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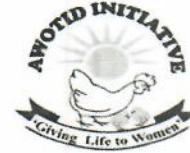
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POSITION PAPER

ADDRESSING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND SAFEGUARDING GRASSROOTS HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN ABIM DISTRICT

A Policy and Rights Imperative for Inclusive Community Security

Submitted by AWOTID –initiative Uganda and Women's Network for Transformation (WEMNET)

August 2026

2/9/2026

CAO ABIM

Acknowledgement

This position paper was developed through extensive consultations with grassroots human rights defenders (HRDs), women-led civil society organizations, local council representatives, clan leaders, and community members across Abim District. We acknowledge the dedicated efforts of frontline defenders, paralegals, and civil society partners who continue to support survivors of gender-based violence and advance human rights under challenging operational conditions.

We extend our gratitude to district local government officials, statutory security personnel, and development partners whose collaboration remains essential for enforcing national laws, transforming social norms, and ensuring survivor-centered protection across Karamoja.

Background and Context

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) including domestic and intimate partner violence poses a critical threat to human rights, public health, and social stability across Abim District, specifically in Morulem Town Council, Alerek, Lotuke, Magamaga, Atunga, and Abim Sub-counties. While national surveys show that a majority of ever-married women suffer intimate partner abuse, formal reporting in Abim remains exceptionally low due to fear, social stigma, and weak reporting pathways.

This violence is heavily driven by widespread alcohol abuse, extreme poverty, and entrenched patriarchal norms. Unregulated local brewing and early-morning drinking impair judgment, escalate domestic conflict, and drain vital household funds needed for food, healthcare, and education. Women and young girls bear the brunt of this instability through physical trauma, excessive domestic burdens, and heightened risks of teenage pregnancy, early marriage, and school dropout.

Grassroots dialogues by AWOTID Initiative Uganda Limited, KAWOU, and WEMNET reveal a alarming gap between community realities and formal police records. While the Abim Police Child and Family Protection Unit (CFPU) recorded only **20 cases in 2024, 21 in 2025, and 13 as now in 2026**, whereas according to the district data 879 gender base violence cases has been recorded and extreme violence continues to claim lives. In 2026 alone, three horrific domestic murders occurred were reported: Akech Kevin and Adero Rose, and one other from Apelkere (Atunga Sub-county).

Addressing this crisis requires moving beyond reactive measures. Abim District must bridge data gaps, enforce strict alcohol bylaws, engage men as allies, and sensitize communities on official GBV referral pathways to build safe, stable households

Executive Summary

Gender-Based Violence (GBV)—specifically domestic and intimate partner violence—remains a severe human rights, public health, and socio-economic challenge in Abim District. National surveys indicate that a majority of ever-married women experience physical, sexual, or emotional violence from an intimate partner. However, official crime statistics represent only a fraction of actual cases due to widespread underreporting caused by systemic barriers and social stigma.

In Abim District—particularly within Morulem Town Council/Sub-county, Alerek, Lotuke, Magamaga, Atunga, and Abim Sub-counties—domestic violence is heavily driven by pervasive alcohol abuse, extreme poverty, and deeply entrenched patriarchal norms. The proliferation of unregulated local brewing and early-morning drinking depletes meager household finances, triggers severe domestic conflict, and impairs judgment. Consequently, women and girls bear a disproportionate burden, suffering physical, emotional, and economic abuse while carrying excessive domestic workloads. This ongoing violence directly contributes to high rates of school dropout, early marriage, and teenage pregnancy among young girls in the district.

To address these drivers, this position paper outlines four strategic policy priorities for Abim District Local Government, lower local councils, cultural leaders, and civil society partners. Sustainable stability and community development require urgent action to enforce local alcohol regulations, engage men and boys as proactive partners in violence prevention, strengthen household economic security, and establish reliable sub-county data collection and referral pathways.

Abim District Local Context

- **Ground-Level Evidence in Abim District:** Community dialogues conducted across Morulem Town Council/Sub-county, Alerek, Lotuke, Magamaga, Atunga, and Abim Sub-counties confirm that actual incidents of domestic violence far exceed formal police reports. The severity of this crisis is underscored by recent extreme cases, including three domestic violence-related murders recorded in 2026 alone:
- **Wilela Parish:** Akech Kevin was murdered by her husband, Okello Quinto, earlier this year (2026).
- **Apelkere, Atunga Sub-County:** A woman was brutally killed and dismembered in an incident of severe intimate partner violence early in 2026.
- **Aremo, Morulem Sub-County:** A woman was strangled during a domestic dispute; although rushed to the hospital, she succumbed to her injuries.

Despite these severe incidents and numerous unrecorded cases from previous years, formal reporting remains exceptionally low. According to records from the Child and Family Protection Unit (CFPU) at the police station, only 20 domestic violence cases were reported in 2024, 21 cases in 2025, and 13 cases recorded to date in 2026. This stark contrast between widespread community-level violence and low formal reporting highlights an urgent need to sensitize communities and strengthen official GBV referral pathways.

Key Local Drivers:

- In Abim District, domestic violence is primarily fueled by early-morning local alcohol consumption, chronic household poverty, disputes over food security and scarce resources, and traditional beliefs that treat domestic abuse as a private family matter.
- Key Local Drivers: In Abim specifically, domestic violence is primarily fuelled by early-morning local alcohol consumption, poverty, food security disputes, and traditional beliefs treating abuse as a private family matter..

2.0 CSO Key Issues for Advocacy and Recommendations

2.1: Unregulated Alcohol Production, Sale, and Consumption: The unregulated sale and early-morning or daytime consumption of potent local brews directly correlate with heightened domestic disputes, assault, and household economic drain. The absence of enforced local ordinances allows liquor outlets to operate without restrictions on operating hours or age limits.

