

# THE 5<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Topic: Leveraging SDGs to Realize Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCRs)

Theme: LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

#ESCRUg18



19th- 20th September 2018 Makerere University Main Hall



## Introduction

For the last one and half decades, the international community has been preoccupied with implementing an international framework that seeks to address global poverty and achieving social justice for all. Globally, whereas there has been progress in economic development, poverty, inequality and exclusion levels have consistently increased.

This widening gap between the rich and poor is among the reasons global leaders under the United Nations converged to adopt the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 as a strategy to address the global poverty and inequality.

At the expiry of the time frame of the MDGs in 2015, decline in global poverty had been achieved and progress had been observed in various sectors reflected therein. Although some set targets were not achieved, the MDGs acted as a foundation block for the continued advancement of the global development agenda leading to the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Following the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in June 2012, UN Member States agreed to adopt the SDGs as the next global policy development platform up to 2030.

**The SDGs 2030 Agenda; “Leave No One Behind” commits to address the challenges of poverty and exclusion that are hindering human kind from living a dignified life.**

The SDGs are aimed at complimenting the efforts of the earlier international and regional binding human rights instruments and reinforcing the respect, protection, and fulfilment of social and economic rights including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR) and the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) among others.

Therefore, the achievement of the SDGs has a direct bearing on the fulfilment of social and economic rights globally.

**The 17 SDGs address various current global challenges including poverty, hunger, limited access to education and clean energy, poor healthcare, and unsafe water.**

These are at the core of the current limited enjoyment of the social and economic rights like access to adequate food, clean and safe drinking water, quality and equitable education, quality health care, and social security.

**In addressing these challenges, SDGs are based on the principle of universality, a key norm in the realization of social and economic rights as the above highlighted challenges affect all people, poor or rich equally.**

In committing themselves to address these issues, each state is obliged to develop and adopt national plans with a human rights based approach and fully aligned with the set and measurable targets in the SDGs.

For the case of Uganda, the State developed and adopted its development agenda; ‘Vision 2040’ and the ‘National Development Plan II (NDP II)’ 2015/16 – 2019/20, prior to the adoption of the SDGs.

It is on this background that the alignment of the Uganda’s national development agenda to the SDGs need to be fully checked and interrogated.

Cognizant of the broadness of the SDGs, the 5th Annual National Conference will pay adequate attention to the country's preparedness to achieve certain key SDGs aligned to economic, social and cultural rights including:



**(No Poverty):** End poverty in all of its forms everywhere specifically implementation of appropriate national social protection systems and measures and achieve substantial coverage of the poor and vulnerable (*Target 1.3*).



**Goal 2 (Hunger):** End hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round (*Target 2.1*) and end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons (*Target 2.2*).



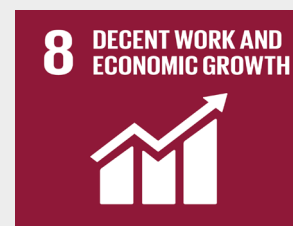
**(Good Health & Wellbeing):** Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages with emphasis on achievement of universal health coverage (*Target 3.8*) and substantial increase in health financing (*Target 3.c*).



**(Quality Education):** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all with specific focus on completion of free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education (*Target 4.1*) and access to education for vulnerable children including children with special needs and children from poor households (*Targets 4.5 and 4.a*).



**(Gender Equality):** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life (*Target 5.5*) and undertaking reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws (*Target 5.a*) and adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels (*Target 5.c*)



**(Decent Work & Economic Growth):** Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all looking specifically at protection of labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers (*Targets 8.5 and 8.8*) and protection from forced labour, human trafficking and elimination of harmful child labour (*Target 8.7*).



### **(Reduced Inequalities):**

Reduce Inequality within and among countries with focus on empowerment and promotion of social and economic inclusion of all (*Target 10.2*), ensuring equal opportunity and reduce inequality by elimination of discriminatory laws, policies and practices (*Target 10.3*) and adoption of wage and social protection policies to achieve greater equality (*Target 10.4*).

### **(Partnerships):**

Strengthen domestic resource mobilization, including through international support to developing countries, to improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection (Target 17.1), developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments (Target 17.2) and Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources (Target 17.3).

Currently, there is also growing encouragement of the private sector to play a leading role in the delivery of social services amidst the declining public investment and weak policy and institutional regulatory framework. This is hindering access to quality social services and consequently the enjoyment of social and economic rights by the poor, thus worsening vulnerability and exclusion.

## **The 5th Annual National Conference on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

The idea of an Annual Conference on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was born in 2014, at the behest of Government processes that flagged the need for constitutional reforms.

