Country Report

Progress towards peaceful, just and inclusive societies

SDG 16+ in Uganda

CECORE
CENTER FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

GPPAC
A Network of People Building Peace

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Uganda at a glance

Population:

April 2020
45,092,019

Projection 2030
63,842,364

Source 1 Source 2

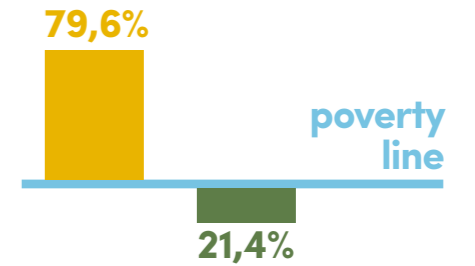Uganda's population is expected to reach **100 million** by 2050.

Source 1 Source 2

Total surface area:

241,550.7 km²

Source

Life expectancy:

53.2 years

0 - 15 year   15 - 64 year   65⁺ year

Age structure:

49.9%
Under 15

48.1%
Between 15 and 64 years

2.1%
65+

Source

Refugees:

1,423,377

Source

79,6%

poverty line

21,4%

People living below the poverty line 21.4%
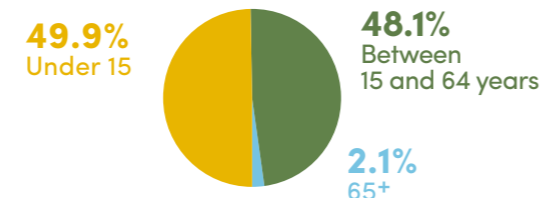
Source

Global Peace Index 2019:

105 out of 163

Source

GDP per capita 2018:

USD 642.8

Source

List of acronyms

ADR: Alternative Dispute Resolution

CECORE: Center for Conflict Resolution

CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

CEWERU: Conflict Early Warning and Early Response Unit

COVID-19: Corona Virus Disease

CSO: Civil Society Organisation

GPPAC: The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict

IGAD: Inter-Governmental Agency on Development

JLOS: Justice Law and Order Sector

LC: Local Council

NFP–SALW: National Focal Point on Small Arms and Light Weapons

NIRA: National Identification and Registration Authority

OPM: Office of the Prime Minister

PRDP: Peace Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda

PWD: Persons with Disability

SDG: Sustainable Development Goal

UBOS: Uganda Bureau of Statistics

UHRC: Uganda Human Rights Commission

UN: United Nations

URA: Uganda Revenue Authority

VNR: Voluntary National Review

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Executive summary

With its specific focus on peaceful, just, and inclusive societies, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 and all related peace targets — commonly referred to as SDG 16+ — address the core of sustainable development issues in Uganda. The government of Uganda has committed itself to the SDGs. It has developed a national framework and roadmap to guide their implementation and is undertaking its second Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2020. To complement this VNR and accelerate meaningful SDG implementation, the Center for Conflict Resolution (CECORE) in Uganda, together with the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), conducted an independent civil society-led study on the progress of SDG 16+ in six selected districts and at the national level.

Peace, justice, and strong institutions are key to progress on all SDGs across Uganda. This reports specifically reviews SDG 16 targets and indicators, as well as selected targets from SDGs 2 (zero hunger), 5 (gender equality), and 17 (partnerships), which are particularly relevant in the Ugandan context. In reviewing progress achieved towards creating a peaceful, just, and inclusive Ugandan society, the report also assesses existing partnerships and SDG awareness-raising mechanisms to provide

specific recommendations for further progress. This study seeks to complement and support the official VNR report to be submitted to the United Nations (UN) by the government of Uganda in June 2020 – ultimately contributing to the realisation of SDG 16+. As a civil society contribution, it looks to further strengthen policies and institutions, and to mobilise multi-stakeholder support and partnerships for accelerated implementation of the SDGs.

Looking critically at SDG 16+ progress, as well as its translation into practices, partnerships and coordination, the study also documents real-life stories, critical gaps, and challenges encountered on the ground. To prompt further progress, the study provides key recommendations to government, civil society, and the international community. And it provides a practical model for effective and meaningful localisation of the SDGs, based on local experiences from *Kaabong* district.

Diversity of participants was targeted in six districts in Uganda (selected from six geographical regions): *Kaabong, Yumbe, Lira, Tororo, Kasese,* and *Mityana.* The study also involved national-level stakeholders who are key in SDG 16+ implementation, employing both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, with an emphasis on the qualitative.

1.1 Key Findings

- Uganda has a number of enabling legal and policy frameworks, as well as a comprehensive SDG coordination framework that can drive the implementation and realisation of SDG 16+. However, Uganda still lacks a specific policy framework on peacebuilding that provides systematic guidance, coordination, and implementation of peace efforts throughout the country.

- The implementation of SDG 16+ related policies is generally weak, especially at the local level.

- General awareness of the SDGs and 16+ in particular is low and, related to this, participation of stakeholders at the community level in SDG 16+ efforts is minimal despite the critical roles that communities need to play.

- Despite the explicit commitment of the government to 'strengthen policies and institutions and to mobilise multi-stakeholder support and partnerships for the accelerated implementation of the SDGs', meaningful participation and inclusion of relevant partners, such as civil society, local authorities, and the private sector remain predominantly at the strategic level and are less visible in practice and at the community level.

- Uganda has managed to significantly contain insurgencies, disarm communities, and create macro-level stability. However, at the local level, different forms of violence are still significantly hindering SDG progress.

- Land and domestic violence were cited as the most prevalent conflicts across all the sample districts. An increase in domestic violence was partly attributed to COVID-19 – mostly triggered by tensions created when individuals who used to be "bread winners" were no longer able to provide, as a result of the lockdown. Although the government ordered the suspension of all land transactions, evictions, etc. as a way to manage violence during the COVID-19 lockdown, violent land-related conflicts continue to escalate.

- Traditional practices that undermine the participation of marginalised groups such as youth and women persist as major obstacles to the realisation of SDG 16+.

- Peace and conflict prevention issues are not prioritised by the government. Its official VNR key message[1] to the UN does not refer to peace or conflict prevention and pays little attention to SDG 16. Peace and conflict prevention are also not prioritised in budgeting at the national and local government levels. Furthermore, Uganda indicated in its VNR message that it would prioritise 'key accelerators based on their relative return on investment'. This does not bode well for investment in peace and conflict prevention, which is likely to continue receiving little attention. Investment in peacebuilding demands a long-term perspective and is not easily quantified. Even when the importance of peace as a bedrock for other sectors to thrive is recognized on paper financial commitments are often low. Paralleling the central promise of the SDGs to "Leave No One Behind", review participants strongly called on all actors: "Don't leave SDG 16 behind".

- Localisation of SDG 16+ is fundamental and needs more attention. This localisation must enhance human security of people and communities, particularly the most vulnerable. The study offers some **key localisation principles** that all actors should follow:

  1. Localisation needs to build on what is there;
  2. SDG 16+ needs to affect change at the community level;
  3. Ownership is key – build outwards starting from local communities and councils;
  4. SDG 16+ strategies and implementation must be moved forward in a holistic way;
  5. Building broad local support structures for SDG 16+ is essential;
  6. Invest in the process of local ownership of the goals and solutions;
  7. Ensure development, availability of, and access to localised SDG 16+ indicators and data at the local level.

[1] Sustainabledevelopment.un.org

To the government

- Through the Office of the Prime Minister, the government **should finalise and operationalise the national peace policy** draft through a purposeful multi-stakeholder approach. Such a human security-based peace policy is key to ensuring a coordinated and coherent method to prevent, manage, and resolve violent conflicts, as well as to securing sustainable, positive peace in the country.
- National and local governments should **prioritise peacebuilding and conflict prevention** by:
  - Enhancing specific programmes and approaches, such as promoting Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms in community structures;
  - Increasing allocations for SDG 16+, in particular to peace and prevention themes and sectors for national and local budgets;
  - Ensuring an open civic space and the protection of all fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression and the media.
- Strengthen SDG 16+ collaboration and information sharing by **revitalising** and adequately capacitating the **National Platform on Peacebuilding** and Conflict Resolution under the Office of the Prime Minister.
- **Increase the human and resource capacity of existing institutions working on conflict prevention,** such as the Conflict Early Warning and Early Response Unit (CEWERU), for it to operate nationally and on its 5 recently scaled-up themes,[2] and the National Focal Point on Small Arms and Light Weapons (NFP–SALW), for it to increase activities in the Karamoja region, as ways of enhancing SDG 16+ implementation at the local level. Capacity building could include enhancing skills of key officers involved in SDG 16+ implementation with expertise in peacebuilding, human security, and participatory programming.

[2] Environment, Social, Economic, Governance and Security

- Raise awareness about the dangers of and complete **legislative reforms relating to small arms and light weapons**, such as amending the Firearms Act of 1971, and having the Firearms Bill passed into an Act of Parliament.
- **Scale up the community policing** programmes as a way of promoting preventive responses to violence at the community level.
- Political, administrative, and traditional leaders should **prioritise the fight against corruption** and ensure anti-corruption laws are effectively enforced.
- **Ensure gender equality and the protection of women's rights** (including to land). To achieve this, the Ministry of Gender should identify key issues to tackle and work with relevant ministries, local authorities, traditional leaders, and other key "gatekeepers" in communities to address them. This should include increasing land ownership by women to at least 30%, as recommended by the African Union. All gender related initiatives should work with men to ensure they become key partners and supporters in making gender and women's rights a shared and widely supported agenda.
- Government should **engage youth as partners** to identify youth-specific needs and respond to key issues that affect youth, such as unemployment and low and/or tokenistic participation in decision-making processes. This can be done by ensuring their active participation and strengthening existing capacities for youth to help establish youth-led development initiatives.
- Work through local governments and collaborate with CSOs to build on and **strengthen the district and community peace committees,** as well as local councils to coordinate SDG 16+ implementation at the local level.

- Work through local governments and collaborate with civil society, UN agencies, and the private sector to **enhance SDG awareness** and enable the localisation of the agenda. This collaborative approach should activate community participation in SDG implementation, SDG advocacy, and in holding the various duty-bearers to account. Active participation should include involving local communities as key actors in spearheading community dialogues, ensuring inclusion of youth, women, and other vulnerable groups, in addition to tracking SDG 16+ progress and participatory budgeting.
- **Localisation of SDG 16+** needs to be clearly stipulated as a responsibility of the Chief Administrative Officers, sub-county, and local council leaders, so that they integrate localisation into their day-to-day work. This should include facilitating local ownership of the goals, developing inclusive SDG 16+ strategies, and their inclusive implementation.
- Collaborate with neighbouring countries to **enhance cross-border approaches** and minimise spill-over effects of violence. This will reduce challenges faced in border regions, including cross-border raiding, arms proliferation, violent extremism, and boundary-related tensions about natural resource. Ensuring the implementation of the UN commitment to support the Uganda-Kenya cross-border initiative (2020–2025) for sustainable peace and development in the *Turkana, West-Pokot*, and *Karamoja* regions is a key opportunity to seize.[3]
- **Enhance SDG data collection** by, for example, identifying a government office at the district level and assigning it a role to coordinate data collection and act as a one-stop centre for information on SDGs. The office could work closely with the SDG secretariat.[4]

[3] Ug.one.un.org

[4] The secretariat was established in 2019 to support SDG coordination architecture in Uganda.

[5] An NGO platform organization in Uganda

To civil society organisations

- Jointly **advocate** for and cooperate with the government in **finalising and operationalising the draft national peace policy** for it to be passed and approved by parliament. This could be done through the National Platform on Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution.
- Jointly **advocate** and **cooperate** with local and national authorities to **increase their budget allocations towards SDG 16+,** in particular peacebuilding and conflict prevention. This should include specific attention to working with youth and women to identify and address their specific rights, capacities, and needs.
- **Work with communities** for them to participate in developing and **tracking relevant SDG 16+** plans, budgets, and expenditures and progress.
- **Collaborate** with government, the UN, and the private sector in a participatory and inclusive manner to **enhance SDG awareness and SDG 16+ in particular** – especially at the community level.
- **Use the SDGs as an advocacy tool** for peace and human security to constructively engage rights-holders and duty-bearers. The SDGs provide an internationally, nationally, and locally recognised tool to work with stakeholders in fulfilling their various mandates and service delivery.
- Collaborate with government institutions to **promote Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)** mechanisms, such as mediation, as well as trauma counselling, as an approach to transforming conflicts within communities. This can be done through local councils and community-based organisations.
- The NGO Forum[5] should **facilitate coordination, learning, and information sharing meetings** for CSOs to engage, reflect, and share experiences on SDG 16+ awareness-building, mobilisation,

implementation, learning, monitoring, and advocacy. This should have a particular focus on increasing active participation of communities, including local leaders, in SDG 16+ implementation, as well as promoting accountability and anti-corruption measures.

