YOUR RIGHT TO BE VALUED, SEEN AND HEARD
UGANDA’S NATIONAL CHILD PARTICIPATION STRATEGY
Dear Children

The Government of Uganda is committed to giving children opportunities to exercise their right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. That is why, together with children, we have developed the first ever National Child Participation Strategy, which is explained in this booklet.

The Strategy aims to create ways in which, as children, you can make your voices heard and guide decisions at local and national levels. This booklet will help you to understand the strategy and learn how and where to speak up about the issues that concern you.

We hope you will feel inspired by what you read and that it gives you confidence to get involved. We look forward to working with you and hearing your voices.

For God and my country

HON. FLORENCE NAKIWALA KIYINGI
MINISTER OF STATE FOR YOUTH AND CHILDREN AFFAIRS
From the mountains of Moroto to Mount Rwenzori, from Lake Victoria to the crown of the Nile, and from the streets of Kampala to Karamoja, the voices of the hundreds of children who contributed to the National Child Participation Strategy still echo in our ears. Thank you to every child for sharing your insights, hopes, pain and dreams. Your views are important to us and are our inspiration.

Development of the Strategy has been a long and participatory process. We would like to thank all the children who helped us develop it, as well as our partners on this journey, especially UNICEF and Save the Children for their financial and technical support.

JAMES EBITU
AG. PERMANENT SECRETARY
MINISTRY OF GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
The Government of Uganda has developed the National Child Participation Strategy to explain how you, as children, can get involved in the processes and decisions that affect your lives and our country’s future.

Why? BECAUSE…

- Being involved in the decisions that affect you is every child’s right
- Today, children make up more than half the people living in Uganda
- Children are the country’s future and decisions made now will affect the Uganda you grow up into
- International, regional and national laws make it the Government’s responsibility to provide the services that keep children safe and healthy and enable you to learn and grow.
UGANDA’S NATIONAL CHILD PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

is based on three basic principles

Children should be **VALUED**
as important members of society at all levels – from their homes and communities to local and national government.

Children should be **SEEN**
and the things that are important to them included in national and local laws, budgets, data, policies, programmes and consultations.

Children should be **HEARD**
and provided with the tools and opportunities to contribute their ideas and opinions.

“GIVE US THE CHANCE TO MEET WITH LEADERS AND WE’LL TELL THEM WHAT WE THINK, AND SHARE OUR IDEAS AND SOLUTIONS TO HELP MAKE THINGS BETTER FOR US”
Here are some words, organizations and people that adults might refer to when you are meeting with them or reading one of their documents.

**AFRICAN UNION (AU)**
An organization of all 55 African countries to achieve greater unity and solidarity between the countries and peoples of Africa.

**AFRICAN CHARTER ON THE RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF THE CHILD (ACRWC)**
An agreement by 48 countries that are members of the African Union to ensure that children are protected and have access to health care and education.

**CHILDREN’S RIGHTS**
Human rights focused on the protection and care of children to which all children are entitled, as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**CHILD AND FAMILY PROTECTION UNIT OFFICERS**
Police officers responsible for children and family matters reported at a police station.

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS**
Officers whose role is to help communities improve their living conditions.

**DEVELOPMENT**
A process of change that can be used when referring to children, as they grow and learn, or a country, as it becomes more prosperous and provides more services and infrastructure for its people.

**DISCRIMINATION**
Unfair treatment of people, especially on the grounds of race, age, sex, religion or disability.

**HUMANITARIAN**
A person, organization or type of assistance to help people, especially in emergency situations.
INFRASTRUCTURE
The buildings, roads, power and supplies needed for an organization or country to operate

POLICY
How a government aims to address issues such as education and health care

PRINCIPLE
A basic truth that a belief system is based on

STAKEHOLDER
A person with an interest in or who is affected by something

STRATEGY
A plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim

MINISTRY OF GENDER, LABOUR AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (MGLSD)
The government ministry responsible for gender, work and social care, as well as for introducing, developing and implementing the National Child Participation Strategy

NATIONAL CHILDREN’S AUTHORITY
The body responsible for making sure that the Government is fulfilling its commitments to children’s rights

PARTICIPATION
Taking part, for example, in meetings about issues that affect you

PROBATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE OFFICERS
Legal officers who represent children and families in the justice system

PRIVATE SECTOR
The part of the national economy that is run by large companies, small businesses and individuals

SAVE THE CHILDREN
An international non-governmental organization working in Uganda and around the world to give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm.

