



**INTERNATIONAL  
AID SERVICES**

***WATER AND ALCOHOL A CASE FOR  
INTERNATIONAL AID SERVICES UGANDA  
AT THE  
62nd SESSION OF THE UN COMMISSION  
ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW62)***



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## **Salutations:**

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I am so delighted to be here today bringing salutations from one of the most beautiful countries in the world, a country abundant in beauty which beauty the admiration of many a sojourner is. When Sir Church Hill of old stepped on the soil of my motherland, having traversed many a country in Africa, he was caught up in awe, gazing at the beauty of this land so beautifully crafted, all that could be heard coming from his lips was ' this is the Pearl of Africa! Ladies and gentlemen receive greetings from Uganda Africa's own Pearl.

My name is Juliet Namukasa. I serve as the Country Director for International Aid Services Uganda. International Aid Services (IAS) is an International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) abiding by Christian values, operating in 10 countries in East Africa and the Horn Africa and now in Chad and Niger. Our main areas of focus are:

- Integrated Water Resource Management
- Inclusive/Special Needs Education
- Civil Society Development.

In Uganda, IAS implements integrated Community Empowerment and development programs in Northern Ugandan districts of Pader, Agago, Abim and an Emergency response in Rhino camp, Arua district.

IAS is on the Executive Committee of Uganda Alcohol Policy Alliance, a coalition of civil society organizations with the mission to advocate for effective regulation of alcohol production, sale and consumption especially among minors (children below 18).

I take this opportunity to appreciate IOGT International, through the President Kristna Sperkova for extending the invitation to me to come and share about this subject of great importance: Empowering rural women and girls drawing lessons and inspiration from Water and Alcohol as witnessed by International Aid Services.

## **1. Contextual analysis**

### *i. Uganda and Alcohol:*

*Uganda generates a lot of revenue from the alcohol industry with Nile Breweries and Uganda breweries coming 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> respectively in 2016<sup>1</sup> among the highest revenue earner. It offers a lot of employment in various forms, directly in the factories, businesses and indirectly through purchase of inputs like sorghum, cassava and molasses (sugarcane). Ugandans drink 11.93 shots of liquor per year on average, which is the second most in the Africa. And of 10 other countries analyzed by US based Moguldom Media Group arm AFKinsider, none comes anywhere close.*

*Uganda's unparalleled liquor consumption is almost entirely due to the country's love for home-made waragi and Ajono topping the alcohol menu. Just 4 per cent of consumption comes from beer and 2 per cent from wine, with the "other" category a resounding winner at 94 per cent of consumption. The generic term for domestically distilled beverages is UBL's famous Ugandan Waragi, which contain 42% of alcohol making it one of the most alcoholic spirits in the world<sup>2</sup>.*

*WHO's 2014 global health status report noted that Uganda lacked a national policy or plan and added that there weren't any restrictions on the day or place alcohol is sold. The report stated that Uganda has no legally binding regulation on alcohol advertising or sponsorship, product placement, sales promotion or health warning labels on containers. There are no restrictions as to where, when and in what quantities alcohol should be sold. Hence we have bottled beer with very an average alcohol content of 4.5 percent sold in bars while Sachets are available in many shops that is licensed to do business if they choose to have alcohol.*

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<sup>1</sup> <http://metrofm908.com/president-lists-100-best-tax-payers-in-uganda/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://eagle.co.ug/2016/05/18/uganda-ranked-africas-2nd-biggest-consumer-of-alcohol.html>

## **ii. Culture and Alcohol**

Alcohol is accepted across different cultural divides and in fact alcohol carries a connotation of socialization, leisure, celebrations and grieving. It is the ever-present companion on every function.

- Initiation ceremonies- alcohol
- Burials- Alcohol
- Weddings- Alcohol
- Relaxation- alcohol
- Hunger like in Karamoja- alcohol is food
- Social gathering at home- the wife should have alcohol prepared for the husband and his friends.

