Right to Food

Access to regular, nutritious meals is a critical part of mental health care, yet the provision of food for patients varies widely across hospitals and often depends on family support. Adequate food is essential for persons with mental illness; it is therapeutic and integral to treatment. At Jinja and Lira Regional Referral Hospitals, patients admitted to the mental health units are not routinely provided with meals. Families are expected to bring food for their relatives, and in Lira, occasional donations from community members provide some relief, but these contributions are limited and inconsistent.

At Butabika National Referral Mental Hospital, patients are provided with breakfast, lunch, and supper daily, reflecting the hospital's recognition that proper nutrition is essential for recovery, overall health, and the preservation of human dignity. Any disruption in meal provision can have serious consequences, not only compromising physical health but also undermining patients' ability to engage in therapy, adhere to treatment, and participate in rehabilitation activities. Despite the critical importance of this service, the hospital has identified a significant funding gap, estimating that **UGX 5.7 billion** is required to ensure consistent and adequate food provision for all inpatients. Addressing this shortfall is vital to maintain standards of care, support recovery outcomes, and uphold the rights and dignity of persons living with mental health conditions.

At Kabale Regional Referral Hospital, patients receive one government-supported meal per day, but families are often required to supplement this to ensure adequate nutrition. Similarly, Masaka Regional Referral Hospital provides breakfast in the form of porridge and lunch consisting of posho and beans using government funds, yet many patients still rely on additional food brought by relatives or donations from development partners.

At the Gulu Referral Hospital Mental Health Unit, Soroti Regional Referral Hospital and Kapchorwa General Hospital, food is not provided for the patients; instead, the caregivers provide food for their patients. The team was informed that most

of the caregivers bring millet bread, posho, beans and silverfish for the patients. The vulnerable patients and patients with special needs are not considered a priority since the facility doesn't provide any food. Every patient has their own caregiver to cater for any special needs.

However, the situation in Mbale Regional Referral Hospital was very different. The Hospital provides food only for patients without caregivers, and also considers those with extreme conditions of vulnerability and special needs.



UHRC officials with the doctors working at the Mbarara Mental Health Department. © UHRC



UHRC staff monitoring a mental health unit at Masaka Referral Hospital. © UHRC

These gaps in nutritional support disproportionately affect patients who do not have family or community support. Without reliable access to meals, patients may struggle to recover, their physical health may decline, and their overall rehabilitation process is undermined. According to the WHO, standards for inpatient mental health care, adequate nutrition is essential to promote recovery, support medication effectiveness, and maintain overall wellbeing. Providing consistent, nutritious meals is therefore not only a matter of care but a matter of patients' basic rights to health and dignity.

“

I have bipolar, and I have to take medication every day. It is quite tough because it requires a balanced diet, which I cannot afford.” - D.N.

6.5.8 Liberty for Patients

The CRPD recognises the right of PWDs to the liberty and security of a person, and any deprivation should be justifiable. It further calls upon the state to put in place facilities and processes to facilitate the realisation of this right. The use of seclusion and chemical restraint may constitute an arbitrary deprivation of liberty where patients are confined without clear legal or therapeutic justification, inhumane or degrading treatment if such measures are applied excessively or punitively, and with a lack of due process where no mechanisms exist for independent review, appeal, or oversight of restraint practices. In addition, seclusion and chemical restraint should be exceptional, strictly time-limited, documented, and legally justified. States and facilities should invest in de-escalation,¹⁸⁵ psychosocial interventions, environmental adjustments, and

independent oversight mechanisms. Despite these recommended safeguards, in practice, some facilities continue to rely on sedation and isolation to manage patients, reflecting the ongoing challenges in fully realising these rights. At Masaka Regional Referral Hospital, violent patients are sometimes sedated and placed in isolation rooms where necessary. Electroconvulsive therapy is no longer practised at the facility, although modern administration of this therapy would require an anaesthetist, which the facility currently lacks. At Butabika Hospital, standard protocols for seclusion and psychiatric intensive care units have been established, improving oversight and protecting patient rights, although overcrowding and staff shortages remain challenges.

“

I was brought in Butabika Hospital for a mental health problem. I was sedated and left alone in a dark room, with only meals arriving. This was the only good thing there. There were no activities they allowed me to do. I felt frightened and abandoned. They kept making me sleep and would not allow me to get out of the isolation. The hospital continually admitted others who were severely unwell and sometimes violent, which made me feel constantly in danger and vulnerable. Being in that environment, surrounded by fear and uncertainty, was traumatic and overwhelming. This experience showed me how urgent it is to have humane, compassionate, and patient-centred mental health care that prioritizes both safety and emotional support.” - J.B.

¹⁸⁵ Verbal de-escalation, active listening, and calming strategies to reduce aggression and train people in trauma-informed care.



UHRC Soroti staff on Special Assignment with the medical staff of the mental health facility at the Soroti Regional Referral Hospital. © UHRC



UHRC staff with Psychiatric Clinical Officer Satya Stanley in his office. © : UHRC

At Fort Portal Regional Referral Hospital, the Commission noted that sedation was frequently used to manage patients experiencing severe agitation, while seclusion was no longer used due to concerns about patient safety and the risk of suicide if patients are left unmonitored.

It was reported that at Gulu Referral Hospital, the use of a restricted or isolated room was implemented for a period of time while the condition was being managed and stabilised.

It was further stated that the service user was isolated in an isolation room, away from other service users, or in another designated room.

The electroconvulsive therapy is not administered in Gulu, Mbale and Kapchorwa Hospitals. Though Soroti had one, there was no one to operate the machine. The hospitals always use pharmacological methods (giving medicine) and counselling of patients to restrain the de-escalating crisis.

6.5.9 Criminalising Attempted Suicide

According to the WHO, more than 720,000 people die due to suicide every year.¹⁸⁶ Suicide is the third leading cause of death among 15-29-year-olds. The impact on families and communities is devastating and far-reaching, even long after the bereavement.¹⁸⁷ Mental illness can increase the risk of suicide, but not everyone with a mental illness will attempt or die by suicide. Suicide is an action, while mental illness is a condition.¹⁸⁸ Suicidal behaviour is often a symptom of mental distress or illness, not a 'crime'. Criminalising suicide and attempted suicide treats it as an offence and not a health issue, which discourages people from seeking help.¹⁸⁹

The WHO 2014 Report on Suicide notes that decriminalisation of suicide makes it easier for those with suicidal behaviours to seek help and explicitly suggests countries should review their legal provisions in relation to suicide to ensure they do not deter people from seeking help. The Commission notes that decriminalisation reduces stigma and can make people more likely to seek help. Early intervention is often the key to preventing both attempts and deaths.

The Commission notes that the Penal Code Act of Uganda criminalises attempted suicide: "Any person who attempts to kill himself or herself commits a misdemeanour."¹⁹⁰ This means someone who survives a suicide attempt risks arrest and prosecution, rather than being offered medical or psychological support. In addition, in African culture, suicide is not only considered a personal tragedy but also as shameful and dishonourable. This stigma does not end with the person who died; it extends deeply to their families. Some people fear marrying or getting married in a family where someone has ever attempted to or committed suicide. The stigma often includes *gossip, blame, or speculation* about the family's moral standing, parenting, or social worth, which compounds the grief. Most families internally

blame themselves or feel judged by others, leading to *silence, withdrawal, and emotional isolation*. *This can further isolate the person as adequate support may not be available from the family*. The 2024 Annual Police Crime Report indicated 218 cases of attempted suicide across the country.

6.5.10 Inadequate Community-Based Services in Uganda

Community mental health services represent a progressive system of care that centres the rights, dignity, and autonomy of persons living with mental illness. In this approach, individuals with lived experience work alongside health professionals as active partners, providing support and interventions that promote mental wellbeing. Rather than relying solely on hospital-based treatment, these services are delivered within the community, empowering people to live independently, participate fully in society, and access care in familiar, everyday settings. This model not only supports recovery but also helps reduce the need for costly inpatient care, while safeguarding the human right to inclusion and social participation.

The WHO highlights that community mental health services are more accessible and effective, reduce social exclusion, and carry fewer risks of neglect or human rights violations that have historically been associated with institutional care. Recognising this, the Commission established in 2025 that GOU had begun integrating mental health into primary health care by training Community Health Workers, Social Workers, and primary care personnel. Mental health considerations are also being incorporated into maternal health, HIV/AIDS, and tuberculosis programmes, reflecting a broader commitment to holistic, rights-based care.

Despite these positive steps, challenges remain. At Butabika National Referral Mental Hospital, limited community awareness contributes to

186 World Health Organization, *Suicide Worldwide in the 21st Century* and global suicide statistics (WHO reports and fact sheets).

187 World Health Organization, "Suicide" Fact Sheet, which highlights the social and community impact of suicide.

188 American Psychiatric Association, resources on suicide risk factors and the relationship between mental illness and suicide.

189 There is a constitutional court petition to decriminalize suicide in Uganda.

190 Section 193 of the Penal Code.

long-term institutionalisation. Many patients express a preference to remain at the hospital rather than return to their communities, fearing discrimination, rejection, or social exclusion. As Dr Mutamba, Deputy Director of Butabika Hospital, noted: *“Patient inflow consistently exceeds outflow, leading to congestion in our wards. Unfortunately, this also correlates with a high relapse rate, estimated at 30% to 40%, a phenomenon we commonly refer to as the ‘revolving door syndrome’. We are committed to addressing these challenges through improved community support and follow-up care, ensuring that patients can reintegrate safely into their homes and communities.”*

In addressing these challenges, the Commission commends the work of community-based organisations such as YouBelong Uganda.¹⁹¹ YouBelong has made significant progress in supporting post-discharge reintegration of persons from Butabika Hospital, building a bridge between institutional care and the community. Through community sensitisation, awareness campaigns on mental illness, and education on human rights, the organisation has helped reduce stigma, enhance social inclusion, and improve reintegration outcomes. Other organisations, including the Uganda National Self-Advocacy Initiative and Strong Minds, among others, also contribute commendably to strengthening community-based mental health services. Their work underscores the critical role of civil society in promoting a rights-based approach to mental health, supporting recovery, and ensuring that persons with mental health conditions can participate fully in society with dignity and respect.

6.5.11 Treatment of Persons with Mental Illness in Conflict with the Law

The UHRC established that some mental health patients end up committing capital offences like rape and defilement. This severely impacts victims and their families. As a result of these crimes, they may end up being incarcerated.

The Commission notes that GOU *needs to integrate mental health care into the justice system. Currently, the Mental Health Act of 2019 provides for diversion from prison to care, but enforcement remains a challenge because mental health institutions do not have enough security, like in prisons, to keep the mentally ill persons who are at the same time in conflict with the law. In 2025, the Commission established that there were 5,782 inmates in prison with mental illness.* This has human rights implications and also underscores the need for rehabilitation-focused approaches, including diversion programmes and specialised mental health services, rather than prolonged incarceration.

On a positive note, all inmates who were pending ministerial orders have been released from prison, including some who had been incarcerated for over 20 years. The UHRC commends GOU for taking this action, which addressed a longstanding concern and demonstrated a commitment to upholding the rights and dignity of affected individuals.

6.5.12 Migration and Mental Illness

Both internal and international migration expose individuals to stressors such as trauma, family separation, exploitation, precarious livelihoods, and social isolation. *According to the UNHCR, there are more than 1.4 million refugees in Uganda, many of whom are at risk of mental health conditions due to their difficult socioeconomic circumstances and stigmatisation. Female refugees were found to be in a challenging situation because of their exposure to violence and their lifetime experience of traumatic events. Provision of mental health support to vulnerable population groups and people in difficult circumstances, including refugees, girls and women, should therefore be considered an integral component of the mental health policy in Uganda.*

Refugee populations experience even higher mental health burdens: a survey in Nakivale Refugee Settlement reported generalised anxiety in 73%, post-traumatic stress disorder in 67%, and

¹⁹¹ Established in 2017 as a non-governmental organisation to support mental health interventions in Sub-Saharan Africa.

major depressive disorder in 58% of respondents. Urban refugee youth in Kampala further experience depression linked to food insecurity, unemployment, and social marginalisation.¹⁹² Among returning migrant domestic workers from the Middle East, 133 cases of mental illness were documented between 2019 and 2023, with contributing factors including abuse and overwork.¹⁹³

6.5.13 Mentally Ill Persons on the Streets

People living with severe mental illness on the streets of Kampala and other cities in the country are often among the most vulnerable members of society. Many of them did not choose to live on the streets but ended up there because of untreated mental health conditions, poverty, family breakdown, or stigma. These individuals deserve compassion, dignity, and access to proper medical care rather than neglect or mistreatment.

Under the Mental Health Act, 2019, GOU and relevant authorities, such as the UPF and health workers, are expected to ensure that people with severe mental illness are assisted and taken to treatment facilities like Butabika National Referral Mental Hospital for professional care. In Kabale, it was reported that patients get abandoned or brought by the Police, with no family support.

Addressing the issue requires a humane approach that focuses on treatment, rehabilitation, and community support, enabling the affected individuals to regain their dignity and reintegrate into society.

6.5.14 Cases of Torture, Cruel and Inhumane Treatment

The UHRC notes that persons with mental health conditions are highly vulnerable to torture, cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment within communities. The Commission found that some community members subject mental health patients to violence, especially when the patients display aggressive or unpredictable behaviour,

which sometimes provokes fear and retaliation from the public. This was reported especially in Kabale.

The Commission also noted challenges in accessing assistance from the Police even when urgent orders for medical intervention are secured. In some cases, Police officers are reluctant to respond and reportedly request money for fuel or facilitation, which families of the patients often cannot afford. As a result, community members sometimes take matters into their own hands by restraining persons with mental illness using ropes and transporting them to hospitals on motorcycles under unsafe and undignified conditions. These practices expose individuals with mental health conditions to further harm and violate their human rights. In Lira, these issues came out very strongly. Similar risks exist in Moroto, where a lack of security and limited human resources can put both patients and staff at risk. In Arua, the facility lacks adequate security personnel, and the perimeter fence is so short and easy to climb over, allowing patients to escape easily.

6.5.15 Overcrowding

The Commission observed that Butabika National Referral Mental Hospital, the country's main specialised mental health facility, operates far beyond its official capacity of 550 beds, currently accommodating between 1,200 and 1,300 in-patients. This severe overcrowding reflects the growing demand for mental health services in Uganda and places a significant strain on available infrastructure, staff, and resources, potentially compromising patients' dignity and quality of care. The mental health outpatient department attends to an average of 100 patients daily, further demonstrating the pressure on the facility. There is a need to reposition the hospital as a **national centre of excellence, focusing on advanced training, specialised care, and referral support**, rather than functioning primarily as a congested long-stay facility.

¹⁹² National Planning Authority Report on Mental Health - Silent Emergency 2024.

¹⁹³ As Above.

At Soroti Regional Referral Hospital, the Commission established that the mental health unit attends to 300-400 patients weekly, with patients broadly categorised into those below five years and those above five years.

Similarly, at Mbale Regional Referral Hospital, the Commission noted that overcrowding at the facility has led to frequent shortages of essential medicines, affecting the continuity and adequacy of treatment. While Gulu Referral Hospital-Mental Health Unit received 10,203 patients as of December 2025, (6,081 males and 4,122 females), outpatients were 9,716, the majority of whom were under 18 years of age.

In Hoima Referral Hospital's mental health unit, from October to December 2025, the facility received 1,111 females and 1,107 males, totalling 2,218 patients. Around 500 were children (below 18 years), and 90% of these had mental issues resulting from epilepsy. The mental health facility was severely understaffed, with only 12 staff members instead of the 36 required to run the facility adequately. These 12 managed both the out and inpatient departments, which is very hectic and affects the quality of services offered. As a result, patients on admission are sometimes left unattended for long hours as staff attend to outpatients.

The Commission notes that all the above conditions raise concerns regarding the right to the highest attainable standard of health, as recognised under Article 12 of the ICESCR and Article 16 of the ACHPR, which require States to ensure that health services are available, accessible, and of adequate quality.

6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development should increase the budgetary allocation for mental health services.
2. The Ministry of Health should prioritise the development and expansion of community-based mental health services across districts, ensuring that persons with mental illnesses can access care close to home.
3. The Ministry of Health should collaborate with the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Parliament and Uganda Law Reform Commission to review and amend Section 193 of the Penal Code Act, decriminalising attempted suicide.
4. The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development should allocate funds and implement community-based programmes that address the causes of mental illness, like poverty, abuse, trauma, substance use and social stressors.

6.7 CONCLUSION

Mental health is an essential part of overall health and a fundamental human right. A rights-based approach integrating mental health into primary care, expanding community services, raising awareness, and reforming restrictive laws is crucial. Prioritising mental health in Uganda will protect human dignity, improve access to care, and enable individuals to participate fully in society.

07

The right to health: Cancer and its human rights implications in Uganda



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Cancer in Uganda is not only a medical crisis; it is a human rights emergency. Late diagnosis, prohibitive costs, and inadequate facilities mean that for many Ugandans, the right to health remains a constitutional promise yet to be fully realised.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Cancer is a generic term for a large group of diseases that can affect any part of the body.¹⁹⁴ Other terms used are malignant tumours and neoplasms. One defining feature of cancer is the rapid formation of abnormal cells that grow beyond their usual boundaries and can then invade adjacent tissues and spread to other organs; this process is referred to as metastasis. Widespread metastases are the primary cause of death from cancer.¹⁹⁵ In Uganda, cancer remains among the most pressing health challenges, with 80% of patients succumbing to the disease within the first year of diagnosis. Cancer is a non-communicable disease (NCD) which has increasingly contributed to the health burden in the country both socially and economically. According to the WHO, 22% of all cancers worldwide are a result of chronic infections, and the percentage keeps growing. According to the health workers at the Uganda Cancer Institute, cancer is now on the increase and one of the major causes of death in the country. In Uganda, 35,968 new cancer cases are diagnosed every year, with an annual death toll reaching 24,629.¹⁹⁶ The rising cancer burden, combined with structural weaknesses in the health system, threatens the full realisation of the right to health and attendant social and economic rights for many Ugandans. This chapter, therefore, highlights the

Commission's assessment of the cancer situation in Uganda during the reporting period.

7.2 LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

7.2.1 International Legal Framework

Article 25 of the UDHR provides for the right of all persons to an adequate standard of living,¹⁹⁷ including guarantees for health and wellbeing. Article 12 of the ICESR obliges States to take steps to prevent, treat, and control diseases and further requires state parties to recognise the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The WHO Constitution (1946) first articulated the right to health and mandates the WHO to promote it. General Comment No. 14 of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights elaborates on the content of this right to health and emphasises the States' obligation to ensure that health services are available, accessible, acceptable, and of good quality. Article 24 of the CRC recognises the right to health for children, requires that State Parties recognise the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁴ Definition as provided by the World Health Organization.

¹⁹⁵ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/cancer#:~:text=%EE%80%80Cancer%EE%80%81%20is%20a%20gener last> accessed in December, 2025.

¹⁹⁶ Data presented by Dr Alfred Jatho, Head, Department of Community Cancer Services, Uganda Cancer Institute, presented during the UHRC Annual Report Consultative meeting 15th December 2025, UHRC Boardroom.

¹⁹⁷ Article 25 of the UDHR.

¹⁹⁸ Article 24 of the CRC.

7.2.2 Regional Legal Framework

Article 16 of the ACHPR guarantees the right to the highest possible level of health, to which end necessary measures have to be taken, while also guaranteeing medical services in case of illness.¹⁹⁹ Article 14 of the ACRWC also recognises the right to health.

7.2.3 National Legal Framework

The Constitution of Uganda, under the National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy, provides for medical services. Objective XX requires states to take all practical measures to ensure the provision of basic medical services to the population. The Constitution also protects the right to a clean and healthy environment under Article 39, which is an underlying determinant for health. The SDGs, particularly Goal 3, further require Uganda to reduce premature deaths from non-communicable diseases, including cancer, by one-third by 2030. At the national level, cancer services are guided by the Constitution, the National Health Policy, successive Health Sector Development Plans, the Uganda Cancer Institute Act of 2016, and the National Cancer Control Strategy. These frameworks promote prevention, early detection, treatment, research, and palliative care. However, implementation gaps persist, largely due to limited resources, insufficient workforce capacity, inadequate decentralisation of services, and uneven distribution of health infrastructure. These gaps continue to hinder the practical realisation of the right to health for persons affected by cancer.

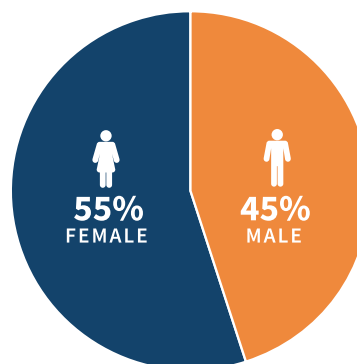
7.3 OVERVIEW OF THE CANCER BURDEN IN UGANDA

7.3.1 Gendered Burden of Cancer and Sex Distribution of Reported Cases

The highest documented cancer cases in the country currently are cervical cancer and breast cancer, which directly impact women.²⁰⁰ The high incidence and mortality associated with

these cancers have significant gender and social implications. Women, who are often primary caregivers and contributors to household income, face severe economic hardship, social stigma, and loss of livelihood when affected. This not only undermines their dignity and equality but also affects the welfare of their families and dependents. The limited availability and accessibility of affordable cancer prevention and treatment services, therefore, raise serious concerns regarding the State's obligation to progressively realise the right to health, particularly for vulnerable populations. The graph below shows the sex distribution of cancer cases reported at the Uganda Cancer Institute (UCI). From the pie chart, females account for a higher ratio of cases, being 55% of the recorded cases, while males represent 45%.

Figure 14: Gender spread of cancer cases in Uganda, 2025.



Source: UCI

Cancer prevalence in Uganda continues to rise. Cervical cancer remains the leading cancer among women, largely driven by persistent human papillomavirus (HPV) infections, while breast cancer has also increased significantly and is increasingly detected in younger age groups. Among men, prostate cancer is the most common, especially among those aged 50 and above. Liver cancer, which is closely associated with chronic Hepatitis B infection, continues to affect

¹⁹⁹ Article 16 of the ACHPR.

²⁰⁰ Presentation by Dr Alfred Jatho (PhD), Head, Department of Community Cancer Services, Uganda Cancer Institute, presented during the UHRC Annual Report Consultative meeting 15th December 2025 at UHRC in the Boardroom.

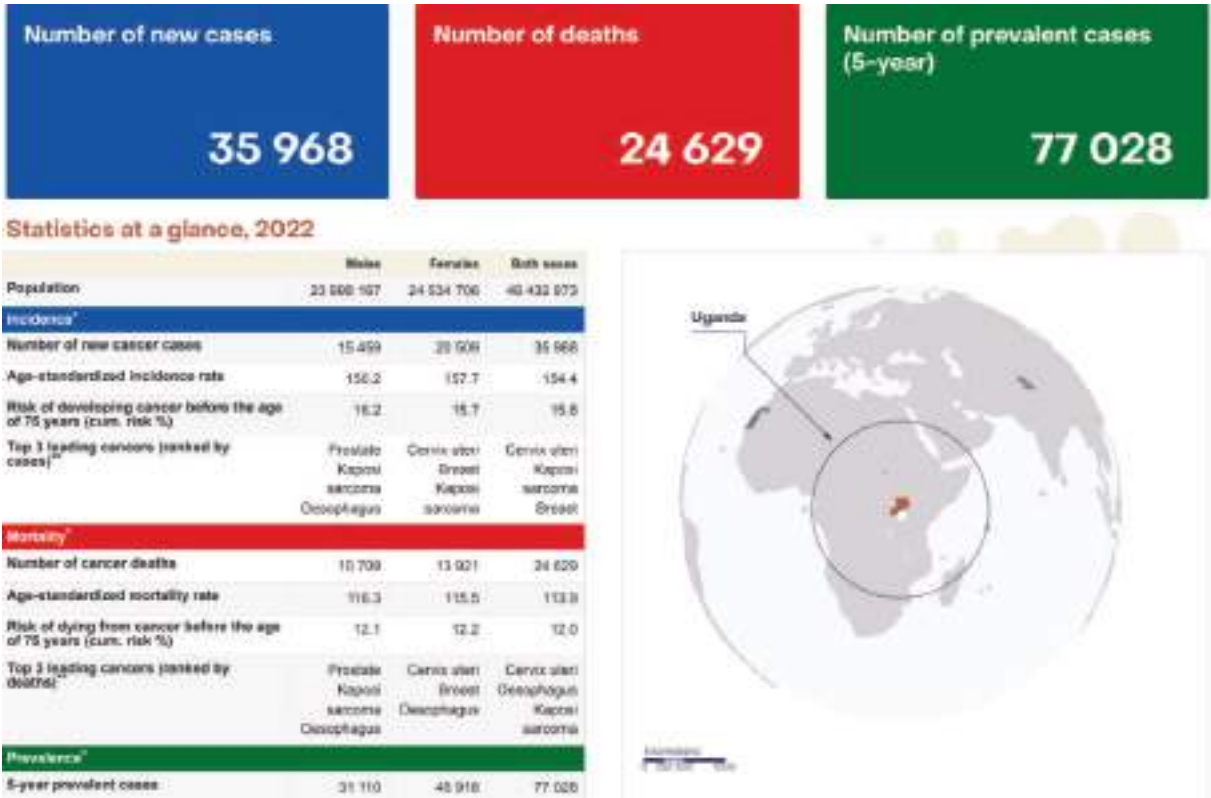
large numbers of adults, particularly in northern Uganda. Kaposi sarcoma remains strongly linked to HIV infection, making it common in areas with high HIV prevalence.

7.3.2 High Cancer Mortality Rates

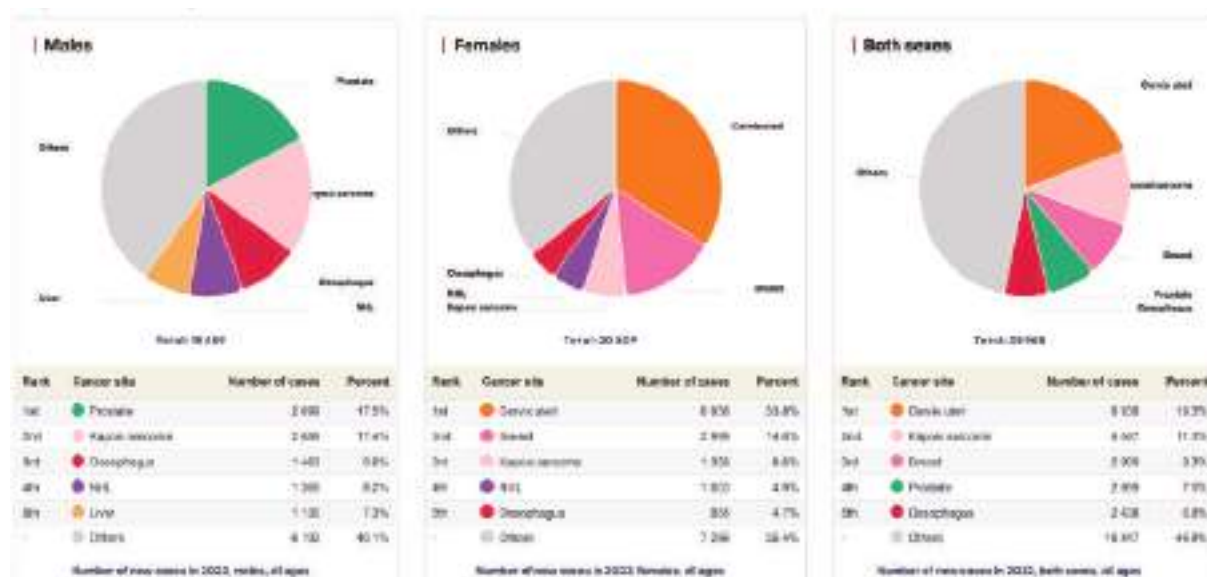
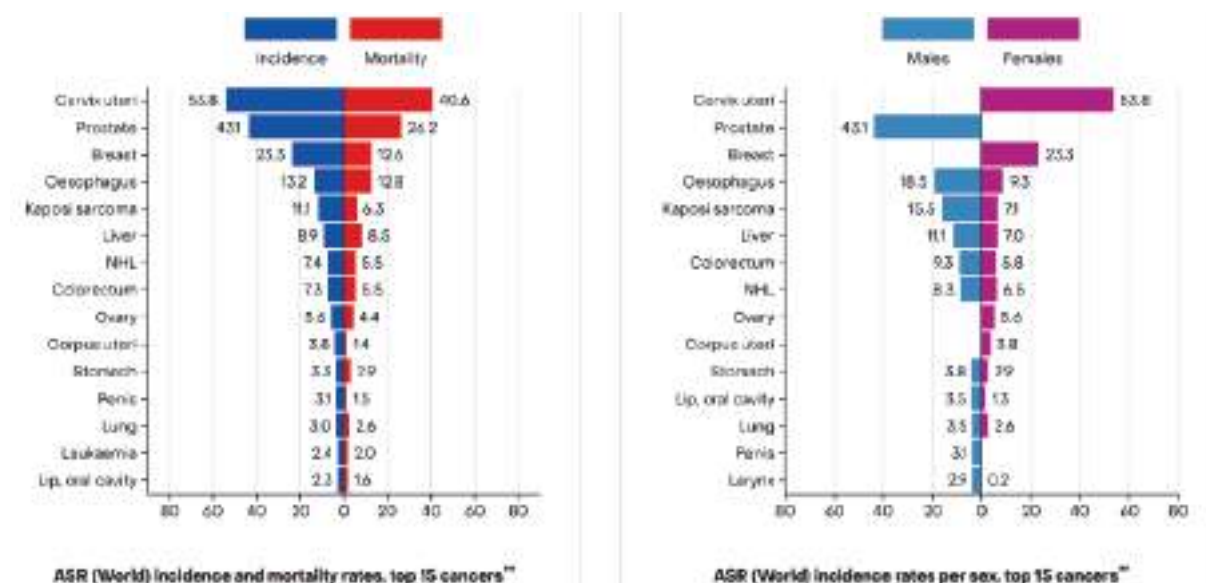
The mortality associated with cancer is alarmingly high. More than 80% of cancer patients die within the first year of diagnosis, a trend largely attributed to late detection, limited access to specialised

care, and insufficient treatment options. Rural populations bear the heaviest burden because screening services and diagnostic facilities are predominantly located in urban areas, requiring long distance travel and high costs that many households cannot afford. These disparities reflect underlying inequalities in access to healthcare and highlight the urgency of prioritising cancer control as a national public health and human rights issue.

Figure 15: Cancer burden in Uganda.



Source: Uganda Cancer Institute

Figure 16: The most frequent cancers in Uganda.Source: Presentation to UHRC²⁰¹**Figure 17:** Incidence and mortality rates of the top 15 cancers in Uganda.Source: UCI²⁰²

201 Presentation by Dr Alfred Jatho (PhD), Head of the Department of Community Cancer Services, Uganda Cancer, presented during the UHRC Annual Report Consultative meeting.

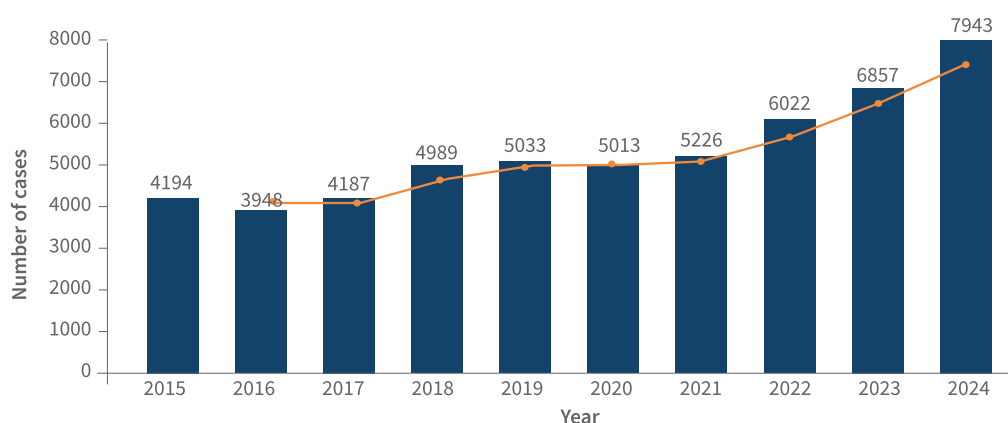
202 Presentation by Dr Alfred Jatho (PhD), Head of the Department of Community Cancer Services, Uganda Cancer Institute, presented during the UHRC Annual Report Consultative meeting.

7.3.3 Trends of Cancer Cases

The graph shows a steady rise in the number of cancer cases recorded at the UCI from 2015 to 2024, indicating a growing cancer burden over the 10-year period. In 2015, 4,194 cases were recorded, followed by a slight decline to 3,948 cases in 2016. From 2017 onwards, however, the trend generally increased, with cases rising to 4,989 in 2018 and

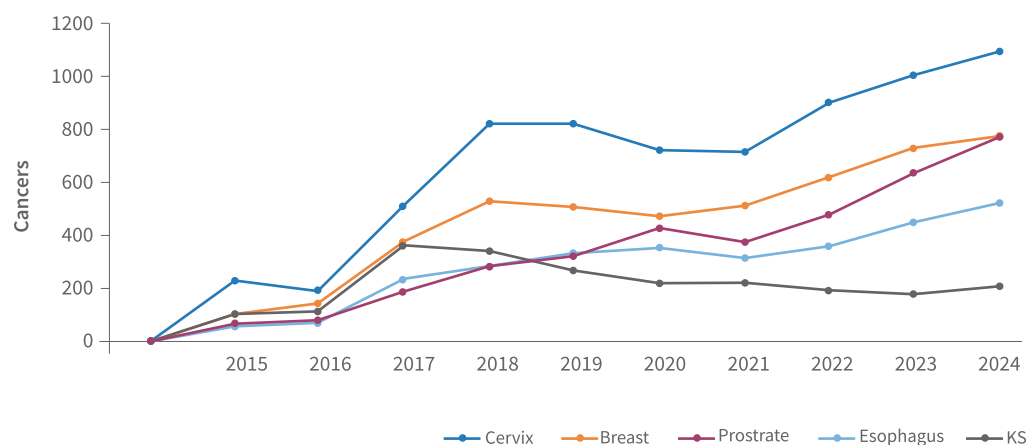
remaining above 5,000 from 2019 to 2021, despite minor fluctuations. A more pronounced increase is observed from 2022, when cases rose to 6,062, followed by 6,857 in 2023 and reaching the highest level of 7,943 in 2024. This consistent upward trend suggests improved detection and reporting, but also reflects a growing demand for cancer prevention, diagnostic, and treatment services.

Figure 18: Trends of new cancer cases in Uganda, 2015 to 2024.



Source: UCI²⁰³

Figure 19: Trend of the most common cancer cases in Uganda from 2015 to 2024.



Source: Uganda Cancer Institute

The line graph illustrates trends in selected cancer types at the UCI from 2014 to 2024, showing an overall increase in cases across most cancer categories over time. Cervical cancer consistently records the highest number of cases throughout the period, rising sharply from the early years and

reaching its peak in 2024. This sustained increase underscores its continued prominence as a major public health concern, particularly among women. Breast cancer also shows a steady upward trend, with cases increasing significantly from 2017 onwards and continuing to rise through 2024.

203 As Above.

Similarly, prostate cancer demonstrates gradual but consistent growth over the years, reflecting an increasing burden among men, especially in the later period from 2021 to 2024.

In contrast, oesophageal cancer and Kaposi's sarcoma show more fluctuation. Oesophageal cancer cases increase initially, then decline slightly in the middle years before stabilising. Kaposi's sarcoma shows a general downward trend after peaking around 2017–2018, with cases reducing and then levelling off in the later years.

Overall, the graph highlights a growing burden of non-communicable diseases, particularly cervical, breast, and prostate cancers, which continue to place increasing pressure on cancer prevention, screening, and treatment services in the country.

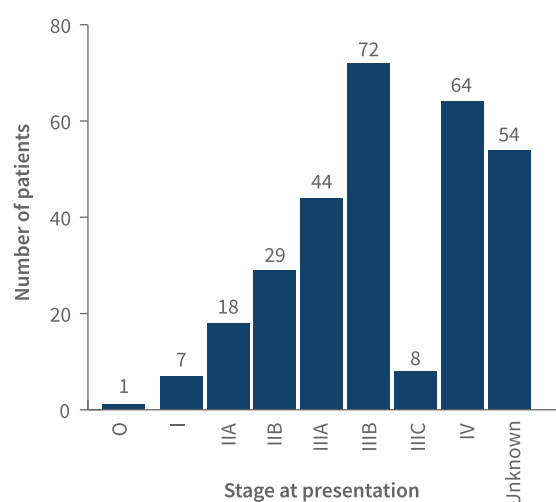
present at Stage IIIB (72 cases) and Stage IV (64 cases), indicating that the majority seek medical attention when the disease is already advanced. Additionally, 54 cases are recorded as “Unknown,” suggesting gaps in staging documentation or diagnostic assessment. Overall, the data points to delayed health-seeking behaviour and possible limitations in early detection and screening

services, resulting in many patients presenting at advanced stages when treatment outcomes are generally poorer.

7.4 SUB-REGIONAL SPECTRUM OF CANCER BURDEN IN UGANDA

The National Cancer Registry Programme of Uganda operates nationwide, collecting vital cancer data from hospitals, health facilities, and medical centres across all regions in Uganda to inform cancer control interventions in Uganda and beyond. According to the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC, 2024), in the central part of Uganda between 2013 and 2017, the three common cancers in males were prostate, oesophagus and kaposi sarcoma. However, in the northern part of the country, it is cancers of the prostate, liver and lymphomas. In females, the three most common in Central Uganda are cervical, breast and oesophagus cancers, whereas in the north it is cervical, breast, and lymphomas. It is clearly evident that cancer profiles in Uganda vary by geographical region, but it is important to note that cancer of the cervix in females, prostate in males and oesophageal cancers in both sexes are prevalent across all regions of Uganda. It is imperative that estimates of cancer incidence for Uganda be done from merged regional cancer data from the four main regions of the country to accurately determine cancer incidence in Uganda. Efforts need to be scaled up, especially towards the control of these common cancers in the entire country, to prevent them and reduce their burden to improve the overall wellbeing of all Ugandans.

Figure 20: Stage of cancer at first patient reporting.



Source: Uganda Cancer Institute

The bar chart illustrates the stage at which patients present for care, showing a clear pattern of late diagnosis. Very few patients present at early stages, with only one case at Stage 0 and 7 at Stage I. The numbers begin to increase from Stage IIA (18 patients) and IIB (29 patients), rising further at Stage IIIA (44 patients). The highest number of patients



Children receiving treatment at Mulago Cancer Institute paediatric ward. © Uganda Cancer Institute

7.5 CHILDHOOD CANCERS IN UGANDA

Childhood cancer is increasingly recognised as a pressing public health and human rights issue in Uganda. Estimates suggest that between 1,500 and 2,000 new cases occur annually, though the actual burden is likely higher due to underreporting, misdiagnosis, and limited access to healthcare services.

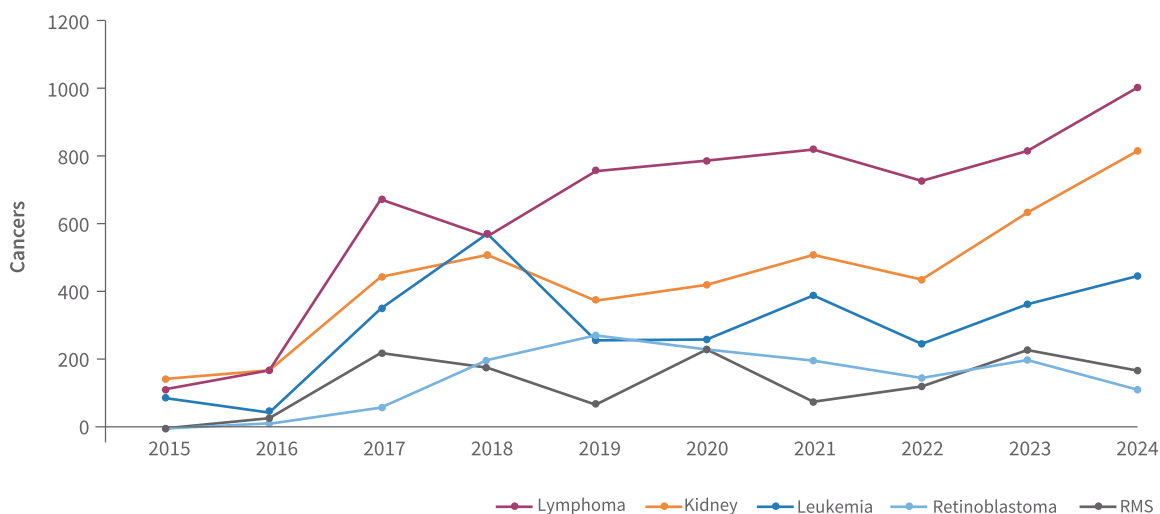
7.5.1 Common Childhood Cancers in Uganda

The commission established that the common childhood cancers in Uganda include the following: Leukaemia (Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia), which is the most common childhood cancer, typically affecting ages 3 to 7 years, and is treatable if diagnosed early. It is followed by lymphomas, both Hodgkin's and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, where chemotherapy is effective, but late detection undermines outcomes. Thirdly, Retinoblastoma: A cancer of the eye in children under 5, often recognisable by a 'cat's eye' reflection in the pupil. Brain and spinal cord tumours, whose symptoms include headaches, seizures, and developmental delays. The Commission established that the diagnosis of this type of cancer is hindered by a

lack of imaging equipment. Lastly, Wilms Tumour, commonly known as kidney cancer, which affects children under five years, and is reported to be treatable if diagnosed early, but screening programmes remain limited in Uganda.²⁰⁴ The Commission further established that childhood cancer in Uganda is not only a medical challenge but also a human rights issue. The unequal distribution of healthcare resources, late detection, and inadequate treatment infrastructure place thousands of children at risk each year.

One mother at Mulago paediatric oncology ward stated, *"I have been staying here in the paediatric oncology ward in Mulago with my child for weeks now. Before this illness, we were living a normal life at home. Now the hospital has become our home. Watching your child go through cancer treatment is one of the hardest things a mother can face. The medicines are strong. Some days my child is very weak, vomiting, and unable to eat. Other days there is so much pain, and all I can do is sit beside the bed, hold his hand, and pray that the treatment will work. The ward is full of other mothers like me. We share the same fears, the same tears, and the same hope that our children will get better. Sometimes we encourage each other, because we understand what the other is going through."*

204 <https://www.afro.who.int/countries/uganda/news/who-supports-development-child-and-adolescent-cancer-control-strategy-uganda> last accessed in December 2026.

Figure 21: Trend of the most common cancers among children in Uganda, 2015-2024.

Source: Presentation to UHRC²⁰⁵

7.6 RISK FACTORS IN RELATION TO CANCER

The commission further established that Cancer in Uganda is influenced by multiple factors, including but not limited to the following.

7.6.1 Infections

Certain viral and bacterial infections significantly increase the risk of developing specific cancers. In Uganda and many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, infections contribute to a notable proportion of cancer cases. The Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is one of the primary causes of cervical cancer, which remains a leading cancer among women in Uganda. Persistent infection with high-risk HPV types can lead to abnormal cell changes in the cervix that may progress to cancer if not detected early through screening. Similarly, chronic infection with the Hepatitis B virus significantly increases the risk of liver cancer because long-term liver inflammation can result in cirrhosis and malignant transformation of liver cells. Another infection associated with cancer is the Epstein-Barr virus, which has been strongly linked to Burkitt's Lymphoma, a fast-growing cancer of

the lymphatic system that is relatively common among children in parts of East Africa. The commission notes that preventive measures such as vaccination against Hepatitis B, HPV vaccination for girls, early detection, and improved infection control can significantly reduce the burden of infection-related cancers.²⁰⁶

7.6.2 Genetics

Genetic predisposition also plays an important role in cancer susceptibility. Individuals with a family history of certain cancers may inherit genetic mutations that increase their likelihood of developing the disease. While not all cancers are hereditary, having close relatives diagnosed with cancer can elevate risk, particularly for breast, colorectal, and prostate cancer.

