# REPORT ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION OF SEX WORKERS IN UGANDA

## JANUARY 2023 TO JUNE 2024

**NETWORK OF KEY POPULATION SERVICE ORGANISATIONS LTD (UNESO)**

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## Glossary of Terms

| | |
|---|---|
| **Hotspot:** | A location known for a high concentration of sex work activity. Hotspots are often specific areas in cities or towns where sex workers are known to solicit clients. |
| **Incident:** | A specific occurrence or event, particularly one that involves human rights violations or other significant actions related to sex workers. |
| **Violation:** | Any action that infringes upon the legal rights of an individual, particularly in the context of human rights. Violations can include physical assault, eviction, discrimination, and other abuses. |
| **Lodge:** | In this context, a lodge refers to a small hotel or guesthouse, often used by sex workers and their clients for short-term stays. |
| **Sex Work:** | The exchange of sexual services for money or goods. This term encompasses various activities, including prostitution, erotic performances, and other related services. |
| **Human Rights Violations:** | Acts that infringe upon the fundamental rights and freedoms to which all individuals are entitled, such as the right to life, liberty, and personal security. |
| **Decriminalisation:** | The process of making an activity legal that was previously considered a crime. In this context, it refers to the removal of criminal penalties associated with sex work. |
| **Discrimination:** | Unjust treatment or consideration of an individual based on their group, class, or category, such as gender, occupation, or sexual orientation. |

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|---|---|
| **Eviction:** | The act of forcibly removing someone from a property. In the context of this report, it often refers to the unlawful removal of sex workers from their homes. |
| **Torture, Inhumane and Degrading Treatment:** | Severe physical or mental suffering inflicted on an individual, often by authorities or other individuals in positions of power. |
| **Stigma:** | The disapproval or discrimination against an individual or group based on perceivable social characteristics that serve to distinguish them from other members of society. |
| **Criminalisation** | The process of making an activity illegal. In this report, it refers to laws that make sex work illegal and punishable under the law. |
| **Perpetrators:** | Individuals or groups responsible for committing human rights violations. |
| **Sex Worker** | An adult person (of 18 years and above), who consensually engages sexual sex work. |

**Acronyms**

| | |
|---|---|
| **AHA:** | Anti-Homosexuality Act, Cap. 117 |
| **ACHPR:** | African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights |
| **CEDAW:** | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women |
| **FSW:** | Female Sex Worker |
| **ICCPR:** | International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights |
| **ICESCR:** | International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights |
| **LC1:** | Local Council 1 (the lowest administrative unit in Uganda) |
| **NGO:** | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| **OHCHR:** | Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights |
| **PPTA:** | Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act |
| **UDHR:** | Universal Declaration of Human Rights |
| **UKPC:** | Uganda Key Populations Consortium |
| **UNESO:** | Network of Key Population Service Organizations Ltd |
| **UPDF:** | Uganda People’s Defence Forces |
| **ARVs:** | Anti-Retroviral drugs |

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|---|---|
| **WWM:** | Women with a Mission |
| **WOPEIN:** | Women Positive Empowerment Initiative |
| **KWHSI:** | Kabarole Women Health Support Initiative |
| **DCEWO:** | Dream Center for Women Organization |
| **OGERA:** | Organisation for Gender Empowerment & Rights Advocacy |
| **MONU:** | Men of the Night Uganda |
| **LMEC:** | Lady Mermaid Empowerment Center |
| **HODARI:** | Hodari Youth South West |
| **ACIHW:** | Action for Improved Health & Wealth |

**List of Legislation.**

International Legal Instruments

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979)

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)

Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel , Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984)

**Regional Instruments**

African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981)

Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2005)

**National Legislation**

Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995

Penal Code Act Cap. 128

Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act Cap. 130

Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA) Cap. 117

Anti-Pornography Act Cap. 119

Non-Governmental Organisations Act Cap. 109

HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Act Cap. 126

## Executive Summary

This report offers an in-depth analysis of the systemic abuses endured by sex workers across Uganda between January 2023 to June 2024. It meticulously documents 237 cases, with 214 verified as human rights violations, covering areas such as torture, discrimination, property rights, and the right to life. The report highlights the intersection of legal frameworks and societal attitudes that exacerbate these violations, particularly focusing on the impact of the criminalisation of sex work under Ugandan law.

The criminalisation of sex work has entrenched a climate of fear and marginalisation, forcing sex workers into precarious situations where they are vulnerable to exploitation, violence, and abuse. The Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA) Cap. 117 has further compounded these challenges, leading to a surge in unlawful evictions and heightening the risks faced by LGBTQ+ sex workers. The legal environment, characterised by punitive measures and a lack of protective legislation, leaves sex workers with little recourse to justice, perpetuating cycles of violence and impunity.

Throughout the reporting period, sex workers faced severe human rights violations, including physical assault, rape, attempted murder, and murder, often at the hands of clients, intimate partners, and even law enforcement officials. The report reveals the widespread discrimination and stigma that sex workers endure, both from society at large and within their own communities. These abuses are often underreported due to the fear of legal repercussions, further isolating sex workers from accessing the protection and support they desperately need.

Property rights violations, particularly unlawful evictions driven by the AHA, have left many sex workers homeless and vulnerable to further violence. The report details how these evictions, often justified by discriminatory laws, strip sex workers of their basic human rights and expose them to heightened risks. This disturbing trend underscores the urgent need for legal reforms that protect the housing rights of sex workers and ensure their safety and dignity.

The report concludes with a strong call for the decriminalisation of sex work and the implementation of legal reforms to protect the rights of sex workers. It recommends comprehensive training for law enforcement and healthcare providers to address biases, as well as enhanced legal and psychosocial support systems for sex workers. The report underscores the critical need for systemic change to ensure that sex workers in Uganda can live and work with the same rights, protections, and dignity afforded to all citizens.

## 1. Introduction

This Report on the Human Rights Situation of Sex Workers in Uganda is a publication of documented human rights violations against sex workers that occurred between January 2023 and April 2024.

It provides a record of verified human rights violations perpetuated against sex workers, because of their involvement in sex work. The report also highlights the relationship between the criminalization of sex work, and violation of rights of sex workers. It iterates the normative content of laws that guarantee human rights of sex workers, and the state obligation therein. In this regard, the report makes recommendations to the different stakeholders and duty bearers on the specific actions they can take in order to protect, promote and fulfil the rights of sex workers.

## 2. Methodology.

This report presents a quantitative analysis of the recorded human rights violations against sex workers from December 2023 to June 2024. The data collection was carried out by member organisations of UNESO operating across various regions of the country and additional data was provided by UKPC from data collected through the Integrated KP Information System (IKIS).

UNESO developed a comprehensive tool for documenting human rights violations, which was distributed to its member organisations. These organisations, through their staff and peer educators, utilised the tool to capture details of incidents reported by members of the sex worker community within their respective areas of operation. The following organisations contributed data on reported violations:

1. Women With a Mission (WWM)
2. Women Positive Empowerment Initiative (WOPEIN)
3. Kabarole Women Health Support Initiative (KWHSI)
4. Dream Center for Women Organisation(DCEWO)
5. Organisation for Gender Empowerment & Rights Advocacy (OGERA)
6. Men of the Night Uganda(MONU)
7. Lady Mermaid Empowerment Center(LMEC)

8. Hodari Youth South West
9. Action for Improvement of Health and Wealth.(ACIHEWE)
10. Serving lives under marginalisation (SWING)
11. Trans Advocacy Initiative(TAI)
12. Organisation For Women Empowerment Centre(OWEC)
13. Dream centre for women organisation(DCEWO)

Upon receiving the completed documentation from their member organisations, UNESO staff meticulously reviewed the information to verify its authenticity and assess whether each reported incident indeed constituted a human rights violation.

## 3. Challenges

One of the primary challenges encountered during the documentation process was the limited capacity of staff within the different member organisations to effectively record the violations. Another challenge was the limited follow-up mechanisms to track the status of sex workers regarding the violations.

## Contextual Legal Framework Sex Workers in Uganda.

Sex workers are adults who receive money or goods in exchange for consensual sexual services or erotic performances, either regularly or occasionally.[1] Sex workers sell sexual services in order to earn a livelihood. For many, sex work represents the best available option in difficult circumstances. They often face poverty and lack other viable employment opportunities. Some also find that sex work provides better income and more flexible working conditions compared to other jobs.[2]

The Penal Code Act criminalises various activities associated with sex work, including prostitution, living off the earnings of prostitution, aiding and abetting prostitution, and operating brothels.[3] In recent years, additional laws have been enacted that further impact the

[1] UNAIDS, Protecting the Rights of Sex Workers. https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2017/june/20170602_sexwork [Accessed 18th August 2024]

[2] Open Society Foundations, Understanding Society in an Open Society. https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/explainers/understanding-sex-work-open-society [Accessed 18th August 2024]

[3] Penal Code Act Cap 128, Sections 138 and 139

rights of sex workers, such as the Anti-Pornography Act Cap. 119, the NGO Act Cap. 109, and the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Act Cap. 126. A new Sexual Offences Bill, which retains the prostitution-related offenses from the Penal Code, has also been introduced in Parliament. These legal developments underscore the need for a critical evaluation of the legal framework governing sex work and its impact on the rights of those involved.[4]

Sex work is not recognised under Uganda's employment and labour laws, yet it remains a source of livelihood for many women and men.[5] As a result, sex workers face numerous socio-economic challenges, including arrest, imprisonment, prosecution, stigma, exploitation, lack of protection, limited access to public services, and vulnerability to sexually transmitted diseases. Due to the illegal status of sex work, sex workers struggle to find legal remedies, support, and services when their rights are violated. These violations persist despite the fact that sex workers' rights are protected under both international agreements and the Ugandan Constitution.

Sex workers in many settings report extreme levels of violence and harassment in connection with their work, including from clients, managers, and police. Criminalisation makes it difficult for sex workers to report rights violations, especially by the police, because they are vulnerable to incarceration, further abuse, and retribution. This perpetuates stigma, violence, and impunity, which further endanger sex workers' health and safety.[6]

## 4. Rights of Sex Workers and the State Obligations

Despite the criminalisation of sex work under Ugandan law, the state is still bound by its duty to protect, promote, and fulfil the rights of sex workers. Article 20(2) of the 1995 Constitution of Uganda clearly mandates that the rights and freedoms outlined in the Bill of Rights must be respected, upheld, and promoted by all government entities and individuals. Furthermore, Article 21 of the Constitution asserts that everyone is equal before the law and should not face discrimination based on factors such as sex or social status.[7] These constitutional provisions

[4] Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum, Legal Regulation of Sex Work in Uganda: Exploring the Current Trends and Their Impact on the Human Rights of Sex Workers.

