



WOMEN TALKING, KAMPALA LISTENING

An Urban Assessment from a
Gender Perspective in Uganda

Cities Alliance
Cities Without Slums

Hosted by
UNOPS

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Acknowledgements: This publication has been produced by Cities Alliance's Cities for Women Programme. Cities Alliance expresses gratitude for the comments and feedback we received that ensured the quality of the report. A number of Cities Alliance members, partners and experts have contributed to the peer-review process of this publication.

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First published in 2021

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Cities Alliance–Cities for Women Global Programme

Cities Alliance is a global partnership fighting urban poverty and supporting cities to deliver sustainable development. To manage its activities, Cities Alliance operates a multi-donor fund with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) as host and trustee.

Cities Alliance envisions a world where all women and girls can live in inclusive and equitable cities and communities. The Cities for Women Global Programme works towards this, aiming to increase women's and girls' engagement in urban development and governance.

Cities Alliance adopts a citywide approach to women's engagement and participation, focusing simultaneously on political participation, urban governance, spatial planning and public spaces, and economic equality. In line with the approach to Cities Development Strategy (CDS) developed and supported by Cities Alliance in cities around the world, the Cities for Women Global Programme helps cities develop urban areas that are more gender sensitive and inclusive, and responsive to everyone's needs, create frameworks of opportunities for the active participation of all, and include results frameworks and indicators to monitor gender equality.



Executive summary



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Traditional city planning often reflects the needs and aspirations of a limited segment of society, failing to integrate the interests of the most marginalized, women, youth and urban poor. Male urban experts build most cities, and although the ways in which urban environments are experienced vary widely between community members, urban policy planning and investments rarely consider such different perspectives. Excluding under-represented groups from urban decision-making results in leaving a large portion of the world's population underserved, with the population's full potential untapped.

How can societies design cities in such a way that they are gender-inclusive, from vision to infrastructure and services? Cities Alliance looks at women as sources of positive and transformational change in cities, and, therefore, believes in the importance of a participatory approach to city planning and governance, one that takes into full consideration the voices and ideas of the women walking and living in cities' spaces.

Cities Alliance has been active in Uganda for more than a decade, working with national and local authorities, development agencies and community-based organizations to design and support a variety of urban operations. In 2019, the Uganda Country Programme began implementing a safeguarding project for the Kampala-Jinja Expressway. Within this framework, the Cities for Women Global Programme organized a citywide urban assessment workshop in Kampala in March 2021 with women from different sectors assessing their level of participation in the city making.

The workshop sought to improve gender awareness of city policymakers and local stakeholders, identify obstacles and enablers for women's engagement in urban governance and planning, and promote women's active engagement in city governance and planning. The results of this engagement will inform ongoing and future Cities Alliance projects in Uganda, including the Kampala-Jinja

Expressway "No One Worse Off" project, the Cities and Migration Programme, and specific COVID-19 response actions in informal settlements—thus supporting the country in meeting its 2040 Vision goals.

Quotations from respondents at the urban assessment workshop are presented throughout this publication, which explores in-depth the results of the workshop's assessment. The *Women Talking, Kampala Listening* report offers insights into the lives of women living and working in Kampala, their daily struggles with urban infrastructures, and their burdens juggling caregiving and informal economy activities. It also showcases their resourcefulness and their wish to be adequately supported in order to attain their full potential and reclaim Kampala as a space inclusive of their voices and needs.

Gender Equality and Urbanization in Kampala

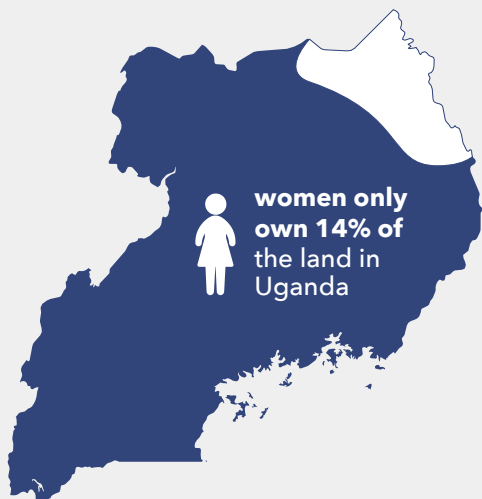
1 out of 4
households is
headed by women