7.6.3 Age

Age is another major risk factor because the likelihood of cancer increases as people grow older. This is largely due to the gradual accumulation of genetic mutations and prolonged exposure to environmental and lifestyle risk factors. As life expectancy increases in Uganda, the number of

²⁰⁵ Report presented during the UHRC Annual Report Consultative meeting by Dr Alfred Jatho (PhD), Head of the Department of Community Cancer Services., Uganda Cancer Institute.

²⁰⁶ <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/infectious-agents>, last accessed in December 2025.

cancer cases associated with ageing populations is also expected to rise. This underscores the importance of strengthening early screening programmes, increasing public awareness about family history, and improving access to diagnostic and treatment services.

7.6.4 Dietary Habits

Dietary patterns play a significant role in influencing the risk of cancer among the population. In Uganda, changing lifestyles and urbanisation have contributed to shifts in dietary habits, including increased consumption of processed foods, red meat, and foods high in fats and sugars. Evidence shows that high consumption of red and processed meats is associated with an increased risk of colorectal cancer and other gastrointestinal cancers. Conversely, diets rich in fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains, which are traditionally common in many Ugandan communities, are associated with a reduced risk of several cancers. These foods contain essential nutrients such as dietary fibre, vitamins, and antioxidants that support cellular health, reduce inflammation, and help protect the body against oxidative stress that may contribute to cancer development. Promoting healthy dietary practices through public awareness, nutrition education, and community-based interventions remains critical in reducing cancer risk and improving overall public health outcomes in Uganda.²⁰⁷

7.6.5 Physical Activity and Cancer Prevention

Regular physical activity is an important protective factor against several forms of cancer, including breast, colorectal, and prostate cancer. Physical activity contributes to maintaining a healthy body weight, regulating hormone levels, improving metabolism, and strengthening the immune system, all of which play a role in reducing cancer risk. In Uganda, while many rural populations engage in physical labour through agriculture and other livelihood activities, increasing urbanisation has led to more sedentary lifestyles, particularly

among urban populations and office-based workers. Reduced physical activity combined with unhealthy diets can increase the prevalence of obesity and other non-communicable diseases, which are recognised risk factors for cancer. Encouraging regular exercise, promoting active lifestyles, and integrating physical activity into daily routines are important strategies for cancer prevention within communities.

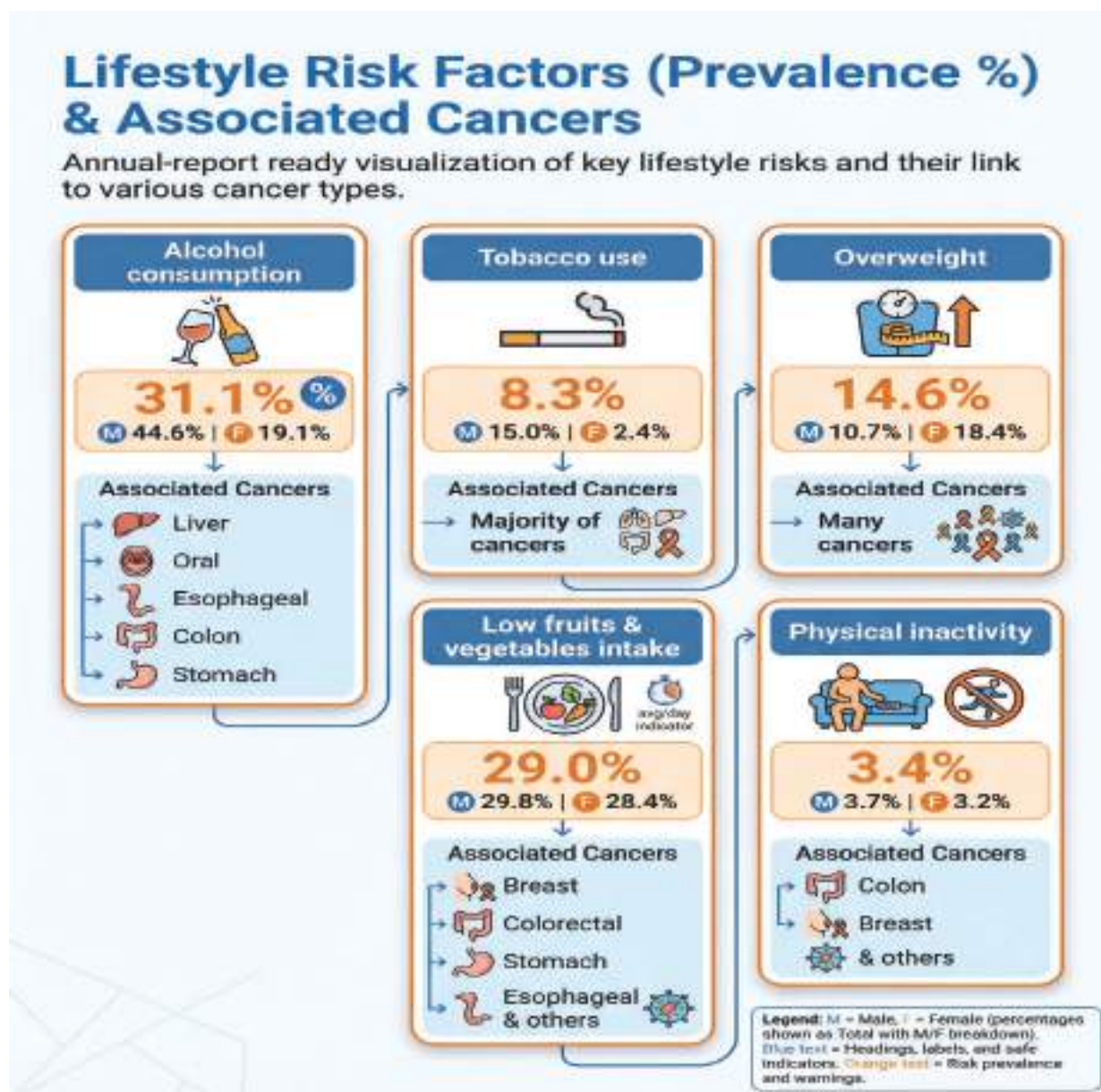
7.6.6 Tobacco Use

Tobacco use remains one of the leading preventable causes of cancer worldwide and poses a significant public health concern. The carcinogenic substances present in tobacco smoke have the possibility of damaging DNA and trigger processes that lead to the development of cancers such as lung, oral, oesophageal, throat, and bladder cancers. In Uganda, tobacco consumption continues to affect both smokers and non-smokers through exposure to second-hand smoke. Despite existing tobacco control measures, including the Tobacco Control Act, continued public education and enforcement remain essential to reduce tobacco use and protect communities from its harmful effects. Smoking cessation programmes and increased awareness of the health risks associated with tobacco are key interventions that can significantly reduce cancer incidence and improve population health.

7.6.7 Alcohol Consumption

Alcohol consumption has also been identified as a risk factor for several cancers, including breast, liver, and oesophageal cancers. Ethanol and its by-products can damage DNA and interfere with normal cellular processes, thereby increasing the likelihood of cancer development. In Uganda, alcohol consumption is relatively common in both rural and urban settings, and harmful drinking patterns contribute to the rising burden of non-communicable diseases, including cancer. Public health initiatives that promote responsible alcohol consumption, strengthen regulation of alcohol production and distribution, and increase

²⁰⁷ Dietary patterns and cancer risk | *Nature Reviews Cancer*, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41568-019-0227-4> accessed on 15th December 2025

Figure 22: Prevalence of some of the modifiable cancer risk factors in Uganda.

Source: UCJ²⁰⁸

community awareness about the health risks associated with excessive alcohol intake are critical components of cancer prevention efforts. Addressing harmful alcohol use will contribute not only to reducing cancer risk but also to improving broader health and social outcomes within Ugandan communities.

7.6.8 Environmental Factors

Environmental pollution, including air and water pollution, has been implicated in cancer development. Exposure to pollutants such as particulate matter, heavy metals, and carcinogenic chemicals can lead to increased cancer risk through mechanisms such as oxidative stress and inflammation. Studies have shown associations between pollution and cancers such as lung

208 Report presented during the UHRC Annual Report Consultative meeting by Dr Alfred Jatho (PhD), Head of the Department of Community Cancer Services, Uganda Cancer Institute.

cancer and bladder cancer. Long-term exposure to certain air pollutants, like benzene and dioxins, has been linked to an increased risk of cancer. Environmentally, air pollution contributes to smog formation, acid rain, and can damage vegetation and forests by reducing growth and increasing susceptibility to disease.²⁰⁹

Exposure to ionising radiation, such as that from medical imaging or environmental sources, is a known risk factor for several cancers, including thyroid cancer and leukaemia. While the benefits of medical imaging often outweigh the risks, minimising unnecessary radiation exposure and using protective measures are important for reducing cancer risk.²¹⁰

7.6.9 Occupational Hazards

Certain occupations expose individuals to carcinogens that increase cancer risk. For example, asbestos exposure is linked to lung cancer and mesothelioma, while exposure to benzene is associated with leukaemia. The Commission therefore notes that implementing safety measures and regulations to minimise occupational exposure is essential for cancer prevention in at-risk professions.²¹¹

7.7 HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS

The right to health is assessed through the spectrum of accessibility, availability, affordability and quality.²¹² The Commission notes that, within the context of cancer in Uganda, the following are the concerns.

7.7.1 Availability

Availability means that the State has an obligation to ensure that adequate healthcare infrastructure, including hospitals, community health facilities, trained healthcare professionals, drugs, equipment and health services are available in all geographic areas and to all communities, including vulnerable persons, indigenous communities and ethnic minorities.

The Commission established that late diagnosis remains the single most significant factor contributing to poor cancer outcomes in Uganda. Screening services for breast, cervical, prostate, and liver cancers are largely concentrated in major towns, leaving rural communities with minimal access. Many health centres at Levels III and IV lack basic screening equipment such as VIA kits (for cervical cancer screening), ultrasound devices, or Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) testing facilities (for prostate cancer screening). Consequently, patients often begin their care journey at advanced stages when treatment options are limited and costly.

The experience of ‘Sarah’, a 39-year-old mother from Namutumba, demonstrates this challenge. Her symptoms were initially dismissed as routine infections at multiple lower-level health facilities. Only after several months, and at great personal cost, did she manage to reach the Uganda Cancer Institute, where she was diagnosed with advanced cervical cancer. Her case represents thousands of others whose delayed access to screening undermines their right to timely and appropriate healthcare.

209 Air and Water Pollution: Causes, Effects, and Impacts - Biology Insights <https://biologyinsights.com/air-and-water-pollution-causes-effects-and-impacts/>, last accessed in December 2025.

210 <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/radiation-and-health>, last accessed in December 2025.

211 [2500_the-impact-of-lifestyle-and-environmental-factors-on-cancer-risk-and-prevention.pdf](#) accessed on 20 December 2025.

212 World Health Organization.

“

I kept going to the health centre with pain, but they told me it was just a normal infection of women ... Months later, when I finally reached Mulago Hospital, the doctor told me it was cancer... and it was already advanced. I kept asking myself what if they had found it earlier, maybe I would not have reached to this state ...”

A patient at Mulago Cancer Institute

“I thought the bleeding would stop on its own. I delayed going to the hospital because I was afraid of the cost. When I finally went, they told me that I had cancer and it was already at a late stage.”

A patient at Mulago Cancer Institute

7.7.2 Accessibility to Treatment Services

All persons within Uganda should have access to health care, which must be universal and guaranteed for all on an equitable basis. Healthcare must also be affordable and comprehensive for everyone and physically accessible where and when needed.

The Commission established that cancer treatment services in Uganda remain heavily centralised. Uganda Cancer Institute, located in Kampala, remains the main facility providing chemotherapy, radiotherapy, and specialised oncology care. The ongoing development of regional cancer centres

in Gulu and Mbarara is a positive step, but they are not yet fully functional or adequately equipped to handle the growing demand. Patients from remote districts often travel long distances, incur substantial transport and accommodation costs, and endure prolonged waiting times before accessing services. These delays compromise treatment outcomes and violate the principle of equitable access to healthcare.

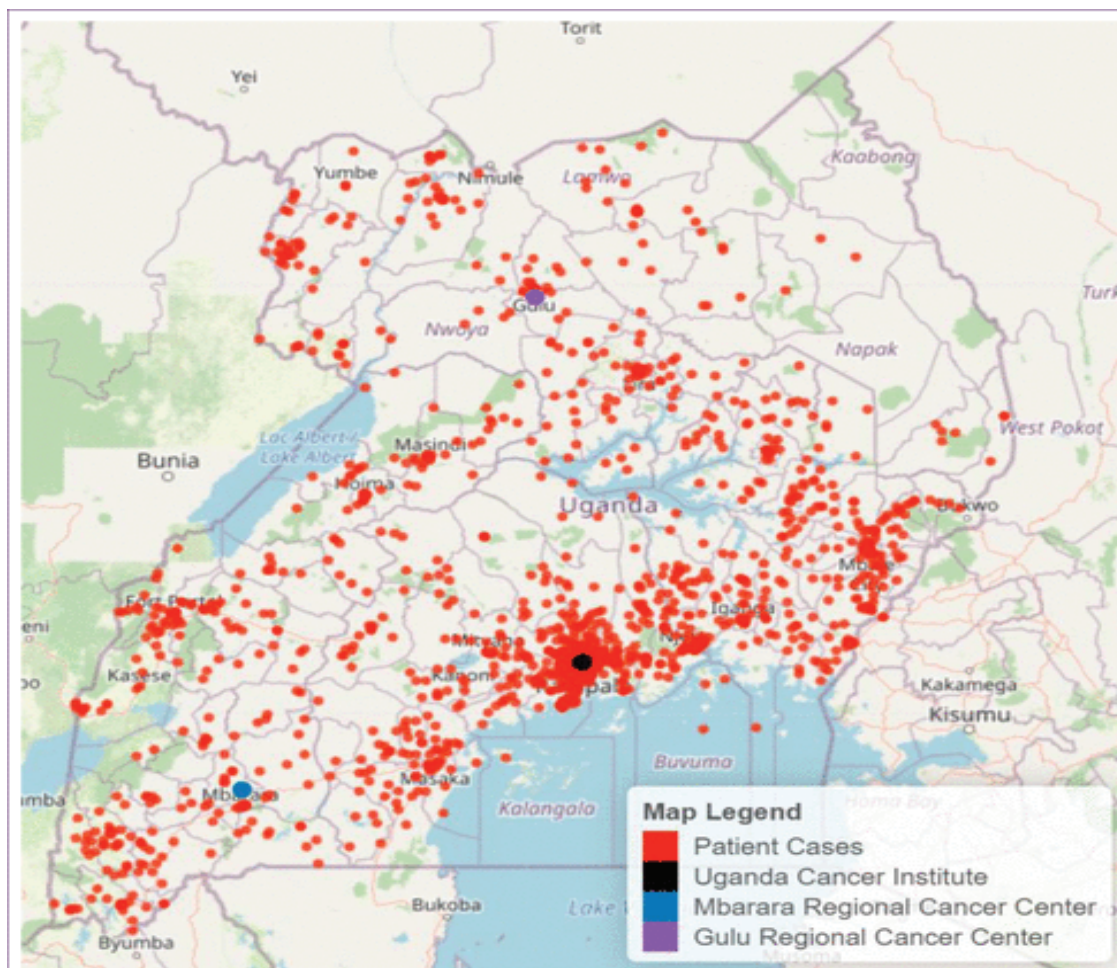
“

Cancer treatment in our country feels like a journey only a few can manage. Almost everything is in Kampala. When you are diagnosed in a district far away, the first battle is not even the disease it is finding the money to travel. By the time many of us reach the Uganda Cancer Institute, we are already exhausted, financially and emotionally. Sometimes the waiting is so long that you wonder if the disease is moving faster than the help.”

A patient at Mulago Cancer Institute

We have to leave home for days, sometimes weeks. Transport, food, where to sleep, and sometimes buying medicines - it all adds up. And while you are worrying about money, your loved one is getting weaker. You feel helpless... because getting treatment should not be this hard.”

A caretaker at UCI noted

Figure 23: A map showing cancer circulation, and care/treatment centres across Uganda.

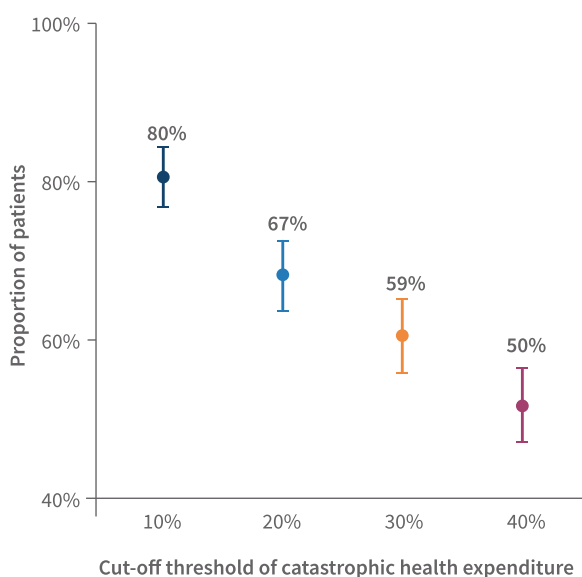
Source: Uganda Cancer Institute

In regard to access to palliative care, the Commission noted that although Uganda is internationally recognised for its pioneering community-based palliative care programme, access remains uneven across the country. Many districts still lack palliative care units, while others struggle with inconsistent supplies of oral morphine, one of the most important medicines for pain control. The Commission encountered stories such as that of ‘Ocen’, a 55-year-old farmer from Agago, who lived with excruciating pain because his nearest palliative care facility was more than 70 kilometres away. His experience highlights the suffering that results when pain management is inadequate, raising concerns related not only to the right to health but also to the right to dignity and freedom from cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment.

7.7.3 Affordability of Cancer Treatment

The financial burden of cancer care is severe. The Commission received testimonies from patients whose families resorted to selling land, withdrawing children from school, or taking high-interest loans to finance diagnostic tests, chemotherapy cycles, radiotherapy sessions, and follow-up imaging services. In the absence of a national health insurance scheme, most cancer costs are borne directly by patients and their families. This undermines economic accessibility, which is a key component of the right to health, and contributes to increased poverty among households affected by cancer.

Figure 24: Catastrophic health expenditure of cancer patients.



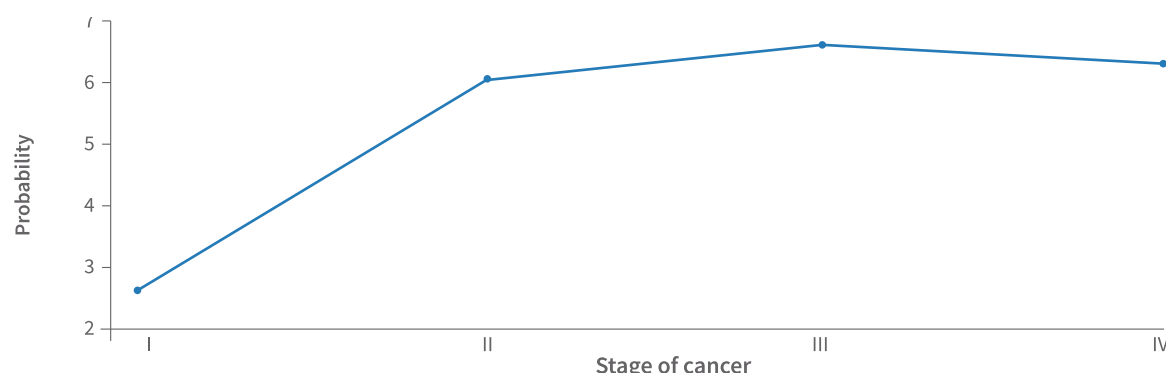
Source: Uganda Cancer Institute

The graph on catastrophic health expenditure shows that a significant proportion of patients face substantial financial strain due to healthcare costs, even at different measurement thresholds. At the 10% cut-off point, about 80% of patients experience catastrophic health spending, indicating that a large majority spend a notable share of their income on medical care. This proportion decreases as the threshold increases, with 67% at the 20% cut-off, 59% at 30%, and 50% at the 40% level. Despite this decline, the data still demonstrates that at least half of the patients incur extremely high out-of-pocket health expenses. Overall, the graph highlights the heavy economic burden of healthcare on patients and households, suggesting that many families are at risk of financial hardship when seeking treatment.

“

Before my mother fell sick, I had applied to access my 20% savings from NSSF. I had a simple dream to start building my country house. But before that dream could begin, my mother became very sick. After many expensive tests, the doctors told us she had advanced ovarian cancer. Everything changed....the money I had planned for my house became the money that helped me take care of her. The treatment was very expensive, but she was my mother, and there was no other choice. Sadly, within four months, she passed away. In that moment, I felt a double loss; I had lost my mother and the money I had saved for my future. But when I look back, I am grateful... grateful that I had the resources to care for her in her final days... because without them, I don't know what I would have done. Cancer treatment is soooo...expensive.”

A caretaker at UCI

Figure 25: Catastrophic health expenditure by cancer stage in Uganda.

Source: UCI²¹³

The likelihood of experiencing catastrophic health expenditure is highest in the later stages of cancer, being Stage III. At Stage IV, palliative care is typically the preferred option.

7.7.4 Acceptability

This element presupposes that health care providers must respect dignity, provide culturally appropriate care, be responsive to needs based on gender, age, culture, language, and different ways of life and abilities. They must respect medical ethics and protect the confidentiality of patients.

The shortage of skilled health professionals in cancer care remains a major concern. Uganda has a limited number of oncologists, oncology nurses, radiologists, radiographers, and pathologists. This shortage leads to long queues, delayed diagnoses, and increased workloads for the few

specialists available. Health workers in regional hospitals reported difficulty interpreting cancer symptoms due to limited specialised training, which contributes to delayed referrals and missed opportunities for early detection. Human resource constraints, therefore, compromise the quality of cancer care and hinder the State's ability to meet its obligations under the right to health.

7.7.5 The Projected Cancer Workforce Deficit in Uganda

Reports estimate the number of cancer specialists (oncologists) at approximately 20 by 2020.²¹⁴ Of these, only one is a paediatric oncologist, and five are haematologists. The NDP IV Human Resource Development Plan shows the trend in shortages in key oncology specialities over the next five years if no deliberate efforts are taken to address the growing cancer needs in the country.

Table 11: Projected specialist gaps in cancer care/ treatment in Uganda over the next five years.

NO	SKILL	5-YEAR GAP
1.	Gynaecologic oncology	400
2.	Haematologic oncology	350
3.	Oncology	650
4.	Thoracic/pulmonary oncology	121
5.	Oncologic pathologists	118
6.	Paediatric oncologists	123
7.	Haematologists (haematologic oncologists)	250

Source: Presentation to UHRC.²¹⁵

213 Report presented during the UHRC Annual Report Consultative meeting by Dr Alfred Jatho (PhD), Head of Department of Community Cancer Services, Uganda Cancer Institute.

214 Bifaglobal.org accessed on 23 March 2026.

215 Report presented during the UHRC Annual Report consultative meeting.

Related to acceptability, the Commission also noted that stigma, misinformation, and cultural beliefs on cancer remain widespread. In several communities visited, cancer is associated with curses, witchcraft, or divine punishment. This stigma discourages individuals from seeking medical help early and often pushes them toward unregulated alternative treatments that delay appropriate care. Women diagnosed with reproductive cancers reported experiencing abandonment or discrimination within their households, while men shared fears of being perceived as weak or incurable. These cultural barriers undermine early detection efforts and exacerbate health inequalities.

“

When my illness was discovered, my husband slowly began to distance himself. Some relatives told him that a woman with this kind of cancer is no longer a ‘complete woman.’ I was not only fighting cancer, but I was also fighting loneliness and rejection in my own home.”

A woman diagnosed with reproductive cancer at Mulago Cancer Institute said,

7.7.6 Quality

Quality means that all health care must be medically appropriate and of good quality, provided in a timely, safe, and patient-centred manner and have quality standards that are acceptable for humans.

Cancer imposes a significant emotional and psychological toll on patients and caregivers. Many individuals interviewed by the Commission expressed feelings of despair, fear, and isolation. Caregivers, who are often women and children, face additional burdens, including missed economic opportunities and emotional fatigue. Mental health and psychosocial support services

remain scarce within cancer treatment facilities, despite growing evidence that such services improve treatment adherence and overall quality of life.

“

You don’t just care for someone with cancer... you carry their pain too. You miss work, you miss sleep, and you miss yourself. Sometimes you are strong for them, even when you are breaking inside. And no one really asks how you are coping.”

One caretaker (who looked very exhausted)

“I had to grow up fast. Instead of school, I am at the hospital. I try to be brave... but sometimes I get scared. I just want my mother to be okay... and I wish someone could help me too.”

A child caretaker at the UCI

7.8 GOVERNMENT INTERVENTIONS IN ADVANCING CANCER CARE IN UGANDA

7.8.1 Establishment of Regional Cancer Centres

The GOU has undertaken significant interventions to strengthen cancer prevention, diagnosis, and treatment nationwide. Through the UCI and the Ministry of Health, efforts have been made to decentralise cancer care services, invest in modern treatment technologies, expand research capacity, and improve specialised care, including paediatric oncology services. Historically, specialised cancer treatment in Uganda was largely centralised at the UCI in Kampala, requiring many patients from

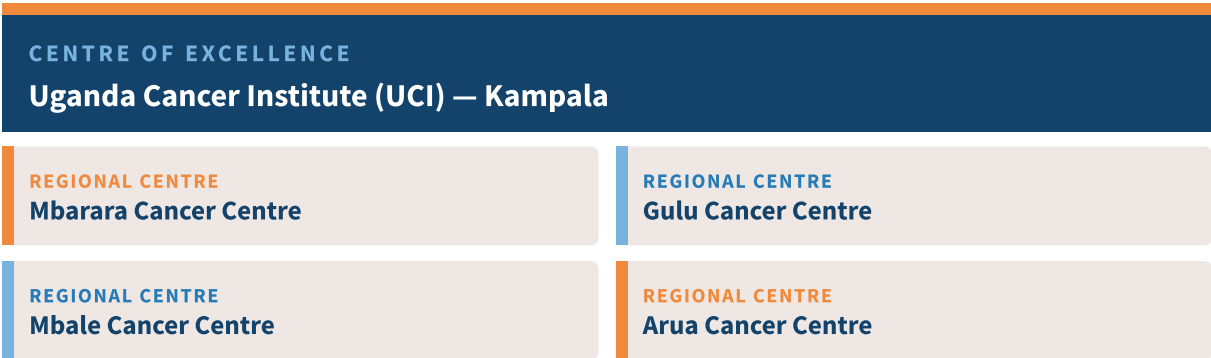
other regions to travel long distances to access care. This often resulted in delayed diagnosis, interruptions in treatment, and reduced survival outcomes for patients who were unable to make repeated visits to the capital.

To address these challenges, GOU has prioritised the establishment of regional cancer centres to bring diagnostic and treatment services closer to communities. The UCI Northern Uganda Regional Cancer Centre in Gulu is currently operational and provides a range of services, including diagnostics, imaging, surgery, chemotherapy, and palliative care. The facility has significantly reduced the patient burden on the Kampala-based centre and improved access to treatment for patients in the

northern region.

Plans are also underway to expand regional cancer services by constructing additional centres in other parts of the country. Proposed facilities include the West Nile Regional Cancer Centre in Arua, the Western Uganda Regional Cancer Centre in Mbarara, and the Eastern Uganda Regional Cancer Centre in Mbale, with construction expected to commence in the Financial Year 2025/2026. These centres are expected to provide services such as cancer screening, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and specialised diagnostics, thereby improving early detection and treatment outcomes.

Figure 26: Cancer centres in Uganda.



Source: Uganda Cancer Institute

7.8.2 Introduction of Advanced Medical Technologies

Government interventions have also focused on strengthening cancer diagnosis and treatment by introducing advanced medical technologies. The UCI has introduced high-precision radiotherapy technologies, such as Linear Accelerators (LINACs), enabling targeted radiation therapy

for breast, prostate, and head and neck cancers. These technologies improve treatment accuracy while minimising damage to surrounding healthy tissues. The Institute currently boasts three LINACs, two Cobalt-60 Teletherapy machines, three high-dose rate (HDR), and two CT simulators.



Radiotherapy: The Institute currently boasts of 3 LINACs, two Cobalt-60 Teletherapy machine (EBRT), 3 high dose rate (HDR), 2 CT simulators Uganda Cancer Institute



UCI's laboratory services, currently undergoing modernisation and expansion to become a national reference centre for cancer diagnostics.

Further advancements have been made in cancer diagnostics through the introduction of molecular imaging technologies, including the Single Photon Emission Computed Tomography (SPECT-CT) scan, which enhances the detection and staging of cancers. Plans are also underway to establish a Positron Emission Tomography (PET) imaging facility to further strengthen early cancer detection and treatment planning.

7.8.3 Expansion of Pathology Laboratories and Diagnostic Services

The Government has also invested in strengthening pathology and research capacity to improve diagnostic accuracy and support evidence-based cancer treatment. The UCI has expanded pathology laboratories and diagnostic services, enabling more precise tissue analysis and facilitating early-stage cancer detection. Additionally, investments

in genomic medicine research are contributing to a better understanding of the genetic factors associated with cancers affecting the Ugandan population, thereby supporting the development of more targeted and personalised treatment approaches.

The services offered at UCI include comprehensive testing (pathology, clinical pathology, coagulation studies, specialised diagnostics (flow cytometry, microbiology, immunohistochemistry, molecular oncology (Polymerase Chain Reaction(PCR), Sequencing (BCR-ABL, BRCA1), viral panels (HPV, CMV, HIV, HCV, HBV), viral Load monitoring) and bio banking.

7.8.4 Introduction of a Paediatric Oncology Unit

The Commission also established that in recognising the unique needs of children with cancer, GOU has strengthened paediatric oncology services at the UCI. A dedicated paediatric oncology unit has been established to provide specialised care for childhood cancers such as leukaemia, lymphoma, and solid tumours. The unit is staffed by trained specialists and provides tailored chemotherapy protocols designed specifically for paediatric patients. Multidisciplinary teams, including oncologists, radiologists, and psychosocial support personnel, work collaboratively to provide comprehensive care to young patients and their families.

7.8.5 Introduction of a Paediatric Cancer Survivorship Programme

In addition, the Commission found that the UCI has introduced a Paediatric Cancer Survivorship Programme to ensure long-term follow-up care for children who have successfully completed cancer

treatment. The programme provides ongoing medical monitoring as well as psychological support to address potential long-term effects of cancer treatment and improve the quality of life of survivors.

7.8.6 Launch of the National Cancer Control Plan (NCCP)

A major policy milestone in Uganda's cancer control efforts was the launch of the National Cancer Control Plan (NCCP) in 2024. The plan provides a comprehensive framework for strengthening cancer prevention, early detection, treatment, and palliative care services nationwide. Implementation of the NCCP includes expanding screening programmes for common cancers such as cervical and breast cancer, increasing public awareness on cancer prevention and early detection, and further decentralising treatment services.

Collectively, these interventions demonstrate GOU's commitment to improving cancer care in Uganda by strengthening health system capacity, expanding access to specialised services, and promoting research and innovation in cancer management. Continued investment and collaboration among government institutions, development partners, and health sector stakeholders remain critical to sustaining progress in cancer prevention and treatment in the country. Despite these positive developments, the scale of interventions remains insufficient relative to the rising cancer burden. Many initiatives depend on external funding and lack long-term sustainability. In addition, regional inequality in service delivery persists, with most resources concentrated in central Uganda.

7.9 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with District Local Governments, Health Centre IVs and Regional Referral Hospitals in Uganda, should integrate routine cancer screening services into primary health care facilities across the country. The Ministry should also expand and sustain mobile outreach screening programmes targeting rural and hard-to-reach communities to promote early detection and timely referral for treatment.
2. The Government of Uganda, through the Ministry of Health and in partnership with the Uganda Cancer Institute, should accelerate the operationalisation, staffing, and full equipping of regional cancer diagnostic and treatment centres across the country, including dedicated paediatric oncology services. This will help decongest services at the Uganda Cancer Institute, reduce the urban–rural disparities in access to cancer care, promote earlier diagnosis and treatment, and ensure equitable access to quality cancer services for both adults and children in fulfilment of the right to health.
3. The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with Uganda Cancer Institute, and training institutions such as Makerere University College of Health Sciences, should increase investment in the training, recruitment, and retention of oncology specialists, including oncologists, oncology nurses, radiologists, pathologists, and radiotherapy technicians, to address the critical shortage of skilled personnel in cancer care.
4. The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with Palliative Care Association of Uganda and District Local Governments, should expand palliative care services to all districts. This should include strengthening supply chains to ensure a consistent and reliable availability of oral morphine and other essential pain-relief medicines for patients with advanced cancer.
5. The Uganda Bureau of Statistics, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Uganda Cancer Institute, and academic and research institutions, should strengthen national cancer registries and improve routine data collection and analysis on cancer incidence, treatment outcomes, and mortality. Regular updates of national cancer statistics will support evidence-based policy formulation, planning, and monitoring of interventions aimed at reducing cancer-related morbidity and mortality in Uganda.

7.10 CONCLUSION

The UHRC emphasises that safeguarding the rights to health, dignity, and life requires sustained investment in equitable and accessible cancer services across the country. A comprehensive, rights-based approach anchored on prevention, early detection, accessible treatment, and dignified palliative care remains essential. Ensuring that every person, regardless of gender, age, socio-economic status, or geographic location, can access quality cancer care is not only a public health necessity but also a legal and moral obligation. The realisation of these commitments will be central to protecting the lives, dignity, and wellbeing of all people in Uganda. Addressing cancer must therefore move beyond a purely medical concern and be firmly recognised as a human rights issue affecting most people and families in Uganda.

08

Human Rights Developments and Concerns in 2025



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The year 2025 brought both progress and persistent challenges. Landmark court decisions affirmed constitutional rights, while concerns over freedom of expression, the rights of human rights defenders, and social protection for older persons emphasised the fact that efforts to promote human rights never cease..

8.1 INTRODUCTION

During the period under review, Uganda continued to demonstrate a **strong constitutional, legal, and institutional commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights**, while also navigating a range of governance, security, and societal challenges associated with democratic processes and national development priorities.

8.2 HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

Uganda's human rights framework is underpinned by a strong policy and legal framework which emphasises democratic principles. The **institutional framework for human rights protection** remains firmly in place through the Courts of Judicature, Parliament, particularly through its Human Rights Committee and key state institutions such as the National Human Rights Institution (UHRC), EOC, UPF, ODPP and UPS. These bodies provide oversight, accountability, and mechanisms for redress. The following were major developments noted during the year in review.

8.3 SUPREME COURT DECISION IN ATTORNEY GENERAL V KABAZIGURUKA SCCA 02/2021

The right to a fair hearing is a key legal principle that ensures that an accused person is heard before an independent and impartial body. It is a norm of customary international law from which no derogations can be made.

In 2025, the Supreme Court of Uganda heard and determined the case of Attorney General v Kabaziguruka, which challenged the jurisdiction of the court martial to try civilians. The judgment in AG v Kabaziguruka SCCA 02/2021 arose from an appeal by the Attorney General against the decision of the Constitutional Court in Kabaziguruka v AG Const Petition No. 45 of 2016. The Constitutional Court partly allowed the appeal in its majority decision, holding, inter alia, that, as a civilian, the respondent was not subject to military law and could be lawfully tried only by a Military Court if he were charged under s. 119 (1) (g) of the UPDF Act as an accomplice to a principal who was subject to military law, and the principal was so named in the charge sheet. There being no principal named in the charge sheet, the Court held that the charges brought against him were null and void, and of no effect. The Court also declared section 119 (1) (h) of the Act, which allowed military Courts to try persons for offences provided for under other laws outside the scope of the UPDF Act, unconstitutional.

The decision of the Court was to the effect that Section 119 (1) (h) now S. 117 (1) (h) of the UPDF Act, which provides that any person found in possession of arms, ammunition or equipment ordinarily the monopoly of the army and other classified stores is unconstitutional. In addition, that Section 179 (1) and (2) (now 177) of the UPDF Act read together with section 197 (2) (now 195 (2)), which grants subordinate military courts jurisdiction over capital offences, are unconstitutional for contravening Article 129 (1) (d) and Article 126 (1). That extending the jurisdiction of the court to civilians in a blanket manner is unconstitutional.



Chief Justice Alphonse Owiny-Dollo (centre) and Judges of the Supreme Court session delivered a landmark ruling on the trial of civilians in military courts in Kampala on January 31, 2025. © The Daily Monitor.

Having found the Court to be a subordinate court of law, it found that it has specialised jurisdiction to handle issues of military discipline. They also found that the General Court Martial was not independent and impartial as to guarantee the right to a fair trial as envisaged under Article 44 (c) of the Constitution. Accordingly, all charges, or ongoing criminal trials, or pending trials, before the courts martial involving civilians immediately ceased and were to be transferred to the ordinary courts of law with competent jurisdiction.

Advisory orders were also made including a recommendation to appoint civilians with requisite legal qualifications to serve as judicial officers in the current subordinate military courts and amend the Constitution to establish superior courts within the military court system under article 129 of the Constitution and clothe them with the necessary jurisdiction and guarantee of independence and impartiality to try specific military offences of a capital nature or provide for the High Court to sit as a Court Martial to try capital offences.

Following the decision of the court, the Attorney General introduced amendments to the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) Act through the UPDF Amendment Bill 2025. Parliament passed the amendments, and President Yoweri Museveni assented to them, providing, among others, for the qualifications of the members of the court martial, providing mechanisms of appeal and providing for limited circumstances under which civilians can be tried in military courts. The amendments provided a narrow exception that allows a civilian to be tried by a military court only if they are jointly charged with a soldier who is deemed the principal offender for the same offence. His Excellency the President has since reconstituted the General Court Martial.

Although some cases, such as that of Dr Kiiza Besigye and Hajj Obed Lutale, were moved to the civil courts, the process of moving all affected cases to the civilian court remains pending.

8.4 THE RIGHT TO AN ORDER OF HABEAS CORPUS

In 2025, courts entertained several applications for habeas corpus arising from the arrest and detention, particularly of political actors. Among these applications was an application in relation to two Kenyan nationals- Bob Njagi and Nicholas Oyoo- arrested in Uganda in October 2025. The High Court dismissed the application, Miscellaneous Cause No. 281 of 2025, holding that where the state denies custody, the case should be considered as a missing persons investigation.

The Commission notes that in that instance, Njagi and Oyoo were eventually found to be in state custody, released and repatriated to Kenya. The Commission also notes that the right to habeas corpus is a non-derogable right under Article 44 of the Constitution, which all stakeholders must respect and uphold.

8.5 FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

The year 2025 marked a season of heightened political activity in the run-up to the 2026 General Elections. The rights of citizens to assemble, associate and express themselves through mobilisation of supporters, sharing of manifestos, party primaries, nomination of candidates and campaigns.

The right to assemble and associate was generally enjoyed. However, the UHRC noted some cases of restraint of some political figures from accessing prior scheduled campaign venues, as well as the use of force to disperse supporters. There were concerns raised about access to funding for all parties through the Inter-Party Organization for Dialogue.

In preparation for the 2026 general elections, the UPF stepped up its election-security planning and operations. Overall, the UPF maintained an active presence throughout the 2025-2026 electoral cycle, with substantial recruitment and operational activity aimed at preventing disorder and safeguarding the electoral process. The Commission notes that overall, the Police did a commendable job of ensuring calm and peaceful elections.

8.6 CONSTITUTIONAL DECISION ON NO-FAULT DIVORCE

In the case of Innocent Ngobi Ndiko and Others v Attorney General and Others (Constitutional Petition No. 23 of 2020) [2025] UGCC 11 (18 August 2025), the Constitutional Court declined to introduce no-fault divorce but held that property protections in judicial separations must be gender-equal.²¹⁶ Couples seeking divorce in Uganda must continue to prove matrimonial offences such as adultery, desertion, cruelty, or other legally recognised grounds.²¹⁷

A no-fault divorce is one in which neither spouse places blame on the other for the demise of the marriage. The couple seeking a no-fault divorce merely has to assert that they are incompatible or that irreconcilable differences exist. In a no-fault divorce, the court grants the dissolution of marriage without requiring either party to show evidence that the other spouse breached the marital contract.

The Constitutional Court premised its decision on the sanctity of marriage and family and the need to protect the family unit. However, the Commission notes that often in the process of proving the grounds for divorce, innocent third parties, especially children, may be affected.

²¹⁶ *Innocent Ngobi Ndiko and Others v Attorney General and Others (Constitutional Petition No. 23 of 2020) [2025] UGCC 11 (18 August 2025)* – ULII accessed on 17 February 2026.

²¹⁷ *Innocent Ngobi Ndiko and Others v Attorney General and Others (Constitutional Petition No. 23 of 2020) [2025] UGCC 11 (18 August 2025)* – ULII accessed on 17 February 2026.

8.7 SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR OLDER PERSONS

In November 2025, the GOU announced significant reforms to the Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment (SAGE) and the Senior Citizens Grant as part of efforts to strengthen social protection and inclusion for vulnerable older persons. The Cabinet approved lowering the eligibility age for the programme from 80 years to 65 years, effective in the 2026/2027 financial year. This expansion is expected to increase the number of beneficiaries from around 306,759 to more than 1,048,598 older Ugandans.²¹⁸ To support the broader eligibility, the annual budget for the programme was increased from UGX121.2 billion to UGX373.36 billion, representing an additional UGX252.16 billion allocated for the upcoming budget cycle. At the same time, the monthly stipend paid to recipients was raised from UGX25,000 to UGX35,000 to better respond to the cost-of-living pressures faced by elderly citizens. These changes form part of a broader agenda to promote equity, social justice, and economic security for older persons across Uganda.²¹⁹

8.8 GLOBAL LEADER IN REFUGEE PROTECTION

Uganda continues to position itself as a global leader in refugee protection, hosting approximately two million refugees. The country's progressive refugee framework grants freedom of movement, the right to work, and access to public services for refugees fleeing conflict in neighbouring countries, representing a significant humanitarian contribution.

As of November 2025, Uganda was hosting 1,967,186 refugees and asylum seekers, making it the largest refugee-hosting country in Africa. The majority of refugees are from South Sudan (52.4%), followed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo (32.9%) and Sudan (4.7%). According to projections by UNHCR, it is expected that numbers will further increase by another 200,000 refugees in 2026.²²⁰



Refugees from Sudan at a reception centre in North-Western Uganda. © UNHCR

²¹⁸ Age threshold for SAGE beneficiaries to be lowered to 65 years - NTV Uganda accessed on 17 February 2026.

²¹⁹ As above.

²²⁰ Uganda: Mid-term Progress Review on the Uganda 2023 Global Refugee Forum pledges - December 2025 - Uganda | ReliefWeb, accessed on 17 February 2026.



Vice President Jessica Alupo with senior leadership from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and International Organization for Migration Uganda Chief of Mission Sanusi Tejan Savage (far left) following the official launch of the National Migration Policy. © International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Global Refugee Forum (GRF) Uganda is on track to achieve its targets by 2027, with 11 (20%) targets already met and 22 (40%) on track. However, 16 targets (29%) are either not on track or have seen no progress. For instance, on the thematic area of durable solutions: since December 2023, a total of 25,240²²¹ individuals had been supported to attain durable solutions, including voluntary return to the country of origin, complementary pathways or resettlement. Voluntary repatriation remains the most desirable yet challenging outcome as it is dependent on the security in the refugees' country of origin. Currently, it is deemed feasible primarily for the Burundian caseload due to positive political changes. Consequently, 3,810 Burundian refugees have returned since December 2023, contributing to a total of 15,500 returns since 2020.²²² The Commission notes that there is reduced international funding towards refugees and efforts must be made to address the gaps.

