

Mentoring Police Officers to End SGBV Tolerance and Complicity



REFUGEE LAW PROJECT

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Dear Friends and Colleagues,

We are happy to share with you yet another development on our training of duty bearers. At the request of the top leadership of the Uganda Police Force, RLP is taking fast and positive strides in modelling best practices by conducting trainings and mentorship jointly with senior personnel from within Uganda Police Force.

With funding support from the US Government under the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (US BPRM), we are presently conducting a series of trainings and mentorship programmes for Police, Prisons, Medical and Psychosocial Practitioners, Medical and Legal students as well as for the leadership of refugee-led support groups.

The rationale for training of police officers resonates with our working experience that law enforcers including the Police are usually the first point of contact for refugees and asylum seekers in Kampala. Despite the significant responsibilities, power and authority they have at hand, some Police officers have limited understanding of conflict-related SGBV and how best to respond to it in accordance with relevant national and international legislation governing forced migrants and SGBV. We continue to profile cases of violations of rights of forced migrants in Police custody, and to find that Police officers are not automatically aware of the asylum process, nor are they always sensitive to the complex nature of SGBV; specific challenges emerging from our interactions with forced migrants and police both in Kampala and at border entry points include:

- refugees who do not have any legal documents are at times detained for long periods of time without appearing in courts of law as officers are unaware of the asylum process
- victims/survivors of SGBV are at times forced to negotiate with alleged perpetrators
- police officers are not adequately aware of guiding procedures of access to Post Exposure Prophylaxis following Sexual Exposures (PEPSE)
- police officers, including those attached to Child and Family Protection Unit are not adequately on how to handle unaccompanied minors who are victims/survivors of sexual violence
- police officers generally do not know how to handle male victims/survivors of sexual violence

RLP in partnership with Uganda Police Force (UPF), successfully organized and conducted 3 training courses (29th - 30th April, 4th – 7th May & 12th – 14th May) for Police Officers attached to Mulago, Ggaba and Kitintale Police Stations respectively.

The training in Mulago drew 25 active and energized participants from each police station,

The overall goal of the training was to enable Police Officials to become knowledgeable on conflict related Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV) and able to provide quality, compassionate, non discriminatory and timely SGBV prevention and response services to all survivors within urban refugee communities.

purposefully chosen from Police Child & Family Protection, Traffic & Road Safety, General Duties, Criminal Investigation & Crime Intelligence (CICI) and Field Force Police (FFP) Unit from different police posts under Mulago Police Station.

In a new development in the history of our long-standing partnership, a representative of the leadership of UPF, Commissioner Ndyomugenyi Felix, modelled the effective transfer of learning by actively participating in the mentoring of those undergoing the training. Commissioner Ndyomugenyi is Deputy to the Assistant Inspector General of Police Commissioner Moses Balimwoyo, Head of the UPF's Directorate of Human Resource Development & Management. In the course of the training Commissioner Felix facilitated a session on "*The Role of Police Officers in response to and prevention of SGBV*".

This key development signals the importance of close and practical partnership with key duty bearers if we are to create deeper and more sustainable impact on responding to and creating a violence-free society.

Acknowledging that there are huge prevention and response challenges including structural, legal and best practices gaps that require collective and cross-sectorial collaboration, Commissioner Ndyomugenyi Felix had the following key messages to pass to the participants during the trainings;

Model attitudinal change towards victims/survivors

As he called upon participants to be agents of change after the training Commissioner Ndyomugenyi noted that effective response to and prevention of SGBV requires attitudinal shifts. It requires that police officers challenge cultural practices that condone SGBV. He applauded the police officers attached to Mulago police station for the continuous support rendered to forced migrants seeking medical

Objectives of the Police officer's training

- To enhance Police officer's awareness of SGBVP among urban refugee population
- To equip police officers with information and knowledge on relevant laws and policies on Sexual Gender Based Violence and Persecution (SGBVP) and context relevant policy and legal instruments
- To improve the capacity and skills of Police officers in the prevention of and response to SGBVP cases of refugees and asylum seekers in accordance with international human rights standards and standards set by the 1995 Constitution of Uganda and the Refugee Act
- To create awareness about the rights and duties of refugees and asylum seekers and the roles of the Government of Uganda and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the promotion and protection of refugees both during displacement be they males, females or gender and sexual minorities.
- To impart skills so that the trained Police officers can transfer the knowledge, ideas, rules, and standards learnt during the course into credible investigations and court practices in the response to and prevention of sexual and gender based crimes.
- To reinforce attitudes and behavioural change among the Police so that they can maximise and effectively improve the protection of refugees and asylum seekers. Specific example of this shall be male survivors of sexual violence. Many victims of sexual violence do not disclose to service providers unless asked the right questions in a supportive environment.
- To help ensure that Police accord fair treatment to all refugees and asylum seekers with the same standards of individual respect and social justice that apply to the rest of Ugandans.