In Uganda, women constitute 51 per cent of its estimated 37.7 million population, with one in every four households (31 per cent) headed by women¹³. The country has made progress by setting up legal processes to ensure protection against gender discriminations, including the need for fair representation in public offices, the criminalization of domestic violence, and the need to enhance the welfare of women and enable them to realize their full potential and protect their rights. Moreover, the Uganda Land Act contains several provisions related to the security of tenure and the safeguard of land rights for

women and children, making it unlawful to discriminate against women and children in respect of ownership, occupation, and use of any land¹.

The Government of Uganda has strived to improve in terms of gender equality and women's empowerment, with the definition of a National Gender Policy, the mainstreaming of gender across ministries, and the deliberate affirmative actions taken to promote women in elected positions from the village councils to the Parliament of Uganda. In spite of the legal framework and the overall institutional efforts, women in the country are still confronted with several challenges in their daily lives.



For example, studies found that women only own 14 per cent of the land in Uganda⁸, which hinders their opportunities, such as access to loans as well as women's economic safety. Moreover, women are frequently stopped by their husbands to stand for elective positions, or they have resigned from their jobs because of cultural expectations, yet there is no clear legal framework when it comes to matters ensuring certain women's rights, with the Marriage and Divorce Bill¹¹ being one of the most debated laws in the history of Uganda having languished in Parliament for almost five decades.

“

Most of these good policies and laws that the Government of Uganda has put in place are not helpful as they don't reach me, the woman on the ground. They are written in English and are not translated into the local languages for everyone to understand.

– a workshop's participant

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Such struggles encountered by women are even more visible in the context of the capital city's fast urbanization. During the past decades, Kampala's population has grown rapidly because of a combination of natural population growth, rural-urban migration, and land-use reclassification. **The urban population has almost doubled from 1.74 million in 2007 to 2.84 million in 2017⁴ and has been steadily growing in the past years, reaching 3.47 million in 2021¹⁴.**

