

NEWSLETTER

December 2021



December 2021 brought to a close a number of our campaigns and activities for the year. FIDA Uganda participated in the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence and commemorated key international human rights days in order to raise awareness about the need to take collective responsibility for the violence that women and girls face in Uganda. FIDA Uganda also ended the year by holding our Annual General Meeting which brought together our Board, staff and members in order to reflect on the performance of the organization in the previous year and vote on key decisions which will set the course for 2022.

ENHANCING ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR WOMEN

Case Statistics

During the month of December, a total of **1279 cases** were handled at FIDA Uganda's **16 field offices** and **5 justice desks**. Out of these, a total of **730 clients were female** while **549 were male**. The number of cases handled is far fewer than the 2296 cases handled during November due to the fact that the legal aid clinic was closed for an end of year break from 17th to 31st December and only handled urgent matters during this time. The end of the year is characterized by heightened economic demands and difficulties which affect the lives of women and the organization handled high numbers of cases concerning **land disputes, maintenance and compliance with settlement agreements**.

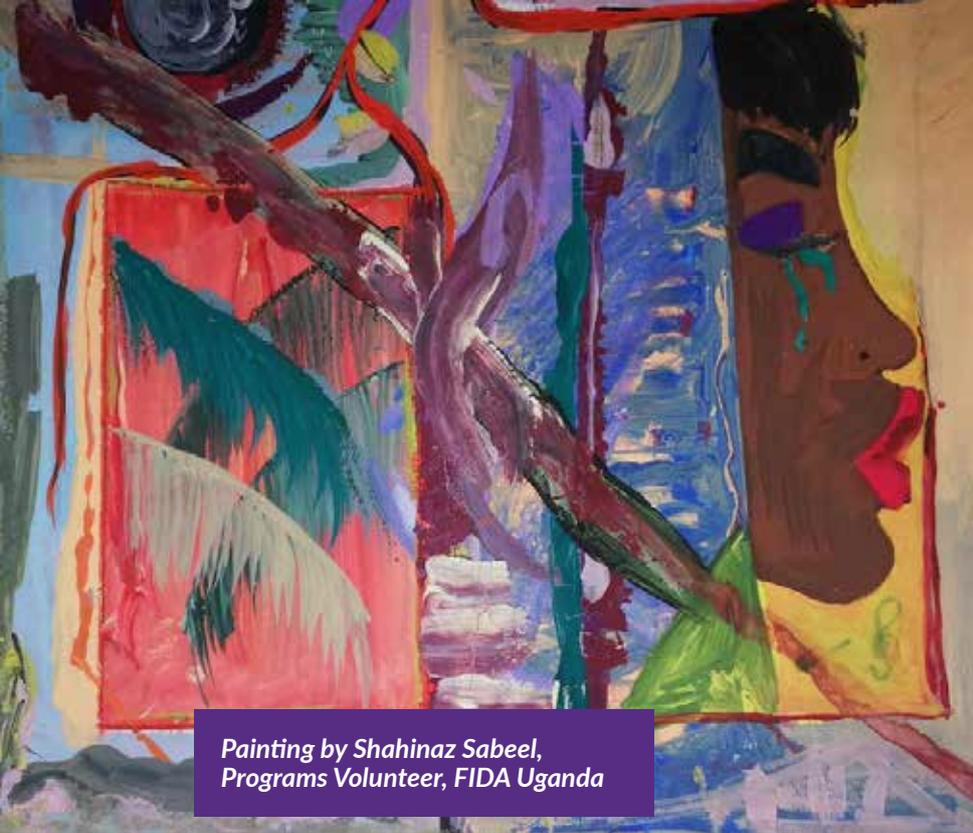
Success story of the month

FIDA-U's in-house counselling services gives new hope to GBV survivor

In July 2021, FIDA-U added to our team an in-house counsellor in order to provide psycho-social support to our clients. Many of the women who come to FIDA-U for legal aid services are survivors of domestic violence. However, due to a lack of community awareness on the different forms of violence besides physical abuse, some who experience emotional abuse are unaware that what they are facing classifies as GBV. When women approach FIDA-U for legal aid and there are signs of emotional abuse, counselling and psychosocial support is provided and the counsellor encourages self-awareness and a process for addressing the trauma. Women who are healing emotionally from the trauma that they have suffered benefit more from the outcomes of the legal processes and are better supported to establish a life independent from an abusive relationship.