The Conference was at the time conceived as a forum to advocate for the inclusion of economic, social and cultural rights in the Constitution. At the 1st Conference in September 2014, the question of the justifiability of ESCRs took center stage. The 2nd Conference in September 2015 confronted the subject of the state of socio-economic services, focusing particularly on the issue of exclusion and vulnerability. The subject of development planning and use of the Human Rights Based Approach as well featured prominently at the 2nd Conference.

The subject of business and human rights was flagged as a serious issue. One of the outcomes of the 2nd Conference was the birth of the Uganda Consortium on Corporate Accountability (UCCA) including a decision that the 3rd Conference addresses the subject of business and human rights under the theme: Business and Human Rights in Uganda: Accountability Vs. Social Responsibility for Corporate Abuses.

**Therefore, the 5th Annual National Conference will examine the country's capacity in terms of administrative, legislative and fiscal measures available to facilitate the achievement of the SDGs which are key in the attainment of the country's development agenda set in Vision 2040 and fulfillment of social and economic rights of its people.**

From the 3rd conference, it was decided that the 4th conference address the subject of local government and the realization of economic, social and cultural rights.

The 4th conference centered on the headway local governments have made in the delivery of social services. This was conducted under the theme: Local Government and Service Delivery in Uganda: Achievements, Challenges and the Way Forward.

During the 4th conference, it was agreed that the 5th Annual National Conference addresses the issue of fully aligning the country's national developmental agenda to the SDGs since achieving them has a positive bearing on service delivery and the enjoyment of social and economic rights by the citizens.

## Objective of the 5th Annual National Conference

The aim of the conference is to create awareness among the citizenry on the importance of the SDGs in the realization of the country's development goals. The specific objectives are;

- i. *To underscore the link between SDGs and Social and Economic rights and how the former can be used to achieve fulfilment of the latter;*
- ii. *To push the state to fully incorporate SDGs in its development plans, strategies and policies and developing key indicators for tracking progress of implementation SDGs highlighted above;*
- iii. *To empower the citizens with the necessary information needed to hold the state accountable for the realization of SDGs particularly those highlighted herein above;*
- iv. *To examine the state commitment in the provision of adequate financing for the achievement of the SDGs; and*
- v. *To understand the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders responsible for the implementation of the various SDGs particularly those aligned to the social and economic rights.*

## Expected Outcomes:

- 1- The conference will set the agenda on the localizing SDGs in Uganda by raising awareness about their importance in the realization of Social and Economic rights.
- 2- It will also further examine the capacity of the state in the implementation of the SDGs in terms of available policy, institutional framework and financial resources to finance education and health sectors and social protection programs that are key in addressing inequality and exclusion among the masses.
- 3- The Conference will generate a report summarizing key debates and discussion, and a Resolution detailing key messages to policy makers resulting from the discussions at the Conference.

## About the Organizers

### *Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER)*

ISER is an independent, not-for-profit human rights organization responsible for promoting the effective understanding, monitoring implementation and realization of Economic and Social Rights in Uganda. This they do by promoting a Human Rights Based approach to the design and implementation of legal and policy frameworks relating to Economic and Social Rights; building awareness about Economic and Social Rights and exploring strategies for securing their realization; broadening individuals' and communities' access to Economic and Social Rights in Uganda; strengthening community participation in the design and implementation of social and economic policies and programs that affect them; ensuring government accountability for Economic and Social Rights through community empowerment; and mobilizing and building capacity of Non Governmental organizations and the media to advocate more effectively for Economic and Social Rights including using Regional and International mechanisms. ISER also hosts the Uganda Consortium on Corporate Accountability (UCCA)



***Public Interest Law Clinic (PILAC), School of Law  
Makerere University***

PILAC is the premier University Based Law Clinic in Uganda. Established in 2012, PILAC seeks to promote Social Justice through hands-on experiential learning as well as exposing students to 'live' cases of individuals who have been confronted by the law in its varied manifestations. The Clinic has a Clinical Legal Education (CLE) programme, which is intended to equip law students with public lawyering skills. PILAC has also extended the benefits of hands-on practical learning through the establishment of a Community Law Programme and mobile clinic (CLAPMOC), which is used to extend legal literacy sessions and other legal services to the communities around the university. PILAC also hosts the Network of Public Interest Lawyers which is an umbrella organization that brings together individual lawyers, CSOs/NGOs and law firms committed to public interest litigation and advocacy.



