



**UGANDA,  
GROUND ZERO**  
A TESTING GROUND  
FOR DANGEROUS  
DEMOCRACIES

JANUARY 2025

# Introduction.

Uganda has become ground zero for anti-rights activities on the continent and globally. Not only is Uganda one of two African countries that co-sponsored the [Geneva Consensus Declaration](#) in 2020, but Uganda also passed one of the harshest anti-homosexuality laws in 2023. Furthermore, in 2023 and 2024, Uganda hosted the [first](#) and [second](#) African Inter-Parliamentary Conferences on Family Values and Sovereignty,<sup>1</sup> with the third iteration poised to occur in 2025. These conferences are critical mobilization and coordination platforms for anti-rights groups. Specifically, anti-rights actors leverage these conferences to recruit African legislators and expand the reach of their insidious agenda.

It is not a coincidence that Uganda is a strategic recruitment and agenda-setting ground for anti-rights actors. Since the arrival of the missionaries in the 19th Century, religion has influenced the socio-cultural facets of Ugandan life, including education, health, and beliefs. The anti-rights movements leverage socio-cultural aspects, geopolitical alliances, and disinformation campaigns to fuel moral panic and advance regressive agendas, which they disguise as protecting family values and traditional norms. In doing so, they create a dangerous face-off between the rights of the minority and those of the majority, facilitating a war akin to that of Goliath versus David.

As Reverend Kapya Kaoma ironically stated when he featured in the award-winning 2013 documentary, “God Loves Uganda,” the attempt by American evangelicals to indoctrinate their Christian-right beliefs in Uganda has facilitated a surge in coordinated anti-rights activities that target gender equality, reproductive health, and LGBTQ+ rights, characterized by the passing of anti-gender laws rooted in morality clauses. The surge in coordinated anti-rights attacks is happening against a backdrop of shrinking civic space characterized by stringent requirements for non-government organizations to operate in Uganda. This combination of growing coordinated anti-rights attacks and shrinking civic space threatens to erode hard-won human rights gains. Moreover, this threat is particularly heightened in Uganda as we head into an election year—2026. Notably, we expect conservative politicians to weaponize gender and reproductive issues on the campaign trail to endear themselves to the electorate and to tarnish the reputation of political opponents. This means that the role of civil society and human rights defenders is more critical than ever.

To prepare a formidable defense against impending anti-rights attacks, this document examines Uganda’s most prominent anti-rights patterns in 2024, predicts threats to expect in 2025, and offers strategic recommendations to stakeholders.

<sup>1</sup> The 1st and 2nd African Inter-Parliamentary Conferences on Family Values and Sovereignty were held in March 2023 and May 2024 respectively in Entebbe, Uganda.



## 1. Weaponizing Culture and Religion:

Anti-Rights actors weaponize cultural and religious narratives to legitimize their attack on gender equality, reproductive health, and LGBTQ+ rights. Ugandan politicians regularly leverage homophobia to rally support, framing their interest as protecting “family values” and moral integrity to disguise their uncouth agenda. Notably, Ugandan legislators have used platforms like the Geneva Consensus Declaration (GCD) and ‘Entebbe Conferences’<sup>2</sup> to undermine reproductive rights. Such narratives can exacerbate societal divisions and increase the stigmatization of vulnerable groups, particularly LGBTQ+ individuals.

### Signal:

*Politicians are expected to deploy anti-rights rhetoric on the campaign trail in Uganda’s forthcoming elections. Specifically, politicians will weaponize homosexuality to attack their opponents.*

<sup>2</sup> Entebbe Conferences include the 1st and 2nd African Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Family Values and Sovereignty held in March 2023 and May 2024 respectively.



VIDEO: The three-day 2nd African Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Family Values and Sovereignty has resolved not to bow down to Western...



## 2. Institutionalizing Anti-Rights Activities:

Leaders of global anti-rights organizations strategically engage with influential Ugandan politicians, including the President of Uganda, the First Lady, and key parliamentarians, to institutionalize regressive policies. A notable example is the Protego Project, which aligns anti-rights activities with governmental priorities as a purported public health initiative. Uganda is one of five countries that endorsed in 2020 the Protego Project, whose values are anchored in the anti-abortion **Geneva Consensus Declaration**. In May 2024, the government of Uganda entered a Memorandum of Understanding with the Institute for Women's Health detailing their respective responsibilities to implement the Protego Project.

