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Behind the Scenes: The Reality of NGO Work in Uganda

The public often sees the visible outcomes of civil society work such as community meetings, advocacy statements, policy dialogues, and civic education programs. Less visible, however, are the daily efforts that make these initiatives possible.



CIDD-UG staff reflecting during internal everyday reality talks in NGO sector in Uganda.

At Citizen Initiative for Democracy and Development Uganda, promoting inclusive governance and democratic accountability begins long before any public engagement takes place.

Staff dedicate extensive time to community consultations, policy analysis, development of advocacy materials, and coordination with local leaders and institutions. This work is guided by the belief that informed citizens and accountable leadership are essential to strengthening democracy and improving governance outcomes.

Working in the NGO dedication, patience, and operate in environments expectations are high resources. Achieving requires continuous local leaders, government development partners.

"Informed citizens and accountable leadership are essential to strengthening democracy and improving governance outcomes."

sector requires resilience. Staff often where community despite limited sustainable change collaboration with institutions, and

Fieldwork also presents significant challenges. Staff frequently travel long distances to reach rural communities, facilitate dialogue, and document governance concerns. Promoting accountability and transparency can at times be sensitive, requiring constructive and lawful engagement.

Despite these challenges, the impact remains evident. Increased civic awareness, stronger citizen participation, and improved transparency among local leaders continue to reflect the value of our sustained engagement. Every dialogue, training, and advocacy effort contributes to meaningful and lasting change, transforming everyday challenges into opportunities for empowering communities and strengthening democratic governance in Uganda.

Visit Our Website **CIDD-UG**

During the reporting period, the Citizen Initiative for Democracy and Development-Uganda (CIDD-UG) hosted a partnership visit from Centenary Bank at eastern regional office. The engagement formed part of the bank's ongoing efforts to strengthen collaboration with community-based and civil society organizations working at the grassroots level in eastern Uganda.



Centenary Bank team pose for group photo during partnership visit to CIDD-UG offices

The visit centered on a “Know Your Client” engagement, aimed at deepening the centenary bank understanding of CIDD-UG work, structure and community reach. This interaction provided an opportunity to explore strategic partnerships with organizations actively promoting community empowerment, governance and local development.

Discussions focused on potential areas of collaboration that directly benefit communities across the region. A key priority was advancing financial literacy at the grassroots level. Centenary Bank expressed interest in partnering with CIDD-UG to equip community members with practical skills in financial management, promoting a savings culture and encouraging responsible use of financial services.

The bank also highlighted plans to implement joint Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives with civil society actors in the region. These efforts aim to support community development while strengthening trust and engagement between financial institutions and the communities they serve.

CIDD-UG welcomed the partnership and emphasized the importance of collaboration in promoting financial inclusion and local development by working together; civil society and financial institutions can bridge the gap between formal financial systems and underserved communities.

The visit marked an important step toward building stronger institutional linkages to enhance financial awareness and support sustainable development across the region. CIDD-UG looks forward to continued collaboration with Centenary Bank and other partners committed to advancing financial inclusion and community resilience.

During the reporting period, Citizen Initiative for Democracy and Development Uganda (CIDD-UG), in partnership with local stakeholders, implemented a capacity building program to strengthen civic engagement and community-led development among refugee leaders in Adjumani District and Palabek Refugee Settlement.

The intervention was delivered using the Active Citizens Model by British Council and consisted of two intensive three day trainings. These sessions focused on enhancing civic participation, community engagement and mindset transformation as critical drivers of sustainable development.

Through intercultural dialogue and participatory learning approaches, participants engaged in collaborative problem-solving and applied practical skills relevant to their communities. This approach

strengthened inclusion, fostered mutual understanding and enhanced cooperation between refugee populations and host communities.

A key outcome of the initiative was the development of community-based social action plans by all 30 trained refugee leaders. These plans focus on improving children's learning outcomes using locally available resources, reflecting increased local ownership, innovation and resource mobilization capacity.

Settlement leadership commended the initiative for its role in building trust, strengthening social cohesion and promoting constructive engagement between communities and local authorities.

Building on this progress, CIDD-UG plans to scale the model across more refugee-hosting districts. The goal is to sustain positive mindset change,

deepen civic participation and promote inclusive, community-driven development that strengthens resilience and social harmony.