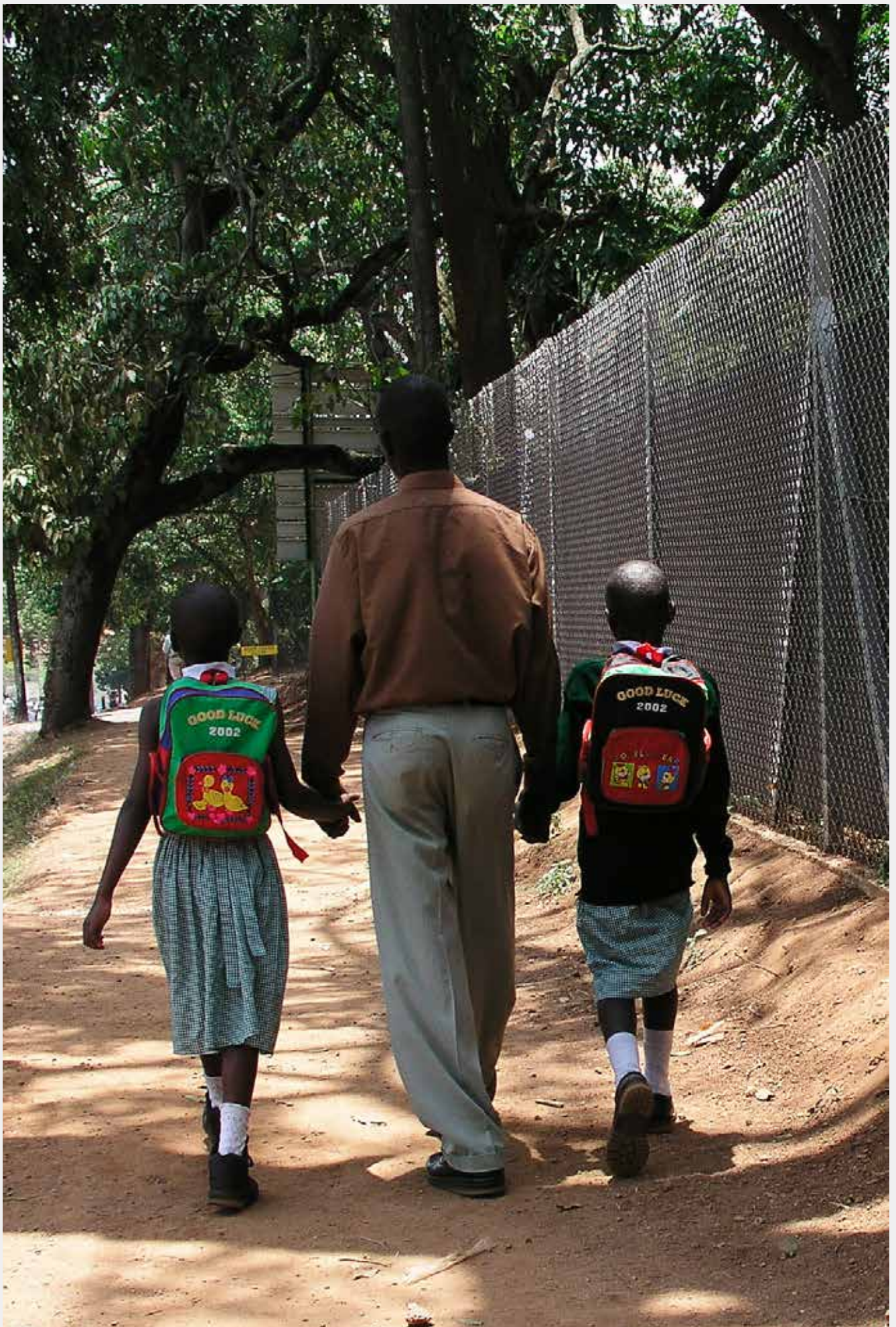
Access to the benefits of urbanization has not been equitable, with urban inequality disproportionately affecting women. Socio-cultural norms constrain women's economic participation, and the burden of domestic work disproportionately falls on women. In Kampala's slums, which constitute 60 per cent of the city development, most households are female-headed, and most women work in

the informal sector. Too often women living in the slums are under-empowered and do not have the opportunities to participate in the city making.

Many women in Kampala are engaged in informal economic activities, such as street vending and shopkeeping, which usually do not provide enough, constant income, contributing to their poverty and dependence on their husbands. Long working hours also hinder women's work-life balance, with some women having to resign from their jobs and concentrate on looking after their families or engage in informal economic activities that give them time to look after the family. **On average, women in Uganda spend 30 hours a week on unpaid domestic and care work, more than twice the amount of time spent by men (12 hours)⁸.**

TABLE 1 | KEY NATIONAL STATISTICS RELEVANT TO GENDER EQUALITY

Indicator	Value	Source
Literacy rate	♀ Female: 70.84% ♂ Male: 82.66%	Country Economy, 'Uganda - Literacy rate', 2018
Women having used internet compared to men	♀ Female: 21% ♂ Male: 61%	World Wide Web Foundation, 'Women's Rights Online', 2015
Percentage of women active in low skills and wages jobs compared to men	♀ Female: 92% ♂ Male: 77%	Uganda Bureau of Statistics and Inner City Fund International Inc., 'Uganda - Demographic and Health Survey', 2016
Women working as unpaid family workers	35%	Uganda Bureau of Statistics and Inner City Fund International Inc., 'Uganda - Demographic and Health Survey', 2016
Fertility rate	5.8 children per woman	Central Intelligence Agency, 'CIA World Factbook 2021: Uganda', CIA, 2021
Child marriage	43%	Uganda Bureau of Statistics and Inner City Fund International Inc., 'Uganda - Demographic and Health Survey', 2016
Child pregnancy	25%	Uganda Bureau of Statistics and Inner City Fund International Inc., 'Uganda - Demographic and Health Survey', 2016