Because of the cultural mindset towards alcohol, children are sent to the bars to buy liquor since there is no enforcement of age limit in regard to who buys alcohol. The girl child is handy in supporting the mother to run the business by serving the revelers since alcohol is also sold in homes or in outlets near homes. For local brew like Ajono/malwa, children especially the girl child helps the parents to refill the pots and also to add hot water to the pots as required. Given that poverty bites hard in many rural communities, children also brew and sell alcohol in order to raise their own fees and support their siblings.

*Example: During IAS Intervention in Morulem sub county in Abim district in Karamoja Sub region in Uganda, pupils in the schools of IAS intervention were asked whether they had tasted alcohol or not. In Rachkoko primary school 78% of the children take alcohol, Gulonger primary schools -74%, Akwangagwel Primary school- 66% and Obolokome Primary school -72% this percentage was got as result of asking the children directly before introducing the topic on Alcohol and its effects and they raised up hands willing to show that they take or they don't take and the majority of the children in the above schools raised to confirm that they take alcohol.*

*We love our thing that much that we publically advertise it celebrating- **Uganda wa Uganda wa, Uganda wa, Uganda wa Uganda Waragi, the spirit that binds us!!** Indeed it is the spirit that binds us! Yes, binding us in poverty, child-neglect, high levels of defilement. High levels of spread of HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence, high levels of road accidents, .*

The person standing before you is a product of the sale of alcohol; my mother having been involved in brewing and selling alcohol to raise money to take me to school. So I owe what I am today to alcohol. I would be sent to the bar to buy alcohol and also on various occasions ground fermented millet for use in the alcohol production. By the age of 8 I had learnt how to make local brew- Kwete and Malwa for my consumption – behold an alcoholic in the making!

Though my foundation was laid on alcohol revenue, I would not applaud it for its contribution to what I am today rather I stand and passionately fight against this vice which many times is combined with other drugs. My elder sister dropped out of school due to teenage pregnancy- the man responsible was one of my mother's clients. ***Alcohol gives you with one hand and takes away with another***

My history unfortunately is common for many Ugandans in the rural area or slums and yet because alcohol is a source of livelihood people are blinded to the pain/cost associated with its sale and consumption hence the need to deliberately engage those involved including the policy makers who are oblivious of the real cost of alcohol.

## **Agago**

*This article ran in the daily monitor newspaper on 16th January 2012*

*'The twins, hit by hunger, suckled their deceased mother's breasts for close to an hour until the police arrived and took the body away. The 20-year-old woman, of Lala Village, Adilang Sub-county, was reportedly killed after she refused to sell some of the household property.*

*Witnesses said the man wanted money from the sale to buy alcohol. "For the past three days, the man was on a drinking spree. On the fateful day,*

*he wanted to sell household items to buy more alcohol but he was barred by the wife, prompting him to beat her to death,” said a neighbor,*

## **2. IAS, water and Alcohol**

### **Background:**

In 2008 following the signing of the cessation of hostilities between the Kony’s Lord’s Resistance Army and the Government of Uganda (GoU) the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) started going back to their cradle-land. IAS responded to the government call to support the recovery and reconstruction of Northern Uganda through the sector of Water Hygiene and Sanitation as our main stay and in most cases the IAS entry into communities. We drilled boreholes and sensitized communities on proper hygiene and sanitation practices. We had set expected impacts however we were in for a surprise:

- Improved hygiene: Expected increase in water usage with increased supply did not happen- people were not bathing as often hence meetings were filled with stench
- Improved standard of living: The effect of women committing more time to economic engagements following a reduction in time spent walking long distances and queuing up for long waiting for water was not realized.
- Protection of the girl child: Increased protection of the girl-child from abuse and defilement did not happen- actually in 2009 the then Pader district registered over 200 cases of defilement.
- Increased enrollment and retention of the girl child in school: We had expected higher completion rates for the girls given that they can easily fetch water and go to school- no this had not been realized- the completion of girls at primary level was level- there was a problem- in addition to many other factors teenage pregnancies were still very high

- Reduced cases of gender based violence: We had sensitized communities about gender equality and the fact that the woman was not a glorified asset or property to be dealt with the way men felt. We thought the lesson was clear but there was a problem: cases of gender-based violence reported at the police posts and many that went unreported were high.

