

NEWSLETTER

September 2021



The month of September brought with it a continuously-improving COVID-19 situation in the country, which opened doors to increase our community engagement and collaboration with partners. FIDA Uganda engaged in advocacy on women's rights in various fora and continued to serve our target communities through our holistic self-actualization model of empowerment as we collectively recover from the second wave of the pandemic.

ENHANCING ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR WOMEN

Case Statistics

During the month of September, a total of **1809 cases** were handled at FIDA Uganda's **15 field offices** and **4 justice desks**. Out of these, a total of **1274 clients** were female and **535** were male. Out of these cases, **1320** were concluded through **alternative dispute resolution, mediation, the court process, referral to partners or legal advice**. A total of **489** remained pending mediation or court processes by the end of the month. The organization continued to handle high numbers of **land cases**, particularly in the Northern region and also continued to provide support in family matters concerning **domestic violence, maintenance and custody**.

Success story of the month

A widow in Napak district recovers her land with the help of FIDA Uganda

In the Karamoja sub-region, women's ownership of land is not widely accepted. Traditional cultural practices dictate that only men can inherit land from deceased relatives, which leaves widows vulnerable to lose their land to male relatives of their late husbands. This is the predicament faced by Mary Auma, a 65-year old widow from Napak district.

Mary was widowed in 2003 after her husband was killed during insurgencies by warriors in the sub-region. Mary's husband left her one acre of land in the Entebbe area, Ngoleriet sub-county, Kangole Town Council where she put up a family home for her and her seven children. Mary and her children made use of the land to cultivate their own food. During the course of 2021, Mary and her children were forced to leave their land by the brother of Mary's late husband, Lochoro John. Mary was greatly distressed after losing her land, she had no hope of being recognized as the true owner and even started having suicidal thoughts. A friend of Mary's, who has been helped by FIDA Uganda Napak office in the past, advised Mary to seek help from FIDA as well.

On the 15th of August 2021, Mary visited the FIDA office in Napak and shared her story. The FIDA staff counselled Mary and advised her on land, property and inheritance rights for widows. The office summoned the respondent (Lochoro John) for a mediation to resolve the matter, to be held on the land in question. The mediation was attended by local authorities, community members, our client and her friends and relatives as well as the respondent. The FIDA staff members started the mediation by setting out the legal framework on property rights and explaining the rights of widows to inherit and own land. It was important to address the misconception about widow's property rights before the case at hand could be mediated.

Both our client and the respondent were given an opportunity to state their cases. FIDA staff facilitated the discussion and offered legal advice where appropriate. After a long discussion and with the community as witnesses, the

respondent finally agreed to leave Mary and her children in peace on the land which Mary inherited from her late husband.

Mary was overjoyed after this successful mediation and has moved back to her land with her children. She expressed to the FIDA staff: "My children, I will die a happy woman because you have helped me regain my land, I know there is no problem FIDA cannot solve".

This story illustrates the importance of raising awareness about FIDA Uganda's services in rural communities. If Mary's friend did not know about FIDA, Mary would not have been helped in this situation. The story also illustrates the impact which injustice often has on the mental health of victims. As part of holistic legal aid service provision, it is important that FIDA provides counselling services to our clients along with legal services■



FIDA staff, relatives and friends of the client, local authorities and community members listen to Mary's submissions during the mediation meeting held on the 24th August, 2021. The land in question is behind the participants of the mediation meeting. (Photo by Ariko Michael, CLV).

Increasing victim participation in transitional justice processes

FIDA Uganda has been granted leave to submit amicus curiae observations to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in order to support the fair and expeditious conduct of reparations proceedings in favour of victims of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency in Northern Uganda. The Trial Chamber IX of the ICC convicted the Brigade Commander of the senior brigade of the LRA, Dominic Ongwen on 61 counts of crimes against humanity and war crimes, including forced marriage, rape and sexual slavery.

On 29th September 2021, FIDA Uganda had an engagement with the Greater North Parliamentary Forum to discuss the appropriate reparation program for war victims in order to inform FIDA's amicus curiae submissions. The meeting was aimed at collecting the opinions of the parliamentarians on the harm suffered by the war victims in their respective constituencies

and the type and modalities of reparations appropriate for these victims. These views were collected, and the Parliamentarians furthermore made commitments on the operationalization and implementation of the National Transitional Justice Policy, 2019 and fast-tracking the adoption of the Transitional Justice Act■





Liliane Byarugaba Adriko, CEO of FIDA Uganda, discussing the case of Dominic Ongwen before the International Criminal Court with Parliamentarians of the Greater North Parliamentarians Forum, held on 29th September 2021 at Golf Course Hotel in Kampala.

