

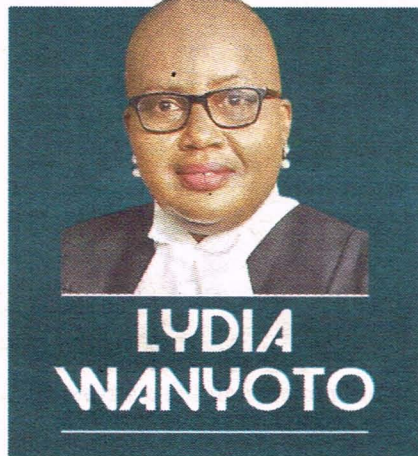
# WOMEN'S DAY: A TIME TO CELEBRATE, REFLECT, REMEMBER

**O**n Sunday, Uganda joins the rest of the world to commemorate International Women's Day under the theme: *Scaling up investment to accelerate access to justice for all women and girls in Uganda*. The international theme, which is not far removed from the national one, is *Give to Gain*. This year's commemoration at Kololo Independence Grounds is the 42nd time Uganda has marked International Women's Day, having held its inaugural national event in 1984 at State House Entebbe.

Both the international and national themes speak to the need to celebrate trailblazing women and girls who have been breaking barriers, rewriting the world's rules, and creating great social, cultural and political change. International Women's Day is an important opportunity for us to celebrate the splendid sacrifices, solidarity, achievements and advocacy efforts of all women and girls, from our own relatives to eminent trailblazers, both local and international.

The *Give to Gain* theme emphasises the power of reciprocity and support in our everyday lives. When people, governments, organisations and communities give generously towards women's causes, opportunities and support for women increase. The international theme inadvertently amplifies the adage that "in uplifting a woman, the family and nation are uplifted. In educating a woman, the family and nation get educated."

Whether through donations, knowledge sharing, resources, infrastructure, visibility, advocacy, education, training, mentoring or time, contributing to women's advancement helps create a more supportive and interconnected world. For example, what will you give to gain gender equality and



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jettison anachronistic, as well as repugnant cultural ethos that have, for generations, consigned women and girls to the shadows of a patriarchal society that, until recently, hardly recognised their very existence?

As individuals, giving support means calling out stereotypes, challenging discrimination, questioning bias, celebrating women's success, mentoring young women starting their career journeys and being worthy role models.

International Women's Day has, since its inception in 1975, assumed a new global dimension for women in both developing and developed countries alike. The growing international women's movement, strengthened by four global United Nations Women's Conferences, has helped make the commemoration a rallying point to build support for women's rights and participation in the political and economic arenas.

This year, International Women's Day calls for action to dismantle the structural barriers to equal justice, discriminatory laws, weak legal protection and harmful practices, as well as social norms that systematically erode the rights of women and girls.

In Uganda, women and girls constitute the largest portion

of our national population. Fostering laws and policies that entrench discrimination and marginalisation against women would amount to a net loss to the nation. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics National Housing and Population Census 2024, females constitute 51.6% (23,592,128) of Uganda's total population (45,905,417).

Supporting policies that invest in and uplift women in Uganda can turn this portion of our population into a real engine of growth. To our eternal credit, Uganda has one of the most progressive and liberal legal regimes in upholding the rights of women and girls anywhere in the world.

The 1995 Constitution has buttressed these rights, ranging from affirmative action in favour of females, freedom from discrimination premised on sex, acknowledging the special place of women in society given their maternal role, to disregarding repugnant customs that are deemed

oppressive to women.

Uganda has also ratified several international conventions, treaties and protocols that seek to uphold the rights of women, with the majority of such principles getting domesticated in our municipal laws. Some of these include: the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the United Nations "Trafficking in Persons Protocol", which has since been supplemented by the Palermo Protocol that proscribes transnational organised crime whose victims are normally women getting trafficked by organised criminal gangs for prostitution purposes.

Most of the principles in protocols and conventions ratified by Uganda have been domesticated in laws, including the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act, Cap. 133; Succession Act, Cap. 268; Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act, Cap. 131; the Children Act, Cap. 62; Data Protection and Privacy Act,



**L-R: Vice-President Jessica Alupo; Third Deputy Prime Minister Rukia Nakadama; and the Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Betty Amongi, during the 2025 International Women's Day celebrations held at Bukwiri, Kyankwanzi district. The Government has done much to uphold women and girls' rights, including supporting women in political spaces**

Cap. 97; and the Domestic Violence Act Cap. 123.

It is, therefore, imperative to commend the Government of Uganda and President Yoweri Museveni for walking the talk in upholding the rights of women and girls. The only remaining challenge is communities that are furtively upholding anachronistic customs that daily flout women's rights.

It is the duty of everyone - leaders, civil society and ordinary citizens - to contribute towards efforts tailored to jettisoning these practices. This year's national commemoration comes at the beginning of Uganda's Fourth National Development Plan implementation. This offers an opportunity to see how women can better themselves through different initiatives tailored to their economic empowerment.

This year's International Women's Day commemoration offers a rare opportunity to remember plucky, trailblazing women who had the chutzpah to demand their place in a then-man's world, to celebrate those who initiated the process to correct historical injustices against women, and reflect on the milestones thus far realised. Happy International Women's Day.

**AS INDIVIDUALS, GIVING SUPPORT MEANS CALLING OUT STEREOTYPES, CHALLENGING DISCRIMINATION, QUESTIONING BIAS, CELEBRATING WOMEN'S SUCCESS, MENTORING YOUNG WOMEN STARTING THEIR CAREER JOURNEYS AND BEING WORTHY ROLE MODELS.**

**The writer is a member of the National Planning Authority board and the Mbale Woman MP-elect**