- In collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister and Ministry of Internal Affairs, the NGO Forum should organise regular, **constructive dialogues** among civil society and government on implementing complementary, joint SDG 16+ efforts, discussing related recommendations from official and CSO-led SDG reviews.

To the international community

- **Enhance support for peace and conflict prevention** in the country by increasing funding for SDG 16+ interventions. This can be done through specific calls for funding proposals for CBOs and CSOs and earmarked contributions to relevant government agencies. This funding should also specifically address the Covid-19 pandemic and its localized impact on human security.

- **Support** government, CSOs and CBOs in participatory localisation and **awareness-raising of SDG 16+** and its targets in an inclusive manner, in particular at the community level.

- **Encourage** and support a **conducive civic space** and access to information by urging the government to ensure that CSOs (including media) are able to freely play their legitimate roles.

- **Support partnership building** among the state, civil society, and the private sector for effective planning, implementation, and monitoring of SDG 16+. This could be done by funding **Government-CSO-private sector dialogue** meetings.

1.3 SDG targets selected

This study reviewed progress of **SDG 16 on peaceful, just, and inclusive societies (most indicators),** as well as **SDG 2 on ending hunger** (indicator 2.1.1), **SDG 5 on gender equality** (indicators 5.1.1 and 5.a.1 and 5.a.2), and **SDG 17 on partnerships for the goals** (indicator 17.15.1). The selection was based on the intersectionality of the various indicators, and those the study found critical in the implementation of the SDGs in Uganda. Continue reading below for more details on the various targets reviewed.

2 Introduction to SDG 16+

As stated by the UN, the SDGs – also known as 'Agenda 2030' – are 'a universal call for action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity'.[6] The SDGs comprise 17 goals and were adopted by UN member states in September 2015. While SDG 16 is specifically related to peaceful, just, and inclusive societies, many targets under other SDGs – for instance those on inequality and gender responsiveness are also crucial for realising SDG 16. Therefore, the term '**SDG 16+**' has been coined to encompass SDG 16 and all peace-related goals and targets across Agenda 2030. The innovating element of the SDGs, as compared to the Millennium Development Goals, is its attention to new areas, such as climate change, economic inequality, sustainable consumption, and peace and justice as key pillars for sustainable development. With the recognition that the goals are interconnected, Agenda 2030 is a call on governments and all other partners to secure societies that are peaceful, just, and inclusive.

SDG 16+ provides a framework to strengthen and link up actions on a range of peace-related issues. Still, as recognised by practitioners, 'it will not drive change on its own. It depends on change-makers and reformers, both within and outside government, to identify and take action on key obstacles to peace, justice and inclusion in their own contexts; as well as integrating the global agenda into national plans and processes'.[7]

2.1 Why review SDG 16+?

As noted above, the SDGs are particularly relevant for peacebuilding as they explicitly recognise the link between peace and development, including a dedicated 'peace goal'. Undertaking a review on SDG 16+ progress provides a significant opportunity to build on what works, while identifying policy and implementation gaps and opportunities. It offers a moment for collective reflection and stronger joint action for conflict prevention and peacebuilding, especially at the national and local levels. This is particularly urgent as both the global SDG review and SDG 16+ review in 2019 clearly indicated that not enough progress has been made towards achieving peaceful,

just, and inclusive societies.[8] In the words of the UN Secretary-General, 'we must step up our efforts. Now!'[9]

In 2020, Uganda is among the countries undergoing the **Voluntary National Review (VNR)[10],** within the theme: 'Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development'. This is an opportune moment to critically reflect and complement government efforts to assess progress and shortcomings in the implementation of the goals. This helps identify areas where more means and actions for peace and development are needed. The findings and recommendations of this SDG 16+ spotlight report will be used to engage actors at the national and local levels, alongside those emerging from the government-led VNR report.

[6] www.md.undp.org
[7] www.saferworld.org.uk
[8] undocs.org
[9] news.un.org
[10] sustainabledevelopment.un.org

The national government's VNR process consulted stakeholders, including members of civil society, but it did not place as much emphasis on local consultations. Therefore, this report complements government and other CSO initiatives by capturing and sharing real-life experiences of men, women, and young people in six sample districts, and at the national level.

Finally, this review provides lessons to further advance the realisation of SDG 16+. Using *Kaabong* district as a case study, a concrete model for future steps in the practical, effective, and meaningful localisation of SDG 16+ in Uganda is provided.

CECORE sees this research as a first step towards further strategic and operational cooperation with the government and other stakeholders to advance local progress on SDG 16+.

2.2   Scope of the study

This study analyses the extent to which progress on SDG 16+ indicators has been implemented. Given the intersectionality of the agenda, the study found it necessary to incorporate SDG 2, 5, and 17, as each of them critically contributes to peaceful, just, and prosperous societies. For these goals, one indicator was selected from each, mainly the first indicator of the first target. Other focus areas this study considered included CSO participation, inclusion of local actors, and localisation of the agenda.

A few indicators under SDG 16 were left out of this report (i.e. 16.8.1 on the proportion of members and voting rights of developing countries in international organisations). Some targets were merged because of their close links (i.e. targets 16.2 and 5.1).

In terms of geographical scope, the study targeted six districts in Uganda, selected from six regions. These were *Kaabong* in North Eastern Uganda (*Karamoja* region), *Yumbe* in the West Nile region, *Lira* in Northern Uganda, *Tororo* in the Eastern region, *Kasese* in the Western region, and *Mityana* in the Central region. The study also involved national-level stakeholders that are key to implementing SDG 16+. This selection provided a good sense of

the national outlook, both in terms of diverse geographical coverage and representation.

2.3   Methodology

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods, with more emphasis on qualitative. The research comprised literature reviews, key informant interviews, and individual surveys for community members. The interviews and surveys were conducted through semi-structured interviews. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of interviews were conducted through phone calls and emails. The questionnaire for *Kaabong* district included an extra section to assess the level of localisation and capacity needs in SDG 16+ implementation.

The study involved 168 respondents (herein referred to as participants): 97 men and 71 women. These numbers are composed of 20 key informants at the national level, 72 key informants from the six sample districts, and 76 interviews with individual community members. The key informants involved at both levels included a wide range of key actors: government ministries and institutions, security agencies, the private sector, academia, NGOs, faith-based organisations, media, political party actors, independent consultants, and special interest groups. Others included district local government officials and local leaders, community-based organisations, traditional leaders, and opinion leaders.

Data analysis and report writing was done by a team of technical personnel in the area of peacebuilding. Analysis of quantitative data was conducted using SPSS and Excel. The draft was then reviewed by experts in the field. The findings of the report were validated through an online workshop that involved various key actors from government (central and local), NGOs, media, UNDP, embassies, the private sector, community leaders, independent experts in the area of peacebuilding, among others. Further input was collected through emails and thereafter incorporated into the report.

2.4   Study limitations

The study was conducted at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic during the lockdown in Uganda. This affected some of the envisaged data collection methods (i.e. focus group discussions). To address this, the research targeted a larger number of key informants and different categories of individuals from the community than originally intended. This ensured that the necessary information was obtained, and the quality of research findings was not compromised.

The pandemic also changed in-country dynamics, increasing some forms of conflict, like domestic violence, to outlier points. Mindful of this, the study evaluated the trend of conflicts over the last 12 months and not only for the April–May 2020 period during which the effects of COVID-19 were very pronounced in Uganda.

2.5   Quality control

The research team ensured quality control throughout the study. This included the selection of competent, experienced, and reputable research assistants to collect data at the district level; briefing research assistants; pre-testing the questionnaire; cleaning the data; and validating with a wide range of key stakeholders, among others.

2.6   Implications of the COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has directly disrupted peacebuilding interventions and fuelled specific forms of violent conflicts. Its multiple effects can be seen in cases like domestic violence that have increased to outlier levels, hate speech, and tensions due to isolation. Media reports have shown that gender-based violence has increased during the lockdown period. In less than one month into the lockdown, the Ministry of Gender,

[11] csbag.org

Labour, and Social Development already reported that over 3,000 cases of domestic violence were registered.[11]

Research participants also saw the COVID-19 pandemic and related containment and prevention measures as leading to violent conflicts. While enforcing the government directives on COVID-19, violence has been meted out against citizens, including killings.[12] Those most affected by the lockdown have been women, due to gender socialised roles; youth in the informal sector; those differently abled (disabled); pregnant women, and those suffering from chronic illnesses. For example, the elderly and those living with disabilities have been arrested for failing to reach home before curfew time, and pregnant mothers have faced life-threatening challenges while being denied quick access to health facilities.[13] Participants noted that this has a negative influence on peace. These dynamics partly influenced study findings. The research also indicated that COVID-19 will have a longer lasting impact on peace as the livelihoods of people who depend on informal businesses, such as women and youth, have been severely disrupted.

2.7   Structure of the report

This report is divided into ten main sections. Section one provides an overview of the study, key findings, and recommendations. Section two provides an introduction and contextual background on SDG 16+, while section three provides an overview of conflicts in Uganda. Section four looks at SDG awareness, while section five looks at the legal and legislative frameworks and policies. Sections six and seven form the core of the report, presenting the findings on SDG 16+ progress. Lastly, sections eight, nine, and ten look at levels of CSO participation, propose an SDG localisation model, and provide a concluding call for enhanced peace and conflict transformation efforts.

[12] www.newvision.co.ug
[13] www.newvision.co.ug

3 Contextual overview of conflicts in Uganda

The Ugandan government aspires to attain high-income, stable, peaceful, and prosperous country status. Its *Vision 2040* is aimed at realising 'a transformed Ugandan society from a peasant to a modern and prosperous country within 30 years'. Its National Development Plan III (2020/21 until 2024/25) also strives to achieve this same vision. These long-term aspirations are aligned to the government's commitment and desire to realise the SDGs by 2030.

At the same time, violent conflicts constitute a major cost and threat to the country's development aspirations and commitment towards achieving the SDGs. Generally speaking, Uganda is a conflict-prone country within a conflict-prone region. It continues to grapple with cycles of serious, multiple, and complex conflict situations. These situations stem from negative past experiences, such as tensions along ethnic lines, and emerging issues, such as land conflicts between communities and investors.

Such violent conflicts have a negative impact on the realisation of SDG 16+, undermining the country's peace and development aspirations. They are detrimental to livelihood, production, investment and financial flows, as well as human security, human rights, and gender equality, among others.

3.1 SDG 16 progress in comparison with the 2016 VNR report

Uganda presented its first VNR report in 2016.[14] The report mainly presented the country's readiness, desires, and commitments towards the implementation and realisation of the SDGs. Since it was conducted immediately after passing Agenda 2030, the report focused on how implementation would be carried out. It is clear that since 2016, the government has made some notable progress. Key among these is the strengthening of institutional coordination at the national level, such as the establishment of the SDG secretariat. The integration of Agenda 2030 in Uganda's planning frameworks through the alignment of the SDGs to the National Development Plan III is also an important step.

In 2016, the government stated that 'Uganda still has significant room for improvement in pursuit of its Sustainable Development Goals'.[15]

This still holds true for most of the SDG 16+ indicators, as reflected in this study's findings. Key issues that the government indicated that it would address under SDG 16 in 2016 have not significantly progressed – i.e. enhance accountability and observance of human rights; improve democracy and governance processes; eliminate corruption; and increase community participation in the development process from 50% to 70%. This demands greater sustained focus on SDG 16+. Clear steps on how the government will achieve its 2016 commitments should be emphasised in its 2020 VNR conclusions.

[14] sustainabledevelopment.un.org

[15] sustainabledevelopment.un.org

3.2 Key Findings

According to the participants, violent conflicts are rampant in communities. Common cases of violence include land disputes, domestic violence, and child abuse. In some localities these are reported to be happening on a daily basis. Other common expressions of violence identified in the interviews include rape, forced marriages, excessive force by security forces, and alcohol abuse. Religious, tribal, and political/electoral violent conflicts are also reported to be common. Participants also named poverty, illiteracy, and corruption as drivers of violent conflict in their communities. Some conflicts were more pronounced in certain districts than in others. For example, *Kaabong* suffered more from cattle rustling; *Yumbe* experienced rising tensions from the influx of refugees; *Tororo* was more prone to tribal conflicts; trauma and other post-conflict issues were more rampant in *Lira*; *Kasese* largely experienced ethnic-related tensions; and *Mityana* predominantly faced landlord-tenant land tensions.

"It is unfortunate that in Kaabong district, where raiding had disappeared, the barbaric act has resumed. This is threatening the livelihoods of the people. I had witnessed more girls going to school but now I do not know. When insecurity increases, it means the security organs will be strained, and women and girls will suffer more."

– A participant from Kaabong.

