



UGANDA

UGANDA	UGANDA OVERVIEW								
İ	Child marriage prevalence ¹ (girls married before the age of 18 years, as a proportion of all girls)	34%							
Ŷ	FGM prevalence ² (proportion of women and girls aged 15–49 years	0.3%							
<u>k</u>	Internet users ³ (proportions of the adult male and female populations)	46% of men 40% of women							
	Mobile phone ownership ⁴ (proportions of the adult male and female populations)	84% of men 69% of women							
	Level of government support for digital literacy ⁵ (scale 0–3) ⁶	High: 3							

NEWS ABOUT HARMFUL PRACTICES: WORD CLOUD MAPS AND NUMBERS OF REPORTS

FIGURE 1. DELT word cloud. Most common words portrayed in the reports of the global media for both FGM and child marriage in Uganda (2014 – 2022)

HONOR KILLING FGM
UNDERAGE MARRIAGE
CHILD BRIDE
CHILD MARRIAGE
EARLY MARRIAGE
GIRLS NOT BRIDES
FORCED MARRIAGE

Note: This word cloud map was produced with data from the Event Database of the GDELT project, which monitors the world's broadcast, print and web news in over 100 languages; identifying the people, locations, institutions, topics, publications, sentiments, numbers, quotations, pictures and occurrences linked to events worldwide. After filtering the database for a comprehensive pool of keywords related to FGM and child marriage and technology in Uganda, the most common words portrayed in the reports related to these issues are mapped in a country word cloud. The bigger the font size, the more frequently the word appears.

FIGURE 2. Number of reports covering the topic of child marriage in Uganda, compared with other countries (2014–2022)

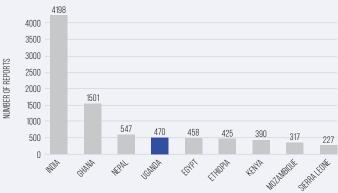
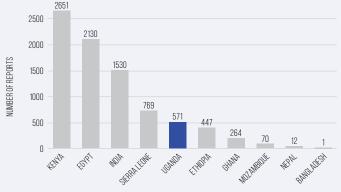


FIGURE 3. Number of reports covering the topic of FGM in Uganda, compared with other countries (2014–2022)



Note: After filtering the GDELT project database for the actors, actions, and associated reports pertaining to FGM and/or child marriage in Uganda, it can be observed that there are a total of 470 reports corresponding to child marriage and 571 reports corresponding to FGM in the country.

THE CONTEXT OF CHILD MARRIAGE AND FGM IN THE COUNTRY

In 2021, an estimated 46 per cent of the Ugandan population was aged between 0 and 14 years,7 which makes it one of the youngest countries in the world. Uganda is also home to 5 million child brides (girls and women alive today who were married before age 18), with 34 per cent of women aged 20 to 24 married before age 18. Of these, 1.3 million were married before reaching the age of 15 years.8 Child marriage has become less prevalent in the last 25 years, with the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 who were married before age 18 dropping from 52 per cent in 1991 to 34 per cent in 2016.9 However, the speed at which child marriage is falling will not be sufficient to reach the 14 per cent prevalence target set in Uganda's third National Development Plan by 2025. The midterm evaluation carried out in 2020 of Uganda's National Strategy to End Child Marriage and Teen Pregnancy highlighted the role of peer pressure and poor parenting as a risk factor in this phenomenon, and recommended greater focus and investment in programmes aimed at empowering adolescents and parents.¹⁰

FGM, on the other hand, is a much less prevalent issue in Uganda, with one of the lowest rates in

Africa. According to Demographic and Health Survey data from 2016, only 0.3 per cent of girls aged 15 to 29 years have undergone FGM. This figure changes to 0.4 per cent and 0.2 per cent for young women in rural and urban areas, respectively.¹¹ Variances are more visible when looking at specific communities; for instance, about 95 per cent of girls and women in the Pokot community in the Amudat district¹² and 52 per cent of Tepeth girls in the Moroto district¹³ have undergone FGM. Other communities practising FGM include the Sabiny in Kapchorwa, Kween and Bukwo districts, and the Kadama in Nakapiripirit. Despite the practice being officially banned in 2010, girls sometimes continue to see this practice as a 'rite of passage', leading to it continuing by going underground. In addition, some of these Ugandan girls are crossing the border into Kenya to undergo FGM, and did so even during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁴ On the positive side, in 2011, 82 per cent of girls and women at the national level, and up to 95 per cent of those in eastern Uganda,15 stated that this practice should no longer exist in their country.