UNITED NATIONS (UN)
An organization that nearly every government belongs to which aims to maintain international peace and security, develop friendly relations among nations, achieve international cooperation, and be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (UNCRC)
An international agreement that sets out the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children

UNICEF (UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN’S FUND)
A United Nations agency responsible for providing humanitarian and development aid to children in Uganda and worldwide
ALL CHILDREN HAVE RIGHTS

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the Government of Uganda signed up to in 1990, is divided into Articles that relate to specific rights.
For example, you have the right to:

**ARTICLE 12**
form and express an opinion

**ARTICLE 13**
express your opinion freely – in writing, drawing, speaking
ARTICLE 14

choose your own religion and beliefs, with guidance from your parents

ARTICLE 15

choose your own friends and belong to and set up groups, as long as they are not harmful to others
ARTICLE 30
practise or use whatever religion, culture or language you choose

ARTICLE 31
play and rest
Your government has also signed up to the **African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child**, which is also divided into Articles. These include the right to:

**ARTICLE 4**
have your opinions heard and taken into account during legal and administrative proceedings

**ARTICLE 7**
express your opinions freely

**ARTICLE 8**
associate freely with others, within the law

**ARTICLE 9**
choose what to think, what you believe is right, and your religion

**ARTICLE 12**
play, and participate in cultural and artistic life
The Government of Uganda has also introduced its own **laws and policies**. These include:

The **Children (Amendment) Act (2016)** that, among other things, states that children, especially those over the age of 14, should give their consent before being adopted.

The **Local Government Act (1997)** that gives children the right to play an active role in their communities.

The **Education Act (1998)** that provides for the setting up of student councils in secondary schools.

These Conventions and laws mean that, among other things, you have the right to:

- Participation
- Protection
- Development
- Survival
Children in Uganda Today

The Government is working hard to provide you with your rights, but we still have a long way to go. Today, in Uganda:

- More than half the population are children under the age of 18.
- 56% of children are living in poverty without six or more things or activities that most Ugandans think are essential.
- 1 in 3 deaths of children under five are caused by illnesses that could be prevented or treated, such as malaria, pneumonia and diarrhoea.
ONLY 62% of children complete primary school and of the 14% who start secondary school, only 30% go on to take their ‘A’ levels.

1 IN 4 15-19-YEAR-OLD GIRLS have begun childbearing, which is one of the top causes of school dropout and death for teenage girls.

28% of children with disabilities have experienced discrimination or harassment.

61% OF THE 1.2 MILLION refugees in Uganda are children – who have been forced to flee their homes and country.

Statistics on this page are from the Situation Analysis of Children in Uganda, Government of Uganda and UNICEF, 2019.
NINE CHILD PARTICIPATION PRINCIPLES

1. Informative and transparent
2. Voluntary
3. Respectful
4. Relevant
5. Child friendly
6. Inclusive
7. Supported by training
8. Safe and sensitive
9. Accountable
The Government has a duty to ensure that all children can participate in decisions that affect them. These are the 9 principles that child participation should follow.

1. **INFORMATIVE AND TRANSPARENT**
   You should be provided with information about your right to participate and express your views freely, and about where and how this will take place.

2. **VOLUNTARY**
   You can choose to participate – or not – and change your mind.

3. **RESPECTFUL**
   You should be treated with respect and your ideas taken seriously and acted upon.
4 **RELEVANT**
You should be given opportunities to express your views based on your personal experience and knowledge.

5 **CHILD FRIENDLY**
You should be given time and support to gain confidence and contribute your views.

6 **INCLUSIVE**
You should be encouraged to participate – whether you are a girl or boy, able bodied or disabled, poor or rich, Ugandan citizen or not – and not discriminated against.
**SAFE AND SENSITIVE**
You should not be afraid to participate and should know where to go for help if you need it.