***The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC)***

The Equal Opportunities Commission is a constitutional body mandated to eliminate discrimination and inequalities against any individual or group of persons on the ground of sex, age, race, colour, ethnic origin, tribe, birth, creed or religion, health status, social or economic standing, political opinion or disability, and take affirmative action in favor of groups marginalised on the basis of gender, age, disability or any other reason created by history, tradition or custom for the purpose of redressing imbalances which exist against them. Our vision is to have a just and fair society where all persons have equal opportunity to participate and benefit in all spheres of political, economic, social and cultural life. Our role is to assist you to understand your right to equal opportunities and your responsibilities, and to facilitate redress to discrimination. We are committed to fostering a society in which all individuals are equal and are treated with respect and dignity.



***Uganda Consortium on Corporate Accountability (UCCA)***

UCCA was established in August 2015 as a Civil Society Consortium on corporate accountability aimed at enhancing accountability by corporations, states, international finance institutions and development partners for violations or abuses of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCRs). Currently, the UCCA has a founding membership of four organizations specializing in different areas of rights protection, including the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER), the Public Interest Law Clinic at Makerere University Law School (PILAC), Legal Brains Trust (LBT) and the Center for Health Human Rights and Development (CEHURD). Other UCCA members are Twerwanaho Listeners Club (TLC), Karamoja Development Forum (KDF), the Southern and Eastern Africa Trade Information and Negotiation Institute (SEATINI), the Centre for Economic Social and Cultural Rights in Africa (CESCRA), Buliisa Initiative for Rural Development Organisation (BIRUDO), Navigators for Development Association (NAVODA), Ecological Christian Organisation (ECO), World Voices Uganda (WVU), Rural Initiative for Community Empowerment West Nile (RICE WN), Teso Karamoja Women Initiative for Peace (TEKWIP), ActionAid Uganda (AAU) and International Accountability Project (IAP). The UCCA membership is open to any organisation working in the field of business and human rights.



### **Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC)**

Uganda Human Rights Commission is a national human rights institution that was established on 6th November 1996 to promote and protect human rights in Uganda. Under Article 52 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995, its functions include monitoring the enjoyment and realization of all human rights (ESCR rights inclusive) in Uganda and Government's compliance with international treaties and conventions it has ratified. It also receives and initiates complaints of ESCR related abuses/violations and conducts ESCR advocacy and sensitization activities with stakeholders at national level and at the grassroots. UHRC produces Annual and Special Reports on its findings and recommendations and they are submitted to Parliament of Uganda to follow up implementation from its stakeholders. In May 2016, Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) and the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR) launched a preliminary web-based country guide that aims to be a resource for businesses, Civil Society Organizations, Governments, multilateral institutions and all other relevant local and international actors, to enable these actors ensure that business fosters sustainable development in line with human rights standards. UHRC is accredited with "A status" by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), Geneva Switzerland, giving it enhanced access to the United Nations human rights system. It is also a member of the Network of African NHRIs (NANHRI).



Food Rights Alliance (FRA) is a Non for Profit coalition of Organizations and individuals that work on issues that impact of Food Availability Accessibility, Stability and Utilization. FRA is driven by a Vision of A world free from Hunger and malnutrition. FRA upholds the fundamentality of the Human Right to Adequate and supports it because we believe in it. FRA promotes the holistic approach to appreciating this right interrogating means of producing food, accessing it, what keeps it in stable supply and the actual utilization of food. She organizes her agenda in seven thematic areas of Natural Assets, Financial assets, trade and market access, Seed security and Bio diversity, Special interest groups, Food and Nutrition and Policy and Governance. Through these themes FRA undertakes interventions on enhancing the capacity of Rights Holders and duty Bearers to appreciate the Right and take full commitment on duty and obligation to the realisation of this Right; undertake policy research and policy advocacy to ensure that policy decisions across do not affect the realization of the Rights, Creates platform for collective action; Undertakes strategic thinking on innovative ways to realize the Rights and engages in public campaigns to promote the Rights.

Strengthening Human Rights Research and Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (SHUREA) is a three year regional project whose overall objective is to strengthen the capacity in the project countries (Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and South Africa) to conduct high quality human rights research and teaching relevant for societal development processes. SHUREA aims to achieve three major outcomes: improved access to doctoral training in human rights; increased high quality research in human rights; and strengthened role of human rights research in societal development processes in the project countries. It is implemented by five partner institutions i.e., School of Law-Makerere University, the Institute for Human Rights at Abo Akademi University, Centre for Human Rights-University of Pretoria, School of Law-Nairobi University and the School of Law-Addis Ababa University. SHUREA is supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland.

