



**U**ganda is a landlocked country in East Africa with an estimated population of 45.6 million. It has one of the youngest populations globally, with 56% under the age of 18 approximately 26.4 million children. Despite steady economic growth, children in Uganda face serious protection challenges. Many experience violence, abuse, and harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation. About 56% live in multidimensional poverty, lacking access to education, healthcare, safe housing, and protection. Key child protection frameworks exist, but weak enforcement, limited resources, and harmful social norms continue to hinder progress. Strengthening child protection systems is essential to safeguarding the rights, dignity, and future of Uganda's children.

At Terre des Hommes Netherlands, we are committed to addressing the root causes that leave children vulnerable to exploitation, while also empowering them to advocate for themselves and have their voices heard.

## CHILDREN IN UGANDA



Uganda has one of the youngest populations globally, with over 26.4 million children, making up half of the total population. Of these, more than 56% of children live in multidimensional poverty, lacking access to essential services such as education, healthcare, nutrition, housing, and protection. Over half of children under five and 38% of school-aged children live in impoverished conditions that severely limit their development.

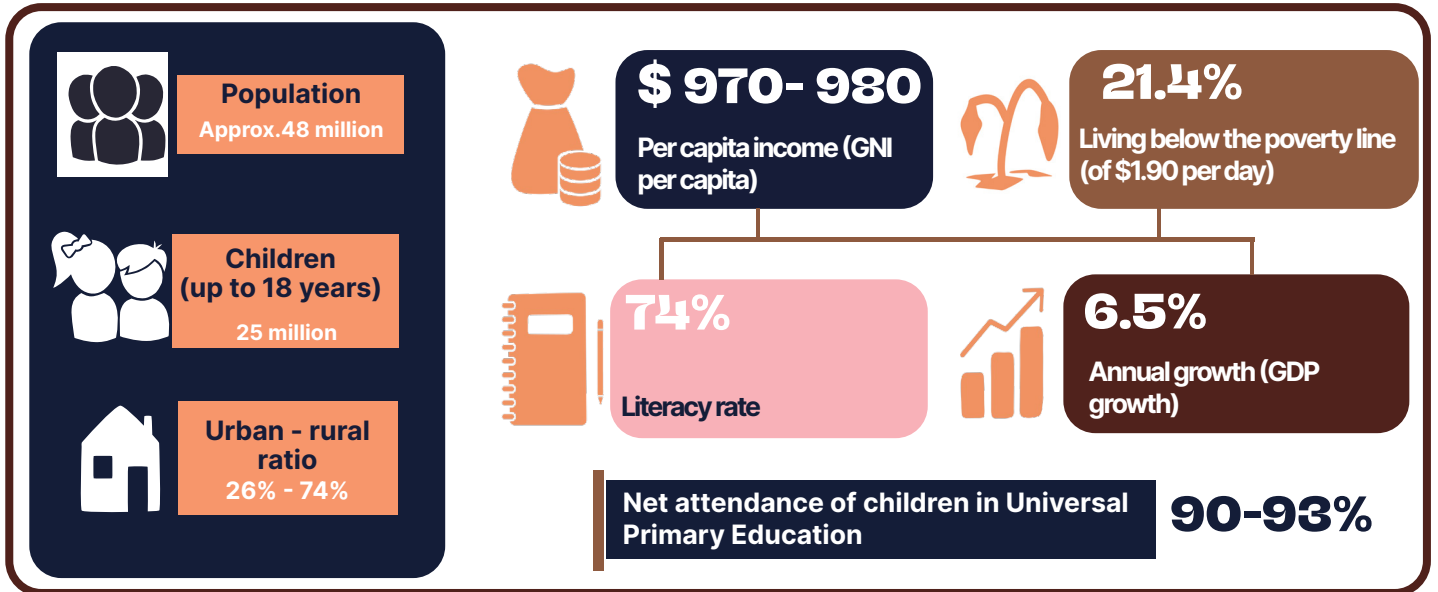
Approximately 2.5 million children in Uganda are orphans, and an estimated 8 million are considered vulnerable to harm. Many face heightened risks of violence, abuse, and exploitation.