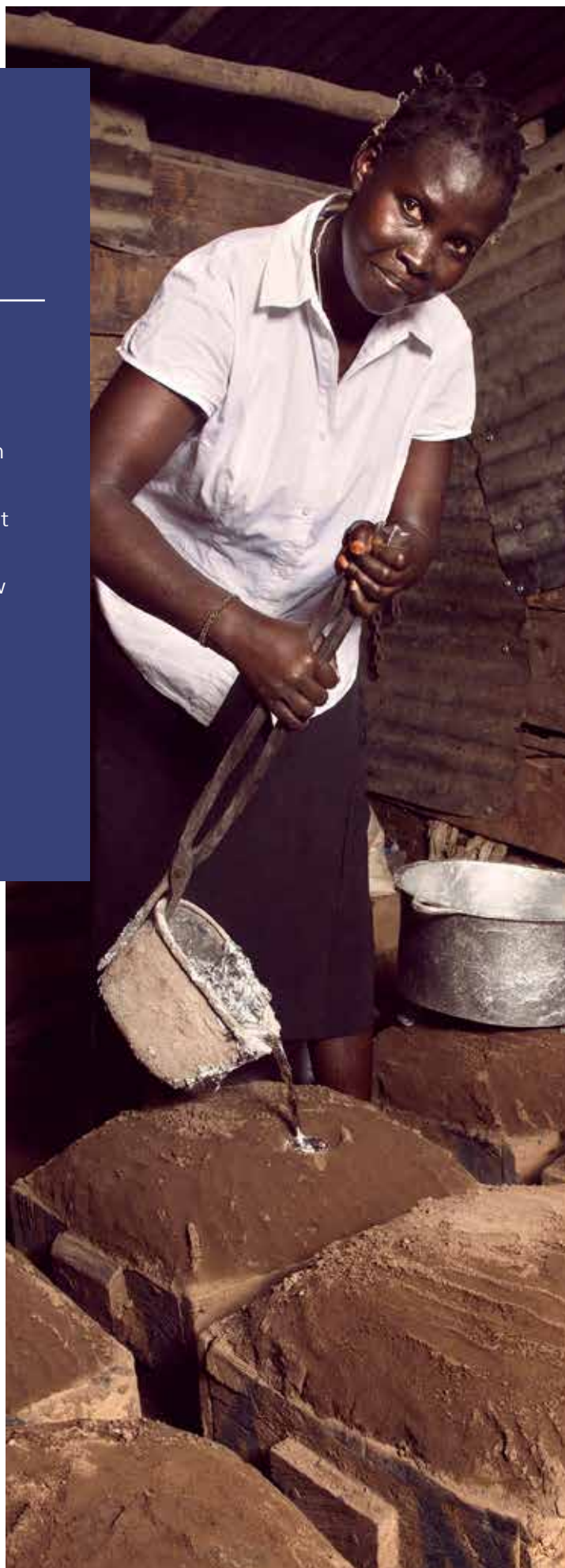


1 Cities for Women Methodology in Kampala

Cities Alliance is working to improve gender awareness of city policymakers and local stakeholders, along with identifying obstacles and enablers for women's engagement in urban governance and planning. To this end, Cities Alliance has developed a Women's Engagement City (WEC) profile, a tool for policymakers to guide the collection and analysis of data on how women and girls interact with their city, in order to better inform public policies and address women's often unmet needs at the urban level. To promote women's active engagement in Kampala, Cities Alliance organized an urban assessment workshop in March 2021, applying the [WEC framework and indicators](#).

Forty-two local stakeholders attended the workshop, *Women Talking, Kampala Listening—Urban Assessment Workshop with a Gender Lens*, which adopted a participatory process and included individual and group assessments to provide qualitative data on the level of women's social, political, economic and cultural engagement in the city development. Along with women's individual and collective experiences and perceptions, national data and policy information were collected.

Before the workshop, initial engagements involved identifying and mobilizing key stakeholders (women from the communities) and contacting leaders (religious, cultural and political leaders), civil society representatives, financial institutions, and representatives from the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) and women's groups. As these initial steps were in process, the Cities Alliance team finalized the indicators to be used in the assessment. The team organized key stakeholder meetings to discuss the workshop agendas and methodology with the intention to elicit and understand the local perspective and local knowledge, along with identifying additional stakeholders.