The average level of satisfaction that there is peace in Uganda was 6.2 on a scale of 0–10. Participants who said that there is peace mainly attributed it to the relative national peace Uganda is enjoying, as it is not in direct inter-state conflict or fighting internal wars. Those reporting a lower level of satisfaction were mainly concerned with the rampant community-level conflicts in the country and the context-specific conflicts mentioned above.

"Land conflicts are brewing and if not attended to, [they] are going to explode in the near future."

– A male participant in Kasese.

Average level of satisfaction that there is peace - on a scale of 1-10

| District	Value
National level stakeholders	6,5
Kaabong	5
Lira	6,1
Yumbe	6,3
Kasese	6
Mityana	6,6
Tororo	6,8
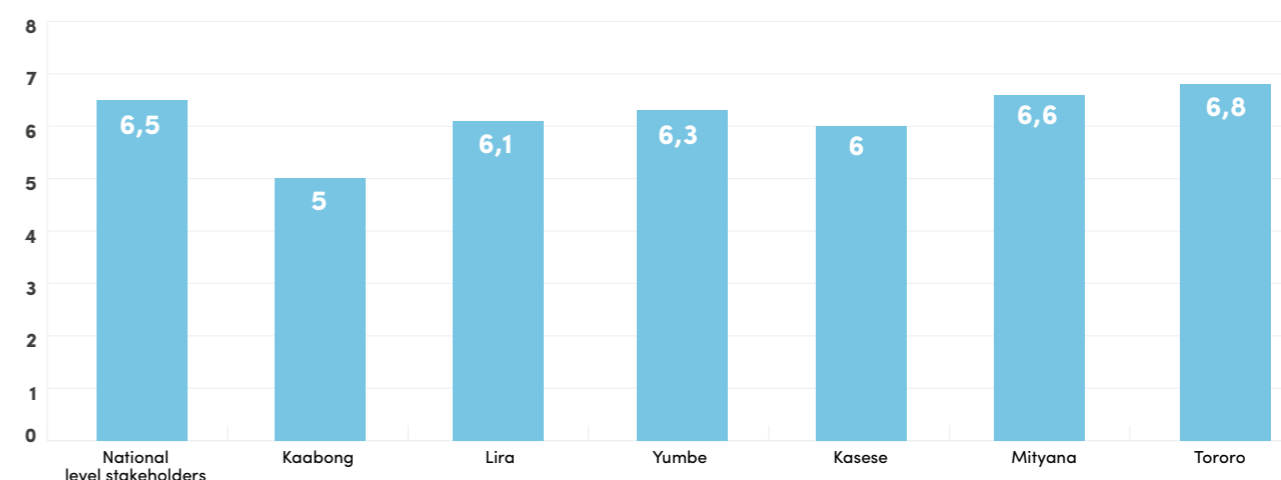
4 SDG awareness

The study findings indicate a generally low awareness of the SDGs across all of the six districts sampled, especially at the community level. The percentage of community-based participants who knew about the SDGs ranged from 12-22%, with *Kaabong* recording 12% and *Tororo* recording 22%. There was a general misunderstanding of the SDGs, even among leaders at the community level. They perceived the SDGs as a specific project and not an overall agenda that government and non-government actors are building on. Also, a number of government and non-government actors at the district level are aware of peace-related interventions in their areas but cannot link these to the national or global SDG agenda.

Among the national-level stakeholders, there was a reasonable level of understanding and application of the SDGs. Of the national-level participants, 86% knew about the SDGs. A number of them were further able to demonstrate that they are using the SDGs. *'I apply the SDGs at an individual level and an institutional level. I have planted at least 1,000 trees in the last six months. I am a strong advocate of a corruption-free country and I appraise projects for funding, against the SDGs',* said one participant.

With a generally low awareness of the SDGs, participation of stakeholders at the community level is very minimal, despite the critical role that communities need to play towards the realisation of the SDGs. Lack of knowledge around the SDGs means that interventions cannot be linked to national or international work that would increase local impact. It also reduces the possibility of rights-holders to hold duty-bearers to account.

Participants who knew about SDGs in % (overall).
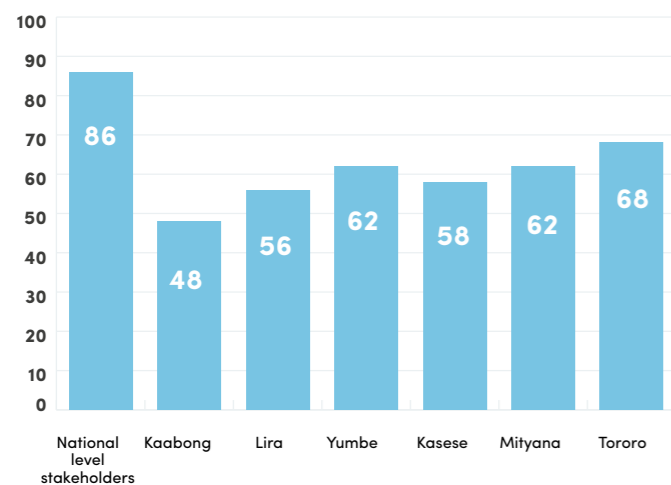
Participants who knew about SDGs in % - at community level
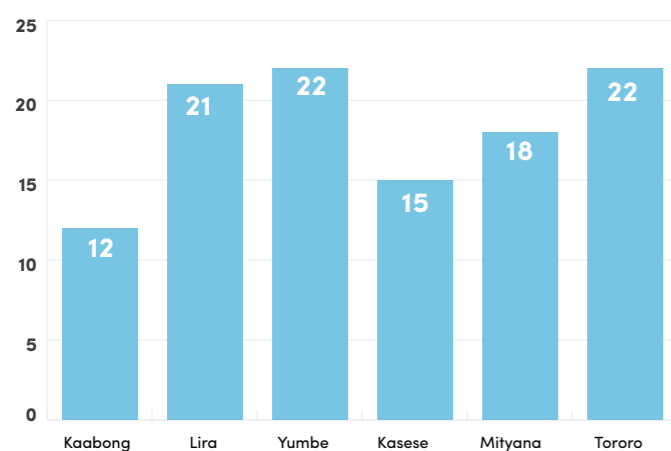
4.1 Recommendation

- Government, civil society, and the international community need to work together to enhance awareness around SDG 16+ and the SDGs in general, especially at the community level in order to enable active participation in implementation.

5 Assessment of legal and legislative frameworks and policies relevant to SDG 16+

Uganda has various legal and legislative frameworks and policies that generally support the implementation of SDG 16+. Uganda's legal framework is largely based on the 1995 constitution, which strongly indicates the need for peace, unity, stability, gender equality, and respect for human rights and freedoms. It includes the popular phrase of 'all power belongs to the people' in chapter I of the constitution.

Other instruments aimed at protecting (or preventing) people from physical violence include the Equal Opportunities Act (2007), which established the equal opportunities commission. This commission aims to promote inclusive development that includes all vulnerable groups. The Justice Law and Order Sector (JLOS) framework is also aimed at ensuring access to justice. The national gender policy (2007) and the refugee policy also contribute towards protecting people from violence. The police, especially the family and child protection unit and its community policing programme, seek to protect people from violence. In terms of preventive measures, the CEWERU is a promising mechanism aimed at proactively preventing and responding to conflicts.

Furthermore, Uganda has its National Development Plan III that recognises peace and security as key pillars for development in the country. SDG interventions are expected to be aligned to this development plan. An ad-hoc platform on peacebuilding and conflict resolution under the Office of the Prime Minister often brings together government and non-government peace actors to address topical issues. These, and a number of other frameworks, policies, and instruments, contribute in one way or another to the realisation of SDG 16+, providing a basis for government and non-government actors to work from.

5.1 Key achievements and challenges

Participants cited several ways through which legal and legislative framework and policies contributed to achieving SDG 16+. For example, in reference to Article 33 and 31 of the constitution that emphasise gender equality and affirmative action in favour of marginalised groups, a woman in *Kasese* noted: *'We feel we are represented and our voices are heard because we have a strong district woman member of parliament'.* Similarly, a woman from the *Ik* community in *Kaabong* expressed her gratitude for the creation of *Ik* County: *'You cannot imagine that we the Ik ethnic minority community are also represented in parliament'.* CEWERU, in its work with the NFP–SALW, were also mentioned as key institutions that have played a key role in contributing towards the reduction of cattle rustling in the *Karamoja* region.[16]

[16] Conflict Early Warning and Early Response. Its task is to collect, process and communicate early warning information to appropriate authorities for effective response to emerging or existing pastoral conflicts. *See*

In *Yumbe*, Uganda's refugee policy, applauded as the best refugee policy in the world, was mentioned as having created an environment that makes refugees feel safe in the country.[17] *'Here we feel safer, we stay in settlements and not camps, we can do some businesses around, and we can access land',* said a male refugee from South Sudan staying in Bidi-bidi refugee settlement in *Yumbe*.

In regards to the National Development Plan III, one of the national-level participants remarked,'... *now you can see that all interventions are guided, coordinated, and aligned - unlike the kind of uncoordinated efforts we have always had'.* The aforementioned policies were also noted by CSO members as important tools for monitoring SDG 16, as well as for engagement, dialogue, lobbying, and advocacy.

Although there is a solid policy and legal framework, their consistent and coherent implementation is weak and marred with various challenges. For example, since its establishment in 2003, CEWERU has only been active in the sub-region of *Karamoja*, and even there only on one thematic area: cattle rustling. While it is in the process of scaling-up to other districts and its mandate has been expanded to cover five thematic areas, its capacity is inadequate. Despite improvements, institutions at the centre of protecting people against physical violence (i.e. the police and judiciary) still face a number of weaknesses that compromise their role in protection. A number of participants attributed this to inadequate financial and other resources. Others decried the inhumane manner in which some of the security officers handle suspects, resulting in inflicting torture.

Participants raised one issue particularly strongly: Uganda lacks a specific framework to support the implementation of SDG 16+. The snail pace in developing a national peace policy, and failure until now to put it into place, was lamented and seen as a key bottleneck to achieve SDG 16+. In the absence of such a

policy, peacebuilding efforts and responses were seen as largely reactive, ad-hoc, and not well coordinated. Participants believed that such a policy would strengthen coordination, common approaches, and synergies among stakeholders in peacebuilding processes at all levels. In turn, this would strengthen conflict prevention, management, resolution, and transformation; hence ensuring sustainable peace. The policy would also play a significant role in operationalising article III of the 'national objectives and directive principles of state policy', on national unity and stability, section (iv) stating, *'There shall be established and nurtured institutions and procedures for the resolution of conflicts fairly and peacefully'.*[18]

Additionally, lack of prioritisation of peace issues was cited by participants as a major challenge: '*While the national development policy recognises peace and security, attention to security and peace issues are handled on an ad-hoc basis. The peacebuilding platform under the department of disaster preparedness in the OPM (Office of the Prime Minister) tends to be more focused on disaster and not real peacebuilding'.* In the process, a majority of participants appealed to the government to prioritise humane/soft security, as opposed to focusing only on hard security.

"Peace is key to any development and therefore must be prioritised and be a number one policy to be put in place."

– A female participant during the validation workshop

5.2 Recommendations

- Through the Office of the Prime Minister, the government should finalise and operationalise the national peace policy draft through a purposeful, multi-stakeholder approach by revitalising the national platform on peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Such a peace policy is key to the effective coordination and consistency of preventing, managing, and resolving violent conflicts, and ensuring sustainable, positive peace in the country.

- The international community and national civil society should work with and support the government in finalising and operationalising the national peace policy.

- Parliament, Ministry of Finance and Local Governments should prioritise peacebuilding and conflict prevention by increasing allocation to themes and relevant sectors for the 2021 budgets and thereafter. This needs to be reflected in national and local government budgeting.

- There is a need to strengthen the capacity of the CEWERU to ensure that it serves as a truly national prevention and peace infrastructure. It should be consolidated so that it can work across the whole country to prevent and respond to conflicts before they escalate.

- Government should prioritise human security approaches when preventing, managing, and transforming conflicts, addressing violence at the local and national levels. This should be reflected in the national development plan and be at the heart of the proposed national peace policy.

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[17] www.weforum.org

[18] www.statehouse.go.ug

6 Review of progress in the implementation of SDG 16+ targets

6.1 Target 16.1: Reduce all forms of violence and related death rates (linked to indicator 5.1.1)

Violence is a significant obstacle to the realisation of the SDGs in their entirety. Violence instils fear, brings insecurity, and limits the peace one is supposed to enjoy. It is also a direct cause of death, both instant and in the longer-term. As violence disproportionately affects women and girls, the study linked the progress assessment of target 16.1 to indicator 5.1.1 'whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex' under target 5.1 'ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere'.