[5] Ibid

[6] Bronwyn McBride and others, 'Underreporting of Violence to Police among Women Sex Workers in Canada' (2020) 22(2) Health and Human Rights Journal 257.

[7] 1995 Constitution of Uganda, Article 21

unequivocally establish the state's duty to safeguard the human rights of all individuals, including sex workers, even though their work is criminalised under the Penal Code.

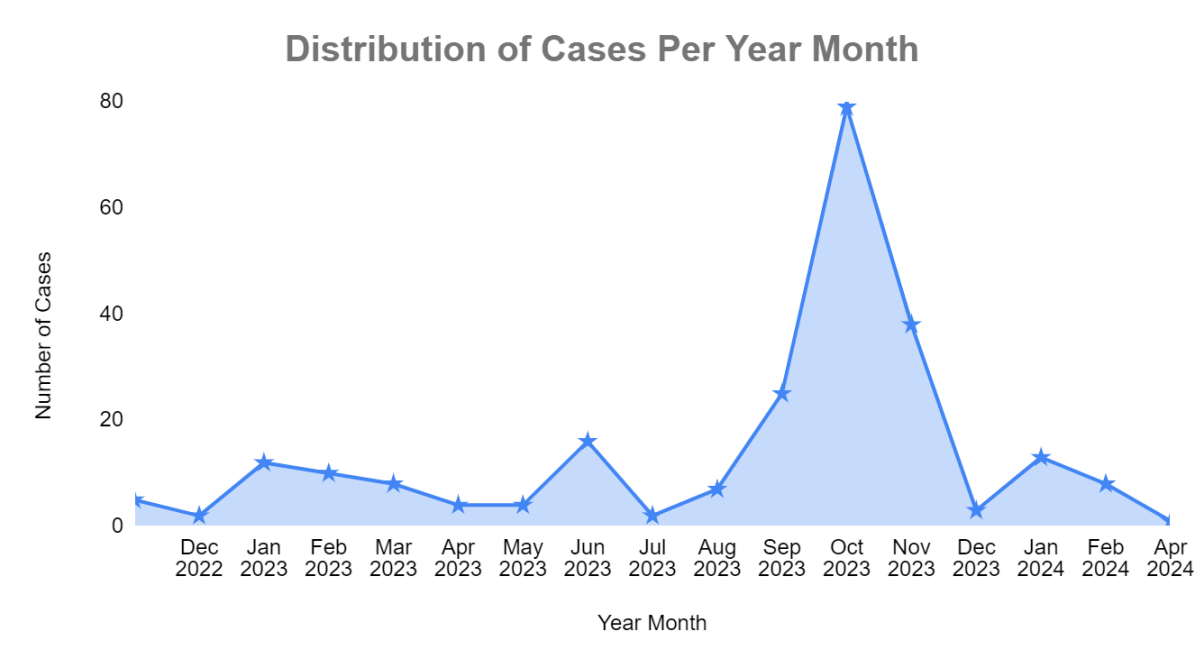
Uganda's obligation to respect, uphold, promote, and fulfil the human rights of its citizens is embedded not only in the Constitution but also in regional and international treaties to which Uganda is a party. According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the state's obligation to respect human rights requires it to refrain from interfering with the enjoyment of these rights. The OHCHR further explains that the duty to uphold human rights obligates the state to protect individuals and groups from human rights abuses. Additionally, the state must take positive actions to ensure the enjoyment of basic human rights. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) has defined the obligation to protect human rights as the duty to shield rights holders from violations by others, through appropriate legislation and the provision of effective remedies. The ACHPR also emphasises that this obligation requires states to take steps to realise rights and freedoms, including enacting necessary laws and regulations, promoting tolerance of diverse views and norms, raising human rights awareness, and establishing the infrastructure needed for enforcement.[8]

## 5. Record of Human Rights Violations against Sex Workers

During the period of 2023-2024 a total of 237 cases were recorded. Out of these, 214 were verified to be human rights violations. These ranged from the right to freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, the right to property, the right to freedom from discrimination and equal protection under the law, the right to life and the right to liberty. In this section, we look at the number and nature of human rights violations that were perpetuated against sex workers.

*Monthly Distribution of Recorded Cases (2023-2024)*

[8] SERAC v Nigeria, Decision, Comm.155/96 (ACmHPR, Oct.27,2001)




### 5.1. Violation of the right to freedom from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

#### 5.1.1. Legal Framework

The right to freedom from torture, inhuman, and degrading treatment is a fundamental human right that must be upheld for everyone, including sex workers who are particularly vulnerable to abuse. Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment," setting a global standard against such violations.[9] This protection is reinforced by Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which similarly prohibits torture and ill-treatment.

Uganda's 1995 Constitution mirrors these international standards, with Article 24 prohibiting torture and Article 44(a) ensuring that this protection cannot be suspended.[10] The Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act (PPTA) of 2012 further strengthens these safeguards by criminalising torture and providing avenues for victims to seek justice.[11]

[9] Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 7

[10] Constitution of Uganda 1995, Article 24 and Article 44

[11] The Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act (PPTA) of 2012 Sections 4 and 6

Although sex work is criminalised under Uganda's Penal Code, protections against torture extend to marginalised groups, including sex workers.[12] States have a duty to protect all individuals, including sex workers, from such abuses.[13]

Violations of the right to freedom from torture, inhuman, and degrading treatment can be committed by both state and non-state actors. While the state and its agents are primarily responsible for upholding and preventing such abuses, non-state actors, such as individuals or groups, can also commit these violations. In such cases, the state has an obligation to protect individuals from harm by non-state actors, prevent these abuses, investigate incidents, and hold perpetrators accountable through legal means.[14] The state's failure to take appropriate action to prevent or address these violations can also constitute a breach of its obligations under international human rights law.

A violation of the right to freedom from torture, inhuman, or degrading treatment by non-state actors involves acts of severe mistreatment inflicted by individuals or groups that are not official state agents. This includes any form of abuse that causes severe physical or mental harm or suffering. Such violations can occur in various contexts, such as through violence, exploitation, or harassment.

### 5.1.2. Recorded violations

Throughout 2023 to 2024, UNESO recorded 78 verified cases of violation of sex workers' right to freedom from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. The perpetrators in these cases included both state and non-state actors, who included clients, intimate partners and fellow sex workers themselves. The fact that sex work is criminalised creates a hostile legal environment for the observance of sex workers' right to freedom from inhuman and degrading treatment. It buttresses the fallacy sex workers are not worthy of the same human dignity and respect as other members of society, simply because they are criminalised.

In Uganda, sex workers continue to face severe violations of their right to freedom from torture, inhumane, and degrading treatment. These violations manifest in various forms, including

[12] Penal Code Act Cap 120, Sections 138 and 139

[13] Human Rights Committee's General Comment No. 20 on the ICCPR (Prohibition of Torture, or Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment) para 2

[14] International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
Article 2(1) and 2(3).

physical assault, rape, and other forms of violence, often perpetrated by clients, intimate partners, and even strangers.

***January 2023***

In January 2023, nine violations of the right to freedom from torture, inhumane, and degrading treatment against sex workers were documented. These violations included six cases of physical assault and two of rape and one of attempted rape.

One assault case occurred on 2nd January 2023, in Nylon, Namatala, Industrial Division, where a 24-year-old sex worker was violently beaten by a bouncer. The bouncer, suspecting her of carrying a bottle of aeroplane fuel into a bar.[15] This incident demonstrates the physical violence and harsh treatment sex workers often endure based on unfounded suspicions and prejudices.

Another deeply troubling incident took place on 15th January, 2023, in Isingiro. A sex worker was gang-raped by three men after she agreed to a session with one of them. The brutality of this act left her unconscious and with severe injuries, requiring medical support. This case highlights the severe physical violence and unjust treatment sex workers endure due to prejudiced suspicions.

On 18th January, 2023, in Mbarara, a sex worker was physically attacked by a group of angry community women. They accused her of being a bad influence and promoting prostitution and drug use in the neighbourhood. The assault was so severe that the victim was left unconscious and required medical attention, although no police report was filed. This incident illustrates how sex workers are subjected to inhumane and degrading treatment due to societal stigma associated with their profession.

On 20th January, 2023, a 26-year-old sex worker living in Agururu B 111, Osukuro Parish, Osukuro Sub County, was assaulted by a fellow sex worker at around 4:30 p.m. The attacker accused her of taking a client away. This incident, which was not reported, reflects the heightened vulnerability of sex workers to violence, even within their own community.[16]

Furthermore, one case of attempted rape was recorded. On 20th January, 2023, a 25-year-old sex worker in Ushay, Osukuro Subcounty, Tororo District, was attacked in her room by a man who attempted to rape her. Thankfully, her alarm drew nearby people to her rescue. This

[15] WWM/SW/12/2023

[16] WWM/SW/13/2023

unreported incident highlights the severe vulnerability of sex workers to sexual abuse, as perpetrators often target them knowing they are unlikely to report such crimes. [17]This case underscores the urgent need for better protections for sex workers, whose right to freedom from torture and inhumane treatment is frequently violated without consequence.

***February 2023***

February 2023 saw six recorded violations of the right to torture, inhuman and degrading treatment against sex workers in Uganda. These included assault and attempted murder. The perpetrators consisted of 1 intimate partner, 2 clients, 3 fellow sex workers and one a member of the community.

The intimate partner violence occurred on 1st February 2023, in Aguba, Namatala, Mbale district, where a female sex worker was severely beaten by her husband. The violence was triggered by his discovery that she had been involved in a fight with a co-wife, who accused her of being a sex worker.[18] This domestic violence incident shows the societal stigma and misogyny faced by sex workers because of their profession.

On 16th February 2023, another assault took place at Casablanca hotspot in Mbale city. A 27-year-old sex worker was brutally attacked by a fellow sex worker over an alleged dispute concerning a client.[19] Despite the severity of the assault, it went unreported, reflecting the deep-seated fear and mistrust that often prevent sex workers from seeking justice.

The month also saw a deeply troubling case of rape on 17th February, 2023, in Namatala, Mbale. A 19-year-old sex worker was gang-raped by four men while returning home from work. The trauma of the assault was compounded when the victim later discovered she was pregnant. Her subsequent attempt to perform an unsafe abortion was unsuccessful, leading to her receiving post-abortion care at Namatala Health Center IV.[20] This case underscores the extreme violence sex workers endure and the severe consequences of such abuse.

