



## Press Statement for International Women's Day 2025

**T**oday we join the world in celebrating International Women's Day (IWD) under the theme: "Accelerating Gender Equality for Action". This day is an important reminder of the struggles for gender equality and women's empowerment. It is a time to reflect on the progress made, acknowledge the work yet to be done, and highlight the critical role of women and girls in achieving a just, inclusive, and prosperous society that supports peace and development.

This year's theme calls for acceleration of progress towards gender equality. It emphasizes that gender equality is not just a matter of social justice but a fundamental human rights issue. IWD 2025 sets the demand for inclusive actions that promote equal rights, power, and opportunities for all women and girls.

At the core of this vision is the empowerment of the youth, especially young women and adolescent girls, as essential drivers of change for a more gender-equal world. The year 2025 is significant as it marks the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a milestone document that has shaped global strategies for women's rights since its adoption by 189 governments in 1995. As we commemorate this anniversary, the urgency to address the persistent barriers women face across the globe, especially in conflict and forced migration contexts, is more pressing than ever. Uganda currently hosts 1.7 million refugees, 79% being women and children who are often marginalized and vulnerable to exploitation, violence, and denial of basic rights. RLP has played a pivotal role over the past 25 years in advocating for the protection, dignity, and empowerment of refugees and their host communities in Uganda. Through its various thematic programs, RLP strives to enhance the lives of forced migrants, particularly women and girls, by addressing issues such as access to justice, gender-based violence, education, and livelihoods.

RLP's work is centered on ensuring that women and girls, particularly in refugee settings, have access to their rights and are empowered to take control of their lives and futures.

RLP's programs aim to address the most urgent needs and challenges faced by refugee women and girls. The Gender and Sexuality program, for example, focuses on dismantling patriarchy, addressing systemic gender inequalities, and promoting the full participation of women and girls in society.

Through education, empowerment, and advocacy, RLP ensures that the voices of marginalized women and girls are heard and that their needs are prioritized in local and international dialogues.

**A** key issue affecting refugee women and girls is gender-based violence (GBV). In Refugee Settlements such as Kiryandongo, violence against women and girls remains widespread, yet underreported. Limited access to essential services, including psychosocial support and legal aid, further exacerbates the situation. RLP's advocacy seeks to bridge these gaps by engaging stakeholders in meaningful discussions on providing survivors with adequate services and promoting long-term prevention strategies.

RLP also advocates for gender equality through its Access to Justice Program, which promotes inclusive access to education, legal protection, and resources for refugee women and girls, empowerment programme which have boosted refugee women to take up leadership positions in the settlements and host community leadership structures.

The English for Adults program, based on an integrated "Speak Your Rights" curriculum, empowers refugees by equipping them with the tools to advocate for their own rights. The curriculum empowers the refugees to uphold and defend their rights, integrate into their local communities, understand mental health and psychosocial wellbeing and livelihoods opportunities that exist, learn financial literacy and job application processes, sexual reproductive health rights and gender identity, environmental management,

and participate effectively in the daily improvements of socio-economic life. Furthermore, RLP's efforts to help refugees translate their academic qualifications and get accreditation from Ugandan authorities facilitate better employment opportunities, fostering self-reliance and resilience.

The lack of access to decent work, social protection, and economic opportunities makes it difficult for refugee women and girls to overcome poverty and contribute meaningfully to the local economy. RLP, through its Livelihood and Economic Empowerment Program, advocates for policies that prioritize economic justice for refugee women, including access to land, training, and credit. Despite significant progress, many refugee women and girls in Uganda and globally still face severe barriers to achieving gender equality.

They endure violence—physical, sexual, and

emotional—that often goes unreported due to cultural stigma and a lack of access to justice. In refugee settlements, resources to combat gender-based violence (GBV) are scarce, leaving survivors without the care and protection they desperately need.

Financial pressures and shifting global priorities have also led to a decline in funding for gender equality initiatives, which severely impacts the provision of vital services like education, healthcare, and protection for refugee women and girls. Refugee girls, in particular, face challenges in completing their education and accessing healthcare, limiting their future opportunities for empowerment. Many women and girls live in extreme poverty, with limited resources and few livelihood opportunities, making them more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

**A**dditionally, harmful cultural practices like child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) continue to violate the rights of young girls, further hindering their ability to break free from cycles of inequality that impede their abilities to realise their potentials through participation in everyday improvements in education, healthcare, and in delivering more opportunities, more jobs and greater peace in the homes and neighborhoods.

These struggles are a daily reality for millions, and urgent action is needed to address these challenges and ensure that refugee women and girls are able to live with dignity, safety, and opportunity.

### Call to Action

- Governments, donors, civil society, and the private sector need to invest in gender equality initiatives and ensure that refugee women and girls are at the heart of humanitarian and development programs by providing them with equal opportunities. This includes enhancing access to justice, providing adequate health and education services, addressing GBV, and ensuring economic empowerment.
- Development partners should allocate more resources to protect women from violence, provide education and training opportunities, and ensure women and girls have access to the tools they need to rebuild their lives.



*The lack of access to decent work, social protection, and economic opportunities makes it difficult for refugee women and girls to overcome poverty and contribute meaningfully to the local economy. RLP, through its Livelihood and Economic Empowerment Program, advocates for policies that prioritize economic justice for refugee women, including access to land, training, and credit.*