**ACCOUNTABLE**
You should be given feedback about how your views have been used and be able to challenge the results if you feel they have been misinterpreted.

**SUPPORTED BY TRAINING**
You should be offered training in organizing meetings, raising funds, dealing with the media, public speaking and campaigning, and adults should be supported with training in how to work with children.
WHAT IS MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION?

Participation can happen in different ways:

- Children can lead and make decisions, supported by adults
- Children can lead and share the decision-making with adults
- Adults can lead and share the decision-making with children
- Adults can lead and make decisions but consult with children and inform them how their input will be used
- Adults can lead and make decisions but keep children informed.
All children have the right to participate in decisions that affect them. Adults should create opportunities for you to participate based on your age and maturity and that help you to develop your skills. However, you should never be made to participate against your will.
THE PARTICIPATION PYRAMID

Children can participate at all levels of society. How and where you are able to participate will depend on how old you are.
CHILDREN WHO ARE CHANGE MAKERS

AISHA NABUKEERA was badly burned as a child, but was determined not to let her scars ruin her life. After treatment and gaining a scholarship to finish school, Aisha, now 23, went on to gain a degree in Social Work and Social Administration. She even entered the Miss Uganda beauty pageant, not to win she says, but to “inspire other people like me who had lost hope”. She has set up the Aisha Nabukeera Foundation to advocate for children’s rights and encourage children to seek help if they are being abused.

PHIONA MUTESI - QUEEN OF KATWE is Uganda’s first female chess champion, despite dropping out of school when she was nine because her mother could not afford to send her to school. In 2016 Disney made a film about her. After studying sociology in the USA, she plans to “come back home and serve my community” in the slums of Kampala.
JOSEPHINE NABUKENYA was born HIV-positive and, having received life-saving treatment herself, is now a peer ambassador for the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF). She has won many awards and has spoken to the US Congress about her work for an AIDS-free generation. Josephine, 18, is studying for a degree in Social Work at Makerere University and has written a book, Beyond Your Status, encouraging other young people to discover their HIV status and get treatment.

WILLIAM KAMKWAMBA built a wind turbine using wood and scrap metal to power electricity for his home in Malawi when he was just 14. The organizer of an international conference was so impressed, she invited him to come and give a talk. Inspired by his dreams, donors supported him to build more wind turbines, a solar-powered pump and an irrigation system for his village. William returned to school and wrote his autobiography – The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind – which was later made into a film. He went on to attend the African Leadership Academy in South Africa and continues to inspire others through Moving Windmills, an organization that aims to empower African innovators.
Wherever you are and whatever you are doing, it is important that you are safe. The same is true when you decide or are invited to participate. Here are some ways to help you stay safe.

1. **YOUR CHOICE.** You should never be made to participate against your will.

2. **SUPPORTIVE ADULTS.** Not everyone will be happy when you voice your opinion, and some may disagree with you. Try to seek out supportive adults so that you can express yourself freely.

3. **SAFETY IN NUMBERS!** Find out what other children are thinking and encourage them to come along with you.
You should be provided with equipment and activities that are suitable for your age and help you to participate.

A SAFE PLACE. Adults organizing a meeting with you or providing a place to meet should make sure that the building is safe – with no holes in the roof, cracked walls or other hazards – and you should avoid dark or dangerous places, for example, where people are drinking alcohol.

ASK FOR THINGS TO BE EXPLAINED. If you do not understand something an adult is saying, ask him or her to explain. They should be patient with you, but you should also be patient with them. Not all adults find this easy!

WHO CAN HELP ME? I DON’T KNOW WHO TO TALK TO ABOUT MY PROBLEMS

CLAN LEADERS SHOULD JUDGE WELL. THEY SHOULD PUNISH CHILD ABUSERS. THEY SHOULD ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO STAY IN SCHOOL.

EQUIPMENT AND ACTIVITIES. You should be provided with equipment and activities that are suitable for your age and help you to participate.
REMEMBER... YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE

Your government and your community need you to help us build a better future for Uganda!

www.mglsd.go.ug

www.savethechildren.net

www.unicef.org/uganda

www.eprcug.org/children/