Lastly, on 24th February, 2023, in Nylon, Namatala, Mbale district, a 31-year-old sex worker was physically assaulted by a fellow sex worker, who accused her of stealing money from her

[17] WWM/SW/18/2023
[18] WWM/SW/O1/2023
[19] WWM/SW/30/2023
[20] WWM/SW/42/2023

bag. Unlike many other cases, this incident was reported to the police, though the outcome remains uncertain.[21]

These violations of the right to freedom from torture, inhumane, and degrading treatment illustrate the pervasive violence and abuse that sex workers endure, often with little to no intervention from authorities.

***March 2023***

March 2023 saw continued violence, with a total of seven documented violations of the right to freedom from torture, inhumane, and degrading treatment. These violations included four cases of assault, two cases of rape, and one case of grievous bodily harm.

Assaults were the most frequent violation, with four incidents reported. On March 5, 2023, a 32-year-old female sex worker was beaten by her husband on Nagongera Road, Ongururo, Tororo district. He struck her on the head with a beer bottle after finding her standing on the verandah waiting for clients. This incident was not reported to the police.[22]

Rape cases were particularly severe. On March 28, 2023, a 27-year-old sex worker at Centre Restaurant, Park Cell, was raped by her client after she insisted on using a condom as initially agreed.[23] Another rape incident occurred on March 29, 2023, where a sex worker from Agururu B III in Tororo district was raped by a truck driver who had given her a lift to Busia. Instead of taking her to her destination, the driver parked the truck and took her to a lodge where the assault occurred.[24] Neither of these cases was reported to the police.

A grievous bodily harm incident occured on 28th March, 2023, in Kikolomojo, Namatala, Industrial Division, where a 30-year-old sex worker was beaten by her husband, who accused her of being a sex worker and sleeping with other men.[25] This incident was reported to the police.

These cases illustrate the persistent and severe violence faced by sex workers, often with limited legal recourse and support.

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[21] WWM/SW/40/2023
[22] WWM/SW/24 /2023
[23] WWM/SW/22/2023
[24] WWM/SW/82/2023
[25] WWM/SW/62/2023

***April 2023***

April saw three significant violations of the right to freedom from torture, inhumane, and degrading treatment were recorded, both involving domestic violence against female sex workers by their intimate partners.

On 1st April, 2023, a case of domestic violence occurred at Kiduda, Nyanca Cell, Namatala in Industrial Division, Mbale City. A female sex worker was brutally beaten by her husband. The attack was driven by the husband's anger over her returning home late due to her involvement in sex work.[26] These violent acts highlight the ongoing domestic abuse faced by sex workers, stemming from both their professional activities and the broader stigma attached to their work. Unfortunately, the case was not reported to the police, reflecting the lack of protection and justice for victims within this community.

Another case of domestic violence took place on April 23, 2023, also at Kiduda, Namatala in Mbale City. In this instance, a sex worker was beaten by her husband after catching him with another woman in a lodge. The assault further emphasises the vulnerability of sex workers to domestic violence. Like the previous cases, this incident was also not reported to the police, further demonstrating the limited avenues for justice available to victims.

***May 2023***

May saw, four violations of the right to freedom from torture, inhumane, and degrading treatment were recorded against female sex workers. Three violations included assault and one involved both physical and sexual violence. Two of the violent acts were perpetrated by intimate partners, one was by a client in conspiracy with other men, and another was by a fellow sex worker.

One incident involved a fellow sex worker, who was assaulted following a dispute over a client at a guest house in Tororo district. The altercation resulted in the victim being beaten. This incident went unreported to the police, reflecting the challenges sex workers face in seeking justice within their own communities.[27]

Another severe case involved a client and a group of men committing sexual and physical violence. A sex worker was deceived by a client, leading her into a situation where she was

[26] WWM/SW/07/2023

[27] WWM/SW/46/2023

surrounded by eight men. Despite her attempts to escape and negotiate, she was violently restrained, resulting in a dislocated shoulder and other injuries. The brutality of this attack left her unconscious, and the incident was not reported to the authorities, highlighting the extreme dangers faced by sex workers and the barriers they encounter in accessing justice.

In Mbale City**,** two cases of domestic violence against sex workers were reported. In one case, a sex worker's husband became violent after she returned home late from work at a local lodge. He threw her clothes out and ordered her to leave the house.[28] In the other case, the husband was arrested after the victim sought help from an organisation, which advised her to report the matter to the police. This case shows the potential for legal recourse when support systems are engaged, though it remains clear that many sex workers still face significant barriers to accessing protection and justice**.**[29]

***June 2023***

June 2023 saw a disturbing spike in documented breaches of the right to freedom from torture, inhumane, and degrading treatment, with fifteen cases recorded. These included thirteen incidents of physical assault, one case of sexual abuse, and one involving both sexual and physical abuse. The perpetrators varied widely, encompassing intimate partners, clients, fellow sex workers, law enforcement officers, and a local leader; individuals who should have been protectors but instead became abusers.

On June 1st, the month began with a violent attack in Namatala, Mbale, a young woman was physically assaulted by her boyfriend after he accused her of being a sex worker.[30] Similar violence occurred on the same day in Tororo District, where another woman was assaulted by a client after refusing unprotected sex.[31]

Another physical assault occurred on 18th June, when a female sex worker was severely beaten by a group of her colleagues, following a verbal altercation at Ice Bar in Kimumbasa, Bwaise. The altercation quickly escalated into a brutal assault by other sex workers. This incident was reported to the police, with documentation referencing the attack. However, there is no further information on the police's response to this report.

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[28] WWM/SW/67/2023

[29] WWM/SW/74/2023

[30] WWM/SW/03/2023

[31] WWM/SW/25/2023

The violence extended beyond personal relationships and clients, with two incidents implicating figures of authority. In one case reported on 3rd June, a sex worker from Katoogo in Bwaise was assaulted by the local Chairman, and his associates after she failed to pay a security fee. Despite her efforts to seek justice, the Chairman refused to take responsibility, showcasing a severe abuse of power.

On June 11th, seven sex workers in Kabarole were brutally beaten and raped by a group of UPDF soldiers, who are entrusted with protecting Ugandans. Instead, the soldiers subjected the women to severe physical violence and verbal abuse, leaving them battered and traumatised. Some victims were found unconscious with severe injuries, highlighting a grave abuse of power by those in uniform.

The month also saw another distressing case of sexual abuse on the 19th of June, in Matugga, where a sex worker was raped by a regular customer at her mother's bar. This case was reported to the police but there is no information on its current status. These cases emphasise the need for greater accountability and protection for sex workers, who continue to face severe and often unaddressed violence.

***July 2023***

In July 2023, the dangerous reality of sex work was painfully highlighted through two violent incidents. Both of the incidents involved sex workers who were gang raped after agreeing to meet up with a client.

On 2nd July, a sex worker anticipated a routine meeting with a client, but instead, she was brutally gang-raped by three men at the client's residence. The violence inflicted on her exemplifies the severe risks inherent in sex work and the frequent exploitation of sex workers by those they trust.

Similarly, on July 14th, another sex worker in Arua endured a horrifying experience. After arranging to meet a client, she was gang-raped by seven men at his residence and left unconscious. This appalling incident highlights the extreme dangers sex workers face, showing how their vulnerability is exploited and how what should be a routine part of their job can escalate into life-threatening and traumatic situations.

***August 2023***

In August 2023, a total of five violations of the right to freedom from torture, inhumane, and degrading treatment were documented for sex workers. Three of these violations were perpetrated by intimate partners and the other two, by clients.

One of the incidents occurred on 1st August. It involved a 23-year-old sex worker in Bwaise Kiyaga Zone who was subjected to extreme violence by her partner, who severely beat her and inserted a bottle into her vagina, leading to severe medical complications and the loss of her unborn child. On 3rd August, a 31-year-old sex worker in Tororo was beaten by her husband, who accused her of associating with other sex workers.[32] Similarly, on August 4th, another sex worker in Tororo was assaulted by her husband for allegedly communicating with clients.[33] These cases illustrate how sex workers experience domestic violence because of the stigma attached to their work.

Two other violations were perpetrated by clients. On 2nd August a sex worker in Tororo District was violently attacked by a client with a beer bottle after the client discovered her ARVs hidden beneath her mattress. On 20th August, a sex worker in Mbarara was assaulted by a client who refused to pay for services, resulting in severe injuries after being struck with a sand brick. These incidents demonstrate the dangerous environments sex workers face when dealing with clients who exploit their vulnerabilities.

Out of these five violations, three were reported to the police. However, there is no further data available on the current status of these cases, highlighting a critical gap in the follow-up and justice process for these victims.

***September 2023***

In September 2023, a total of seven cases were documented where sex workers faced violations of their right to freedom from torture, inhumane, and degrading treatment. The month saw three cases involving physical violence from clients, one involved an intimate partner, and the other perpetrators are unknown.

On 1st September, a 25-year-old female sex worker in Mbale City was brutally attacked by a client who used a knife after a dispute over payment. The matter was reported to the police,

[32] WWM/SW/62/2023

[33] WWM/SW/85/2023

and a community paralegal was contacted to intervene in a mediation process at the LC1 court. However, the accused failed to appear. Women With a Mission (WWM) covered the victim's medical expenses while the police continued their search for the suspect. Unfortunately, the client eventually lost interest in pursuing the case due to the high costs demanded by the police to apprehend the accused.[34]

The police's handling of this case reflects a broader issue of injustice where the pursuit of justice is hindered by financial demands. The police, after being contacted, required excessive money to apprehend the accused, causing the client to lose interest in pursuing the matter. This lack of access to justice due to financial barriers not only discourages victims but also allows perpetrators to evade accountability and continue their harmful behaviour without consequence.

Just a few days later, on 5th September, another female sex worker in Mbale was beaten by a client who was angered by the delay in her bathing time, despite having already paid for the service.[35] These cases illustrate the extreme risks that sex workers face from those who exploit their services.

Violence from intimate partners was also a significant concern during this period. On 4th September, a sex worker in Tororo District was beaten by her husband, who suspected her of engaging in multiple relationships. Additionally, on 5th September, another sex worker in Mbale experienced violence from her partner, who attacked her after suspecting her of infidelity.

***October 2023***

In October 2023, eight violations were reported on the right to freedom from torture, inhumane and degrading treatment which occurred across the Western, Central and Northern regions which all included physical assault. For example, on 12th October, a sex worker in the Eastern Region experienced a violent physical attack. Another significant case occurred on 17th October in the Western Region, where a sex worker was subjected to physical assault and violence. On 4th October, a case of domestic violence was reported in the Central Region, where a sex worker faced abuse from her partner. The data provided indicates a series of human rights violations against sex workers, including evictions, physical assaults, domestic violence, and

[34] WWM/SW/9/2023.