8.9 NATIONAL MIGRATION POLICY

The Government developed and adopted a comprehensive National Migration Policy (NMP) 2025, to help manage its internal, intra-regional and international migration flows for poverty reduction and sustained national development. The said policy was adopted in 2025 and launched in 2026.

The main rationale of this policy is to manage Uganda's migration flows comprehensively, in the context of movement and stay of persons within and across the country's borders and regionally. It is also an integral part of the GOU's efforts as a state party to the various international instruments governing diverse types of migration to domesticate them appropriately through national laws and to adopt practices in keeping with the rights, duties, obligations, and responsibilities of citizens and migrants. The Policy aligns with the Global Compact's For-Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration Policy, promoting legal and safe migration options.

²²¹ As above.

²²² Midterm progress review on the Ugandan 2023 Global Refugee Forum Pledges - December 2025. Can be accessed on *Uganda: Mid-term Progress Review on the Uganda 2023 Global Refugee Forum pledges - December 2025 - Uganda* | ReliefWeb.



His Excellency Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, the President of Uganda, officially commissions the Hoima City Stadium. © UBC

8.10 SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In 2025, several development projects were undertaken and are ongoing, including the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) pipeline, the Nyagak III Hydropower project commissioned in August 2025, the Kabalega International Airport and the Hoima City Stadium. The stadium, with its 20,000-seat main stadium, indoor arena, swimming facilities, and courts for basketball, netball, and volleyball, *was officially commissioned* at the end of 2025. President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni formally opened the facility with a ceremony on 24 December 2025, marking its completion and readiness for use as part of Uganda's preparations to co-host the 2027 Africa Cup of Nations. The Commission notes that this development will improve accessibility of sports facilities, which supports socio-economic development in Uganda.

8.11 RIGHTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In November 2025, DefendDefenders, the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project, hosted a two-day convening at Speke Resort Munyonyo, bringing together around 200 human rights defenders (HRDs), regional and global human rights experts, and advocates. The gathering provided a platform to reflect on two decades of human rights work, share experiences,

and strategise for the future in an increasingly complex global context. Central to the discussions was the protection and promotion of the rights of human rights defenders, emphasising their entitlement to freedom of expression, assembly, association, and access to justice without fear of reprisals. Participants also highlighted the urgent need to expeditiously enact a draft law on the recognition and protection of HRDs, which would provide a formal legal framework safeguarding defenders against harassment, threats, and other risks associated with their work.

In November 2025, UHRC hosted the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders as part of engagements around human rights protection and the ongoing work to strengthen the environment for defenders in Uganda.

8.12 RELEASE OF PERSONS PENDING MINISTERIAL ORDERS

During its 2025 monitoring and inspection visits, the UHRC noted that several individuals who had previously been awaiting Ministerial Orders were released from prison. By 2025, the 24 of inmates at Luzira Prison awaiting Ministerial Orders had decreased to just one, reflecting significant progress in resolving pending cases. Notably, all individuals who had spent over 20 years in prison were released, a development that is highly commendable.

8.13 HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS

8.13.1 Media Freedom and Access to Information

The Commission noted that there were various reports of arrests, physical confrontations involving journalists, confiscation of equipment, and restricted access to certain public events, which point to challenges in balancing public order considerations with constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression and the media's role in informing the public. Incidents such as break-ins at media premises further highlight the need for enhanced protection of media institutions and personnel.²²³

8.13.2 Civil and Political Rights in the Electoral Context

Civil and political rights attracted particular attention as the country prepared for the forthcoming general elections. Law enforcement responses to political activities were largely framed in terms of maintaining public safety and order. Some incidents, however, highlighted the importance of continuous training and guidance to ensure that crowd management practices remain consistently aligned with constitutional principles and international human rights standards, including proportionality and necessity.²²⁴

In the lead-up to the elections, the NGO Bureau, under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, ordered the suspension of several civic, human rights, and election-monitoring organisations just days before polling. The NGO Bureau cited regulatory non-compliance, ongoing investigations, and national security concerns as reasons for suspending the organisations. The affected included Chapter Four Uganda, Alliance for Election Finance Monitoring (ACFIM), Human Rights Network for Journalists-Uganda (HRNJ-U), National NGO Forum, National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders-Uganda (NCHRD-U), Centre for Constitutional Governance, African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV), and African Centre for Media Excellence (ACME).

8.13.3 Judicial Processes and Access to Justice

Access to justice continued to benefit from sustained government investment in the justice, law and order sector, including the expansion of courts, deployment of additional judicial officers, and the strengthening of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. These measures contributed to improved geographical coverage and reduced barriers for court users, particularly in underserved areas. At the same time, access to justice for vulnerable and indigent populations remains an area for continued development.

While legal aid services are currently provided through a combination of state-supported initiatives and civil society programmes, the Legal Aid Bill has not yet been enacted into law. The adoption of a comprehensive legal aid framework would further institutionalise legal aid provision, enhance coordination among service providers, and strengthen equitable access to justice in line with constitutional principles and international best practices.

8.14 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Uganda Government should ensure that all cases of civilians that were being handled by the General Court Martial are expeditiously transferred to civilian courts.
2. The Ugandan Parliament should expeditiously enact the Legal Aid Bill to facilitate equitable access to justice and fair trials for all citizens, especially the vulnerable.

8.15 CONCLUSION

The Commission notes that 2025 marked human rights developments, especially in the area of civil and political rights. There is a need to continue strengthening the human rights environment and ensure justice for all persons.

²²³ UHRC Statement on Kawempe North By-Election (2025).

²²⁴ Chapter Four Uganda, *Human Rights Day 2025: Urgent Call to End Electoral Violence*.

09

Highlights of UHRC Interventions in Complaints Management



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In 2025, the UHRC continued to receive, investigate, and resolve complaints of human rights violations, ensuring that Ugandans from all walks of life have a credible avenue for redress.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Article 52 (1) (a) of the 1995 Constitution of Uganda mandates the UHRC to “investigate, at its own initiative or on a complaint made by any person or group of persons against the violation of any human right.” Article 53 (1) gives the UHRC powers of a court to issue summons or orders requiring the attendance of any person before the UHRC and the production of any document or record relevant to any investigation by the UHRC; to question any person in respect of any subject matter under investigation before the UHRC; to require any person to disclose any information within his or her knowledge relevant to any investigation by the UHRC; and to commit persons for contempt of its orders. The Constitution also gives UHRC powers to order payment for compensation or any other legal remedy or redress in the event of a human rights violation. The UHRC applies a victim-centred approach to its complaints management process. This section provides highlights of the Commission’s complaints management in 2025.

9.2 COMPLAINTS RECEIVED AND REGISTERED

The UHRC registered **324** allegations of human rights violations, in accordance with the Commission’s admissibility criteria. The highest number of complaints was registered by the Gulu Regional Office, with 58 (18%), followed by the Mbarara Regional Office, with 53 (16.4%).

Of the **324** complainants whose matters were registered by the UHRC, 203 (63%) were male and 121 (37%) female. The nature of the alleged violations that were mostly reported (torture and deprivation of personal liberty), are majorly experienced by men who tend to be in conflict with the law, more frequently than women.

The Mbarara Regional Office registered the highest number of male complainants, 47, while the Gulu Regional Office registered the highest number of female complainants(32).

The highest number of complaints was registered in the age category of 31-59 years (55.2%), followed by those between 18-30-years (38%)

The Table below shows the number of complaints registered by the UHRC regional offices in 2025, disaggregated by gender and age.

Table 12: Number of complaints registered by the UHRC Regional Offices in 2025

REGIONAL OFFICE	COMPLAINTS REGISTERED	GENDER		AGE			
		MALE	FEMALE	0-17	18-30	31-59	60+
Arua	38	18	20	01	15	21	01
Kampala	37	28	09	00	08	25	04
Moroto	10	04	06	00	02	08	00
Fort Portal	4	04	00	00	01	03	00
Gulu	58	26	32	03	28	24	03
Hoima	6	02	04	02	02	02	00

REGIONAL OFFICE	COMPLAINTS REGISTERED	GENDER		AGE			
Masaka	26	10	16	00	14	12	00
Soroti	38	29	09	00	12	23	03
Kabale	16	13	03	00	06	10	00
MBARARA	53	47	06	01	20	32	00
LIRA	28	16	12	00	12	13	03
JINJA	10	06	04	00	03	06	01
TOTAL	324	203	121	07	123	179	15

Source: UHRC

9.3 COMPLAINTS INVOLVING VULNERABLE PERSONS

The UHRC received 45 complaints involving vulnerable persons. 27 of those complaints were registered for intervention while 18 complaints were referred to other institutions. The Table below indicates the number of vulnerable persons whose complaints were registered per regional office. The highest number of complainants whose complaints were registered were PWDs (11 complainants), and the Lira Regional Office registered the highest number of complaints from PWDs and other vulnerable persons.

Table 13: Complainants in the category of vulnerable persons registered per Regional Office

CATEGORY	ARUA	KAMPALA	MOROTO	FORT PORTAL	GULU	HOIMA	MASAKA	SOROTI	KABALE	MBARARA	LIRA	JINJA	TOTAL
Persons with disability	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	11	00	11
Prisoners	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
Minors	01	01	01	00	03	02	00	00	00	01	00	01	10
Older persons	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	01
Refugees	04	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	05
TOTAL	06	02	01	00	03	02	00	00	00	01	11	01	27

Source: UHRC

9.4 COMPLAINTS RECEIVED THROUGH THE UHRC APP

The UHRC engaged the public through its App. The Commission did not receive any public complaints about the App. Two complainants inquired about the location of UHRC offices, while two were following up on previously-lodged complaints. The majority of the messages from 20 members of the public expressed appreciation for the introduction of the App.

Table 14: Nature of complaints/inquiries received through the UHRC App

NATURE OF ISSUE	TOTAL
Complaints	00
Inquiries about the location of UHRC offices	02
Follow up on complaints previously lodged	02
General inquiries	20
Grand Total	24

Source: UHRC

9.5 USE OF TOLL-FREE LINES IN COMPLAINTS RECEIPT AND MANAGEMENT

A total of **1,723** people reported complaints of alleged human rights violations and sought advice on various issues through the use of UHRC toll-free lines at its 12 Regional Offices. Only five complaints received were admissible and registered for further investigation at the Arua, Masaka, Kabale, and Lira Regional Offices. Masaka had the highest number of callers (215), and Moroto had the lowest (60).

Table 15: Number of callers per UHRC Regional Office disaggregated by gender

CATEGORY	ARUA	KAMPALA	MOROTO	FORT PORTAL	GULU	HOIMA	MASAKA	SOROTI	KABALE	MBARARA	LIRA	JINJA	TOTAL
Male	62	206	50	60	154	81	163	81	76	114	170	81	1298
Female	23	75	10	03	44	40	52	28	54	42	29	25	425
TOTAL	85	281	60	63	198	121	215	109	130	156	199	106	1,723

Source: UHRC

Table 16: Number of complaints received and registered through the UHRC toll-free lines

CATEGORY	ARUA	KAMPALA	MOROTO	FORT PORTAL	GULU	HOIMA	MASAKA	SOROTI	KABALE	MBARARA	LIRA	JINJA	TOTAL
Registered complaints	01	00	00	00	00	00	01	00	01	00	02	00	05

Source: UHRC

Table 17: Nature of complaints registered

REGIONAL OFFICE	NUMBER OF CASES	NATURE OF VIOLATION
Arua	01	Torture
Masaka	01	Personal liberty
Lira	02	Personal liberty
Kabale	01	Cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment

Source: UHRC

9.6 NATURE OF ALLEGED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS REGISTERED

The Table below shows the nature of human rights violations registered at the UHRC Regional Offices in 2025. Allegations of violation of the right to personal liberty ranked highest with **133** complaints, while alleged violation of freedom from torture ranked second highest with **117** complaints. This was followed by a denial of child maintenance with **74** complaints.

Mbarara Regional Office registered the highest number of complaints involving the alleged violation of the right to personal liberty, with 39. This was followed by Arua with 23 complaints and the Kampala Regional Office with 17.

Kampala Regional Office registered the highest number of complaints involving the alleged violation of the right to freedom from torture, with 25. Soroti followed with 19 complaints, and Mbarara and Gulu registered 13 complaints each.

Table 18: Human rights violations registered at UHRC Regional Offices in 2025

ALLEGED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS	ARUA	KAMPALA	MOROTO	FORT PORTAL	GULU	HOIMA	MASAKA	SOROTI	KABALE	MBARARA	LIRA	JINJA	TOTAL
Torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment	05	25	06	02	13	00	08	19	06	13	10	10	117
Denial of child maintenance	07	04	01	00	29	04	10	08	02	02	07	00	74
Deprivation of personal liberty (detention beyond 48 hours)	23	17	01	02	10	01	11	06	08	39	11	04	133
Violation of the right to education	01	00	00	00	03	00	00	00	00	02	00	00	06
Deprivation of the right to life	01	03	04	01	03	00	00	08	00	00	03	00	23
Violation of the right to property	02	02	00	00	01	01	01	00	04	03	02	00	16
Denial of remuneration	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	02	00	00	02
Violation of the right to a fair hearing	00	00	00	00	02	00	00	00	00	01	00	00	03
Violation of the right to health	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	01	00	00	01
Total	39	51	12	05	61	06	30	41	20	63	33	14	375*

Source: UHRC

*Some complainants report more than one violation, thus making the number of violations recorded more than the number of complaints received.

9.7 RESPONDENTS IN HUMAN RIGHTS COMPLAINTS REGISTERED

The highest number of complaints registered by the UHRC was against the UPF, with 181 complaints, followed 85 complaints registered against private individuals. Complaints against the UPDF were 37, 16 complaints were registered against MDAs while the UPS had 9 complaints filed against it.

Table 19: Respondents by Regional Office and the number of complaints registered against each respondent

CATEGORY	ARUA	KAMPALA	MOROTO	FORT PORTAL	GULU	HOIMA	MASAKA	SOROTI	KABALE	MBARARA	LIRA	JINJA	TOTAL
UPF	27	14	01	04	20	00	13	13	14	53	13	09	181
Private individuals	08	04	01	00	31	05	12	08	02	04	07	03	85
UPDF	02	16	08	00	05	01	00	02	00	00	02	01	37
UPS	00	02	00	00	01	00	00	02	00	02	02	00	09
MDAs	00	00	00	00	01	00	00	14	00	00	01	00	16
Private companies/ businesses	01	00	00	00	00	00	01	00	00	01	00	00	03
Local governments	00	00	00	00	02	00	00	00	00	02	00	00	04
Education institutions	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	01	00	01	00	01	03
Clan leaders	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	02	00	02
State House Anti- Corruption Unit	00	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	01
Internal Security Organisation	00	01	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	01

Source: UHRC

9.8 INVESTIGATIONS

In fulfilment of its constitutional mandate to investigate alleged violations of human rights, the UHRC investigated **1,011** complaints. Of these, 581 (57.5%) were concluded, while **430** (42.5%) were partially investigated. The UHRC's backlog of investigations reduced (by 48%) from 529 in 2024 to 255 in 2025.



UHRC Gulu Regional Office staff recording statements in Adjumani District. © UHRC



UHRC Lira Regional Office staff Ms Ammy Pacutho (L) and Mr Anthony Otim (R), obtaining statements from witnesses during field investigations at Alula-Adwong Village, Alula Parish, Olilim Sub County in Otuke District. © UHRC



UHRC Lira Regional Office staff from left: Mr Anthony Otim, Human Rights Officer-Education and Ms Ammy Pacutho, Human Rights Officer-Investigations, tracing a complainant at Mission Cell, Ityel Ward, Amolatar Town Council in Amolatar District. © UHRC



Ms Ammy Pacutho, Human Rights Officer-Investigations, conducting field investigations at Awany 'A' Village, Kacung East Ward, Agwata Sub County in Dokolo District. © UHRC



UHRC staff cross-checking medical evidence at Apac Medical Centre, located in Village-Inn Cell, Te-ibu Ward, Agullu Division in Apac Municipality. © UHRC

Table 20: Complaints investigated per UHRC Regional Office

CATEGORY	ARUA	FORT PORTAL	GULU	HOIMA	JINJA	KABALE	KAMPALA	LIRA	MASAKA	MBARARA	MOROTO	SOROTI	TOTAL
Conclusively investigated	29	27	35	36	35	52	94	24	08	80	107	54	581
Partially investigated	01	06	62	06	26	25	161	18	06	48	15	56	430
No. of files investigated	30	33	104	42	61	77	225	42	51	128	122	110	1,025
Caseload as at 31 Dec 2025	09	06	131	06	09	25	212	20	06	48	36	40	548
Backlog as at 31 Dec 2025	00	04	08	03	03	01	162	14	01	09	36	14	255

Source: UHRC

9.9 INVESTIGATIONS INITIATED BY THE UHRC

The UHRC initiated investigations into **seven** incidents of alleged human rights violations as indicated in the Table below. Investigations into the alleged human rights violations initiated by the UHRC were triggered by reports made to the UHRC by concerned individuals and by media reports on various platforms, including print, radio, television, and social media.

Table 21: Investigations initiated by the UHRC per Regional Office

REGIONAL OFFICE	NO. OF INVESTIGATIONS	ALLEGED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS	RESPONDENT INVOLVED
Gulu	02	Life	UPDF 5 th Division
Gulu	01	Torture	UPDF 4 th Division, UPF (Gulu CPS)
Masaka	01	Personal Liberty	UPDF
Soroti	01	Life	UPF (Kanyumu Police Station)
Soroti	01	Life	UPS (Mutufu Prison)
Soroti	01	Life	UPF (Odom Police Station)

Source: UHRC

9.10 REFERRALS MADE TO OTHER INSTITUTIONS

The UHRC offered legal advice to **63** and referred **3,183** complaints to various institutions and organisations for appropriate management. The complaints referred involved matters that were outside UHRC's mandate to handle. The nature of matters referred is indicated in the Table below.

Table 22: Number of complaints referred per Regional Office and Headquarters

DCILS (HQTS)	ARUA	FORT PORTAL	GULU	HOIMA	JINJA	KABALE	KAMPALA	LIRA	MASAKA	MBARARA	MOROTO	SOROTI	TOTAL
175	190	179	624	345	225	133	311	41	218	395	101	246	3,183

Source: UHRC

Table 23: Nature of matters referred by UHRC

NATURE OF COMPLAINT	TOTAL
Criminal matters	562
Land disputes	388
Legal advice	352
Child-related matters	213
Family disputes	114
Labour disputes	174
Domestic violence	154
Breach of contracts	85
Property-related matters	143
Challenges with investigations of cases by the Police	34
Succession disputes	61
Access to justice	78
Health-related matters	13
Education-related matters	19
Banking and credit-related matters	07
Torts	00
Traffic offences	29
Corruption and abuse of office	10
Security of person	04
Issuance of identity cards	01
Migration-related matters	08
Poaching	00
Elections-related matters	13
Others	721
GRAND TOTAL	3,183

Source: UHRC

9.11 MEDIATIONS

The UHRC mediated **81** complaints during the period under review. The complaints (51 of them constituting 64%) involved the denial of child maintenance. Of the 81 complaints mediated by the Commission, 57 (70%) were successfully mediated. This implies that the parties were able to reach an amicable agreement and sign a memorandum of understanding detailing how they resolved their disputes and each party's responsibilities. Mediations were deemed to be unsuccessful in 24 complaints, and the files were closed or referred to other institutions.

Table 24: Complaints handled through mediation per Regional Office.

CATEGORY	ARUA	FORT PORTAL	GULU	HOIMA	JINJA	KABALE	KAMPALA	LIRA	MASAKA	MBARARA	MOROTO	SOROTI	TOTAL
Complaints handled through mediation	06	00	38	05	00	02	04	05	12	01	00	08	81

Source: UHRC

9.12 TRIBUNAL

In 2025, the Tribunal heard a total of **252** complaints and disposed of **131** in 2025. Out of the **131** disposed of complaints, the tribunal awarded compensation in **23**, amicably settled **2** and dismissed **106**.

Table 25: Summary of complaints disposed of at the Tribunal

FORM OF DISPOSAL	TOTAL
Complaints awarded by the tribunal	23
Complaints amicably settled by the parties	2
Complaints dismissed or closed	106
Complaints closed administratively (including caution letters)	415
Total	548

Source: UHRC

Table 26: Complaints disposed of by the Tribunal in 2025.²²⁵

COMPLAINT NUMBER	COMPLAINANT(S)	SEX	AGE	RESPONDENT ²²⁶	NATURE OF VIOLATION(S)	DECISION DATE	TRIBUNAL DECISION ²²⁷
KAMPALA REGIONAL OFFICE							
UHRC/02/2008	Byamugisha Z. Alex	M	49	Attorney General (UPDF)	Torture	11/2/2025	Complaint allowed UGX 25,000,000
FORT PORTAL REGIONAL OFFICE							
FPT/43/2010	Mujuni Fred	M	42	Attorney General (UPF)	Personal liberty	5/6/2025	Complaint allowed Mujuni Fred UGX 2,000,000
	Rugaju Augustine						Rugaju Augustine UGX 2,000,000
FPT/041/2012	Turyamureba Esau	M	43	Attorney General (UPF)	Personal liberty	4/6/2025	Complaint allowed UGX 7,000,000
GULU REGIONAL OFFICE							
GLU/20/2006	Okwera Alex	M	38	Attorney General (UPDF)	life	7/3/2025	Complaint allowed UGX 60,000,000
GLU/310/2003	Opio Lawrence	M	54	Attorney General (UPDF)	Life	1/9/2025	Complaint allowed Opio Lawrence UGX 70,000,000
	Adong Doris	F	35		Torture		Adong Doris UGX 20,000,000
GLU/59/2010	Mogi Moses	M	61	Attorney General (UPS)	Torture	4/9/2025	Complaint allowed UGX 25,000,000
HOIMA REGIONAL OFFICE							

²²⁵ Includes decisions made by the Tribunal with an award, dismissed or closed and amicably settled by the parties.

²²⁶ Attorney General is the overall respondent, but with other categories, e.g., UPF.

²²⁷ The decision affirms whether a case was allowed and the amount of the award.

COMPLAINT NUMBER	COMPLAINANT(S)	SEX	AGE	RESPONDENT ²²⁶	NATURE OF VIOLATION(S)	DECISION DATE	TRIBUNAL DECISION ²²⁷
FPT/82/2008	Kirungi Simon	M	58	Attorney General (UPF)	Torture(T)	26/6/2025	Complaint allowed Kirungi Simon UGX 20,000,000 (T) 2,000,000 (PL)
	Kyaligonza Fred	M	38		Personal liberty (PL)		Kyaligonza Fred 20,000,000 (T) 2,000,000 (PL)
	Kwikiriza Peregrin	F	41				Kwikiriza Peregrin 20,000,000 (T) 1,500,000 (PL)
	Nsungwa Proscovia	F	39				Nsungwa Proscovia 4,000,000 (PL)
JINJA REGIONAL OFFICE							
JJA/07/2014	Rwecungura Paul	M	56	Attorney General (UPF)	Torture Personal liberty	6/11/2025	Complaint allowed UGX 8,100,000
JJA/13/2018	Bakaki Yusuf	M	47	Attorney General (UPF)	Personal liberty	6/11/2025	Complaint allowed UGX 10,000,000
KABALE REGIONAL OFFICE							
MBR/060/2010	Atwebembeire Betty	F	41	Attorney General (UPF)	Life	24/3/2025	Complaint allowed UGX 55,000,000
LIRA REGIONAL OFFICE							
GLU/20/2010	Olake Micheal	M	47	Attorney General (UPF)	Torture	17/02/2025	Complaint partly allowed Olake Micheal UGX 15,000,000
	Abak Morris	M	65				
GLU/16/2008	Alango Katorina	F	83	Attorney General(UPS)	Life	20/02/2025	Complaint allowed UGX 65,000,000
GLU/16/2011	Akello Cissy	F	41	Attorney General (UPS)	Life	20/02/2025	Complaint allowed UGX 60,000,000
MBARARA REGIONAL OFFICE							
MBR/167/2009	Mugabo James	M	42	Attorney General (UPF)	Personal liberty	24/3/2025	Complaint allowed UGX 6,000,000
MBR/47/2014	Nabimanya Emmanuel (PWD)	M	45	Attorney General (UPS)	Torture	27/8/2025	Complaint allowed UGX 15,000,000
MBR/12/2014	Abigaba Peruth	F	39	Attorney General (UPF)	Life	25/11/2025	Complaint allowed UGX 80,000,000
MBR/12/2015	Mucunguzi Vicencio	M	57	Attorney General (UPF)	Life	26/11/2025	Complaint allowed UGX 80,000,000
SOROTI REGIONAL OFFICE							
SRT/34/2013	Olobo David	M	37	Attorney General (UPF)	Torture	26/02/2025	Complaint allowed UGX 10,000,000
SRT/229/2006	Chepkwemoi Phylis	F	55	Attorney General (UPDF)	Life	26/02/2025	Complaint allowed UGX 60,000,000
SRT/143/2009	Ojur Lawrence	M	46	Attorney General (UPF)	Torture	26/02/2025	Complaint allowed UGX 4,000,000

COMPLAINT NUMBER	COMPLAINANT(S)	SEX	AGE	RESPONDENT ²²⁶	NATURE OF VIOLATION(S)	DECISION DATE	TRIBUNAL DECISION ²²⁷
SRT/132/2005	Woswama Fred	M	44	Attorney General (UPF)	Personal liberty	29/9/2025	Complaint allowed Woswama Fred UGX 3,000,000
	Musika Richard	M	47				Musika Richard UGX 3,000,000
SRT/17/2010	Okileng Nelson	M	60	Attorney General (UPF)	Torture	1/10/2025	Complaint allowed UGX 18,000,000
SRT/002/2014	Acanit Stella	M	53	Attorney General (UPF)	Life	3/10/2025	Complaint allowed UGX 70,000,000
AMICABLY SETTLED COMPLAINTS							
GULU REGIONAL OFFICE							
GLU/146/2001	Ojok Alensio	M		Attorney General	Torture	2/9/2025	Ocaya Anthony UGX 650,000
	Ocaya Anthony	M					Okot Ponsiano UGX 500,000
	Okot Ponsiano	M					Orach Alfonsio UGX 400,000
	Orach Alfonsio	M					Agwen Mary UGX 1,000,000
	Angwen Mary	F					Okayotabi Dominic UGX 1,000,000
	Okayotabi	M					Korina Akoko UGX 800,000
	Dominic	F					Okello Ojok Maurensio UGX 2,000,000
	Corina Akoko Ocaya David	M					
	Okello Ojok Maurensio	F					
MBARARA REGIONAL OFFICE							
SRT/20/2008	Cpl. Kato Silverino	Ms	60	Attorney General (UPDF)	Life	28/8/2025	Kato Silverino UGX 130,000,000
	Wamalwa Hannington		47				Wamalwa Hannington UGX 110,000,000

Source: UHRC

Of the 25 complaints awarded/settled by the Tribunal, 68% were against the UPF, 20% against the UPDF, and 12% against the UPS.

Table 27: Nature of decided complaints before the Tribunal in 2025

NATURE OF VIOLATION	NUMBER	TOTAL AMOUNT AWARDED BY THE TRIBUNAL IN RESPECT OF THE VIOLATION (UGX)
Life	9	637,000,000
Personal liberty	11	42,600,000
Torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment	19	206,350,000
Total	39	885,950,000

Source: UHRC

Table 28: Status of Tribunal files as of 31 December 2025

S/N	STATUS	NUMBER OF FILES
1	Files pending hearing	665
2	Part-heard ²²⁸	177
3	Decided or disposed of matters	131
4	Administratively closed	415
5	Tribunal caseload as at 31 December 2024 ²²⁹	842

Source: UHRC

As of 31 December 2025, the Tribunal caseload stood at **842**, which was a **30.8%** decrease from the annual closing caseload of **1,216** in 2024. As of 31 December 2025, a total of **665** were pending hearing, while **177** were partially heard as summarised in the Table below.

Table 29: Summary of caseload per Regional Office for matters partially heard and pending hearing

STATUS	KAMPALA	FORT PORTAL	GULU	JINJA	KABALE	LIRA	MBARARA	SOROTI	ARUA	MASAKA	MOROTO	HOIMA	TOTAL
Partially heard	53	22	13	4	3	15	16	18	8	4	16	5	177
Pending hearing	31	38	103	19	2	73	54	108	74	33	90	40	665
Sub-Total	84	60	116	23	5	88	70	126	82	37	106	45	842

Source: UHRC

The parts heard complaints are those where evidence is still being adduced by the witnesses, while matters pending hearing are those awaiting hearing by the Tribunal.

UHRC audited complaint files and administratively disposed of a total of **415** complaints.

Table 30: Summary of cases concluded administratively per Regional Office

REGIONAL OFFICE	KAMPALA	FORT PORTAL	GULU	JINJA	KABALE	LIRA	MBARARA	SOROTI	ARUA	MASAKA	MOROTO	HOIMA	TOTAL
Concluded administratively	55	64	72	6	0	3	10	22	24	24	60	75	415

Source: UHRC



Members of the Commission at a tribunal session at Hoima Regional Office. © UHRC

228 Includes cases being heard, those pending amicable settlement, submissions or decision.

229 Total of 1, 2 & 3.



Members and staff of the Commission, and representatives from MDAs, on 9 April 2025 at Protea Hotel, Kololo, Kampala.
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9.13 DISPOSAL OF COMPLAINTS

The Commission disposed of **956** complaints at the various stages of the complaints management process. **386** complaints were disposed of at the investigations stage, **415** were disposed of at the directorate level (concluded administratively), and **131** were disposed of at the Tribunal stage, as indicated in the Table below.

Table 31: Disposal of Complaints at UHRC

DISPOSALS	NUMBER
Disposal at investigations (File closed during investigations and at legal opinion stage)	386
Files conclusively investigated and forwarded for consideration at Directorate	415
Disposal at mediation	24
Disposal at Tribunal	131
Total	956

Source: UHRC

9.14 PAYMENT OF COMPENSATION/TRIBUNAL AWARDS

Pursuant to Article 53 (1) (b) of the Constitution, the Directorate of Complaints, Investigations and Legal Services organised a meeting²³⁰ with MDAs’ representatives from the Ministry of Defence and Veteran Affairs, Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, UPF, UPS, Kampala Capital City Authority, Uganda Wildlife Authority, National Forestry Authority and UHRC members and legal officers. The purpose of this meeting was to follow

up on the status of payment of Tribunal awards, get feedback from stakeholders and staff on concerns raised by decree holders and/or respondents in paying awards, and come up with resolutions to fast-track payments.

Issues raised by participants included: delay in payment of awards, especially after decentralisation of payments of court awards in 2016, inadequate budgetary allocation for MDAs, lack of information by decree holders, and the Commission’s lack of clarity on payment procedures, failure or inability of victims from

230 In April 2024.

turning up or properly identify themselves, missing files, absence of and accurate statistics on the status of payment of awards from stakeholders and lengthy/bureaucratic verification procedures which require victims to travel long distances.

As a way forward, it was agreed during the meeting that MDAs should prioritise budgeting

for human rights cases, strengthen coordination between focal point persons, provide prompt feedback regarding payment of awards, simplify verification processes to enable complainants to provide their particulars on time, and an effective mode of communication be adopted to ensure that all complainants turn up for verification.

Table 32: Status of payment of Tribunal awards per respondent in 2025.

RESPONDENT	PAID	OUTSTANDING
UPDF	UGX 378,095,000	UGX 160,000,000
UPF	Information not availed	
UPS	Files not forwarded by the Ministry of Justice for payment	

Source: UHRC

9.15 CHALLENGES

(a) Delays in disposal of cases at the investigation stage Investigations are often delayed due to inadequate resources, particularly the limited availability of motor vehicles needed to conduct field inquiries and follow-ups.

(b) Delays in hearing complaints As a result of the case **backlog**, tracing complainants and witnesses is difficult, which can affect the quality of evidence and the overall resolution of cases.

(c) Predominantly manual complaints management system The current reliance on a manual complaints management system slows down the process of tracking and following up on cases, leading to inefficiencies and potential loss of information.

9.16 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Commission should scale up the full automation of the complaints management system to improve efficiency in case registration, tracking, and follow-up. This will reduce reliance on manual processes and enhance the timely handling of complaints.
2. A structured archiving system should be established for files of cases that have been concluded. This will improve record management, facilitate easy retrieval of information when needed and ensure proper preservation of institutional records.
3. The Commission should intensify public awareness campaigns to educate the public about the admissibility criteria for complaints handled by the Commission. This will help reduce the number of inadmissible complaints and enable the institution to focus on matters within its mandate.

10

Highlights of UHRC Interventions on Monitoring Human Rights



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Behind prison walls and police cell doors, human rights do not disappear. The UHRC's monitoring mandate exists to ensure that those deprived of their liberty can still retain their dignity.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

The UHRC is constitutionally mandated to monitor GOU's compliance with international treaties and conventions on human rights and to recommend effective measures to Parliament for the promotion of human rights under Article 52 (1) (d) and (h) of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda. As a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI), the UHRC plays a critical role in ensuring that Uganda fulfils its commitments under international human rights treaties, thereby fostering a culture of accountability and respect for human dignity. This mandate is operationalised through the Directorate of Monitoring and Inspections and its sub-units: the Vulnerable Persons Unit, the Right to Health Unit, and the Human Rights Defenders Desk.

Human rights monitoring refers to the systematic collection, verification, and immediate utilisation of information to address human rights concerns. This includes documenting incidents, observing events (such as elections, trials, and public demonstrations), visiting detention facilities and refugee camps, engaging government authorities to obtain information and remedies, and conducting follow-up activities. Monitoring encompasses both evaluative exercises and first-hand fact-gathering in the field. It also has a temporal dimension, often spanning extended

periods to ensure accurate and comprehensive reporting.

Human rights monitoring serves as a mechanism to assess how effectively a country respects, protects, and promotes the rights of its people. Unlike other forms of research, it specifically focuses on the observation of rights protection over time. The collected information is then used to:

- (a) Advocate and sensitise stakeholders.
- (b) Prevent human rights violations.
- (c) Establish factual records.
- (d) Inform legal and policy reforms.
- (e) Promote institutional reforms and accountability.

10.2 MONITORING PLACES OF DETENTION

The right to liberty and freedom of movement is a fundamental human right, though it is not absolute.²³¹ States may lawfully deprive individuals of their liberty through arrest or detention, provided that such measures are based on reasons and procedures clearly prescribed by law.²³² International law strictly prohibits arbitrary arrest or detention.²³³ Consequently, persons deprived of their liberty are particularly vulnerable and face an

²³¹ UDHR, Article 3; ICCPR, Article 9(1).

²³² ICCPR, Article 9 (1)-(2).

²³³ UDHR, Article 9; ICCPR, Article 9 (1).

increased risk of human rights violations.²³⁴ In this regard, the detaining authority bears responsibility for their security and wellbeing and must ensure that conditions of detention respect human rights and human dignity.²³⁵

Monitoring detention conditions is therefore an essential component of the protection framework for persons deprived of their liberty. In this regard, and pursuant to its constitutional mandate under Article 52 (1) (b), the UHRC continued to monitor the human rights situation in various places of detention in order to assess the conditions of suspects and inmates. These monitoring and inspection activities also served to evaluate GOU's compliance with applicable national, regional, and international human rights standards relating to persons deprived of liberty, as discussed in this chapter.²³⁶

10.3 LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

10.3.1 International Legal Framework

At the international level, Uganda is a party to a number of international instruments that provide for the treatment of detainees and promote the rights of persons deprived of their liberty.²³⁷ These include the ICCPR,²³⁸ UN CAT,²³⁹ the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules),²⁴⁰ and the Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment.²⁴¹

Collectively, these instruments establish international standards for the protection of the rights of detainees.

10.3.2 Regional Legal Framework

At the African regional level, the ACHPR guarantees the rights of detainees in more or less the same manner as the international instruments.²⁴² The African system also imposes obligations on States to extend special protection to women and children in places of detention, consistent with the Protocols to the ACHPR on the Rights of Women, and the ACRWC, respectively. Equally important are the Robben Island Guidelines²⁴³ which provide for the prohibition and prevention of torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in Africa.

10.3.3 National Legal Framework

At the national level, the 1995 Constitution guarantees respect for human dignity and protection from torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including for persons held in places of detention.²⁴⁴ The Constitution further safeguards the rights of persons deprived of their personal liberty and prescribes the circumstances under which personal liberty may lawfully be restricted.²⁴⁵ In addition to the Constitution, guarantees relating to the rights of detainees are provided for in other legislation, including the Uganda Police Force Act (Cap. 303),²⁴⁶ the Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces Act, 2005 (Cap. 307),²⁴⁷ the Uganda Prisons Act,

234 Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 35 (2014) on liberty and security of person, para. 3.

235 ICCPR, Article 10 (1); United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), Rules 1 and 24.

236 ICCPR, Articles 7 and 10; ACHPR, Article 5; United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), Rule 83.

237 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995, as amended), Article 287.

238 ICCPR, adopted 16 December 1966, Articles 7, 9 and 10.

239 CAT, adopted 10 December 1984, Articles 2, 11 and 16.

240 United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), UN General Assembly Resolution 70/175 (2015).

241 Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment, UN General Assembly Resolution 43/173 (1988).

242 Articles 3-7 of the ACHPR.

243 The Guidelines and Measures for the Prohibition and Prevention of Torture, Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

244 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995, as amended), Articles 20 and 24.

245 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995, as amended), Article 23.

246 Uganda Police Force Act, Cap. 303, particularly sections relating to arrest, detention and treatment of suspects.

247 Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces Act, 2005, Cap. 307, provisions on military detention and discipline.

2006,²⁴⁸ the Penal Code Act (Cap. 121),²⁴⁹ the Trial on Indictments Act (Cap. 23),²⁵⁰ and the Children's Act (Cap. 59),²⁵¹ among others. Collectively, these laws not only protect the rights of detainees but also regulate the management, treatment and care of inmates in places of detention.

10.4 PLACES OF DETENTION INSPECTED BY UHRC IN 2025

In 2025, the UHRC conducted **1,065** inspection visits to places of detention, which included **266** Police stations, **684** Police posts, **139** Government prisons, **9** remand homes and rehabilitation centres, and **07** military detention facilities. The Table below shows the total number of detention facilities inspected by the UHRC in 2025.

Table 33: Detention facilities inspected by the UHRC in 2025

LOCATION	PRISONS	POLICE STATIONS	POLICE POSTS	MILITARY DETENTION	REMAND HOMES AND REHABILITATION CENTRE	TOTAL
Arua	10	67	10	-	1	88
Kampala	51	74	22	-	2	149
Fort Portal	9	33	16	-	1	59
Gulu	27	77	16	-	1	121
Hoima	23	83	04	-	02	112
Jinja	18	40	13	-	-	71
Kabale	09	46	10	-	01	66
Lira	17	73	14	-	-	104
Masaka	25	59	09	-	-	93
Mbarara	13	41	01	-	-	55
Moroto	07	43	13	06	-	69
Soroti	17	48	11	1	01	78
TOTAL	266	684	139	07	09	1,065

Source: UHRC

10.5 HIGHLIGHTS OF KEY FINDINGS IN PLACES OF DETENTION INSPECTED IN 2025

During its inspections, the UHRC noted encouraging progress in some areas, while observing that several human rights issues continued to require attention. The findings below reflect the UHRC's observations in the places of detention inspected during the year.

10.5.1 Release of Persons Pending Ministerial Orders

The Commission commends GOU for acting on its previous recommendations to release persons with mental illness who were detained pending ministerial orders; by December 2025, UPS had only one person pending such orders at Upper Prison, Luzira. In past annual reports, UHRC consistently highlighted the **continued detention of mentally ill inmates awaiting ministerial decisions** as a serious human rights concern and called on authorities to urgently

²⁴⁸ Uganda Prisons Act, 2006, sections on the administration, welfare and treatment of prisoners.

²⁴⁹ Penal Code Act, Cap. 121.

²⁵⁰ Trial on Indictments Act, Cap. 23

²⁵¹ Children's Act, Cap. 59, especially provisions on the detention and protection of children in conflict with the law.

address prolonged remand for this group. For example, earlier reports noted that dozens of mentally ill detainees were being held in prisons without timely ministerial orders, contributing to prison overcrowding and denial of dignity and appropriate care. The Commission has repeatedly

urged that suspects with mental illness be referred for proper assessment and treatment and that prolonged detention pending ministerial orders be eliminated to uphold detainees' rights and wellbeing.



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10.5.2 Registration and Records Management

Well-maintained records containing the information necessary for safeguarding detainees' rights are essential for the effective management of places of detention. Proper official registration also plays a critical role in ensuring transparency and protecting the rights of those deprived of their liberty.

During its inspections of **1,065** places of detention, the UHRC found that the majority of facilities maintained registers that were regularly updated and actively used. A few isolated exceptions were observed, predominantly in Police posts, where registers had not been consistently updated. The registers examined included lock-up registers, station diaries, admission and release registers,

property registers, transfer registers, gate registers, exhibits registers, as well as medical registers and records of medical treatment.

The presence of these registers demonstrates that most detainees had a documented admission trail, an inventory of personal property, and records relating to their judicial processes. Nevertheless, the UHRC noted concerns regarding the storage and maintenance of records in instances where registers had become full, which could pose risks to the integrity and accessibility of detainees' information.

10.5.3 Separation of Categories of Detainees

Human rights standards require that different categories of detainees be held separately, taking into account factors such as sex, age, criminal

record, and the reason for detention.²⁵² Under the law, women must be held apart from men, minors from adults, and untried detainees from those who have been convicted.²⁵³ Migrants detained solely on account of their migration status should likewise be separated from convicted persons and accommodated in conditions as distinct as possible from a prison regime.²⁵⁴

The primary purpose of such separation is to safeguard the protection and safety of those deprived of liberty and to facilitate the effective management of detention facilities.²⁵⁵ It also upholds the presumption of innocence for untried detainees and ensures that each category of detainee is provided with conditions appropriate to their status.²⁵⁶ The following section outlines the UHRC's observations regarding the implementation of detainee categorisation.

a. Separation of female from male cells

In all **1,065** places of detention inspected, the UHRC observed that female inmates were held in separate cells from male detainees. This practice aligns with the standard requiring, wherever possible, that men and women be detained in distinct facilities.²⁵⁷ The separation of women from men in prison cells is grounded in human rights principles, particularly the rights to dignity, personal security, and protection from physical or psychological harm.²⁵⁸ International human rights frameworks underscore the importance of this separation, highlighting the need to safeguard both the physical and mental wellbeing of female prisoners.²⁵⁹

b. Juveniles detained with adult offenders

Article 40 of the CRC provides that juveniles accused of violating the law should be treated in a manner that promotes their reintegration into society and mandates their separation from adults in detention or prison settings.²⁶⁰ Such separation is crucial to shield juveniles from harmful influences that could impede their development and compromise the objectives of rehabilitation.