In addition to drilling wells, communities had asked for oxen, ox ploughs and seeds. They had promised us that after 2 years they would not need us since they would be self-reliant- however- there was a problem- food was never enough at home. Before the project could completely fail, we observed a trend which would later inform our operations: while women were in gardens, many men would be at home, unfortunately drunk as early as 9.00.

Many abused alcohol in the name of escaping the painful realities of loss they were dealing with. Many took to binge drinking during their time in the camps and coming back home having lost all, they just continued. This was against the typical behavior in Acholi sub region where people would traditionally go to their gardens first and then in the evening engage in drinking locally brewed alcohol as a means of socialization. While the local brew of ajono and Kwete had low alcohol content, the gins introduced in sachets are very cheap and very intoxicating hence the high demand.

During our intervention we realized that child rights were violated due to a number of reasons alcohol taking the lead as shown in the table below.

**GBV, CHILD-NEGLECT AND CRIMES COMMITTED DUE TO  
ALCOHOL AND DRUG CONSUMPTION/ABUSE**

| <b>S/<br/>N<br/>o</b> | <b>Incidence<br/>Reported</b> | <b>2015</b> | <b>2016</b> | <b>2017<br/>(Jan-<br/>March)</b> | <b>Total</b> | <b>Causes</b>   |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|----------------------------------|--------------|---|
| 1                     | <i>Domestic violence</i>      | 124         | 146         | 11                               | <b>281</b>   | <i>Alcoholism</i>   |
| 2                     | <i>Child neglect</i>          | 126         | 174         | 21                               | <b>321</b>   | <i>Poverty/Alcoholism</i>   |
| 3                     | <i>Child desertion</i>        | 23          | 28          | 2                                | <b>53</b>    | <i>Polygamy/Domestic Violence</i>                                     |
| 4                     | <i>Missing children</i>       | 4           | 5           | 1                                | <b>10</b>    | <i>Ignorance</i>  |
| 5                     | <i>Forced marriage</i>        | -           | 17          | -                                | <b>17</b>    | <i>Cultural believes</i>  |
| 6                     | <i>Child Labour</i>           | 18          | 35          | -                                | <b>53</b>    | <i>Poverty and hunger</i>   |
| 7                     | <i>Child to child sex</i>     | 11          | 14          | -                                | <b>25</b>    | <i>Too much exposure to sex life</i>                                  |
| 8                     | <i>Simple Defilement</i>      | 48          | 35          | 9                                | <b>92</b>    | <i>Lack of sensitization</i>  |
| 9                     | <i>Aggravated defilement</i>  | 18          | 7           | -                                | <b>25</b>    | <i>Alcoholism</i>   |
| 10                    | <i>Incest</i>                 | 2           | 1           | 1                                | <b>4</b>     | <i>Alcoholism/Lack of parental care/ sharing rooms with relatives</i> |
| 11                    | <i>Indecent assault</i>       | 6           | 3           | -                                | <b>9</b>     | <i>Alcoholism/indiscipline</i>  |
| 12                    | <i>Rape</i>                   | 6           | 3           | 1                                | <b>10</b>    | <i>Alcoholism</i>   |
| 13                    | <i>Marital Rape</i>           | -           | 2           | -                                | <b>2</b>     | <i>Alcoholism</i>   |
|                       | <b>Total</b>                  | <b>386</b>  | <b>470</b>  | <b>46</b>                        | <b>902</b>   |   |

### **3. International Aid Services approach:**

Hence IAS approach was to understand the underlying factors that affected the women and girl-child in particular as opposed to just addressing the presenting problems.