[35] WWM/SW/80/2023

various forms of abuse. However, the details surrounding these incidents are notably sparse, particularly regarding the identities of the perpetrators. The absence of this critical information makes it challenging to fully understand the context in which these violations occurred and the specific dynamics of power and control that may have been at play.

***November 2023***

In November 2023, sex workers experienced four notable violations of the right to freedom from torture and inhumane treatment. The month began with one severe instance of physical assault by an intimate partner. On 1st November, 2023, a 25-year-old female sex worker in Nylon, Namatala, Mbale City, was brutally attacked by her partner. This violence was triggered by her late return home, which her partner attributed to her sex work.[36] This attack highlights a troubling trend of intimate partner violence against sex workers, driven by stigmatisation and control over their professional choices.

On 5th November, 2023, the pattern of violence continued with a case involving a 22-year-old sex worker in Legolego, Namatala, Mbale City. She was physically assaulted by a client who became enraged when she refused to provide services due to her falling ill.[37] This incident highlights the exploitation and violence that sex workers face from clients, reflecting a broader issue of abuse linked to their profession.

Additionally, on 12th November and 17th November 2023, two more cases of physical abuse were reported, though details are sparse. In these instances, the lack of specific information limits the understanding of the full extent of the violations, but the patterns of violence and abuse against sex workers remain clear.

***December 2023***

In December, one case of assault was recorded involving a 36-year-old female sex worker in Tororo District was severely injured by a client. The client, upset with her for intervening in a bar fight, hit her with a beer bottle, causing serious injuries.[38]

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[36] WWM/SW/8/2023

[37] WWM/SW/78/2023

[38] WWM/SW/28/2023

***January 2024***

In January 2024, six assaults against female sex workers were reported, revealing a troubling pattern of violence from intimate partners, clients, and even neighbours.

On 3rd January, in Nauyo village, Mbale District, a 24-year-old sex worker was violently attacked by her neighbour. Accusing her of engaging in sex work and spreading HIV, the neighbor demanded she leave the area immediately. This unfounded accusation led to a brutal assault, underscoring the deep-seated stigma faced by sex workers.[39]

Domestic violence was starkly highlighted in two separate incidents. On 19th January, in Mbale City, a 35-year-old sex worker was assaulted by her husband at the Kamonkoli hotspot. After discovering her working there, he dragged her home and struck her with a metal object, injuring her eye and chest.[40] Similarly, on January 30th in Kampala, a sex worker was beaten by her boyfriend after confronting him about his late-night activities, suspecting him of visiting another sex worker.

Assaults by clients also featured prominently. On January 18th, in Bunga, a transgender sex worker was attacked by a client named Draxy following a payment dispute. The victim initially feared reporting the incident due to potential discrimination but eventually sought help from a support organisation, which brought the assault to light. Another client-related assault occurred on 22nd January in Kamwokya. In this case, the victim was beaten after she refused to engage in unprotected sex with the client who had forcefully removed the condom.

The final reported assault of the month took place on January 25th in Malukhu, Mbale. A 24-year-old sex worker was horrifically burned with cooking oil by a neighbor whom she had invited to her room for sex work services. The neighbour, feeling disrespected, retaliated by pouring hot oil on her face. Although the matter was reported and the suspect agreed to cover the victim's medical expenses, this attack highlights the extreme vulnerability and violence that sex workers often face.

***February 2024***

In February 2024, only one case of violation of the right to freedom from torture, inhuman, and degrading treatment was reported, highlighting the ongoing struggles of sex workers. On 9th

[39] WWM/SW/27/2023

[40] SD REF 14/18/2024

February in Kamwokya, a sex worker endured continued domestic violence from her former husband. Despite her numerous attempts to address the issue, the abuse persisted. Compounding the situation, the abuser's neglect of their four children added to the distress and hardship faced by the victim. This case underscores the pervasive and long-term impact of domestic violence on sex workers and their families.

***April 2024***

There was one case recorded in April 2024. On 10th April, A sex worker in Kirehe Ruti, Mbarara, experienced severe physical and sexual violence. She initially agreed to leave the hotspot with a client but was ambushed upon arrival at the room, where multiple men were waiting. These men forcibly subjected her to sexual acts without her consent, constituting a brutal gang rape. Despite the severity of the crime, the case was not reported to the police, highlighting the pervasive fear and mistrust that prevent many sex workers from seeking justice.

The report highlights the severe and ongoing violations of the right to freedom from cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment faced by sex workers in Uganda. Despite existing legal protections, these abuses continue due to inadequate enforcement and systemic discrimination. Immediate reforms are needed to strengthen legal safeguards, improve law enforcement responses, and provide better support for victims. Addressing these issues is essential to ensure the protection and dignity of sex workers.

**5.2. Right to property**

Article 26 of the Ugandan Constitution provides for the right to property and prohibits the deprivation of the same.[41] This aligns with Article 17(2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which guarantees the right to own property without arbitrary deprivation.[42] The UDHR further extends this protection through Article 25(1), which recognises the right to an adequate standard of living, one that encompasses essential needs such as housing and medical care.[43] This commitment to human dignity is echoed in Article 11(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), compelling states to ensure access to adequate living conditions for all, including food, clothing, and housing,

[41] 1995 Constitution, Article 26 (2)

[42] Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 17(2)

[43] Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25(1)

while striving for continuous improvement in these areas.[44] Yet, despite these protections, the years 2023-2024 have seen a disturbing rise in unlawful evictions, disproportionately targeting sex workers and starkly violating these fundamental rights. Such actions, which fail the proportionality test set out in R v Oakes,[45] are not merely restrictive but deeply unjust, depriving individuals of their homes and dignity in a manner that is indefensible in any free and democratic society.

The right to property, as enshrined in human rights frameworks, encompasses both personal and real property. This right not only protects against forced evictions and violations of the right to quiet enjoyment of property, whether rented, owned, or occupied by sex workers for residential or professional purposes, but also extends to the deprivation of personal property. Violations of this right have been observed in cases where sex workers have been deprived of their belongings through theft or other unlawful means. Such infringements underscore the broader vulnerability of sex workers to multiple forms of property rights violations, which affect both their economic well-being and personal security.

### 5.2.1. Impact of the Anti-Homosexual Act, Cap. 117

The enactment of the Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA) on 26th May, 2023, has been a significant factor in the rise of property rights violations. This Act not only criminalises consensual same-sex relationships, but also imposes severe restrictions on property use. Section 9 of the AHA penalises property owners who "knowingly allow any premises to be used by any person for the purposes of homosexuality," with a potential seven-year imprisonment sentence.

Furthermore, Section 11(2)(d) of the Act prohibits the promotion of homosexuality by knowingly leasing, using or permitting the use of property for activities that encourage homosexuality or any other offence under the Act. This provision has exacerbated the issue, as it effectively prevents sex workers, many of whom are part of the LGBTIQ+ community, from securing and maintaining stable housing. Landlords, influenced by the fear of legal

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[44] International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 11(1), This article states that "The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions

[45] R v Oakes, [1986] 1 S.C.R. 103, [1986] 1 S.C.R. 103, Supreme Court of Canada. This case established the Oakes test, a framework used to determine whether a law that limits a Charter right is justified under Section 1 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The test requires that the limitation be reasonable and demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society

consequences, are increasingly evicting tenants suspected of being involved in sex work or associated with the LGBTIQ+ community. [46]

The correlation between the Anti-Homosexuality Act and the surge in evictions is clear. The Act's stringent provisions have created an environment where property owners are motivated to discriminate against and unlawfully evict sex workers to avoid potential legal penalties. This has resulted in a significant rise in the number of sex workers being displaced from their homes, exacerbating their vulnerability and further infringing upon their right to property.

On 3rd April 2024, the Constitutional Court delivered a significant ruling on a petition challenging the constitutionality of the Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA).[47] The Court nullified Section 9 and Section 11(2)(d), stating that they violated Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and Article 16 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), which guarantee the right to an adequate standard of mental health. This ruling marks a positive step toward protecting the rights of sex workers, particularly those within the LGBTQ community.

However, between May 2023, when the AHA was enacted, and April 2024, when these provisions were voided, numerous sex workers were unlawfully deprived of their housing and faced violations of their right to property on the basis of these laws. The damage caused by these provisions during this period is undeniable, as lives were deeply affected by the enforcement of the law.

Moreover, the fact that most provisions of the AHA remain in force continues to create a perilous environment for LGBTQ sex workers. The law legitimises discrimination, stigmatisation, harassment, and prejudice against an already vulnerable group. The existence of this law legitimises and fuels fear and insecurity, making it nearly impossible for LGBTQ sex workers to live with dignity, free from the threat of arbitrary arrests and harassment. Therefore, the repeal of the AHA in its entirety is essential to ensure that LGBTQ sex workers can live safely and without fear.

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[46] Uganda: Court Upholds Anti-Homosexuality Act – Entrenches Discrimination, Enhances Risk of Anti-LGBT Violence" (4 April 2024) https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/04/04/uganda-court-upholds-anti-homosexuality-act accessed 17 August 2024.

[47] Fox Odoi and Others v Attorney General [2024] UGCC 10

### 5.2.2. Statistical Overview of Evictions

Between January 2023 and February 2024, a total of 126 evictions were recorded. In 2023, evictions began in January with 1 case recorded. 1 other case was recorded in August. The number increased in September with 18 recorded evictions. October saw the highest number, with 68 evictions, followed by 33 in November. In 2024, 5 evictions were recorded in January.

### 5.2.3. Violations

On the morning of January 15, 2023, a female sex worker was visited by her landlord, who ordered her to vacate her residence due to her occupation as a sex worker. Using a religious tone, the landlord claimed he could not accommodate what he deemed "immoral" clients in his "blessed" house and insulted her in front of neighbours and her children. He gave her two days to leave or face police involvement. This eviction not only breached the victim's right to property, as protected under international and national human rights frameworks, but also highlighted the discriminatory basis for the action. Her forced removal was solely due to her occupation, underscoring the unjust application of property rights and further exposing her to instability and additional discrimination.

On September 18th, a sex worker in the Central Region was evicted without prior notice and forced to spend the night outside. On October 3rd, another sex worker faced eviction in the Central Region, with several additional cases reported on subsequent days. These incidents demonstrate the widespread discrimination and mistreatment faced by sex workers.

### 5.2.4. Wider Implications and Impact

The consequences of these evictions extend beyond displacement. For example, on August 27th 2023, after being evicted and finding her home padlocked, a sex worker was forced to spend the night outside. During this time, she was violently attacked and raped by a group of men. This assault not only caused significant physical injuries and deep emotional trauma. This incident exemplifies how the lack of stable housing can exacerbate the risks and violence faced by sex workers, reflecting the urgent need for protective measures and support systems that address both property rights and personal safety.