Girls, in particular, are at risk of child marriage, teenage pregnancy, and, in certain communities, female genital mutilation. Transactional sex remains a growing concern, largely driven by poverty; some girls engage in it for food, clothes, or safe transport to school. One in ten children have reported being solicited for sexual acts in exchange for money or gifts, either online or in person. Child labour remains widespread, with 93% of rural children engaged in commercial or subsistence agriculture.

Recognising and upholding the rights of children to protection, education, and dignity is essential to shaping a safer and more equitable future for Uganda.

## DEMOGRAPHICS



## OUR WORK IN UGANDA

Terre des Hommes Netherlands works to prevent and respond to child sexual exploitation, trafficking, unsafe migration, child labour, and gender inequality in Uganda. Our approach focuses on addressing the root causes of these issues such as poverty, limited access to education, entrenched harmful social norms, and under-resourced child protection systems.

### ♦ Sexual Exploitation of Children

Sexual exploitation continues to rise, particularly in urban slums, where poverty and lack of livelihood options drive girls and young women into transactional sex, often with older men. In rural areas, the exchange may not be monetary but is often framed as a pathway to marriage. These exploitative practices have severe long-term consequences for children's health, education, and safety.

### ♦ Child Trafficking and Unsafe Migration

Children most at risk of trafficking include orphans, street-connected children, those out of school, and children from poor or abusive households. Internal trafficking is prevalent, especially from high-poverty regions like Karamoja, which contributes nearly 40% of child labourers in Kampala. Girls are frequently trafficked into sexual exploitation disguised as work in bars or restaurants, or into forced marriage.

### ♦ Child Labour

An estimated 6.2 million children aged 5–17, about 40% are involved in child labour, especially in agriculture.

Rural children are disproportionately affected. In areas like Busoga, up to 45% of children from poor households are forced to work, undermining their development and Uganda's commitment to SDG 8.7 on eliminating child labour.

### ♦ Child Trafficking and Child Labour

Karamoja, one of the poorest regions in Uganda, faces a high prevalence of child trafficking and child labour, driven by extreme poverty, food insecurity, and harmful social norms. Children, especially girls, are often trafficked internally to urban centres like Kampala under false promises of work or education. Many end up in exploitative situations, including domestic servitude, sexual exploitation, forced begging, and street vending. According to national surveys, Karamoja accounts for nearly 40% of all internally trafficked children in Kampala, with child labour rates as high as 56% in the region. Cultural acceptance of child migration as a survival strategy further exposes children to abuse and exploitation. The lack of access to education, weak protection systems, and limited livelihood options for families continue to fuel these vulnerabilities.

### ♦ Gender Equality and Empowerment

Although women make up 51% of Uganda's population, gender inequality persists. Adolescent girls face multiple vulnerabilities, including limited access to education and employment. Terre des Hommes Netherlands partners with communities, government, and civil society to strengthen child protection systems, empower girls, and promote safe, supportive environments where all children can thrive free from exploitation.

€ 616,575 **2024 Budget**

## OUR APPROACH

### ◆ Children at the centre

Children are at the centre of everything we do. We support them to get access to education and other skills development so that they can eventually find jobs to earn better incomes to enhance their opportunities to live a decent and dignified life. We build their resilience and facilitate their empowerment. We help them amplify their voice, opening opportunities to speak up to those with the power to realise systemic change.

### ◆ Strengthening child protection

We educate parents and communities. We build the capacity of local structures to effectively prevent, detect, report and respond to child exploitation. We collaborate with other actors to influence strengthening of the legal and policy environment for better promotion and protection of children's rights.

