

**55<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**  
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**Oral statement: Uganda**

8 June 2015

*Orateur: Ms. Enkeleda Papa*

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Thank you Mr. Chairperson,

With this statement Franciscans International and various partner organizations wish to complement their submitted report on Uganda. Our main concerns pertain to the inclusion of women in the management of natural resources, and birth registration as a means to combat the prevalence of child labour and early marriage.

First, we ask the Committee to pay particular attention to the persistence of low birth registration rates in Uganda. Even though a system of sending birth notifications by SMS has attributed to a slight increase in the registration rate, significant challenges remain. With the exception of a procedural amendment in 2005 introducing costs for birth registration, the Births and Deaths Registration Act has been left unchanged since 1973. We believe that the current legislation does not adequately reflect the social and economic circumstances of Uganda. While the steps taken to obtain a short birth certificate have been streamlined, the process to acquire a long birth certificate remains complicated. People residing in rural areas may have to travel a significant distance to reach the requisite offices in their regional capitals. Additional challenges include the fees for the registration services and additional charges from intermediaries who purport to process birth certificates faster.

Without a birth certificate to prove their age, children are more vulnerable to human rights violations and have an increased risk of falling into an early marriage or becoming a child labourer. Though the Ugandan Constitution stipulates that the legal age for marriage is 18 years old, underage marriage is still prevalent. In certain tribes and cultural groups girls are considered to be adults and ready for marriage once they have undergone Female Genital Mutilation, even as a minor. Regarding child labour, roughly 31% of children from the ages of 6-13 years old qualify as child labourers. The National Action Plan against the Worst Forms of Child Labour has not been effectively implemented and the judicial system has failed to bring those responsible for child labour to justice.

To overcome these issues, we urge the Committee to recommend the state of Uganda to revise the national legislation and administrative procedures to ensure free and universal birth registration. Moreover, Uganda should intensify efforts to increase awareness on the process of acquiring a birth certificate and on the importance of birth registration in protecting children from the potential consequences of non-registration, including early

marriage and child labour.

Our second issue of concern pertains to the inclusion of women in the management of natural resources, and thereby their right to land and property. Oil exploration, as is widely occurring in the Albertine region in Uganda, comes with risks that may undermine the full enjoyment of rights by women. Since the majority of women do not own land, they are excluded from the negotiations, which could be used to petition against the sale of their families' land to oil agencies. Furthermore, as they often do not hold the titles to their land, these women do not benefit from the financial transaction and are left landless. The government fails to guarantee economic security and sufficient compensation for the women and families who are forced off their lands. Moreover, women are largely excluded from the labour force in the oil industry and thus profit very little from local resource wealth and development. On the level of governance, women are represented in decision-making bodies, yet are prevented from influencing matters related to oil exploration due to a lack of pertinent knowledge, and a lack of experience and training in governance. Limited female input on important decisions pertaining to natural resources hinders women and their communities from benefitting from their due economic, social and cultural rights.

For these reasons, we ask for recommendations to be made to the government of Uganda advising them to create legislation ensuring the right to free, prior and informed consent of the affected communities. Additionally, female community leaders need to be trained so that they can effectively represent their constituencies on the issues of land rights, oil production and public services. Lastly, mechanisms must be put in place to ensure that land where people are to be resettled to is allocated before evicting notices are issued, and that the allocated land has the necessary infrastructure to support the well-being of those being displaced.

I thank you.