The increase in property rights violations against sex workers calls for immediate legal reforms and advocacy. Protecting sex workers' rights to secure housing and safety is crucial to prevent further abuses and ensure their fundamental human rights are upheld. Evictions have significant

adverse effects on the lives of sex workers and exacerbate their vulnerability to other human rights violations.

**Other violations of the Right to Property.**

Sex workers' right to property have been violated in four cases of robbery and theft. On 24th December, 2022, a 19-year-old female sex worker in Bugema village, Nauyo Town Council, was violently attacked and robbed while returning home from work at around 10:00 pm. The unknown assailants beat her and forcibly took her phone, an essential tool for her livelihood. This incident not only involved physical harm but also represented a clear violation of her right to property. This case was not reported to the police. The targeted theft of her phone underscores the heightened vulnerabilities that sex workers face, as their property is often seen as easy prey by perpetrators who exploit their marginalised status.[48]

Similarly, on 26th December, 2022, another sex worker, aged 25, residing in Nauyo village, Bumamwanyi Sub County, Mbale District, experienced a violation of her property rights under different circumstances. She borrowed a phone from an acquaintance to contact her clients, but the phone was taken by one of her clients who left the premises before she could retrieve it. This situation, though not a traditional theft, still deprived her of her property and highlights the precarious nature of sex workers' access to and control over their belongings.[49] This case was reported to the police, however its current status is unknown.

On 20th April 2023, a sex worker was threatened with death by her client after she demanded the return of her phone, which the client had borrowed to make a call. Instead of returning the phone, the client fled with it, depriving her of her property. This case was also not reported to the police, leaving the victim without recourse to recover her stolen belongings.[50]

Another theft occurred on 12th February, 2024, in Jinja, a sex worker was robbed by a client. The victim had stepped out to the reception area to purchase condoms. Upon returning, she discovered that her phone and money were missing. This incident was reported to the police, but the current status of the case is not available. The robbery highlights the risks that sex workers face, even in seemingly routine situations, and underscores the need for improved safety measures and legal protections.

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[48] WWM/SW/26/2023

[49] WWM/SW/20/2023

[50] WWM/SW/65/2023

The incidents of theft and property violations against sex workers underscore their heightened vulnerability and the critical need for protection and justice. The cases reported—ranging from violent robberies to theft by clients—reveal a disturbing pattern of exploitation and disregard for their rights. The lack of formal reporting and recourse available to these individuals exacerbates their marginalisation and highlights the urgent need for systemic changes to address and safeguard their property rights effectively.

Furthermore, despite the legal protections outlined in the Ugandan Constitution and international human rights instruments, the recent year has witnessed an alarming rise in unlawful evictions, particularly driven by discriminatory laws such as the Anti-Homosexuality Act. This Act which imposed severe restrictions on property use, created a hostile environment that exacerbated property rights violations. Although some provisions of the Act have been nullified by the Constitutional Court, the damage inflicted during its enforcement period underscores the urgent need for comprehensive legal reforms.

**5.3. Right to Freedom from Discrimination and Equality under the Law.**

Article 21 of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda guarantees the right to freedom from discrimination and ensures equal protection under the law in all areas of life. This provision specifically prohibits discrimination based on factors such as sex and socio-economic status.[51] Additionally, Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) asserts that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, while Article 2 of the UDHR provides that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration, without distinction of any kind. Moreover, Articles 2, 3, and 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Articles 2 and 15(1) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and Articles 2, 3, and 19 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) reiterate this same principle, prohibiting discrimination on any basis. Furthermore, the constitutional guarantee of equality of all persons in Article 21(1) extends to minority groups, including sex workers.

The Constitution defines discrimination as providing different treatment to individuals based solely or primarily on a protected ground, including "social standing".[52] “Social standing” is defined as a person’s status or social class in society[53] which in turn is generally understood as

[51] Constitution of Uganda, Article 21(2)

[52] Constitution of Uganda, Article 23(3)

[53] Collins English Dictionary https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-status

an individual's rank in society or relative position in a social hierarchy.[54] According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, a person's status can be ascribed based on factors like occupation. Therefore, discrimination based on "social standing" clearly encompasses discrimination based on occupation.[55] Consequently, discriminating against sex workers based on their work is a clear violation of their rights and is fundamentally unjust.

### 5.3.1. Impact of the Criminalization of Sex Work on the Right to Freedom from Discrimination and Equality Under the Law.

The legal framework that criminalises sex work is not only a violation of the principles outlined above but also exacerbates the discrimination that sex workers face daily. The criminalisation of sex work directly contributes to discrimination by reinforcing negative stereotypes and societal biases against sex workers. When the law treats sex work as a criminal act, it not only stigmatises those involved but also legitimises discriminatory practices by law enforcement, employers, and the public. Sex workers become vulnerable to harassment, violence, and exploitation, often with little to no legal recourse, as their profession is deemed illegal.[56]

The criminalisation of sex work thus institutionalises discrimination, making it difficult for sex workers to assert their rights and leading to widespread violations of their dignity and equality. Furthermore, it exacerbates discrimination by creating a legal environment where sex workers are marginalised and vulnerable to abuse.[57] Due to the illegal nature of their work, many sex workers are hesitant to report violations of their rights, fearing arrest and prosecution. This fear of legal repercussions silences them, leaving them without access to justice or protection. Perpetrators of violence and other rights violations exploit this vulnerability, knowing that sex workers are less likely to seek help from authorities. As a result, they can harm sex workers with impunity, confident that the illegal status of their victims will prevent any consequences.[58]

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[54] *See* https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-status.

[55] Encylopaedia Britannica https://www.britannica.com/topic/social-status

[56] Ine Vanwesenbeeck, 'Sex Work Criminalization Is Barking Up the Wrong Tree' (published online 5 June 2017) Springer https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-017-1008-3 [Accessed 17 August 2023]

[57] Ibid

[58] John Godwin, Sex Work and the Law in Asia and the Pacific: Laws, HIV, and Human Rights in the Context of Sex Work (October 2012).

### 5.3.2. Incidents of Violation of the Right to Freedom from Discrimination and Equality under the Law

Five incidents of the violation of this right were recorded. The perpetrators ranged from members of the community to fellow sex workers and law enforcement. Such discrimination stems from the societal stigma surrounding sex work as a profession which, as well as discriminatory laws which further marginalize sex workers.

The following cases illustrate the gravity of this issue: On 18th January, 2023, a sex worker in Mbarara was brutally attacked by a group of community women. The assault was driven by hostility towards her status as a sex worker, with accusations that she was a bad influence and promoting prostitution and drug use. The violence left her unconscious and bleeding from the nose, highlighting the severe discrimination and danger faced by sex workers in their communities.

Discrimination within the sex worker community also reflects the deep-rooted stigma they face in society. On 13th March, 2023, in Mbale city, a sex worker at Centre Restaurant hotspot was accused by a fellow sex worker of bewitching her to prevent her from getting clients. The accuser further claimed that sex workers from her tribe were murderers. This harmful and unfounded accusation not only defamed the victim but also targeted her based on her ethnicity, violating her right to be free from discrimination. The case, however, was not reported to the police.

Similarly, on 20th June, 2023, a distressing incident of discrimination was reported in Wabiduku, Kiwatule. A female sex worker faced verbal abuse and stigmatisation from a fellow sex worker due to her HIV-positive status, as well as the status of her child. This case highlights the painful reality of discrimination within the sex worker community, where individuals already marginalised by society face further harm from their peers.

Acts of blackmail, threats, and media outing further exacerbate the discrimination sex workers endure. On 3rd October, 2023, a sex worker in the Central Region was blackmailed and threatened. This act of coercion violated her right to personal security and inflicted significant psychological harm, further endangering her safety.

On 14th October, 2023, a sex worker in the Western Region experienced media outing and online violence. This breach of privacy exposed her to public humiliation and heightened her vulnerability to further abuse.

Evictions based on discriminatory laws have also highlighted the intersection between legal frameworks and discrimination. Furthermore, there were multiple evictions of sex workers from their rented homes, most of which were ignited by the passing of the discriminatory Anti-Homosexual Act, which contained provisions prohibiting the renting out of houses to LGBTQ+ persons. The arbitrary denial of housing was a severe violation of their right to freedom from discrimination.

In summary, the criminalisation of sex work in Uganda perpetuates systemic discrimination, denying sex workers their right to equality and protection under the law. This legal stance fosters societal stigmatisation, leaving sex workers vulnerable to violence and exploitation without recourse to justice. Addressing this issue is essential to ensuring their rights and dignity are upheld.

**5.4. The Right to Life.**

The right to life is guaranteed under Article 22 of the Ugandan Constitution, which stipulates that no one shall be intentionally deprived of their right to life. This is in alignment with Article 6(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which asserts that no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of life, and that this right must be protected by law. The ICCPR establishes that States have a fundamental obligation to respect and ensure the right to life, enforce it through legislative and other measures, and provide effective remedies and reparations to victims of violations of this right.[59]

States are also required to ensure the protection of the right to life by exercising due diligence to protect individuals from deprivations caused by non-state actors.[60] The second sentence of Article 6(1) underscores that the right to life "shall be protected by law," implying that States must create a legal framework that ensures the full enjoyment of this right by all individuals.[61]

An essential aspect of the protection afforded by the ICCPR is the obligation of States to investigate incidents of deprivation of the right to life, and where appropriate, prosecute the perpetrators.[62]

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[59] UN Human Rights Committee, 'General Comment No. 36 - Article 6: Right to Life' (30 October 2018) CCPR/C/GC/36, para 4.

[60] Ibid, para 7

[61] Ibid, para 18

[62] Ibid, para 27

### 5.4.1. Impact of the Criminalization of Sex Work on the Right to Life

The criminalization of sex work significantly contributes to the deprivation of the right to life of sex workers, as it creates an environment where they are marginalised, stigmatised, and rendered vulnerable to violence, including murder. Criminalisation drives sex work underground, making it difficult for sex workers to seek protection or justice from law enforcement, as they fear arrest, prosecution, or further victimisation. The illegal status of their work deters them from seeking protection or reporting threats to the authorities due to fear of arrest, prosecution, or further victimisation. This vulnerability allows perpetrators to commit acts of violence, including murder, with a sense of impunity, knowing that their victims are unlikely to receive legal protection or justice.[63] As a result, there were 14 recorded violations of the right to life between 2023-2024.

### 5.4.2. Murder Cases

Throughout 2023 and early 2024, there are 11 tragic murders of sex workers recorded, underscoring a severe violation of their right to life. Many of these murders remain unresolved, reflecting a systemic issue in protecting sex workers and delivering justice. The lack of progress in these investigations highlights the extreme vulnerability of sex workers, who often face severe violence due to their marginalised status. This underscores the urgent need for comprehensive protective measures and effective law enforcement to uphold the right to life for sex workers and ensure their safety.