ADVOCACY



Incorporating a gender lens in the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights

On 6th September 2021, the long-awaited National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights (NAPBRH) was adopted by the government of Uganda. FIDA Uganda has been instrumental in the development of this Plan and has ensured that a gender perspective is reflected in the objectives and strategies of the Plan. In 2019, FIDA Uganda facilitated consultations between the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD) and the far-to-reach communities in Kaabong and Moroto in Uganda's Karamoja sub-region. Women who work in the extractive industry in these areas were consulted and these consultations informed the inclusion of protection-focused clauses in the draft NAP. A study was commissioned on best practices for engendering NAPs to ensure that the rights and interests of women are adequately protected and addressed and FIDA-U convened a three-day technical committee meeting to assess how the NAP will protect women in business. Over the course of 2020 and 2021, FIDA-U hosted

various meetings to bring key stakeholders together in order to develop the NAP, address and incorporate comments from various government ministries and undertake detailed editing of the final draft. Going forward, FIDA will sensitize communities about the existence of the NAPBHR through which redress can be sought for human rights violations suffered due to business operations. We will also advocate for the adoption and strengthening of laws and policies that are envisioned by the NAP and ensure access to justice to vulnerable persons whose rights have been violated due to business practices through legal representation in the appropriate fora■

Combating sexual harassment in the workplace

FIDA Uganda, together with Akina Mama wa Afrika and Human Rights Watch, is participating in a campaign for the ratification of International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 190 on violence and harassment in the world of work. The purpose of the campaign is to ensure that the Ugandan government ratifies the Convention and adopts the needed legislative and policy framework to ensure its implementation.

On the 22nd September, FIDA made a presentation justifying the ratification of the ILO Convention 190 and set out the steps which the Government of Uganda can take in order to prepare for its implementation. The presentation was made at a convention organised by Public Services International, a global trade union federation representing 20 million working women and men who deliver vital public services in 163 countries■



Elizabeth Kemigisha, Advocacy and Policy Officer, at the Imperial Royale Hotel at a convention on ratifying ILO Convention 190.

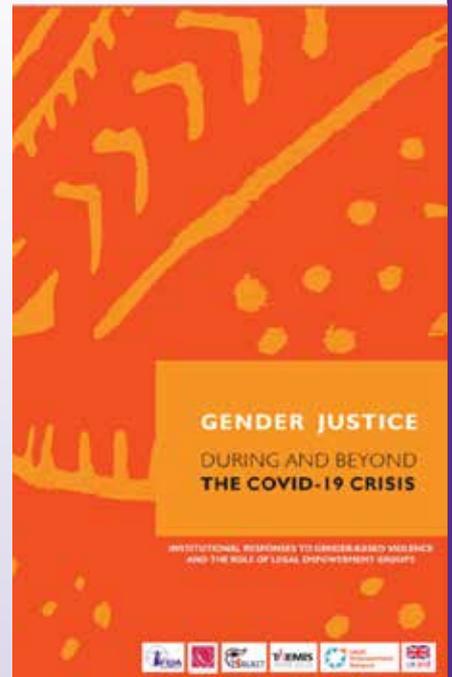
RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

FIDA Uganda hosts Sub-Saharan Africa launch of global study on gender justice, legal empowerment and COVID-19

During the month of September, FIDA Uganda hosted a two-part virtual launch in Sub-Saharan Africa of the global study "Gender Justice: During and Beyond the COVID 19 Crisis". This participatory research initiative was organized jointly by the Legal Empowerment Network, convened by Namati and Themis – Gender, Justice and Human Rights (Brazil). The study was co-led and implemented by FIDA Uganda, the Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women (ESE) and the Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST). The study mapped, discussed, analyzed, and documented the experiences of practitioners to address gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study explores challenges faced, innovative

legal empowerment approaches and community-centered interventions that were effective and can be replicated in other countries and contexts.

During the Sub-Saharan Africa launch, held virtually on 2nd and 9th September 2021, 15 civil society organizations and grassroots legal empowerment actors from across the continent discussed the study findings and shared lessons and experiences, as well as challenges which could be addressed through collective action within regional fora. An article on this report, authored jointly by the participating organizations, was published on the [Pathfinders International Blog](#) on 27th September 2021 ■



FIDA STAFF AND MEMBERSHIP



Celebrating professional achievements

September was a month of professional achievement for FIDA staff and members. We congratulate four of our staff members, Joan Agoe, Elizabeth Zakumumpa, Dorine Nandera, and Claudia Anzoa on their enrolment to the Bar. We also congratulate Ms. Norah Matovu, a senior Member of FIDA Uganda, for winning the Uganda Law Society Award for Excellence at the Bar ■



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