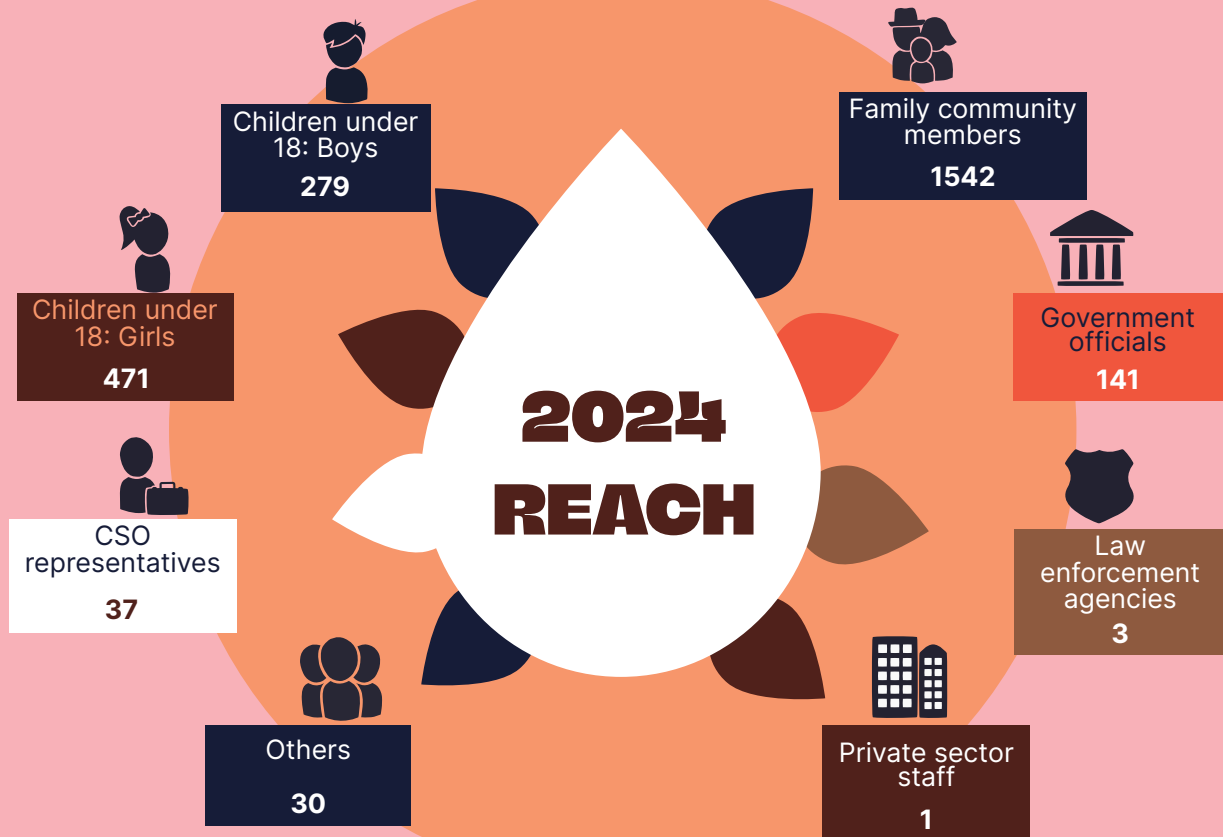
## OUR PROJECTS

### Current projects

- ◆ Sexual Exploitation of Children - 3 projects
- ◆ Child Labour - 1 project



**2024  
REACH**



# ACHIEVEMENTS

## ◆ Lobby and Advocacy Achievements

In 2024, Girls and Young Women (GYW) contributed significantly to policy and legislative influence at both national and local levels. They made formal submissions to Parliament on the Alcohol Control Bill and the Human Assisted Reproductive Bill, while also advancing awareness of the Succession (Amendment) Act 2022 through media campaigns, church engagement, and high-level dialogues. Their advocacy ensured disability perspectives were included in the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) PWD Ordinance. At the local government level, commitments were secured for child protection and alcohol control ordinances in Lotome Sub County, Napak District.

## ◆ Access to Resources & Representation

Fifty-seven Girls and Young Women (GYW) were linked to the Parish Development Model fund, while community monitoring of government programmes on teenage pregnancy and school dropout in Bugiri leveraged additional funding for expanded Young Citizen Score Card activities. Furthermore, GYW groups in Nadunget and Lotome accessed UGX 5.5 million each in financial support, and a GYW representative was appointed to the Board of Directors of SCORED, a Community-Based Organisation in Bugiri District. Financial empowerment was strengthened with 57 GYW supported to establish small-scale businesses, and traditional leaders in Komaret created spaces for girls' voices in decision-making processes.

## ◆ Access to Education and Skills Development

In Karamoja, 36 girls re-enrolled in school as a result of GYW advocacy efforts. In Bugiri, several girls, including teenage mothers, resumed their education with the support of scholarships and training opportunities. Through strong partnerships with like-minded CSOs, DREAM Organization and BRAC Uganda extended bursaries and scholastic support to girls in Kawempe. Additionally, two girls in Loputuk completed vocational training in agriculture and horticulture, opening up new opportunities for self-reliance.