The study findings confirm that Uganda has managed to significantly contain insurgencies and the number of arms within communities such as the *Karamoja* region. This has brought about relative peace and an increased feeling of safety across the country. The Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) survey in 2018 indicated that 97% of people felt safe walking in their communities; respectively, 94% and 61% felt safe walking alone during the daytime and at night.

6.1.1 Key findings

Although insurgencies have been contained and a number of communities have been disarmed, cases of violence at a micro/community level are still a big concern. The following narration demonstrates the kind of violent conflicts present in the country:

"It is hard to provide specific numbers, but the reality is that a number of people have died over the 12-month period prior to the research, arising from injustices at family and community level. Several families were evicted from their lands that they had occupied for the last 30 years. For example, an investor was reported to have evicted a whole village in Mubende

district. Talking about deaths occasioned by domestic violence at family levels, look at a case in Mubende district, where a police officer gunned down his two children before shooting himself, and a pastor cut his three children into pieces, set fire to the bodies, then killed himself'. – A national-level participant

In districts *Kasese* and *Lira*, a majority of participants said violent conflicts have reduced in comparison to earlier insurgencies in those districts. Worryingly in *Kaabong*, although the recent disarmament exercise had significantly reduced the rate of gun violence, the trend is reported to be re-escalating. One participant said, *'In Kaabong, fear is increasing among people due to claims of re-armament; continued cattle raiding from the armed neighbouring communities like*

From a champion of violence to a champion of peace:

Irwata, a former cattle raider who commanded cattle raids, escaped death after witnessing many of his friends being killed. He was both a perpetrator and a victim of violence. He testified that, *'In the whole of Kaabong district, I used to be the number three in command of raiders. I am now the number one commander of peace in my community'.* As a result of the government disarmament exercise and peacebuilding skills training by CECORE, Irwata has transformed. He further said *'I realised I was on a path of death. Indeed, most of my friends died during the raids we commanded'.* He leads a group of fellow young people in Kalapata sub-county, known as Naporoto peace champions, who preach peace and carry out income-generating activities like goat-rearing and making arts and crafts pieces. Having learnt from his past experience, Irwata's number one mission is to change people's mind-sets as a key strategy to realising peace in the *Karamoja* region.

Turkana across the border in Kenya; attacks from neighbouring communities like the Jie; the current animal quarantine that has stifled the economic livelihood of most youth; and the rising rates of violence'. This re-escalation of violence is dangerous, and it is likely to diminish the relative peace that had been paved by recent disarmament efforts in *Karamoja*. In *Yumbe*, recent tensions are largely attributed to the influx of refugees in the district, with the *Bidi-bidi* settlement alone hosting over 1.4 million[19] refugees. In *Kaabong*, *Yumbe*, and *Kasese*, spill-over effects from the conflicts across the borders remain key areas of tension, posing high risks of radicalisation and violent extremism.

According to the findings, many cases of violence at community level are not recorded and, therefore, go unnoticed. A participant from Tororo said, 'For example in our setting only about 20% of cases related to domestic violence, violation of children's rights, and domestic fights are reported to authorities'. Physical, psychological, or sexual violence tend to affect women and girls more as they are more vulnerable to violence and bear its brunt when it occurs. In Kaabong, cattle raiders have targeted and raped women while on their raiding missions. The Uganda human rights report of 2018 also affirmed as such, reiterating that 56% of women aged 15-29 have experienced

physical violence since the age of 15, and 28% of women have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime. SDG 16+ cannot be achieved if violent conflicts persist and its causes and consequences are not adequately addressed.

6.1.2 Recommendations

- In collaboration with CSOs, the government should enhance conflict prevention and ADR mechanisms in community structures, such as the Local Council I. This can be done through capacity building training programmes.

- Police should scale up its community policing programme. This would play a key role in preventing violent acts and enhancing public confidence in reporting cases.

- The NFP-SALW and CSOs should strengthen efforts to prevent possible re-armament of communities in the *Karamoja* region. This should include mental disarmament campaigns by CSOs to transform the attitudes of communities towards guns, control the proliferation of arms through porous borders, and advocate for a harmonised regional disarmament approach in the IGAD region (especially with Kenya and South Sudan).

[19] www.unocha.org

Target 16.2: Abuse, exploitation and trafficking of children (linked to target 5.1: gender equality)

Acts of violence affect both men and women but they impact them differently, with vulnerable groups like women, girls, and children often disproportionately affected. They tend to either be targeted or suffer most when violence occurs.

Research findings indicate that abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence against children have continued unabated. In most surveyed communities, there is a very thin line between the interviewees' perceptions of torture of children and child responsibility. What should be considered torture of children is still being seen as acceptable behaviour.

Official statistics show that reported cases of violence against children and youth have somehow reduced between 2018 and 2019. A total of 120 incidents related to people trafficking were registered in 2019, compared to 286 in 2018, with a total of 455 victims of people trafficking compared to 650 in 2018[20]. According to the 2019 police report, 4.9% of the cases reported to police in that year were offences where children/juveniles were direct targets/victims, illustrating an 8.5% decrease as compared to 2018[21]. In 2019, reported defilement cases were reduced by 11.4% as compared to 2018. In both years, a majority of the victims/survivors were girls. While police reports indicate a reduction in defilement and torture, in some places this could be attributed to less reporting, not necessarily a reduction in cases. *'Children as young as four years are sent into the wilderness to herd cows, but no one reports that as torture. Even most of the girls are married off at about 14 years, but such cases are rarely reported'*, said a participant in *Kaabong*.

Violence and discrimination against women remains a major obstacle to the empowerment of all women and girls, and the realisation of SDG 5 and target 5.2. Discrimination against women and girls is rampant across all six sampled districts. This was corroborated in interviews with national-level stakeholders. It must be noted that the Ugandan government has made significant progress in developing legal frameworks, policies, and programmes to protect women's human rights and advance gender equality. The 1995 constitution prohibits laws, customs, or traditions that oppose the dignity, welfare, and interest of women. Article 21 on equality and freedom from discrimination, and Article 31 on affirmative action in favour of marginalised groups, clearly speak to the issue. This has enabled major progress, for example, in elective representation. The implementation of international instruments, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), further supports the advancement of women and girls' rights against discrimination. This could partly explain the slight reduction in the number of abuse and violence cases against women reported between 2019 and 2018. Cases of rape reported to police in 2019 decreased by 3.2% as compared to 2018[22]. And 13,693 cases of domestic violence were reported to police in 2018 as compared to 13,916 cases in 2019, showing a slight increase.

The prevalence of violence against women is still unacceptably high. Despite progressive legislation, the survey findings provide strong reasons to believe that the figures reported in a 2011 survey, that 56% of women aged 15-49 had experienced physical violence at least once[23] and 22% of women experience sexual violence, still hold true.

[20] Uganda Police. Annual Crime Report 2019: xxiv
[21] Uganda Police. Annual Crime Report 2019: xxvi
[22] Uganda Police. Annual Crime Report 2019: xxi
[23] africa.unwomen.org

Key findings

In the traditional Ugandan setting, most cases of abuse and domestic violence are kept under cover due to feared negative implications and stigma. This 'conspiracy of silence' is said to be highest among men due to the fear of social ridicule. For example, in Lira, one of the male participants said, *'if I am beaten by my wife I can't report. Fellow men can get to know about it and start laughing at you. It is the same with men who were raped here during the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) war'.*

Moreover, most cases of exploitation, torture, and other forms of child abuse are not reported. *'What I see and read about in the media, the TV, radio, newspapers and others, is an indication that cases of physical and sexual violence are on the rise and some of which go unreported'*, said one participant in *Mityana* district. The vulnerable, such as those abled differently, especially the handicapped are most affected. In many traditional societies, they are viewed as a parent's punishment. Some actions taken by parents are seen as socially acceptable, but equate to child torture. A woman in *Kaabong* said, *'My son has a mental problem, but I have to get something to eat. So, I have to tie him on a pole in the house before I can go out and look for food'.*

In regards to violence against women, harmful practices like female genital mutilation have persisted (mainly in secret) despite the enactment of the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act (2010). Forced/child marriages are also reported to persist. In *Kaabong*, parents continue to arrange marriage for their child-age daughters, which includes her abduction by the family of her husband-to-be and severe physical abuse in case of resistance. The research participants also indicated that discrimination was common in communities. Factors like sex, age, disability, religion, income status, and ethnic background were mentioned as common sources for discrimination. As one of the participants in *Mityana* relayed, *'...when a community member abused me, he said that they are fed up of Banyarwanda'.*[24]

Rejection by the community

Survey participants also expressed issues of rejection due to negative attitudes held by community members. For instance, some community members view returnees from the Lord's Resistance Army as perpetrators of atrocities meted upon the community, while others fear accepting returnees based on their own real-life experiences.

Discrimination on account of rape—Immaculate, Lira district

Immaculate is one of the many children who became orphaned as a result of the LRA war. Their home, located behind the current *Barlonyo* massacre mass grave, was attacked in 2004 by the LRA rebels when she was eight years and both parents were killed. A social worker took her to a shelter home in Lira town, where she stayed for four years before returning to her grandmother's home. The grandmother took her to one family where she became a helper.

The man in the home where she worked sexually abused her and she became pregnant. The man then chased her out of his home. She decided to return to the shelter home. She later married a man in *Aleptong* district, *Teso* region, who later chased her away after hearing rumours that Immaculate had been sexually abused by rebels and that is how she had become pregnant. Her child later died and Immaculate now sells oranges in *Lira* town to earn a living.

[24] Referring people who originated from Rwanda.

6.2.2 Challenges

The major gaps to realising this target lie in the implementation and adequate enforcement of available instruments, as well as the challenge of achieving behavioural change, especially without active involvement of local/traditional actors. The findings reveal a slow change in attitudes and practices related to women.

Participants indicated how deep-rooted cultural and traditional practices are, also among women, as well as low awareness about and weaknesses in redress mechanisms, all of which continue to impede progress on SDG 16.2 and 5.1. The research also reveals how women internalise deep-rooted traditions that prevent full gender equality, including among "elite" women, with one female youth participant in *Yumbe* explaining, *'Yes, land belongs to the boys. Why should I also start fighting with boys over land?"*

6.2.3 Recommendations

- In collaboration with CSOs, the government needs to increase initiatives to create community awareness around child rights and responsibilities, as well as against abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and all forms of violence against children. Structures that can play a facilitating role are the community police and the child and family protection units of the police; they need to pay greater attention to the prevention of (domestic) violence. This can be done through *Barazas* (community information fora).

- CSOs should identify and offer trauma counselling support for members of the affected communities, especially post-conflict communities.

- The Ministry of Gender should identify and work with key 'gatekeepers' in communities to influence behavioural change. These can include traditional leaders (and their wives), church leaders, local media, and opinion leaders, among others.

6.3 Target 5.a.1: Secure rights over agricultural land, by sex and type of tenure

Uganda has progressed in putting legislations in place that promote women's access to, control over, and ownership of land. A UN–ECA report (2012) notes that *'Uganda offers some of the best practices as far as gender policies and laws are concerned'.*[25] The report attributes this to the 1995 constitution and the Land Act (1998), which outline gender equality in land access and land ownership.

These support affirmative action in favour of women, including declaring all customary laws and practices that discriminate against women illegal, and having provisions that protect spouses from the sale of jointly occupied land without their consent. This promotes women's rights and provides access to land use for their livelihood.

Despite progress towards the acceptance of women's equal rights to land in laws and policies, their implementation has encountered many obstacles. Research findings suggest that women's access to, control over, and ownership of land is low. Only 16% of women own land in their own right, and the number of land registered is even lower at 7%; yet women constitute the majority of the population and are the primary users of land, especially for agricultural purposes.[26]

[25] repository.uneca.org

[26] Nangula Shejavali (2016). Land, food security and agriculture in Uganda. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung- Kampala, Uganda.