### Signal:

*The government of Uganda is expected to roll out and host more anti-rights initiatives, including new legislations, policies, or events that embed anti-abortion, anti-gender, or anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric into national health strategies.*

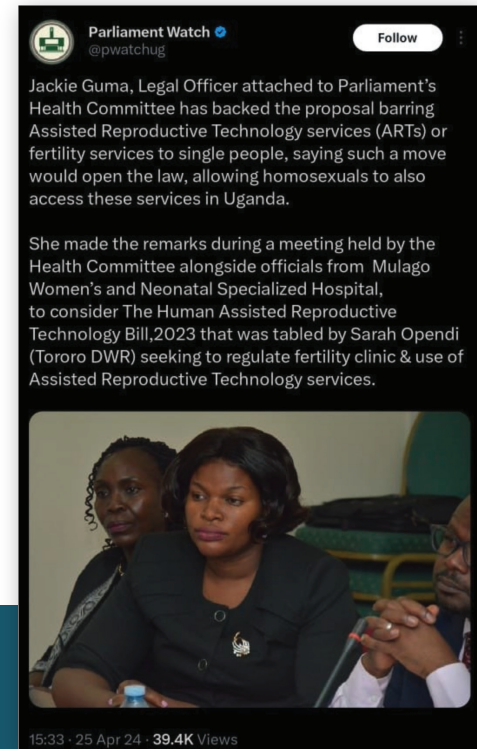


### 3. Weaponizing Legal and Policy Processes:

In 2024, anti-rights actors opportunistically leveraged legal reform processes to introduce morality clauses and discriminatory provisions to marginalize specific groups. For instance, during a Health Committee of Parliament hearing on the Assisted Reproductive Technology Services Bill in April 2024, a parliamentary legal officer proposed restricting access to single individuals to prevent LGBTQ+ persons from utilizing these services. Similarly, a dispute arose during the parliamentary debate on the Sexual Offences Bill between the mover of the Bill, Hon. Annah Adeke, and Hon. Jonathan Odur, about whether the Anus could be rightfully termed as a sexual organ.

#### Signal:

*Expect leaders to weaponize policies to gain political capital. Legislators and policymakers are likely to continue leveraging legal and policy reviews to push populist agendas that marginalize vulnerable groups, including women, children, and gender minorities.*



## 4. Shrinking Civic Space:

Civic space is shrinking in Uganda. Ugandan NGOs face challenges such as new registration requirements and the threat of deregistration. The growing government crackdown on civil society organizations, particularly those advocating for human rights and the criminalization of LGBTQ+ rights, has limited their ability to operate effectively.



### Signal:

*Anticipate intense legal and regulatory measures to suppress civil society voices before the 2026 elections. Expect a surge in state-sanctioned actions against NGOs, journalists, and activists, including de-registration, blackmail, harassment, imprisonment, and raids aimed at delegitimizing civil society voices.*



## 5. Geopolitical Developments Fueling Anti-Rights Activities:

There's a boom in foreign financial and ideological support for anti-rights activities in Uganda, especially from right-wing politicians. Russia has emerged as a strong ideological reinforcement of anti-rights movements in Uganda<sup>3</sup> bolstering support from perpetual conservative organizations based in Europe and the US, such as Family Watch International. These foreign actors use Ugandans as proxies to influence policy-making and increase their legitimacy and operational capacity.

### Signal:

*Anticipate more geopolitical alignment between Russian and US-based anti-rights actors scrambling for Uganda. Expect the government of Uganda to host more international anti-rights conferences in partnership with prominent foreign anti-rights actors. These partnerships will, in turn, further entrench foreign anti-rights influence.*

<sup>3</sup> Russia donated over UGX 1 Billion to popularize the Anti-Homosexuality Act — the Wall Street Journal



## 6. Diverting Progressive Funding to Anti-rights Aligned Actors:

Progressive funding streams are increasingly vulnerable to anti-rights groups that dupe human rights funders and divert the money to their incendiary agenda. A recent [report](#) named anti-rights organizations, including the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU) that benefited from over \$75 million in progressive funding over the last 10 years. Anti-rights actors flaunt profiles of progressive donors on their websites, including UN Women and the World Bank, to disguise their interests. Nonetheless, progressive cash is just one of many funding streams these groups use to bolster their financial capacity.