THE TECHNOLOGY ENVIRONMENT IN UGANDA

Young people are accessing information through digital technologies like never before, which opens opportunities for greater civic participation, increased knowledge and empowerment. However, every country offers a different technological landscape to its youth. In recent years, Uganda has made important strides in that regard. For starters,



whereas 15.1 per cent of the total population had access to electricity in 2000, the number reached 71.4 per cent by 2020. Internet access has also improved significantly, moving up from 4 per cent of the total population (measured by the proportion of individuals that have used the internet from any location in the last three months) in 2010 to 20 per cent in 2020. This figure, however, still reflects a very low level of internet penetration in the country. Furthermore, the gender gap for this indicator stood at 23.5 per cent in 2020, which means that men (68 per cent) have more access to the internet than women (52 per cent).

Mobile technology has had a higher level of adoption in the country. According to ITU, 60.5 out of every 100 inhabitants had a subscription to a post-paid or prepaid mobile cellular telephone service in 2020.¹⁹ In the same year, 85 per cent of the population had access to 3G network coverage and 31 per cent to 4G coverage,²⁰ and 43.9 per cent were active mobile broadband subscribers.²¹

Data from After Access shows that 49 per cent of Ugandans own a mobile phone; however, the large majority (71 per cent) use a basic phone and only 16 per cent own a smartphone.²² Yet, it should be noted that smartphone connections quadrupled over the four years previous to 2018.²³ The mobile ownership gender gap favours the men again, with 58 per cent of male versus 40 per cent of female owners in the country.²⁴

Digital literacy plays a key role in enabling individuals to take advantage of different technologies available to them. In Uganda, government support for digital literacy, measured in terms of number and quality of strategies aimed at enhancing this indicator, got a score of 3 in a scale of 0 to 3 based on research by the Economist Impact. Uganda's government has not only implemented a digital literacy plan for students and teachers, but the Uganda

Communications Commission also supports school technology infrastructure in hopes of helping to bridge the digital divide. Furthermore, in 2015 an investment plan on the ICT sector was announced to increase access to these technologies for the entire population.²⁵ National female e-inclusion policies, however, were only rated with 1 in a scale from 0 to 4, which suggests a low level of inclusivity in the country's legal framework for digital policies with a gender perspective. Digital skills are another area of improvement, as a self-assessment survey conducted by the World Economic Forum in 2019 resulted in a national score of 3.42 (below the global median of 4.2) out of 7 points in 2019 for Ugandan citizens.²⁶ Overall, and given the 23.4 per cent score obtained in the Gender Digital Divide Index (which only includes 10 countries), the country still has a long way to go to solidify the strength of its technological environment.

MAPPING OF TECH INTERVENTIONS

The interventions mapped in this section stem from an initial landscape exercise conducted jointly by UNFPA and UNICEF, followed by a systematic review of publicly available data and information on technology-driven and technology-enabled interventions addressing child marriage and/or FGM in Uganda. The compiled information was curated and complemented with insights emerging from key informant interviews conducted with local stakeholders.

CODING TYPE OF INTERVENTION

Consultations with gender or thematic experts and/or local leaders were conducted during the development,

- [•] Technology-driven intervention/solution (tech is a core element)
- $[lackbox{0}]$ Technology-enabled intervention/solution (tech is secondary to the intervention, there are other non-tech components)

♀ FEMINIST LENSES

Consultation with

The seventh column of the interventions table below identifies how organizations have included feminist lenses into the design and implementation of the interventions by highlighting four key aspects:

- experts and/or community leaders implementation, and/or monitoring and evaluation of the interventions.

 Consultations with target group(s)

 The interventions incorporated, at any stage, consultations with the populations targeted, especially girls and women of different ethnicities, ages, sexual orientations, classes, and other social markers.