Some legal instruments on land are also understood to include biases against women. For example, Section 22 (2) – Cap 227) of the Land Act favours men under the communal land holding. It states that *'for the purpose of holding land under customary tenure, a family shall be deemed to be a legal person represented by the head of the family'.*

The 'head of the family' in customary contexts is a man, and this section therefore undermines women's rights to land. Some specific laws even guarantee the omission of women's rights to land. The Marriage and Divorce Bill that sought to address land rights issues has been pending for over 20 years now.
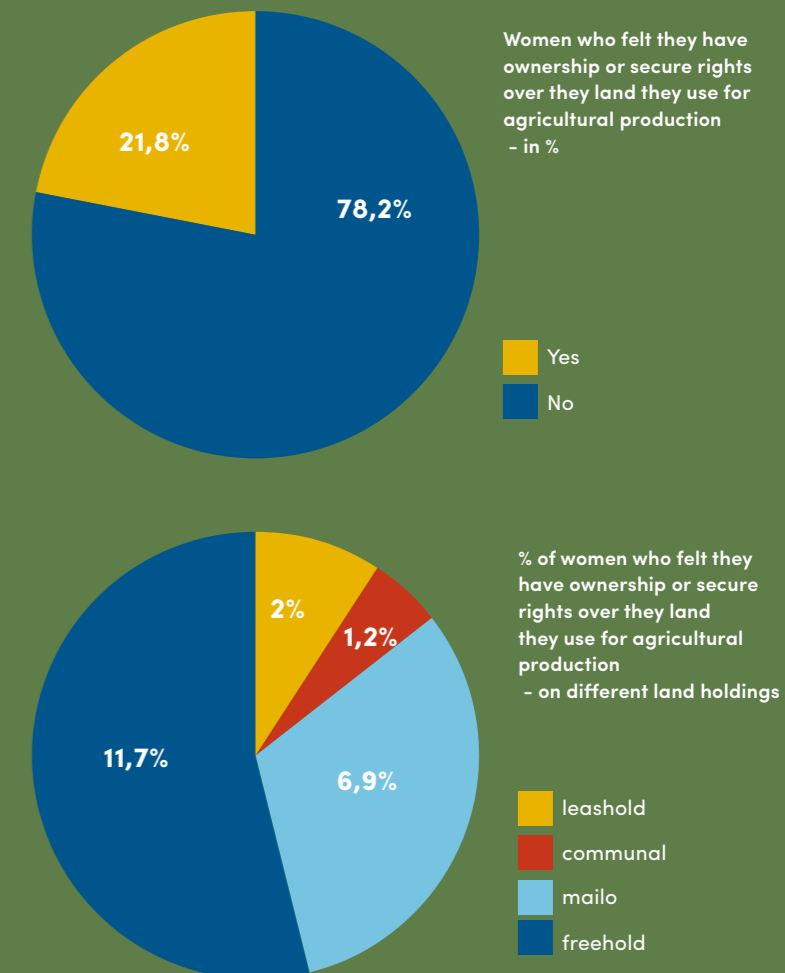
6.3.1 Key findings

The research findings confirm that women continue to encounter significant barriers in access to and control over land. They are excluded from owning, inheriting, and controlling land due to existing exclusionary norms, laws, and practices. They are unfair to women, particularly women without children, widows, single women, and disabled women. These practices and norms also disadvantage those in conflict situations and the poor. This was confirmed by both men and women across all sample districts. Of the women sampled, 78.2% felt that they have **no ownership** or secure rights over the land they use for agricultural production. Of the data representing women who felt that they **have ownership**, the percentage was lowest under communal land holding at 1.2%.

In the context of women's access to, control over, and ownership of land, a vivid illustration was offered by a woman interviewee in Kasese:'...and yet we cannot afford to buy land because we do not work for money. We only stay at home mainly to dig and look after children'.

Some of the participants indicated that traditional and communal land systems limit the attainment of women's rights to land and place women in disadvantaged and vulnerable positions. Land is managed by traditional norms and customs and regulated by clan leaders/elders who are typically men. Equally, although women may have the right to live on land and farm on it, only males/sons tend to inherit land.

Access, control, and ownership, therefore, remain key challenges in Uganda and current cultural norms, every day practices, and land legislations are not conducive enough to meet SDG 16 goal or SDG 5.

Women who felt they have ownership or secure rights over they land they use for agricultural production – in %

- 21,8% Yes
- 78,2% No

% of women who felt they have ownership or secure rights over they land they use for agricultural production – on different land holdings

- 2% leashold
- 1,2% communal
- 6,9% mailo
- 11,7% freehold

Note: Private Mailo land is a recognized form of land tenure system – practiced mainly in Buganda region. It also exists in a few parts of Bunyoro and Bugisu regions. It stems from the 1900 agreement between the British colonial government and the Kingdom of Buganda.

6.3.2 Recommendations

- The Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Urban Development, together with local authorities and traditional leaders, should ensure that traditional land governance structures become gender sensitive. This can be achieved through capacity building training programmes on conflict and gender sensitivity.

- Government and CSOs should include men (through existing traditional structures) as key partners in relevant gender equality programmes to ensure gender and women's rights area joint, shared agenda, not solely a women's issue.

- The Ministry of Lands, Housing, and Urban Development, together with the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development should develop an implementation framework on land to increase land ownership of women to at least 30%, as recommended by the African Union.

6.4 Target 16:3. Rule of law and equal access to justice for all

The Ugandan government, as well as non-governmental institutions, have shown willingness to promote the rule of law and ensure equal access to justice for all, at all levels. This is demonstrated in existing legal frameworks and the establishment of structures aimed at enhancing access to justice. Police, courts, toll-free lines, paralegal and pro-bona services, as well as public sensitisation programmes are some of the measures aimed at extending justice to the people. According to UBOS (2018), 72% of the participants trusted that the government protected them against crime and violence.

6.4.1 Key findings

Research findings do not fully align with these positive developments, with 50.2% of participants indicating that they did not feel comfortable reporting a case to the authorities.

Respondents who felt comfortable reporting a case to the authorities

49,8% 50,2%

- Yes
- No
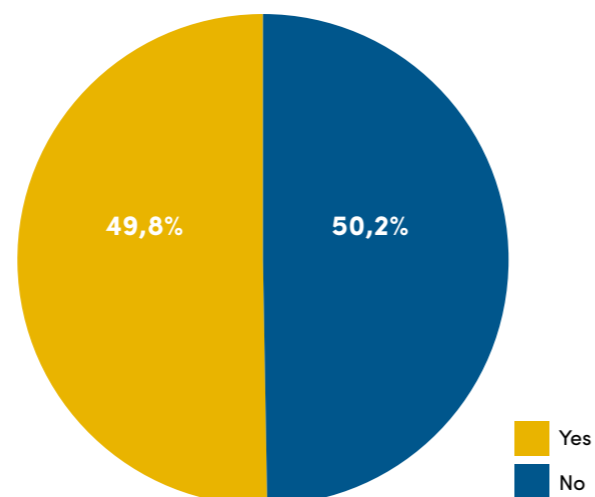
With further probing, a number of participants suggested that it depended on the nature of the case. For example, several interviewees were more comfortable reporting land cases to clan leaders, domestic cases to the Local Council I, and criminal cases to the police.

Less formal redress mechanisms were preferred at the community level. As shared by a male participant from *Mityana*: *'At the police there are many things that scare you, they ask you so many questions, you have to photocopy papers, you even have to incur transportation costs'*. Some claimed that 'the more formal, the more corruption', while others raised concerns about the long distance people have to cover to access services:

"While there are government organs that would advocate and promote justice for persons, especially the vulnerable and minority groups, the centres for such services are not within close proximity to the people who deserve free services to justice... the arm that would mediate family issues hardly has outreach services to the people who deserve them... like the rural, poor woman who is battered like a "Sunday morning drum" at my local church."

–Ik ethnic minority leader in Kaabong.

As well as corrupt practices:

"As the saying goes, "...if I can afford to buy the judge, why do I have to hire a lawyer". This is typical of our society where injustice thrives irrespective of the government instituted arms that would promote, protect, and preserve the law! The police in Uganda are sad news."

– said one of the national level participants.

Detention is another crucial issue. The 2018 Uganda Human Rights Commission report (UHRC 2019) shows that the number of people in detention awaiting legal proceedings is higher than those who have been convicted and sentenced to imprisonment, raising the issue of prolonged detention on remand. Long pre-trial detention is a violation of the right to a fair hearing (UHRC 2019). Formerly detained interviewees also reported that prisons are over-crowded. This was mostly attributed to the police arresting suspects before investigations, the unavailability of judicial officers, and general ignorance about procedural issues that need to be undertaken. On a positive note, initiatives by the Ugandan government such as plea bargaining; quick wins' sessions (through arbitration); and diversion of children in conflict with the law from formal justice systems (for example, where the children do not have to be taken to court but instead settle the issue from remand homes), were among other interventions that reduce the prolonged pre-trial detention.

6.4.2 Recommendations

- The JLOS should collaborate with CSOs that promote access to justice to enhance the capacities of both formal and informal redress mechanisms in ADR approaches to handling conflicts. Actors targeted should include the police, magistrate courts, local council, and traditional leaders.

- CSOs should collaborate with relevant government structures to build the capacity of communities in promoting accountability and reducing corruption in courts and police institutions. For example, this can be accomplished through the community score cards model. This participatory community monitoring and evaluation tool enhances constructive dialogues between right holders and duty bearers on issues that affect them.

6.5 Target 16.4: Reduction of illicit arms flows and organised crime

Possession and proliferation of illicit arms, as well as organised crime, are major threats to peace and security in Uganda. However, solid data and trustworthy information is difficult to obtain on both issues due to their sensitivity.

Although it is difficult to estimate the number of illicit small arms in the country, several proxy indicators reveal that organised crime remains a big challenge. Communities mentioned fear, criminal gangs, crime syndicates, use of illicit firearms, and light weapons by civilians, as well as the misuse of legally held firearms, as vital concerns. Incidences of gun-related crimes,

however, seem to be on a decline. In *Karamoja*, this is attributed to the recent disarmament exercise undertaken in the region that reduced illicit arms in the hands of civilians. This has significantly limited gun-related insecurity and cattle rustling, paving the way for increased economic development in the region. The government, through the NFP–SALW, has contributed considerably to the management and control of the proliferation of small arms in Uganda. Their efforts have included establishing structures for the control of small arms and light weapons in some districts, as well as arms destruction, stockpiling (safe custody of firearms), and branding.

6.5.1 Key findings

Fear of the proliferation of small arms was more pronounced in *Kaabong: 'Insecurity in Karamoja is rising again. With increasing raids and attacks, warriors are starting to stealthily acquire guns again, wanting to defend their animals. We fear lapsing back into the kind of insecurity we had a few years back',* shared a community member. This proliferation is linked to porous borders, instability in neighbouring countries, availability of illicit arms in neighbouring communities (i.e. Kenya and South Sudan), and refugee influx (in the case of *Yumbe*). Participants in *Kaabong* partly attributed the proliferation of weapons to the desire for re-armament in *Karamoja*, as well as criminal motives.

Interviewees connected arms misuse (i.e. owning legal guns but using them for criminal activities) at the national level to private security guards, police, and army officers, especially in urban areas. In post-conflict districts like *Lira* and *Kasese*, participants mentioned being afraid of possible illicit arms being used and traded since there has not been proper disarmament in those areas. While in *Yumbe*, isolated reports of refugees sneaking in with guns was mentioned as a source of fear.

6.5.2 Recommendations

- The NFP-SALW, in collaboration with CSOs, should raise awareness around the dangers of illicit small arms and light weapons, especially using the mental disarmament approach in places like *Karamoja*. This will help transform community attitudes towards gun possession.

- The Ministry of Internal Affairs should complete relevant legislative reforms, such as amending the Firearms Act of 1971, and having the Firearms Bill passed into an Act of Parliament. This will support the control of arms proliferation.

- Government should work jointly with CSOs on comprehensive approaches to arms control. These approaches should look at root causes of why people take up arms and offer

alternatives, as well as build connectors for peace (i.e. cross-border roads in *Karamoja*). This can be adopted from experiences such as CECORE's 'peace champions' projects on peace and livelihood.[27]

- The ministry in charge of *Karamoja* Affairs, together with local government leaders, should collaborate with UNDP and the Kenyan government to ensure that cross-border security commitments are implemented (i.e. the Uganda-Kenya initiative (2020-2025) for sustainable peace and development in the *Turkana, West-Pokot* and *Karamoja* regions).

- The Ugandan government, in cooperation with other IGAD (Inter-Governmental Agency on Development) member states need to establish a harmonised disarmament approach in the region, as a way to reduce cross-border cattle raiding and risks of arms proliferation.

[27] www.cecore.or.ug

6.6 Target 16.5: Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms

Corruption is a major hindrance to the social and economic development of society. It erodes public confidence, transparency, legitimacy, and moral authority. It also paints a bad picture of all governance systems and compromises the cultural, religious, and moral values that a country like Uganda holds dear. In the end, it negatively affects implementation and quality of services, and desired outcomes, as funds are diverted for selfish gains.

A study conducted by UBOS (2018) confirmed that corruption is a central challenge, with 88% of the population

considering it a major concern. According to this same study, two out of 11 Ugandans (18%) paid a bribe in the 12 months prior to the survey, with urban areas recording 21%. Findings below indicate that cases of bribery seem to be higher than what is currently reported to the police.

6.6.1 Key findings

At both the national and district levels, corruption was noted as a major hindrance to service delivery. *'This is evidenced by the poor quality of services and shoddy work that we see...but remember that there is a lot that we do not see because most of the people in the community are not able to track public expenditure'*, shared a participant in *Kasese*.