services in Mulago national referral hospital. He urged them to be ambassadors of change wherever they are transferred to in the future. He called upon participants to join hands with civil society organisations including Refugee Law Project, in strengthening mass community awareness campaigns through community policing and other community-led initiatives on SGBV prevention and response. He re-affirmed that police officers are well placed to provide tailored trainings to community members on techniques to reduce crime rates including incidents of SGBV.

Protect victims/survivors

Commissioner Ndyomugenyi reiterated that the Police have a duty to provide security to all people in Uganda including refugees and victims/survivors of SGBV. He warned participants that victims/survivors can easily be followed, threatened or even killed by alleged perpetrators or their allies. He noted that some forced migrants seek sanctuary in Uganda because of experiences including persecution on SGBV related issues and some of the perpetrators might be powerful and in influential positions in police, other government agencies and political position.

He encouraged participants to model *safety* (protection), *confidentiality* (do no harm) and *respect* (enduring integrity) as key guiding principles when working with SGBV survivors/victims and alleged perpetrators.

Timely and professional apprehension of perpetrators

Commissioner Ndyomugenyi recommended that participants enrich the justice process through conducting professional investigations. He added that alleged perpetrators often follow victims/perpetrators from the country of origin into Uganda. He reminded officers that unknown assailants have gunned down many refugees in the suburbs of Kampala. He noted that when alleged perpetrators are left free, breaking the cycle of violence becomes extremely difficult. He however cautioned that the principle of 'use of reasonable force' has to be fully understood and not abused by police officers while executing their duties, including arrest of suspects.

He further warned against police officers coercing victims/survivors to negotiate with alleged perpetrators as it might cause death of victims upon release of suspects and further shame on the police as an institution. Victims should be given informed perspectives on the benefits and risks associated with negotiation. All cases need to be reported, investigated and treated on their own merits. He advised police officers to release perpetrators on specific conditions and terms such as police bond but not on the basis of bribes or other forms of corruption.

Make prompt referrals to the nearest health centre

Responding to incidents of SGBV requires timely and professional medical and psychosocial intervention including referrals. For the medical intervention, Police surgeons are crucial in treating victims/survivors and providing evidence for court prosecution and promoting access to justice for survivors. Medical services for survivors - be they females or males - include access to and provision of Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) and emergency contraceptives. Commissioner

Ndyomugenyi advised the police wherever possible to accompany victims/survivors to the surgeons, to build trust and ensure timely and non-corruptible evidence generation.

Being cognisant of the logistical and financial challenges associated with access to and provision of medical services to survivors of violence including SGBV survivors, Commissioner Ndyomugenyi urged police to strengthen partnership with other stakeholders such as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Refugee Law Project and other operating partners working on SGBV.

In his concluding remarks Commissioner Ndyomugenyi encouraged police officers constantly to advise government and other civil society organisations on relevant policy and best practice reforms that build on their own extensive hands-on experiences on working with survivors and alleged perpetrators of SGBV.

About Refugee Law Project (RLP): The Refugee Law Project (RLP) is an outreach project for the School of Law – Makerere University. It was established in 1999 in response to research indicating that refugees and asylum seekers do not enjoy their rights in Uganda. Its initial focus on the provision of Legal Aid and psychosocial support to forced migrants has since expanded, and is now organized under five thematic programme areas: Access to Justice; Mental Health & Psychosocial Wellbeing; Gender & Sexuality; Conflict, Transitional Justice and Governance; and Media for Social Change. RLP has five offices across the country (Kampala, Gulu, Kitgum, Hoima and Mbarara), supported by Operations and Programme Support (OPS).

RLP envisions contexts in which all people enjoy their human rights, irrespective of their legal status. Our mission statement is “To empower asylum seekers, refugees, deportees, IDPs and host communities to enjoy their human rights and lead dignified lives.”