### Signal:

*Progressive funding streams are expected to diminish with the rise of right-wing governments. Yet, as human rights funding faces cuts and diversion, anti-rights groups are likely to thrive, bolstered by substantial financial support from conservative donors, including contributions from anti-rights actors in Russia, Europe, and the US. This shift will empower regressive agendas and jeopardize the sustainability of social change initiatives.*



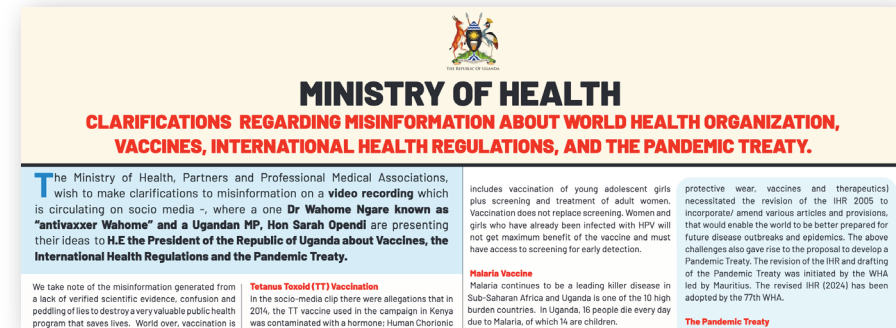


## 7. Spreading Disinformation:

Anti-rights actors are increasingly leveraging social media platforms to disseminate disinformation about LGBTQ+ rights and reproductive health. For instance, a [video](#) of a well-known anti-vaxxer, Wahome Ngare, presenting the purported harms of the WHO treaty to the President of Uganda in May 2024 has been widely shared online. Even though the Ministry of Health debunked Wahome's arguments, such narratives are designed to create moral panic, polarize public opinion, and mobilize public support against progressive policies. Moreover, these actors strategically target Ugandan legislators, traditional institutions (e.g., the family), and the youth, exploiting cultural and societal values to advance their agenda.

### Signal:

*Anticipate a surge in mis- and disinformation campaigns. Expect politicians and influencers to use social media platforms such as X, Facebook, and YouTube to spread harmful narratives to incite distrust and confusion, especially during key legislative debates or public events.*



**MINISTRY OF HEALTH**  
**CLARIFICATIONS REGARDING MISINFORMATION ABOUT WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, VACCINES, INTERNATIONAL HEALTH REGULATIONS, AND THE PANDEMIC TREATY.**

The Ministry of Health, Partners and Professional Medical Associations, wish to make clarifications to misinformation on a **video recording** which is circulating on social media, where a one **Dr Wahome Ngare known as "antivaxxer Wahome"** and a Ugandan MP, **Hon Sarah Opendi** are presenting their ideas to **H.E the President of the Republic of Uganda about Vaccines, the International Health Regulations and the Pandemic Treaty.**

**Tetanus Toxoid (TT) Vaccination**  
 In the socio-media clip there were allegations that in 2014, the TT vaccine used in the campaign in Kenya was contaminated with a hormone: Human Chorionic