In relation to the number of cases reported to authorities, numerous participants observed that those who engage in bribery do not report it because they seem satisfied with it. One of the independent consultants added, 'because of the fear of revenge from perpetrators and impunity, some people choose not to report'.

Some participants attributed the high level of corruption to poor remuneration. This was challenged by others who believed that corruption is a moral issue and that corruption was growing because of the low participation of traditional structures and, therefore, loss of moral values. In their responses, participants suggested that corruption is one of the areas where 'Uganda is still doing badly'.

The study findings indicate that, although the government has demonstrated its desire to fight corruption by establishing anti-corruption laws, corruption persists. Reacting to the issue, one participant expressed that *'ethical behaviour and professionalism have gone down in the public service'.* Of this study's participants, 30% have paid or been asked to pay a bribe by a public officer in the last 12 months. Among business people it was even higher at 58%. Other participants preferred not to comment on the question. *Boda-boda* (motorcycle taxi) riders, for instance, mentioned how they pay a bribe to police officers almost every month. This is worsened by circumstances where corruption becomes a means to obtaining services (i.e. police, health care, justice, employment, etc.). *'When I go to the health centre and get treated [it] means I have to give kitu-kidogo (bribe) or when riding a passenger on my boda-boda, I would rather*

give kitu-kidogo and go rather than being arrested', said a boda-boda rider in *Kasese*.

At the national level, corruption was partly attributed to the lack of political will in the fight against corruption, as some politicians tend not to act out of fear of losing votes, which worsens impunity. It was also noted that acts of corruption among the 'would-be fighters' of corruption (leaders and officers in institutions mandated to fight corruption) are common. Politicians and social workers (especially at the district level) mentioned social pressures as one of the contributing factors for accepting a bribe. One of the parish councillors shared, *'As an elected leader, I have to show that my well-being is okay, I have to contribute to fundraising and burial in the community, I have to attend to sick people and parents who have failed to raise school fees. My salary is too little. So, if I get a chance of "free money", I take it'.*

Paid or asked to pay a bribe by a public official in the last 12 months

- 8%
- 38%
- 54%
- no
- yes
- prefer not to comment
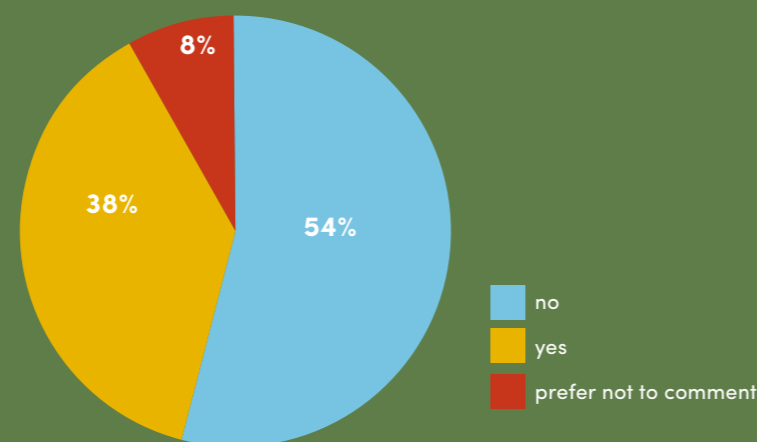
Business persons who paid or were asked to pay a bribe by a public official in the last 12 months

- 12%
- 30%
- 58%
- no
- yes
- prefer not to comment
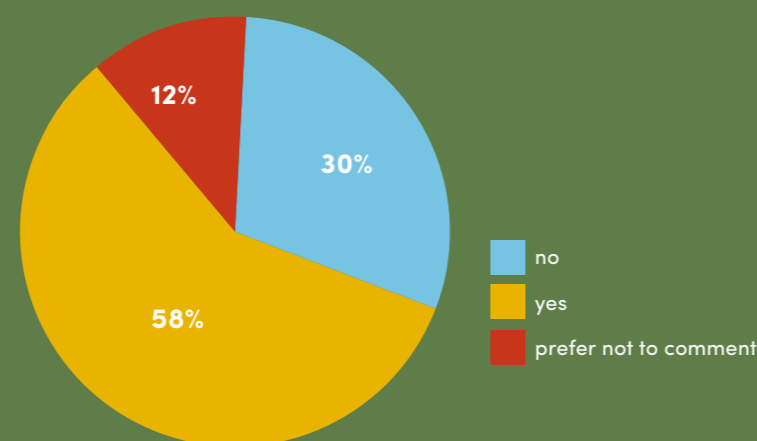
6.6.2 Recommendations

- Political, administrative, and traditional leaders should prioritise the fight against corruption, ensuring that the anti-corruption laws are effectively enforced. This will be more meaningful and attract momentum if the president champions tough actions against corrupt officers

- The Ministry for Ethics and Integrity need to involve traditional systems like cultural leaders in the fight against corruption, instilling morals in society. This will help people regain pride in not being corrupt.

- CSOs should empower communities for them to participate in developing and tracking local and government development plans, budgets, and expenditures. Through such a rights-based approach, they should be strengthened in demanding adequate services from duty-bearers and engage in productive dialogues aimed at improving service delivery in their areas. This will help increase accountability at the local level. This can be done by using the aforementioned community score card models.

6.7 Target 16.6: Effective, accountable, and transparent institutions at all levels

The establishment of institutional infrastructures has steadily improved in Uganda. This is evidenced by local government structures, health centres, schools, security services, and justice centres, among others. Bringing services closer to the people, this is a positive and fundamental step towards effective service delivery.

According to UBOS (2018), access to institutions offering public services increased from 29% in 2014 to 42% in 2017. In general, 54% signified that they had trust in public services, but only 46% had trust in the Ugandan police force; and only 29% trusted the tax/customs authority (URA).

6.7.1 Key findings

Despite increased trust, there is still a lot of room for improvement in the effectiveness, level of accountability, and transparency of government institutions, as shown in our findings.

Level of confidence in public service – in %.
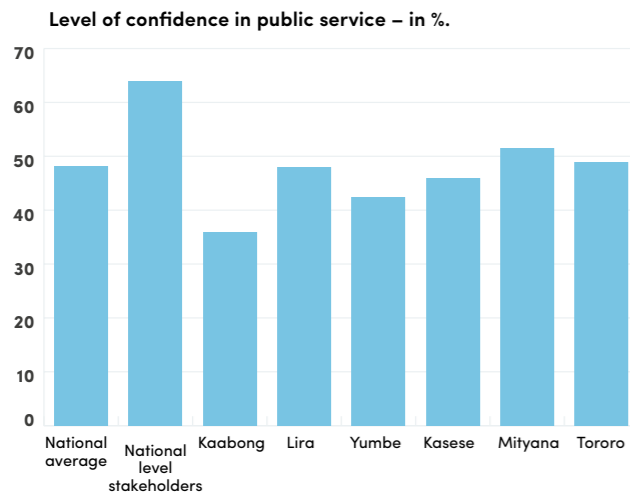
Of the participants, 48.1% reported being satisfied with their experiences of public services, but views differed based on their geographical location. Participants in *Kaabong* noted that public service delivery in sectors such as education and health care is still poor, scoring their institutions at 36% percent, while national-level stakeholders, who mainly stay in and around *Kampala*, recorded a higher level of satisfaction (68%).

Civil servants largely attributed challenges to the late release of funds from the Ministry of Finance limiting time available for implementation, as well as inadequate funding for key priority areas (i.e. health, roads, and education). Interviewees at the district level pointed out other implementation challenges, as conveyed by a participant in *Lira*: *'Budgeted programmes are not implemented and if so, executed works are never proportional to the budget. At the end of the financial year, some monies are claimed to have been sent back to the treasury leaving a good number of areas very much in need'.*

Reactions from lower local governments also indicated poor allocation of funds. One civil servant urged the government to *'allocate more*

funds to local governments than the current practice, where 80% of the funds are utilised by the central government'.

On the other hand, community members and CSOs mainly attributed poor service delivery to corruption, low pay for lower level civil servants, and the top-down priority setting in government programmes. A key informant in *Mityana* expressed:

Public services are poor and are haphazardly delivered, given that attention from public servants is usually divided. For example, a teacher who does part-timing in four schools will hardly offer the best service to any of the schools. Look at how police officers are mishandling suspects here in Mityana. Look at how roads develop potholes hardly past half of their expected lifespan. Look at cases of how smuggled drugs from public hospitals end up in private clinics and pharmacies. Service delivery is really wanting!

Service delivery is a fundamental prerequisite for peace. Basic services like water, roads, and healthcare are key for the well-being and human security of people. Ensuring that people can live free of want, need, and indignity are key components of peace. Lack of or poor service delivery has, therefore, huge implications for the realisation of SDG 16 and other SDGs in Uganda.

One key issue stressed at both the national and local government levels is that peace-related issues lack prioritisation in local government planning. In a few instances where peace-related issues are budgeted for, they are placed under 'unfunded priorities'. A key informant in Lira said, *'This was the case under the peace recovery and development plan (PRDP), which had peace as its core issue. And that is what happens at district level. In instances where such funding is obtained, it is always the first to be diverted'.* This was confirmed by an elected leader at the district level who noted, *'For example at the district level, council cannot afford not to sit due to lack of funding, yet you have some funds for community peace sensitisations. Council meeting takes priority'.*

6.7.2 Recommendations

- CSOs should complement government actions and work with communities to enhance their capacity to participate in decision-making, hold duty-bearers to account, and facilitate constructive dialogues between duty-bearers and rights-holders. This can be done by sensitising communities on how to participate in planning and tracking the implementation of SDG related programmes.

- National and local governments should prioritise peace issues in their yearly developmental plans, and include specific budget lines for these issues as part of their core budget. This can be informed by both a (yet to be finalised) national peace policy and, locally, through participatory priority setting and budget making.

- The international community and donors should prioritise funding towards SDG 16+ targets, and help ensure these funds will address the COVID-19 pandemic and its localised impact on human security.

6.8 Target 16.7: Responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels

"By intention there is inclusiveness, but in practice it is very low"

– a key informant.

Responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels is at the heart of SDG implementation. This is also echoed in programmes and policy frameworks of the Ugandan government. Uganda has fronted its commitment to 'ensuring that no one is left behind' in all its SDG awareness campaigns. This commitment aimed at ensuring government and other actors would include vulnerable groups (i.e. women, youth, elderly, those abled differently, ethnic minorities, geographically disadvantaged, the poverty stricken, and children). Another key commitment has been that of ensuring participation. At strategic levels, including policy frameworks, there is a clear pledge to inclusion and participation.

Uganda has also established several specific interventions aimed at ensuring inclusive development. One policy measure is the national

gender policy and the establishment of the equal opportunities commission. Specific programmes such as the youth livelihood programme, Uganda women entrepreneurship programme, and the social protection programme for the elderly attempt to enhance empowerment and inclusive development.

Some of the other key initiatives to promote inclusive development have been affirmative action in education and electoral positions (i.e. parliament and local councils), women leadership, and awareness around gender rights. People living with disabilities, the army, women, youth, and workers are also categorised as special interest groups, and are represented in decision-making processes. Significant progress has been realised in this regard, especially in electoral leadership positions (i.e. in parliament and local government structures). For example, as a result of affirmative action, there are 124 district women representatives, five youth representatives, and five representatives of people with disabilities in the current 10th parliament.[28]

[28] www.parliament.go.ug

Key findings

Research findings illustrate some noticeable progress on the ground. Equal representation of both sexes has become a common and key indicator monitored in both government and non-government sectors. Leadership by women is also more common and accepted, as one participant stated, *'At the national level, women now head key sectors such as education, health, minerals and energy, public service, parliament, and of recent even roads and works'.*

In *Kaabong*, nine out of 52 villages in the district have women Local Council 1 chairpersons – something that community members said was unheard of in a district in the Karamoja region, which has a very strong traditional setting.