Participants in Adjumani undergo rural community participatory appraisal to identify community issues



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Reflecting on International Women's Day 2026

On 8 March, the world commemorated International Women's Day, a global occasion to celebrate the achievements of women and girls while renewing commitment to gender equality. The 2026 theme, "Rights, Justice, and Action for All Women and Girls," emphasized the need for stronger efforts to ensure women and girls can fully enjoy their rights and opportunities.

At Citizen Initiative for Democracy and Development Uganda (CIDD-UG), the day served as an opportunity to engage communities and reflect on progress made in promoting gender equality while acknowledging the challenges that remain. Through community discussions and awareness engagements, participants highlighted the critical role women and girls play in driving social and economic development within families and communities.



MARCH 8TH

INTERNATIONAL WOMENS DAY

On this international Womens Day, CIDD-UG celebrates the strength, leadership and resilience of Women and girls who continue to shape our communities and strengthen democracy. HAPPY WOMENS DAY

#GIVE TO GAIN
#GIRL POWER
#EQUAL RIGHTS

CIDD-UG staff joins the world in celebrating International Women's day

Despite these contributions, many women and girls still face barriers that limit their full participation in decision-making, access to economic opportunities, and protection from gender-based violence. Participants emphasized the importance of strengthening legal protections and ensuring that women and girls can access justice and support services without fear of stigma or discrimination.

The commemoration also underscored the importance of translating commitments into action. Stakeholders called for continued investment in girls' education, women's leadership, and community initiatives that challenge harmful social norms and promote equality.

As the world reflects on this year's theme, CIDD-UG remains committed to working with communities, local leaders, and partners to advance the rights and empowerment of women and girls. Empowering women and girls is not only a matter of fairness but also a key driver of sustainable and inclusive development. Together, through continued advocacy, community engagement and collaboration, we can build a society where every woman and girl has the opportunity to realize her full potential.

The Citizen Initiative for Democracy and Development Uganda (CIDD-UG) in partnership with Restless Development Uganda and the Network for Active Citizens (NAC) successfully validated youth-led research findings under the Youth Connect Programme in Mbale City. This milestone reflected a growing commitment to ensuring that young people's voices are meaningfully integrated into decisions shaping sustainable and inclusive cities in Uganda.

The validation engagement brought together key stakeholders, including city leadership, youth representatives, and civil society actors, providing a dynamic platform to discuss the realities facing urban youth. Findings from the research highlighted pressing issues such as youth unemployment, mental health challenges, climate crisis, limited access to essential public services and gaps in inclusive urban planning processes.

Through structured presentations and dialogue, young people shared evidence-based insights and practical recommendations to improve service delivery and strengthen urban governance. Their active participation not only amplified youth perspectives but also reinforced their role as credible and influential contributors to policy and development processes.

City leaders welcomed the findings, emphasizing the importance of inclusive planning that reflects the needs of all residents' especially young people who make up a significant share of the urban population. The engagement strengthened collaboration between youth and duty bearers, fostering greater accountability and responsiveness in city management.

This initiative underscored the critical role of youth-led research and civic engagement in advancing sustainable urban development. Through continued advocacy for inclusive planning and people-centered policies, CIDD-UG and the partners are contributing to the development of cities that are equitable, resilient and responsive to the needs of all citizens.



Youth and city leaders in dialogue during the validation meeting of youth-led research in Mbale City, 10th.March 2026.

In 2021, Agote Dena participated in a capacity enhancement training organized by the Citizen Initiative for Democracy and Development Uganda (CIDD-UG) for Pallisa District council leaders. At the time, she had the passion to serve but lacked the confidence and practical skills to effectively influence governance processes. Through the training, she gained a deeper understanding of council legislative procedures, accountability and citizen engagement. More importantly, the experience ignited her confidence to speak up, engage and lead.

Building on this foundation, Dena took another bold step in 2024 by joining a regional training for women candidates on effective campaigning and manifesto

From training room to unopposed victory: Agote Dena rising leadership journey



development. This opportunity sharpened her ability to design issue-based campaigns, articulate community priorities and develop a clear, people-centered manifesto.

"Before these trainings, I doubted my voice. Now, I know I can lead and represent my community effectively," during 2026-2031 leadership cycles," she shared.

In the 2026 general elections, Dena's commitment and preparation paid off; she was elected unopposed as the District Female Representative for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) on the Pallisa District Council. This milestone reflects the strong trust