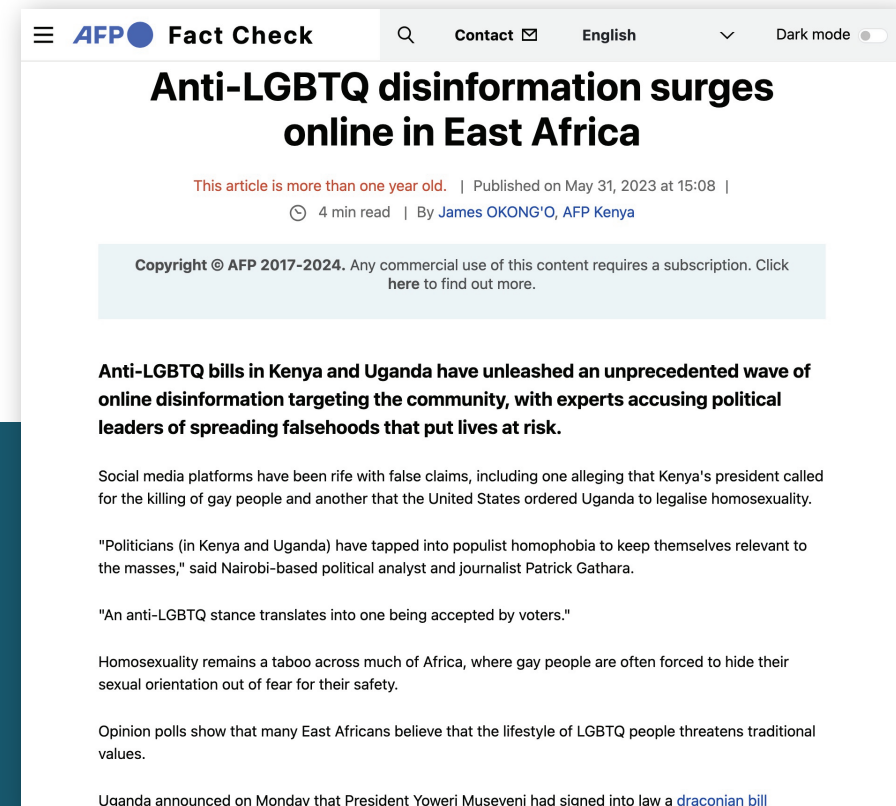
includes vaccination of young adolescent girls plus screening and treatment of adult women. Vaccination does not replace screening. Women and girls who have already been infected with HPV will not get maximum benefit of the vaccine and must have access to screening for early detection.

**Malaria Vaccine**  
 Malaria continues to be a leading killer disease in Sub-Saharan Africa and Uganda is one of the 10 high burden countries. In Uganda, 16 people die every day due to Malaria, of which 14 are children.

protective wear, vaccines and therapeutics) necessitated the revision of the IHR 2005 to incorporate/amend various articles and provisions, that would enable the world to be better prepared for future disease outbreaks and epidemics. The above challenges also gave rise to the proposal to develop a Pandemic Treaty. The revision of the IHR and drafting of the Pandemic Treaty was initiated by the WHA, led by Mauritius. The revised IHR (2024) has been adopted by the 77th WHA.

**The Pandemic Treaty**

We take note of the misinformation generated from a lack of verified scientific evidence, confusion and peddling of lies to destroy a very valuable public health program that saves lives. World over, vaccination is



**AFP Fact Check** | Contact | English | Dark mode

### Anti-LGBTQ disinformation surges online in East Africa

This article is more than one year old. | Published on May 31, 2023 at 15:08 | 4 min read | By James OKONG'O, AFP Kenya

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**Anti-LGBTQ bills in Kenya and Uganda have unleashed an unprecedented wave of online disinformation targeting the community, with experts accusing political leaders of spreading falsehoods that put lives at risk.**

Social media platforms have been rife with false claims, including one alleging that Kenya's president called for the killing of gay people and another that the United States ordered Uganda to legalise homosexuality.

"Politicians (in Kenya and Uganda) have tapped into populist homophobia to keep themselves relevant to the masses," said Nairobi-based political analyst and journalist Patrick Gathara.

"An anti-LGBTQ stance translates into one being accepted by voters."

Homosexuality remains a taboo across much of Africa, where gay people are often forced to hide their sexual orientation out of fear for their safety.

Opinion polls show that many East Africans believe that the lifestyle of LGBTQ people threatens traditional values.

Uganda announced on Monday that President Yoweri Museveni had signed into law a draconian bill

# 8. The Operationalization of the Geneva Consensus Declaration through the Protego Project:

In May 2024, Uganda entered into an MoU with the Institute for Women's Health's Valerie Huber, a notorious anti-Comprehensive Sexuality Education advocate from the US and an architect of both the Geneva Consensus Declaration and Project 2025. This new formal partnership has emboldened government officials to adopt more restrictive stances in legal and policy framework development and review processes. At the same time, this agreement has muzzled ministries from discussing and pushing for evidence-based interventions to morally contested health issues, including teenage pregnancy, abortion rights, and even vaccines.

## Signal:

Funding for health, education, and other social programs from various development partners to the Ugandan government is likely to be diverted to support the priorities of the Protego Project. This means that science-backed interventions will be deprioritized in favor of values-based programming, causing regression in progress to address adverse health outcomes amongst vulnerable groups in society, including women, girls, and key populations.