Juveniles are legally and internationally required to be held separately from adults while in detention. During its inspections, the UHRC identified instances where juveniles were detained alongside adult offenders. These cases were primarily observed in Police stations, including Kyegegwa Police Station and Bundibugyo Police Station, Kitgum CPS, Butalango Police Station CPS Koboko Kyegegwa Police Station, Kakabara Police Station, Sembabule Central Police Station, Kotido CPS, Kaabong Central Police Station Rukungiri Central Police Station, Kanungu Central Police station, Kisoro Central Police station, Apac Central Police Station, Ogur CPS, Kole CPS, and Lira City West CPS. Among others. The practice of detaining juveniles with adults was largely attributed to the absence of dedicated juvenile cells in Police facilities and the continued failure to accurately ascertain the ages of suspects.

c. Remand and convicted inmates

Prisoners on remand are legally required to be held separately from convicted prisoners.²⁶¹ In 2025, the UHRC observed that, in all facilities inspected, remand prisoners were sharing cells with convicted inmates, contrary to section 66 of the Prisons Act 2006, which mandates the separation of these two categories.

252 UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules), Rule 8.

253 Constitution of [Country], relevant provisions on detention; Penal Code or Juvenile Justice Act provisions on separation of detainees.

254 UNHCR Detention Guidelines, Guideline 8; ICCPR, Article 10.

255 Nelson Mandela Rules, Rule 63; UN Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners, Principle 5.

256 ICCPR, Article 14(2); Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 32 (2007) on Article 14.

257 UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules), Rule 8.

258 CEDAW, Article 11; UN Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners, Principle 5.

259 Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 21 (1979) on humane treatment of prisoners; UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (Bangkok Rules), Rules 2–4.

260 CRC, Article 40 (3) (b)–(c); CRC, General Comment No. 24 (2019) on children's rights in the justice system.

261 Prisons Act 2006, Section 66; Nelson Mandela Rules, Rule 8.

Human rights standards require that convicted prisoners and pre-trial detainees be kept apart to ensure fair treatment and to uphold the presumption of innocence for those awaiting trial.²⁶² Pre-trial detainees should be treated as individuals who have not yet been proven guilty and must not be subjected to conditions that could be considered punitive prior to trial. Rule 8 of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules) explicitly states that pre-trial detainees must be kept separate from convicted prisoners to prevent undue punishment and protect their rights.²⁶³ Rule 11 further emphasises that pre-trial detainees should not be subjected to solitary confinement or harsh conditions solely on the basis that they have not been convicted.²⁶⁴ Article 10 of the ICCPR similarly underscores that all persons deprived of their liberty should be treated humanely, and that pre-trial detainees.²⁶⁵

d. Civil debtors

Article 11 of the ICCPR, to which Uganda is a State Party, prohibits the imprisonment of individuals solely for failure to fulfil contractual obligations.²⁶⁶ During inspections, the UHRC noted that the requirement to separate civil debtors from inmates detained on criminal charges was generally not observed. In practice, detainees were primarily segregated based on gender due to limited space. International human rights instruments strongly prohibit imprisonment for civil debt, focusing on the prevention of arbitrary detention and the protection of fair and equitable legal processes.²⁶⁷ Alternative measures, such as repayment plans, mediation, or other non-custodial mechanisms, are encouraged, while incarceration should be limited to cases involving serious fraudulent conduct or wilful evasion of lawful obligations.²⁶⁸

Table 34: Some of the detention facilities with civil debtors

REGIONAL OFFICE	DISTRICT	NAME OF THE PRISON
Fort Portal	Kabarole	UG Prison Katojo
	Kasese	Mubuku Prison Farm
Kampala	Kampala	Kampala Remand Prison, Luzira Upper Prison, Murchison Bay Prison
Lira	Amolatar	Amolatar Government Prison
	Apac	Maruzi Government Farm Prison, Arocha Government Farm Prison, Arocha Government Farm Prison
	Amolatar	Atopi Government Prison
	Oyam	Loro Government Farm Prison, Aber Government Prison, Oyam Male Government Prison – Anyeke, Oyam Female Government Prison – Anyeke
	Otuke	Uganda Government Prison Otuke
		Uganda Government Prison Awei
	Alebtong	Uganda Government Prison Alebtong
	Dokolo	Uganda Government Prison Dokolo (Koroto Farm)
	Kole	Uganda Government Prison Kole

262 ICCPR, Article 10; Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 21 (1979) on humane treatment of detainees.

263 UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules), Rule 8.

264 Nelson Mandela Rules, Rule 11.

265 ICCPR, Article 10; UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 24 (2019) regarding humane treatment of pre-trial detainees.

266 ICCPR, Article 11; Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 35 (2014) on liberty and security of person.

267 UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment No. 8 (1982) on the right to liberty and security; Nelson Mandela Rules, Rule 3.

268 UN Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners, Principles 6–8; UN Standard Minimum Rules for Non-Custodial Measures (Tokyo Rules), Rule 3.

REGIONAL OFFICE	DISTRICT	NAME OF THE PRISON
	Lira	Uganda Government Prison Lira Male, Uganda Government Prison Lira Female, Uganda Government Prison Erute
	Kwania	Uganda Government Prison Kwania
Mbarara	Ibanda	Uganda Government Prison Nyabuhikye, Uganda Government Prison Kiburara
	Isingiro	Uganda Government Prison Isingiro
	Ntungamo	Uganda Government Prison Ntungamo
	Mbarara	Uganda Government Prison Mbarara Main (Male Section), Uganda Government Prison Mbarara (Female Section), Uganda Government Prison Kakiika
	Sheema	Uganda Government Prison Sheema
	Bushenyi	Uganda Government Prison Bushenyi (Male Section) Uganda Government Prison Bushenyi (Female Section)
	Buhweju	Uganda Government Prison Buhweju
	Rubirizi	Uganda Government Prison Rubirizi
Kabale	Kabale	Ndorwa Government Prison
	Rukungiri	Rukungiri Government Prison
	Kanungu	Kanungu Government Prison
Soroti	Mbale	Government Prisons Mbale Main
	Sironko	Uganda Government Prisons Mutufu
	Kapchorwa	Uganda Government Prisons Kapchorwa
Hoima	Kagadi	Uganda Government Prison, Kagadi
	Kiboga	Uganda Government Prison Kiboga
Gulu	Adjumani	Openzizi Prison, Uganda Prisons Farm Olia
	Agago	Patongo Prison
	Nwoya	Nwoya Prison
	Gulu	Uganda Government Prison, Gulu Main
	Kitgum	Kitgum Prison
	Amuru	Amuru Prison, Uganda Government Prison

Source: UHRC



A delegation from UHRC, the Regional Prisons Commander Mid North Region (SSP Kumakech Godfrey) and the Acting Deputy Officer in Charge during the debrief meeting at Uganda Government Prisons, Lira Main. © UHRC

Other examples include the following.

Table 35: Prisons with civil debtors

PRISON NAME	CATEGORY
Ndorwa Government Prison	Government Prison
Rukungiri Government Prison	Government Prison
Uganda Government Prison, Bushenyi (male section)	Government Prison
Kanungu Government Prison	Government Prison
Uganda Government Prison, Mbale Main	Government Prison
Uganda Government Prison, Mutufu	Government Prison
Uganda Government Prison, Kapchorwa	Government Prison
Uganda Government Prison, Kagadi	Government Prison
Uganda Government Prison, Hoima	Government Prison
Mubuku Prison Farm	Prison Farm
Uganda Government Prison, Kiboga	Government Prison
Uganda Government Prison, Kasangati	Government Prison
Openzizi Prison	Government Prison
Uganda Prisons Farm Olia	Prison Farm
Patongo Prison	Government Prison
Nwoya Prison	Government Prison
Amuru Prison	Government Prison
Uganda Government Prison, Gulu Main	Government Prison
Kitgum Prison	Government Prison

Source: UHRC

e. Mothers incarcerated with their children

Mothers incarcerated with their children are entitled to have their physical, emotional, social, and psychological needs adequately provided for by the authorities.²⁶⁹ During inspections, the UHRC observed that some children incarcerated with their mothers were between one month and three years old, exceeding in certain cases the statutory age limit of 18 months. Prisons where such incidences were noted included Openzizi Prison, Uganda Government Prison, Nwoya, Kitgum Prison, Patongo Female Prison, Pader/Kineni Prison, and Uganda Prison Farm Olia, Oyam Female Prison, Oyam CPS, Lira Female Prison, Otuke Prison, and Alebtong Prison, Uganda Government Prison Nyabuhikye, Uganda Government Prison Ntungamo, and Uganda Government Prison Bushenyi, Rukungiri Government Prison, Kanungu Government Prison,

Ndorwa Women Prison, and Rubanda Government Prison, Uganda Government Prison, Mbale Women, Serere Prison, Mbale Remand Home, Uganda Government Prison, Kaberamaido. Others included Nakapiripirit CPS, Kotido Prison, Masaka Women's Prison, Sembabule Main Prison, Uganda Government Prison, Hoima, Buyende Prison, Kiyunga Prison, Iganga Prison, Masafu Prison, and Tororo Women's Prison, among others.

In most cases, toddlers and infants were considered too young to be separated from their mothers. The UHRC was informed that the primary reason for allowing children to remain with their mothers was the absence of willing or available relatives to provide alternative care while the mothers were in detention.

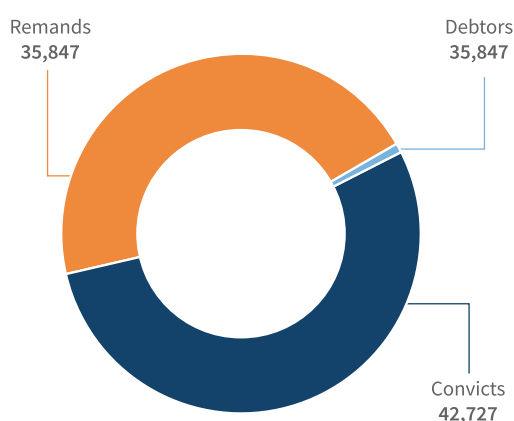
The United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures

²⁶⁹ UN Bangkok Rules, Rule 62; UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Articles 3, 18, and 27.

for Women Offenders (Bangkok Rules) underscore that, wherever possible, non-custodial measures should be prioritised for mothers of young children to avoid incarceration.²⁷⁰ When imprisonment is unavoidable, authorities should facilitate arrangements for mothers to remain with their children in conditions that ensure their safety, health, and overall development. Children may remain with their mothers in detention facilities until an age appropriate for separation, often up to six years, but only in environments that provide adequate care, including child-friendly spaces, nutrition, healthcare, and access to education and developmental activities.²⁷¹

10.5.4 Prolonged Pre-trial Detention

Figure 27: Prison Population in Uganda at 31 December 2025.²⁷²



Source: UPS

Pre-trial detainees are persons awaiting trial or the finalisation of their trial, who have not been convicted of the charges against them. They are legally presumed innocent, which is a criminal justice system principle based on the rule of law and individual liberty. International standards require that pre-trial detention should only be used if there are reasonable grounds to believe that the person concerned has been involved in the commission of the alleged offence, and there is a demonstrable risk that the person concerned

will abscond, interfere with the course of justice, or commit a serious offence. International standards also mandate the widest possible use of alternatives to pre-trial detention.

The Commission identified several causes of prolonged pretrial detention in the justice system. One major factor is the lack of a Legal Aid Law, which limits access to legal representation for accused persons who cannot afford a lawyer. Similarly, the absence of a Witness Protection



DPP and UHRC officials from the meeting organised by the Human Rights Committee of Parliament to discuss issues of prolonged pretrial detention and rights of inmates. © UHRC

Law discourages witnesses from coming forward, slowing down investigations and delaying trials. Another contributing factor is the inadequate number of judicial officials, which creates backlogs in courts and extends the time accused persons spend in detention.

Other systemic challenges include delayed investigations and corruption within the formal justice system, which can cause cases to stagnate. The Commission also noted delays by courts in sanctioning files and the problem of misplaced or missing files, both of which further slow down the trial process. Prolonged detention also affects petty offenders and civil debtors, many of whom are held unnecessarily for minor matters. Additionally, recidivism and repeated detention

²⁷⁰ UN Bangkok Rules, Rule 64.

²⁷¹ As above.

²⁷² UPS Monthly statistical abstract for December 2025.

of the same individuals exacerbate congestion in detention facilities, while delays in the mentioning of cases in court contribute to extended pre-trial detention. Overall, the causes of prolonged pre-trial detention are multifaceted, combining legislative gaps, administrative inefficiencies, and systemic corruption, all of which result in unnecessary delays and overcrowding in detention facilities.

In response to the findings of the UHRC regarding prolonged pre-trial detention and other challenges affecting detainees' rights, Parliament, specifically the Human Rights Committee and key justice institutions, including the Judiciary, the ODPP, and the MOJCA, engaged in consultations to discuss these issues. Following these discussions, the respective institutions reported on the strategies and reforms they have implemented to address procedural inefficiencies, enhance case management, and promote alternatives to unnecessary custodial detention.

In response to these challenges, the ODPP implemented several strategies in 2025 aimed at reducing prolonged pretrial detention. One key initiative is participation in plea bargaining, which encourages early case resolution without lengthy trials, thereby ensuring that accused persons spend less time in detention. Another important measure is prosecution-guided investigations, an integrated strategy where prosecutors coordinate closely with investigators to ensure evidence is collected efficiently, and cases are prepared promptly for court. The ODPP also conducts weeding out of cases, a continuous review that withdraws weak or undeserving cases before trial, leaving only strong, prosecutable cases in court. Additionally, the ODPP has implemented an Anti-Corruption Strategy to prevent, detect, and punish corruption within the office, ensuring that unethical practices do not cause unnecessary delays in case management.

The Judiciary has also taken significant steps to improve efficiency and reduce pretrial detention. The Judiciary Anti-Corruption Strategy addresses systemic corruption that can otherwise slow down court proceedings. Automation of court processes through systems like Electronic Case and Court Management Information System (ECCMIS) has improved tracking of court files and electronic management of case progress, reducing delays caused by misplacement or slow file handling. The Judiciary has also reorganised registries and archives and improved the use of file movement books, ensuring that the whereabouts of case files can be easily traced and administrative delays minimized.

In addition to these efficiency measures, the Judiciary has promoted alternatives to custodial sentences. Non-custodial measures, such as community service, fines, and cautions, are now available for petty offenders, preventing unnecessary detention. Moreover, the promotion of alternative dispute resolution and reconciliation, as provided under Article 126 of the Constitution, encourages mediation and settlement outside formal trials. These mechanisms allow minor disputes to be resolved quickly, reducing the burden on courts and preventing prolonged pretrial detention for minor offences.

Overall, in 2025, the ODPP and the Judiciary adopted a combination of efficient case management, technological innovation, anti-corruption measures, and non-custodial options. By addressing both procedural and systemic challenges, these strategies have significantly reduced the number of individuals held in detention before trial and contributed to a fairer, faster, and more effective justice system.

The UHRC organised a high-level meeting to present its findings and facilitate dialogue among stakeholders, focusing on the protection of the rights of detainees and measures to reduce prolonged pre-trial detention.



Chairperson of UHRC, Hon. Mariam Wangadya and other officials at the high-level meeting to discuss the rights of detainees.
© UHRC

10.5.5 Overcrowding

The UHRC noted that prison overcrowding has remained a challenge, with some prisons housing twice or up to three times their designed capacities, with the male inmates most affected. It is a requirement that detention accommodation should provide adequate cubic content of air, floor space, lighting, heating and ventilation. However, this is not always attained. The UHRC noted that while UPS has an accommodation capacity of 23,184 prisoners, it has a population of around 79,311 inmates. The UHRC is concerned that overcrowding greatly impacts prisoners' health and safety and also increases their risk of being subjected to acts of physical torture by fellow inmates, as well as disease.

At Nakifuma Prison, the inmates complained of the limited space in the wards. The nickname 'Kigaali' was used by inmates to describe the overcrowded sleeping conditions, revealing the intensity of their experience, likening their cramped reality to bustling congestion.

“

There are too many of us and too little space, so we lie on our sides, pressed against each other like cargo. You cannot stretch your legs. You cannot turn freely. When one person shifts, everyone wakes up. The air is heavy, hot, and smells of sweat. Some inmates sit the whole night because there is simply no room to lie down. By morning, our backs ache, our bodies are numb, and our eyes are swollen from lack of rest. That is why we call it 'Kigaali.'" - One of the inmates.

Overcrowding in detention facilities was largely attributed to the limited size of the cells, which could not accommodate the growing number of detainees. Contributing to this problem were delays by prosecutors in sanctioning files and the absence of magistrates from their duty stations, both of which slowed the judicial process and extended the time accused persons spent in detention. These factors compounded existing challenges, such as administrative inefficiencies and systemic delays, leading to congested detention facilities and prolonged pre-trial detention.

Table 36: Prison overcrowding

CATEGORY	GENDER		TOTAL
	MALE	FEMALE	
Convicts	40,800	1,927	42,727
Remands	34,126	1,721	35,847
Debtors	508	229	737
Total	75,434	3,877	79,311
Percentage	95.1%	4.9%	100.0%
Holding capacity			23,184
Occupancy			342.1

Source: UHRC

10.5.6 Accommodation of Inmates

The UHRC noted that efforts were being made to renovate or construct new facilities. However, despite these efforts, the infrastructure in many facilities largely remained the same. Below are the findings regarding accommodation in places of detention.

a) Ventilation and lighting

International human rights standards set out certain minimum conditions for prison environments to ensure the health and dignity of prisoners. Both ventilation and lighting are key aspects of these standards, which are designed to protect inmates from inhumane or degrading treatment. In terms of ventilation, the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules) State that prisoners should have access to fresh air, and all cells should be adequately ventilated. Poor ventilation can contribute to the spread of disease, respiratory problems, and general physical discomfort. Therefore, it's essential that cells are designed in a way that allows for constant air flow. Where possible, natural ventilation through windows or open spaces is preferred to mechanical ventilation systems. The aim is to maintain air quality and prevent overcrowding from impairing airflow.



The UHRC inspection team at Rubaya Police Station; the male cell has no ventilation. © UHRC

Cells should receive natural light for part of the day to maintain the physical and mental wellbeing of prisoners. The Nelson Mandela Rules also emphasise that prisoners should have access to natural light for a significant portion of each day. Where natural light is insufficient, adequate artificial lighting should be provided. This is important for visibility, reading, and basic activities, especially in the absence of daylight. The UHRC noted that lighting in prisons and Police cells still remained a challenge, particularly in Police facilities inspected.

(b) Old and dilapidated buildings

The UHRC found that numerous Police stations and posts across the country are in a state of disrepair, characterised by old, derelict, and dilapidated buildings.

Table 37: Dilapidated Police facilities in Uganda

CATEGORY	FACILITY NAME	REASON
Police Stations	Gulu CPS, Mbalala, Buikwe Central, Nyenga, Mubende Central, Kiriri, Maddu, Kanoni, Kabulasoke, Kigezi, Kifampa, Mpenja, Myanzi, Kasanda, Bukuya, Kiganda, Kagugube, Bukomero, Lwamatta, Kilangira, Petete Police Station, Kasambya Sub County Police Station, Masindi Port Police Station, Kijunjubwa Town Council Police Station, Kyatiri Town Council Police Station, Pakanyi Sub County Police Station, Labongo Sub County Police Station, Nyangahya, Masindi Police Station, Kikonda, Kyenda, Kigando Police Station	Ageing and deteriorating structures
Prisons	Openzi Prison (Adjumani), Uganda Prison Farm Olia (Adjumani), Uganda Government Prisons Kaladima, Uganda Government Prisons Amuru, Uganda Government Prison Farm Logore, Gulu Main Prison, Kitgum Government Prison, Kitgum CPS, Patongo Prison Farm, Tororo Government Prison, Uganda Government Prisons Bukomero, Uganda Government Prisons Kiboga, Uganda Government Prisons Ntwetwe, Uganda Government Prisons Nakasongola (Male & Female), Uganda Government Prisons Magala, Uganda Government Prisons Mwera, Uganda Government Prisons Buwambo, Uganda Government Prisons Sentema, Uganda Government Prisons Kasangati, Uganda Government Prison Buseruka, Uganda Government Prison Hoima, Uganda Government Prison Buliisa, Uganda Government Prison Biiso	Old and dilapidated structures (staff housing and inmate wards)

Source: UHRC

Some prison facilities, including Uganda Government Prisons Buseruka and Hoima, were also associated with deteriorating structures. Further stations found in poor condition include Kihungya, Bugana, Walukuba, Pachwa, Isunga Town Council, Bugambe, and Kyarusheesha Police Stations, as well as Uganda Government Prison Buliisa and Biiso.

In the Karamoja and Sebei Sub-Regions, several Police stations and posts were found to have dilapidated buildings. These include Tokora Police Station, Namalu Police Station (CFPU building), Kiru Police Post, Lotuke, Karita, Kanair, Losilang, Rengen, Panyangara, Kamion, and Sidok Kopoth Police Post, as well as Amudat CPS and Moroto CPS. Namalu Police Station's CFPU unit was housed in an old and dilapidated building. Tokora Police Station had a run-down structure serving both as offices and staff accommodation, alongside an old uniport partitioned to hold female suspects. Sidok Kopoth Police Post was operating from a former Sidok HC III building that had been converted into offices and cells despite its poor condition. Kamion Police Station had dilapidated uniports with worn-out verandas and floors. Amudat CPS occupied a former ASTU building constructed in 2005, while Karita Police Station, built in 2013, and Kanair Police Station and Losilang Zonal Headquarters were already showing signs of ageing.

Some facilities were found to be old but not yet dilapidated at the time of the UHRC visit. These included Nakapiripirit CPS, Uganda Prison Namalu, Mourita Police Station, Kakomongole ASTU Headquarters, 407 Brigade Mourita, Kabong CPS, Lolelia Police Post, Lobalangit Police Station, Kotido Government Prison, and Kopoth Sidok Police Post. Kabong CPS, constructed in 2006, and Lobalangit Police Station, built around 2009, were considered structurally old but still functional, while Lolelia Police Post was similarly old but not dilapidated.

Beyond general structural decay, several Police stations were identified as having weak and unsecured cells, significantly increasing the risk of suspect escapes. These include Wol Police Station (Agago), Angagura Police Station (Pader), Lokung Police Station, Padibe West Police Post, Elegu, Atiak, Kaladima, Amuru, Purongo, Koch Goma, Koch Li, Ongako, Lakwana, Odek, and Palaro. The weaknesses included old uniports with fragile doors and windows and, in some cases, damaged roofing.

Other facilities of grave concern include washrooms and toilets; in one location, mosquito nets and tarpaulin were assembled together to improvise a shelter for bathing, which is deplorable given the fact that the floors are not cemented, leaving suspects prone to contracting diseases.



UHRC staff inspecting a male cell with weak doors and windows at Wol Police Station in Agago. © UHRC



A toilet facility at Padibe West Police Post with one door missing, infringing on privacy. © UHRC

Kako Police Station was reported to have a building on the verge of collapse, exposed live electrical wires in male and juvenile cells, and rooms that flood during rainfall. Kalungu Central Police Station, constructed in 1957, was found to be in a failing state, with asbestos-containing materials that pose serious health risks.

Table 38: Deteriorating Prison facilities

FACILITY NAME	TYPE	REASON FOR DETERIORATION
Openzizi Prison, Adjumani	Prison	Old staff buildings
Uganda Prison Farm Olia, Adjumani	Prison Farm	Three old wards and seven uniports fitted with waterborne toilets
Uganda Government Prisons, Kaladima	Prison	Ageing infrastructure
Uganda Government Prisons, Amuru	Prison	Ageing infrastructure
Uganda Government Prison Farm, Logore	Prison Farm	Ageing infrastructure
Gulu Main Prison	Prison	Ageing inmate wards and staff housing
Kitgum Government Prison	Prison	Ageing infrastructure
Kitgum CPS	Prison	Deteriorating structures
Patongo Prison Farm	Prison Farm	Ageing infrastructure
Tororo Government Prison	Prison	Dilapidated staff housing
Uganda Government Prisons, Bukomero	Prison	Deteriorating structures
Uganda Government Prisons, Kiboga	Prison	Deteriorating structures
Uganda Government Prisons, Ntwetwe	Prison	Deteriorating structures
Uganda Government Prisons, Nakasongola (Male & Female)	Prison	Deteriorating structures
Uganda Government Prisons, Magala	Prison	Deteriorating structures
Uganda Government Prisons, Mwera	Prison	Deteriorating structures
Uganda Government Prisons, Buwambo	Prison	Deteriorating structures
Uganda Government Prisons, Sentema	Prison	Deteriorating structures
Uganda Government Prisons, Kasangati	Prison	Deteriorating structures

Source: UHRC

c) Newly constructed and renovated facilities

Despite persistent overcrowding, the UHRC commended the UPS and the UPF for efforts to improve detainee accommodation and facility conditions in 2025. Several detention facilities received newly constructed or renovated buildings, including offices, cells, stores, staff houses, and inmate wards. For example, Namung'alwe Prison completed a gate lodge and bathroom in 2024, Masafu Prison added new male and female wards, and Buyende Prison was constructing staff accommodation. Other prisons with new

structures included Yumbe Government Prison, Hoima Government Prison, Kagadi Government Prison, and Masaka Women's Prison, which gained a new ward. Inmates were often actively involved in these construction projects, helping to alleviate overcrowding while acquiring practical building skills useful for reintegration after release. Additionally, new wards were under construction at Rwimi and Rukoki Prisons, and Amolatar Prison was nearing completion of a permanent female ward with a water-borne toilet system, greatly improving the welfare of female inmates.



Newly erected uniports at Maziba Police Station. © UHRC

Table 39: Prisons with new developments

FACILITY NAME	NEW DEVELOPMENT
Angagura Police Station	New pit latrine and bathroom constructed
Kiryandongo Police Station	Improved facilities
Diika Police Post	Improved facilities
Panyadoli Police Station	Improved facilities
Panyadoli Hills Police Station	Improved facilities
Karuma Police Station	Improved facilities
Masindi Main Police Station	Improved facilities
Kichwabugingo Sub County Police Station	Improved facilities
Kitoba Main Police Station	Improved facilities
Buseruka Police Station	Improved facilities
Masodde Kalaggi Town Council Police Station	Improved facilities
Buliisa Main Police Station	Improved facilities
Kagadi Main Police Station	Improved facilities
Kikuube Main Police Station	Improved facilities

Source: UHRC

Similar developments were observed at Kiryandongo Government Prison and Masindi Government Prison, enhancing both staff and detainee accommodation.

In Kasese District, significant progress was achieved with the renovation of Kitwamba and Maliba Town Council Police Stations, with Kitwamba constructed using approximately 90% community-contributed resources. Police

stations that previously operated from rented premises, such as Nyahuka and Busunga, were relocated to the respective Town Council offices. Ntoroko Police Station, supported by the Justice and Law Sector (JLOS), opened a new facility in October 2024 with spacious offices and separate cells for juveniles and nursing mothers, reflecting improved collaboration between law enforcement and local authorities.

Table 40: Police stations and posts with newly constructed facilities.

FACILITY NAME	NEW DEVELOPMENT
Budaka Central Police Station (CPS)	Newly constructed facility
Bukungu Police Station	Newly constructed facility
Adjumani Central Police Station (CPS)	Newly constructed facility
Acherer Police / ASTU Post	Newly constructed facility
Loregae Police Station	Newly constructed facility
Namalu Police Station	Newly constructed facility
Abim Central Police Station (CPS)	Newly constructed facility
Nyakwae Police Station	Newly constructed facility
Kanu Police Station	Newly constructed facility
Morulem Police Station	Newly constructed facility
Adea Police Station	Newly constructed facility
Awach Police Station	Newly constructed facility
Lemsui Police Post	Newly constructed facility
Katabok Police Post	Newly constructed facility
Chepkwararat Police Post	Newly constructed facility
Loroo Police Station	Newly constructed facility
Tokora Police Post	Newly constructed facility
Lorengedwat Police Station	Newly constructed facility
Lokori Police Post	Newly constructed facility
Kathile Police Post	Newly constructed facility
Loyoro ASTU Police Post	Newly constructed facility
Iriiri Police Station	Newly constructed facility
Apeitolim Police Station	Newly constructed facility
Rupa Police Station	Newly constructed facility
Matany Police Post	Newly constructed facility
Tapac Police Station	Newly constructed facility
Kosiroi Police Station	Newly constructed facility
Nakapiripirit Government Prison	Newly constructed prison infrastructure
Abim Government Prison	Newly constructed prison infrastructure
Amudat Government Prison	Newly constructed prison infrastructure
Moroto Government Prison	Newly constructed prison infrastructure
Nakapiripirit Central Police Station (CPS)	Newly constructed facility
Nabilatuk Central Police Station (CPS)	Newly constructed facility
Amudat Central Police Station (CPS)	Newly constructed facility
Moroto Central Police Station (CPS)	Newly constructed facility

Source: UHRC

Several facilities underwent renovations to improve functionality. These included Nakapelimoru, Kacheri, Napak CPS, Lorengechora, Rupa, Apeitolim, Kosiroi, Iriiri, Kachelem, Karenga, Kalapata, Lolachat, and Kabong Police Stations. In prisons, Kotido Government Prison renovated its CFPU and administration blocks, Moroto Prison repainted its administration block, and Amolatar Prison continued the construction of a new female ward. Minor renovations also included painting

works at Lolachat Police Station and staff block improvements at Kotido Government Prison.

Overall, the UHRC observed that these developments, ranging from new constructions and renovations to inmate participation and community involvement, have contributed to easing overcrowding and enhancing detainee welfare.



Newly constructed permanent female ward, including a water-borne toilet facility with flowing water at Amolatar Prison. © UHRC



UHRC addressing female inmates at Amolatar Prison, with a newly constructed female ward in the background. © UHRC



The UHRC inspections team take a group photo with Prison officers in Mutufu, Sironko District, in front of their new premises in a new location. © UHRC



A modern Police station at Bululu Police Station in Kalaki District. © UHRC

Notably, Mutufu Prison had been relocated to a new site with newly constructed modern facilities, significantly improving detention conditions. At Bubulo Prison, a newly constructed block for male inmates was completed, while an administration block and store were under construction at the time of the visit. Several prison facilities undertook major and minor renovations to improve functionality and safety. At Bubulo and Kumi Prisons, kitchens were renovated, with Kumi Prison additionally renovating its cooking stove. Odina Prison renovated some old staff houses, while Amuria Prison reinforced security by welding doors of the male wards. Bukedea Prison carried out renovations to staff accommodation. At Kabaeramaido Prison, construction of a female wing was ongoing in June 2025, and by the time of compiling this report, the female wing had been completed and female inmates had been relocated to the new facility, thereby resolving the longstanding challenge of female inmates sharing accommodation blocks with male inmates.

At Kabulabula Police Post, officers had been relieved of the burden of paying rent from their personal salaries, a challenge that had been noted during the Commission's previous inspection

in 2023, following their relocation to newly constructed Police premises. Suam Police Station had also relocated from old and dilapidated structures to a new building, while Bululu Police Station had constructed a new permanent building.

At Bududa CPS, the establishment of a Health Centre II in October 2025 was noted, providing medical services to suspects, Police staff, and surrounding communities. Similarly, the Kaberamaido Police Health Centre II had been upgraded to Health Centre III, further improving access to healthcare services within Police detention environments.

At Uganda Government Prison, Isingiro, three buildings were under construction at the time of inspection. These included two new wards funded by JLOS and one additional ward constructed through a community initiative led by local residents. The involvement of the local community reflects growing public support toward improving detention conditions. In addition to the new construction works, the old prison structures had been repainted, contributing to improved living and working conditions within the facility.



Newly constructed pit latrines at the prison in Maiha, in Masindi District. © UHRC



Newly constructed twin male ward at the prison in Isimba in Masindi District. © UHRC



UHRC staff interacting with the inmates at the construction site in Yumbe Prison, Yumbe District. © UHRC



The Juvenile Reception Centre, Buyende Central Police Station. © UHRC



New staff blocks at Loro Prison, Oyam District. © UHRC



Interior and exterior of one of the new wards at Loro Prison, Oyam District. © UHRC



UHRC officials monitoring staff accommodation at Nyakishenyi Police Station. © UHRC



Newly fixed metallic doors and windows at Kateete Police Station. © UHRC

10.5.7 Access to Adequate Food

The UHRC observed notable progress in inmates' access to food in terms of frequency, quality, and quantity. In most detention facilities, inmates received at least two meals a day, consisting of porridge for breakfast and lunch or supper made up of foods such as cassava, posho or sweet potatoes, and beans. At many prison farms, these meals were further supplemented with green vegetables, potatoes, and cassava grown by the inmates themselves. Provision of adequate food is key to maintaining the health and strength of detainees, especially those with HIV/AIDS, older persons, the sick, breastfeeding mothers, juveniles and infants.²⁷³

In assessing access to adequate food in detention facilities, the UHRC considered several factors during its inspections, including the quality and quantity of food provided. The Commission also paid particular attention to the dietary needs of vulnerable groups, such as people living with HIV, pregnant women, and lactating mothers. While some prisons provided three meals a day comprising porridge for breakfast, lunch, and supper, most facilities served porridge for breakfast, with lunch and supper served later in the day.

With regard to food quantity, the UHRC found that the majority of detainees interviewed in prisons considered the portions provided to be adequate. In terms of diet, the Commission noted that several prisons made efforts to supplement the staple meals of posho and beans with additional

nutrients, particularly for detainees with specific health needs.



Some members of the Commission tasting the quality of food served in prisons. © UHRC



The Principal Human Rights Officer Central Regional Office, Ms Logose Juliet, inspects the quality of the posho at Wakyato Government Prison in Nakaseke District. © UHRC

²⁷³ Rule 22, Nelson Mandela Rules, UN Standard Minimum Rules on Treatment of Prisoners.

Some facilities maintain vegetable gardens that contribute to improving inmates' diets. In others, detainees who engaged in hired labour were occasionally provided with alternative meals,

including fish or meat. Additionally, self-cooking was permitted in several prisons, a practice welcomed by inmates.

Table 41: Food provision in prisons

FACILITY/POLICE STATION	FOOD PROVISION	SOURCE OF FOOD/FUNDING
Butalango Police Station	Provides food	Facility itself
Luwero Police Station	Provides food	Facility itself
Kayunga Police Station	Provides food	Facility itself
Kiboga Police Station	Provides food	Facility itself
Nakasongola Police Station	Provides food	Facility itself
Kanoni Police Station	Provides food	Facility itself
Wakiso Police Station	Provides food	Facility itself
Mityana Police Station	Provides food	Facility itself
Kasangati Police Station	Provides food	Facility itself
Bukomero Police Station	Provides food	Facility itself
Nebbi Police Station	Consistently provides food	GOU (feeding programme)
Madi Okollo Police Station	Consistently provides food	GOU
Paidha Police Station	Consistently provides food	GOU
Maracha Police Station	Consistently provides food	GOU
Yumbe Police Station	Consistently provides food	GOU
Koboko Police Station	Consistently provides food	GOU
Moyo Police Station	Consistently provides food	GOU
Terego Police Station	Consistently provides food	GOU
Obongi Police Station	Consistently provides food	GOU
Pakwach Police Station	Consistently provides food	GOU
Vurra Police Station	Consistently provides food	GOU
Arua Central Police Station	Consistently provides food	GOU
Arivu East Police Station	Consistently provides food	GOU
Ayivu West Police Station	Consistently provides food	GOU
Pader CPS	Consistently provides food	GOU
Pajule Police Station	Consistently provides food	GOU
Masindi Police Station	Provides food	Facility itself
Kiryandongo Police Station	Provides food	Facility itself
Kakumiro Police Station	Provides food	Facility itself
Kibaale Police Station	Provides food	Facility itself
Buliisa Police Station	Provides food	Facility itself
Kagadi Police Station	Provides food	Facility itself
Kikuube Police Station	Provides food	Facility itself
Hoima CBD Police Station	Provides food	Facility itself
Most other Police stations	Do not provide food	Relatives of suspects (must taste food before handing over)

Source: UHRC

10.5.8 Access to Health Services and HIV Treatment

Access to medical services has improved in most prisons. The UHRC noted that prisons without internal health facilities increasingly rely on nearby Government health centres for medical care. Although a patient referral system is now in place and the provision of medical services in prisons is reportedly better than the national average, challenges remain, particularly the persistent inadequacy of essential drugs.

The UHRC further observed that some prisons are equipped with emergency health kits, which support immediate response to minor and uncomplicated medical cases among staff and inmates. More complex medical conditions are referred to nearby Government health facilities for treatment. In addition, some detention facilities have health care personnel attached to them. However, in certain cases, the long distance to the nearest Government health facility continues to hinder timely access to medical treatment for inmates.

10.5.9 Inmates' Clothing and Beddings

According to Rule 15 of the Nelson Mandela Rules, all prisoners should be provided with adequate bedding and clothing, including seasonal clothing. Prisoners must be provided with clean clothing appropriate to the climate and the season.²⁷⁴ The clothing should be of a sufficient standard to maintain prisoners' dignity. Prisoners should not be required to wear degrading or stigmatising uniforms, and their clothing should respect their cultural and religious needs.²⁷⁵ Prisoners are also entitled to a bed with proper bedding (including a mattress, blankets, and pillows) that ensures their physical wellbeing. The bedding should be clean, comfortable, and suitable for the climate, and prisoners should be provided with adequate privacy and hygiene.²⁷⁶



© UHRC



© UHRC

The UHRC noted that prison facilities had made an improvement in clothing and bedding for inmates. The inspections revealed that most inmates had uniforms at the time and that the majority had been supplied with uniforms, even though they were still inadequate.

²⁷⁴ Rule 19 - Bangkok Rules (UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders).

²⁷⁵ Mandela Rules.

²⁷⁶ As above.



Inmates at Bubulo Prison. © UHRC

At Nakifuma Prison the availability of clothing remained inadequate, with each inmate issued just one pair of worn and torn prison uniforms. These limitations not only affect comfort and dignity but also impact the overall wellbeing and morale of the incarcerated population.

At Bubulo Prison, most inmates were found with dirty and torn uniforms in June 2025, but hygiene had improved in December 2025.

All the remand homes inspected had sufficient bedding and had greatly improved compared to previous years. The juveniles were provided with beds containing mattresses, blankets, and mosquito nets.

10.5.10 Sanitation and Personal Hygiene

In most prisons, especially those newly constructed and renovated, inmates enjoyed good standards of basic hygiene. Where running water and flush toilets had been installed, the personal hygiene of inmates had greatly improved. The Mandela Rules

under Rule 12 provide that ‘Prisoners shall have access to adequate sanitation and toilet facilities, which are essential for their health, dignity, and hygiene’. The facilities provided for prisoners must also be clean, hygienic, and allow prisoners to maintain basic personal hygiene.²⁷⁷ Prisoners should also be provided with personal hygiene items, such as soap, toilet paper, and sanitary products, without any charge.²⁷⁸

a) Bucket Waste Disposal System

The bucket system is when inmates use themselves in the bucket in their cells due to a lack of indoor toilet facilities. The UHRC found that inmates in facilities without flush toilets still used pit latrines during daytime and the ‘bucket’ at night, which they would empty during daytime. The practice of human beings sharing a room with their waste is not only dehumanising but also unhygienic; for example, many inmates would not be able to survive an outbreak of an epidemic like cholera due to such unhygienic living situations.

²⁷⁷ Rule 13 Mandela Rules.

²⁷⁸ Rule 19 Mandela Rules.

Table 42: Some of the detention facilities still using the bucket system

REGIONAL OFFICE	DISTRICT	NAME OF THE PRISON
Jinja	Mayuge	Lukoma Police Post
Kampala	Luwero	Nyimbwa Police Station, Bamunanika Police Station, Wobulenzi Police Station, Bombo Police Station, Ndejje Police Station
	Kayunga	Kagulumira Police Station, Busana Police Station
	Buvuma	Buvuma Police Station
	Wakiso	Magyo Police Post, Nairambi Police Post
	Nakaseke	Kiwoko Police Station, Semuto Police Station, Nyimbwa Police Station
Masaka	Kalangala	Kachanga Police Post
Mbarara	Isingiro	Kagarama Police Station
	Ntungamo	Rwashamire Police Station, Rwahi Police Station, Rwamabondo Police Station, Rubaare Police Station
	Mbarara	Koranorya Police Station, Bwizibwera Police Station, Kinoni Police Station
	Rwampara	Mwizi Police Station, Rugando Police Station
Hoima	Hoima	Kirongo Police Post, Kikongo Police Post
Gulu	Adjumani	Adjumani CPS
	Omoro	Ongako Police Station, Lakwana Police Station, Odek Police Station
	Nwoya	Purongo Police Station, Koch Goma Police Station, Koch Li Police Station
	Gulu	Palaro Police Station
	Kitgum	Omiya-Anyima Police Station
	Amuru	Atiak Police Station, Uganda Government Prison Farm, Kaladima, Uganda Government Prison, Amuru

Source: UHRC



Cell littered with urine in the bucket and on the floor at Omiya-Anyima Police Station. © UHRC



Dirty and smelly male cell with urine on the floor at Kalongo Police Station. © UHRC

However, it was found that Anyara Police Station, Apapai Police Station, and Idamakan Police Post lacked buckets for suspects to use at night. As a result, suspects are forced to hold their waste until the next day, creating an unhealthy and unsanitary environment.

A lack of physical access and disability-friendly latrines or toilets was noted in most Police and prison detention facilities. For instance, at Kengere Police Station, the team found a pit latrine constructed on a raised area with multiple steps, making it difficult for a suspect or officer using a wheelchair to access it.

(b) Access to sanitary towels

Human rights standards for sanitary towels for female prisoners are based on the principles of dignity, health, and equality, ensuring that incarcerated women have access to necessary hygiene products. The Bangkok Rules (UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders) under Rule 19 provide that ‘Prisoners shall be provided with sufficient clothing, which must be appropriate to the climate, and they shall be provided with means to maintain personal hygiene’. Rule 22 of the Bangkok Rules also provides that ‘Prisoners shall be provided with feminine hygiene products, such as sanitary pads or tampons’.²⁷⁹ In addition, Rule 11 of the Nelson Mandela Rules specifically emphasises that prisoners should have access to hygiene products, including sanitary items. The rule mandates that sanitary products should be available to female prisoners, respecting their dignity and ensuring they do not face discrimination or degradation. Rule 15 mandates that all prisoners must be provided with the means to maintain personal hygiene, including during menstruation.²⁸⁰

The Commission established that most of the prisons with female inmates provided sanitary towels; however, most Police stations and posts do not provide sanitary towels for female suspects due to budgetary constraints.

10.5.11 Access to Clean and Safe Water

Prisoners are required to have access to a sufficient quantity of water for drinking, washing, and other hygiene needs.²⁸¹ In 2025, the UHRC observed that the majority of inmates could access clean and safe water through various sources such as rain-harvested water, water taps, boreholes, wells, swamps, springs and dams, which sometimes have unclean water which isn’t safe for drinking. In most of the facilities visited, the inmates boiled water stored in small jerrycans and kept in their cells.

At Amuru Government Prison, there is only one borehole shared with the surrounding community, while at Nwoya and Gulu Main Government Prisons, the water supplied by NWSC was insufficient to meet the needs of the large inmate populations. For example, Gulu Main Male Prison relies on a single borehole to serve approximately 1,600 inmates per day. Uganda Government Prison Farm, Kaladima in Amuru District, had an inadequate water supply; AMREF had provided a solar-powered piped water system, but the inmates still had to go to the stream to fetch water and bathe.

Several Police stations and posts had either limited or no access to clean water. Some rely on boreholes located 100-800 meters away, while others purchase water from private vendors at a cost of UGX 500 per jerrycan.

²⁷⁹ The Bangkok Rules (UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders).

²⁸⁰ United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules).

²⁸¹ Rule 11 - Nelson Mandela Rules.