% of respondents who believe that decision-making in the country is inclusive and responsive by sex, age, disability and population group

55,7% no
34,3% yes
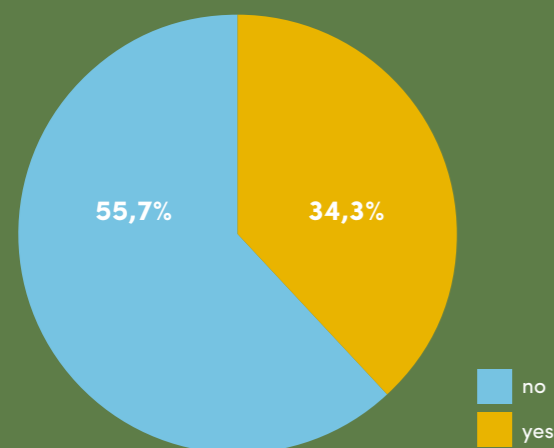
Despite the efforts by government to ensure responsive and inclusive representation at the decision-making levels, both at national and local levels, findings suggest that, on the ground, huge disparities still exist among women, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities. In response, one of the participants in *Yumbe* noted that '*at the district level a lot has to be done to increase the number of women and persons with disabilities to take up offices'.*

Accordingly to the findings, only 34.3% of the participants believe that decision-making in Uganda is inclusive and responsive by sex, age, disability, and population group. There were also variations in the level of inclusion, with the differently abled and ethnic minorities feeling more excluded. Exclusion on the basis of sex was also considered more pronounced at the community level. For example, the number of female Local Council I chairpersons was less than 5% in most of the sub-counties reached. And Local Council I chairpersons wield significant decision-making power and influence over the community. This was mainly attributed to prevailing societal and cultural norms that still hinder the appropriate inclusion of women and marginalised groups.

The most critical issue raised by participants was that the lives of people on the ground have not changed meaningfully. Women, youth, ethnic minorities, and those abled differently felt that many of the interventions aimed at inclusion are simply implemented to pass minimum reporting guidelines. This is reflected in reactions by youth participants, such as a student in *Kasese*: *'Usually, the motive is different. We have been included to fill numbers. But we cannot make decisions'.* Similarly, a young girl in Lira underscored the need for youth to 'set the table': *'Old leaders will often have us young girls on their agenda claiming youth issues cannot be left out. Thank you for recognising us. Now it is time we moved from the agenda to that decision-making table. We should not be discussed. We must be part of the discussion'.* This parallels experiences of women, minorities, formerly abducted youth, and differently abled people, as highlighted by a minority participant from *Kaabong*: *'For us, the Ik people, we have cried for years about insecurity, but no one cares. We have begged for opening of cross-border roads here, but no one is responding to our voices'.*

A call not to leave the most marginalised groups behind:

In the last half a century, the insecurity resulting from cattle rustling between pastoral communities has erupted. This is also true for the Ik ethnic minority in the centre of these communities —*Turkana* of Kenya in the East, *Topotha* and the *Didinga* of South Sudan in the North, the *Dodoth* and the *Jie* in the South and West as the four groups targeted them to loot, rape, and even kill. Although some *Ik* have managed to get oxen and ox ploughs, they cannot keep them on their land due to these cattle rustling communities; they are stolen in no time. A few children go to school but face huge uncertainties, as their families are unable to meet requirements such as tuition fees and scholastic materials.

"We are the most marginalised in the region. We live in the most remote locations. So, when issues related to SDGs are discussed, that discussion does not reach us because of remoteness, insecurity, and poor roads or no road network whatsoever. So, do not continue to leave us behind" – said one of the leaders of the Ik, ethnic minority in *Kaabong* district.

This parallels similar issues highlighted in a video documentary, made in *Kaabong* in 2019, 'Left behind by SDGs', where communities expressed low SDG awareness and involvement.[29]

[29] www.cecore.or.ug

In general, findings indicate that government and non-government actors undertake efforts to promote responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making. However, many efforts assume that the groups are homogeneous. This means the needs of the most vulnerable often go ignored. The youth and women victims of armed violence in *Kasese*, *Lira*, and *Karamoja* have special needs that are overshadowed within broader youth or women groups.

This points to a central issue when trying to address implicit and explicit power relations: adults can include youth (as passive beneficiaries) and they can mainstream youth issues, but they cannot participate on behalf of the youth. Similarly, men can include and mainstream women issues in their agenda, but they cannot "participate" on behalf of women. The same principle applies across marginalised groups. To ensure 'responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels', those different groups must take an active part in designing policies, frameworks, as well as their implementations; otherwise, Uganda risks the absence of the desired meaningful change on the ground.

6.8.2 **Recommendations**

- CSOs should work with the district and sub-county structures to increase community awareness on how communities and local actors can actively participate in decision-making processes. This is vital to building ownership and active participation in decision-making processes.

- Government, CSOs, and community leaders should engage youth as partners, to identify youth specific needs and respond to major issues that affect youth, such as unemployment and low/tokenistic participation in decision-making processes. This can be done by ensuring their active participation and strengthening capacities for youth to help establish youth-led development initiatives.

- The Department for Special Programmes (under pacification and development) should work with CSOs to identify and support the most vulnerable groups, such as victims of trauma in post-conflict communities and former combatants, whose special needs are overshadowed.

6.9 **Target 16.9: Provide legal identity for all, including birth registration**

Identity is one of the most important things in the life of a human being and every human being has a right to formal legal recognition. In Uganda, this legal identity is becoming increasingly critical. Ideally, one's legal identity begins at birth.

Article 18 of the constitution of Uganda (1995) states that, *'The State shall register every birth...occurring in Uganda'.* The Registration of Persons Act (2015) supports its implementation.[30] However, across the country, available data (2011) indicates that only 30% of births are registered.[31]

6.9.1 **Key findings**

6.9.2 **Recommendation**

In a traditional setting, social identity tends to carry more value than legal identity. Communities attach a strong emotional, spiritual, and social value to social identity, as it provides a vital sense of belonging. Legal identity is viewed as less valuable. *'To me, being recognised as a Muganda by tribe and in my clan is good enough. I care less if I do not have a birth certificate',* shared a participant in *Mityana.* Next to this, practical reasons for not registering were attributed to a large number of children being born at home or in the hands of traditional birth attendants, and not being aware of the possibility and benefits of getting a birth certificate. Only 11% of participants in *Kaabong* who had a child under five at home, reported having a birth certificate for them. This implies that the majority of children are still not being registered.

- The Ministry of Internal Affairs (Directorate of Citizenship and Immigration) and the Ministry of Local Government (through local councils), together with civil society and traditional leaders, should educate communities on the importance and need for registering children at birth. This should include processes on how to register.

[30] https://data.unicef.org/crvs/uganda/
[31] https://www.who.int/gho/countries/uga.pdf?ua=1

6.10 **Target 16.10: Access to information and protect fundamental freedoms**

Public access to information is a basic necessity for and right of people. Article 41 (1) of the constitution of Uganda on the right of access to information provides for the right of every citizen to access information in possession of the state or any other organ or agency; except where the release of information is likely to prejudice the security or sovereignty of the state. The Access to Information Act (2005) aims to ensure that the government provides the public with timely, accessible, and accurate information.

As reported by the UN Human Rights Council in 2019, violence against journalists remains a very serious threat, especially for those reporting on political issues and demonstrations, or voicing criticisms against powerful people, government, corruption, human rights violations, and social problems.[32] The report presents cases and decries the plight of human rights defenders – including restrictive legislative environments; alleged cases of torture; cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment; and the absence of effective remedies and office break-ins by security operatives.

Ms. Rosa Malango, the UN Resident Coordinator in Uganda, has also advised on the unfavourable environment human rights defenders operate in: *'Given the critical role that civil society plays in complementing government in the provision of services and upholding values, we request for your support, Mr. President, to facilitate a more conducive environment for CSO engagement at all levels of Uganda's progress'.*[33]

[32] Uganda Human Rights Commission (2019). The 21st Annual Report, 2018: 26.
[33] www.ug.undp.org

6.10.1 **Key findings**

Although the level of access to information and media freedom has relatively improved, participants noted and denounced the commonplace torture and humiliation of journalists and human rights defenders. One of the national-level participants shared that, *'Many cases are showed on TV...but this does not mean that those are the only ones that have been committed, there are many cases we do not get to know'.*

A journalist in one of the sample districts acknowledged improvements, but also remarked that, *'As a journalist, you do not only have to observe the standard of professional journalism, but also have to be sensitive to the operating environment and choose to leave out some information'.*
Another pressing issue raised (especially among CSOs and communities) was the impunity that security officers who have tortured people enjoy. Without any deterrence for their actions, they seem willing to continue violating the law. *'We rarely see action being* taken against errant officers. When it is taken, it is institutions like police that pay for the damage instead of individual officers who did the damage',* revealed one of the CSO representatives.

6.10.2 **Recommendations**

- The president, government ministers, and parliament should ensure that security officers are held to account for human rights violations, and ensure that those agencies respect media freedoms.

- The Ministry of Information and Information Technology, Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Uganda Communications Commission should ensure that there is an open civic space that allows for information to be produced and accessed. Vital to this is the need to urge security agencies to respect the freedom of expression and media freedoms while playing their legitimate role.

7 SDG 16+: review of selected SDG 16 related indicators

7.1 Target 2.1: End hunger and ensure access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food

Food is one of the most important and basic needs and rights of a human being. Inadequate or lack of access to food can lead to conflicts. This target is intimately linked to SDG 16, as captured under the SDG 16+ concept. One key related global indicator is the share of the population that is undernourished (whose calorie intake is insufficient, SDG indicator 2.1.1). Undernourishment values refer to the prevalence of undernourishment for the country's population as a whole. According to the global hunger index score, undernourishment in Uganda in 2018 was 41.4% – having increased from 24.1% in 2005[34].

To contextualise the issue of hunger, the research sought to capture localised understandings of food security. The findings indicate that communities have different understandings of what food security means. Responses from national-level stakeholders revolved around having food available, it being affordable and accessible all the time, and it being nutritious enough. They also highlighted the need for the population to be able to secure food today, tomorrow, and the day after. By contrast, in less affluent places like *Tororo* and *Kasese*, the common definition of food security among participants was the ability to afford two meals a day. While in *Kaabong*, the common response was at least one meal a day.

Participants mentioned food security as a key concern in all the districts sampled, including among national-level participants. Some of the key threats to food security include the effects of climate change, population pressure, lack of and/or too much rainfall, changes in

seasons, and flooding. Other issues include poor post-harvest handling methods, lack of land (especially in semi-urban and urban areas), and food waste during bumper harvest.

In all the sample districts, food insecurity was stressed as one of the main challenges affecting poor households. The most vulnerable groups (i.e. children, those differently abled, landless, and elderly) are some of the worst affected. In *Kaabong*, where hunger is prevalent - as in the rest of the *Karamoja* region, there have been incidences where babies crying out of hunger are given *Waragi* (local liquor) for them to get drunk and go to sleep. Food security, therefore, continues to have a key influence on the realisation of SDG 16+.

7.1.1 Recommendations

- The Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Industry and Fisheries, together with the Food and Agricultural Organisation, need to provide drought-resistant, nutritious seeds for fast-maturing plants to communities in dry places like *Karamoja*.

- The Ministry of Agriculture should work with the media to enhance famers' awareness of post-harvest food handling and value addition on agricultural products.

- The Ministry of Agriculture, in collaboration with CSOs, should enhance the capacity of agricultural extension workers on resilience in agriculture. This can be done through training of trainers' programmes, with the aim of a trickle-down effect on communities.

[34] www.globalhungerindex.org

7.2 Target 17.15: Multi-stakeholder partnerships and 17.15.1: Alignment to country-owned frameworks

As previously mentioned, Uganda has established sound frameworks and long-term development plans. Recently, there has been a concerted effort by the government and other non-government actors to align the SDGs and Uganda's development plans and processes. Such nationally owned tools provide frameworks that can be utilised by development cooperation partners. Another good example can be borrowed from the PRDP for Northern Uganda; a framework that is designed in a way that government, development partners, CSOs, and other actors can mutually contribute towards a common goal of consolidating peace in Northern Uganda.

7.2.1 Coordination and partnership

Under the leadership of the Office of the Prime Minister, the government has created a comprehensive framework that guides the coordination of SDG implementation[35]. The framework brings on board both state and non-state actors, including different sectors, such as CSOs, parliament, UN agencies, and the private sector. This recognises that no person, group, or institution can achieve the SDGs alone, and that collective effort and joint ownership is required. It needs both horizontal and vertical links among stakeholders.

The intersectionality between development and peace, and the need for multi-stakeholder approaches that create space for active participation, particularly of those at risk of being left behind, came out strongly in this study.

This intersectionality is illustrated by one of the young people (former combatant) who used to engage in cattle raiding and other gun-related violence (*Kathile* sub-county, *Kaabong*): *'After the government disarmed us, we have seen a big change. We can now move from Kaabong upto the neighbouring district of Kotido without fear of being shot on the way. Organisations like CECORE have come in and trained us in peacebuilding. The government has supported us through CDD[36] grants and we have boosted our incomes also. We are now busy sensitising about peace and doing craft activities for income'.*

Still, a clear, comprehensive, and participatory approach that guides actors is said to be lacking. This includes a stronger role for the private sector and the media. Lack of proper coordination around peacebuilding actions was mentioned as a concern at both the national and local government levels: *'The national peace policy would play a big role in guiding a systematic coordination'* – noted one participant. Participants also mentioned that local governments, for instance, do not actively share information and do not always seek enough complementary efforts from other actors. Similarly, civil society actors often enter into competition (also for funds).

