

Religious Composition in Uganda

Fact Sheet 03210801

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Population

- Uganda has a total population of about 44.7m with a 3.3% population growth rate.
- 88.4% of Ugandans are Christian with the majority being Catholic (39.4%), Anglican (28.4%), and Pentecostal (10.8%). Muslims make up 10.8% and 0.9% consist of others.
- Most Christians reside in rural areas and are from the Northern and Western regions while most Muslims and other religions reside in urban areas and are from the central region.
- Public trust in institutional leaders ranks as follows: firstly, Religious leaders (63.4%), followed by Traditional leaders (44.9%), then Courts of law (19.1%), and lastly Parliament (18.3%)

Faith-founded organizations

- There are 4 faith-founded TV broadcasting stations and over 15 Radio stations in Uganda. All these TV and Radio stations conduct various faith-based programmes.
- There are over 6,300 schools founded by the Catholic Church and over 6,400 founded by the Anglican Church of Uganda in over 135 districts. About 1,485 schools are founded by the Islamic sect in over 112 districts whereas 462 schools are founded by Seventh-Day Adventist Church in over 86 districts. Schools include nursery, primary, secondary, tertiary and special-needs schools.
- There are over 150 faith-based NGOs involved in social development, health, water and environment out of the 2,249 NGOs in the updated Uganda national NGO register.

Religious Holidays

- Janani Luwum day, Martyr's Day, Good Friday, Easter Sunday and Easter Monday, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, and Christmas are the recognized national religious holidays.

Legal framework

- The Constitution of Uganda prohibits religious discrimination and stipulates that there shall be no State Religion.
- The Government requires faith-based organizations to register with the Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB) to obtain legal entity status and operation permits for a specific period.
- Faith-Based organizations which are engaged in NGO type activities are regulated by the National Bureau for NGOs (NGO Bureau) under the Ministry of Internal Affairs.
- Programmes that focus on race and religion are cautioned by the Uganda Communications Commissions (UCC) to be presented accurately and in a dignified sensitive manner.
- Primary schools must teach either Christianity, Islam, or both in their social studies classes and Religious Education is optional at the post-primary level.

COVID-19 Era

- Religious leaders and communities of faith cancelled services and other gatherings during the lockdown in the COVID-19 pandemic, but they maintained a connection to their communities by conducting faith activities remotely/virtually.
- There has been a strict adherence to the stipulated Standard Operating Procedures including wearing face masks, social distancing, and using disinfectants at worship spaces, pilgrimage sites, and other buildings.

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Policy Implications

Faith leaders are trusted community role models and influencers that possess unique access to families and communities to promote justice and support program and policy communication and implementation.

Tactical collaborations between government and faith communities or faith-based organizations (FBOs) can make the achievement of sustainable programs and policies simpler, especially amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

In recent years, the government of Uganda took steps to enact a policy regarding religious and faith-based organizations regulation. Some religious groups such as the Moslem community, Anglican Church of Uganda, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Roman Catholic Church, welcomed the policy proposal while others groups such as the Pentecostal Church and relatively newly founded religious groups opposed it. There is need to discuss religious rights and freedoms of Religious and Faith-Based Organizations (R&FBOs) while enforcing transparency and accountability in these institutions.

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