Table 43: Access to water in prisons

FACILITY/POLICE STATION/POST	ACCESS TO WATER
Kachanga Police Post	Severely limited/none
Lukoma Police Post	Severely limited/none
Magyo Police Post	Severely limited/none
Kirongo Police Post	Severely limited/none
Kikongo Police Post	Severely limited/none
Nairambi Police Post	Severely limited/none
Kiriri Police Post	Severely limited/none
Maddu Police Station	Severely limited/none
Mpenja Police Station	Severely limited/none
Myanzi Police Station	Severely limited/none
Kasanda Police Station	Severely limited/none
Kiganda Police Station	Severely limited/none
Kagugube Police Station	Severely limited/none
Nakasozzi Police Station	Severely limited/none
Migyera Police Station	Severely limited/none
Nabiswera Police Station	Severely limited/none
Lwampanga Police Station	Severely limited/none
Nakasongola Central Police Station	Severely limited/none
Namasa Police Post	Severely limited/none
Busunju Police Station	Severely limited/none
Kikandwa Police Station	Severely limited/none
Sekanyonyi Police Station	Severely limited/none
Nkandwa Police Station	Severely limited/none
Nakifuma Police Station	Severely limited/none
Nagalama Police Station	Severely limited/none
Mbalala Police Station	Severely limited/none
Buikwe Central Police Station	Severely limited/none
Nyenga Police Station	Severely limited/none
Kyenda Police Station	Severely limited/none
Kasambya Police Station	Severely limited/none
Nabigola Police Station	Severely limited/none
Kibalinga Police Station	Severely limited/none
Madudu Police Station	Severely limited/none
Butologo Police Station	Severely limited/none

Source: UHRC

Some facilities are forced to purchase water at high costs due to the lack of a reliable supply. At Buhuhira Police Station, officers buy jerrycans at UGX 1,000 each, which impacts both staff welfare and the ability to maintain minimum standards of care for detainees. Kibuku Police Station in

Ntoroko District experiences water scarcity during the dry season, requiring staff to use their salaries to purchase water. Similarly, Nyangahya in Masindi Municipality Police Station has no nearby water source, relying on purchased water at UGX 500 per jerrycan and occasional rainwater harvesting.



The officer-in-charge at Kagulumila Government Prison in Kayunga District shows the borehole that is used as a water source at the prison to the Principal Human Rights Officer Central Regional Office and Human Rights Officer/Legal. © UHRC

At Labongo Subcounty Police Station, water is purchased from vendors at UGX 500 per jerrycan, while Kosiroy Police Station depends on water supplied by Tororo Cement; during shortages, jerrycans of water are bought at UGX 1,000-1,500 each. Other facilities with limited access include Mparo, Mpororo, Kamusiza, Bukinda, Muhanga, Mwanjari, and Kitumba Police Stations/Posts.

Overall, inadequate access to safe water remains a serious issue for both detainees and staff, with many facilities forced to rely on distant boreholes or costly private water sources. These conditions compromise hygiene, health, and the ability to uphold minimum standards of care within detention facilities.

10.5.12 Right to Work

Regulations 107(1)-(6) of the Prisons Regulations 2012 prescribe the circumstances under which remand prisoners may be employed and the remuneration. The regulations stipulate that any remand prisoner interested in working who participates in any work should be remunerated. The UHRC found that inmates' labour was used on prison farms and workshops or hired on private farms to generate income. Prisoners' most common forms of work included carpentry and joinery, building construction, handicrafts,

brickmaking, livestock farming, crop farming, and gardening. At all the prison facilities inspected, inmates work from Monday to Friday for 6-8 hours each day, and on Saturday, inmates do light work around the prison premises.

The Prisons Services Act, 2006, recognises prisoners' rights to meaningful remunerated employment. Work, for prisoners serving sentences, is helpful in that it enables them to acquire meaningful and useful skills, which would benefit the inmates in earning an honest livelihood after release. In fact, work for prisoners helps to maintain or improve the vocational qualifications of the inmates, as well as offering them meaningful occupations.

The UHRC noted that all the prisoners who worked were paid a daily rate ranging between UGX 100 for unskilled labour, UGX 250 for semi-skilled labour and UGX 500 for skilled work in most regions.

In Orom Prison, inmates work between six and seven hours daily, performing mainly unskilled labour. The work is mandatory for able-bodied prisoners, while those who are sick are exempted. At Lamwo Government Prisons, inmates are engaged in farm activities for six hours each day. Work is compulsory for all able-bodied prisoners, while the sick are excused. Most of the labour performed is unskilled, but it is remunerated,

giving inmates an opportunity to earn and develop skills that can support an honest living after release.

Across these and other prisons, including Lamwo, Patongo, Pader, Nwoya, Kitgum, and Aswa I and II Prison Farms, exemptions are consistently provided for vulnerable populations. This ensures that inmates who are sick, elderly, or pregnant are not overburdened by labour. However, for the able-bodied, unskilled labour remains a compulsory part of daily life in prison, often linked to rehabilitation efforts and, in some cases, remuneration that supports post-release reintegration.

At Odina and Kaberamaido Prisons, inmates reported working for over eight hours without receiving food during their labour. At Odina, prisoners indicated that they only received the standard three meals on Sundays, while from Monday to Saturday, they were given only porridge before going to the shambas and had supper at 4:00 pm. The same issue was reported by inmates at Kaberamaido Prison. This concern was raised with the Regional Police Commander of the Mid-Eastern Region, who instructed the Officers-in-Charge of the respective prisons to ensure that inmates are provided with food during work.

Inmates at Kaberamaido, Mutufu, Odina, and Serere Prisons also reported being physically beaten while working in the shambas. These beatings were allegedly carried out by the Katikiros for failing to dig properly or working too slowly, often under the watch of prison officers. At Serere Prison, a prisoner was observed with a head injury, reportedly inflicted on 13 June 2025 by a prison officer after the inmate had pushed a Katikiro who was beating him. Then in Orom Prison, there also reports of ‘katikiros’ torturing their fellow inmates.

These issues were brought to the attention of the Regional Police Commanders of the Mid-Eastern and Eastern Regions, who instructed the respective O/Cs to address the provision of food during work. While follow-up visits had not been

conducted at Odina, Serere, and Kaberamaido Prisons at the time of reporting, a follow-up at Mutufu Prison revealed that the beatings by Katikiros had reportedly reduced, indicating partial improvement in compliance with regulations.

10.5.13 Access to Information

The UHRC found that detainees were able to access information through sources such as televisions, newspapers, books, and radios. Access to information provides inmates with information and knowledge about current affairs, laws, legal practices, politics, religion, developmental issues, health issues, and general knowledge about their cases,²⁸² which could be beneficial to the inmates.

During its inspections, the UHRC found that a number of prison facilities allowed detainees to have radios, newspapers and other sources of information. Prisons also provided inmates with TVs. On the other hand, inmates in Police facilities were not allowed to access any information from any medium.

10.5.14 Human Rights Committees

In 2025, the majority of prisons inspected had established human rights committees for both staff and inmates. These committees, particularly those for inmates, play a critical role in educating prisoners about their rights and providing a structured channel for raising concerns. Common issues brought to the committees include the quality and quantity of food, cases of overstay on remand, and general welfare matters, all of which are communicated to the Officers-in-Charge for action.

Human rights committees are also a key component of the complaints and grievance procedures implemented by UPS. They strengthen transparency and accountability by ensuring that human rights concerns are formally recorded and promptly addressed by the authorities. The establishment of such committees in the majority of prisons indicates their perceived importance and potential effectiveness. However, the UHRC

282 Nelson Mandela Rules, UN Standard Minimum Rules on Treatment of Prisoners.

observed that, in several prisons, committees that had been set up were not fully functional, limiting their impact in practice. To enhance their effectiveness, it is crucial that both staff and inmate members of these committees receive formal training in human rights, ensuring they can properly handle complaints and advocate for inmates' rights.

10.5.15 Rehabilitation of Inmates

International human rights standards underscore the importance of rehabilitation and humane treatment in prisons. Rule 58 of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners emphasises that all prisoners should have opportunities for educational, vocational, and recreational activities to support reintegration. Rule 103 further highlights the need for programmes that foster personal development and reduce recidivism, reinforcing the principle that rehabilitation is central to a humane and effective prison system.

The UHRC notes that all prisons provide a range of rehabilitation programmes for inmates, including counselling, guidance, psychosocial support, and formal education from primary to university levels. Vocational training is also offered, covering skills such as carpentry, building, gardening, and tailoring. Products made by inmates are sold to the public, and inmates receive a portion of the proceeds. Pre-settlement visits by prison officers to inmates' communities help facilitate family acceptance and smooth reintegration after release. However, only inmates who have completed vocational training are allowed to participate in production activities. UPS reports that inmates work up to six hours per day for both production and rehabilitation purposes. Meaningful activities, such as education, work, and other programmes, are essential for creating a positive prison environment. They channel prisoners' energy into constructive occupations, reduce the likelihood of disturbances, and support preparation for release and reintegration into society. Overcrowding, however, limits inmates' access to these programmes, as many are confined to dormitories without opportunities to engage in activities outside their wards.



An inmate expressing his human rights concerns during the mini baraza in Sembabule Main Prison. © UHRC



UHRC staff interact with suspects in the library at Paidha Prison. © UHRC

10.6 SNAPSHOT OF KAMPIRINGISA NATIONAL REHABILITATION CENTRE

In 2025, the UHRC paid special focus on the Kampiringisa National Rehabilitation Centre. The purpose of the visit was to assess the state of the facility, evaluate the welfare of the juveniles housed therein, and ensure compliance with national and international human rights standards.

The UHRC respectfully wishes to draw attention to the following observations arising from its findings. While acknowledging the efforts of the facility's management and staff under challenging circumstances, the Commission notes with concern several critical areas that require urgent attention and remedial action.

(a) Dilapidated infrastructure

The facility is in a visibly deteriorated state, with numerous structural defects that pose risks to the safety and wellbeing of both children and staff. Staff quarters are also in a deplorable condition, with leaking roofs and unsafe living environments, negatively affecting morale and service delivery.

(b) Inadequate Rehabilitation Programmes

Despite its designation as a rehabilitation centre, there is minimal structured programming, vocational training, or psychosocial support to facilitate the juveniles' reintegration into society.

(c) Insufficient Food and Nutrition

Several juveniles reported experiencing hunger due to inadequate food portions, both in quantity and nutritional value. The administration acknowledged persistent challenges in feeding the children because of insufficient funding and logistical support.

“

We are very hungry; we need to have at least sufficient and good food.” - A boy at the the centre.

(d) Poor Sanitation and Personal Hygiene

The centre lacks a reliable water supply. The existing water pump becomes non-functional during the dry season when water levels fall, forcing juveniles to fetch water from nearby wells that are not always safe. Some children reported bathing only once in over a month, despite engaging in manual labour such as gardening. Cases of skin infections, including scabies (*Obuwere*), and widespread lice infestations were documented.

“

Sometimes we go many weeks without bathing because there is no water. I have bathed only once in a whole month. Yet every day we go to dig in the gardens, and we come back dirty and sweaty. It is very hard to stay clean. Many of us have skin problems like Obuwere, and some boys have lice in their hair. It itches a lot, and we feel uncomfortable all the time. We just wish we could have enough water and soap to keep ourselves clean.” - A boy at the centre.

(e) Inadequate Sleeping Arrangements

The facility lacks sufficient mattresses, bedsheets, and mosquito nets. Female juveniles specifically requested mosquito nets and bedsheets due to persistent mosquito bites.

(f) Lack of Perimeter Fencing and Security

The centre remains unfenced, with a community road passing directly through the premises. This poses significant security risks and complicates effective supervision and protection of the juveniles.

(g) Understaffing and Lack of Facilitation

With a population of 340 juveniles (230 boys and 10 girls), the staff are overwhelmed. Management expressed frustration over inadequate facilitation and support from the line Ministry, which severely hampers proper care and supervision.

(h) Neglect of Basic Needs and Dependency on External Support

The centre heavily depends on CSOs and well-wishers to provide essential supplies such as sanitary towels and other basic necessities, due to insufficient or inconsistent government provision.

(i) Lack of transport facilities

The centre has no vehicle or transport means, limiting its ability to respond to emergencies, coordinate with other institutions, or facilitate the return of children to their homes upon completion of their sentences.

(j) Limited Family Contact

Many children rarely receive visits from parents or guardians, leading to heightened emotional distress and feelings of abandonment.

10.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development should increase funding to the Uganda Prisons Service and the Uganda Police Force to enable them to build better structures so as to have facilities suitable for human habitation and stop overcrowding.
2. Uganda Police Force should completely phase out the bucket waste disposal system.
3. The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development should urgently restore dignity, safety, and hope at Kampiringisa National Rehabilitation Centre by improving infrastructure, sanitation, water, nutrition, security, staffing, and rehabilitation programmes, providing essential supplies for children, and developing a long-term strategy to strengthen juvenile justice and rehabilitation services in Uganda.

10.8 CONCLUSION

While the UHRC acknowledges positive interventions and improvements in conditions across places of detention, several human rights concerns remain. These include the continued detention of civil debtors, prolonged and arbitrary detention, and overcrowding, which are key contributors to the high prison population. Priority attention should be given to addressing prison congestion and providing support to Police detention facilities to ensure the effective promotion and protection of the rights of all detainees.

10.9 OTHER MONITORING INTERVENTIONS

Other monitoring that was done during the year includes election observation and monitoring; monitoring legislation to assess alignment with human rights standards; monitoring vulnerable persons and situations of vulnerability to protect marginalised and at-risk groups; monitoring business and human rights, among others, to ensure corporate operations respect human rights in Uganda. These activities aimed to ensure compliance with human rights standards, promote justice, fairness, and dignity, and strengthen Uganda's accountability framework for all individuals across the country.

10.9.1 Monitoring Business and Human Rights

Monitoring visits conducted by the UHRC across Busoga, the Albertine Region, and the Kampala Metropolitan Area covered a wide range of sectors, including sugarcane plantations, out-grower schemes, extractives, fisheries, flower farms, quarries, and small-scale businesses. In total, 54 businesses and institutions were monitored. These included 18 businesses in Busoga, 11 in the Albertine Region, and 25 in the Kampala Metropolitan Area.

In Busoga, monitored entities included sugarcane out-growers in areas such as Nankoma, Makandwa, Imanyiro, and Namungalwe, as well as companies such as Bugiri Sugar Company, Mayuge Sugar Company, Budde Mining Company, and the Rwenzori Rare Metals Field Office.

In the Albertine Region, 11 businesses and institutions were assessed, including Kinyara Sugar, Kiryandongo Sugar, Hoima Sugar, Somedium, CNOOC, and activities under EACOP and Tilenga (through community engagements and the Petroleum Authority of Uganda). Additional monitoring covered small businesses in Hoima City.

In the Kampala Metropolitan Area, 25 sites were visited, comprising 9 stone quarries, 4 flower farms, 7 flower gardens, 3 fishing sites, and 2 fish markets. Key entities included Royal Van Zanten, Ugarose, Jambo Roses, King Long Co. Ltd, Hongrun Stone Quarry, Sekindi Stone Quarry, Bulikiro Enterprises, Bukasa Stone Quarry, and members of UTOPA such as Faith Petals and Stems, TJ Flowers, and Makula Flower Garden.

10.9.1.1 Labour rights

Labour rights violations emerged as a major concern across all regions. Many workers, particularly in sugarcane plantations in areas such as Nankoma (Bugiri), Imanyiro (Mayuge), and Namungalwe (Iganga), reported working without written contracts, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and abrupt dismissal. In the Albertine region, workers at companies such as Kinyara Sugar, Hoima Sugar, and Kiryandongo Sugar raised concerns about wage disparities and limited occupational safety measures. A serious incident in Kiryandongo, where a worker lost a hand in a factory accident, highlighted the human cost of weak safety protections. In quarries and flower farms in Wakiso and Mukono, including sites such as Hongrun, Sekindi, and Royal Van Zanten, workers described low pay, lack of protective gear, and limited avenues to raise complaints.

1.9.1.2 Child labour

Child labour remains a critical concern, particularly in sugarcane-growing communities. In Busoga, children as young as 7 to 10 years were found engaged in hazardous activities such as cutting and loading sugarcane in places like Busimbi A Village (Bugiri) and Makandwa Central (Bugweri). In the Albertine districts of Kiryandongo and Masindi, children around 12 years old were also involved in cane planting and cutting. These practices are closely linked to poverty and limited access to education, often resulting in school dropouts and long-term harm.

10.9.1.3 Land and property rights

Land and property rights challenges were especially pronounced in areas affected by large-scale investments. In the Albertine region, particularly in Kiryandongo, Masindi, Buliisa, and Kikuube communities, displacement, unresolved land disputes, and delays in compensation linked to oil and sugar projects involving companies such as CNOOC and Kinyara Sugar were reported. In Kikuube, concerns were raised about the misuse of the Systematic Land Adjudication and Certification programme, with allegations that powerful individuals had acquired land titles over entire villages, leaving residents effectively landless. In Busoga, communities in Kapyanga (Bugiri) and Baitambogwe (Mayuge) reported damage to land and crops caused by sugarcane trucks, often without adequate redress.

10.9.1.4 Environmental concerns

Environmental issues were evident across both agricultural and extractive sectors. In Buliisa, communities reported flooding linked to oil well pad developments, which displaced more than 40 households. In Kikuube, poor waste management at Hoima Sugar raised concerns about pollution from molasses and bagasse. In the Kampala Metropolitan Area, quarrying activities in places such as Bukasa and Bulikiro contributed to dust pollution, land degradation, and safety risks for surrounding communities.

10.9.1.5 Governance and accountability

Governance and accountability gaps were reported across all regions. In Busoga, communities highlighted illegal Police bond charges, corruption in service delivery, and political interference in accessing Parish Development Model funds. In Buliisa, fishers at Butiaba landing site described arbitrary arrests and confiscation of fishing gear. Across both the Albertine region and Kampala Metropolitan Area, weak enforcement systems, under-resourced labour offices, and ineffective grievance mechanisms limited access to justice for affected populations.

10.9.1.6 Community engagement and awareness

Limited community engagement and low awareness of rights were recurring concerns. In Katabi (Wakiso), residents reported that quarrying activities were established without proper consultation, with some alleging evictions without compensation. In oil-affected areas such as Kabaale, communities expressed frustration over the lack of feedback from company liaison offices and a limited understanding of available remedies.

10.9.1.7 Livelihood and economic challenges

Livelihood challenges further compounded human rights concerns. Fishing communities in Kampala and Buliisa cited high taxes on fishing gear as a major burden, while also calling for stronger regulation of illegal nets to reduce conflict with enforcement agencies. Across several districts, migrant and informal workers, particularly in Bugweri and extractive areas, were identified as highly vulnerable due to a lack of formal employment protections.

Despite these challenges, the monitoring process created space for dialogue and accountability. Engagements with companies, regulators, and civil society led to some positive actions, including commitments by Hoima Sugar to improve waste management, compensation provided to an injured worker in Kiryandongo, and follow-up by the Petroleum Authority of Uganda on community concerns. These developments demonstrate that sustained, participatory monitoring can strengthen accountability and contribute to improved human rights practices in business operations.



UHRC monitoring team interacting with the Human Resource Manager and the Finance manager at Hoima Sugar Ltd in Kikuube District. © UHRC



UHRC monitoring team interacting with CNOOC officers at Buhuka, Kikuube District. © UHRC

10.9.2 Capacity Building on Business and Human Rights

The UHRC, together with MOGLSD and the EOC, and with technical support from the Danish Institute for Human Rights, conducted joint and institution-specific training for staff on business and human rights. The May 2025 joint training for 37 core monitoring staff combined theory with

practical field visits to flower farms in Entebbe and analysis of national case studies, such as human rights violations in Bulambuli and land acquisition issues in Kosiroyi. This approach strengthened inter-institutional collaboration and led to an agreement to implement joint community engagement activities.



Staff of EOC, UHRC and MOGLSD at one of the flower farms. © UHRC



Principal Human Rights Officer, Ms. Juliet Logose interacts with Flower Farm workers at Royal Van Zanten flower farm in Mukono. © UHRC



© UHRC

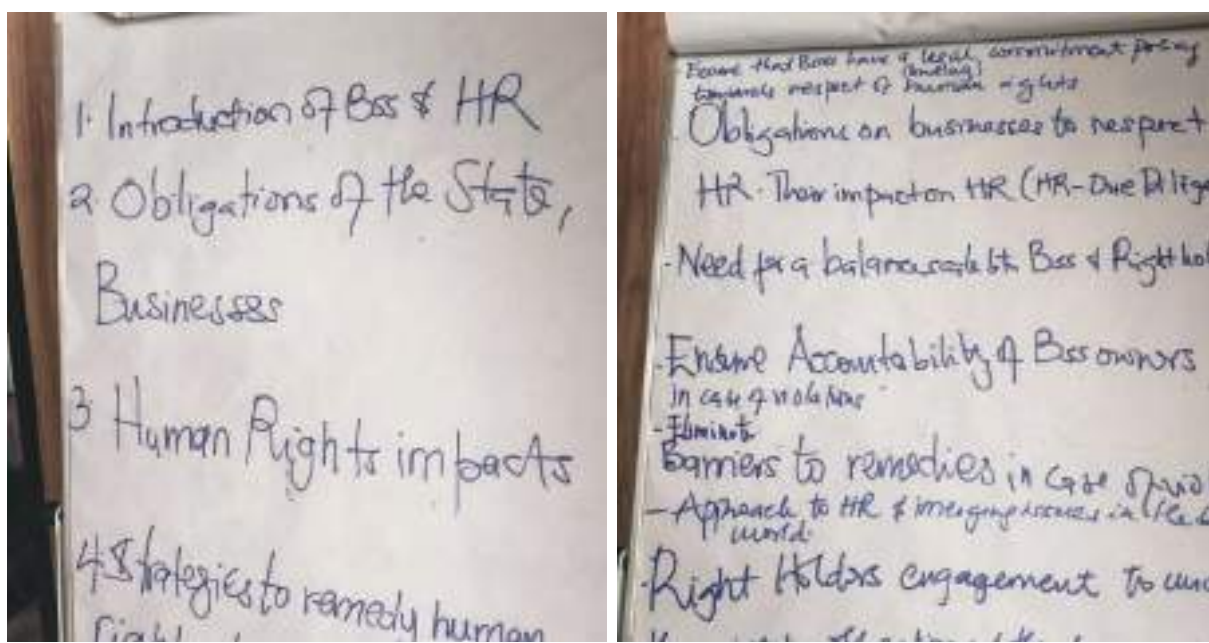


Notes from training. © UHRC



Training session. © UHRC

In September, UHRC trained 75 staff, including investigators and researchers, focusing on practical monitoring, documentation, and reporting skills. The sessions improved coordination between different functional roles, enhanced data collection and analysis, and clarified UHRC's strategic role in mediating business-related human rights disputes. Staff also identified the need to simplify monitoring tools, leverage digital systems, and engage the private sector to highlight the economic costs of ignoring human rights.



© UHRC

These trainings have strengthened the UHRC's capacity to monitor and respond to business-related human rights violations holistically. They fostered a harmonious national approach, improved inter-institutional coordination, and enhanced accountability. By building skills, promoting collaboration, and emphasising evidence-based engagement with businesses, the UHRC is better positioned to protect marginalised groups, advance gender equality, and ensure human rights are respected across sectors.

10.9.3 Development of a Factsheet on Business and Human Rights

A factsheet outlining the mandate of the UHRC was developed, designed, printed, and disseminated. The factsheet served as a practical reference tool for awareness creation, institutional outreach, and stakeholder engagement, ensuring that communities and private sector actors clearly understood the role of UHRC in advancing respect for human rights by businesses.

10.9.4 AU and UN Forums on Business and Human Rights

The UHRC participated in the AU and UN Forums on Business and Human Rights, where delegates from around the world exchanged best practices on advancing business respect for human rights

under the UN Guiding Principles, with a strong focus on accelerating action amid global crises and transformation. Participants highlighted the need for effective human rights due diligence, meaningful engagement with affected communities, and stronger accountability mechanisms to ensure that both states and corporations uphold their responsibilities. A call was also made for countries without National Action Plans (NAPs) on business and human rights to adopt them promptly, and for those that already have them to ensure full and effective implementation.

10.9.5 Election Monitoring

10.9.5.1 Dialogue on Breaking Barriers to Women's Participation in Elective Politics held in Kalangala District

The UHRC organised a dialogue in Kalangala District to examine the challenges limiting women's participation in politics. The meeting brought together participants from all seven sub-counties, including incumbent and aspiring women leaders, political party representatives, EC officials, civil society actors, security personnel, media practitioners, district officials, leaders of women with disabilities, and community representatives. The dialogue aimed to identify barriers to women's political engagement and propose practical solutions.



© UHRC



Director Monitoring and Inspections, Mrs Pauline Nansamba-Mutumba, giving her remarks during the dialogue on women participation in elective politics.

© UHRC

Participants highlighted multiple challenges, including limited government resources adapted to the district's island geography, weak women's solidarity across political, ethnic, and social lines, and low self-confidence, emphasising the need for mentorship programmes. Other barriers included social media intimidation, difficulties balancing family and political responsibilities, limited male involvement in gender issues, sexual and GBV, early pregnancies, and inadequate protection for the girl child. Additional concerns focused on poor communication networks, the need for

community sensitisation on human rights, mindset shifts regarding the monetisation of politics, and innovative awareness campaigns using ferries and boats.

The dialogue generated practical recommendations, including supporting aspiring women leaders, fostering dialogue within families, and improving planning for services and schools across the islands. The meeting was highly engaging and considered valuable for empowering women to participate in leadership and promoting gender equality in political spaces.

10.9.5.2 Hotspot mapping

During the nationwide hotspot mapping exercise, the UHRC engaged key stakeholders, including District and Regional Election Officers, Resident Police Commanders, civil society representatives, and local leaders, to identify areas vulnerable to electoral tension and potential violence. The exercise revealed that tensions often stem from intense political competition, historical election-related disputes, misinformation, youth unemployment, and limited trust in electoral processes. The findings directly informed UHRC's interventions, guiding the planning and deployment of election observers to high-risk areas and strengthening coordination with stakeholders. This enabled the Commission to enhance early warning mechanisms, improve



The EC chairperson, his deputy, UHRC Commissioners and other stakeholders during the UPR review meeting at Speke Resort Munyonyo in 2025. © UHRC



Archbishop of the Church of Uganda, Dr Stephen Kazimba Mugalu, Owekitibwa, the Attorney General of Buganda kingdom, Imam Idd Kasozi, Elder Elizabeth Lwanga, together with the UHRC Chairperson, Members and top leadership during the Early Warning Conference. © UHRC

voter education, and implement preventive measures, thereby promoting peaceful, credible, and democratic elections across the country.

19.9.5.3 Uganda Periodic Review (UPR) meeting on elections

The UHRC also convened a meeting to discuss the implementation of the accepted UPR recommendations on elections. The meeting was attended by key stakeholders such as the Chairperson of the Electoral Commission (EC), Justice Simon Byabakama, and the Deputy Chairperson, Hajjati Aisha Lubega, among others. Discussions focused on aligning electoral practices

with human rights standards, monitoring the progress of UPR commitments, and identifying practical steps to strengthen the credibility, transparency, and inclusiveness of electoral processes.

10.9.5.4 Early Warning and Early Response Mechanisms Conference

The UHRC organised a national conference on 'Early Warning for the 2026 Elections' at Protea Hotel-Kololo, bringing together political parties, security agencies, media, religious and cultural leaders, civil society, academia, and EC officials. Under the theme 'Mitigating Electoral Risks through Timely

Action and Collaboration, the conference provided a platform for dialogue, risk identification, and collective planning. Stakeholders discussed potential electoral threats and strategies to strengthen early warning and early response mechanisms, promoting coordinated, preventive actions to ensure peaceful, credible, and inclusive elections.

10.9.5.5 Joint press briefing on peaceful elections

The UHRC organised a joint press briefing on peaceful elections, bringing together the EC, Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), the Inter-Religious Council, political parties, civil society, and media stakeholders. The briefing reinforced a unified commitment to free, fair, credible, and peaceful elections, emphasising

constitutional duties under Articles 51 and 59. Key results included: a public reaffirmation of the EC's transparency and impartiality, the Police's commitment to law and order with respect for human rights, the UCC's pledge to promote responsible media and counter misinformation, and the Inter-Religious Council's role in fostering peace and tolerance.

The briefing strengthened coordinated messaging to citizens, promoted national unity, and enhanced public awareness of the shared responsibilities of institutions, political actors, and communities in preventing electoral violence. By unifying key stakeholders in a single public communication, UHRC effectively reinforced preventive measures for peaceful elections and increased accountability across all actors involved.



The UHRC Chairperson, members of top leadership and panellists during the joint press briefing. © UHRC

10.9.5.6 High-level election dialogue

The UHRC, in partnership with the Uganda National NGO Forum, organised a high-level national dialogue on human rights and elections at the Sheraton Hotel, Kampala, under the theme *"Towards 2026: Safeguarding Rights, Fostering Trust and Building Peaceful Elections."* The dialogue convened 250 participants (187 males, 63 females) from government institutions, civil society, security agencies, religious and cultural leaders, media, academia, and development partners.

Key results included increased stakeholder awareness of human rights considerations in electoral processes, strengthened multi-sectoral coordination for peaceful elections, and the development of actionable strategies to promote inclusivity, trust, and accountability ahead of the 2026 general elections. The dialogue reinforced UHRC's role in safeguarding human rights, fostering dialogue, and building a collaborative framework to prevent election-related violations and enhance citizen confidence in democratic processes.

10.9.5.7 Advocacy materials developed and joint statement on the protection of children in electoral Contexts

The UHRC, in collaboration with UNICEF, the Uganda Child Rights NGO Network (UCRNN), and the National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE-UG), developed targeted messages to safeguard children's rights during electoral processes. UHRC hosted a joint press briefing to inform the public and stakeholders about these initiatives, emphasising the protection of children from abuse, exploitation, and intimidation during elections. Key results included heightened public awareness of children's rights in the election context, strengthened coordination among government, civil society, and development partners, and a clear call to political actors, media, parents, and citizens to prioritise children's safety and wellbeing. These efforts reinforced UHRC's role in promoting child rights, ensuring that electoral activities respect the dignity and freedoms of all children while fostering a safe and inclusive democratic process.

10.9.5.8 Training of UHRC election observers

In fulfilment of its mandate, the UHRC organised two training sessions for election observers to build their capacity in human rights-based election monitoring. The trainings enhanced participants' understanding of electoral processes and strengthened their skills in documenting and reporting human rights issues before, during, and after elections. Key results included improved

preparedness of observers to identify and report violations, increased consistency and reliability of monitoring data, and strengthened accountability mechanisms to support free, fair, and credible electoral processes. These trainings contributed to the UHRC's broader efforts to promote peaceful, inclusive, and rights-respecting elections.



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Director of Monitoring and Inspections making remarks at the hybrid training for staff of UHRC on elections and human rights. © UHRC

10.9.5.9 Training of situation room members on digital rights

Some members of the UHRC-led Situation Room received online training on the digital rights paradigm, enhancing their understanding of how an open internet supports political participation, dialogue, and informed decision-making. The training highlighted key digital threats, including surveillance of journalists and opposition voices, misinformation and disinformation, online violence, censorship, internet disruptions, and targeted data harvesting.

Participants gained practical knowledge on ensuring that surveillance and interception of digital communications adhere to the principles of legality, necessity, and proportionality. Key results included strengthened capacity to monitor and respond to digital rights violations during electoral processes, improved awareness of cyber threats to democratic participation, and enhanced ability to protect citizens' digital freedoms in line with human rights standards.

10.10 REVIEW OF BILLS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS COMPLIANCE

10.10.1 Review of National Drug and Health Products Authority Bill, 2025

In line with its constitutional mandate under Article 52, the UHRC conducted a review of bills, laws, and policies to ensure compliance with human rights standards and alignment with existing legislation. The review meeting, attended by 37 participants (23 females, 14 males) at Fairway Hotel, analysed proposed legal frameworks to identify potential human rights gaps or conflicts.

The meeting strengthened the Commission's capacity to provide informed recommendations, enhanced stakeholder engagement in legislative review processes, and generated actionable guidance to support government policy and lawmaking that upholds both domestic and international human rights obligations.

10.10.2 Review of the Marriage Bill 2024

The UHRC convened a stakeholder dialogue to examine the human rights implications of the Marriage Bill, 2024. The dialogue brought together representatives from Parliament, government ministries, the Judiciary, civil society, religious institutions, the media, students and development partners, creating a platform for a balanced and informed discussion of the proposed law. The Bill seeks to consolidate Uganda's fragmented marriage laws into a unified framework, regulate various forms of marriage, including civil, customary, and religious unions, and address matters relating to matrimonial property, dissolution, and associated rights.

While the proposed law represents an important step toward legal reform, participants raised concerns that several provisions may have implications for the protection and promotion of human rights. Key issues highlighted included the need to safeguard equality and non-discrimination, strengthen the protection of women's economic rights, uphold the rights of children, and ensure respect for cultural and religious freedoms. Stakeholders also emphasised the importance of protecting the rights to privacy and dignity, noting that these considerations should remain central as the legislative process continues.



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10.10.3 Review of The Sexual Offences Bill 2024

The Commission convened a stakeholder dialogue to examine the human rights implications of the Sexual Offences Bill, 2024. The meeting brought together a wide range of stakeholders, including representatives from the ODPP, MOGLSD, the Uganda Law Reform Commission, Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum, Chapter Four Uganda, Legal Aid Service Providers Network, FIDA Uganda, the Uganda Law Society, the Women Probono Initiative, the UPF, the Women Human Rights Defenders Network, students from the Makerere University School of Law, members of the Commission, UHRC staff, and the media.

The dialogue provided a platform for a human rights-focused critique of the Bill, identifying provisions that require refinement to ensure alignment with constitutional guarantees and international human rights standards, while also acknowledging its significance in strengthening legal protection against sexual offences. Participants highlighted progressive aspects of the Bill, including the expansion of the definition of sexual offences to cover emerging forms such as cyber harassment, online exploitation, and digital abuse; the introduction of stricter penalties, particularly for repeat offenders; and enhanced protections for vulnerable groups, including children, PWD, and marginalised communities.

Emphasis was also placed on provisions clarifying consent, affirming that any act without free, voluntary, and informed consent constitutes a sexual offence, as well as proposals to improve investigative and judicial processes through specialised courts, expedited proceedings, and trained personnel.

At the same time, stakeholders underscored the importance of ensuring that the Bill is implemented in a manner that upholds fundamental rights, including fairness, proportional sentencing, and due process. They stressed the need for comprehensive victim support systems, including access to shelters, medical care, psychosocial support, legal assistance, and rehabilitation services, alongside strengthened responses to cyber and digital sexual offences such as non-consensual sharing of intimate content. It was further noted that sexual violence is a systemic issue that requires not only legal reform but also sustained public education, institutional capacity building, and coordinated social interventions.

Overall, the stakeholders urged that the enactment of the Sexual Offences Bill, 2024 should be accompanied by clear safeguards and holistic frameworks that address both accountability and survivor protection, recognising sexual violence as both a human rights and public health concern.

10.11 ANNUAL REPORT DEVELOPMENT

10.11.1 28th Annual Report Consultative Meeting

The UHRC held a consultative meeting in the UHRC Boardroom to prepare its 28th Annual Report. The meeting brought together experts and stakeholders from diverse sectors to provide information and insights to enrich the report. Participants reviewed emerging human rights trends, shared sector-specific experiences, and contributed practical recommendations. The engagement enhanced the comprehensiveness of the report, strengthened collaboration among stakeholders, and provided the Commission with evidence-based inputs to inform its analysis and policy guidance to Parliament.

10.12 TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

10.12.1 Capacity Building for Staff in Violent Extremism

The UHRC conducted a training to strengthen the capacity of investigators to carry out lawful, ethical, and human rights-compliant investigations, particularly in contexts of violent extremism and organised crime. The training emphasised the role of investigators in safeguarding human dignity, ensuring due process, and promoting accountability for violations by both state and non-state actors.

Participants gained a deeper understanding of rights-based investigative methodologies,

enhancing their ability to operate effectively in high-risk and sensitive cases. By the end of the training, investigators reported increased confidence in applying human rights approaches, identified procedural gaps in documentation and inter-agency communication, and acquired practical strategies to address these gaps. The training also highlighted the importance of building trust with affected communities to improve access to credible information and foster public support for UHRC's work.

10.12.2 Capacity for Religious Leaders on Violent Extremism

The UHRC conducted a training to strengthen the capacity of religious leaders to promote and uphold human rights while addressing issues related to violent extremism and organised crime. The training emphasised the pivotal role of religious leaders in safeguarding human dignity, ensuring due process, and fostering accountability for violations by both state and non-state actors. Participants explored rights-based investigative approaches and strategies for engaging communities in sensitive contexts, enhancing their ability to identify, report, and respond to human rights concerns.

By the end of the training, religious leaders reported greater confidence in applying human rights principles in their guidance and oversight roles and recognized that procedural gaps, such as weaknesses in documentation and inter-agency communication, can compromise justice and protection of rights.



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10.13 MONITORING GOVERNMENT'S COMPLIANCE WITH ITS TREATY BODY OBLIGATIONS

10.13.1 Conference on the Implementation of the UPR Recommendations

The UHRC hosted a one-day conference to assess progress in the implementation of the 2022 UPR recommendations, bringing together 91 participants (50 males, 41 females), including government officials, civil society representatives, and media actors. The meeting reviewed the status of GOU's reporting process, discussed challenges

across thematic areas, and incorporated civil society perspectives. Outcomes included recommendations for GOU to begin preparing its Fourth UPR Report, for UHRC and civil society to prepare independent and shadow reports, and for UHRC to formally request additional implementation information from all MDAs, which was subsequently done. The conference reinforced collective responsibility in monitoring human rights under the UPR framework and established a continued tracking process to ensure accountability and progress ahead of the next review cycle.



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10.13.2 Meeting for the Inter-Ministerial Technical Advisory Committee on Human Rights to Discuss Implementation of UPR Recommendations

The UHRC engaged the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) comprising key MDAs to verify information, obtain updated data, and clarify implementation measures during the drafting of its independent UPR report. The UHRC organised a one-day workshop for the IMC to assess progress on previously accepted UPR recommendations and prepare for Uganda's fourth review. The workshop guided GOU to begin preparing its fourth UPR report, while the UHRC and CSOs were supported to develop their independent and shadow reports, respectively. This engagement strengthened the accuracy, credibility, and comprehensiveness of

the UHRC's independent report to be submitted to the Human Rights Council in July 2026, reinforced collective responsibility for human rights monitoring, and established a continued process for tracking implementation ahead of the next UPR cycle.

10.13.3 Capacity Building Training for MDAs on Human Rights Mechanisms

The UHRC conducted a one-day capacity-building training for 54 representatives of MDAs (28 males, 26 females) in Kampala. The training strengthened participants' understanding of international and regional human rights mechanisms, including the Universal Periodic Review, treaty body reporting, and engagement with UN special procedures.



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It enhanced technical capacity in applying human rights principles, economic, social and cultural rights and standards, and rights-based approaches to government programmes. Participants identified challenges such as coordination gaps and reporting obligations and discussed emerging focus areas for the UHRC, including business and human rights, fiscal policy, and corruption. The training enabled more coordinated and effective engagement with human rights mechanisms, reinforced MDA's accountability in implementing recommendations, and encouraged integration of human rights-based approaches across government activities.

10.14 ENGAGEMENTS FOR MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES

10.14.1 JLOS Engagement Meeting on Rights of Marginalised Groups

The UHRC convened a stakeholder engagement meeting in Kampala, bringing together justice sector actors, civil society, and development partners to discuss the rights of marginalised groups. Discussions focused on barriers such as discriminatory laws, social stigma, institutional bias, and limited access to legal aid, with recommendations for inclusive policies, capacity building, and strengthened collaboration between state actors and civil society. The meeting concluded with a call for systemic reforms and continuous human rights training to ensure justice that truly serves all Ugandans.

10.14.2 Marginalised Communities Engagements

The UHRC, in partnership with the EOC and Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum, conducted a series of sensitisation engagements aimed at empowering marginalised and vulnerable persons with knowledge about the mandates and services of the UHRC and EOC. The activities were held in Mbarara, Jinja, Mbale, and Masaka, focusing on raising awareness about equality, non-discrimination, and available complaint-handling mechanisms for persons whose rights are violated. In addition, capacity-building training on equality and non-discrimination was conducted for UHRC staff drawn from the Regional Offices of Arua, Gulu, Lira, Mbale, Soroti, Jinja, Moyo, Kapchorwa, Pader, and Kitgum. The training strengthened staff capacity to mainstream equality and non-discrimination principles in their human rights promotion, protection, and complaint-handling work across the different regions.

10.14.3 Stakeholders' Engagement on Equality, Non-Discrimination, and Implementation of Resolution 275

The UHRC held a stakeholder engagement in Kampala to discuss equality, non-discrimination, and implementation of Resolution 275. The meeting brought together representatives from state institutions, civil society, and marginalised communities. The discussion on Resolution 275 underscored protections for marginalised persons, urging state institutions and CSOs to implement guidelines that prevent violence, stigma, and discrimination while ensuring access to justice.



The UHRC monitoring team with implementing partners at Matanda Transit centre, located in Kanungu District. © UHRC

Lived experiences shared by marginalised individuals emphasised the personal and systemic impacts of exclusion. Participants called for substantive equality, training of justice actors, collaboration with NGOs, and inclusive policymaking. The engagement concluded with a commitment to uphold constitutional and international human rights obligations, address institutional biases, and ensure that no one is left behind in Uganda's pursuit of equality and justice.

result in long waits and overused facilities. Essential services (emergency obstetrics, surgery, outpatient) are available at all sites, but resource gaps persist: critical drug stock-outs (antibiotics, chronic disease meds, and contraceptives) and staffing shortages are routine. Patients frequently reported neglect during extended wait times (especially in maternity and paediatric units), and poor communication from overburdened staff caused anxiety and mistrust.

10.15 MONITORING SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS

With support from UNFPA, UHRC carried out inspections of Eastern Uganda prisons (Mbale Main, Mbale Women's, Jinja Main), monitoring the right to health in five regional referral hospitals (Hoima, Gulu, Jinja, Arua, Mbale), and an equality and non-discrimination training focused on African Commission Resolution 275 for both UHRC staff and different actors both in government and civil society.

The inspected Regional Referral Hospitals serve very large populations (Hoima: 2.8M;

Arua: 2.2M; Gulu: 2.1M; Mbale/Jinja: 4.5M) with limited resources. Beds and specialist staff are far

short of needs: e.g., Mbale/Jinja each had 40-45% of catchment living within 5km, but only 300-600 beds and 10-12 specialists. These mismatches

10.16 MONITORING OF REFUGEES

In Uganda, refugees arrive carrying the weight of conflict, persecution, and unimaginable loss, hoping for safety and a chance to rebuild their lives. Yet, even within a country celebrated for its progressive legal framework and open-door policy, many find new challenges that threaten their dignity and wellbeing. Overcrowded settlements, limited access to healthcare, education, and clean water, and growing food insecurity due to funding shortfalls create daily struggles that compound past trauma. Women and children, the majority of refugees face heightened risks of GBV, exploitation, and interrupted schooling, while the elderly and PWD are often overlooked, experiencing isolation and neglect.

Although the right to work and self-reliance exists on paper, practical barriers such as scarce economic opportunities, land shortages, and

restrictive local dynamics leave many reliant on diminishing humanitarian aid. Tensions with host communities, fuelled by competition over scarce resources, further expose refugees to discrimination and social marginalisation. The UHRC has monitored conditions in key settlements, including Adjumani, Bidi Bidi, Kyagwawala, Nakivale, and Rwamwanja, documenting both the persistent challenges and small but meaningful successes. For instance, targeted programmes have improved access to clean water and education in some settlements, and community-based initiatives have fostered dialogue between refugees and host populations, reducing conflicts and strengthening social cohesion.

10.17 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development should increase funding to UHRC for human rights monitoring to strengthen oversight, improve accountability, and ensure compliance with national and international human rights obligations.

