

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN BY THE UGANDA HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION DURING 2015 – 2016

INTRODUCTION

The Uganda Human Rights Commission (hereinafter referred to as the Commission) is a National Human Rights Institution that is established under Article 15 of the Constitution of Uganda. The Commission has a wide mandate bestowed on it under the Constitution which includes establishing a continuing programme of research, education and information to enhance respect of human rights; and formulating, implementing and overseeing programmes intended to inculcate in the citizens of Uganda an awareness of their civic responsibilities and an appreciation of their rights and obligations as free people (Article 52 of the Constitution).

The Commission has in place a directorate of research, education and documentation, ten regional offices and ten field offices to execute the mandate of conducting human rights education nationally.

Human Rights education interventions by the Commission in 2015 to 2016 were guided by the priorities of the third phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education.

Human Rights Education interventions by the Uganda Human Rights Commission during 2015 – 2016

1. Human rights education for law enforcement and security agencies

The Commission conducts human rights education for law enforcement and security agencies as a means of empowering them to respect human rights and freedoms in the performance of their functions. During the period under review the Commission targeted the Uganda Police Force, the Uganda Peoples Defence Forces (the National Army), the Uganda Prisons Service and the Internal Security Organisation.

The Commission trained a total number of 2,753 participants in this category. Participants acquired knowledge in human rights standards (international, regional and national); their role in the protection and promotion of human rights; principles and safeguards during arrest and detention; principles governing the use of force; and the international and national laws prohibiting torture. Since the period under review was also an electoral period for Uganda, participants were trained on the human rights standards relating to elections and their role in elections and elections management processes.

2. Human Rights education for schools

The Commission conducts human rights education in schools through human rights and peace clubs. The Commission established human rights and peace clubs in secondary schools as an initiative that is intended to promote a culture for the respect of human rights and the attendant duties and responsibilities in schools. The Commission has to date established 269 Human Rights and Peace clubs in secondary schools country wide. The clubs conduct human rights education activities within their schools and in their communities through drama shows, debates, music, community outreach and radio talk shows.

The Commission conducted sensitisation programmes for 3,987 teachers and students across the country. Through the trainings participants gained knowledge on among other things basic concepts of human rights (derived from international, regional and national human rights standards); duties and responsibilities of children in schools; children's rights; the rights of the girl-child; the right to education; and the rights of vulnerable groups.

3. Human rights education for communities

UHRC conducts human rights awareness for grass roots communities to enhance active participation of communities in claiming their rights and fulfilling their civic obligation. UHRC engaged grassroots communities through community meetings (baraza) and the use of the civic education vans.

A total of 135,551 (89,461male, 46,090female) attended the Commission's grassroots awareness campaigns conducted in 78 districts countrywide. The women attendees were fewer during the grass roots awareness initiatives due to various influences including the patriarchal nature of societies in Uganda which dictates that women do not attend public meetings; and domestic chores and demands that keep women at home and in their gardens.

The Commission sensitized communities on a wide range of human rights issues including: rights of vulnerable groups including women, children, PWDs, the elderly, persons living with HIV/AIDS; land rights; Early and Forced Marriages and Female Genital Mutilation as Human Rights issues; and existing accountability mechanisms for ensuring the observance of human rights.

4. Human rights education through the media

Due to the wide coverage of media in terms of audiences, UHRC used various platforms of the media to raise awareness on various human rights issues countrywide. These included radio and television talk shows, radio spot messages, infomercials, newspaper supplements, press briefings and statements.

For example, the Commission conducted 304 Radio talk shows country wide. The talk shows were interactive allowing for about 1,580 listeners to call in and they were conducted in English and various local languages.

The choice of topics and issues discussed by the callers was influenced by selected thematic human rights issues as identified by UHRC and prevalent human rights issues that were specific to each region and to the country. They included: human rights duties and responsibilities of citizens; rights of vulnerable groups; human rights standards in the electoral process; land rights; human rights implications of domestic violence; the right to personal integrity; accountability of duty bearers; Chapter 4 of the Constitution (the Bill of Rights).

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