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Empowering Women and Girls in Africa

By Ann Grosjean

The *United Nations Association of New York* partnered with the *Women's Bar Association of New York* to present **Sylvia Acan** and her NGO, *Golden Women Vision of Uganda* and Attorney **Lorraine Smith van Lin** and her NGO, *Tallawah Justice for Women* to share two approaches to dealing with violence against women in Africa.

Sylvia Acan, at age 13, was abducted during the twenty-year war in Uganda and was held in captivity until she escaped eight years later. Her father and sister were killed as they attempted to run away. After her escape, she began to rebuild her life with the help of Two priests from Italy and Germany at an Internally Displaced Persons Camp ultimately earning her bachelor's degree. In the meantime, she worked with other local activists to meet the needs of survivors – the women and children born of war. As these vulnerable people emerged from captivity, she provided them with food and job opportunities like baking cakes or making baskets and stuffed animals selling them to support their families and send their children to school. During the pandemic, they also made soap, shampoo, and clothing for their community.

In 2011, Sylvia started [*Golden Women Vision in Uganda*](#). The office was under a tree, and they brought women together to share their stories; identify their problems; and provide support giving a voice to the voiceless! If a woman experiences violence, now they report the perpetrator(s); refer the victim to the hospital; and work in an amicable way using peaceful reconciliation to settle issues. The government often calls on her to dialog with men finding that when men are involved in the discussion, problems are solved better in the homes. Men have also taken on additional responsibilities in the home: caring for sick children; getting food; carrying children



on their backs; helping with household chores. As she visited families weekly, she could see the changes. She is now collaborating with other groups beyond Uganda.

Lorraine Smith van Lin is an international human rights lawyer who was born in Jamaica, now living in Europe. She was a Parish Court Prosecutor and Judge in Jamaica. She found that by the time gender-based violence and gang crime reaches the court it is too late for the victims, and she wanted to change this. She decided to study victim rights and international law. She went on to practice international law in The Hague as director of IBA and International Criminal Court (ICC). She also did field work in Uganda seeing first-hand the passion of survivors. She established [Tallowah Justice for Women](#) because “tallowah” in Jamaica means strong, capable, and fearless. She consulted with survivor projects in Uganda and Kenya and the ICC to reform gender-based violence, justice policies and bills. They provided women survivor leaders, like Sylvia, with access to the international platform, financial resources, and help with their organizational structure. Tallowah has three pillars: connecting survival women with other leaders so they do not feel alone, providing tools and support for women to manage their own organizations, and offering survivor leaders a platform to make changes helping to bring human rights into law.

DKG has partnered with UNICEF to support [Schools for Africa](#) since 2010. Schools in twenty-one African countries provide children with an education, nutrition, safe drinking water and sanitation. By sharing these success stories from Africa, we hope to inspire you and your chapter or state organization to support this DKG international project.

Take a Journey to the United Nations

by Lochie Musso



Yes, the United Nations is still shut down to in-person visitors but that doesn't mean you can't see it or learn more about it!

The New York UN Visitor Center has created outstanding Virtual Tours for groups and individuals. Each sixty-minute tour provides a live guide and includes an interactive Q&A with the tour guide. You can also experience an on-line briefing and interactive discussion with trained UN experts

who speak in over 15 languages. These sessions could be great for chapter meetings and/or classroom activities. Sessions are scheduled on Microsoft Teams but accommodations are available for alternative platforms. Here are some of the trips available:

[Virtual Tour of UN Headquarters in New York](#)

[Focus on Asia & the Pacific Virtual Tour](#)

[Black History Virtual Tour](#)

[Focus on Women Virtual Tour](#)

[UN Architecture Virtual Tour](#)

The Committee on Teaching About the United Nations (CTAUN) enjoyed the UN Architecture Tour. Our guide took us into the past where we learned the history of how the UN was designed and who the creators were, “walked” us through the various sections, explained the decors and the symbolism and ended at the gardens. Then we were able to ask questions. All very informative and lovely.

There are some fees involved and reservations must be made at least four weeks in advance, so go to: un.org/visit for details and booking.

YOUR UN REPRESENTATIVES - The DKG members listed below are your official representatives at the UNDGC (UN Department of Global Communications) and ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council.) All of them also work with CTAUN. You can email us for further information.

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