About the Gender & Sexuality Programme: The Programme’s main aim is to facilitate gender sensitivity and inclusivity and awareness, and to provide inclusive Sexual Gender Based Violence prevention and response interventions. The programme actively engages individuals, families, communities and institutions, whether as victims, perpetrators or stakeholders, at local, national and international levels to transform practice, policy and discourse on gender and sexuality towards greater inclusivity for all. Gender and Sexuality’s work is geared towards ensuring best practices, documentation and dissemination of information about SGBV among forced migrants, conducting evidence based advocacy and lobbying and research on Sexual and Gender related issues among forced migrants.

Gender & Sexuality envisions a conducive environment in which all people understand, attain, recover and enjoy their sexual and gendered being and rights regardless of legal status and is guided by a mission statement “To actively engage individuals, families, communities and institutions, whether as victims, perpetrators or stakeholders, at local, national and international levels to transform practice, policy and discourse on gender and sexuality towards greater inclusivity and access for all.”

With funding support from



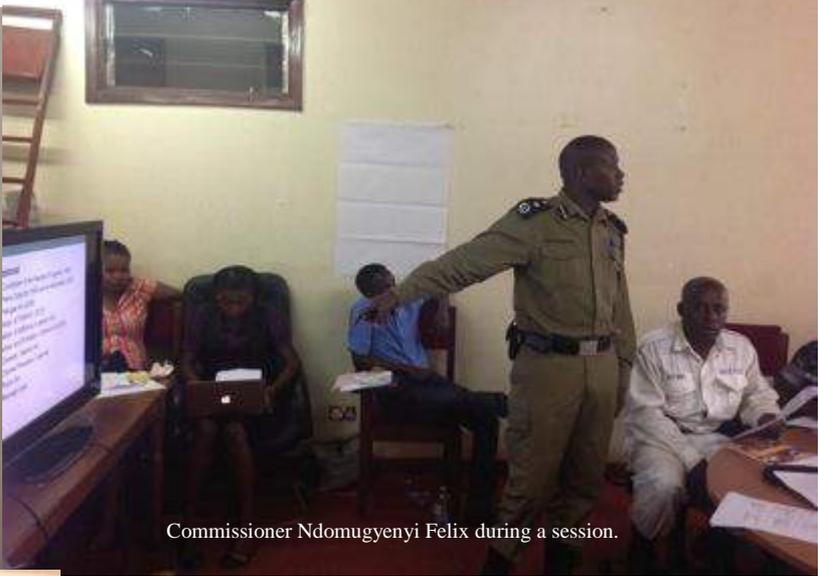
Photo Gallery



Commissioner Ndomugenyi Felix facilitating a session with Police officers attached to Mulago Police Station on *"The Role of the Police in Response to and Prevention of SGBV"*



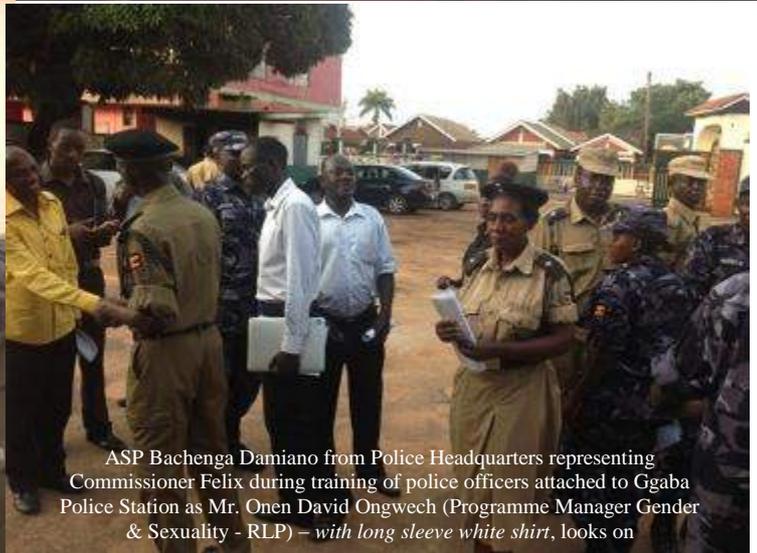
Commissioner Ndomugenyi Felix warning participants against coercing victims/survivors to negotiate with alleged perpetrators.



Commissioner Ndomugenyi Felix during a session.



Police officers preparing for a group photo with Commissioner Ndomugenyi Felix after a session



ASP Bachenga Damiano from Police Headquarters representing Commissioner Felix during training of police officers attached to Ggaba Police Station as Mr. Onen David Ongwech (Programme Manager Gender & Sexuality - RLP) – with long sleeve white shirt, looks on