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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and
to the special session of the General Assembly entitled
“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace
for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic
objectives and action in critical areas of concern and
further actions and initiatives**

Statement submitted by Kikandwa Rural Communities Development Organization, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

Conditions of rural women and girls in Uganda (a Kikandwa Rural Communities Development Organization experience)

Despite the fact that other women and girls have some knowledge about their rights, that is not the case with most of those who live in local rural communities. Eliminating and preventing all forms of violence is still a great challenge in these communities, where most of the women and girls are continually being intimidated and sexually abused, and a lack of knowledge on how to seek justice is an issue at large.

During the implementation of the Kikandwa Rural Communities Development Organization's Justice Makers project (Rural Communities Criminal Justice Awareness project) and the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign in 2010 and 2011 in 10 villages in the Kyampisi subcounty in Uganda, we discovered a number of issues relating to the theme of the fifty-seventh session, "Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls", that we would like to bring to your attention.

It is difficult for rural primary schoolgirls to complete their primary education. According to live testimonies from the headmistresses of the primary schools of Kikandwa and Bulijjo Churches of Uganda, most girls drop out of school owing to the fact that they are raped at home by either relatives or other men and end up getting pregnant at a very young age. In this regard, the 2012 Ministry of Education report indicates that 71 per cent of primary schoolchildren, of which the majority are girls, drop out of school.

A large percentage of rural women and girls lack the knowledge of their fundamental rights and are unaware as to how to seek justice when they are abused. The abusers intimidate the women and girls to the point where they will not report the violence to the local authorities or the police.

Poverty has contributed greatly to the mismanagement of some of the criminal offences against women and girls in rural communities. Girls are being raped, and in some cases the family of the victim is paid compensation in settlement.

In most cases no consideration is given to the health circumstances of the victims in relation to AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections.

When we aimed to provide assistance in most of the situations, we discovered that victims often feared to disclose details of an assault during criminal court sessions and, in those situations, it was difficult to take on the relevant legal approaches.

The distance between rural communities and police and law enforcement departments is a large issue for rural women and girls. In the communities where we currently operate, locals need to travel a distance of six to seven miles to access police services.

Most rural women and girls are living below the poverty line, with the average household earning less than US\$ 1 per week, and therefore cannot afford transport and other expenses, thus resulting in forgoing their complaints.

In conclusion, there is a need for collective collaboration between local non-governmental organizations on the ground and international organizations, which should adequately support skills financing and lobbying, among others, to effectively help in eliminating and preventing all forms of violence against women and girls in rural communities.