On 18th February 2023, a sex worker was discovered dead in a lodge in Kiyindi, Mukono, with the circumstances of her death remaining unclear and no police report filed, leaving the case unresolved. On 6th August 2023, a sex worker known was found murdered in the lodges of Kivumbi in Kyabadaza. The crime scene was abandoned by lodge managers, and the investigation's progress remains unknown.

December 2023 brought further tragedy with two significant cases. On 15th December, a sex worker was found dead in Butenga village, leaving behind a child. The details of the investigation are not available. Shortly after, on 19th December, another sex worker was

[63] Human Rights Watch, '"Treat Us Like Human Beings": Discrimination against Sex Workers, Sexual and Gender Minorities, and People Who Use Drugs in Tanzania' (18 June 2013) https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/06/18/treat-us-human-beings/discrimination-against-sex-workers-sexual-and-gender accessed [date you accessed it].

discovered murdered in her room in Bwaise, with a post-mortem revealing fatal stab wounds. Again, there is no information on the progress of the investigation.

The new year began with more violence with two murders recorded in January 2024. 11th On January, 2024, another sex worker was found brutally murdered in Kigonbya, her body discarded on the roadside. The investigation details are lacking. On January 15, another sex worker was discovered dead in Butenga village, Masaka, leaving behind a child. As with previous cases, the investigation's status remains unclear.

In February 2024, four serious murders of female sex workers were reported. On 4th February, another female sex worker was discovered dead in Lukaya, Masaka. Indications suggested she was murdered the previous night.

Later, on 11th February 2024, Kokunda another sex worker, aged 29, was found murdered in Kireka, Wakiso, her body discovered in a pool of blood. The next reported murder occurred on 18th,February 2024 in Myende Island, where a sex worker was found dead in a lodge room, the victim of a murder by a client. Despite the grave nature of this case, it was not reported to the police.

Finally, on February 20th, a sex worker was found murdered in her room in Mukono. Originally from Iganga, she lived there with her two children. In both of these cases, the details of the investigations remain unclear, with little information available on the progress or perpetrators involved.

The relentless series of 11 murders of sex workers over 2023 and early 2024 reveals a stark reality: sex workers are often left unprotected and vulnerable to the most severe forms of violence, with their right to life grossly violated. The persistent lack of progress in these investigations not only leaves families and communities in anguish but also highlights a troubling disregard for the lives of these women. Each unresolved case is a painful reminder of the systemic failures that allow such injustices to continue, underscoring the urgent need for meaningful protections and justice for sex workers.

### 5.4.3. Attempted Murder Cases

There were also three incidents of attempted murder reported. Two of them were perpetrated by a client and one by an intimate partner as narrated below;

On 5th January, 2023, a sex worker faced a grave violation of her right to life when her partner, enraged by discovering her sex work, attempted to murder her. After learning about her profession, he attacked her with a knife in a fit of rage. Despite her efforts to defend herself, the assault resulted in severe injury, including the severing of her lip. This brutal attack highlights a stark disregard for the sex worker's fundamental right to life and personal safety. The assault not only endangered her life but also underscores the vulnerability of individuals facing violence due to their occupation. The case was reported to the Kawempe police, however its current status remains unknown. [64]

On 21st February, 2023, a case of attempted murder occurred in Kireka. A female sex worker was discovered unconscious under a bed, with visible hand marks and scratches on her neck, indicating that she had been strangled by a client. The client had then pushed her under the bed, leaving her for dead. This horrifying incident was also not reported to the police.

On 8th February 2024, a significant incident of violence occurred when a client attempted to murder an FSW in Mbale City. The attack began after a dispute over payment, where the client offered less money than initially agreed. Enraged, he pulled out a knife and assaulted the victim, injuring her on her neck and hand. The case was reported to the police but there is currently no update available on its current status.[65]

The three attempted murders of sex workers between 2023 and early 2024 paint a harrowing picture of the dangers these women face, often at the hands of those they know or trust. These incidents reveal not only the extreme physical violence but also the deep-seated prejudices that make sex workers vulnerable to such brutality. Whether driven by rage, control, or the dehumanisation of their profession, these attacks highlight a grave violation of their right to life and personal safety. The lack of updates on these cases further emphasises the need for stronger protections and more effective legal responses to safeguard the lives of sex workers.

Conclusively, the murders and attempted murders of sex workers over the past year are not just isolated incidents but part of a broader pattern of violence that reflects the deeply ingrained stigmatisation and marginalisation of these women. Each of the 11 lives lost, and each woman who narrowly escaped death, represents a devastating failure of our society to protect the most vulnerable. These tragedies serve as stark reminders that the right to life, a fundamental human right, is being denied to sex workers, often with impunity. The continued lack of accountability

[64] Kawempe Police: 98/06/01/2023

[65] SD REF 161/20/2023

and justice in these cases only deepens the wounds inflicted on these women and their communities. It is a call to action for all of us to demand meaningful change, ensuring that sex workers are afforded the same rights, protection, and dignity as every other human being.

### 5.5. Right to Liberty

Article 23 of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda guarantees the right to liberty for every individual. The right to personal liberty requires that persons not be subject to arrest and detention except as provided for by law, and provided that neither the arrest nor the detention is arbitrary. Art. 9 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights states that everyone has the right to liberty. The right prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, as well as unlawful deprivation of liberty. The concept of arbitrariness is not limited to actions that are illegal but is understood more broadly. It encompasses factors such as inappropriateness, injustice, unpredictability, lack of due process, and the absence of reasonableness, necessity, and proportionality. [66]

While this right is recognised, it is also subject to certain limitations under specific conditions. For example, the Constitution allows for the restriction of liberty when arresting someone based on reasonable suspicion of having committed or being likely to commit an offense. However, the same Constitution sets out important protections against unjust restrictions, underscoring the importance of procedural fairness. These protections require that anyone arrested must be held in a legally authorised place, informed of the reasons for their arrest and detention in a language they understand, and cannot be kept in police custody for more than 48 hours.[67]

Despite these legal safeguards, the reality for many sex workers in Uganda tells a different story. The right to liberty of sex workers is frequently infringed due to their profession, as law enforcement often targets them with outdated charges such as "common nuisance."[68] These charges, although not directly related to prostitution, are commonly used as a pretext to arrest and detain sex workers. According to a study on the arrests of sex workers, police officers rarely charge them under the specific provisions of the Penal Code Act that criminalise

[66] Human Rights Committee, General Comment No 35, CCPR/C/GC/35.

[67] 1995 Constitution of Uganda, Article 23

[68] Penal Code Act Cap 128, Section 160

prostitution.[69] This is largely because proving prostitution and related offences beyond a reasonable doubt is challenging during a criminal trial. The difficulty in gathering evidence and securing witnesses, as most activities occur in private settings like hotels and brothels, further complicates prosecution.[70]

Consequently, rather than pursuing the more complex task of proving prostitution, law enforcement finds it easier to arrest sex workers who are visible on the streets and charge them with lesser, vague offences. These arrests often do not lead to formal charges or court proceedings. Instead, they serve as opportunities for extortion, where sex workers are coerced into paying bribes to secure their release. In more egregious cases, the abuse goes further, with reports of sex workers being raped by law enforcement officers.[71] This practice not only violates their right to liberty but also perpetuates a cycle of abuse and exploitation, leaving sex workers vulnerable and without recourse to justice.

In December 2022, the Constitutional Court declared Section 168(1)(c) of the Penal Code Act, which criminalised being idle and disorderly, unconstitutional.[72] Since the nullification of this law, there has been a significant decrease in the number of arbitrary arrests of sex workers, as the police had heavily relied on this provision to arrest and detain them. The law had previously granted the police excessive power to arrest virtually anyone, leading to widespread misuse. Notably, only one such case was recorded between 2023 and 2024, highlighting the positive impact of repealing colonial and outdated laws on protecting the right to liberty of sex workers.

In summary, while the right to liberty is enshrined in both the Ugandan Constitution and international law, sex workers in Uganda frequently experience violations of this right. Law enforcement often targets them with vague charges like "common nuisance" as a means to detain them arbitrarily, bypassing the need to prove more specific offences related to prostitution. These practices not only lead to unlawful detention but also open the door to extortion, abuse, and exploitation, further marginalising sex workers and denying them access to justice.

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[69] Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum, Legal Regulation of Sex Work in Uganda: Exploring the Current Trends and their Impact on the Human Rights of Sex Workers page 58.

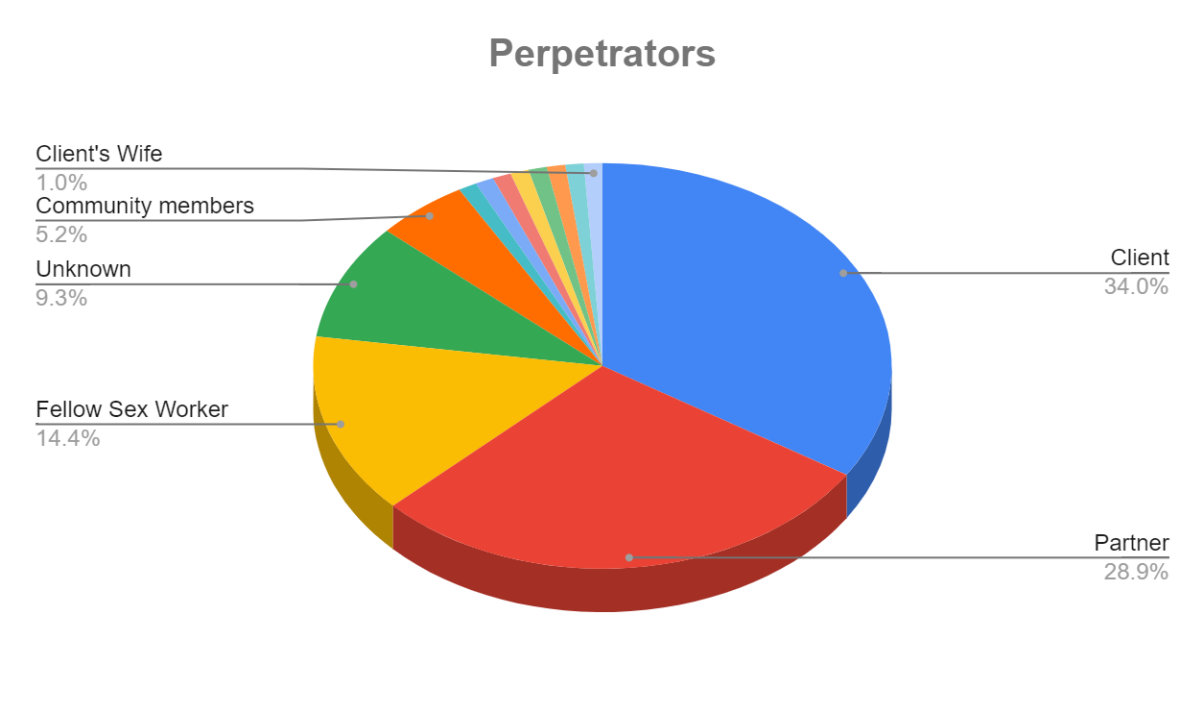
[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibid

[72] Francis Tumwesigye Ateenyi v Attorney General Constitutional Petition No.36 of 2018.