2 Women Experiencing Kampala

The participatory process undertaken during the “Women Talking, Kampala Listening” workshop identified women’s practices and perceptions of the city, in particular around safety, accessibility and mobility, in order to ensure that public services and policies respond to women’s needs.



Women’s Safety and Living Conditions

Respondents stated that despite efforts, such as the city lighting and increase in the number of health centres within the city, more needs to be done to improve the safety of Kampala City for women. A respondent mentioned that even if there are certain safety measures in place, many more are lacking, such as hospitals with appropriate drugs or reliable police stations. Robbery and killings of mobile money agents (most of whom are women) are frequent, thus increasing the perception of the city as an unsafe place for women.

The living conditions for women in Kampala City are also regarded as challenging, especially for women living within the slum areas. The cost of living is high mainly because of the economic impact of COVID-19 and high population growth within the city, leading to increased demand for limited resources. Housing is also expensive, with most women resorting to one-roomed flats that they share with the rest of the house members.

“

Even if women have tried to boost [their incomes] and upgrade, their situation remains bad, especially in respect of housing conditions. Most houses in slum communities are not accessible and in very poor conditions.

– a workshop’s participant

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Difficulties to Move Around and Access Technology

An effective, affordable, and inclusive transport system is the engine for the development of any city. However despite the efforts taken up by the Government of Uganda and Kampala Capital City Authority to ensure their improvement, the existing tarmacked roads have potholes and most roads within the slum communities are inaccessible when it rains, or very dusty during the dry seasons. The situation with the transport system has not only contributed to wastage of time due to traffic jams,

but also negatively affected business growth as it makes it hard for the women to access or be exposed to potential markets, and it increases the costs of doing business in the city.

The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened the transportation situation, forcing a limitation in the numbers of people using public transport in order to halt the spread of the virus. Moreover, residents of Kampala often resort to using boda bodas as a means of transport to beat the traffic jams, although many road traffic accidents have resulted from boda bodas.⁷

“

I use a boda boda daily to go to work as it will take me a shorter time to reach the city centre. I can also comfortably carry my luggage on the boda boda as compared to the public taxis. My only fear is the rampant boda-boda accidents that have claimed the lives of people within Kampala City.

– a workshop's participant

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In Kampala, despite progress, women still need more access to technology to boost their digital power.

Technology is an effective tool for development as it enables communication and cuts down the costs of doing business. Women are lagging behind in this field because of low levels of digital literacy, as well as high costs of information technology equipment and internet rates, which has been worsened by the Over-the-Top Tax (OTT) charged for using social media in Uganda.

Trust in Public Authorities and Women's Political Participation

Generally women in Kampala have highlighted issues in having access to justice through the Uganda and healthcare through services, especially when it comes to the delivery of services, such as access to justice through the Uganda Police Force, or healthcare. On the other hand, the Government of Uganda has created an environment that enables women to actively participate in electoral politics for which the workshop respondents rated the city profile in this field as “satisfactory”. There are women-only slots for different positions from the grassroots level to the representatives to the Parliament of Uganda.

Despite this, the political leadership of Kampala Capital City Authority is composed of three females and 11 males, with the technical team at 394 women and 760 men, which is an area of concern in addressing the issues around women within the city.

“

As a woman, I appreciate that we now have a political space. For example, in the recently concluded elections we saw a huge percentage of women participating—however, even if the Constitution gave us a platform, there is still a gap.

– a workshop's participant

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Women are still being restricted from taking part in electoral leadership because of cultural and religious restrictions, especially when they are married. There is a confidence gap amongst women and costs of politics are expensive in Uganda, leaving the available slots to the few women who have already taken up those positions for a long time. Radio and television talk shows for politicians are aired at awkward times when the women leaders are expected to be home taking up their family duties and are perceived as favouring the visibility of men, within most cases having only one woman or none in a panel of five people—thus hindering representation of women's views on public platforms.

Women at the grassroots levels pointed out that more capacity building and support is needed to strengthen women leaders's confidence and skills, thus ensuring their ability to fully represent other women's priorities in the different political fora.