## 9. Intimidation, Mudslinging, and Demonising Human Rights Defenders and Technocrats:

In 2024, anti-rights actors intensified efforts to intimidate and discredit progressive reproductive and gender justice champions. As has been their past practice, these actors orchestrated targeted campaigns to tarnish the reputations of individuals they accused of promoting values they perceive as contrary to purported “national values.” A notable example of such attacks<sup>4</sup> targeted Dr. Charles Olaro, the Director of Curative Services at the Ministry of Health, using an **online petition** to demand his resignation for purportedly **‘endorsing contraception for 15-year-olds.’** These attacks aim to bring human rights champions into disrepute to deter them and others from speaking out.

### Signal:

*Expect anti-rights groups to increasingly leverage online petitions and campaigns to mobilize public support against human rights champions. The signatures supporting these campaigns are often generated from places outside the geographical focus of the campaign's subject matter, leading to manufactured discontent and throttling policy and service delivery interventions.*

<sup>4</sup> The Spain-based anti-rights organization, CitizenGo orchestrated this attack.

The image shows a screenshot of a CitizenGo petition page. The title is "Charles Olaro: Resign from the Ministry of Health immediately and apologize to Uganda parents!". It shows 1,723 signatures and a goal of 2,000. The page includes a photo of a man speaking into a microphone, a sign-up form with the email "agnesaineah@gmail.com", and a "Sign this petition!" button. Below the photo, there is a small text block: "Ann Kioko started this petition to Charles Olaro, Ministry of Health Nigeria - 2024/03/06". The main text of the petition reads: "Startling revelations have emerged from Uganda, leaving the nation in a state of disbelief and anger. Charles Olaro, the shameless Director of Curative Services at the Ministry of Health, made the shocking decision to endorse contraception for 15-year-olds. This is not a mere fleeting impulse; it is a plunge into the depths of health hazards, moral pandemonium, and societal disarray. Olaro's endorsement carelessly disregards the potential health risks associated with the use of contraceptives by minors. It blatantly undermines the rights of parents and tramples upon the sacred customs that define Ugandan culture. Such a decision is unequivocally unacceptable. It is our duty to hold Mr. Olaro accountable, ensuring that the Ministry of Health is not blinded to the well-being and dignity of all Ugandans." At the bottom right, there is a call to action: "We, the undersigned, call on Charles Olaro to resign from his position as the Director of Curative Services at the Ministry of Health in Uganda. His decision to approve and promote contraception for 15-year-olds is harmful to the health, morality, and social well-being of..."



## 10. Clamoring for Proximity to Power

Anti-rights groups are cognizant that proximity to power enables them to advance their agenda swiftly and effectively. Well-known anti-rights actors such as Sharon Slater and Valerie Huber have ensured unfettered access to the State House in Uganda. This, in part, has expedited the process to domesticate and operationalize the Protego Project in Uganda. Uganda is one of a handful of countries that have agreed to implement this project that aims to supplant science-based and rights-respecting education, health, and foreign policy. In reality, this project is an anti-abortion, anti-gender, and anti-CSE initiative. Known Ugandan anti-rights actors have also adopted this strategy. Notably, individuals such as Stephen Langa have gained access to and addressed the Annual Judge's Conference earlier this year under the theme "raising responsible law-abiding children."

### Signal:

*Anti-rights actors will increasingly seek out opportunities to collaborate with individuals and organizations that wield a lot of political and social influence. This not only legitimizes their causes but also ensures that their activities are implemented using government structures and platforms.*



**Judiciary Uganda** ✓  
@JudiciaryUG

Ongoing: Day II of the 25th Annual Judges Conference has kicked off with a presentation on the topic; \*Focus on the latest laws and amendments on Estates and Succession Management in Uganda\* by Dr Pamela Tibihikira Kalyegira, Chairperson Uganda Law Reform Commission.

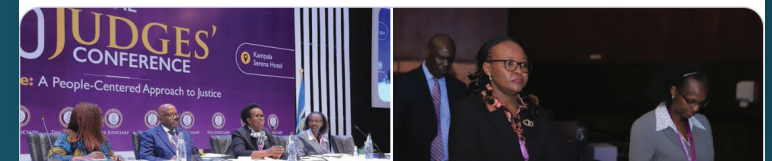
The Session is being chaired by Judge Ketrach Kitariisibwa Katunguka.

Other discussants include Ms Innocent Ngobi Ndiko, an advocate and Justice John Eudes Keitirima.