## 6. Perpetrators of Human Rights Violations

*Perpetrators of Human Rights Violations Against Sex Workers 2023-2024*




The data on human rights violations against sex workers in 2023-2024 reveals significant insights into the nature and sources of violence within this community. Clients are identified as the primary perpetrators, accounting for the largest proportion of violations (34), which indicates a troubling exploitation of power. Intimate partners also pose a serious threat, with 29 violations attributed to them, underscoring the critical issue of domestic violence in the context of sex work. The presence of 14 violations carried out by fellow sex workers highlights potential intra-community tensions or conflicts, pointing to the need for addressing underlying issues within the sex work community. Additionally, the involvement of police officers (1), a local leader (1), and UPDF soldiers in these violations highlights a disturbing trend where individuals in positions of authority exploit their roles to perpetuate violence against sex workers. The fact that none of these cases were reported to the police is particularly telling. It indicates that the positions of authority held by the perpetrators played a significant role in the decision not to report the incidents. The victims likely feared retaliation, further victimisation, or simply believed that their complaints would be dismissed due to the perpetrators' influence and power.

4 incidents involving members of the community including 2 neighbours, one attack by community women and one bouncer suggest that violence against sex workers extends beyond

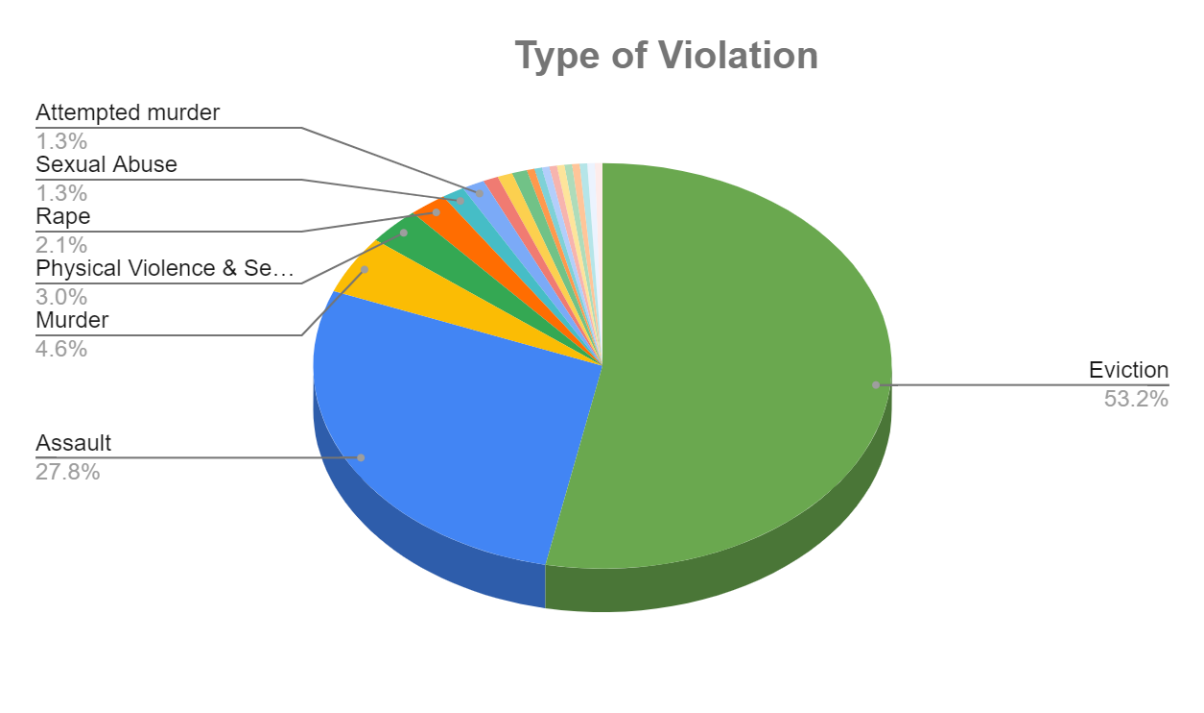
personal relationships to broader societal issues of discrimination and abuse. The 7 cases involving unknown perpetrators may reflect either a higher level of random violence or underreporting, emphasising the need for better reporting mechanisms and enhanced protection for sex workers. Overall, this data highlights the need for comprehensive strategies to address violence from various sources, including legal protections, community support, and targeted interventions.

## 7. Comparative analysis of the years 2022-2023 and 2023-2034.

This report presents a comparative analysis of the human rights violations reported against sex workers in Uganda during the periods 2022-2023 and 2023-2024. The purpose of this comparison is to identify trends, shifts, and emerging patterns in the types of violations, their frequency, and the response from law enforcement and other relevant stakeholders. By examining the data from these two periods, we aim to highlight the ongoing challenges faced by sex workers, particularly in terms of their safety, access to justice, and overall well-being.

### 7.1. Types of violations

*Nature of Human Rights Violations Perpetrated Against Sex Workers (2023-2024)*




The comparison of violations between 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 reveals a dramatic escalation in abuses against sex workers. The total number of reported violations surged from 46 in the

earlier period to an alarming 214 in the latter. This spike can be largely attributed to the 126 evictions resulting from the introduction of the Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA). Sections 9 and 11(2)(d) of the AHA facilitated widespread evictions based on perceived sexual orientation, demonstrating how legislation can directly precipitate human rights abuses.

The troubling rise in abuse against sex workers, reflected in the increase from 40 to 78 cases of torture and inhumane treatment, is deeply rooted in systemic failures. Persistent issues within law enforcement and the judicial system have made it increasingly difficult for sex workers to find protection and justice. The criminalization of sex work only makes this worse, driving their work underground and leaving them more exposed to violence.

For the right to liberty, there was a decline in the number of violations recorded from 4 cases in 2022-2023 to only one recorded in 2023-2024. the limited involvement of the police can be attributed to the Constitutional Court's ruling in December 2022 that declared the offense of 'rogue and vagabond' unconstitutional and therefore annulled. This significant legal change led to a decline in recorded violations. This reduction highlights the positive impact that legal reforms can have on mitigating human rights violations faced by sex workers.

Discrimination incidents also tripled, climbing from 2 to 6, reflecting an intensifying pattern of exclusion and prejudice possibly fuelled by the AHA’s legal and social impact. The right to property experienced a significant shift, with 130 reported violations in 2023-2024 compared to none in the previous year, indicating that the AHA has empowered landlords and authorities to carry out evictions based on perceived sexual orientation.

The most concerning trend is the increase in violence against sex workers, with murders more than doubling from 4 to 11 and attempted murders rising from 1 to 3. This sharp escalation in lethal violence highlights the severe risks faced by sex workers and underscores the erosion of their right to life. Overall, these statistics illustrate a worsening environment for sex workers, driven largely by recent legal changes. Urgent action is needed to address these violations, ensure accountability, and restore protections for this vulnerable population.

### 7.2. Comparison of Perpetrators

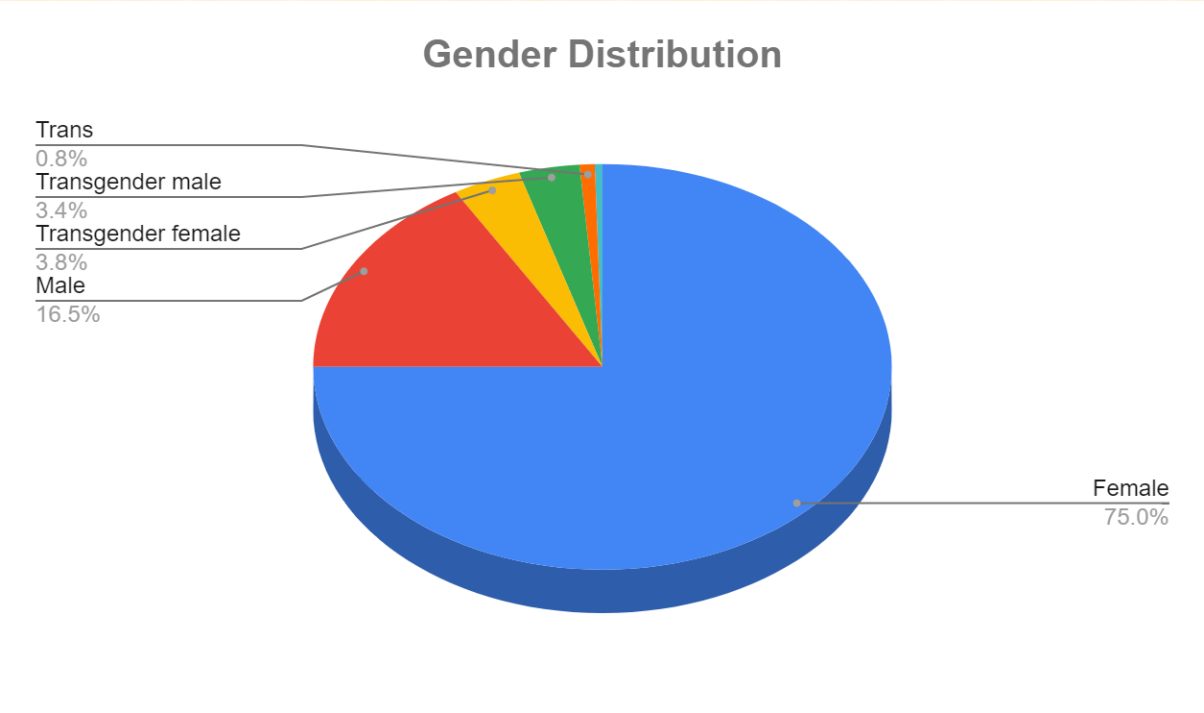
In the 2022-2023 report, clients were identified as the most common perpetrators, responsible for 17 cases of violence. The second largest group was clients' intimate partners, accounting for 9 cases. Police were noted as perpetrators in 9 cases, reflecting significant involvement

from law enforcement. Additionally, fellow sex workers were implicated in 3 cases of violence, and community members in 1 case.