Women participants at the workshop rated the government's involvement and engagement in women's concerns, needs and ideas as "highly unsatisfactory". Government structures have been blamed for not directly working with grassroots women in designing programmes for them. Participants felt that most government officials only consult with women for the purpose of ticking off their work plans or accounting for funds, but they do not put women's ideas into action or provide concrete feedback to them.

“

Government officials who have the responsibility of hearing us out are not interested until the election or budgeting time, that's when they try engaging and consulting us for their budgets to be passed, and after that, we never see them again.

— a workshop's participant

”

The Untapped Potential of Women's Organizations

National and global goals promoting women empowerment have propelled individuals and government within Uganda and Kampala City to start women's rights networks. Women attending the workshop, however, were not satisfied by most of these women's groups as they have not put the interests of the women at the centre, focussing instead on their own interests. The entry points of these women's rights networks are usually politicians who at times are biased when tasked to mobilize women for projects under these networks. As reported by one participant, there is discrimination in access to the opportunities provided by these organizations, as some only invite specific people, instead of the whole community, so only relatives, friends, or neighbours are informed and then the project benefits few households.

Women at the workshop also stated that these women's groups should have higher ambitions. A participant reflected that even if opportunities are there, women tend to focus on small achievements, such as running a saving group, and they do not pursue big opportunities to influence political processes.

Economic Contributions and Lack of Funding Opportunities

Despite improvements in women's participation in the economy, the workshop respondents felt that several challenges still hinder the attainment of their full economic independence—even though, they were confident that with the right support, from institutions as well as the family level, they would be able to achieve that.

“

Our decisions, especially we the working ladies, have cost us our marriages and relationships, ending up as single mothers because our partners think that we are having extramarital affairs, especially if you have to spend some nights out when you travel.

– a workshop's participant

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Although the Kampala Capital City Authority through the Directorate of Gender and Community Services and Production have in place credit facilities that empower and are connected to credit institutions⁵, such as the “*Emyooga*” fund launched by the President of Uganda in August 2019. Women at the workshop were not fully satisfied with the funding opportunities available as they felt that most of them are biased, politically motivated, and difficult to access—such as loan facilities from financial institutions.

Financial institutions were also encouraged to design products able to fit with the socio-economic situation of women. In fact, they often request land titles as collateral security for loans, and as most women do not have land titles in their names, they either have to use their husband's assets to process these loans or give up their endeavour.

Obstacles for Women in Education and Training

Most of the respondents highlighted the need to focus on creating more education and training opportunities for women working in the informal sector. The practice of child marriages and the high incidence of teenage pregnancies further influence the ability of women to benefit from educational opportunities.¹²

Even if participants in the workshop pointed out that the Government of Uganda and different civil society organizations promote several trainings opportunities, they also mentioned that often the people who oversee mobilization for such trainings have some perceived form of bias based on family, tribal, political, and social interests. As a result, some women are unaware of these opportunities as they do not belong to any social groups or lack the relevant communication channels that could have been used to disseminate information on trainings.

“

As a sex worker, even when these opportunities come, we are judged because of the kind of job we do and, in most cases, they don't follow up to train us in any income-generating activity to help quit this job.

– a workshop's participant

”

Women's Participation in the Cultural and Public Scene

Participants highlighted the need for a wider and more diversified cultural offer for women—lack of time, social norms, and the cost of these facilities have discouraged most of the women from participating in such activities. Workshop participants lamented that as women are busy taking care of the survival of their families, with men often absconding from their responsibilities, they have no time to develop an interest in anything else. A woman is still expected to stay home with her family, instead of going out to have fun with her friends. Moreover, most of these events usually happen late in the night, which is taken as a time for a woman to be home with her children. In addition to this, the number of safe, accessible, and enjoyable public spaces in Kampala has decreased over the years, and yet women said that they need these spaces to meet and network.

As the capital city, Kampala brings together people from different ethnic, political, religious, and sexual backgrounds, and yet there is still resistance to accept behaviours and beliefs that are different from one's own. The situation is worse for married women, especially when it comes to situations of intermarriages between people with different backgrounds, as culturally in Uganda a woman is expected to take up and follow the culture of the man's family. A female participant mentioned that as an Acholi women married to a Muganda man, which are two different ethnic groups in Uganda, there are things that she is expected to refrain from—including enjoying cultural amenities and starting businesses—because of her husband's background.