## ◆ Community Engagement & Awareness

In 2024, Girls and Young Women (GYW) actively engaged communities to promote social awareness and participation. On 9 April, ten GYW from Naitakwae led a music, dance, and drama performance at Moroto Hospital, motivating 20 community members to donate blood.

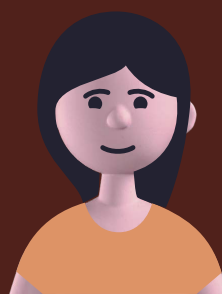
Between April and May, 15 traditional leaders, two religious leaders, and one opinion leader in Lotome Sub-county conducted 14 outreach sessions to enforce the ban on "Edonga" dances near schools and raise awareness of their negative impacts. In June, 30 GYW representatives, alongside 14 male champions, utilized radio airtime on Akica and Ateker FM to discuss child trafficking and girls' rights, receiving 104 positive community responses. Additionally, GYW advocates, local leaders, and faith representatives provided psychosocial support to 201 returnee children at Lotome Girls' Primary School, addressing their reintegration needs and promoting well-being.

## ◆ Media & Digital Advocacy

Media and digital advocacy continued to amplify GYW voices. Social media platforms, particularly Gov.Junction on Twitter, were leveraged to spotlight GYW concerns during International Women's Day. Radio discussions across Eastern Uganda addressed issues of child marriage, teenage pregnancy, and education, while digital platforms like Karamoja Link documented cases of child marriage and harmful practices. Findings from GYW-led research on online exploitation were published by Next Media, reinforcing national advocacy efforts.

## ◆ Institutional & Regional Strengthening

Institutional and regional structures were strengthened through the integration of child protection policies by civil society organizations such as BIPA and the development of a regional advocacy workplan by the Busoga GYW Alliance. Busoga Kingdom committed to establishing a Children's Parliament and engaged GYW in reviewing its Child Protection Policy. Representation of girls and young women was also secured in key decision-making spaces, including the Nadunget Community Land Association and the Child Protection CSO Network.



**“They said we were too young to lead. We said, “Watch us lead anyway.”- Betty, GYW Advocate, Uganda.”**

**Betty,  
GYW Advocate, Uganda**

## References

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ubos.org/uganda-profile/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/uganda/what-we-do/child-pr>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/esa/sites/unicef.org.esa/files/2019-10/UNICEF-Uganda-2019-Situation-Analysis-of-Children.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [https://int.terredeshommes.nl/uploads/5722ab1d-20250604\\_tdh\\_annualreport\\_2024\\_partone.pdf](https://int.terredeshommes.nl/uploads/5722ab1d-20250604_tdh_annualreport_2024_partone.pdf)



**“We asked for a seat at the table. They gave us a stool. So we brought our chairs and now we’re building the whole room.”**

**Margaret,  
GYW Advocate,  
Uganda.**



**“The achievements of Girls and Young Women across Uganda in 2024 demonstrate the transformative power of youth leadership. From influencing national policies to driving community awareness, advocating for education, and promoting child protection, these young leaders are not only shaping their own futures but also strengthening the social fabric of their communities. Their courage, dedication, and creativity are a testament to what is possible when girls are empowered to raise their voices and lead change.”**

**Josephine akiru  
Country Director, Uganda  
Terre des Hommes Netherlands**

## PARTNERSHIPS

Terre des Hommes Netherlands is a member of the:

- Joining Forces - an alliance of six child-focused international NGOs.
- She Leads, a five-year strategic partnership between the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and four consortium organisations - Terre des Hommes Netherlands, Plan Netherlands, DCI-ECPAT Netherlands and the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET).

In our work, we closely collaborate with the Government of Uganda, in particular, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) and other partners:

- Girl Up Initiative Uganda (GIUP)
- Karamoja Women Umbrella Organization (KAWUO)
- Multi Community Based Development Initiative (MUCOBADI).
- Dwelling Places (DP)

## FUNDING PARTNERS

Our work in Uganda currently is made possible through the generous support of the:

- Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- September 10th Stitching

### About Terre des Hommes Netherlands

Terre des Hommes Netherlands (TdH NL) is an international child rights organisation committed to stopping child exploitation. Our mission is to protect children by preventing and stopping child exploitation and by empowering children to make their voices count. Our vision is that 'children can flourish in a world free of all forms of exploitation.

## CONTACT US

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