To boost participation of communities as active partners in this process, there is a need to build the capacity of local actors, recognising that their ownership and active participation are key to implementing and realising the SDGs. It is also an important way of promoting inclusion, especially among the vulnerable in communities. Local governance structures, as well as local civil society, are strategic in the model for SDG localisation, as building blocks for a holistic and coordinated approach in SDG 16+ implementation. There is, a clear need for adapted mechanisms for local coordination, cooperation, and information sharing, relating to existing national and sub-national coordination mechanisms.

[35] opm.go.ug
[36] Community Demand Driven grants

7.2.2 Recommendations

- Meaningful contextual SDG 16+ localisation should be driven by relevant local government units and civil society counterparts. Existing structures (i.e. local peace committees and local council structures) should be built upon and strengthened to coordinate SDG 16+ implementation at the local level. These structures need relevant capacities (including joint learning on SDGs, access to relevant data to guide their actions, and clarified responsibilities and adequate budgets) to implement SDG 16+ programmes and initiatives.

- Government, CSOs, and the international community should work together with the district peace committees, local council, and local peace committees to localise SDG 16+ and implement meaningful strategies and projects.

- Collaboration and information sharing among the government, UN agencies and non-government actors (i.e. NGOs, media, private sector, and traditional leaders) needs strengthening. This can be achieved by revitalising and adequately capacitating the national platform on peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The availability of SDG related data at district level can be enhanced by clearly stipulating coordination of SDG data collection as a responsibility of the Chief Administrative Officers, sub-county, and local council leaders, so that they integrate it into their day-to-day work.

8 Civil society participation in SDG 16+ implementation and the VNR

The universal Agenda 2030 offers an 'opening' for civil society at the national level to cooperate with member states, the UN, and regional organisations to push for peace policies and actions. CSOs have taken up the opportunity to engage in Agenda 2030 in Uganda. For example, they have established a national CSO core reference group, which is hosted by the NGO Forum; to ensure CSO national representation, the forum sits on the government-led SDG national taskforce. Coordination specifically around peace issues has typically occurred through the national platform on peacebuilding and conflict resolution. However, the platform is ad-hoc and has not been active most recently.

NGOs have also participated in or led campaigns raising SDG awareness. One key CSO initiative in Uganda was the *Tondeka mabega* (don't leave me behind) campaign in June 2019. The campaign, aimed at amplifying voices of marginalised people, was organised by the CSO reference group. Even though not all peacebuilding CSOs are fully aware of the SDG agenda, they still contribute to the implementation of SDG 16+ through their work.

Still, a number of obstacles for effective cooperation and meaningful civil society participation (not only inclusion) exist, including a trust crisis between the government and broader civil society. As a CSO member notes: *'We are partners and supplement government in its efforts, but often we are viewed in the perspective of political party opponents. We are viewed with lots of scepticism and not as partners in development'.* CSOs also highlighted their concern that peace issues and SDG 16+ have not featured as strongly in national priorities. Case in point, the government's key 2020 VNR messages shared with the UN do not refer to peace or to SDG 16[37]. Also, not all CSOs are members of the NGO Forum, making it difficult for them to channel their issues, not to mention the environment within which CSOs are operating. This environment is limited by both restrictive policies and practices, as exemplified by the harassment of human rights defenders and the media.

With regards to the UN-drafted VNR process guidance, one of its key principles is the active participation of actors such as CSOs. The VNR presents an opportunity to use principles of participation to the fullest, encouraged by both the Ugandan government and UNDP. It allows for a critical and constructive reflection on achievements and progress made towards peace, identifying where challenges remain. In this process, civil society stakeholders are indispensable actors in measuring, monitoring, and holding relevant actors and their SDG commitments to account. Due to their proximity to community, CSOs play a critical role in communicating local peace-related issues and reporting on the impact of peace gains. They, therefore, contribute to a critical accountability link between the community and government.

While the VNR offers an opportunity for thorough consultation and participation, the 2020 SDG review process saw unfortunately low participation of CSOs across the country. This is not unique to CSOs, as the study revealed that only a small percentage of the participants including senior officials in key government ministries were aware of the VNR process. This calls for more comprehensive engagement of relevant actors for SDG implementation and the VNR process in the future.

On a positive note, some of those who were aware of the VNR applauded government for their social media outreach. They reached out to young people, for example, through online platforms to seek their ideas and inputs during the VNR process. However, on the whole, the media and private sector representatives interviewed were not aware of how to participate in the process. This relates to a final challenge that the research revealed; namely the lack of consistent and accessible/available data on SDG progress, as well as uneven localisation of SDG indicators. While the newly established SDG secretariat is tasked to pull this information together at the national level, it faces a daunting task. Information at local level linked to global SDG indicators is not readily available and SDG indicators have not been localised in a way that makes contextual sense to inform government and partner actions at the local and national levels. There is also not currently the capacity or resources for this to happen fully. This was one of the driving factors for CECORE and GPPAC to partner in developing a, mainly qualitative, spotlight report presenting the views of people on SDG 16+ progress. Greater availability, accessibility, and consistency of SDG data at the national, as well as local levels, involving an adequate process to localise indicators and provide necessary capacities and resources are fundamental next steps to enhancing SDG related information and action.

[37] sustainabledevelopment.un.org

8.1 Recommendations

- The NGO Forum, together with the Office of the Prime Minister and Ministry of Internal Affairs, should organise constructive dialogues among civil society and the government to pave the best way forward in implementing complementary, joint peacebuilding efforts. Discussions around SDG 16+ related recommendations from government and CSO-led SDG reviews, and the SDG secretariat, should include a joint framework for reporting, monitoring, and sharing.

- The NGO forum should facilitate coordination and information sharing meetings for CSOs to engage, reflect, and share experiences on SDG 16+ related implementation, capacity building, and monitoring. The SDG secretariat could develop joint regular reviews that are methodologically consistent, build on previous reports, and reflect on specific government commitments and advocacy, involving the SDG secretariat where appropriate.

- The SDG secretariat should facilitate capacity building training programmes for CSOs to increase their understanding of the SDG framework and process, SDG 16+ (adopted) targets, participation in the national review process and their role in SDG implementation.

- CSOs should use the SDG 16+ as a tool for advocacy by engaging duty-bearers to deliver on peace-related mandates. The SDGs provide an internationally, nationally, and locally recognised tool to engage stakeholders in helping them fulfil their various mandates and finding ways to strengthen service delivery.

- Government, CSOs (through the NGO forum), and UNDP should work together to develop a more consultative and participatory SDG review process in the future. For example, taking local level SDG reviews with local governments into account, where participation could be easier to obtain and findings more immediately translatable into actions.

- Government and international partners should work with local actors, including CSOs to secure adequate capacities and resources, jointly localising SDG indicators (prioritising 16+). Capture adequate data and make it readily available to all interested actors at the local, national, and international levels.

- CSOs should enhance information sharing on the SDGs among themselves and with the SDG secretariat. This can be done through a joint framework for reporting, monitoring, and sharing.

9 SDG localisation, an essential step to accelerate progress

The primary responsibility for the SDGs lies in the hands of all UN member states who committed to their implementation. However, the realisation of the SDGs, and SDG 16+ in particular, largely depends on it becoming locally relevant and responsive. For this to happen, many more leaders, communities, and other actors at the local level need to become involved and take ownership over the SDG 16+ agenda. They need to (be able to) participate meaningfully and play their roles in the implementation process. With these efforts, the various pieces required for the broader realisation of peace can come together. As UNDP rightly observe, local governments and civil society are critical in turning Agenda 2030 from a global vision into a local reality[38]. UNDP also present sensitisation and engagement of local actors as one of the key drivers of transformational change[39].

To advance the agenda at the local levels and ensure local SDG (16+) commitments are made, reviewed, and accounted for, local level VNRs should be undertaken too. Such reviews and their recommendations can then feed into national reviews, informing national and local peace and development planning and actions. 'Localising the SDGs means more than just "landing" internationally agreed goals at the local level. Localising the SDGs means making the aspirations of the SDGs real to communities, households, and individuals, particularly to those who are at risk of falling behind'[40].

[38] www.undp.org
[39] www.undp.org
[40] www.undp.org

"At the end of the day, the impact of those goals (SDGs) should be evidenced by how a common person like me in a rural community has meaningfully transformed; but, we need to be part of the process"

– a woman in *Kalapata* sub-county, *Kaabong*.

How localisation can be achieved in practice
– voices from the ground: The case of Kaabong district

Principles for SDG 16+ localisation:

- **Localisation needs to build on what is there.** The entry point for localisation in Uganda is local planning and local governance structures at the district, sub-county, and parish levels. Especially Local Councils I, III, and V. There is also, at these local levels, little knowledge and awareness about the SDGs and how they can support their capacities and needs. Localisation should, therefore, be stipulated as one of the roles of the chief administrative officers, sub-county chiefs, and Local Council I leaders so that they integrate localisation into their day-to-day work. This should include facilitating local ownership of the goals, developing inclusive SDG 16+ strategies, and their inclusive implementation.

- **SDG 16+ needs to affect change at the community level.** This is where peace and development issues such as violent conflicts and tensions; poverty; illiteracy; social, political, and economic inequalities, etc. have most direct impact. Those most affected are best placed to lead the process to transform themselves. This requires a holistic and inclusive approach, which means addressing all SDG 16+ related goals and targets with all actors, leaving no one behind.

- **Ownership is key—build outwards.** Local councils and other local actors should be involved in a way that they have a stake in and jointly own SDG 16+, and its implementation. Ownership can be enhanced by building the capacity of local actors to actively participate.

- **SDG 16+ strategies and implementation should be taken forward in a holistic manner.** The goals should be incorporated into all strategies of different structures, and integrated into all programmes and service delivery.

- **Build broad local support structures for SDG 16+.** NGOs, community-based and faith-based organisations, as well as elected and traditional leaders at the community level, need to work collectively with interest groups and local communities towards common goals.

- **Invest in the process of local ownership of goals and solutions.** This includes sensitisation, raising SDG awareness, as well as seeking and facilitating involvement and participation of local communities.

- **Ensure development, availability of, and access to localised SDG 16+ indicators and data at the local level.**

While the above focuses on SDG 16+, these principles are true for all SDG implementation.

How to localise SDGs:

- **Contextualise needs and responses;**
- **Develop and capture context-specific but aligned indicators;**
- **Sensitise and engage local actors;**
- **Respect the bottom-up principle;**
- **Establish a coordination structure at the local level;**
- **Ensure availability and access to localised SDG data in the district;**
- **Create awareness and enhance capacity for participation and inclusion;**
- **Ensure active participation;**
- **Focus on human security;**
- **Enhance local ownership;**
- **Organise periodic constructive dialogues between duty-bearers and rights-holders.**

10   Conclusion

The realisation of SDG 16+ is key for transforming the lives of people. SDG 16+ is a pre-requisite and central pillar for the realisation of the entire SDG agenda. At the same time progress on SDG 16+ is also an indicator that all other SDGs are being realised. With active and meaningful involvement and participation of stakeholders, as well as coordination and prioritisation of peace and conflict transformation, great strides can be taken towards more peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. It is unquestionable that SDG 16+, like other SDGs, cannot be achieved under conditions of violent conflict. Therefore, the government of Uganda and other actors must enhance their efforts towards peace and conflict transformation in the country. As participant strongly appealed:

"As we strive to leave no one behind, let us ensure we do not leave SDG 16 behind".

About the authors

GPPAC

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is a network of civil society organisations active in conflict prevention and peace building practice world-wide, promoting a fundamental shift in how the world deals with violent conflict: moving from reaction to prevention. GPPAC members work together to inform policy, improve practice and facilitate collaboration amongst civil society, intergovernmental organizations and state actors.

www.gppac.net

Center for Conflict Resolution (CECORE).

CECORE was founded 1995 by a number of Ugandans aspiring to promote alternative and creative means of preventing, managing, and resolving conflict. CECORE's purpose is to empower individual women and men, communities, organizations and institutions to transform conflict effectively by applying alternative and creative means in order to promote a culture of active tolerance and peace.

CECORE commits to work with people, especially – but not only – in areas where conflict is present or peace is threatened, to awaken and develop their awareness that peace is within their grasp; to empower them with the knowledge and skills relevant to their situation; and to facilitate conflict prevention, resolution and transformation.

CECORE focuses on research for capacity development in areas related to: peace building and conflict transformation, governance, human rights, lobby and advocacy, nonviolence, conflict sensitivity and gender and youth inclusive related approaches.

CECORE is one of the founder members of GPPAC. From 2017, CECORE is the regional secretariat for GPPAC-Eastern and Central Africa regional network where it coordinates peace building work of its members in 16 countries in the region.

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