10.18 CONCLUSION

In the realm of monitoring compliance with human rights standards, the saying “*what is not measured cannot be improved*” resonates profoundly. Safeguarding fundamental rights and freedoms within a country requires careful measurement and systematic assessment. Without a strong framework for tracking and evaluating adherence to these standards, meaningful progress remains difficult to achieve. Just as a skilled artisan carefully refines each detail when creating a masterpiece, so too must institutions deliberately monitor and assess their commitment to human rights. Through consistent and rigorous monitoring, gaps can be identified, shortcomings addressed, and continuous improvement achieved. Human rights monitoring empowers the Commission to hold institutions accountable, advocate for necessary reforms, and ensure that human rights are realized in practice for all citizens.

11

Highlights of UHRC'S Interventions in Research, Education and Documentation in 2025



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Human rights education is the first line of defence. When citizens know their rights, and institutions know their obligations, the conditions for violations narrow and the prospects for accountability grow.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Article 52 (1) (c), (e), (f), and (g) of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda provides for the promotional mandate of the UHRC to foster and nurture a culture of respect for human rights. This entails specifically, establishing a continuing programme of research, education and information to enhance respect of human rights; creating and sustaining within society the awareness of the provisions of the Constitution as the fundamental law; educating and encouraging the public to defend the Constitution against all forms of abuse and violation; and formulating, implementing and overseeing programmes intended to inculcate in the citizens of Uganda awareness of their civic responsibilities and an appreciation of their rights and obligations as free people.

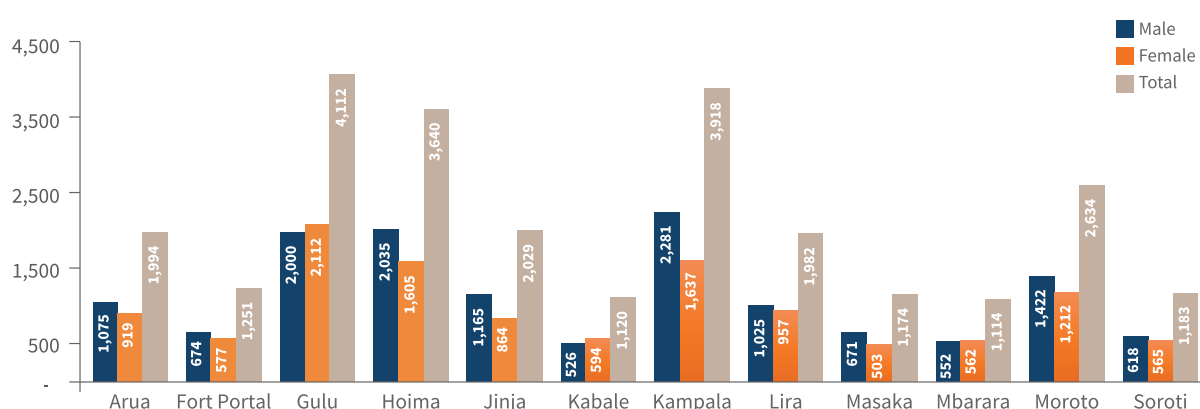
In the period under review, the UHRC conducted several activities within this mandate, targeting both rights holders and duty bearers. These

included workshops, human rights barazas/ community meetings, and media campaigns aimed at enhancing human rights awareness, including knowing and fulfilling civic duties and responsibilities. The UHRC also undertook thematic research on persistent land conflicts within the Buganda Sub-Region, establishing valuable insights to inform and guide policy formulation and interventions.

11.2 COMMUNITY MEETINGS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

In 2025, the UHRC organised a total of **166** community meetings known as barazas in **9** cities and **67** districts country-wide, in which **26,151** people (**14,044** male and **12,107** female) were sensitised. Six of the barazas were specifically conducted in Refugee Settlements in Palabek, Mungula, and Mireyi in Adjumani and Lamwo Districts.

Figure 28: UHRC Baraza attendance in 2025 disaggregated by Regional Office and gender.



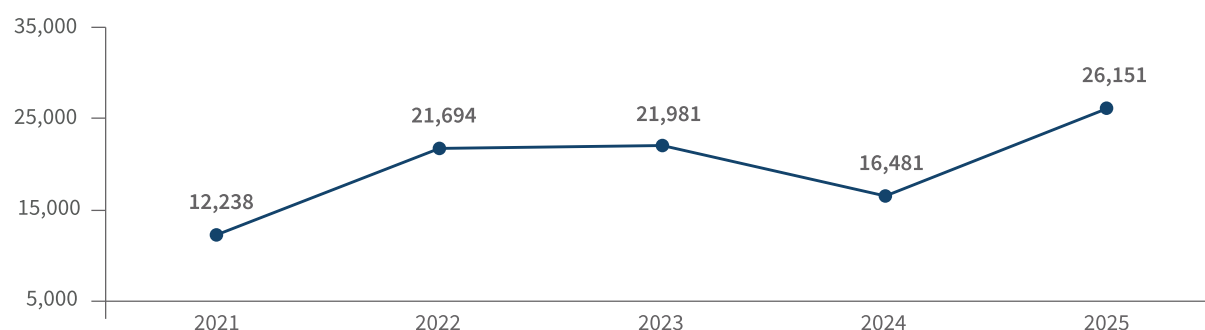
Source: UHRC

The number of barazas conducted rose significantly by 76.6% from 94 in 2024 to 166 in 2025. The **26,151** people reached in 2025 reflected a 58.67% increase from the 16,481 in 2024. The notable increase was attributed to the enhanced Government of Uganda funding for the UHRC and the stronger collaboration with partners, particularly ENABEL, which enabled UHRC to fulfil the commitment to take human rights awareness closer to the communities. Specifically, ENABEL supported development of inclusive communication materials, radio sensitisation programmes

and community barazas on business and human rights. As a result, more citizens got the opportunity to understand their rights, voice concerns, and hold duty bearers to account.

Over the years, the UHRC engagement with community members in barazas has generally been increasing, as the Figure below indicates. Equally growing has been the interest, attendance, and active participation of the targeted community members.

Figure 29: Attendance of UHRC barazas between 2021-2025.



Source: UHRC

11.2.1 Emerging Issues from the Community Meetings

Several emerging issues came up during the discussions, including the following:

- The rampant and prolonged pre-trial detention, with some inmates sometimes remaining on remand for over one year without appearing in court.
- Access for inmates aged 70 years and above to the SAGE while in prison.
- The concerns of prison officers about the refusal of some family members of prisoners to take responsibility for young children while in prison with their incarcerated mothers.
- The frequent drug stock-outs and inadequate clothing for children incarcerated with their mothers, which leaves prison officers-in-charge with no choice but to personally meet medical costs for them.
- Claims that some National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) officials were soliciting UGX 50,000 from citizens to fast-track the renewal of their national identity cards, a practice that excluded the poor and vulnerable.
- Delayed disposal of land cases by courts, which has pushed some aggrieved individuals to resort to witchcraft.
- Loss of life linked to alleged witchcraft practices and called for government mechanisms to investigate and prosecute such cases to deter future occurrences.
- Persistent cattle theft and killings by Karimojong rustlers in Katakwi District, despite the deployment of the army and Anti-Stock Theft Units within the border areas.
- The rising cases of child neglect, early marriages, teenage pregnancies, and school



UHRC staff Ms Caroline Gumoshabe, Principal Human Rights Officer, Mbarara (left) and Nassolo Samia (right) address a community baraza, on the UHRC mandate and the concept of human rights respectively, at Kakamba Trading Centre in Isingiro District. © UHRC

- dropouts which are attributed to parents' failure to value education and adequately provide for their children.
- Increasing incidents of mob action due to delays in the delivery of justice for victims of crime.
 - Increased substance and alcohol abuse among youth in Kapelebyong (including smoking marijuana, old women's grey hair, and paspalum grass), resulting in idleness and heightened security risks.
 - Concerns over the removal of names from the National Voters Register and the unauthorised transfer of voters to other polling stations other than the ones the voters knew, which would lead to confusion on Election Day.
 - Delays by GOU to compensate families whose children died while serving as 'Arrow Boys' – a civilian militia formed to protect communities against attacks by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) during the insurgency in Teso Sub-Region in the early 2000s.
 - The need for the GOU to urgently address the rising cases of Ugandan immigrant workers whose rights, particularly life, health, liberty and remuneration, were frequently violated by employers.
 - The growing number of street-connected children in Mbale City, attributed to poor parenting and unfavourable conditions at home.
 - Concerns about human rights abuses against widows, including being inherited as property, and dispossessed of their houses and land, among others.
 - The disparity in teachers' salaries caused by enhancements for science teachers alone, leaving out the arts teachers, which was detrimental to effective realisation of the right to education.
 - The rising GBV against men, who are often reluctant to report to the Police, largely due to cultural norms that elevate men above women and discourage them from seeking help.
 - Concerns about some government-aided primary and secondary schools that imposed fees even though they are supposed to provide free education.
 - Challenges of accessibility for persons with disability to services provided in offices on storeyed buildings without ramps for wheelchairs, nor toilets specially designed to accommodate them; all of which perpetuated their discrimination.

Business and Human Rights

- Lack of written employment contracts: Workers, out growers, and community members were operating under verbal agreements and consequently they struggled to prove the terms of employment in case of disputes.
- Many children were engaged in child labour working under hazardous conditions, which exposed them to harmful chemicals in oil and gas operations and sugar cane plantations.
- Child labour was causing high rates of school dropouts as children struggled to make ends meet and be in school as well.
- Unfair or delayed compensation for land acquired by companies or GOU.
- Inadequate or ineffective mechanisms for resolving disputes related to land acquisition, displacement, health, employment, among others.
- Pollution of the environment (air, water, and soil contamination) from oil spills and toxic waste dumping, which caused serious health problems within the community.
- Domestic violence triggered by disagreements on expenditure of the proceeds of land sales and/or the additional income from the employment opportunities.
- Loss of livelihoods from farming and fishing due to the companies acquiring large tracts of land for floriculture, sugarcane plantations, and oil and gas infrastructure.

11.2.2 Highlights of Benefits from the Barazas

- Over 50 participants (30 women, 20 men) received immediate guidance on family, labour, land, and court-related matters-while other issues were taken up for further deeper and structured handling at various levels both within and outside the Commission.
- Local leaders, including LC officials, Parish Chiefs, and Community Development Officers (CDOs), among others, were empowered

as first responders, and equipped with the knowledge and skills to effectively handle and manage human rights concerns.

- Strengthened collaboration was seen between the UHRC and the EC, EOC, district authorities, and local businesses, which enhanced community engagement, thereby enabling more effective redress for community members.
- Community members had greater appreciation of the dangers of domestic violence, child neglect, alcohol and drug abuse.

11.3 HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING WORKSHOPS AND DIALOGUES

The UHRC organised **45** training workshops on specific human rights issues targeting various stakeholders to impart knowledge and skills in human rights. The participants included UHRC members and staff; officials from the Office of the President (Resident City/District Commissioners), ODPP, District and Local Government, CSOs, Uganda Law Society, media practitioners, judicial officers, politicians, and religious and cultural leaders, among others. Through these engagements, UHRC reached a total of **2,640** people (**1,805** males and **835** females).

11.3.1 Training Workshop for UPF Personnel on Elections and Human Rights

In 2025, the UHRC held a four-day training workshop on elections and human rights for UPF personnel at the UPF Development Centre Kikandwa, Wakiso District. The workshop held from 24-27 June 2025 was attended by **89** Police officers (**72** males and **17** females) drawn from **21** districts, who gained comprehensive knowledge of core human rights principles and their practical application throughout the electoral process. They were from Lira, Kasese, Kabarole, Jinja, Iganga, Kamuli, Bushenyi, Buikwe, Wakiso, Yumbe, Hoima, Masindi, Soroti, Mbale, Tororo, Masaka, Kampala, Arua, Katakwi, Kayunga, and Gulu Districts.



Member of the Commission, Hon Crispin Kaheru (seated third left), the Director, Human Resource Development at the UPF, Senior Commissioner of Police, Tusiime Anne (seated middle) with other Police officers and UHRC staff pose for a group photo during the workshop © UHRC



L-R: Member of the Commission, Hon Omara Arpita Lamex (seated second right), Mr Kmadi Byonabye, Director, Research, Education and Documentation (seated second left), pose for a group photo during the workshop and group work sessions during the training of senior prisons officers at Imperial Resort Beach Hotel, Entebbe. @ UHRC

Emerging issues from the workshop

The participants raised some issues of concern including:

- Inadequate voter education which leaves some citizens unaware of their rights, voting procedures, and the implications of key electoral laws, and could lead to low voter turnout.
- The lack of joint or integrated online platforms and databases which limited the effective sharing, coordination, and dissemination of relevant information and recommendations generated from various government strategic meetings.
- The need to train Resident District Commissioners (RDCs) on human rights and electoral offences, as inadequate knowledge of these has led to unlawful orders of arrests.

- The need to disseminate the Public Order Management Act (POMA), 2012, as amended, as well as electoral and human rights laws, to Police stations and posts, as many officers were not adequately aware of these legal provisions.

11.3.2 Training of Female Prison Officers on Human Rights

The UHRC organised a two-day human rights training workshop for female prison officers, from 23-24 January 2025, at the Imperial Resort Beach Hotel in Entebbe. A total of 57 participants (04 males and 53 females) attended. The training equipped them with the knowledge and skills necessary to address the complexities of human rights in their line of duty. It also emphasised the importance of entrenching a human rights culture within prison work, with a particular focus on the unique challenges faced by women in custody.



Mr Kamadi Byonabye, Director-Research Education and Documentation, Ms Juliet Logose, Principal Human Rights Officer, Kampala Regional Office, with staff of the UHRC and prison officers, during the workshop at Kitalya Mini-Max Prison. © UHRC

Emerging issues from the workshop

The issues of concern raised by the female prison officers during the discussions included:

- The responsibility and blame that the prison authorities endured, even when suspects were admitted with visible wounds and injuries sustained prior to their incarceration and duly documented.
- The urgent need to effectively address and manage the increasing number of reported cases of sexual harassment by prison officers. This would ensure accountability, protect victims, and uphold professional and ethical standards within correctional institutions.
- The need to develop standardised guidelines and procedures to enable Officers-in-Charge of prisons to facilitate the automatic release of prisoners, particularly on remand, as

a measure to significantly reduce prison congestion.

11.3.3 Training of Prison Officers from Kitalya Mini-Max and Farm Prisons on Human Rights

The Commission conducted 03 capacity-building workshops on human rights for officers from Kitalya Mini-Max and Farm Prisons at Kitalya Mini-Max Prisons. A total of 257 officers (199 males and 58 females) attended. The participants were trained on the mandate, functions, and powers of the UHRC; the concept of human rights; the mandate of the UPS; the Mandela Rules; provisions of the Human Rights Enforcement Act; and the prevention of torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, with particular emphasis on the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act and the application of a HRBA within the prison setting. Participants were equipped

with practical skills to manage and support vulnerable persons, including women, youth, and PWD, with dignity, respect, and in accordance with human rights standards. The prison officers demonstrated enhanced understanding of human rights standards and their practical application in prison management.

“

One participant remarked: “The high turnout at this workshop reflects our shared commitment to upholding human rights. The training was timely and has strengthened our capacity to apply human rights principles in our daily duties.”

11.3.4 High-Level Meeting with Top Security Officers under the Kampala Metropolitan (KMP) Policing Area

The UHRC convened a high-level meeting of the senior command of the KMP on 11 December 2025 in Wakiso District, under the theme: ‘*Human Rights and Electoral Democracy in Uganda*’. It was attended by 84 participants (70 males and 14 females). It was also addressed by the EC. The meeting was held in preparation for the 2026 general elections, discussing how officers would

ensure peaceful, free, and fair electoral processes. Discussions covered the challenges encountered in past electoral processes, and strategies through which human rights could be safeguarded throughout the electoral cycle.

Emerging issues from the meeting

- The need to convene joint meetings between security agencies and the media to address misinformation and disinformation, and to promote accurate, balanced, and responsible reporting.
- The need to strengthen mechanisms that promote objective media reporting and ensure appropriate regulation of information disseminated to the public.
- The absence of comprehensive guidelines to govern and guide the constitutional cooperation and coordination between the Police and other security agencies.
- Inadequate knowledge among presiding officers, polling assistants, and constables regarding electoral laws, processes, and election management.
- The need to enhance voter and civic education to improve understanding, inclusivity, and participation of all citizens without discrimination.
- Insufficient logistical support for both the UPF and the EC during electoral processes.



The Chairperson UHRC, Hon. Mariam Wangadya (seated third left), flanked by UHRC staff, the EC official, the Senior Officers of Kampala Metropolitan Police and prisons, at the meeting held in Wakiso District. © : UHRC



Left to Right: UHRC staff with Stakeholders from Soroti City (top left), Bushenyi (top right), Kyenjojo (bottom left) and Jinja Districts (bottom right) in group photos during the dialogues on elections and Human Rights. © UHRC

11.3.5 Regional Dialogues on Elections and Human Rights

The UHRC conducted 12 regional dialogues across the country on elections and human rights. Held under the theme: *'Building trust and safeguarding human rights: the role of the Electoral Commission in delivering Peaceful and inclusive elections in the Region'*, the dialogues discussed stakeholders' duties and responsibilities, as well as the human rights challenges and hotspots in the electoral processes.

Stakeholders were sensitised on the human rights at stake during elections and experiences shared from past electoral processes. Participants were able to identify key risks and vulnerabilities and strategise on effective compliance with the legal framework, fulfilment of constitutional obligations, duties and responsibilities, and fostering accountability. Recommendations to guide peaceful, free, fair and human rights-based electoral processes were made, emphasising early warning systems, inclusive participation, and rapid response mechanisms.

A total of 508 people (427 males and 81 females) from 14 districts and 3 cities attended, drawn

from the UPF, UPS, UPDF, Office of the President (Resident City Commissioner (RDC)), NIRA, EC, Judiciary, CSO leaders, politicians, opinion leaders, and religious and cultural leaders were also in attendance. The dialogues were held in Arua, Soroti and Lira Cities; and the districts of Kyenjojo, Kitgum, Rubanda, Iganga, Sembabule, Kagadi, Bushenyi, Mityana and Moroto.

Emerging issues from the dialogues

During the discussions, the stakeholders raised the following issues of concern:

- The persistent threats of electoral violence in areas such as Sembabule, Masaka, Lwengo, and parts of Acholi and Kigezi. These threats were attributed to youth unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse, gang activity, and identity-based politics rooted in religious or tribal divisions.
- The misuse of technology and social media which had intensified issues like misinformation, disinformation, hate speech, and propaganda, exacerbated by unprofessional media practices and the use of AI to create fabricated stories. These dynamics were noted to contribute to heightened

tensions and intimidation of voters, candidates, and security personnel.

- The rising incidences of physical violence and assault against media practitioners by the Police and other security agencies.
- Undue censorship of content on some radio stations e.g. in Kagadi District, where content from or about the opposition candidates was heavily censored.
- The heavy deployment of armed security personnel on streets and roads; the allegations of unequal treatment of candidates exhibited by the security agencies, which undermined public confidence and, in some instances, intimidated citizens. RDCs, for example, were openly campaigning for the NRM, yet as public servants, they were required to be impartial. Others harassed and sometimes disrupted the activities of the opposition with the intention of blocking their events.
- Inadequate civic and voter education, mainly due to limited funding and the EC's focus on urban areas, which is said to have left rural and marginalised communities, like the Batwa, with little access to information on electoral processes and voter rights. This led to widespread ignorance, low voter registration, declining turnout, and persistent voter apathy observed over successive election cycles.
- Monetisation and commercialisation of elections, characterised by voter bribery, escalated campaign costs, and allegations of corruption among some EC officials and media practitioners. These practices disadvantaged candidates without financial muscle, discouraging them from contesting, which could distort voter choice and erode electoral integrity.
- Inadequate sensitisation on the mandates and obligations of security agencies, the constitutional mandate of RDCs, and the electoral laws particularly Section 87 of the Parliamentary Elections Act, which affected

the understanding and appreciation of roles, leading to mistrust, misinformation and conflict.

- Delays in justice and accountability mechanisms, especially investigations and delivery of decisions by oversight bodies including courts of law, which weakened timely justice and deterrence.
- The rising incidences of attacks against security personnel by some citizens and politicians during the electoral period. Violations in form of physical assaults and harassment of security personnel had occurred during the political campaigns in which they had a duty to maintain law and order amidst heightened tensions.
- The non-involvement of religious and cultural leaders in civic and voter education in a structured manner, as well as other electoral preparations, despite their critical role in community empowerment.
- The rising sexual and GBV due to couple disagreements on political choices.

11.3.6 Training on the Human Rights-Based Approach to Service Delivery within Refugee Settlements

UHRC conducted 05 training activities on the human rights-based approach (HRBA) to service delivery to refugees and host communities in Koboko District, reaching a total of 440 people (316 males and 124 females). The targeted participants included officers from the UPF, UPS, the Judiciary, and other justice, law and order institutions responsible for ensuring that service delivery promotes the observance of human rights. The training focused on human rights standards, principles, and safeguards during arrest and detention; the Human Rights Enforcement Act, 2019; the legitimate use of force and firearms in law enforcement operations; and access to justice for refugees, among others.



Group photos of some participants during the training in Koboko District. © UHRC

In addition, 04 other workshops on HRBA to service delivery were held for the Refugee Welfare Council (RWC) leaders in Koboko District. The RWC leaders were also trained on their role in the observance of human rights in refugee settlements and within host communities. A total of 162 people (85 males and 77 females) attended the workshops that focused on the promotion and protection of the rights of vulnerable persons such as women, girls, the concept of human rights, HRBA, and the dangers of early child and forced marriages and sexual gender-based violence (SGBV).

Emerging issues from the training activities

The issues of concern that participants raised on HRBA to service delivery were:

- Absenteeism among judicial officers, including magistrates and RSAs, leading to delays in the delivery of justice.
- The absence of a reception centre at the office of the Probation and Social Welfare Officer, which undermined effective service delivery for juvenile offenders. This challenge was further exacerbated by the insufficient number of probation officers, leading to delays in the management and disposal of juvenile cases.
- The exploitation of refugee children, who were often forced into child labour such as street hawking, hazardous work in quarries, and laborious tasks on farms to support their families. This compromised their safety and wellbeing and also violated their fundamental rights as children.
- Limited awareness among refugees of their rights, duties, responsibilities, and the legal framework in Uganda. This contributed to instances of non-compliance with the law and increased their vulnerability to exploitation, for example, by being made to illegally pay for Police bond when they were in conflict with the law.
- Corruption and procedural delays within the Police, largely resulting from prolonged and inadequate investigations, which continued to hinder timely case handling and management.
- The rising cases of homosexuality among inmates within detention facilities which pointed to challenges in inmate management, safety, and discipline.
- The need to redesign existing Police cells and prisons or establish new ones that would be appropriate for juvenile offenders. This would prevent the detention of juveniles with adults which is happening in violation of human rights standards.
- The growing reliance of community members on witchdoctors, whose practices undermine the observance of the law and human rights.
- The reduction in the food rations given to the refugees that has led to rampant thefts and crimes compounded by the lack of a court.
- The exploitation of refugees by humanitarian agencies who were employing them without contracts and not paying their dues.
- Poor referral mechanisms and a lack of coordination among the humanitarian agencies whose major mandate is refugee welfare and protection.



Staff of the UHRC, the EU Supreme delegation and participants take a photo in Adjumani District (left) and Lamwo Districts (right). © UHRC

11.3.7 Capacity Building on Access to Justice for JLOS Actors

The UHRC conducted 05 capacity-building workshops on access to justice for JLOS actors in refugee-hosting communities of Adjumani and Lamwo Districts. The Police, prisons, Magistrates, RSAs and other JLOS actors were trained under the theme: *“Bridging the gap in access to justice for refugees and host communities; protection and promotion of the rights of inmates.”*

A total of 256 participants (196 males and 60 females) attended and were enlightened on Alternative Dispute Resolution; dangers and prevention of Sexual Gender Based Violence; salient features of the Human Rights Enforcement Act, 2019; the ethical code of conduct and the use of reasonable force by Police.

From the trainings, participants identified and developed practical approaches for protecting and promoting the rights of refugees and host communities, including improved understanding of applicable legal frameworks, strengthened coordination among justice actors, and enhanced capacity to respond effectively to rights violations within both refugee settlements and host communities.

Emerging issues from the capacity building workshops

- Reduction in donor funding to the partners working with refugees, which affected service delivery and increased the vulnerability of refugees and host communities, resulting in an increased crime rate.
- Inadequate funding for mobile courts in the settlements and for fuel for the judicial officers to reach out to mobile courts.
- The language barrier between refugees and the legal aid service providers negatively impacted the delivery of justice.
- Excessive delays in handling of remand matters, especially those involving capital offences.
- Difficulty in handling domestic violence cases because many victims (wives) demanded the release of their husbands due to family pressure.
- Lack of medical personnel to examine GBV victims and perpetrators, thereby contributing to detention of suspects beyond 48 hours.
- The many unreported cases of forced and early child marriages within the refugee communities. Girls would be smuggled back to South Sudan, married off under a different legal regime and return to Uganda with babies.
- Persistent land disputes between refugees and host communities despite the efforts made on awareness creation on land related rights.
- Exploitation of refugees by the host communities who hire land at expensive rates.
- Refugees lacked awareness about the Ugandan laws.
- Poor parenting and high rate of school dropout in both the refugee and host communities.
- The increasing numbers of unregistered refugees in prisons.



Game rangers at Murchison Falls National Park in Nwoya District after the capacity building workshop.

© UHRC

- Inadequate medical staff in most health facilities within the settlements due to reduction of funding to Medical Teams International (MTI) and other partners that used to pay the remuneration of the additional staff.

11.3.8 Capacity Building for Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) Personnel on Human Rights

Two capacity-building workshops on human rights were held for game rangers from Kidepo and Murchison Falls National Parks in Karenga and Nwoya Districts, respectively. A total of **119** participants (**102** males and **17** females) attended the training, which covered the concept of human rights, the HRBA, the ethical code of conduct and national laws such as Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act, (PPTA), 2012, Human Rights Enforcement Act, 2019 and the rights of vulnerable persons. They were also urged to uphold human rights in human-wildlife conflicts and use reasonable force.

Emerging issues from the UWA capacity building

Participants noted some issues of concern as outlined below:

- The lack of consideration for expectant game rangers, who are reportedly required to still

wear their uniforms, which are not tailor-made to accommodate pregnancy, thus posing potential risks to foetal health.

- The harsh living conditions and alleged torture in training schools, such as beatings and deliberate deprivation of food, cited by new recruits, which were reportedly part of the training considered appropriate to prepare them for the challenging nature of ranger duties.
- Insufficient knowledge within communities about wildlife matters and related conflicts, resulting in increased tension.
- Effective follow-up of cases of poaching was difficult due to poor coordination between the Police and UWA, whereby suspects were released without the knowledge of UWA, even when the details of the case had been discussed between the two institutions.

11.3.9 Police Training on Human Rights Standards during Law Enforcement

During the period under review, the UHRC organised **02** training workshop for Police personnel in Buliisa and Kibaale Districts on human rights standards during law enforcement. A total of **81** participants (**66** male and **15** female) drawn from the lower cadre were trained, since they directly deal with the community members

to enforce the law, including effecting arrests. The training covered the mandate of UHRC, the concept of human rights, the Human Rights Enforcement Act, 2019 and the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act, 2012. Participants also learnt about the individual responsibility that officers have under the Human Rights Enforcement Act, 2019, as opposed to vicarious liability.

Appreciating the importance of the knowledge attained, the participants urged GOU to increase funding for training so that more security officials can be reached since their awareness of human rights standards and laws was inadequate.

11.3.10 Training for Flower Farm Workers on Business and Human Rights

Three trainings on business and human rights were conducted for Royal Van Zanteen and Aurum Roses Flower Farms in Wakiso and Mukono Districts, with a specific focus on labour rights and redress mechanisms for violations of workers' rights. A total of **499** participants (**192** males and **307** females) attended. The identified emerging issues from the participants were:

- Lack of a minimum wage policy in Uganda.
- Lack of a human rights policy in most companies and business enterprises.
- Weak implementation of laws leading to the employment of children and use of child labour.
- Lack of employment contracts/appointment letters, especially for casual workers.
- Ignorance of workers about their rights, duties and responsibilities.

11.3.11 Engagements with Stakeholders on the Status of Human Rights in Districts

The Commission held **04** stakeholder engagements in Kotido, Lira and Buvuma Districts on the status of human rights, where a total of **105** participants, **76** males and **29** females, were reached. The participants, comprising the UHRC, Office of the President (RDCs and Resident City Commissioners), UPF, UPS, UPDF, ODPP, DLGs, CSOs, ULS, media, Judiciary, political actors, religious and cultural leaders, were drawn from

Moroto, Kotido, Buvuma, Nakapiripirit Districts and Lira City.

The discussions focused on the prevailing human rights concerns in the respective districts, identifying key gaps, challenges, and possible interventions for improving the protection and promotion of human rights.

Emerging issues from the stakeholder engagements

- Lack of a remand home in Lango Sub-Region leading to detention of juvenile offenders with adults.
- The need to revamp and fully operationalise District Human Rights Committees through targeted training and adequate facilitation.
- The need for integration of HRBA into the training manuals of security agencies in order to prevent abuses and violations.
- The inadequate community sensitisation which needed to be enhanced in order to reduce crime and promote a culture of vigilance and accountability. Community sensitisation would enable the population to understand the legal consequences of crime especially capital offences, as well as the reporting and protection mechanisms for the victim(s).

11.4 ESTABLISHING A HUMAN RIGHTS MUSEUM

The UHRC's plan to establish a human rights museum progressed well in 2025 with a crucial meeting held to put it into perspective and map the next steps forward. The museum, which will be for purposes of recording, examining past violations and remembering those affected by human rights violations, was expected to be established in the near future. The Chairperson and members of the Commission attended the discussions, facilitated by experts from Makerere University. Its purpose, clientele, operating legal framework, location and funding and the operational modalities were further concretised during the meeting. By the close of 2025, the

UHRC was engaged in practical steps to actualise the establishment and operation of the Uganda Human Rights Museum.

11.5 THE PENDING NATIONAL CIVIC EDUCATION POLICY

The UHRC has, since 2012, been spearheading the advocacy for a National Civic Education Framework in accordance with its constitutional mandate to oversee civic education in Uganda. The advocacy aimed at ensuring harmonised, coordinated, adequately funded, continuous and countrywide civic education as required by the Constitution of Uganda. This overly lengthy process saw UHRC first submit a draft National Civic Education Policy to the MOJCA (its line Ministry) in 2015, for tabling before the Cabinet. However, in 2021, MOJCA advised the UHRC to undertake a Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA), which was a new mandatory requirement for the policy formulation process.

GOU released funds to the UHRC in 2024, and the RIA was duly undertaken and later validated in January 2025, facilitated by the Cabinet Secretariat and MoJCA. A total of 33 participants (19 males and 14 females) attended the RIA from the MOGLSD, Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of ICT and National Guidance, EC, IRCU, Uganda National NGO Forum, UPIMAC (the Coordinator of the Civic Education Coalition in Uganda), and ACME/Uganda Media Sector Working Group. In the RIA sessions, spanning 10

working days, participants practically did an in-depth analysis of the civic education environment in Uganda.

The analysis deduced that a National Civic Education Policy was critical to address the challenges related to civic education, as summarised below:

- The inability of the UHRC to oversee all civic education programmes, including those of other partners and key stakeholders, as required by the Constitution. This was against the backdrop of a lack of a common understanding of UHRC's oversight role, the inadequate funding for civic education initiatives, and uncoordinated civic education delivery.
- Lack of a civic education curriculum for schools and educational institutions ever since subjects like civics and political education was scrapped or relegated.
- The general lack of awareness of human rights and civic obligations among a significant part of the population of Uganda.
- The lack of clarity between voter education and civic education, which had created the misconception that civic education is only necessary during electoral periods, as well as the politicisation of or politicking in the name of civic education, had created negative perceptions.



L-R: Commissioner Mwenyi Davis (Cabinet Secretariat), Ms Ida Nakiganda, former Director, Complaints Investigations Legal Services Directorate (seated middle), Mr Kamadi Byonabye, Director Research Education Documentation Directorate (seated right) and other participants during the drafting sessions of the Regulatory Impact Assessment. © UHRC



Participants attending the validation meeting pose for a group photo alongside the Hon. Norbert Mao, Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs. © UHRC

- The absence of a commonly accepted definition of civic education, or a nationally shared content or curriculum. This was in addition to the inadequate standard setting, quality control mechanisms and information-sharing and coordination frameworks.
- The limited national investment in civic education leading to inadequate, intermittent and uncoordinated efforts at civic education delivery. Previous efforts at implementing coordinated national civic education programmes were donor-supported, limited in coverage and unsustainable.

The RIA recommended a National Civic Education Policy as the best option in addressing the issues of: Undefined processes of transferring knowledge, skills and values; unclear processes of acquiring knowledge, skills and values to every person in Uganda; low appreciation of their human rights, duties and obligations as stipulated in the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995; and inadequate empowerment of citizens.

The RIA on civic education was duly validated in January 2025 by **63** participants (**42** males and **21** females), representing various state and non-state actors. In addition to State institutions that had participated in the RIA were: the Office of

the President, the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministries of Local Government; Finance, Planning and Economic Development; Defence; and Internal Affairs; the, EOC, Inspectorate of Government, Judicial Service Commission, UCC, Media Council of Uganda, UPF, UPS, UPDF, Internal Security Organisation, the RDC Secretariat, ODPP, NPA, National Curriculum Development Center (NCDC), the Human Rights Governance and Security Programme at the MoJCA and the Uganda Media Centre.

Similarly, non-state stakeholders that validated the RIA, in addition to those that had participated in its development included: Uganda Joint Christian Council, Uganda Editors Guild, Uganda Media Women's Association, National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders in Uganda, Women of Uganda Network, Sensitise Uganda and Uganda Youth Development Network.

Subsequently, in March 2025, the 2018 draft National Civic Education Policy was reviewed and aligned to the RIA as stipulated in the policy formulation guidelines from the Cabinet. The UHRC submitted the new draft National Civic Education Policy and its Implementation Action Plan to MOJCA in May 2025 for further management. By the close of 2025, the policy was pending Cabinet approval.

11.6 REVIEW OF THE POLICE HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING MANUAL

For the past 16 years, the UPF has implemented a Human Rights Training Manual developed in 2000 by the UHRC in conjunction with the UPF. The manual, which guides human rights training within the Police, was first reviewed in 2009. Subsequently, in 2025, it was again reviewed and updated, given the emerging human rights challenges and evolving legal standards. The review aimed to ensure continued relevance, effectiveness, and alignment with current human rights standards.

A one-day consultative meeting to review the training manual was convened on 3 April 2025 in Entebbe, attended by 29 participants (17 males and 12 females) from UPF and UHRC.

The meeting, which the UHRC Chairperson and the Secretary to the Commission facilitated, made a comprehensive review, agreeing on proposals that would ensure alignment with current human rights standards and best practices. Gaps and areas of improvement were identified and positions from UPF and the UHRC harmonised.



Hon. Mariam Wangadya, Chairperson, UHRC, Ms Ejang Margaret Lucy, Secretary to the Commission and Senior Commissioner of Police, Anne Tusiime, with other participants, pose for a group photo during the meeting. © UHRC

Some of the critical issues for consideration in the review were:

- Updating the manual to include the new laws, policies, regulations and other guidelines that have since come up, particularly on human rights.
- Other emerging human rights issues, such as the different trends in the human rights legal framework at the international and regional levels; the expanding roles of Police under civil and political rights; handling disability; the HRBA to Police work; mental health and human rights in Police work, among others.
- Incorporating contemporary human rights challenges such as those relating to:
 - a) Traffic and the human rights implications in Police work;
 - (b) Harmful cultural practices in view of the right to culture;
 - (c) The increasing assignment of individual liability to law enforcement officers by the new laws as opposed to vicarious liability;
 - (d) The role of Police as the lead agency in policing elections with other security organs in light of the freedom to assemble and demonstrate;
 - (e) Harmonising the extent of incorporation of sexual and GBV issues in the human rights manual, given that it was already a separate module with an existing training manual.

| The design and layout of the Manual

The UHRC convened the compilation meeting of staff and UPF officers from 9-11 April 2025, at Ridar Hotel, Seeta-Mukono, attended by **14** people (**11** females and **3** males), which produced a draft manual.

Thereafter, the UHRC conducted a pre-testing exercise of the revised Police Human Rights Training Manual at Kabalye Police Training School in Masindi District from 28-30 May 2025.

A total of **100** Police officers (**75** males and **25** females) participated in the pretesting, which enabled the UHRC to assess the manual's practicality, comprehensiveness of the topics and effectiveness in ensuring the application of human rights principles to law enforcement.

Subsequently, from 11-13 June 2025, the draft was reviewed and updated to incorporate the findings of the pretesting exercise. A joint meeting of **15** participants (**05** males and **10** females), from the UHRC and UPF, undertook this in Entebbe, Wakiso District. Thereafter, the UHRC printed **184** copies of the updated manual. Training of trainers' sessions were planned to follow to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the content by the UPF trainers/instructors who will be using it.



The UPF team reviewing the manual. © UHRC

11.7 RESEARCH ON PERSISTENT LAND CONFLICTS IN BUGANDA SUB-REGION

In the period under review, the UHRC undertook research on persistent land conflicts in Buganda and the human rights implications. The research sought to establish the nature of the land conflicts: the manifestations, underlying and systemic causes.

A preliminary meeting to contextualise the research was held on 19 August 2025 at the UHRC Boardroom. It was attended by **20** participants (**09** males and **11** females) drawn from the UHRC, Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development, Lands Division of the High Court, ACODE, Buganda Land Board, Uganda Land



Member of the Commission, Hon. Crispin Kaheru and other participants during the contextualisation meeting of the research on land conflicts in Buganda Sub-region. © UHRC

Alliance, UPF, and GIZ (Responsible Land Policy Programme in Uganda).

It established the different perspectives on the nature and causes of the land conflicts, the available key resources for information on land conflicts and a common, collaborative approach to the research and policy engagement.

Highlights of the discussed causes of the persistent land conflicts in Buganda Sub-region include:

- The growing population vis a vis the in-expandable nature of land.
- Poor documentation and overlapping land titles, i.e., where two people have documents confirming ownership of the same piece of land.

- Urbanisation and the related rural-urban migration; Buganda hosts the capital city of Uganda, hence many people flock in seeking a better lifestyle, which puts pressure on land.
- Bureaucracy in resolving land matters.

The contextualisation meeting also guided the research respondents and the critical questions to be asked.

Subsequently, data collection was conducted in 26 districts of Wakiso, Mpigi, Mukono, Kayunga, Kalungu, Bukomansimbi, Masaka, Kalangala, Gomba, Butambala, Nakasongola, Nakaseke, Luwero, Kayunga, Buikwe, Buvuma, Sembabule, Lyantonde, Lwengo, Rakai, Kyotera, Mityana, Kassanda, Mubende, Kiboga and Kyankwanzi. Data analysis was undertaken, and by the end of December 2025, the UHRC was in the process of publishing the research report.

11.8 HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION THROUGH SCHOOL HUMAN RIGHTS AND PEACE CLUBS

During the review period, the UHRC focused on re-establishing the School Human Rights and Peace Clubs and providing monitoring and technical support to the members. This was because the effectiveness of the clubs had been negatively

affected during the COVID-19 lockdown, during which schools were closed for a period of two years. The UHRC engaged with **68** secondary schools, comprising **21** newly formed clubs and **47** revamped, reaching a total of **8,718** students, comprising **3,943** males and **4,775** females. The school outreach in 2025 is summarised in the Table below.

Table 44: School Human Rights and Peace Clubs established and monitored in 2025 by Regional Office.

REGIONAL OFFICE	NO. OF SCHOOLS REACHED	SCHOOLS	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
ARUA	4	Yivu SS, Moyo SSS, Katrina SS and Ogoko SSS	227	152	379
FORT PORTAL	13	Kyejonjo SSS, Nyamwamba Seed SS, & Our Lady of Fatima SS, Kasese Muslim Secondary School, Mubuku Valley Secondary School, Kuruhe High School, Semuliki High School, Bumadu Seed School, Bubukwanga Secondary School, Nyabbani Secondary School, Kitagwenda High School, Kyaka Senior Secondary School, and Wekomire Secondary School.	1,259	1,302	2,561
GULU	6	Kitgum Comprehensive School, Layibi High, Gulu Army Secondary School, Lagwai Seed Secondary School, Biyaya secondary School, Kitgum Comprehensive School	267	410	677
HOIMA	4	Bugungu Secondary School, Faba Seed Secondary School, Biiso War Memorial School, & Ngwendo Seed Secondary School	157	149	306
JINJA	3	Busoga High school, Balawoli Secondary School and Kamuli Girls College.	110	206	316
KABALE	3	Bubaare Secondary School, Kigata High School, & St. Aloysius Girls' Secondary School.	40	110	150
KAMPALA	4	Luwero Seed Secondary School, St. Mary's Kavumba Vocational Senior Secondary School, Bishop's Senior Secondary School and Ndejje Vocational Secondary School	240	232	472
LIRA	5	Atapara Secondary School, Hill City College, Aduku Secondary School, Aloii Secondary School & Okwang Secondary School	501	531	1,032
MASAKA	3	St. Joseph Mary Secondary School, Kako Senior Secondary School, and Bukomansimbi Senior Secondary School.	379	538	917
MBARARA	3	Bugamba Secondary School, Kitagata Secondary School, and Kibubura Girls' Secondary School.	111	292	403
MOROTO	14	Morulem Girls' Secondary School, Lotuke Seed Secondary School, Abim Secondary School, Jubilee 2000 Secondary School, Pope John Paul II Memorial College, Ik Seed Secondary School, Kaabong Technical Institute, Kaabong Secondary School, St. Kizito Secondary School, Arengesiop Secondary School, Lolachat Seed Secondary School, Nakapiripirit Secondary School, Namalu Secondary School, and Kotido Secondary School,	545	607	1,152
SOROTI	6	Tubur Secondary School, Soroti Secondary School, Kanyum Comprehensive Secondary School, Wiggins Secondary School, Hamdan Girls' School, and Nakoma Secondary School	107	246	353
TOTAL	68		3,943	4,775	8,718

© UHRC



Photo 111: Sensitisation of Club members at Morulem Girls S.S (left) in Moroto and Bukomansimbi SSS (right). © UHRC

The UHRC built the capacity of the students in managing the clubs and sensitised them on the benefits of joining. Key highlights of the discussions were the concept of human rights, the mandate of the UHRC, forming and running the club, and constructive dispute resolution both in and out of school.

Among the established benefits of the club were:

- Enhanced understanding of human rights and respect among students.
- Increased civic engagement and participation in community service.
- Reduced bullying and discrimination.

However, some of the challenges included:

- Inadequate knowledge of human rights among some patrons and club members.
- Insufficient funding to run the affairs of the clubs.
- Sustainability challenges; when club leaders leave the school, new members often have to start from scratch.

11.9 HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION THROUGH THE MEDIA

The UHRC conducted radio talk shows, television engagements, and spot messages to reach diverse communities across the country. A total of **134** radio talk shows and **05** television talk shows were conducted in addition to the **6,327** spot messages aired. The talk shows and spot messages were in multiple local languages to ensure accessibility, inclusivity, and meaningful public participation in human rights discussions. The languages were: Runyankore, Rukiga, Lukhonzon, Rutooro, Runyoro, Luganda, Ateso, English, Kupsabiny, Lumasaba, Lusoga, Lugwere, Luo (Leb Lango), Ngakarimojong, and Lebtur. The Commission received free radio airtime to promote public awareness of human rights. It was donated by several radio stations, including Radio Wa 89.8 FM in Lira, Ngeya FM in Kasese, Pacis FM and Mega FM in Gulu, UBC West in Mbarara City, and Radio Maria in Kabale.