3 Recommendations for a more Gender-inclusive Kampala

During the “Women talking, Kampala Listening” workshop, participants came up with key recommendations for the city authority to consider when designing programmes and strategies to improve the participation of women in the city governance.



Improve Kampala's Safety and Services for Women



Invest in improved housing: KCCA should invest in affordable and better housing facilities for women living within the slum communities of Kampala. Moreover, the workplaces for many of these women are in uninhabitable conditions, especially when they have to bring their children along. As KCCA and private business owners improve the conditions of the markets, they should also make provisions for childcare centres within the market areas where the women can safely keep their children as they work.



Make public transport accessible and public spaces safer: KCCA and the Government of Uganda should invest in fixing roads to reduce traffic jams. Road constructions in Kampala City need to put in provisions for pedestrians, people with disabilities, and cyclists to reduce the rampant road accidents within the city. KCCA needs to monitor and regulate the boda-boda business in Kampala by making sure all safety measures are in place and the riders are well trained to be able to ride the motorcycles.



Strengthen policing and safety measures: There needs to be deliberate police patrolling of the city centre and slum areas, city lighting, and surveillance cameras, which need to be extended to the city outskirts. KCCA needs to monitor the public transport system to tackle and prevent incidents of robbery and harassment targeting women.



Increase access to sexual and reproductive health information and services: The lack of sexual and reproductive health awareness is considered as a challenge for women in Kampala, with much needed information on issues of family planning and sexually transmitted diseases. There are many unintended pregnancies in Kampala and Uganda, leading to high levels of unplanned births, unsafe abortions, and maternal injury and death. Women at the workshop pointed out episodes of children being abandoned by their mothers because of their inability to take care of them, especially when the children's fathers forego their parenting responsibilities.



Invest in healthcare facilities: KCCA and other private partners have strived to improve the health sector, especially regarding maternal health. KCCA should explore improving the situation around women-focused health centres so they can serve the health needs of women in Kampala, regardless of their financial status.

Improve Women's Political Participation



Invest in leadership training for women: The affirmative policies put in place to encourage women to take up leadership positions have not been highly effective because of a lack of advertisement of such positions, as well as the low confidence of women within Kampala. The government and civil society organizations need to invest to improve awareness of the leadership positions available for women and promote trainings for women to build their self-esteem and leadership.



Review costs of electoral politics: Costs for elective positions in Uganda are high, with the non-refundable nomination fees ranging from UGX50,000 for councillors up to UGX20 million for the presidential election. Such costs, combined with those of running campaigns, have contributed to making politics not accessible for women, leading to a monopolization of the available positions to the few who have the resources. The electoral process in Uganda needs to be reviewed in order to reduce its costs and encourage women's engagement in politics.



Provide consultations to directly engage grassroots women: The design of development projects needs to draw directly from consultations with women, going beyond the engagement of only female leaders, as some of them might not be in a position to effectively disseminate or represent the views and interests of the common woman. Moreover, laws and policies, as well as projects and opportunities directly or indirectly targeting women, should use a language that they can understand.

Strengthen Women's Skills and Boost their Economic Role



Improve the access and cost of technology for women: There needs to be a deliberate effort to provide digital training for women to improve their understanding and usage of digital services. The government should remove financial bottlenecks, such as the Over-The Top - OTT phone tax, and lower costs of purchasing digital hardware (such as smartphones, computers, and radio) to enable women to buy and use these tools.



Implement affirmative action to promote women in business: This action can be in the form of tax holidays and business financing by financial institutions, through friendly lending terms and conditions that can be managed by women, especially around collateral security and

interest rates. Moreover, there should be efforts to sensitize women on their property rights and on the procedures required to register assets in their names.



Invest in financial literacy for women: Women in Kampala City have a strong entrepreneurial spirit, engaging especially in informal economic activities, such as street vending or selling of vegetables in markets, or starting joined savings groups commonly known as Savings and Credit Co-operative Societies (SACCOs). To support such proactivity, women should be provided with trainings on basic financial information, such as loan management, insurance, and financial service providers, that they can use to develop their businesses.