- Engaging communities in the critical evaluation of their beliefs and practices on community transformation- mindset transformation:

Having recognized that any community cannot develop beyond its mindset IAS has since 2008 embarked on enhancing the capacity of the community to critically evaluate the impact of their cultural beliefs and practices on community transformation. It is important to note that some factors that negatively impact on the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals lend themselves to our cultural beliefs and practices coupled with the learned culture of dependence. Culture being a sensitive matter, IAS let the communities critique it themselves while we facilitated the process. They covered all areas including the place of women and children with special reference to the girl child. It boiled down to women being 'gloried assets' and the men have the final say regarding their plight.

- Dialoging about the bittersweet of alcohol:

Given the cultural and livelihood value of alcohol, IAS had to appeal to the women by touching one of the key areas of concern- gender based violence and child neglect. Having built relationships with the community and aware that IAS engages them in various dialogues the subject of alcohol came to light. When the ladies were asked to share the benefits of alcohol production, sale and consumption you would have thought Alleluias had been raised to heaven. When asked any costs associated, it was like the river Nile had over-flooded her banks. Many were the unspeakable experiences:

- Men had neglected their responsibilities as household heads
- Girls being defiled by drunken men and yet prosecution was limited
- Spread of HIV/AIDS was on the rise
- There was food insecurity as men would sell off food in exchange for alcohol
- Biting poverty as household assets would be sold to get money for alcohol

- Limited household productivity since men's contribution on the farm would be limited .....
- Support for education was low hence a high rate of school dropout.

One of the most awakening reality was that while one woman was able to take her children to school due to sale alcohol, it was a self-defeating venture since another woman in the same community would have her child out of school because he husband spent the money on alcohol which has become the source of income for the one who has taken her children to school. IAS asked them whether they would find an income generating ventures without negative effects on their neighbors to which they responded to the affirmative. Many admitted that if they had alternative means of livelihood they would stop brewing and selling alcohol. Groups of 20 women each were formed and agreed on a set period of time during which to brew, sell alcohol and save their money as capital for investment in other Income Generating Activities and that was done. Today there are over 40 groups of women who have diversified away from alcohol production and sale.

*Sensitizations on gender equality: Gender equality remains a big challenge especially with low levels of education and exposure. Unfortunately some women believe that the marginalized position is their portion so they perpetuate the imbalance. Some believe that gender based violence is a sign of love and encourage the young girls to embrace it. Hence sensitizations of the value of humanity- each person worth becomes critical and not to be defined by the dowry that husbands give.*

*Livelihood diversification away from alcohol production/sale*

As indicated above, IAS sensitizes women mostly who are involved in the sale of alcohol about other enterprises, introducing village savings loan associations whereby women form groups and start saving together. This money is later borrowed by members and invested in small income generating activities like sale of produce and animal husbandry. In addition IAS lends the group a revolving fund for a set period which is refunded for other groups to borrow. This has been very effective as many groups have now diversified from brewing. By reducing alcohol available in the community, alcohol abuse also reduces and the related vices which negatively affect the respect of child rights. For example by not brewing, the produce which would have been used to produce local brew is used

for food in the home and some is sold to meet the school requirements contributing to the right to education

#### Rehabilitation of vulnerable girls:

We engage the child mothers and many other girls who were either married against their will or got into marriage because of circumstances, give them literacy skills, enhance their life skills, train them in business management and give them startup kits to earn a living while being assertive in society. We no longer refer to them as vulnerable- because it is negative rather we gave them a new outlook to life by calling them VERSATILE. We support them with goats to raise in preparation for their children's education,

#### Conclusion:

Every transformed life gives us a new reason to keep moving and investing our time in the lives of the rural women and girls. Like the motto for the great ladies' hall Mary Stuart, in Makerere university goes- Train a woman a nation trained' so do I say, train a empower a woman, a nation empowered. Yet I know that the struggle has just begun, I borrow the motto of the great men's hall, Lumumba of Makerere University to say 'Aluta Continua'. Ladies and gentlemen, the struggle continues.

# Thank you