Table 45: UHRC media programmes in 2025 disaggregated by Regional Office

REGIONAL OFFICE	RADIO TALK SHOWS	TELEVISION	SPOT MESSAGES
Arua	5	0	200
Fort Portal	8	0	412
Gulu	13	0	788
Hoima	12	0	602
Jinja	11	0	730
Kabale	26	0	689
Kampala	4	0	480
Lira	32	0	220
Masaka	5	0	786
Mbarara	6	1	553

REGIONAL OFFICE	RADIO TALK SHOWS	TELEVISION	SPOT MESSAGES
Moroto	5	0	220
Soroti	7	0	647
Headquarters	0	4	00
Total	134	5	6,327

Source: UHRC

11.9.1 Television Talk Shows

Five television talk shows were conducted on Bukedde TV1 in Luganda, and Tayari West TV in Runyankore, focusing on elections and human rights. Critical issues that were discussed were the obligations to observe human rights throughout the electoral process and the rights at stake, including the right to vote, freedom of expression, access to information, rights of children and protection from intimidation. Furthermore, sensitisation was done on the legal framework on elections, emphasising the

duties and responsibilities of citizens during the electoral processes, the role of the media and political institutions, among others.

Viewers were enlightened on the HRBA principles and their application to elections. The principles of active participation, accountability of decision-makers, non-discrimination among all citizens, empowerment of marginalised groups, and adherence to the rule of law were highlighted, emphasising their critical importance in fostering democratic systems.

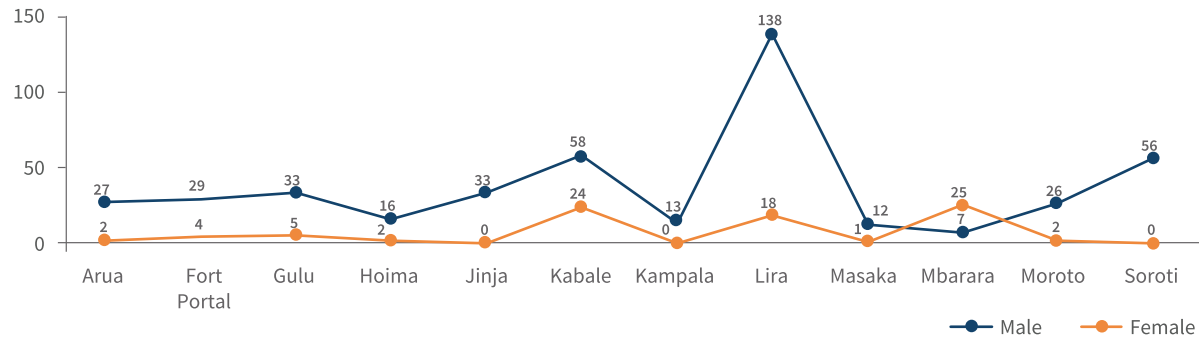


The UHRC panellists during the different television talk shows in Luganda at Bukedde TV 1 on Elections and Human Rights.
© UHRC



L-R: Member of the Commission, Hon. Omara Apita Lamex and Lira Regional Office staff, Mr Otim Anthony and Mr Nicholas Ogwang, during a radio talk-show at Radio Wa, Lira. © UHRC

Figure 30: Disaggregation by gender of the callers during the UHRC radio talk shows.



Source: UHRC

11.9.2 Radio Talk Shows

A total of **134** radio talk shows were held on 40 radio stations countrywide. A total of **531** listeners (**448** males and **83** females) called in during the talk shows, which provided a key platform for interactive engagement, enabling people to discuss human rights issues, ask questions, and receive guidance on referral mechanisms, as well as report human rights concerns. The topics of discussion were: the concept of human rights; the rights of children; the human rights implications for labour rights; elections and human rights; the dangers of sexual and GBV; the right to personal liberty; and freedom from torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.

Male callers dominated the talk shows compared to the women and there was a clear disproportion

in gender representation across the Regional Offices, as shown in the Figure below. This was largely attributed to the patriarchal nature of society and its influence on the gender disparity in access to media and telephones; high levels of illiteracy among the women; and the preoccupation with other domestic and maternal responsibilities that were not according them time for participation in media programmes, among others.

11.9.3 Airing of Spot Messages

A total of **6,327** spot messages on elections and human rights were aired on **35** radio stations nationwide. This multi-lingual, multi-platform approach strengthened public awareness, sustained engagement, and enhanced understanding of human rights across the regions.



Copies of the UHRC IEC material on the Uganda Bill of Rights in Aliba Ti and Kebu languages. © UHRC

11.10 INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION (IEC) MATERIALS

In 2025, the UHRC translated the Bill of Rights into nine local languages, printed and disseminated **8,831** copies of the IEC materials to the communities through the UHRC Regional Offices. The local languages were: Aliba Ti, Rutuku, Kinyarwanda, Kirundi, Lendu, Edeb, Nyangi, Lubwisi, Ndo/Kebu. The availability of printed copies enhanced accessibility, enabling citizens to easily reference, share, and internalise the provisions, thereby strengthening awareness and protection of human rights at the grassroots level.

To further promote inclusivity and ensure equal access for all persons without discrimination, the Bill of Rights was also translated into Braille. This initiative enabled individuals with visual impairments to read, understand, and benefit from the material, thereby strengthening their participation in human rights awareness and protection.

11.11 HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION THROUGH COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

During the reporting period, the UHRC enhanced and leveraged partnerships and collaborations nationwide to advance its constitutional mandate of promoting human rights. These efforts were realised through active participation in numerous human rights activities organised by stakeholders from both state and non-state institutions, as well as involving the stakeholders in UHRC Human Rights Education (HRE) activities. Key collaborators included the UPF, UPS, UPDF, Wakiso Human Rights Committee, Human Rights Centre Uganda, African Youth Development Link, and academic institutions, as detailed in the Table below. In addition, the Commission worked closely with development partners such as GIZ, ENABEL, European Union and Austrian Development Cooperation, further strengthening its outreach and impact.

Table 46: UHRC partnerships and collaborations in 2025

S/N	PARTNER	THEME	TARGET PARTICIPANTS
	African Youth Development Link	Elections and human rights: Massive youth campaigns to register for National IDs	General public
2	Arua District Local Government	SGBV in the West Nile Region	Police, DLG, Judiciary, media, ODPP
3	CEHURD	Application of HRBA to service delivery	District Human Rights Committees
4	Church of Uganda (Madi and West Nile Diocese)	United Society free from child violence	Congregation at Emmanuel Cathedral children's church, Ombokoro Church of Uganda

S/N	PARTNER	THEME	TARGET PARTICIPANTS
5	East African Crude Oil Pipeline	Gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health risks	Community members, district leadership, health partners, CSOs in Hoima
6	ENABEL	Respect for human rights by businesses in Uganda	Communities and duty bearers in Hoima Region (oil & gas), Jinja Region (sugar cane plantations), and Kampala Region (floriculture and mining)
7	GIZ	Strengthening governance and civil society in Uganda	Game rangers in the Gulu Region
8	Gulu City and Gulu District Local Government	Gender equality	General public, community leaders
9	Human Rights Centre-Uganda	Reduction of human rights violations through the application of HRBA	Duty bearers and rights holders in Lira, Pader and Moroto Districts
10	Kazi Njema Online Radio	The human rights situation in the Albertine Region and the role of the media in the promotion and protection of human rights	Representatives from media houses and the UCC
11	National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Uganda	Promotion, sharing, learning and adoption of good practices by human rights defenders in Hoima Region	Human rights defenders in the Albertine Region
12	The National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU)	NUDIPU Annual Advocacy Day	Government officials of Hoima City, development partners, NUDIPU, security agencies, the MOH, the MOGLSD, PWD and representatives of their Unions
13	UPDF	The role of UPDF in the observance of human rights (children's rights, land rights and rights during elections)	100 UPDF Officers of the 4th Division in Gulu
14	UPF	Human rights in the electoral process Rights of the children in conflict with the law Promotion and Protection of Human Rights	4000 polling constables participated Police officers in Gulu 3,446 Police officers at Kabalye Police Training School, Masindi
15	Wakiso District Human Rights Committee	Commemoration of the International Human Rights Day Role of security agencies in the protection and promotion of human rights during elections.	General public 67 Police officers of Wakiso CPS, Wakiso District
16	War Victims and Children Networking (WVCN)	Experience sharing on the observance of the rights of former abductees	Survivors of abduction during the LRA insurgency and duty bearers in Gulu Region
17	Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy	Tuongea: Let's talk peace	Security agencies in Jinja Region

Source: UHRC

11.12 UHRC LIBRARY AND DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

The UHRC Library and Documentation Centres (LDCs) at the Head Office and the Regional Offices continued to serve staff and the general public in 2025. Users utilised the LDCs for academic and other research, as an information resource on human rights and law, but also generally. A total

of 85 users visited the LDCs in 2025, of whom 24 were researchers, 33 students, 07 lawyers, 9 interns and 12 UHRC staff, as shown in the Table below. The well-stocked LDCs provided the users with resources on diverse subjects; enabled them to do research and utilise reliable information across multiple formats, contributing to academic, professional and personal development.

Table 47: Categories of the LDCs users disaggregated by UHRC Regional Office

REGIONAL OFFICE	RESEARCHERS	STUDENTS	LAWYERS	INTERNS	STAFF
	02	05	00	00	01
Fort Portal	00	00	00	00	01
Gulu	10	04	00	00	01
Hoima	02	02	02	02	01
Jinja	01	01	01	01	01
Kabale	00	00	00	00	01
Kampala	03	07	00	00	01
Lira	00	00	00	00	01
Masaka	05	10	01	00	01
Mbarara	01	04	03	06	01
Moroto	00	00	00	00	01
Soroti	00	00	00	00	01
TOTAL	24	33	07	09	12

Source: UHRC

In addition, the UHRC successfully subscribed to the Online Law Library so as to enhance access to legal information and enable library users to conveniently consult a wide range of Ugandan legal instruments. The subscription supported legal research, promoted awareness of the law, and strengthened the user's capacity to uphold human rights and the rule of law.

Furthermore, the UHRC subscribed to the Uganda Printing and Publishing Corporation (UPPC) and acquired 02 physical copies of each publication and legislation enacted. These included newly endorsed Acts of Parliament, Bills, Statutory Instruments, subsidiary legislation and Government Gazettes. The subscription supported the UHRC mandate by enhancing the availability of up-to-date legal instruments for research, education, and public awareness.

11.13 CHALLENGES FACED IN THE PROVISION OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

(a) The lack of coordination in information disseminated to the public by various State and non-state organisations sometimes led to inconsistencies and confusion, thereby affecting public trust and the effectiveness of human rights education.

(b) Human rights education activities continued to be dominated by men, reflecting the patriarchal nature of society. This perpetuates gender inequality and undermines the SDG principle to 'Leave No One Behind'.

(c) Inadequate funding continued to limit UHRC's ability to expand outreach activities and discounted the impact of human rights education. As a result, many citizens still lacked access to critical human rights information.

(d) The participation of PWDs in human rights education activities was still minimal, thereby depriving them of essential information needed to foster positive mindset change, build self-esteem, and strengthen their capacity for advocacy. Reaching out to them effectively required adequate resources to facilitate appropriate transportation, guides and sign language interpreters.

11.14 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs should fast-track the tabling to Cabinet and approval of the National Civic Education Policy so as to guide harmonised, coordinated, adequately funded, continuous and countrywide civic education and address current challenges in the delivery of civic education.

2. The promotional mandate of UHRC, which focuses on the prevention of human rights violations and abuses, should be given adequate priority through enhanced funding by the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.
3. Parliament should operationalise Article 212 (d) of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda to clearly spell out how the Uganda Police Force should cooperate with other security organs established under the Constitution.

11.15 CONCLUSION

The Commission fulfilled its constitutional mandate during the reporting period by implementing a range of human rights and civic education initiatives that enhanced public awareness of fundamental rights and strengthened citizens' ability to understand, claim, and exercise them; through inclusive and participatory approaches, these efforts reached diverse and vulnerable groups, promoted accountability and respect for the rule of law, and empowered individuals and communities to identify violations, seek redress, and engage in democratic processes, contributing to a more informed and rights-conscious society grounded in dignity, equality, and justice.

12

Finance and Administration



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In 2025, the UHRC continued to deliver against significant resource constraints, but adequate, predictable funding remains essential to sustained impact.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

The Finance and Administration Directorate is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day administration and management of the Commission, including funds to enable the achievement of the objectives of the Commission's Strategic Investment Plan (SIP). The role of the Directorate is to support other directorates to implement their activities in accordance with the constitutional mandate of the Commission. The Directorate comprises the following units: Policy and Planning, Finance and Accounts, Human Resources and Administration, Procurement and Disposals, Information Systems and Communication and Public Relations. Accordingly, the activities under the Directorate include management of human resources, procurements and disposals, IT systems, logistics/transport, public relations and planning, budgeting and finance.

12.2 BUDGETARY ALLOCATIONS FOR FY 2024/25²⁸³

The UHRC activities are funded by GOU in fulfilment of the state's obligation to fund National Human Rights Institutions in accordance with the Paris principles. The Commission appreciates the GOU for the continuous funding of its activities. In FY 2024/2025, the Commission's service delivery was funded by resources from the GOU supplemented by contributions from development partners.

12.2.1 Funding from GOU and Development Partners

The GOU remained the major funding source for the Commission, providing a total of UGX 32,978,273,948, up from UGX 18,667,000,000 the previous Financial Year, while development partners contributed UGX 973,479,757. The development partners were Justice, Law and Order Sector, the German Corporation for International Development (GIZ), and UNFPA, as indicated in the Table below. Donor support was particularly for the human rights tribunal hearings, investigations, monitoring, inspections, and human rights and civic education.

Table 48: UHRC funding from Government of Uganda and development partners in FY 2024/25

S/N	FUNDING SOURCE	AMOUNT (UGX)	TOTAL (UGX)
1.	Government of Uganda	32,978,273,948	32,978,273,948
2.	Development partners		973,479,757
3.	Justice, Law and Order Sector	584,651,072	
4.	German Corporation for International Development	107,917,685	
5.	United Nations Population Fund	280,910,000	
GRAND TOTAL			33,951,753,705

Source: UHRC

²⁸³ The financial information is based on the financial year (FY) 2024/25 as opposed to activities that are based on the calendar year 2025, since the funding is provided on the basis of financial years.

Government of Uganda provided 97.1% of the Commission's funding, which was an increase from 91.9% received in FY 23/24, while development partners provided 2.9%, which was a reduction from the 8.1% received in the previous FY.

The Commission also received support from ENABEL, United Nations Office on Drugs and

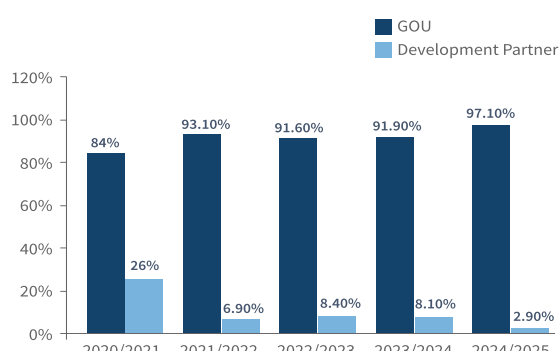
Crime (UNODC), and Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) and Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF) through direct funding for various activities. GOU funding increased in the FY under review, as shown below. The Table highlights the funding trend by GOU and development partners for the last five years.

Table 49: Government of Uganda and external funding to UHRC 2020/21-2024/25

EXPENDITURE ITEM	2020/2021 UGX IN BILLIONS	2021/2022 UGX IN BILLIONS	2022/2023 UGX IN BILLIONS	2023/2024 UGX IN BILLIONS	2024/2025 UGX IN BILLIONS
Wage	6.595	7.595	7.595	7.595	11.021
Non-wage	12.256	12.250	12.014	10.806	15.185
Capital development	0.0518	1.000	.631	.266	6.766
Total funding from GOU	18.903	20.845	20.240	18.667	32.978
External sources	3.593	1.542	1.849	1.649	0.973
Total funding	22.496	22.387	22.089	20.316	33.951
% of GoU Contribution	84%	93.1%	91.6%	91.9%	97.1%
% of development partners contribution	26%	6.9%	8.4%	8.1%	2.9%

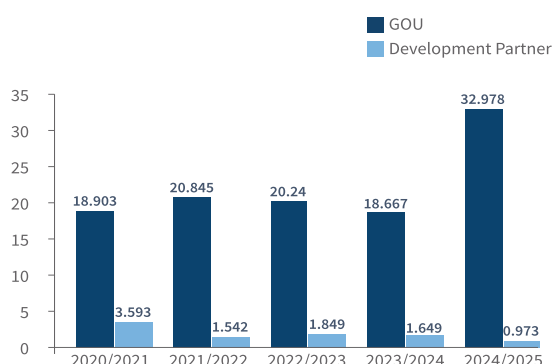
Source: UHRC

Figure 31: UHRC budget financing, 2020/21-2024/25.



Source: UHRC

Figure 32: UHRC Funding contribution in billions (UGX).



Source: UHRC

12.2.2 Funding Gap in the Commission's Ministerial Policy Statement

Despite the increased funding from the GOU for the FY under review, from UGX 18.667 billion in FY 2023/2024 to 32.978 billion, the Commission is still grappling with a funding gap. In the budget framework paper submitted to the GOU for the FY 2024/2025, the Commission required UGX 54 billion compared to the UGX 32.978 billion was the amount approved for Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) for FY 2024/2025. This left a funding gap of UGX 21.022 billion. Inadequate funding to the Commission breaches the Paris Principles, which recognise financial independence as a key requirement for National Human Rights Institutions to execute their functions/core mandate independently and effectively.

The funding falls short of what is required for the Commission to effectively fulfil its wide constitutional mandate of complaints management, human rights and civic education, monitoring and inspections of places of detention and other facilities of human rights interest, as well as implementing administrative tasks/

operations. In view of the funding gap, the Commission continued to reach out to GOU, particularly the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and the Parliament of Uganda, to lobby for the enhancement of the Commission's MTEF.

12.3 ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED BY THE POLICY AND PLANNING DIVISION IN 2025

a) Consultative meeting on the Annual Performance Assessment exercise for FY 2023/24

In the period under review, the Annual Performance Assessment report for FY 2023/24 was presented to the Commission and members of the expanded management. This was the second Institutional Performance Assessment done in FY 2023/24 to evaluate departmental and regional performance, identify capacity gaps, and strengthen accountability and learning. Guided by the Commission's strategic objectives, the exercise aimed to enhance evidence-based decision-making, efficiency, and service delivery in the promotion and protection of human rights. It was done through self-assessments, validation visits, document reviews, interviews, and field observations. Performance was measured across five key dimensions: Human Resource Management, Procurement and Disposal Management, Programme Implementation and M&E Capacity, Financial Management and Accountability, and Governance and Transparency at Head Office and 12 Regional Offices.

b) Findings of the assessment

- Generally, findings reflected strengthened institutional performance and a positive shift in the Commission's organisational culture and business practices across all operational levels.
- The performance reflected the enhanced capacity, stronger compliance, and improved managerial oversight, as well as indicating strong financial governance, robust internal controls, and timely reporting.

In the performance assessment exercise, it was observed that in order to sustain performance gains and further enhance institutional accountability and service delivery, the Commission would prioritise the following:

- Strengthening procurement and records management in Regional Offices.
- Strengthening monthly meetings at the Head Office.
- Institutionalising standardised monitoring and evaluation practices.
- Developing asset management plans.
- Digitising financial accountability systems.
- Sustaining human resource excellence, integrity and anti-corruption measures.

These actions would consolidate progress toward a performance-driven culture and greater efficiency, transparency, and accountability in fulfilling the UHRC's constitutional mandate.

b) Monitoring and evaluation field exercise

In 2025, a monitoring and evaluation was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the Commission's interventions in promoting human rights awareness, addressing complaints, and engaging communities across selected districts. It covered six Regional Offices of Hoima, Masaka, Fort Portal, Lira, Gulu and Jinja, engaging 173 participants, with representation from districts of Pallisa, Amuru, Kyotera, Gulu, Bunyangabu, Lira, Jinja, Masaka, Hoima, Buliisa, and Kyankwanzi. Participants included 53% females and were primarily aged 30–49 years (48%), with 33 individuals aged 50–69 years. The assessment employed structured questionnaires, key informant interviews, and observation checklists to collect data. Data collection was facilitated using a Kobo Toolbox, ensuring accurate and organised entry across all evaluation areas.

Key findings

The majority of participants (94%) attended civic education sessions and had high awareness

of electoral processes, human rights, youth responsibilities, gender roles, and early marriages. However, only 32.4% had listened to UHRC radio programmes, and these were mostly youth (10–29 years) and older adults (50–69 years), indicating the need to expand the Commission’s media outreach. A lesson for the Commission was that combining in-person sensitisation with localised radio programmes enhanced understanding and participation of the citizens.

In the 23 detention facilities (12 Police stations and 11 prisons) evaluated across six regions, it was found that inspections had led to significant improvements in human rights observance, including the construction of juvenile cells, improved inmate welfare, increased court sessions, better medical services, and congestion-related and juvenile welfare concerns were addressed. However, it was observed that gaps remain in infrastructure, transport, and staff accommodation. Overall, the respondents affirmed the relevance of inspections in promoting accountability and respect for human rights.

Nine participants (6%) were assessed under the complaints investigation component. About **75%** of them expressed satisfaction with the process, citing professionalism and fairness, though delays and limited feedback were reported. Respondents called for improved communication, faster case resolution, and stronger collaboration with justice sector institutions.

The Commission established that sustained engagement and consistent inspections yield measurable behavioural and institutional change.

12.4 OVERALL ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

The evaluation confirmed the Commission’s visible impact in promoting human rights awareness, reducing torture, enhancing inmate welfare, and improving community-Police relations. The lesson learned was that strengthened follow-up and data-driven advocacy were essential to sustain impact. Nonetheless, persistent challenges include limited resources for follow-up and outreach, weak

inter-agency coordination, and insufficient radio coverage in remote areas.



*UHRC M&E team, including Commissioner Lamex Omara Apitta, interviewing a respondent in Obutet Sub County in Pallisa District (left). The UHRC M&E Team, the UHRC Commissioner with the Officer-in-Charge of Prisons at Uganda Prison Iganga, after the evaluation exercise (right).
© UHRC*

12.5 QUARTERLY PROGRESS PERFORMANCE REPORTS

The Commission prepared and submitted quarterly performance reports to the MOFED through the Programme-Based Budgeting System (PBS), thereby strengthening accountability and transparency in reporting on planned outputs and expenditures. This process also enhanced the monitoring and evaluation of departmental performance against approved work plans and budgets.

12.6 PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF THE MINISTERIAL POLICY STATEMENT FOR FY 2025/26

The Ministerial Policy Statement (MPS) for Financial Year 2025/26 was prepared and submitted to the MOFPED through the PBS. The Commission subsequently presented the MPS to Parliament for consideration and approval. As a result, the Commission's planned priorities, programmes, and budget proposals for FY 2025/26 were formally articulated, scrutinised, and aligned with national policy and budgeting frameworks.

12.7 PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF THE BUDGET FRAMEWORK PAPER FOR FY 2026/27

The Budget Framework Paper (BFP) for FY 2026/27

was prepared and submitted to the MOFPED through the PBS. The BFP outlined the planning figures and priority activities for the forthcoming financial year, thereby providing a credible basis for budget preparation, resource allocation, and alignment of planned activities with institutional and national policy objectives.

12.8 THE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT UNIT

At the beginning of 2025, the Commission was fully constituted with six members, which significantly enhanced service delivery in the promotion and protection of human rights in Uganda.

By December 2025, the key staff positions approved by the Ministry of Public Service had been filled through internal promotions, leaving only a few vacancies, as indicated in the Table below.

Table 50: UHRC human resource staffing levels as of the end of December 2025

S/N	APPROVED POSITIONS	APPROVED STAFFING	CURRENT STAFFING	FEMALE	MALE
1	Chairperson	1	1	1	0
2	Members of the Commission	6	6	2	4
3	Substantive staff	220	206	118	88
4	Staff recruited under special assignment	10	7	5	2

Source: UHRC

12.8.1 Training and Capacity Building Programmes for Staff

The Commission trained staff in various programmes, as shown in the Tables below, which aimed at filling identified capacity gaps.

Table 51: Training and capacity building for UHRC staff in national and international institutions.

S/N	TRAINING PROGRAMMES	NUMBER OF STAFF	FEMALE	MALE
1.	Masters	7	6	1
2.	Post-Graduate Diplomas	5	4	1
3.	Bachelor's Degrees	1	1	0
4.	Professional courses Certified Public Accountant (CPA)	2	1	1

Source: UHRC

Table 52: UHRC staff training workshops/seminars/retreats

S/N	TRAINING PROGRAMMES	NO. OF PARTICIPANTS	FEMALE	MALE
1.	Training in human capital management to all staff (performance management, leave management and employee information manager)	201	119	82
2.	Refresher training for the Chairperson and Members of the Commission	13	9	4
3.	Training for non-financial managers in basic financial management	21	14	7
4.	Training of staff in basic sign language	68	45	23
5.	Induction of newly appointed staff	18	10	8

Source: UHRC

12.8.2 Staff Recruitment and Exit

During the year 2025, the Commission appointed 18 substantive staff in vacant positions. Other

staff were promoted and re-designated, while others resigned. The contract of one staff was not renewed.

Table 53: Recruitment and exit of UHRC staff, 2025

S/N	ACTIVITY	TOTAL NUMBER	FEMALE	MALE
1.	Newly appointed substantive staff	18	10	8
2.	Promotion	7	4	3
3.	Re-designation of title	4	3	1
4.	Resignation	4	4	0
5.	Non-renewal of contract	1	1	0

Source: UHRC

12.8.3 Critical Emerging Issue

The Government's plan for the Rationalisation of Government Agencies and Public Expenditure (RAPEX) Programme has led to short staff contracts as per the guidance from the Solicitor General. The waiting has caused a lot of anxiety among staff, potentially reducing their morale.

internal promotions, enhancing institutional capacity and operational efficiency.

12.8.4 Human Resource Achievements

- **Full constitution of the Commission:** At the beginning of 2025, the Commission was fully constituted with six Members and a Chairperson, strengthening leadership, decision-making, and coordination in the promotion and protection of human rights in Uganda.
- **Improved staffing levels:** By June 2025, most key positions approved by the Ministry of Public Service were filled through recruitment and

- **Strengthened staff capacity:** Staff benefited from academic and professional development programmes, including Master's degrees, Postgraduate Diplomas, Bachelor's degrees, and professional courses such as Certified Public Accountant (CPA), which improved staff competencies and institutional performance.

- **Staff training and institutional development:** Various workshops, seminars, and retreats were conducted to enhance staff performance. Key areas included Human Capital Management systems, financial management for non-financial managers, sign language training, and induction for newly appointed staff.

- **Staff recruitment and career development:** Eighteen staff were recruited to fill vacant

positions, seven were promoted, and five were redesignated to positions matching their qualifications and experience, improving motivation and organisational effectiveness.

- **Promotion of gender balance:** The Commission maintained a reasonable gender balance, with female staff forming a significant proportion of the workforce, demonstrating commitment to gender equality and inclusiveness.

12.9 STRENGTHENING REGIONAL SERVICES

In a bid to fulfil its mandate and in line with Section 8 of the UHRC Act Cap 24, which stipulates that the Commission may establish offices at district and other administrative levels as it considers fit for the better performance of its functions, the UHRC embarked on the process of moving services closer to the communities. This became even more necessary with the creation of more districts and the increase in the country's population, which is

estimated at 45.9% with a growth rate of 2.9% in 2024. The UHRC currently has a total of 22 offices across the country: 12 Regional and 10 Field Offices. Each of the Regional Offices comprise of between 6-21 districts with 10 of them covering cities as well which are independent administrative units. Central Regional Office was renamed Kampala in order align it with the rest of the Regional Offices named after the city or town where they are domiciled. The Regional and Field Offices implement the UHRC's core mandate guided by the UHRC Strategic Plan under the coordination of the Directorate of Regional Services in liaison with respective directorates at the Head Office.

It should be noted that despite its regional presence, the UHRC remains thinly spread on the ground, which has negatively impacted the execution of its broad mandate, yet efforts for further expansion have been constrained by inadequate funding. In the period under review, no additional Regional or Field Office was established, and so the regional coverage remained as it was in the previous year.

Table 54: Regional coverage of UHRC in 2025

NO.	REGIONAL OFFICE	FIELD OFFICE	DISTRICTS COVERED
1	Arua	Moyo	Arua City, Arua, Terego, Maracha, Pakwach, Zombo, Yumbe, Moyo, Koboko, Ubongi, Madi-Okollo and Nebbi
2	Fort Portal	Kasese	Fort Portal City, Kasese, Bundibugyo, Kitagwenda, Kyenjojo, Kyegegwa, Kamwenge, Kabarole, Ntoroko and Bunyangabu
3	Gulu	Kitgum and Pader	Gulu City, Pader, Agago, Lamwo, Kitgum, Amuru, Nwoya, Omoro, Gulu and Adjumani
4	Jinja	0	Jinja City, Jinja, Kamuli, Buyende, Kaliro, Mayuge, Iganga, Luuka, Bugweri, Namutumba, Bugiri, Namayingo, Busia, Tororo, Butaleja, Pallisa, Butebo, Budaka and Kibuku
5	Central	Buvuma	Kampala City, Buvuma, Buikwe, Mukono, Kayunga, Mpigi, Butambala, Gomba, Mubende, Kassanda, Mityana, Kiboga, Nakaseke, Luwero, Nakasongola, and Wakiso
6	Hoima	0	Hoima City, Hoima, Kikuube, Kakumiro, Kibaale, Kagadi, Buliisa, Masindi, Kiryandongo and Kyankwanzi
7	Kabale	0	Kabale, Kisoro, Kanungu, Rukungiri, Rubanda, Rukiga
8	Lira	0	Lira City, Lira, Amolatar, Apach, Kwanja, Otuke, Oyam, Kole, Dokolo and Alebtong
9	Masaka	Kalangala	Masaka City, Masaka, Kalangala, Lwengo, Rakai, Kyotera, Lyantonde, Sembabule, Kalungu and Bukomansimbi
10	Mbarara	0	Mbarara City, Mbarara, Ibanda, Kazo, Kiruhura, Buhweju, Bushenyi, Mitooma, Rubirizi, Sheema, Isingiro, Rwampara and Ntungamo
11	Moroto	Nakapiripirit and Kotido	Moroto, Kotido, Nakapiripirit, Napak, Abim, Kalenga, Kaabong, Amudat and Nabilatuk

NO.	REGIONAL OFFICE	FIELD OFFICE	DISTRICTS COVERED
12	Soroti	Kapchorwa and Kaberamaido	Soroti City, Mbale City, Soroti, Kaberamaido, Kalaki, Kapchorwa, Kween, Bukwo, Manafwa, Sironko Bulambuli, Bududa, Namisindwa, Mbale, Kumi, Bukedea, Katakwi, Kapelebyong, Amuria, Serere and Ngora

Source: UHRC

From the geographical distribution of Regional and Field Offices as indicated above, it is evident that, whereas the UHRC is compliant with the UN Paris Principles in respect of broad mandate and functions as well as financial access by members of the public in that complaints are received and investigated at no cost from the complainants, it remains thinly spread throughout the country. Current coverage for some Field Offices is wide enough to warrant their upgrade to Regional Office status which would enhance UHRC's geographical reach and consequently enhanced access to UHRC services by the members of the public.

12.9.1 Regional Interventions

In 2025, the Directorates of Regional Services (DRS) implemented a number of activities within all the 12 Regional Offices of Arua, Fort-portal, Gulu, Hoima, Jinja, Kabale, Kampala Lira, Masaka, Mbarara, Moroto and Soroti as well as in five Field Offices namely: Kasese, Nakapiripirit, Kotido, Buvuma and Moyo. The interventions were intended to enhance functional reporting, improve internal communication, ensure availability of adequate office space as well as strengthen stakeholder partnerships; all geared towards enhanced UHRC service delivery to the members of the public. The activities implemented were supervisory oversight visits, stakeholder engagements and valuation of office space.

12.9.2 Supervisory Oversight Visits

During the Reporting period, the Commission, through DRS, conducted supervisory oversight visits in the 12 Regional Offices of as well as in 05 Field Offices. The oversight visits to Hoima, Arua, Gulu and Lira were led by the Chairperson and Members of the Commission. During the visits, meetings were held with staff in which they appreciated UHRC compliance requirements regarding internal and external communication,

personal conduct, performance as well as other contractual obligations in regard to implementation of the UHRC mandate. In addition, staff were taken through report preparation and writing in a bid to enhance functional reporting.

12.9.3 Stakeholder Engagements

The UHRC held interactions with key stakeholders in the protection and promotion of human rights that included, among others: UPS, UPF, judicial officers, the Resident City/District Commissioners, City/District Local Government political and technical leaders, CSOs as well as media fraternity. During the interactions, the stakeholders were appreciated for their partnership in the protection and promotion of human rights in respective regions. They were taken through the mandate of the UHRC, feedback on UHRC interventions was sought from the stakeholders and pressing human rights issues peculiar to specific regions were shared. Furthermore, the stakeholders were reminded about the need to advocate for an election process in which human rights are respected by all with underpinning peaceful coexistence before, during and after the elections. The interactions further enhanced partnerships in the protection and promotion of human rights which ultimately contributed to enhanced UHRC service delivery.

12.9.4 Valuation of Office Premises

The Directorate, along with the Office of the Chief Government Valuer - Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development, undertook the valuation of office premises for the UHRC Fort Portal Regional Office, as well as the Kitgum Field Office, as per the stipulated regulations and guidelines. This fostered the availability of adequate office space that provided a safe and conducive working environment.



UHRC Moyo Field Office block as at December 2025 © UHRC



The UHRC Chairperson, Hon Mariam Wangadya, with UHRC Staff and Soroti City Officials during site visit at Plot 45, Akisim Ward, Old Mbale Road, East Division, Soroti City. © UHRC



The UHRC Chairperson, Hon Mariam Wangadya, addressing a meeting during the preconstruction assessment visit at Soroti City. © UHRC

12.9.5 Oversight of Construction Moyo Field Office Field Office Premises

The Commission secured funds from the European Union through the EU SUPREME Project and GOU to fully construct the Moyo Field Office premises, under the supervision of DRS. The construction was completed and the premises occupied.

The Commission also carried out preconstruction assessment visits to the UHRC Masaka and Soroti Regional Offices, where land had been acquired for the construction of office premises.

12.9.6 Emerging Issues

- Consideration to include Adjumani District under Moyo Field Office.
- Consideration for elevation of Moyo Field Office to a Regional Office.

12.9.7 Regional Achievements

- Strengthened institutional capacity by reducing dependency on rented premises, cutting long-term operational costs and ensuring stability.
- Sustainability in UHRC service delivery at Moyo Field Office owing to permanent physical presence.
- Improved working environment, staff productivity, morale, and professionalism.
- Ability to integrate modern digital tools for data management and communication with headquarters.
- Enhanced communication and reporting by the staff.
- Free airtime for human rights and civic education secured from radio pacis.
- Invitation by UPF Aswa West Region to the UHRC to join their team for radio talk shows once a week.
- Partnerships with key stakeholders strengthened.
- Visibility of the UHRC enhanced.
- Commitment by the District and City Council Executive to allocate land to UHRC Buvuma and UHRC Arua, respectively.

12.9.8 Challenges Related to Strengthening Regional Services

Operational

- Office operation funds to the Regional Offices remained inadequate in some budget lines, such as maintenance of equipment, minor repairs, and small office equipment, among others.
- Unstable and slow internet, especially for regions that were being served by UTL.
- Prolonged network instability for toll-free lines.
- Inadequate computers, laptops, scanners, printers, as well as projectors; the majority were old, and replacements appeared slow. This did not present a good precursor for digitalisation and ultimate automation.
- Inadequate office cameras to enable evidence-based reporting.

Structural

- Some of the Regional Offices, for instance, Kampala, Soroti, Jinja, Mbarara, Moroto, have a very wide geographical jurisdiction, making UHRC interventions less impactful.



The Director of Regional Services, Ms Sarah Nakhumitsa (centre), with the Arua Regional Office staff © UHRC



Handover of the office of the Regional Human Rights Officer being witnessed at the UHRC Masaka Regional Office. © UHRC



UHRC Chairperson, Hon. Mariam Wangadya, together with Masaka city officials and UHRC staff, during a preconstruction assessment visit at Masaka. © UHRC



Members of the Commission during one of the supervisory oversight visits at UHRC Lira. © UHRC

12.10 PUBLIC AFFAIRS UNIT

The Public Affairs Unit manages the communications function, corporate image/brand and visibility of the Commission. The Unit buttresses the Chairperson, who is the official spokesperson, through technical support in institutional publicity, communication, information sharing, brand positioning and public relations. This contributes to the wider UHRC strategy of achieving its constitutional mandate of protecting and promoting human rights in Uganda. The Public Affairs Unit is the link between the UHRC and its various stakeholders and audiences, in accordance with the Paris Principles, the UHRC Clients Charter and the SIP.

In the period under review, the unit leveraged advanced technology and new media to reach wider audiences with minimal resources. It created digital tools and platforms for the Commission's communications and publicity, advocacy, public relations, stakeholder engagements, branding and information sharing. Specifically, the following activities were undertaken:

- Utilising commemoration activities for national and international human rights days to publish human rights messages.

- Disseminating on the Commission's social media platforms messages of peace, civility, and responsibility during the election period.
- Organising the following five press conferences:
 - (a) Key stakeholders in the management of the 2026 general elections addressed the nation on December 4, 2025, on the steps to ensure a peaceful election. The stakeholders were: the EC, UCC, the UPF and the IRCU. The Press conference got substantial coverage in both legacy and new media.
 - (b) The Commission, alongwith UNICEF, to advocate for the rights and against abuse of children during campaigns/general elections. It was addressed by Members of the Commission Lamex Omara Apita, Shifrah Lukwago, Simeo Nsubuga.
 - (c) Three press conferences in commemoration of the World Press Freedom Day (May); the UN Day in Support of Torture Victims (June); and the International Human Rights Day/UDHR (December). They were separately addressed by the Chairperson together with heads of different partner organisations.



UHRC media engagement. © UHRC



The stakeholders included The African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV), Human Rights Center Uganda, Avocats Sans Frontières, (ASF) United Nations Population Fund, Uganda Media Sector Working Group (UMSWG), Uganda Law Society, Makerere University, African Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC), Media Focus on Africa, among others.

- Implementing advocacy activities in the form of exhibitions, runs, and public dialogues. The Lake Victoria Run was organised in Jinja, while the Access to Justice Run was in Kampala at the Law Development Centre, as a partnership of the Commission and the Legal Aid Service Providers Network. Public dialogues were in commemoration of the WPF, the UN Day in Support of Torture Survivors and the International Human Rights Day(IHRD)/ Universal Declaration for Human Rights (UDHR).
- Training 49 journalists (26 males, 23 females) on responsible reporting during elections, in conjunction with Makerere University School of Journalism and Communication. The two-day training was attended by journalists from different media houses in Uganda.
- Organising the 25th Annual Media Convention jointly with Makerere University School of Journalism and Communication. It attracted journalism scholars, students and the general public to discuss the rights and freedoms of journalists and the media in general.
- Participating in the 2025 Makerere University Human Rights Expo from 28 to 29 October 2025. Over 40,000 people from the university community attended. The Commission partnered with the university's Ethics and Human Rights Association (MUEHRA) to conduct this expo, during which it had an exhibition stall. A total of 169 people (86 female, 83 Male) visited the stall and engaged with staff on human rights information. Close to 1,000 Commission IEC materials and reports were distributed.
- Stakeholder engagements in which either the Commission was invited, or the stakeholders made official visits to the Commission. On 22 September 2025, on the eve of the nominations for presidential candidates, the Chairperson hosted the Inspector General of Police, Abbas Byakagaba and the EC Chairperson, Justice Simon Byabakama Mugenyi, at her office. She also hosted the British High Commissioner to Uganda Ms. Lisa Chesney MBE, on 10 December 2025.
- Developing branding guidelines (a brand manual) to standardise the logo, define colours and develop various templates for internal communication so as to promote a uniform visual identity and strengthen the Commission's brand identity.
- Developing the Commission Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy with support from GIZ. The strategy defined the channels of communication, the parameters for handling crisis communication, thus facilitating intentional, structured communication as opposed to reactionary.
- Producing branding materials, including five signposts and reception glass signage for five Regional Offices of Masaka, Soroti, Lira, Kampala and Hoima and for the newly-constructed Moyo Field Office.
- A total of 38 visibility materials (press banners, teardrops, and pull-up banners) were designed, produced and distributed to all Regional Offices and Head Office. A total of 250 branded calendars, 250 diaries for the year 2026 and 250 pens were produced and distributed.

12.11 OTHER ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED UNDER THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

12.11.1 The UHRC Risk Management Policy, Framework and Manual

Section 45 (2) of the Public Finance Management Act, 2015 (as amended) requires Accounting Officers to put in place effective systems of risk management and internal controls in respect of all resources and transactions of a vote.

The Commission's management of risks is at various levels, notably, strategic, operational, reputational, technological, financial, compliance, and environmental; all of which necessitate having a robust Risk Management Policy and Framework in place to mitigate eventualities and take informed decisions. Managing risks at all levels is, therefore, a responsibility of everyone at the Commission. In this regard, the Commission developed a Risk Management Policy and a Risk Management Framework to provide a shared understanding of risk management and to introduce a common language, minimum standard and processes for all officials at the Commission. It outlined the risk assessment processes and provided a consistent approach to proactive risk management throughout the implementation of its interventions. It also set out the responsibilities of the Commission, Audit, Risk Management Coordinator, Commission Secretary, Directors,

Managers, staff and other UHRC stakeholders.

The Risk Management Policy and Framework and Manual were subsequently validated in the period under review to ensure that they were aligned with best practices of corporate governance, national legislation, and international standards. In addition, the validation ensured that they were up to date with current standards, identified any gaps or inconsistencies in the policy and recommended action towards strengthening the risk management practices. The validation also ensured that the Commission and top management knew the content of the policy, framework and manual.

The Commission thereafter printed 100 copies each of the Risk Management Policy, Framework and Manual which were due for dissemination to the UHRC Regional Offices of Kabale, Gulu, Mbarara, Central, Masaka and Fort Portal.

12.11.2 Dissemination of the UHRC HIV/AIDS Workplace Policy and Hybrid Awareness Creation on HIV/AIDS and TB

The Commission HIV/AIDS workplace policy was disseminated at the Head Office and across the Regional Offices of Moroto, Lira, Arua, Kabale, Central, Gulu and the Kalangala Field Office in Masaka. The policy was put in place to mitigate the socio-economic impact of HIV/ AIDS at the Commission and contribute to a reduction in



The UHRC Risk Management Policy and Framework. © UHRC



Dr Daniel Byamukama, Head of HIV Prevention Directorate, Uganda AIDS Commission, presents during the staff hybrid awareness creation on HIV/AIDS and TB. © UHRC

HIV infections through enhanced prevention interventions and a focus on behaviour change among employees. It aimed at building capacity for integration of HIV and AIDS into the human resources training programmes for Commission staff and to protect those living with HIV from unjust discrimination. Ultimately, it would improve their quality of life by creating a caring and supportive workplace environment as a means for mitigating the impact of the disease.