Improve Cultural Opportunities and Spaces



Adapt cultural programmes to include women's needs: Cultural amenities and events need to be reviewed in terms of timings and costs to ensure that women can get involved.



Improve the public infrastructure for active recreation: The KCCA could host a public dialogue on how to improve such urban cultural infrastructures and, consequently, the health and quality of life for the city residents, as well as allocate budgets towards these expenditures.



Support programmes on girls' education: Lack of education and knowledge has immensely affected women's empowerment. This lack hinders their ability to read and understand most policies, which are usually written in English, and it limits women's confidence to run for leadership positions or make informed decisions on issues around their development. Therefore, it is critical to provide support to low-income families to discourage girls from dropping out of the education system.

Concluding Reflections, Kampala Listening and Acting

Successfully addressing gender gaps in the ongoing process of urbanization will be a pre-condition for Uganda to meet the ambitious Vision 2040 goals of becoming a modern and inclusive middle-income country. Better understanding and addressing the needs of women living in informal settlements will improve the living conditions of all inhabitants, through the provision of basic services, inclusive public spaces, improved transportation services and better access to land.

The process of addressing gaps needs to place women at the centre through open consultations gathering their feedback and opinions, making sure not to take for granted women's views. Women will also need to be updated on the progress of their opinions, showing active solutions to address their concerns and ensuring that tackling gender inequalities within Kampala's urban environment becomes a collective effort.



Kampala–Women Engagement in the City (WEC) Profile

The questions below were presented at the workshop. The averages of the responses from the participants, with a scale from 1 (critical) through 5 (almost satisfactory) to 9 (full), were used to define the Kampala's Women Engagement City Profile (WEC).

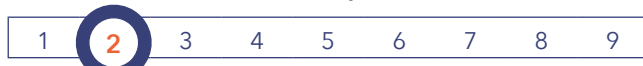
1. Safety | How does one assess safety issues for women in this city?



2. Tolerance | How does one assess tolerance towards women in this city?



3. Living conditions | How does one assess the living conditions for women in this city?



4. Mobility and accessibility | How do you assess the efficiency and accessibility of the city's transport system?



5. Trust and transparency | How does one assess women's trust or confidence in public authorities?



6. Technology | How would one assess the availability of technology for women in this city?



7. Economic independence [quantity] | How is the ability of women to be financially independent or to make a living in this city assessed?



8. Careers [quantity and quality] | How is the quality of the job market for women in this city assessed?



9. Entrepreneurship [quantity, quality and price] |

How is the city as a place for women to have their own business assessed?



10. Funding opportunities [quantity, quality and price] |

How are opportunities for women assessed?



11. Training [quantity, quality and price] | How are the training opportunities or the training system for women assessed?



12. Employment and entrepreneurship policies [quantity, quality] | How are women's employment and entrepreneurship policies assessed in this city?



13. Decision making (participation from within) [quantity] | How is the direct involvement of women in political decision-making processes assessed in this city?



14. Democratic vitality (participation from outside) [quantity] | How is the democratic vitality in this urban area assessed?



15. Consultation and permeability (participation from outside) [quantity and quality] | How is the permeability of governance structures to women and their needs and ideas assessed?



16. Participatory policies | How are citizen engagement mechanisms or public policy aimed at enhancing women's participation assessed in this city?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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17. Civil Society [quantity and quality] | How are civil society organizations in this city assessed?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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18. Women's rights networks [quantity] | How does one assess opportunities for women in different age groups to get involved in informal or unstructured networks to influence political processes?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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19. Audiences and users [quantity] | How is the interest of women in culture assessed?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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20. Cultural amenities [quantity and price] | How does one assess the cultural offerings provided by private (reflecting the demand) and public institutions in this city?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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21. Cultural policies [quantity and quality] | How are cultural policies directed towards women assessed?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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22. Community-based organizations [quantity and quality] | How are cultural offerings provided by community-based organizations assessed?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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23. Public free third spaces [quantity, quality and price] | How are public spaces that can be used by women to meet and connect assessed?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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24. Education and knowledge [quantity, quality and price] | How are current education opportunities for women in this city assessed?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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