Thereafter the Chief Justice, Alfonse Chigamoy Owiny - Dollo will make a presentation on \*The Role of Alternative Dispute Resolution in Involving the Public in Justice Delivery\*.

Later, Eng. Stephen Langa, the Executive Director of the Family Life Network will take participants through the topic, \*Raising Responsible and Law Abiding Children\*.

The Director of Programmes is the Chief Registrar, HW Sarah Langa Siu and she is assisted by the Judiciary Public Relations Officer, HW James Ereemye Jumire Mawanda. #AJC2024



## 11. Leadership Programs are the New Recruitment Ground for Anti-rights Groups;

For a long time, known anti-rights actors have conducted leadership programs in Uganda. A notable example is Tim Kreutter's<sup>5</sup> **Africa Youth Leadership Forum (AYLF)**, an entity established in 2007 to 'nurture a new breed of leaders in Africa.' AYLF and other youth leadership programs (e.g., the Emerging Leader's Program) have used this cover as a recruitment and radicalization ground for anti-rights and anti-gender ideology, imparting students and young adults with the insidious ideology of anti-rights. Specifically, anti-rights actors exploit young people's quest for knowledge as a mobilization tool. For instance, the objectives of the **6th Youth Resilience Conference** include "to address youth radicalization, challenges of settlement, integration, enhancing access to employment opportunities, building emotional & social skills, promoting holistic development, empowering voices, cultivating cultural competence and identity." Another notorious youth leadership coordination and mobilization structure is the **Empowered Youth Coalition**, a spin-off of Sharon Slater's Family Watch International.



### Signal:

*Expect the number of recruitment and radicalization programs disguised as leadership programs to increase. Anticipate an increase in militant, intolerant, and generally misogynistic groups if these programs remain unchecked.*



<sup>5</sup> Tim Kreutter is the co-founder of AYLF and a member of the Family Foundation, an organization that has convened and funded the concept of the National Prayer Breakfasts