A locus mediation conducted at Nyakoi village, Akwarkwar parish, Kachumbala sub-county in Bukedea district on 3rd December 2021. A conflict over land between two co-wives and their husband was successfully resolved and 27 participants were sensitized on matrimonial property and land rights.



*Painting by Shahinaz Sabeel,
Programs Volunteer, FIDA Uganda*

In December 2021, Susan (not her real name) approached FIDA-U in pursuit of legal aid. She had been in a cohabiting relationship for three years that she was expecting to lead to marriage and, as a result, she had solely invested in the construction of a house, which was to become their marital home. During this period, the couple tried to have a child but were not able to conceive. This, unfortunately, caused a rift in their relationship and her partner started to emotionally abuse her in various ways.

On this particular day, Susan had visited the office to file a report against the respondent who had breached the MOU even though he had the money to provide the agreed compensation for Susan's share in the joint property. The respondent threatened to make our client suffer because she had reported him to FIDA-U. During FIDA-U's consultation with the client, it became clear that she was a victim of emotional abuse and trauma. She narrated how she had been neglected by her partner when she was severely ill with fibroids and underwent surgery. He did not visit her while she was in the hospital nor did he prepare her a meal after she was discharged. She narrated how he asked her to leave the bedroom to sleep in the living room because he was not in the mood to look after a "barren woman". She further narrated that when she asked him to make her a cup of milk at 10am he grudgingly came and turned on the cooker and after that said he was going back to bed since it was a Saturday and he needed to sleep. He refused to be intimate with her yet she received videos and pictures of him being intimate with several other women. When she confronted him about this, he neither denied nor apologized for his actions. The client expressed that she could identify the indicators and warning signs of abuse as they emerged but said that she had hoped that this would change over time.

After the counselling session, in her meeting with the legal officer, all the pain of the abuse came rushing back and our client felt a sense of deep loss. She had an outburst, saying that she wanted a gun to shoot and kill this man for all the pain he has caused

her. She was given a safe space to express her hurts until she felt calmer. After checking with her, she was allowed to leave and we have continued to engage her with counselling sessions over the phone. Although she had not received the money that the respondent owes her yet, one week later, she wrote a message saying: "Thank you very much for the counselling. I feel much better, the burst out I think helped me, I haven't even thought about him and the money again. Thank you".

This case illustrates how FIDA-U's counselling services offer a platform to survivors of emotional violence to find their voice, express their hurt and process the pain that they have experienced. Counselling, in conjunction with legal aid, offers sustainable solutions to women and helps them to heal from deep wounds and trauma, regain independence and confidence and rebuild rich and productive lives for themselves, beyond the abuse. ■

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PROMOTING GENDER- RESPONSIVE GOVERNANCE AND WOMEN'S EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC LIFE



16 Days of Activism Against GBV

FIDA Uganda participated in the annual, international 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (#16DaysOfActivism) campaign that ran from 25th November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, until 10th December, International Human Rights Day.

This campaign is used as an organizing strategy by individuals and organizations around the world to call for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls.

FIDA Uganda's campaign was called 'From Awareness to Accountability' and it aimed to raise awareness about our individual roles and responsibility towards ending violence against women and ensuring that our world is a safe and just place for all. FIDA Uganda engaged influential leaders from government agencies and departments, civil society as well as staff members and ordinary men and women to participate in our campaign by sharing on their own social media pages their personal motivation for ending violence against women.



^ Hon. Lady Justice Jane Frances Abodo, the Director of Public Prosecutions, participating in FIDA Uganda's 'From Awareness to Accountability' campaign.



At the district level, FIDA Uganda hosted various activities and also participated in activities of our partners geared toward raising awareness during 16 Days of Activism. In Napak district, FIDA Uganda conducted a manyatta dialogue in which men were engaged on their role to play in ending violence against women. The dialogue was held in Lorukomo manyatta, Lorukomo village on 29th November 2021 and focused mainly on cultural acceptance of marital rape. By the end of the dialogue, the men present committed to work with the cultural leaders to engage other men in the community in order to end marital rape.