 Monitoring and evaluation activities were carried out to measure the intervention's progress and sustainability,
 - Monitoring and evaluation activities were carried out to measure the intervention's progress and sustainability evaluation (M&E) and/or to generate disaggregated information, gender-sensitive/responsive indicators, and/or gender analysis frameworks.
- Women- and/or girl-led organization(s)

 The intervention was designed and/or implemented, partly or completely, by a women- and/or girl-led organization(s).

Additional descriptive information about the feminist lenses and potential intersectional approach (i.e., addressing ethnicity, language, class or other aspects of the target group's identity) is provided within the table, following the general description of each intervention, which can be identified by the use of this symbol $[\c Q]$. This analysis is based on information collected during semi-structured interviews with local stakeholders and/or publicly available information.

SAUTI HELPLIN	SAUTI HELPLINE / 2014 — ONGOING / ⊙										
SUPPORTING Organization(s)	IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION(S)	HARMFUL Practice(s)	LOCATION(S)	IMPACT AREA	TYPE OF TECH- Nologies USED	FEMINIST LENSES					
 UNICEF Plan International Save the Children Uganda World Vision Uganda Uganda Child Rights NGO Network 	 Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development Referral services 	Child marriage & FGM	Nationwide	 Service development and strengthening Individual level empowerment Legal and policy systems intervention Family and community engagement 	 Free telephone service Social media Traditional media (TV, radio) 	 Consultations with experts and/or community leaders Consultations with target group(s) M&E instruments 					

The Uganda Child Rights NGO Network began the first toll-free Child Helpline service in 2005 in Uganda. In 2014, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development took over management of the 116 number as the Uganda Child Helpline, otherwise known as the Sauti²⁷ Helpline, to amplify the voices of children and encourage them (and adults) to report child rights violations, including child marriage and FGM. This telephone-based service operates 24/7, linking children at risk or in need of care and protection with resources and services through a case management process. Its staff work collaboratively with law enforcement agents, community development officers, probation and social welfare officers and other CSOs. Reports can be made via phone and through U-Report and SafePal (see more on these interventions below), social media, e-mail and walk-in centres. The Sauti helpline also conducts community sensitization campaigns in schools and communities, and on television and radio.²⁸ During the first half of 2022, over 6,200 cases of abuse were reported to the helpline, of which 1,145 included survivors between ages 14 and 17, and 57 per cent pertained to girls or women.²⁹ During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, 45 per cent more children used this service to seek help related to teenage-pregnancy.³⁰

This intervention integrates an intersectional feminist approach by serving girls and women from all ages and across all country locations. Users can also request a counsellor that speaks in the local language of their choice. Monitoring and evaluation activities are conducted throughout the case management process and case updates, with outcomes being reflected in the annual reports.

SAUTIPLUS / 2	SAUTIPLUS / 2019 — ONGOING /										
SUPPORTING Organization(s)	IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION(S)	HARMFUL Practice(s)	LOCATION(S)	IMPACT AREA	TYPE OF TECH- Nologies USED	FEMINIST LENSES					
Rutgers Uganda	Reach a Hand Uganda	Child marriage & FGM	Nationwide	 Individual level empowerment Family and community engagement Service development and strengthening 	 Digital platform Mobile phone application Social media Traditional media (TV and radio) Print media 	N/A ³¹					

The Sauti Plus campaign is a digital platform designed by the non-profit organization Reach A Hand Uganda with support from Rutgers Uganda. From its beginning, this initiative sough to embrace the growing and innovative technologies in social media, radio and TV, mobile phones, print and digital media to address a myriad of issues around SRHR that currently affect the youth in Uganda. Some of these issues include child marriage, FGM, HIV/AIDS, menstruation, teenage pregnancy and gender-based violence. While the main goal is to educate through entertainment by offering visually engaging content on SRHR targeting young people, the SautiPlus platform also contains a list of referral centres to which their audience can turn when seeking specialized support. The radio show and SautiTVplus, along with other interactive resources, are available directly on their website or on the mobile app.