A hybrid awareness creation training was conducted for staff on HIV/AIDS and TB to inculcate in them behavioural change and ensure they adapt strategies of early detection, prevention, treatment and mitigation of transmission of HIV/AIDS and TB. Key among the topics discussed was understanding the importance of early detection of HIV/AIDS and TB, prevention and treatment and the correlation between HIV/AIDS and TB. The resource persons were experts drawn from the Uganda AIDS Commission and the Ministry of Health. Staff gained knowledge and awareness on the need to ensure early detection and prevention of HIV/AIDS, and on TB as a trigger of deterioration of health for persons living with HIV/AIDS.

Emerging issues from the training

- The need to continuously fight stigmatisation, discrimination, and stereotypes meted out against persons living with HIV/AIDS.

- The need for the Commission to procure condoms or continue soliciting for providers of condoms for supply to all UHRC Regional Offices and the Head Office to reduce the risk of exposure to contraction of HIV/AIDS by staff and clients.
- The Commission HIV/AIDS Workplace Policy, which was developed in 2022, needed a review to ensure incorporation of changing trends and inclusion of components like TB interventions.
- Devise HRBA structured training for health workers so that they are more responsive when handling persons living with HIV/AIDS.
- Strengthening the collaboration between the Commission and the Ministry of Health to provide self-testing kits in offices so that staff are constantly aware of their HIV/AIDS status.
- Providing basic counselling training and skills to Commission staff so that they can provide basic counselling to clients living positively who seek UHRC services.
- Budgeting and procurement of N9 masks for all Commission offices to reduce the exposure of staff to TB during monitoring and inspection of detention facilities.

12.11.3 Dissemination of the UHRC Transport Management Policy and Procedure

In the year under review, the Transport Management Policy and Procedure that had earlier been developed to guide the acquisition,



UGANDA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
Human Rights: The Key to Development

production and promotion in Uganda

December 2014

Newsletter

January / Daily 2015 Issue



Embassy Kampala

1 UHRC and UNHCR conduct an overview of the progress of the Human Rights Training Manual

2 UHRC and UNHCR conduct a meeting with the National Human Rights Commission

3 UHRC and UNHCR conduct a meeting with the National Human Rights Commission

4 UHRC and UNHCR conduct a meeting with the National Human Rights Commission

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28 UHRC and UNHCR conduct a meeting with the National Human Rights Commission

29 UHRC and UNHCR conduct a meeting with the National Human Rights Commission

30 UHRC and UNHCR conduct a meeting with the National Human Rights Commission

31 UHRC and UNHCR conduct a meeting with the National Human Rights Commission

management, and disposal of different modes of Commission transport was disseminated to the Regional Offices of Jinja, Masaka, Gulu, Mbarara, Arua, Hoima and Fort Portal.

12.11.4 Production of the Commission Newsletter

UGANDA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION The 28th Annual Report on the State of Human Rights and Freedoms in Uganda in 2025

12.12 TRANSPORT UNIT

By January 2025, the Commission had 47 vehicles. During the year under review, the Commission acquired 3 double-cabin pick-up vehicles and 2 closed station wagons with funds from GOU through the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. This increased the fleet size to 52 units.

However, out of the 52 units, 13 were earmarked for disposal, leaving only 40 available for use. Only 26 out of these are in good mechanical condition.

The 40 units were serving the entire Commission as they included 8 for the members of the Commission and 3 for Directors who are chauffeur-driven by appointment. Another 12 units were deployed in the 12 Regional and 11 Field Offices. The rest of the staff, including 2 other directors, have to share the remaining 14 vehicles for their work.

Table 55: Status of the UHRC fleet

NO. OF VEHICLES UHRC NEEDS	NO. OF VEHICLE PRESENT	VEHICLES EARMARKED FOR DISPOSAL	VEHICLES RUNNING, BUT IN A BAD STATE	VEHICLES IN GOOD CONDITION	VEHICLES AVAILABLE FOR USE	NUMBER OF VEHICLES REQUIRED
A	B	C	D	E	F = D+E	G = A-E
67	52	13	14	26	40	41

Source: UHRC

As a National Human Rights Institution, the Commission operates across the entire country, including in hard-to-reach areas. This therefore, necessitates a sound and reliable fleet. The Commission’s service delivery could be enhanced by providing an additional minimum of 32 new vehicles to ensure effective implementation of its activities.

The Commission has two Field Offices based on the islands of Lake Victoria. Kalangala Field Office covers 84 islands, while Buvuma covers 54. The islands can only be accessed by means of water transport. The Commission thus depended on hired boats, which were not only costly but also unsafe and not easily available. The Commission, therefore, required 2 speed boats to enhance the timely implementation of activities.

Challenges related to transport

- The slow rate of replenishment of the fleet:** By the close of 2025, 14 of the vehicles were grounded for disposal, creating a total deficit of 31 vehicles. The Commission requires a replenishment rate of seven units per year for six years.

- Shortage of drivers:** The staff structure of the Commission provides for only 30 drivers, which number is not adequate. There is a need to expand the structure and create provisions for 5 more drivers to match the number of vehicles.

12.13 STATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AT THE COMMISSION

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is critical to the Commission as it drives efficiency, enhances communication and collaboration, and supports management planning and analysis. The Commission is still building ICT infrastructure and systems.

In the year under review, GOU funded the purchase of 32 desktop computers, 14 laptops, 20 printers, 10 scanners, 6 projectors and accessories for data storage and power protection. This greatly enhanced the Commission’s effort towards automation for improved performance.

The Commission acknowledges support from DefendDefender Uganda Country Office for the

donation of 2 laptops, 2 printers, a CCTV camera set, data storage accessories and network materials. The Commission used this donation to replace obsolete equipment.

Under the GIZ Strengthening Governance and Civil Society Programme, the Commission procured consultants to upgrade the UHRC APP, the website and HURIS, the e-case management system for complaints handling. This boosted the Commission's policy of automation aimed at stimulating efficiency and monitoring of the daily performance.

In a bid to monitor and observe the processes for the 2025/2026 General Elections, the Commission established a Situation Room equipped with TV screens, radios, voice recorders, mobile gadgets, telephones and other appropriate technologies to receive instant and accurate information from the whole country.

The full automation of all the Commission's business processes was significantly hindered by challenges of funding. Inability to secure all the funding necessary for the significant investment in ICT continued to affect the Commission's existing initiatives and future plans.

| Key Achievements

- ICT hardware upgrade has driven significant improvements in the Commission's communication networks.
- Improved infrastructure allows for more efficient, transparent, and accessible services, reducing the time associated with manual processes.
- Administrative efficiency through improved ICT infrastructure leads to better, faster, and more efficient management and coordination, boosting productivity in the Commission.
- Hardware and programmes enhanced the security of Commission systems.
- Increased access to digital tools that helped bridge the digital divide, making information more accessible to staff and a broader range of citizens.

12.14. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and the Parliament of Uganda should increase funding to the Commission to bridge the funding gap to enable it to fulfil its wide constitutional mandate, effectively ensure follow-up and outreach, public relations, coordination and collaboration with all partners, and reporting. Specifically, the Commission requires adequate funding to:
 - Enhance office operations in the Regional and Field Offices.
 - Enable elevation of Mbale City Field Office to Regional Office status and carving out Mubende Regional Office from Kampala Regional Office as provided for under the UHRC Strategic Plan 2025/26 to 2029/30.
 - Fill the existing staff vacancies.
 - Expand regional presence by opening additional Regional Offices.
 - Increase its fleet size to cover the current deficit and enhance effective operations
 - Make the required substantial investment in information and communication technology to enhance the Commission's initiatives and innovations for better service delivery.
 - Fully automate all the Commission's business processes.
 - Boost human resource activities that support staff welfare, and overall operational effectiveness.
2. The Ministry of Public Service should review the staff structure of the Commission to facilitate the Commission's expansion to the regions and to increase the number of drivers to match the required vehicles.
3. The Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs should review the requirement of short-term staff contracts in order to enhance staff morale.

13

Uganda's Reporting Obligations to International and Regional Human Rights Mechanisms in 2025



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Ratifying a treaty is a promise and reporting on its implementation is accountability. Uganda's engagement with international and regional human rights mechanisms in 2025 reflects both the progress made and the obligations that remain.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

International and regional human rights mechanisms, established by the United Nations (UN) and African Union (AU), are designed to monitor, promote and protect human rights by holding member states accountable under international human rights law. Membership requires states to ratify treaties, committing to the provisions therein and to submit periodic reports on their implementation. These mechanisms operate through two main approaches: treaty-

based mechanisms, which use expert committees to review state compliance with the ratified treaties and Charter-based mechanisms, which function through bodies such as the Human Rights Council, Special Procedures, and the Universal Periodic Review.²⁸⁴ At the regional level, treaty and charter-based mechanisms, and the African Peer Review (APR), all work collectively to ensure that member states respect, protect and fulfil human rights obligations. Further illustration is indicated in the Table below.

Table 56: International and Regional Human Rights Mechanisms

	TREATY-BASED MECHANISMS	CHARTER-BASED MECHANISMS
1	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)	Human Rights Council
2	International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)	Special procedures that include 46 thematic mandates and 13 country mandates
3	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	Universal Periodic Review (UPR)
4	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)	Independent investigations/complaint procedure
5	Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)	
6	Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	
7	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (CMW)	
8	The Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (SPT)	
9	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)	
10	International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED)	

²⁸⁴ Instruments and mechanisms/OHCHR available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-and-mechanisms> (accessed on 5 March 2026).

	TREATY-BASED MECHANISMS	CHARTER-BASED MECHANISMS
AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL		
1	African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC)	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
2	African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights	Special procedures of the ACHPR, such as the working groups and Special Rapporteurs on specific issues such as freedom of expression, women's rights, etc.
3	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights	African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
4	African Court of Justice and Human Rights (ACJHR)	African Peer Review Mechanism (APR) ²⁸⁵
5	Mechanisms under the African Union Convention for the protection of Internally Displaced Persons (Kampala Convention)	

Source: UHRC

Uganda, a member of the UN since 25 October 1962 and of the AU since 25 May 1963, has ratified 9 of the 10-core international human rights treaties including the ICCPR, CAT, CEDAW, the CRC, ICRMW, and three of the regional instruments: ACHPR, the Protocol to the ACHPR on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) and the ACRWC. As part of its obligations, Uganda must submit regular reports detailing the measures it has undertaken to implement the rights recognised under each treaty. The UHRC monitors Government's compliance with these treaty obligations.

This chapter, therefore, highlights an overview of the international and regional human rights mechanisms focusing on treaty bodies, reporting obligations, the status of report submission, the status of implementation of recommendations from the UPR processes, challenges affecting timely reporting and recommendations on improving compliance with the international and regional human rights obligations.

13.2 UGANDA'S REPORTING OBLIGATIONS PER RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE UPR

This section tracks Uganda's treaty ratification status, submission of reports to the treaty bodies and implementation of accepted

recommendations. It also highlights the pivotal role of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and the Inter-ministerial Committee on Human Rights (IMC) in fulfilling state reporting obligations. A fully functional IMC bolsters timely reporting and engagements with the international and regional human rights mechanisms.

The IMC, chaired by MOFA, was established to fulfil one of Uganda's voluntary pledges from its first Universal Periodic Review (UPR) cycle in 2011. Other 2011 voluntary pledges included the development of the NAPs on Human Rights and on Business and Human Rights, creating human rights units in the Police, military, and prison services for better oversight and improving refugee services. Many recommendations from the 2011 and 2016 UPR cycles have been largely implemented, including:

- Adoption of the NAP on Business and Human Rights (NAPBHRs) in 2021, now under implementation.
- The NAP on Human Rights (NAPHRs) in its final stages of adoption.
- Legal and policy reforms strengthening the protection for all, including women, children, and PWD, instruments such as the PPTA (2012), Female Genital Mutilation Act (2010) and the Domestic Violence Act (2010) have been put in place.

²⁸⁵ Charter and Treaty based mechanisms at the AU available at <https://share.google/aimode/mcncOoN218pAjcXwQ> (Accessed on 6 March 2026).

- Increased funding for the UHRC.
- Enhanced ratification of human rights instruments and harmonisation of domestic legislation with international standards.
- Establishment of the IMC, which coordinates stakeholders for data provision and report preparation. Its members include:

Core ministries (MDAs): MOFA (Chair), MOJCA (Co-chair), MOGLSD, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Office of the Prime Minister and Office of the President, MOES, MOH, and the Ministries of Lands and Urban Housing, Water and Environment, Information and Technology and Local Governments.

Agencies: UHRC, EOC, National Planning Authority, Law Reform Commission and Governance and Security Programme.

CSOs: Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI), Human Rights Network-Uganda (HURINET), Human Rights Defenders Network, FIDA, Initiative for Social, Economic Rights and ACTV.

A dynamic IMC ensures treaty reporting compliance, human rights implementation, accountability and rights protection through activities like preparing state reports, collecting data from MDAs, stakeholders' consultations, publicising recommendations, tracking implementation and maintaining a human rights database.

As an NHRI and IMC member, the UHRC notes key activities under reporting obligations led by MOFA in 2025:

- Consultative meeting to assess 3rd Cycle UPR recommendations ahead of the 4th cycle in 2027.²⁸⁶
- Participated in the National Consultative Conference on the draft NAPHR (February 2025) and the finalisation meeting (June 2025).
- Review of the draft response to the list of issues on Uganda's combined 3rd-5th Report under the CRC (December 2025).

- Review of the draft Report on the CEDAW (December 2025).
- Regarding charter-based engagements, the GOU, through MOFA, reviewed and responded to the joint Communication from the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of the LGBTQ+ community in Uganda (May 2025).

13.3 THE ROLE OF UHRC

As a Constitutional body established under Article 51 of the 1995 Constitution of Uganda, UHRC protects and promotes the rights of all Ugandans through various functions. UHRC monitors and documents the human rights situation in the country with appropriate recommendations to Parliament. In addition, UHRC monitors GOU's compliance with international and regional human rights obligations.

UHRC also collaborates closely with the IMC to advance treaty ratification, to implement recommendations from treaty bodies and special procedures and to strengthen reporting.²⁸⁷

In 2025, therefore, and in line with the latter function of monitoring compliance and reporting obligations, the UHRC led the following activities.

- Organised meetings with IMC members, MDAs, and CSOs to discuss progress on the implementation of the UPR recommendations in preparations for the fourth cycle review due in 2027 (September 2025).
- Developed an independent report as an NHRI for the 4th cycle that will be submitted to the Human Rights Council.
- Provided technical support and substantive inputs to MOFA in the preparation of the CRC and CEDAW report.

²⁸⁶ UHRC, IMC meeting to discuss the status of implementation of the UPR Recommendations, 30 September 2025

²⁸⁷ Responsibilities of NHRIs: Engaging with the international human rights system. Available at <https://ganhri.org/engaging-with-the-international-human-rights-system/> (accessed on 18 February 2026).



Members of the IMC in a group photo during the Consultative workshop on the assessment of the progress made in the implementation of the 3rd Cycle UPR recommendation in September 2025. © UHRC



Members group-reviewing the UPR recommendations at the consultative meeting in September 2025. © UHRC

13.4 RATIFICATION OF TREATIES IN 2025

In 2025, GOU, through MOFA, deposited instruments of ratification with the African Union Commission on two instruments: the Protocol to the ACHPR on the Rights of Citizens to Social Protection and Social Security and the Protocol to the ACHPR on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Uganda submitted two reports within the international reporting mechanisms. A report on the ICESCR, submitted on 6 January 2025, and the GOU's periodic report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), submitted on 8 January 2025.

Table 57: Status of Treaties ratified and the corresponding reporting obligations

SERIAL NO.	HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY	YEAR OF ADOPTION	RATIFICATION /ACCESSION OF UGANDA	INITIAL REPORT DUE (FOLLOWING RATIFICATION) WITHIN	PERIODIC REPORTS DUE AFTER EVERY	UGANDA'S REPORTS TO TREATY BODIES (SUBMISSION DATE)	COMMENTS
1	ICESCR	1966	1987	2 years	5 years, in anticipation of the introduction of the 8-year predictable review cycle ²⁸⁸	(1990), 2012, (2020) 2025	1 st report was due in 1990 but was submitted in 2012; 2 nd report was due in 2020 and was submitted in January 2025. The next report will be due in 2030
2	ICCPR	1966	1995	1 year	8 years	2003, (2008), 2020	1 st report submitted in 2003; 2 nd was due in 2010 but submitted in 2020. The next report is due in 2029
3	CEDAW	1979	1985	1 year	4 years	1992, (1986), (1994), 2000, (2010), 2009, (2014), 2020	1 st & 2 nd reports were submitted in 1992, 3 rd in 2000, 4 th , 5 th , 6 th , & 7 th in 2009, 8 th & 9 th in 2020, and additional comments were submitted in 2022. The next report is due in 2026
4	CAT	1984	1986	1 year	4 years	(1998), 2004, (2008/2016), 2020	1 st report was due in 1998 but was actually submitted in 2004. The 2 nd report, combining two reports, was submitted in 2020. The next report is due in 2026
5	CRC	1989	1990	2 years	5 years	(1992), 1996, (1997), 2003, (2011), 2021	Three reports that were due since 1992 were submitted in 2003, 3 rd , 4 th & 5 th combined, submitted in 2021. The next report is due in 2026
6	ICRMW	1990	1995	1 year	5 years	(2014) 2015 (2020)	1 st report was due in 2014 but was submitted in 2015. The 2 nd was due in 2020, and remains pending
7	ICPPED	2006	Signed in 2007	2 years	As requested by the Committee on Enforced Disappearances (Art. 29 (4))	N/A	GOU should consider ratifying the treaty

²⁸⁸ CESCR decided to introduce the predictable review cycle (PRC) for the review of States parties' reports. The Committee would thus review all States over an eight-year cycle once resources are available to do so.

SERIAL NO.	HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY	YEAR OF ADOPTION	RATIFICATION /ACCESSION OF UGANDA	INITIAL REPORT DUE (FOLLOWING RATIFICATION) WITHIN	PERIODIC REPORTS DUE AFTER EVERY	UGANDA'S REPORTS TO TREATY BODIES (SUBMISSION DATE)	COMMENTS
8	CRPD	2006	2008	2 years	4 years	(2010), 2013, (2022) 2023	1 st report was due 2010 but was submitted in 2013, 2 nd , 3 rd & 4 th combined were submitted in 2023. The next report is due in 2027
9	CERD		1980	1 year	2 years	1983, 2001, (2005) 2025	1 st report was submitted 1983, 2 nd - 10 th reports submitted in 2001, 11 th to 13 th reports are pending since 2005. Reported submitted in January 2025. The next report is due in 2027
African Union Human Rights mechanisms							
1	ACHPR	1981	1986	2	2	Submitted 2023	Next reports due 2026.
2	Maputo Protocol	1986	2010	2	2	Submitted 2023	Next report due 2026
3	Protocol to the ACHPR on the rights of Citizens to Social Protection and Social Security		Deposited instruments of ratification in 2025				
4	Protocol to the ACHPR on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities		Deposited instruments of ratification in 2025				

Source: UHRC

Table 58: Treaties and Conventions pending ratification as of December 2025

NO	TREATY	SIGNATURE DATE	RATIFICATION DATE, ACCESSION (A) SUCCESSION (D) DATE	DENUNCIATION DATE
	CAT-OP - Optional Protocol of the Convention against Torture			
	ICCPR-OP2-DP - Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at abolishing the death penalty			
	CED – the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance	06 Feb 2007		
	CED, Art.32 - Interstate communication procedure under the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance			
	The Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of International Adoption 1913 ²⁸⁹			
The African Union instruments				
6	Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Older Persons	Was adopted by AU member states on 31 Jan 2016		
7	African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance	16 Dec 2008 ²⁹⁰		

Source: UHRC

Seven treaties remain pending ratification at the international and regional level as indicated above.

13.5 TACKLING SPECIAL PROCEDURES MECHANISMS - THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW PROCESS

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a unique process which involves a periodic review of the human rights records of all 193 UN Member States, Uganda inclusive. It is a significant innovation of the Human Rights Council which is based on equal

treatment for all countries as reviews are done by peers. It provides an opportunity for all States to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to overcome challenges to the enjoyment of human rights. The process also includes sharing of best human rights practices around the globe. It is the friendliest, universal and inclusive platform for assessing states' human rights performance at the international level that exists, similar to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) at the regional level of the AU.

As a member of the UN, Uganda is subject to the

289 Status of ratification of the Hague Convention on children available at https://clr.africanchildforum.org/Status%20Table/Hague_Conventions_on_Children.html (accessed on 2 February 2026).

290 List of countries that have signed, ratified or acceded available at https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/36384-sl-AFRICAN_CHARTER_ON_DEMOCRACY_ELECTIONS_AND_GOVERNANCE (accessed on 2 February 2026).

Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process. She has been reviewed thrice since 2011 and is preparing for the 4th review cycle in 2027.

In the last review (2022), Uganda received 273 recommendations, supported or accepted 139, and noted or rejected 134. These have since been disseminated for implementation which is ongoing. The Table below presents some of the recommendations accepted and their status of implementation clustered per thematic area.

Relevance of the UPR

It must be noted that the UPR is a vital process that enhances dialogue between Uganda and the international community on human rights matters. It enhances stakeholder confidence and strengthens cooperation on key issues such as refugee protection, freedom of expression, and LGBTQ rights. Recommendations received during UPR cycles are either accepted or diplomatically “noted,” and the implementation of these recommendations forms the basis for progress reviews in subsequent cycles, showcasing a country’s strengths, and inviting it to acknowledge its challenges and commit to continuous improvement in the promotion and protection of human rights. The UPR therefore:

- Holds member states, including Uganda, accountable for their human rights obligations and commitments under international law.
- Ensures GOU is answerable for Uganda’s human rights practices.
- Ensures reforms are made.
- Enhances enjoyment of various human rights, including the right to access health and education services.
- Provides a platform for dialogue with peers.
- Enhances civil society participation.
- Helps to identify human rights challenges and to share best practices on how to overcome the challenges.
- Strengthens international cooperation.

In Uganda, the UPR process has led to notable reforms, such as the establishment of human rights units in security agencies, the enactment of

the PPTA (2012), and the development of NAPs on human rights and on business. The process has also been instrumental in pushing for improvements in the thematic areas of education, gender equality, child protection, and the overall strengthening of legal and institutional frameworks.

Objectives of the UPR

The objective is to assess the human rights situation on the ground, assess the fulfilment of the State’s human rights obligations and commitments, showcase positive developments and challenge, share best practices among States and other stakeholders, support cooperation in the promotion and protection of human rights and encourage full cooperation and engagement with the Human Rights Council, other treaty bodies and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. After reviews, what follows is the implementation of the recommendations.

Pledges from the 2011 UPR - The National Action Plan on Human Rights (NAPHR)

One of the voluntary pledges and commitments made by GOU, during the UPR, was her acceptance to develop NAPs on Human Rights and on Business. The NAPBHRS was adopted in 2021 and is undergoing implementation, while the NAP on Human Rights is in its final stages of adoption. In 2025, the UHRC noted key engagements in finalising the NAPHR, including a national Consultative Conference on the draft NAPHR held in February 2025 and a meeting to finalise the same held in June 2025, therefore, the NAPHR is in its final stages of adoption.

2016 Pledges at the UPR

In 2016, Uganda accepted 148 of 226 recommendations covering the areas of:

- Higher quality education.
- National health insurance.
- A business and human rights national action plan.
- Urbanisation policy.
- Strengthening agriculture.
- Resourcing human rights institutions.

78 recommendations were noted. Uganda did not commit to a minimum wage law, expand social security, or ratify the Optional Protocol to ICESCR.

She initiated several specific voluntary pledges in response to peer recommendations, including:

- Enabling human rights directorates in security forces.
- Improving service delivery for refugees. GOU pledged to enhance healthcare and education services in refugee settlements, in line with the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF).
- Adopting zero tolerance to GBV. Uganda stated that it would implement a zero-tolerance policy on GBV, reinforcing efforts to prevent violence against women and girls.

| 2022 Pledges at the UPR

During its third UPR review, Uganda did not present any self-initiated voluntary pledges to the UPR Working Group. The country received

273 recommendations, of which 139 (51%) were supported, and 134 were noted.

The major themes among the accepted recommendations include:

1. Health: expanding access to general and reproductive healthcare.
2. Education: improving girls' schooling and educational quality.
3. Civic freedoms; enhancing freedom of speech and assembly, association, and protecting human rights defenders.
4. Accountability; investigating Police use of force and impunity.
5. Business and human rights; expanding implementation of the national plan and economic and social rights frameworks, among others.

The status of implementation of some 2022 recommendations is further illustrated below.

Table 59: 2022 Universal Periodic Review recommendations

THEMATIC AREA CLUSTER	RECOMMENDATION	ACTION TAKEN
Improve access to education and healthcare, particularly for vulnerable populations	Seek the international community's support to ensure access to COVID-19 vaccines by all people.	The GOU intensified efforts to mobilise COVID-19 vaccines from international communities and received donations of 286,080 doses of the AstraZeneca Vaccine from Norway, 300,000 doses of Sinovac Vaccine from China in July 2021. Other vaccines like Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson and Johnson were received from other countries. ²⁹¹
	Provide and step up access to general health care for all, including disability-specific services and programmes.	The health sector budget significantly increased in FY 2025/26 to over 5.87 trillion UGX (~8.1% of the national budget). Maternal and child health services, including disability-specific healthcare, were enhanced. Strategic plans target improving health centre infrastructures and service delivery, including the rehabilitation of 11 hospitals and the expansion of community health strategies. ²⁹²
	Expand universal health coverage, in line with the framework of national strategic plans.	Uganda's Ministry of Health developed a 5-year strategic plan to strengthen governance and management of health centres, with increased investment in healthcare infrastructure and human resources to achieve universal health coverage.
	Continuing national efforts to ensure the eradication of HIV through prevention, and to provide health services for all to attain universal health care coverage.	GOU adopted the National Community Health Strategy (NHCS) which decentralises primary healthcare delivery to communities via Village Health Teams (VHTs) and Community Health Workers (CHWs). This approach brought services closer to vulnerable populations, reducing travel barriers to care
	Finalise and implement the multi-sectoral strategy to reduce maternal mortality by 2030.	Key social services for vulnerable groups were prioritised, including HIV/AIDS prevention, maternal health, and childhood immunisation programmes. The Uganda AIDS Commission rolled out campaigns such as "Time Up" targeting youth HIV awareness and ART adherence; funding for health facilities and blood transfusion services increased substantially. ²⁹³
	Increase investment in the health system and infrastructure and improve the equitable distribution and availability of sexual reproductive health and childcare services.	GOU continued to implement the national HIV and AIDS strategic plan 2020/21-2024/25, embedded in the NDP III which has strategies and action to implement interventions and innovations. ²⁹⁴
	Continue efforts to facilitate access to education for all.	Through the Uganda AIDs Commission, various campaigns were conducted to sensitise the general public on HIV preventative measures e.g. "the Time Up Campaign" was rolled out countrywide, promoting HIV prevention and ART adherence among adolescents and youth. ²⁹⁵
	Improve enrolment, retention and completion rate among learners in the primary and secondary education, including addressing barriers to education and factors contributing to the dropout of children.	The National Health Insurance Bill is being worked on.
	Improve the quality of education at all levels and for all, including women and girls, and in line with SDG 4, 5, and 10.	Through implementation of NDP III, maternal mortality rates reduced by 44% from 336/100,000 live births in 2016 to 189/100,000 live births.

²⁹¹ Uganda Human Rights Commission. The 24th Annual report on the state of human rights and freedoms in Uganda 2021.

²⁹² Ministry of Health Annual Health Sector Report 2023/24.

²⁹³ Uganda AIDS Commission Annual Report 2023.

²⁹⁴ The National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan 2020/21-2024/25.

²⁹⁵ Uganda Aids Commission. Annual joint AIDs review report for FY 2022/23.

THEMATIC AREA CLUSTER	RECOMMENDATION	ACTION TAKEN
	Take strong measures to promote children's right to education after long periods of school closures. Provide access to quality maternal healthcare services in public health facilities. Continue with efforts to improve health-care access for women from poor and rural backgrounds. Take further measures to improve maternal healthcare services in public health facilities Promote the participation of girls in all levels of education, especially in rural areas, including by ensuring that schools are a safe space for girls. Increase national investment in children for early childhood development, especially for the first 1,000 days of life Build schools closer to indigenous communities in order to eliminate barriers for children travelling long distances to access education. Implement existing legislation protecting children against exploitation, even under the conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic, including ensuring access to education for all children, protection against sexual harassment, protection from all forms of violence and protection against child labour.	GOU increased funding for Uganda Blood Transfusion services (35% increase), Kawempe National Referral Hospital (12.67%).²⁹⁶ This is expected to positively impact maternal health and emergency care services in line with national commitments to reduce maternal mortality and enhance reproductive health services by 2030. The MOH has embarked on upgrading and rehabilitating hospitals and health centres. For example, three health centre IVs are being upgraded to community hospitals i.e Kabwohe in Sheema, Mitoma in Mitooma, Muko in Rubanda, at 30% average progress. There is ongoing funding for rehabilitation of 11 hospitals, (Busolwe, Kambuga, Kapchorwa, Kitgum, Kotido, Kaberamaido, Katakwi, Amuria, Koboko and Luwero)²⁹⁷ and ongoing construction of new blood banks in Hoima, Arua, and Soroti. Under the Ugift, some HC IIIs & IVs were equipped, i.e 232 HC IIIs in 2022/23,²⁹⁸ 65 HC IIIs in 2023/24 and 45 HC IVs in 2022/23.²⁹⁸ The MOH has developed a National Community health strategy (NHCS), which aims to guide various stakeholders in delivering quality integrated community health services that are affordable and are socially acceptable to every member of the community.²⁹⁹ GOU increased funding to the education sector in the national budget for financial year 2025/2026 showing commitment to transform. Through the first phase of the Uganda Intergovernmental Fiscal Transfer (UgIFT) programme overseen by the MOES, GOU has implemented USE and Seed Secondary schools leading to construction of 117 new secondary schools in underserved districts, with 77 commissioned and fully operational.³⁰⁰ The MOES through the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) has embarked on revision/adjustment of the education curriculum to a competence-based curriculum. The new lower secondary curriculum prioritises a learner-centred education equipping students with real-life problem-solving skills.³⁰¹ GOU further implemented the National Teacher Policy 2019 (NTP) which provides a framework to professionalise and standardise the teaching profession and enhance the development and management of teachers.³⁰²

²⁹⁶ <https://nilepost.co.ug/budget/265548>.

²⁹⁷ As above.

²⁹⁸ As above.

²⁹⁹ National Community Health Strategy Implementation Guideline 2024.

³⁰⁰ <https://ugift.finance.go.ug/education/>.

³⁰¹ <https://observer.ug/education/curriculum-reform-target-seamless-transition-to-a-level-/?utm>.

³⁰² <https://www.unesco.org/en/article/uganda-makes-strides-implementation-national-teacher-policy>

The NTP has prescribed an elaborate implementation strategy and defined the national entities that are central in the implementation of the policy for example the Uganda National Institution of Teacher Education (UNITE).

THEMATIC AREA CLUSTER	RECOMMENDATION	ACTION TAKEN
		Through the implementation of the UPE and USE programme, GOU invested heavily in the education sector, providing free primary and secondary education to the children in the country. This has seen a gross increase in enrolment in primary schools from a total of 2.5 million in the 1996 to 5.3 million in 1997, increase of 73% in one year and to over 8.6 million in 2023.³⁰³ GOU's efforts of liberalising the education has led to increased establishment of private schools which significantly contributes to the increased enrolment of children in schools. Furthermore, private schools tend to offer quality education due to better facilities and qualities of teachers, thus leading to better overall quality of education.³⁰⁴ GOU has further invested immensely in education infrastructure, teacher training and curriculum development, which has led to increase in the enrolment rate and improved access to education, especially for girls and disadvantaged children. Support includes GOU's Capitation Grant (CG), which is used for maintenance and general upkeep of the pupils at school and school facilities, and the School Facilities Grant (SFG), which is extended to the school for the construction and completion of classrooms, teachers' houses, latrines and acquisition of furniture.³⁰⁵ The government of Uganda has established and revised the National Strategy for Girls Education (NSGE) aimed at promoting girls' education as an integral part of GOU's efforts to create gender equality in the education system. Uganda revised its education curriculum to a competence-based model, prioritising learner-centred education. The government implemented the National Teacher Policy 2019 to professionalise teaching and improve quality. Investments in teacher training and infrastructure supported increased enrolment and retention Uganda's response to COVID-19 school closures included distance learning initiatives and accelerated enrolment campaigns. Investments in education infrastructure ensured schools reopened safely, prioritising vulnerable learners, including girls and children with disabilities.³⁰⁶ Maternal health services expanded nationally with improved infrastructure, increased skilled birth attendance, and emergency obstetric care. Maternity waiting homes and referral systems were strengthened in underserved areas.³⁰⁷ Uganda increased rural healthcare funding: primary health care centres (HC IIIs and IVs) were upgraded and staffed adequately. Mobile outreach and community health programmes focused on maternal and child health in poor areas.

303 Celebrating 25 years of universal education in Uganda: Reflecting on the success, challenges and future opportunities <https://www.mediacentre.go.ug/site/default/files/media/celebrating%2025%20years%20of%20Universal%20Education%20Uganda.pdf>.

304 The Uganda Human Rights Commission, the 27th annual report on the status of human rights and freedom in Uganda 2024, page 48.

305 Value for money audit report on the delivery of Universal Primary Education in Uganda 2023

https://www.aog.go.ug/storage/reports/EDU_VFM_2022_23_1703935846.pdf.

306 Ministry of Education COVID-19 Response Report 2023.

307 Ministry of Health Annual Health Sector Report 2023/24.

THEMATIC AREA CLUSTER	RECOMMENDATION	ACTION TAKEN
		Additional funding allocated to maternity wards, staff training and essential supplies improved emergency obstetric care and postnatal services across public hospitals.³⁰⁸ Early childhood development programmes were institutionalised. The GOU built new schools closer to indigenous communities and improved safety and menstrual hygiene management in schools, aiming to reduce dropout rates, especially among girls in rural areas.³⁰⁹ The GOU adopted the integrated early childhood development policy action plan as a strategy to provide the best start in life to every child and achieve sustainable, equitable growth.³¹⁰ The GOU approved the physical education and sport policy and early childhood care and education policy to enhance physical education and early childhood development. The MOES adopted a robust plan to enhance early childhood development by institutionalising caregiver training and enforcing stringent quality standards. The GOU integrated ECD caregiver training into the curriculum of primary teachers' colleges (PTCs), ensuring a professional development pathway from certificate to advanced qualification through the ECCE policy, which was approved in 2024.³¹¹ Furthermore the GOU provided sponsorship slots for diploma level training in ECD in PTCs.³¹² Uganda adopted the integrated Early Childhood Development (ECD) Policy Action Plan focused on the first 1,000 days, institutionalised caregiver training, and improved quality standards in ECD centres countrywide.³¹³ The GOU enhanced birth registration and implemented social protection for vulnerable children through National Child Policy 2020 and COVID-19 response frameworks, ensuring continued access to education and protection against sexual harassment, violence, and child labour throughout the pandemic period. The Children Act is being implemented.

308 Ministry of Health Annual Health Sector Performance Report 2023/24.
309 Ministry of Education and Sports Ministerial Statement FY 2023/24.
310 Status of childcare in Uganda – ECDAN
<https://www.childcare4all.org/initiatives/status-of-childcare-in-uganda/>.
311 <https://nilepost.co.ug/education/231266/govt-strengthens-early-childhood-development-with-training-standards>.
312 As above.
313 Early Childhood Development Action Network Uganda Reports 2023.

THEMATIC AREA CLUSTER	RECOMMENDATION	ACTION TAKEN
Enhance freedom of expression and media rights, ensuring journalists and activists can operate without fear of persecution	Continue to reinforce measures that guarantee the rights of citizens to peaceful demonstration and freedom of expression.	The Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act, 2012, holds individual officers accountable for human rights violations. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on the use of force exist. Awareness raising amongst Police officers through continuous sensitisation on HRBA and the need to adhere to human rights standards has been done. Police officers have been trained on crowd control techniques and minimisation of the use of force. Capacity building to bridge the gaps was done at the entry level to curb capacity and competence gaps. Public Relations Office at Police established to bridge the gap between the State and the public. The Professional Standards Unit of the Police holds errant officers accountable through disciplinary measures and the courts of law. Human rights mainstreaming is done through incorporating human rights modules in Police training schools. There is a zero tolerance strategy on human rights violations relating to freedom of expression and assembly. Decentralisation of policing services aids legal service access. The Directorate of Human Rights and Legal Services in the UPF oversees all human rights in the forces and promotes the respect of the rule of law in the forces. Collaboration with the UHRC is ongoing to monitor compliance of UPF with human rights laws.
Strengthen legal frameworks to combat corruption and promote good governance	Continue to incorporate all ratified international legal instruments into the national legal order.	Most programmes of the NDPs are aligned with the SDGs. Uganda continues to implement all ratified laws and the Constitution of Uganda. There's a 1.5-point policy for girls joining university. The establishment of the Equal Opportunities Commission. More girls are going back to school after dropping out. The Public Finance Management Act in place. CEDAW, PPTA, CRC, and Domestic Violence Acts are embedded in Uganda's laws to promote good governance and ensure accountability.

THEMATIC AREA CLUSTER	RECOMMENDATION	ACTION TAKEN
	Continue to implement bills, regulations, and policies to further strengthen the rule of law and to promote human rights.	There is continued funding of the UHRC, which is mandated under Article 51 of the Constitution to oversee the state of human rights observance. The NAP on business and human rights promotes efficient economic environment and observance of human rights by businesses.³¹⁴ The HREA, 2019 and Anti-Trafficking Rules are in place. Matters of trafficking are now handled by the International Crimes Division. There is regulation under MOGLSD, capturing trafficking of persons. There is also the Human Rights Defenders Protection Bill.
	Consider taking measures aimed at ensuring increased efficiency and accountability of public service. Continue moving forward in implementing legislative amendments or creating new legislation necessary to achieve even better results in the promotion and protection of human rights. Continue efforts to implement the National Plan of Action on Human Rights, further strengthen the independence of the National Human Rights Commission, and enhance funding and resources. Ensure adequate resources are provided to Uganda's Human Rights Commission (UHRC) and Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) to enhance their functioning and effectiveness Consider further strengthening the National Human Rights Commission in accordance with the Paris Principles. Ensure the allocation of sufficient resources toward the full implementation of the National Action Plan for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons 2019 to 2024. Implement promptly the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights adopted in August 2021.	Anti-corruption risk assessments are done by the GOU. The Directorate of Ethics and Integrity is developing a tool for usage in all MDAs. There is a Commission to interact with the Office of the Auditor General for efficiency and accountability, now a point of reference. The GOU is developing a new cycle of Anticorruption policies, which will be in the financial year (2025/26). The GOU has assented to various legislations geared to the promotion of human rights in Uganda including HREA, 2019 which provides a framework for enforcing human rights enshrined in the Constitution. The Human Rights Defender's Protection Act, 2022 protects Human Rights Defenders in their work. The NAP on the Business and Human Rights³¹⁵ works to monitor and ensure protection of human rights by businesses in their operations. Uganda has actively worked on implementing the National Plan of Action on Human Rights with clear benchmarks and multi-sectoral engagement. Annual progress reports are submitted to relevant oversight bodies, ensuring accountability and alignment with international human rights commitments.³¹⁶ The GOU finalised and commenced implementation of the National Action Plan on Human Rights, including developing monitoring systems, stakeholder engagement frameworks, and capacity building for public institutions.³¹⁷ UHRC has enhanced its independence by increasing budget allocations, expanding Field Offices, and securing operational autonomy through legislative amendments consistent with the Paris Principles,³¹⁸ such as increasing staffing levels, enhancing operational independence through legislative reforms and budgetary allocations. The GOU remained the principal funder of the UHRC, allocating UGX 18.1667 billion in FY 2023/24 to support human rights monitoring, investigations, and public outreach programmes. The EOC also received increased funding to improve complaint handling and advocacy.³¹⁹ Prosecution of cases has been made strict. They are being handled by the International Crimes Division. The NAP on Business and Human Rights is being implemented.

³¹⁴ Uganda National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights <https://globalnaps.org/country/uganda/> <https://www.fao.org/faolex/results/details/en/c/LEX-FAOC214705/#:::text=The%20National%20Action%20Plan%20on,Human%20Rights%20in%20Business%20Operations>.

³¹⁵ Uganda passes the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights <https://resourceafrica.org/for-immediate-release-uganda-passes-the-national-action-plan-on-business-and-human-rights/>.

³¹⁶ Ministry of Justice Reports, 2023.

³¹⁷ Ministry of Justice Annual Report, 2023.

³¹⁸ International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions Document 2024

THEMATIC AREA CLUSTER	RECOMMENDATION	ACTION TAKEN
Promoting access to legal aid, especially for marginalised and vulnerable people	Take further steps to ensure access to justice for all, particularly for vulnerable groups. Continue efforts to improve access to justice, including legal aid, for all, especially women and children.	The Judiciary has taken measures to ensure accessibility to court through simplifying court procedures for court users and eliminating barriers to ensure access for all, especially the vulnerable and marginalised, such as PWD, children and women. With support from the Gou, the Judiciary was able to construct and maintain some of the Judiciary buildings in FY 2023/24.³²⁰ There is the Succession Amendment Act in favour of women and children regarding inheritance. ECCMIS – the digitisation of Court Systems – is in place. The Legal Aid Bill has been tabled in Parliament, with expanded community legal aid clinics particularly targeting vulnerable women and children. Paralegal training increased, and digitisation initiatives in courts aim to reduce delays and improve access. Ongoing expansion of legal aid services and court modernisation projects to promote equitable access. Targeted programmes address court backlogs and reduce procedural barriers for marginalised groups.³²¹ Judiciary simplified procedures for vulnerable court users, including PWD and women. The Judiciary established five breastfeeding and children playrooms at the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, Masindi High Court, Kamwenge Chief Magistrate's Court, Kisoro Chief Magistrate's Court and Butambala Chief Magistrate's Court.³²² Funding was secured for the construction and maintenance of Judiciary infrastructure.

Source: UHRC

320 The Judiciary Annual performance report FY 2022/2023.

321 Judiciary Annual Performance Report 2023.

322 Judiciary Annual Report 2023/24.

13.6 POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS

1. Analysis shows commitment towards putting in place measures to improve the enjoyment of human rights in the country, going by the various regulatory, policy, legal and institutional reforms listed therein.
2. The IMC is strengthening coordination and enhancing collaboration, adequate and accurate data collection for the required international reporting.
3. Relatedly, the number of reports pending submission has drastically reduced as indicated in the Table. One report remains overdue.

13.7 CHALLENGES

1. The process of developing, preparing and submitting periodic reports is relatively slow, as most are submitted past the designated period.
2. The GOU continues to experience the challenge of non-ratification of treaties that are key for the promotion and protection of human rights, as indicated in the Table.
3. Continued reluctance to extend and accept invitations and requests to and from the special procedures mandate holders.

13.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Government of Uganda should consider issuing standing invitations to UN Special Procedures Mandate Holders, such as for persons with albinism and food security, to validate progress in these areas and compound human rights compliance in these areas.
2. The Government of Uganda should ratify pending treaties, especially those signed; for example, the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and the International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance, 2006 and the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights regarding abolition of the death penalty.
3. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs should continue tracking and following up on the implementation of pending voluntary pledges like the National Action Plan on Human Rights and recommendations made by treaty bodies to enhance the promotion and protection of human rights in the country, especially the Hague Convention on Inter-Country Adoption.

13.9 CONCLUSION

Uganda has an obligation to report on the treaties it has ratified at the international and regional levels to show its performance in adherence to the human rights standards therein to enhance enjoyment of human rights by its citizens. Analysis of efforts made over time and specifically in 2025, shows levels of great improvement; equally, the establishment of and the functionality of IMC has enhanced coordination and collection of data for timely reporting, which is commendable.



UGANDA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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