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SEATS AT THE TABLE: LEADING THE TRANSFORMATION IN 2026

In the landscape of Ugandan politics, the presence of women has grown, yet the "participation gap" for young women remains a stark reality. As of 2024, women held approximately 34% of seats in Parliament, largely through reserved seats. While this is progress, the number of young women standing for direct elective positions remains minimal. As we approach the 2026 polls, VISTA Foundation Uganda issues a clarion call to Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW): it is time to transition from being observers to being the architects of our nation.

The Power of Representation

Participation is a fundamental human right. When young women lead, the legislative agenda shifts toward "Everyday Essentials"—maternal health, digital inclusion, and climate justice. Statistics show that women are 15% less likely than men to engage in community meetings. This lack of engagement directly correlates to policies that overlook the specific vulnerabilities of AGYW, such as the 19% internet connectivity rate for women in Uganda compared to their male counterparts.

Navigating the Election Climate

We understand the hesitation. The political arena can be daunting, and election-related violence often targets the most vulnerable. To those standing for office: your courage is the Strength in V.I.S.T.A. To those voting: support candidates who demonstrate a clear plan for AGYW empowerment. Be vigilant against manipulation and look for leaders who see gender equality not as an afterthought, but as a prerequisite for development.

Safety and Vigilance

We acknowledge that "smoothness" is not always guaranteed. Reports of intimidation and the use of disproportionate force have surfaced in recent weeks. Your safety is paramount. We encourage you to be vigilant, travel in groups to polling stations, and leave immediately after casting your vote. Monitoring the process peacefully is a right, but staying safe is a necessity.

The VISTA Vision

VISTA stands for Voices, Inspiring Strength, Transformation, and Advocacy. Our commitment to Uganda is unwavering: we work to ensure that AGYW do not just survive, but thrive. We invest in the leadership potential of girls and young women because we know that AGYW in leadership today is a community transformed tomorrow.

This election season, let us move beyond fear. Let us embrace the hope of more young women on the ballot. Whether as a voter or a candidate, your participation is the pulse of our democracy. Let 2026 be the year the Ugandan adolescent girl and young woman take their rightful place at the table.

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