<< ^ Participants in the manyatta dialogue aimed at engaging men to end violence against women, held in Lorukomo village, Matany sub-county, Napak district on 29th November 2021.

Mr. David Kabenge, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, participating in FIDA Uganda's 'From Awareness to Accountability' campaign

FIDA Uganda also held an Akiriket with elders in Lokitumo village, Rupa sub-country, Moroto district on 29th November 2021. In Karamojong culture, the Akiriket is a meeting of influential elders in society whose opinions and pronouncements are highly respected by the community. The Akiriket held in Moroto was attended by 215 people (83F; 132M) and was focused on how influential elders can champion the message on ending violence against women and girls in their communities. The Akiriket identified an undeniable link between insecurity and violence against women and girls. All the men in the dialogue committed to ensure that girls, even those that are now teenage mothers, must go back to school. A number of influential elders including the head of the elders' association accepted to work as champions for future engagement on matters of ending violence against women and girls in their communities.

FIDA Uganda also published a series of articles in online newspapers and our own FIDA blog in order to interrogate and raise awareness about the lesser known facts and realities of women facing GBV. One [blogpost](#) discussed the dynamics of the cycle of abuse and why it is difficult for women to leave abusive relationships; an [article](#) was published in The Monitor on steps that can be taken to help a friend trapped in an abusive relationship and another [article](#) was published in Bukedde on the early warning signs that a new romantic relationship may become abusive.

The totality of these activities provided accessible information on GBV and help for survivors; raised awareness about our collective responsibility in a broad array of fora and ensured commitments from leaders at community level to play their part in ending violence against women. FIDA Uganda is committed to continue this work all 365 days of the year. ■



From left to right: Eres Igira, Driver, UN Women Moroto; Sarah Aciro, Gender Mainstreaming and Coordination Officer, UN Women Moroto and Lokuda Jacob Luke, Transport Assistant, FIDA Uganda



FIDA STAFF AND MEMBERSHIP

FIDA Uganda Annual General Meeting

On 11th December 2021, FIDA Uganda held our Annual General Meeting at the Onomo Hotel in Nakasero. This year's AGM was a hybrid event with our Board and a few Members and staff members attending in person, while the majority of Members attended the meeting online. The meeting was addressed by two guest speakers: Ms. Rita Aciro, the Executive Director of Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) discussed keys to building sustainable and durable institutions in the midst of a volatile operating environment. Ms. Olive Namutebi, the Executive Director of Albinism Umbrella, addressed the Members on the cultivation of disability-inclusion in their spheres of influence and raised awareness about the barriers to accessing justice which Persons With Disabilities face. The meeting presented an opportunity for the FIDA Members to reflect on the performance of the organization over the course of the past year,

to vote on key matters such as the disposal of property owned by the organisation and to approve a new audit firm. Ms. Martha Masiko was elected to the FIDA Uganda Board as the first ever youth Board Member. The highlight of the AGM was the attendance of Hon. Rebecca Kadaga, who addressed the members and encouraged them to continue using the legal profession in all its manifestations in order to promote gender equality and protect women's rights. ■



^ Hon. Rebecca Kadaga addresses FIDA Uganda Members, Board and Staff at the AGM

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Hon. Rebecca Kadaga receives a token of appreciation for her attendance from the FIDA-U Board Chairperson, Lady Justice Victoria N.N. Katamba



Group photo taken at the AGM, held at Onomo Hotel in Nakasero on 11th December 2021





FIDA Members participating in the AGM

Celebrating professional achievements

Brenda Akia, FIDA Uganda's Grants and Advocacy Advisor, has been endorsed by the African Union as Uganda's African Union Candidate for the June 2022 United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) elections. Ms. Akia has extensive experience in leading and managing human and women's rights projects at the international, regional and national level. She is determined to use her broad competence in international criminal law, transitional justice, humanitarian law and women, peace and security to work with CEDAW Member States to effectively end all forms of discrimination against women and girls and advance women's rights and freedoms.

FIDA Uganda recognizes this endorsement and supports Ms. Akia in her campaign leading up to the June 2022 elections.



Ms. Brenda Akia, Grants and Advocacy Advisor, FIDA Uganda



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