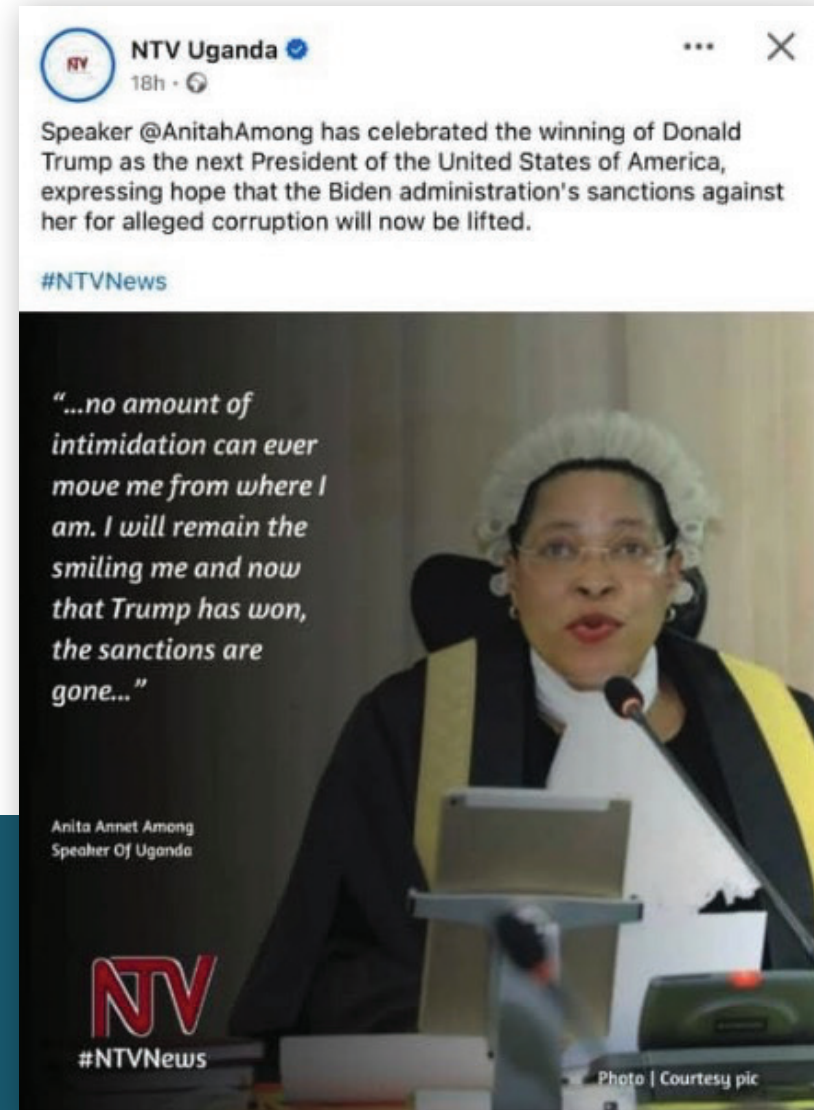


## 12. Trump's Win is Emboldening Anti-rights Actors in Uganda:

Since President Trump won the US election on November 5th, the stance of known anti-rights groups and their collaborators in Uganda has been **emboldened**. The outright exportation of US right-wing ideology disguised as foreign policy, including the expanded global gag rule and the Geneva Consensus Declaration, will impact marginalized groups' access to essential health care. Ugandan political leaders, religious leaders, and public figures have already threatened to crackdown on gender and reproductive justice and freedoms because the person occupying the White House is an ally in the discrimination and legal and policy regression agenda.

### Signal:

*Expect the new Trump administration to embolden Ugandan legislators to propose, table, and enact anti-rights laws and policies. In addition, anticipate the return of the Global Gag Rule and its far-reaching consequences on gender and reproductive health.*



# Recommendations to Stakeholders

## 1. Strengthen Monitoring and Intelligence Gathering

- *Establish robust (both human and artificial intelligence) monitoring systems to track anti-rights activities, including infiltrating their movements.*
- *Share timely and strategic intelligence with human rights defenders to anticipate and respond to emerging threats.*
- *Establish mechanisms and infrastructure to support sustained and timely deployment of pre-emptive and proactive strategies against attacks from anti-rights groups.*

## 2. Amplify Progressive Narratives

- *Collaborate with media allies to counter disinformation and promote human rights-based narratives.*
- *Develop culturally resonant messaging to counteract the influence of deceptive “family values” narratives.*
- *Consistency is key. Repeat your messages as often as possible until they take root.*

## 3. Enhance Legal and Policy Advocacy

- *Equip policymakers with evidence-based resources to pre-empt anti-rights legislation.*
- *Advocate for more substantial commitments to progressive regional and international human rights instruments and treaties.*
- *Offer legal assistance to challenge anti-gender legislation and support legal frameworks that favor gender equality.*
- *Empower the common person and local voices to champion the cause by funding grassroots advocacy. Policy makers need to hear from their constituents about the importance of gender issues.*

## 4. Secure and Diversify Funding

- *Donor organizations should embrace flexible and unrestricted funding mechanisms to effectively support strategic human rights initiatives.*
- *Prioritize intersectional funding and dismantle barriers that exacerbate disparities in grant distribution.*



# Recommendations to Stakeholders

- *Funders should explore safer ways of disbursing funds to human rights defenders to circumvent government surveillance and laws that weaponize anti-money laundering laws to crackdown on civil society.*
- *Funding individual activists and nascent organizations should not be the exception. With more stringent registration and operational license renewal requirements, working outside traditional organizational setups may offer additional protections for more sustained interventions.*

## 5. Foster Resilient Collaboration

- *Support grassroots organizations in building resilience against anti-rights propaganda.*
- *Strengthen regional collaboration and movement-building to amplify the impact of human rights initiatives, foster resilience, and shape more inclusive futures.*

## 6. Protect the Civic Space

- *Engage governments and regional bodies to uphold laws that protect civic spaces.*
- *Train NGOs on safety, security, and compliance to mitigate risks of government persecution.*
- *Foster collaboration with other social movements (e.g., feminist, economic justice, youth and adolescents, sex workers, LGBTQ+, SRHR, etc) to form a united front against the anti-gender agendas, emphasizing shared goals and solidarity.*

## 7. Debunk Misinformation

- *Monitor social media conversations and media reports to identify misleading information and the key actors.*
- *Develop strategies to debunk, preempt, and expose sources of misleading information.*
- *Use social listening to track hashtags, viral content, and the engagement of influencers or organizations to identify and counter emerging disinformation trends.*