In contrast, the 2023-2024 report shows a notable shift in the patterns of perpetration. Clients remain the most frequent offenders, but the number increased to 33 cases. Intimate partners of clients were the second most common perpetrators, with 28 cases reported. The involvement of police as perpetrators has decreased to 1 case, highlighting a change in law enforcement's role. Violence committed by fellow sex workers rose significantly to 12 cases, while violence by community members also increased to 4 cases.

### 7.3. Categories of sex workers

*Gender Distribution of Sex Workers Reporting Human Rights Violations (2023-2024)*




In the reports, the categories of sex workers that reported human rights violations are broken down as follows: 75.0% were female, 16.5% were male, 3.4% were transgender men, and 3.8% were transgender women. This translates to 177 female sex workers, 39 male sex workers, 8 transgender men, and 9 transgender women.

In both 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, female sex workers make up the biggest proportion of sex workers who reported human rights violations. This is due to their predominant number within the sex worker population. Additionally, women are disproportionately affected by gender-

based violence,[73] which is exacerbated by their status as sex workers, making them more susceptible to abuse and exploitation.

Comparatively, last year saw only one case involving a male sex worker and one involving a transgender individual. The noticeable increase in the number of transgender people this year can be largely attributed to the high number of evictions resulting from the enactment of the Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA), which disproportionately affected transgender individuals and led to a significant rise in their documented cases.

The enactment of the Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA) significantly intensified surveillance and scrutiny of LGBTQ individuals, as the law criminalised knowingly housing them as tenants. This heightened vigilance contributed to a surge in violations and evictions, particularly impacting transgender individuals. The increased levels of surveillance created an environment where LGBTQ individuals, especially transgender people, were more likely to be targeted and documented in the reports due to the pervasive fear and discrimination fostered by the law.

The drastic increase in reported human rights violations among male sex workers from just one case last year to 39 this year could be attributed to several factors. One significant reason might be the increased visibility and awareness of male sex workers within both the community and law enforcement, leading to more cases being reported. Additionally, the introduction and enforcement of laws like the Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA) could have heightened the risks and vulnerability for male sex workers, prompting them to come forward in greater numbers to report abuses. The growing recognition of the rights of male sex workers and the possibly enhanced support networks might have also played a role, encouraging more to report violations. Lastly, the overall increase in violence and discrimination against LGBTQ individuals due to the AHA might have disproportionately affected male sex workers, leading to a surge in reported cases.

In conclusion, the comparison between 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 reveals a sharp rise in human rights violations against sex workers in Uganda, some of which were largely driven by the Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA). The spike in evictions, torture, and lethal violence highlights the harmful impact of recent legal changes. Shifts in the patterns of perpetrators and the increased targeting of transgender and male sex workers underscore the broader challenges

[73] Peter Ocheme, Shajobi-Ibikunle Gloria, and Namaganda Zuwena, 'A Critical Overview of Gender-Based Violence in Uganda' (2012) [2020] Journal Title [8] Issue.1

these groups face. This analysis calls for urgent legal reforms and stronger protections to address these escalating abuses.

## 8. Recommendations

**To the Government**

**8.1. Review and Repeal Colonial-Era Legislation:** The government should undertake a comprehensive review of outdated colonial-era laws, such as the "common nuisance" law, which are frequently misapplied by law enforcement to unjustly charge and detain sex workers. These laws, which were designed for a different historical context, no longer serve a legitimate purpose and disproportionately target vulnerable groups, including sex workers.

**8.2. Decriminalise Sex Work**

The government should move towards the decriminalisation of sex work by removing criminal and administrative penalties specifically targeting sex workers. This approach would create an enabling environment that prioritizes the health, safety, and human rights of sex workers. Decriminalisation should be accompanied by the recognition of sex work as legitimate work, thereby allowing it to be governed by labour laws and protections similar to those in other professions.

By decriminalising sex work, the government can reduce the stigma and discrimination that sex workers face, enabling them to seek justice and protection without fear of legal repercussions. This shift would also empower sex workers to access health services, report human rights violations, and improve their working conditions, ultimately contributing to their overall well-being and safety.

**To UNESO and its Members.**

**8.3. Increase Government Collaboration and Lobbying for Comprehensive Training Programs:** Sex worker-led organisations like UNESO and its membership, through increased engagement with the government, can contribute to the development of training programs that address the violations and challenges faced by sex workers. By sharing reports, such as this one, which highlight the plight of sex workers, these organisations can collaborate with the government to develop and implement comprehensive training programs for law enforcement officers. These programs should extend to grassroots and district levels, ensuring broad and effective outcomes. The training should focus on

eliminating discrimination, biases, and stereotypes that often result in the mistreatment of sex workers when they report human rights violations. Additionally, they should include opportunities for sex workers to share their lived experiences, ensuring that the training fosters a genuine understanding of their realities. This will help ensure that law enforcement officers uphold the human rights of all individuals, treating complaints from sex workers with the seriousness and respect they deserve.

**8.4. Access to Education and Vocational Training:** Social protection measures should be implemented to support sex workers, such as access to education, vocational training. Providing sex workers with opportunities for education and vocational training can help them to develop new skills and increase their employability options outside of sex work. This can reduce their reliance on the sex trade, thus reducing their vulnerability to exploitation by providing them with alternative livelihood options and support services

**8.5. Enhance Case Documentation and Follow-up Systems.**

- **Developing a Comprehensive Case Management System:** UNESO should establish a robust case management system that includes detailed documentation of incidents, follow-ups, and outcomes. This system would help track the progress of each case and ensure that no case is overlooked. It could be an internal database that logs details such as the nature of the violation, the response provided, and the current status of legal proceedings. This would tackle the issue of inadequate data on the follow ups and status of cases. UNESO should prioritise data consolidation by fostering synergies with partner organisations to ensure that all data collected is accessible, validated, and accurately reflects the full scope of recorded cases. By creating a coordinated system that allows for the sharing and cross-verification of data between partners, UNESO can ensure that the information gathered is comprehensive and consistent. This will not only provide a clearer and more accurate picture of the human rights violations experienced by sex workers but will also strengthen advocacy efforts by ensuring that the data presented is reliable and inclusive of all cases, regardless of the source.

- **Assign Dedicated Case Managers:** Appoint specific case managers to handle follow-ups on reported violations. These managers should regularly check in with sex workers to provide updates on their cases, offer additional support, and ensure that the legal process is being followed.

- **Enhance Resource Mobilisation:** UNESO should intensify its resource mobilization efforts to ensure that organizations involved in data collection are adequately facilitated. This will enable these organizations to not only expand and strengthen their data collection efforts but also ensure that the data gathered is thoroughly verified and followed up on. By providing necessary resources, UNESO can ensure that cases are not merely recorded, but that their status is tracked, with appropriate follow-up to ensure accountability and resolution. This approach will enhance the quality of data, provide a more accurate reflection of the human rights violations experienced, and contribute to more effective advocacy and programmatic interventions.

### 8.6. Strengthen Legal and Psychological Support

- **Legal Aid and Advocacy:** Organisations should bolster their legal aid programs to provide sex workers with continuous legal representation. This includes helping them file police reports, pursue legal action, and navigate the judicial system. Additionally, NGOs could work on building relationships with law enforcement to ensure that cases involving sex workers are taken seriously and followed up diligently.

- **Psychosocial Support:** Given the trauma often associated with violence against sex workers, Organisations should ensure that survivors have access to ongoing psychological support. This could involve partnerships with mental health professionals or creating peer support networks that allow survivors to connect with others who have had similar experiences.

### 8.7. Promote Collaboration with Law Enforcement and Healthcare Providers

- **Build Stronger Partnerships with Police and Healthcare Facilities:** Encourage regular dialogue and collaboration between Organisations, law enforcement, and healthcare providers to improve the handling of cases involving sex workers. This could involve joint training sessions, creating referral pathways, and setting up protocols for reporting and following up on cases.

- **Advocate for Sensitisation Programs:** Organisations should advocate for and participate in the development of sensitisation programs for law enforcement and healthcare workers. These programs should focus on the rights and vulnerabilities of sex workers, emphasizing the need for a non-judgmental and supportive approach when dealing with them.

**8.8. Establish Safe Reporting Channels:** Organisations should set up confidential and accessible channels through which sex workers can report violations. These could include hotlines, mobile apps, or designated safe spaces where sex workers can seek help without fear of retribution. Set up dedicated legal support hotlines in the Central Region, where sex workers can get immediate advice and assistance in case of human rights violations. These hotlines should be staffed by knowledgeable professionals who can provide guidance and link sex workers to legal aid services.

**8.9. Organise Regular Training Workshops:** Organisations should conduct regular training for their staff, volunteers, and sex workers on topics such as legal rights, self-defense, and navigating the judicial system. These workshops could also cover how to effectively document violations and the importance of following up on cases.

**8.10. Capacity Building for Sex Workers:** Organisations could offer workshops to sex workers on how to protect themselves, know their rights, and safely report violations. This could also include financial literacy and skill-building sessions to help them explore alternative livelihood options if they wish.

**8.11. Online Platforms**: Organisations should set up and actively manage online forums or social media groups specifically designed for sex workers to share their experiences anonymously. For example, creating a dedicated section on a secure online forum can provide a safe environment for sex workers to discuss their challenges and connect with others in similar situations. This can provide a safe space for sex workers to express themselves and connect with others. To ensure these platforms are effective and safe, organizations should implement strict privacy controls, offer regular moderation, and provide clear guidelines for participation. Additionally, offering support and resources through these platforms, such as links to legal assistance or counselling services, can help address the immediate need.

**8.12. Awareness-Raising Campaigns:** Public awareness campaigns should be conducted to challenge stigma and discrimination against sex workers and promote respect for their human rights. These campaigns could involve a mix of media formats, such as social media ads, public service announcements, and educational workshops. Incorporating real stories and testimonials from sex workers can humanize the issue and foster empathy. Engaging with the media to cover these stories, along with creating informative pamphlets and posters for distribution in public spaces, can further enhance the visibility and impact of

these campaigns. By actively addressing and dismantling harmful stereotypes and promoting a culture of respect and equality, these efforts can contribute to a more inclusive society and improve the overall well-being of sex workers.

**8.13. Regular Monitoring and Evaluation:** UNESO through its members should establish feedback mechanisms for sex workers to provide input on the effectiveness of interventions and to report any ongoing issues or concerns. Regularly reviewing and acting on the feedback received will help UNESO stay responsive to the needs and concerns of sex workers. Implement regular monitoring and evaluation systems to track the progress of interventions aimed at protecting the rights of sex workers. This will help to identify areas where improvements are needed and ensure that interventions are effective.