U-REPORT UGANDA / 2011 — ONGOING / ◎									
SUPPORTING Organization(s)	IMPLEMENTING Organization(s)	HARMFUL Practice(s)	LOCATION(S)	IMPACT AREA	TYPE OF TECH- Nologies USED	FEMINIST LENSES			
 UNICEF Sauti Helpline Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development 	UNICEF	Child marriage & FGM	Nationwide	 Service development and strengthening Individual level empowerment Legal and policy systems intervention Family and community engagement 	 Digital platform SMS messaging Chatbots Live chats Social media 	1. Consultations with target group(s) 2. M&E instruments			

U-Report is a free SMS messaging tool for community participation with presence in 95 countries, which was originally developed in Uganda.³³ This initiative aims to empower individuals from any district in the country to voice their views on critical issues, access life-saving information and report issues in their communities, including VAC, and thus child marriage and FGM.³⁴ The national Sauti Helpline and UNICEF set up a U-Report dashboard in 2011 to receive and manage cases, which on one hand enables this and other key stakeholders from government and civil society to access reports and other information in real time. On the other hand, U-Report maintains engagement with parents and youth in Uganda, which was particularly crucial during the COVID-19 lockdowns. In fact, more than 46,000 received information about child marriage alternatives via SMS messages during this period.³⁵ According to a representative from UNICEF in Uganda, the messages are developed based on information collected through weekly polls and live chats. Currently, there are over 550,000 U-Reporters in Uganda. Starting in 2021, the platform incorporated chatbots that provide automated responses and referrals for users seeking GBV/VAC-related help, which also reduces waiting time, and 18,000 people have received key information through this tool.³⁶ Feedback received through U-Report has also been utilized to influence policymaking in Uganda, including during the drafting stage of the Third Peace Recovery and Development Programme.³⁷

This intervention integrates an intersectional feminist approach by targeting messages that are context specific according to topics of interest, area of residence by district, gender and/or age groups, but also by leveraging feedback from users (i.e., youth) collected via SMS polls and live chats. In addition, M&E insights are gained through constant review of the data created through platform use, reflected in reports, and used to adopt better practices for reach and engagement.

SAFEBODA / 2	SAFEBODA / 2020 - 2020 / ⊚										
SUPPORTING Organization(s)	IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION(S)	HARMFUL Practice(s)	LOCATION(S)	IMPACT AREA	TYPE OF TECH- Nologies USED	FEMINIST LENSES					
UNICEFUNFPA	SafeBoda	Child marriage	Urban areas of the country, mainly Kampala	Individual level empowerment Economic empowerment	Mobile phone applicationDelivery transportation service	N/A ³⁸					

Through the Global Programme, UNICEF and UNFPA decided to partner with SafeBoda (a private transport and delivery motorcycle company in Uganda) to distribute over 1 million condoms to young people living in urban settings during the COVID-19 lockdown, and to set up an e-personal health shop within the SafeBoda App.³⁹ The latter not only enabled girls and boys to request sexual and reproductive health services online, which provided privacy and safety for users, but also to access to SRHR-related information directly on their mobile phones covering issues such as child marriage and teenage pregnancy.⁴⁰ According to data pulled from the app, 40 per cent of users were girls aged between 13 and 19 years in need of emergency contraception.⁴¹

SAFEPAL / 20	SAFEPAL / 2015 — ONGOING / €										
SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION(S)	IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION(S)	HARMFUL Practice(s)	LOCATION(S)	IMPACT AREA	TYPE OF TECH- Nologies USED	FEMINIST LENSES					
UNFPA	Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development	Child marriage & FGM	Nationwide	 Service development and strengthening Individual level empowerment Legal and policy systems intervention Family and community engagement 	Mobile phone application	 Consultations with target group(s) M&E instruments 					

SafePal was created in 2015 by a group of young innovators with support from UNFPA in an effort to improve response to high under-reporting levels of sexual violence in Uganda. In 2020, looking to bridge a gap and reach the Ugandan youth during the COVID-19 pandemic, this mobile application was adopted and re-launched by the government, following an upgrading process. The new SafePal aims to promote information exchange on GBV, SRH, HIV and malaria among young people. This digital platform is also a reporting tool for cases of sexual and gender-based violence, including against children and young people. Reporting and referral to corresponding support services is made possible through the link between SafePal and the national Sauti Child Helpline. When a case is submitted through a shared dashboard, service providers can review cases and contact the survivors.