Recommendations:

- Formulate, enact, and strictly enforce district and sub-county bylaws regulating the brewing, sale, and consumption hours of alcohol across all sub-counties.
- Empower Local Council (LC I & LC II) executives and enforcement officers to monitor and close non-compliant alcohol dens.

2.2 Informal Out-of-Court Settlements and Weak Enforcement of GBV Cases GBV cases, including physical and sexual violence, are often handled informally by traditional leaders through fines, compensation, or other settlements without referral to statutory authorities. This undermines survivors' access to justice, medical care, psychosocial support, and protection, while allowing perpetrators to evade accountability.

Recommendations:

- Adopt and enforce district guidelines requiring all GBV and defilement cases to be immediately referred to police and relevant protection services.
- Strengthen frontline statutory services by deploying functional CFPU and Community Development Officers across all sub-counties and Town Councils.
- Establish quarterly district GBV case-review meetings bringing together police, probation, health, local government, and CSOs to track referrals and case outcomes.

2.3 Threats, Social Hostility, and Inadequate Protection of Frontline Defenders Grassroots human rights defenders face intimidation, social stigma, threats, and physical attacks for reporting GBV and supporting survivors. Limited access to transport, communication, emergency funds, and institutional protection further restricts their ability to respond safely and effectively

Recommendations:

- Adopt district-level protection guidelines for grassroots human rights defenders and establish clear procedures for reporting threats and attacks.
- Provide basic response support, including transport, communication, and emergency referral resources, through police and district protection structures.
- Provide small, flexible grants to local defender networks for legal aid, survivor referrals, emergency response, and mobility.

2.4 Economic Insecurity, Climate Shocks, and Child Marriage

Climate shocks, livelihood losses, and persistent household poverty increase women's and girls' vulnerability to exploitation and harmful coping strategies, including child and forced marriage. Economic dependency can also increase women's exposure to violence and limit their ability to leave abusive relationships.

Recommendations:

- Expand women's access to VSLAs, climate-resilient livelihoods, and enterprise support to strengthen household economic resilience.
- Integrate GBV and child-marriage prevention into district climate and livelihood programmes and allocate resources within local government budgets.
- Engage cultural and clan leaders to challenge harmful practices and promote women's control over income, productive assets, and household economic decisions.

3.0 Conclusion

Eliminating Gender-Based Violence and safeguarding human rights defenders in Abim District requires moving decisively beyond paper commitments to enforce statutory protections on the ground. Grassroots human rights defenders carry out essential frontline work to protect vulnerable women and children; securing their safety, resourcing their operations, and enforcing statutory referral pathways are critical imperatives for achieving lasting peace, gender equality, and sustainable development across Karamoja

4.0 References

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- Uganda Police Force. (2020). *Child and Family Protection Unit Operational Framework*. Kampala: UPF.
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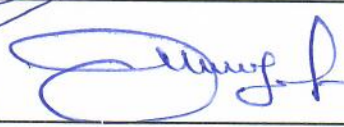
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & COMMITMENT BY DISTRICT LEADERSHIP:

S/N	Key Issues	Commitment	Responsible Persons
1	Unregulated Alcohol Production, Sale, and Consumption	With police stations now established in every sub-county, the district will utilize existing local bylaws for enforcement. This resolves the delays in enacting new ordinances, as previous district proposals for Alcohol Control and GBV Prevention were delayed at the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs.	DPC, CAO and RDC
2	Informal Out-of-Court Settlements & Weak Enforcement of GBV Cases	Leverage existing community structures, including Para-Social Workers and Sub-County Police Child and Family Protection Units (CFPU). Intensive community sensitization will be conducted to address fears of reporting, highlight the benefits of legal action, and strengthen the formal referral pathway.	Multi-Sectoral Team: Police, CSOs/NGOs (AWOTID Initiative), Community-Based Services Department, & Religious Leaders
3	Threats, Social Hostility, & Inadequate Protection of Frontline Defenders	Recognize the vital role of frontline Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) on the ground and mobilize logistical support—specifically transport and communication tools—to enable them to work safely and effectively, building on periodic support models previously provided by UNICEF.	District Local Government (Community Based Service Department), CSOs (AWOTID Initiative), & Police Department
4	Economic Insecurity, Climate Shocks, & Child Marriage	The Commercial Office and partner CSOs will collaborate to develop standardized operational guidelines for Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs). CSOs will actively lobby external partners for economic empowerment grants to supplement local government capacity and support vulnerable women.	District Commercial Office & CSOs (AWOTID Initiative)
5	Institutional Monitoring & Referral Tracking	Establish and institutionalize Quarterly District GBV Case-Review Meetings to bring together Police, Probation, Health, Local Government, and CSOs to track case referrals, manage follow-ups, and review survivor outcomes.	CSOs (AWOTID Initiative), Police Department, & Community Development Officers (CDOs)

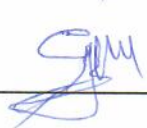
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & COMMITMENT BY DISTRICT LEADERSHIP:

1. The Local council V Chairperson: Sign  Date 2/9/2026

2. Magistrate: Sign  Date 2/9/2026

3. District Health Officer: Sign  Date 2/9/2026

4. District Community Development Officer: Sign  Date 2/9/2026

5. Senior Probation Officer: Sign  Date 2/9/2026

6. Senior Land Management Officer: Sign _____ Date _____

7. District police Commander: Sign  Date 02/09/2026

8. District Chairperson Disability: Sign  Date 02/09/2026

9. District Youth Chairperson: Sign  Date 02/09/2026

10. OCCID: Sign  Date 02/09/2026

11. In charge Child and Family Officer: Sign  Date 02/09/2026

12. Community Development Gender Focal Point Person Sign  Date 2/9/2026