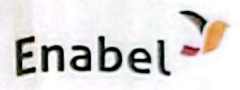


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Group photo of the 5 top companies awarded for significant steps taken in addressing GBV/D at the workplace, together with stakeholders, FIDA-Uganda and Enabel staff.

# Businesses Championing Gender-Sensitive Workplaces

Uganda's economic growth depends on productive, stable, and inclusive workplaces. For many businesses and public institutions, a persistent risk undermines this goal: gender-based violence (GBV), sexual harassment, unsafe working conditions, and harmful gender norms that disproportionately affect women and other vulnerable workers. In the informal sector - where more than 70 percent of Ugandans earn their livelihoods - most workers operate without written contracts, social protection, or clear terms of employment. This exposes businesses and workers alike to high turnover, low productivity, reputational risk, and legal vulnerability. Women in particular face compounded challenges as they balance unpaid care work with precarious jobs, often in hazardous environments and with limited avenues for redress. These realities affect workforce stability, service quality, and Uganda's competitiveness.

### Strengthening Accountability Through Law and Practice

Recognizing these risks, businesses, government, and civil society have increasingly collaborated to strengthen accountability in the world of work. Over the years, FIDA-Uganda has worked alongside employers, workers, and state institutions to ensure that gender-specific risks are addressed within business operations and public policy. This collaboration contributed to the development of Uganda's National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights - adopted in 2021 as the second of its kind in Africa - and to the ratification of ILO Convention 190 on violence and harassment in the world of work. Together, these frameworks provide clear guidance for both companies and government agencies on preventing abuse, managing risk, and protecting workers' rights across value chains.

### Practical Solutions in High-Growth Sectors

In partnership with Enabel (the Belgian agency for international cooperation), FIDA-Uganda has implemented targeted initiatives in the Albertine and Rwenzori regions to address GBV and gender-based discrimination in the Tourism, Hospitality, and Agriculture sectors, with agriculture focusing on coffee, cocoa, and vanilla value chains. These sectors are expanding rapidly, yet many workplaces remain

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informal and weakly regulated, increasing exposure to abuse and exploitation.

Through training, policy development, and improved reporting systems, the initiative has supported employers to translate legal standards into day-to-day practice. To date, 299 employers and 2,104 employees have been trained to strengthen internal systems for preventing GBV and discrimination. As a result, both large and small enterprises have adopted sexual harassment policies, established grievance and reporting mechanisms, improved workplace safety, and introduced disciplinary procedures that promote accountability. Organizations that prioritize safe and respectful workplaces report improved staff retention, stronger morale, and better service delivery which are key drivers of long-term sustainability.

### Business Leadership in Action

In the hospitality sector, Nyaika Hotel in Fort Portal has implemented a comprehensive sexual harassment prevention policy, promoted women into key management roles, and introduced family-friendly measures such as maternity leave, flexible shifts, safe and anonymous reporting systems, and staff transport for late working hours. With a workforce of 120 employees, regular gender-segregated meetings provide a structured forum for addressing staff concerns, strengthening trust and accountability. The General Manager for Nyaika Hotel said, "The successful implementation of GBV prevention strategies is significantly boosted by active leadership participation, which sets a tone of accountability and commitment to addressing GBV. Establishing robust, confidential reporting mechanisms is essential

for encouraging victims to come forward. During the Company Capacity assessments he further highlighted that "sexual harassment is a punishable mistake in Nyaika hotel. People are not allowed to use the offices to start harassing vulnerable women. We believe that women must be respected, no matter what. We know the people have a right to be in love, but we insist that it must be consensual, not forced. Even guests are not allowed to touch the staff members."

Masindi Kolping Hotel has focused on continuous staff sensitization on GBV and discriminatory risks, prevention, and response. The hotel has established safe reporting and witness-protective mechanisms and provided emotional support and gender-responsive information, reinforcing staff confidence and retention. According to Mr. Monday Josephat, the Manager Masindi Kolping

# Invest in safe, respectful and inclusive workplaces

Hotel, "We have scheduled bi-annual awareness activities with labor officers, and monthly meetings with a priest and a counsellor to talk about issues affecting staff including any GBV concerns and provide a platform for staff to receive emotional and other forms of support." Similarly, D'venue Hotel in Masindi has adopted a sexual harassment prevention policy, displayed zero-tolerance messaging in guest rooms, and designated a trained focal person to manage GBV-related concerns, supported by clear incident-recording systems. "We have displayed posters that say 'This is a sexual harassment free zone' outside guest rooms, sparking curiosity from clients, which has allowed us to extend sensitization on consensual sex between two adults, not minors, and preventing sexual harassment or abuse in the premises." Said Ms. Eva Kabasita, the hotel's manager.



A photo taken with representatives of Nyaika Hotel during one of the quarterly company capacity assessments conducted by FIDA-Uganda.

Studies show that workplace harassment contributes to absenteeism, reduced productivity, and high staff turnover, costing economies billions in lost output each year. In Uganda, where informal employment dominates, failure to address GBV and discrimination in the workplace risks undermining national commitments to decent work and inclusive growth.

Beyond hospitality, Asobola Community Development Organization (ASCODE) illustrates how community enterprises can integrate safety and dignity into livelihoods. By providing contracts, protective gear, and sexual harassment policies, ASCODE has empowered more than 163 women in basket-making and crafts and reached over 1,500 people with skills training, while preserving cultural heritage. At the community level, Bigodi Training and Common Facility Centre in Kamwenge links tourism, conservation, and skills development. The centre has introduced a workplace code of conduct, formalized staff contracts, promoted male engagement in GBV prevention, and supported survivors' access to justice, which demonstrates how local institutions can reduce risk while strengthening community resilience.

operating in Uganda and Rwanda, has integrated sexual harassment policies, trained local personnel, and strengthened reporting systems within a complex tourism landscape where informality remains common. Its experience underscores the importance of sector-wide collaboration to ensure consistent standards of safety and professionalism.

and technical capacity to develop and enforce robust workplace policies without external support. Weak labour inspection coverage and limited access to affordable finance continue to slow progress, particularly outside urban centres.

strengthen labour inspections, enforce existing standards, and invest in skills development for employers and workers in high-growth sectors. The private sector should treat sexual harassment prevention, safe reporting systems, and gender-sensitive policies

Small and medium enterprises; including Kabonero Catering Group in Bunyangabu, Bigodi Community Walking Safaris in Kamwenge, and small-scale coffee and restaurant businesses are also making progress by formalizing operations, developing contracts, and establishing disciplinary mechanisms. survivor-led initiatives such as Pamela's Restaurant and producer groups like Bwijanga Coffee Association further show how women's leadership and safe workplaces strengthen dignity, participation, and incomes.



Capacity assessment with a coffee farmer (Mr. Wamara) from Masindi.

### The Gaps That Remain

Despite these gains, many small and informal enterprises lack the financial

Trek Tours and Travels Ltd,

### A Call to Action - Sustaining Progress

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as core business practices that reduce risk and improve performance. Consumers and tourists also have influence: choosing businesses that respect workers' rights sends a powerful market signal that decent work matters.

Sustaining progress requires coordinated action. When businesses and government invest in safe, respectful, and inclusive workplaces, they protect workers, strengthen productivity, and lay the foundation for sustainable economic growth in Uganda.

Government agencies must

A photo of participants during the employers' award ceremony at Nyaika Hotel, Fort Portal on 2nd December 2025.