This intervention integrated an intersectional feminist approach in that UNFPA supported and ended up adopting a project that was originally created by young women and men in Uganda, who understood the issues at hand and had an innovative approach to address it. M&E activities are also part of this initiative, which conducts collects sex disaggregated data from users to implement needed changes.

MEDIA CAMPAIGNS AGAINST FGM / 2019 — ONGOING / €									
	SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION(S)	IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION(S)	HARMFUL Practice(s)	LOCATION(S)	IMPACT AREA	TYPE OF TECH- Nologies USED	FEMINIST LENSES		
	 European Council UNICEF UNFPA UN Women UNDP UNHCR Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development Government of Sweden 	 Uganda Law Society Communi- cation for Development Foundation Uganda (CDFU) 	FGM	Seven districts of Kampala, Kamuli, Kitgum, Kaboong, Gulu, Padel and Moroto.	1. Family and community engagement 2. Individual level empowerment 3. Legal and policy systems intervention	 Traditional media (TV, radio) Mobile legal aid clinics 	 Consultations with experts and/or community leaders Consultations with target group(s) M&E instruments 		

The Spotlight Initiative, currently working in 26 countries, is a joint initiative between the European Council, United Nations agencies and the Government of Uganda to eliminate FGM in the country.⁴⁵ Although the programme encompasses different strategies to reach its goal, the inclusion of technological components via media campaigns has been made possible through collaboration with CSOs, amongst which are the Uganda Law Society and CDFU. The former has run outreach, media campaigns and mobile legal aid clinics in communities, specifically targeting women and girls experiencing violence, including those at risk of FGM. Its work has led to increased knowledge about the legal framework surrounding this practice, as well as to higher reporting rates. Furthermore, the work conducted by CDFU involves the implementation of the 'Make Happiness Not Violence' campaign, which has the primary objective to end all forms of violence against women and girls. Specifically, the campaign focuses on empowering local members to become activists against FGM, while also leveraging education through entertainment by designing radio messages aimed at creating greater awareness about the negative consequences of cutting.⁴⁶ The November 2021 media monitoring report for the Spotlight Initiative in Uganda showed that over 3.9 million out of 18.4 million radio listeners in the country were reached, with the majority (3.1 million) living in rural areas.⁴⁷

The intervention integrates an intersectional feminist approach by using alternative media to reach different population groups including children and youth, and different locations, both rural and urban. The process to craft each message tends to be quite complex, testing prior to launch among target groups to ensure that the campaigns are engaging for those that must be reached. Monitoring is then carried out to measure the campaign's reach.

WHATSAPP GROUP KENYA UGANDA ANTI-FGM FORUM / 2020 — ONGOING / ⊙									
SUPPORTING Organization(s)	IMPLEMENTING Organization(s)	HARMFUL Practice(s)	LOCATION(S)	IMPACT AREA	TYPE OF TECH- Nologies USED	FEMINIST LENSES			
UNICEFUNFPA	 Ministries of gender in both countries Local authorities in border region (e.g., police, councils) Referral services Community leaders 	FGM	Border communities in the border region between Uganda and Kenya	 Legal and policy systems intervention Service development and strengthening Family and community engagement 	 Mobile phone application Virtual calls (Zoom) Television broadcasting Social media 	1. Consultation with experts and/or community leaders			

