



PRESS RELEASE

Drug User Communities Speak Out On the proposed Uganda Sexual Offences Bill

On Monday, 3rd May 2021, the Parliament of Uganda enacted the Sexual Offences Act, 2021, which is now awaiting presidential assent. The Bill was first presented as the Sexual Offences Bill, 2015, published in the Uganda Gazette on 11th December 2015.¹ It was tabled in Parliament on 14th April 2016 as a Private Member's Bill by National Female Youth MP, Monica Amoding under the umbrella of the Uganda Women's Parliamentary Association (UWOPA)

On behalf of the community of people who use drugs in diversity, Uganda Harm Reduction Network would like express the shared and profound concern at the continued enforcement of discriminatory, stigmatizing, criminalizing and harmful laws which abet bad policies and practices that increase vulnerability to HIV and continue to criminalise the already marginalised population. This proposed bill is yet another step backward in the fight against the HIV AIDS because it is founded on stigma and discrimination and based on approaches that have been condemned by international health agencies as ineffective and violating the rights of people who use drugs living and affected with HIV including; sex workers and sexual and gender minorities.

Whereas some of the provisions in the Bill provide much-needed protections, the spirit of the law in certain provisions such as, presumptive section 3 (originally clause 3 of the Bill), section 10(3) and section 14, 15 and 16 of the Act are intolerant, a factor that should not exist in a free and democratic society. The passed bill harbours dangerous provisions that alienate criminalised and marginalized persons such as people who use drugs living and affected with HIV including; sex workers and sexual and gender minorities in contravention of the national, regional, and international obligations that Uganda holds to protect every citizen equally. The provisions are an affront to basic human rights and are inconsistent with the provisions of the constitution for instance article 21 and 22 that provide for the right to equality and freedom from discrimination as well as the right to liberty and security.

We therefore;

- ***Urge the President of the Republic of Uganda to uphold the national and international laws that promote and enforce the human rights of ALL Ugandans by tasking the parliament to re-table and re-review the provisions of the Bill and recommend the consultation of binding laws of Uganda to avoid contradictions and human rights violations of the citizens.***
- ***Call upon all national and international; Human Rights bodies, bilateral and multilateral agencies to speak against the Sexual Offence Bill, 2019 as it will affect the full realisation of rights of some groups of persons, and to advise the Parliament of Uganda on the spill over effect of harmful laws in the state-driven efforts to fight HIV and AIDS.***

Signed by: Wamala Twaibu

**On behalf of the Network and Community of
People who use Drugs**