Ugandan girls living in communities along the border sometimes cross into Kenya to undergo FGM and avoid prosecution. As COVID-19 hit in 2020, and border control weakened, more girls were reportedly undertaking the trip into the neighbouring country. 48 Community leaders on both sides coordinated efforts to prevent the situation from escalating, leading them to create a WhatsApp group called the 'Kenya Uganda anti-FGM Forum' to report and respond to FGM cases in real time. Surveillance groups would inform local authorities of girls they suspected were trying to undergo FGM, and they were repatriated to Uganda when that was the case. After returning, girls were placed in temporary rescue centres, and offered the chance to attend nearby primary schools, receive psychosocial counselling, and access vocational and livelihood opportunities. As the group evolved, the use of the app continued to facilitate communication among stakeholders, and local border authorities in both countries became highly involved in the initiative. Between April and October 2020, 37 girls were intercepted in Kenya and returned, uncut, by the Kenyan authorities to Uganda. According to a representative from UNICEF in Uganda, this initiative contributed to enhancing accountability from government stakeholders, who were prompted to enact actions or become exposed for doing the opposite. To complement this work, UNICEF and UNFPA also utilized virtual meetings, video conferencing, face-to-face interactions, television broadcasting and social media channels to advocate against cross-border FGM in Uganda.

The intervention integrated an intersectional feminist approach by prioritizing the voices of community leaders in such a way that the local authorities ended up adopting and relying on this reporting mechanism to respond to FGM in the border region during the pandemic.

ENDNOTES

- 1 DHS (2016) as cited in UNICEF (2022a), Uganda country profile
- 2 DHS (2016) as cited in UNICEF (2020e), Uganda country profile
- 3 Gallup (2019), as cited in Economist Impact (2022)
- 4 GSMA (2020)
- 5 Economist Impact (2022)
- The score on government support for digital literacy, on a scale from 0-3 (low to high), reflects a government plan or strategy to address digital literacy for students and/or teachers - through the design and development of courses in ICT skills, computer science, programming or other classes for students; and through ICT capacity-building courses for teachers. A zero score indicates that the government does not have such a plan/strategy, neither for students and nor for teachers; a score of 1 reflects a plan for student digital literacy but without including
- teacher capacity-building; a medium score of 2 indicates a current plan for both; and the highest score of 3 reflects a plan addressing both students and teachers, and with the courses and capacity-building starting at the primary school level.
- 7 United Nations Population Division, as cited in the World Bank (2021c)
- 8 DHS (2016), as cited in UNICEF (2022a)
- 9 DHS (1991) and DHS (2016) as cited in UNICEF and UNFPA (2020c)
- 10 UNICEF and UNFPA (2021e)
- 11 DHS (2016) as cited in UNICEF (2020e)
- 12 UN Women (2022)
- 13 Spotlight Initiative (2022)
- 14 Jjuuko and Mbonye (2020)
- 15 DHS (2016) as cited in UNICEF and Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2020)

- 16 IEA, IRENA, UNSD, the World Bank and WHO, as cited in the World Bank (2020m)
- 17 ITU, as cited in World Bank (2020m)
- 18 Gallup, as cited in Economist Impact (2022)
- 19 Economist Impact (2022)
- 20 ITU, as cited in Economist Impact (2022)
- 21 ITU (2020c)
- 22 After Access (2018)
- 23 GSMA (2019)
- 24 After Access (2018)
- 25 Economist Impact (2022)
- 26 As cited in the World Bank (2022b)
- 27 "Sauti" means "voice" in Kiswahili
- 28 The Republic of Uganda (2016)
- 29 Sauti (2022)
- 30 UNICEF and UNFPA (2021d)
- 31 Organization/ intervention not interviewed
- 32 Reach a Hand (2022)

- 33 U-Report (n.d)
- 34 UNICEF (n.d.b)
- 35 UNICEF and UNFPA (2021e)
- 36 U-Report Uganda (2022)
- 37 UNICEF (n.d.b)
- 38 Organization/ intervention not interviewed
- 39 UNFPA and UNICEF (2020c)
- 40 Information provided by UNFPA and UNICEF Uganda representatives
- 41 UNICEF and UNFPA (2020c)
- 42 UNFPA (2020a)
- 43 Information provided by UNFPA and UNICEF Uganda representatives
- 44 UNFPA (2020a)
- 45 UNICEF and UNFPA (2020b)
- 46 Spotlight Initiative (2022)
- 47 IPSOS Uganda (2022)
- 48 Jjuuko and Mbonye (2020)
- 49 UNICEF and UNFPA (2020b)

REVIEW OF

TECHNOLOGY-BASED INTERVENTIONS

TO ADDRESS CHILD MARRIAGE AND FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION





