

# Arise

A Women's Development Magazine Published by ACFODE

Issue 59, December 2015

*Celebrating*



Konrad  
Adenauer  
Stiftung





## Vision

A just society where gender equality is a reality

## Mission

To empower women and influence legislation and policy for gender equality in Uganda

## Core Purpose:

Advocacy for gender equality and equity

## Appreciation

This publication was made possible through the kind support of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS). ACFODE greatly appreciates this generous contribution.

## Editorial Team

Regina Bafaki  
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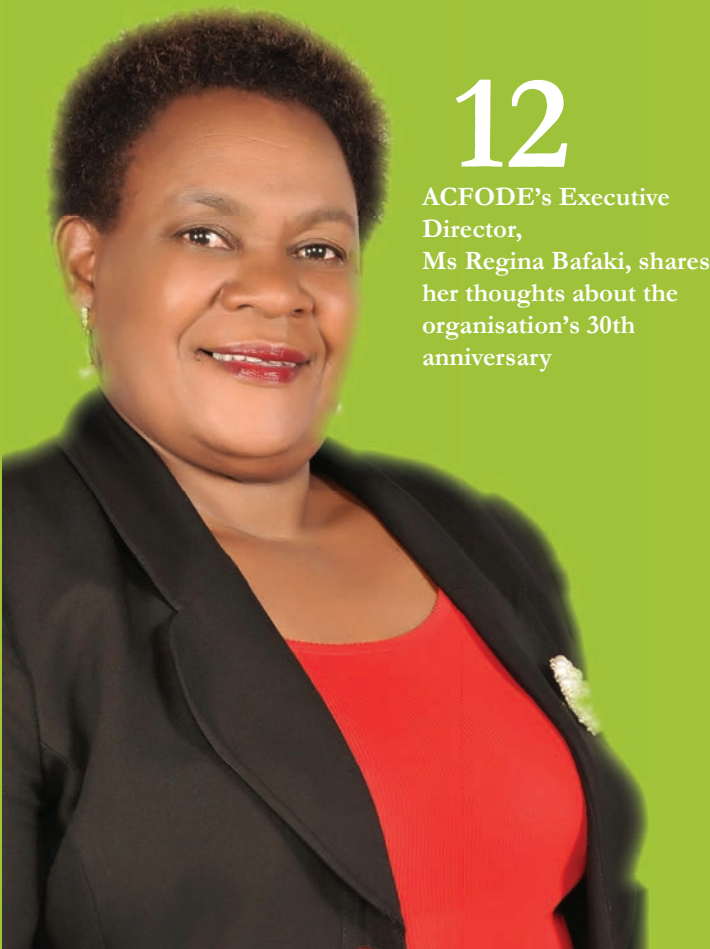
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### Dear Readers,

It gives me great pleasure to write the Editorial of ISSUE 59 of the Arise Magazine as it celebrates the organisation's 30th Anniversary, under this interesting thematic focus of "A Journey of Passion for a Just Society."

It is an opportunity to look back on how ACFODE has evolved over the last three decades.

Thus, there is no better way to mark such an important occasion than with a publication that features a cast of real life stories from women, men, boys and girls as well as institutions whose lives have been changed by ACFODE's interventions.

The story of ACFODE is a touching and impressive one. It tells of how an indigenous non-governmental organisation has successfully moved with the times and developed an array of quality services in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in Uganda.

Established in 1985, the organisation has been proving a wide range of services with the aim of fulfilling her vision of "A just society where gender equality is a reality." These range from advocacy for policy formulation, research, capacity building, coalition building, mobilization and sensitization as her core activities geared towards enhancing the capacity of Ugandans to engage women issues on the national agenda.

To promote women's participation in decision-making processes, ACFODE has steadily monitored women's participation in politics and governance in Uganda.

These strides are attributable to endless sacrifices and the courageous spirit displayed by heroic stalwarts who paved the way.

In the magazine, we thus pay tribute to the stalwarts of ACFODE's struggle: Dr. Hilda Mary Tadria, Dr. Ankrah Maxine, Prof. Joy Kwesiga, and many others with whom we proudly share this occasion.

They are an embodiment of a relentless forward action to total emancipation, land rights, equality, justice and democracy.

Unarmed and defenceless, these women challenged the might and brutality of an oppressive regime in order to ensure that future generations live in a just Uganda that truly belongs to all.

On this 30th anniversary celebrations therefore, I offer my warmest congratulations to ACFODE and wish it continued success in the many years ahead.

**Enjoy the read!**  
**Warmest regards**

**Sandra Nassali**  
**Editor**  
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'I am excited that ACFOE is now 30 years and still going strong. We laid a foundation for ACFODE so strong that at 30 the organisation continues to be relevant in empowering women and promoting women's rights.'

**Dr. Hilda Mary Tadria**

'As a university student doing a course on women and gender studies, I always harboured a yearning for positively impacting women's lives but had no idea how to go about it. However, all this changed after I joined ACFODE and underwent a number of trainings. I have

since begun using this knowledge, power and influence in my different capacities to mobilise and organise different stakeholders to advocate women's rights. ACFODE, congratulations but the struggle continues.'

**Robert kabale, Sub County Chief, Luwero District**

'Congratulations ACFODE. You have touched many lives and opened doors for many women. Despite the storms over the years, your journey has been phenomenal. It is not the time to relent though; we need to scale up the fight against gender inequalities through the use of technology and other creative ways so that our reach is broadened. Enjoy your 30th birthday ACFODE and live for many more impactful years.'

**Helen Twongyeirwe Head Teacher Kiggwa Senior Secondary School, Mityana District.**

'Every organisation has some uniqueness. The uniqueness with ACFODE is their ability to address women vulnerability from all angles, from the everyday woman at grassroots to the women leaders at national level, and their ability to watch political space for women. But also to mention is ACFODE's ability to have senior women activists work alongside young women activists. That intergeneration mix is outstanding. Happy birthday ACFODE! I wish to see you grow stronger and better for the next 1000 years.'

**Tina Musuya, Executive Director, Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention (CEDOVIP)**

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3. Josephine Kasaija – Member
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7. Hilda Akabwai - Member
8. Regina Bafaki – Secretary
9. Yossa Daisy – Staff Representative

**Contributors to this issue**

- Brian Mutebi
- Belinda Kyomuhendo
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## Preface from one of ACFODE's Founder Members, Associate Prof. Hilda Mary Tadria



**D**r Hilda Mary Tadria is a great pillar of ACFODE, being the vision bearer and having served as the first chairperson for the organisation.

One of the Arise magazine reporters had an interview with her, during which she described what the experience was like at the time.

My vision as the founder member and first chairperson of ACFODE can only be appreciated in the context of my experience as I struggled to attend a women's conference in Nairobi. I had been away in the United States (US) for four years doing a PhD in Social Anthropology and Women Studies and during my thesis research in Uganda, I learnt how the power of patriarchy works in the mindsets of both women and men to subdue women.

This was in May 1985, and this coincided with a World Conference that had been organised to review and appreciate the

achievements of the UN Decade for Women. I had followed the preparations while in the US and came back to Uganda prepared and excited to be part of history and join other women for the conference. Travelling out of Uganda at the time, however, was a test of both patience and loyalty to the incumbent government. When the

delegation was finally selected I did not meet the criteria of loyalty. My efforts to travel as a self-sponsored university lecturer did not yield results, as it was clear I needed to be cleared by government. So in the end I missed out on the opportunity.

The idea to start ACFODE was thus triggered by a sense of injustice and frustration. For the week that the conference was taking place I reflected on how, as a Ugandan woman, I could assert my rights to choose and act without political interference. At the time there were not many women in academia. Uganda was still experiencing the trauma of war and the injustices of autocratic regimes. Women had no political voice. I approached two women I had been to school with and knew very well – Prof.

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'I am excited that ACFOE is now 30 years and still going strong. We laid a foundation for ACFODE so strong that at 30 the organisation continues to be relevant in empowering women and promoting women's rights.'

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Ruth Mukama and Prof. Joy Kwesiga (none of us were professors then). I shared with them my frustration and what I wanted to do – start an organisation that would bring together women of all classes and geographical diversities to claim their rights without political interference. Thankfully, these great women embraced the idea. We, however, agreed we would need to learn about the conference outcomes so that whatever the nature of organisation we started, it had a context relevant to the global goals of women's rights.

We approached Prof. Maxine Ankrah who attended the conference. She agreed to join us. I impressed upon the team that women and not individuals would own the organisation we were going to form. Membership would also be open to all women from different walks of life.

This was because all the four of us were from the academic field at Makerere University where the University Women's Association had its home. We needed a different type of organisation, one with membership from urban and rural areas.

We also set term limits for leadership positions. I am so proud to this day, this is still respected. We defined ourselves as a membership organisation and agreed on goals, structure and processes. By September 1985, four months after I had returned from the US, we had crystallised on what we wanted. ACFODE was born with me unanimously elected as the first chairperson.

But that is not to say everything was smooth. Our biggest problem was fear of the unknown. The idea to start ACFODE came at a time when there was shortage of strong human rights civil society organisations in Uganda. Well-placed women were, at first, reluctant to join the movement.

One of today's prominent women rights activists told us at the time that she had no interest in 'women's things'. There was concern as to whether women would join us. Second, would we get resources and, third, would we work well enough together to last as a women's organisation? I am excited that ACFODE is now 30 years old and still going strong. We laid a foundation for ACFODE so strong that at 30 years the organisation continues to be relevant in empowering women and promoting women's rights.

I believe my most important contribution to ACFODE is the idea to start the organisation and come up with guiding principles that have stood the test of time. What we did was to set up a women's organisation with the capacity to outlive all of us. The foundation we gave it was one of inclusive democratic principles to sustain it. Its relevance to women's empowerment issues gives it life and it continues to attract women in all their diversity; I am proud of that and the young women and men who have held it together; some of them were not even born when it was founded. My other contribution is being able wherever I can to lobby for resources for the organisation.

My biggest wish would be that there would be no need for ACFODE, 20 years from now. Unfortunately, the trend shows there are new forms of patriarchy embedded in religious and cultural extremism. These are some of the new frontiers to fight in our work for women's rights. I want to see an ACFODE that is not afraid to challenge them.

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# Interview with **Dr. Ankrah Maxine** – Founder Member **ACFODE**



## **What prompted or inspired you into founding ACFODE?**

I went to Nairobi to attend the United Nations third World Conference on Women in July 1985, The event was attended by roughly 35000 women from around the world. Kenyan women from Sambura, who were bare footed with their beads whilst putting on a united front, impressed me. Unfortunately, the Ugandan team was divided during a very important meeting that happened once a decade. During the meeting, women were discussing matters of substance such as the girl child, peace, marital problems, and academics. The Ugandan women on the other side were busy selling mats and seating under trees waiting for other conference participants to come buy our baskets.

In my spirit, I was so infuriated by this. While I was driving back from Nairobi, it dawned on me that we, the Uganda women were still at the level of selling mats at a world conference that was world changing for women.

When I reported back to work at Makerere University, where I was lecturing at the time in the Faculty of Social Sciences, I called Joy Kwesiga, who was in administration at the time and I told her my experience, who then shared the experience with Dr. Hilda Tadia. The trend continued like that with one woman telling another. Within a week, the numbers were good so they came to my office and we began talking about forming an organized forum that would provide a platform for effective debate and action on issues related to the advancement of Ugandan women.

Out of that talking for about 2-3 weeks only, ACFODE was formed.

## **What, at the time, was the situation of women, gender equality and women empowerment in Uganda? Also, briefly explain what you did to make this dream a reality**

At the time, Ugandan women were tired of being at the level of Mothers Union, or the Daughter of the Roman Catholic Church and the sisters in Islam. We wanted to get a radical position and that was “Action For Development.”



The most critical obstacle was patriarchy which was very prevalent in Uganda at the time. It was perceived in actual fact that women were not really equal to men. At the same time there was a new model of women that I believe paved the way for a change in the mentality of the men at the top. These were women soldiers that had been elevated to be at the top for the first time in Uganda. They included – Hon. Gertrude Njuba, Hon. Janet Mukwaya, and Hon. Olive Zizinga.

Thereafter, we started reaching out to other women organizations and platforms such as the National Council of Women and Mothers' Union to sell our idea. Unfortunately, they were not willing to buy the idea of a more radical position; they were comfortable singing and dancing.

It's at this point that we decided to do it ourselves. However, we realized we needed to become a formal organization. It's at this point that ACFODE translated from an idea to a formal organization.

We rented Kampala City Council which was very popular at the time as a venue for our meetings. We met on 19th November and declared ourselves an organization.

In summary, from 19 November 1985, until present time ACFODE took on the rights mantle, as opposed to women's welfare mantle.

By 1985 ending, news was coming from Luwero triangle; there was someone from the Bush. And the closer he got to Kampala, the more we knew the name.

In March 1986 when President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni had come into power, we re-grouped and invited Ms. Njuba (one of the 3 military leaders under President Museveni's regime) to come and speak to the women. During the meeting, I was elected as the Chairperson, after Dr. Hilda's departure.

### **What major obstacles did you have to overcome in the process of founding ACFODE? How did you overcome them?**

The most critical obstacle was patriarchy which was very prevalent in Uganda at the time. It was perceived in actual fact that women were not really equal to men. At the same time there was a new model of women that I believe paved the way for a change in the mentality of the men at the top. These were women soldiers that had been elevated to be at the top for the first time in

Uganda. They included – Hon. Gertrude Njuba, Hon. Janet Mukwaya, and Hon. Olive Zizinga.

Men were impressed that women would also carry the gun. And then because of what had happened in Nairobi, we began to make requests to meet some of the leaders, most of whom were men to explain ACFODE's agenda. We utilized the 3 women above to mobilise for us influential people because both men and women at that level had accepted them as capable leaders.

We also reached out to the women at the grassroots, so we could change their attitudes by challenging them to stand up for their rights.

At one of our public meetings, we invited the then Vice President of Uganda – Dr. Samson Kiseka. We also reached out to different organizations with the same goal of changing attitudes through knowledge of what other women were doing across the world.

Donor organisations such as KAS, and Ford Foundation came on board and started supporting some of our programmes.

During the meetings held in 1986 at Mukono Bishop Tucker Theological College, which was presided over by the Vice President and attended by different calibre women from all over Uganda, we shared our experiences from the Nairobi conference and thereafter began to breakdown the barriers of ignorance and resistance of women by telling women that they would now be their own boss.

In March 1987, we held the first ever celebrations in that commemorated the International Women's Day. During the celebrations, that lasted a whole week, we invited the President of Uganda to address the women of Uganda as the new Military leader.

At this point, barriers began to break down and now 30 years later we celebrate that beginning.

ACFODE was the first women's rights organization in Uganda. We carried the rights mantle from the start – promoting women's rights and saying there should be equality and equity between women and men. When the government for instance complained that it had failed to identify capable women to appoint women in key political and other administration positions ; we came up with a list and handed it over to the relevant authorities.

### What do you consider to be your most outstanding achievement/contributions to ACFODE?

ACFODE was the first women's rights organization in Uganda. We carried the rights mantle from the start – promoting women's rights and saying there should be equality and equity between women and men. When the government for instance complained that it had failed to identify capable women to appoint women in key political and other administration positions ; we came up with a list and handed it over to the relevant authorities.

We also began to hold radio talk shows to mobilise and sensitise masses on issues to do with women's rights.

Further, we started initiatives that dealt with ourselves as women, by breaking down the myth that there were elite women and the 'other' women. We embraced this approach that is still utilized to date – going to the districts, sleeping on the floors and calling women to attend our sensitization meetings.

This kind of mobilization was started by ACFODE. Then we began to have the conferences, writings in media. Our approach was prolonged because we didn't know who exactly was picking up our ideas and taking them on.

One other critical thing – from the beginning ACFODE declared it would have no branches.

These are some of the few contributions that ACFODE has made to make women visible in their new roles for equality and equity.

### Where do you see ACFODE in the next 20 years or so?

What I would like to see during that time, is that men will have grown because I recently attended a meeting during which a fact finding national survey documented the status of Ugandan women today. It was revealed that upto now, Ugandan men have not come to realize that all the nations of this world that have truly advanced have seen women as equal partners starting particularly with Scandinavia. In such countries, women have the same jobs, proportions in parliament, same salaries. But where women and men have remained divided and women are regarded as second-class citizens and are basically used, then the nations are kept backwards.

One of the proofs is that women are still allowed to die in childbirth while every way of keeping women and children alive is fully known. All it requires is a political decision to invest in their life and in the lives of their off spring. Women also continue to be relegated to motherhood and marriage.

As a country, we are also still largely patriarchal. Right now the reason why I cannot sell off any properties and land that my late husband and I brought is because every thing is conjugal.

Even then, women are only given top positions to be used by men so as to satisfy their agenda.

Such tendencies are keeping women impoverished.

Finally, ACFODE will only survive if it allows being radical and not do things as everybody else is doing. The organization needs to devise means so it can become independent from donor influence and funding as a means of survival in the next 20 – 30 years because this funding is becoming lesser every passing day.

# Fascinating remarks by ACFODE's Board of Trustees Chairperson, Dr Jones Kyazze

**I**t has been a pleasure serving ACFODE. I started serving as chairperson, Board of Trustees in 2009. Then I had little knowledge about women's rights but when I was invited to serve in this capacity as chairperson, Board of Trustees, I gladly accepted the invitation. It has been a journey of learning and working hard. Our role as Board of Trustee is small. In terms of contribution, I should say serving ACFODE has given me more than I have given to it, yet not only me but thousands of women whose lives have been transformed by the organisation's programmes. Most of the successes should be attributed to the Board of Directors and to the Secretariat that runs the day-to-day programmes and activities of the organisation.

I am proud of the management team for it has registered tangible results in spite of the fact that at times they have to work despite meagre resources. The policies and programmes in place aimed at enhancing gender equality and woman empowerment are laudable. Congratulations ACFODE. As we celebrate 30 successful years, aim higher to improve the livelihood of women, especially in northern Uganda.




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'ACFODE's success should be attributed to the Board of Directors and to the Secretariat that runs the day-to-day programmes and activities of the organisation. It's because of their relentless efforts that we are celebrating our 30th anniversary today. I must say I am very proud of them.'

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# Congratulatory Message from the Chairperson Board of Directors, Ms Florence Tayebwa Muhwezi



I am privileged to serve as ACFODE chairperson, a position I took on in May 2014. It's been a journey with ACFODE since joining the organisation in 1995 as a student member. I was at Makerere University in my second year. It was my former lecturer, Dr Eddy Walakira, who invited me to participate in a research study in Rukungiri district on 'Constraints to Women Participation in the Decentralisation Processes'. I later served as ACFODE volunteer before being promoted to Research Officer. What attracted me to ACFODE was the desire to know more about women and girl rights. I had a passion for learning about social relations. I was also interested in doing research.

ACFODE was one place where I met women from diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, educational levels who were one family, harmoniously working together. Every lady I encountered was not only very fast in everything they said or did but did so with enthusiasm and precision.

At that time ACFODE was undergoing changes in strategic direction and focus. Efforts were geared at empowering both men and women. That's how ACFODE developed the concept of 'model couples' in communities to fight domestic and sexual violence against women. ACFODE appreciated the strategic role of men in women economic empowerment and good

social relations.

Later, I went on to do other things but I remained an active member. In May 2011, I joined the ACFODE Board of Directors. My career with ACFODE kept evolving. In May 2014, I was elected chairperson.

My mission was to take ACFODE to a higher level but there were financial constraints. I encouraged the Secretariat to strengthen partnerships with development partners. There were also staffing challenges. ACFODE provides a fast-paced learning environment for her staff so that the organisation tends to be prone to high staff turnover. But with the concerted efforts of the Executive Director, the Board developed incentives to retain staff with benefits like

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My mission was to take ACFODE to a higher level but there were financial constraints. I encouraged the Secretariat to strengthen partnerships with development partners. There were also staffing challenges. ACFODE provides a fast-paced learning environment for her staff so the organisation tends to be prone to high staff turnover. But with the concerted efforts of the Executive Director, the Board developed incentives to retain staff with benefits like nursing facilities, meals and refreshments at work. And we have all – the Board, members and staff – worked together and built strong relationships so it is not only financial benefits that keep people at ACFODE.

nursing facilities, meals and refreshments at work. And we have all – the Board, members and staff – worked together and built strong relationships so it is not only financial benefits that keep people at ACFODE.

I have learnt the power and importance of human resource in an organisation, putting people first before systems, procedures and equipment. I always do my best to make people and systems better than I found them, through literally cleaning my tunic so my neighbours can see it and clean theirs. On a personal level I have realised career should never be static but be reignited through the power of reading.

I would say my contribution to ACFODE is making the Board function as a strategic partner that makes contributions to the day-to-day running of the organisation rather than being auditors or investigators of the management team. The Board has ‘cut through’ the Secretariat and general membership and worked more closely, especially in fundraising, proposal development and other organisational assessment exercises.

We have, for instance, contributed to the development and review of policies such as the Procurement and Disposal Policy, Consultancy Policy and Membership Policy, among others. I also helped start ACFODE Human Resource Clinics that help to develop the talents and abilities of ACFODE members and other beneficiaries within the ACFODE family.

We have given a new face to our information, education and behavioural communication materials and the packaging of our messages is of very high quality. Our

systems and procedures have also greatly improved. I am proud to be part of a winning team that has served ACFODE.

In the next 20 years, of course, I will have retired from active service but I would like to see ACFODE do three things:

- Develop a national women and girl’s museum at the organisation’s premises in Nsimbiziwome, Nakawa division to house the national women’s library and resource centre.
- Establish an ACFODE Foundation which will facilitate the transfer of the legacy and efforts of the women leaders worldwide to charitable efforts for women and girls in education and training, capacity development, maternal health, networking and general human development.
- Uganda has made great progress in women and girls’ empowerment, which efforts need to be maintained within a good legislative framework. But I want to see the enactment of a law providing for maximum rather than the current minimum limits for women. For example, in the current structures of local government systems, and specifically the governance of land management institutions, there should be observance of an ‘utmost  $\frac{3}{4}$ ’ as opposed to the current ‘at least  $\frac{1}{4}$ ’ representation of women in different management structures.

# ACFODE's Executive Director, Ms Regina Bafaki, shares her thoughts about the organisation's 30th anniversary

When did you become ACFODE Executive Director and in what state was the organisation?



The year was 2008. The organisation had a lot of challenges and there were many people waiting to see how I would turn around the situation, which was very strenuous to me mentally. Donor support had dwindled and the organisation was resources-constrained. In fact, there was only one donor who was also on the verge of pulling out. Employees were getting half pay. We had one old pick-up vehicle and van that would often break down on the way. The situation was so bad that there were suggestions from some founder members to close the organisation. It really required a miracle from God to change the situation.

## How did you overcome those challenges?

I reflected critically on strategies to revamp the organisation. My first task was to restore the ACFODE image. The priority was to strengthen our public and communications strategy, which included documenting and sharing our work widely and strategically. We rigorously engaged the media, both mainstream and social media. We also had to recruit the right personnel. Soon we became the pacesetters. It was not long before other women organisations started seeking advice from us while others would copy what we were doing. ACFODE became the organisation that almost everyone wanted to identify with both locally and internationally. Her glory was restored. Our communication strategy attracted many researchers, scholars and civil society organisations, local and international, to understand our approach. Many requested for partnerships. And we have embraced those that fit our mandate and strategic objectives.

The other challenge had to do with most donors supporting projects with little or no institutional support so, as a result, our staff worked under difficult conditions, including half pay or part-time which is demotivating. The effect this had was some

The ACFODE Silver Jubilee celebrations in 2010, two years after I took over the ACFODE leadership, were also memorable. The theme for the celebrations was Embracing the Youth and Looking Ahead. Though hectic, I witnessed renewed energies from ACFODE members, staff, beneficiaries and stakeholders who identified with ACFODE's cause. It was fulfilling to see young people take centre stage, particularly in debates which enabled us to interact closely and bond with them.

employees left the organisation yet we had invested in building their capacities. We employed volunteers to fill the gaps and at times worked with ACFODE members as resource persons.

To raise funds for the organisation, I worked with the Board to engage our donors in addition to mobilising resources for joint programmes with other organisations.

### **How have you seen ACFODE grow over the years and what explains her success?**

Over the years ACFODE has grown in different ways. We have a number of programmes reaching a multitude of citizens. These include advocacy and women's empowerment programmes, community development and livelihood programmes. Through them, we have reached thousands of young people through mentoring, volunteering, debates and the establishment of clubs in schools. Guided by her Vision of a 'Just Society where Gender Equality is a Reality', ACFODE has presence in Central, Western, Southwestern, Karamoja, Eastern and West Nile regions. We have established field offices in the districts of Pader, Oyam, Nebbi, Apac, Dokolo, Namutumba and Kisoro and community structures through which we implement our programmes.

These efforts are supplemented by working with cultural, religious and school authorities, working with men in those institutions to appreciate and champion women's rights and gender equality and good governance in their communities or institutions.

During my leadership, we have managed to bring on board new strategic development partners and maintain them, which has enabled us to implement our strategic plan. We successfully implement our programmes and do quality reporting, which has won us trust from different donors who have renewed their partnerships with us, recommended other donors to us and others have approached us for emerging opportunities to implement together.

We have appreciated the existence of local resources to support our work. For instance, we utilise resource

persons in the districts in which we operate, which has contributed to reducing operational costs, and to ensuring ownership and sustainability of our programmes. We have also recognised the role of the private sector in supporting our mission to empower women. As a result, we have established partnerships with media at local and national levels, individual businessmen and women and companies.

### **What good moments have you had at ACFODE?**

Being ACFODE Executive Director, I have had several good memories. The most important one was when the chairperson and I went to one of ACFODE's longest development partners to request them to give us another chance to prove we were committed to doing things differently. They told us what their complaints about ACFODE were. We apologised and promised to do better. On the way back, we felt rejuvenated and fired up to do our best, and since then we have not had issues with them, the trust has made them recommend us for funding elsewhere. Over time, we have been also been approached by development partners such as KAS, Diakonia and the British Council to do joint fundraising and programmes implementation. This is proof of confidence in ACFODE.

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Then the hosting of Deputy Secretary General and Head of the Department for International Cooperation at KAS, Dr Gerhard Wahlers in 2011! He attended one of the inter-institutional debates. Though there was a lot of tension while preparing his visit, at the end of it all he was impressed with our work, which meant continued support for ACFODE. KAS has been

ACFODE's development partner since 1989.

I have been privileged to witness ACFODE receive several awards in recognition of her contribution to the struggle for gender equality and women's rights. In 2012, ACFODE received the Women Achievers Award from UWONET, recognised for her outstanding contribution to the women's movement in Uganda. The function was presided over by HE President Yoweri Museveni. In 2014, ACFODE was awarded Winner in Gender Mainstreaming in projects organised by Diakonia. ACFODE also received the prestigious Founding Members Award by HURINET-U, founder and committed member by UWONET and recognition for Loyalty and Excellence in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention by ActionAid. Championing women's rights and gender equality requires a lot of passion and commitment. It is, therefore, satisfying for one's efforts to be recognised.

The other good moments for me involve the women, men, girls and boys that I meet in different local, national, regional and international fora who testify that ACFODE made them who they are. I have loved seeing young people join ACFODE and get empowered to take on assignments within and outside ACFODE. Many often come back to appreciate my tough love that has made them grow professionally and as individuals.

It is also gratifying to find people appreciating my efforts in resurrecting the organisation that had almost closed. And as a leader, I get inspired when there are critical issues in the country and the media consults me. It is a sign that my personal views and ACFODE's are very crucial in shaping national debates on gender equality and women's rights.

I am fortunate to witness ACFODE celebrate 30 years. The key highlights of these celebrations have been giving back to communities through donations for maternal health in Kisoro district, giving relief items in Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement and sharing best practices in promoting gender equality and women's rights. I have appreciated how generous and resourceful Ugandans are.

### **Are there problems that the organisation continues to face?**

As an advocacy organisation promoting good governance and women's rights, there have been instances where we have been misunderstood as being a partisan organisation. A case in point is when we raised our concerns against the enactment of the Public Management Act because like any other organisation,

ACFODE, her target groups, staff and members become affected by repressive laws. We have, however, had strategic engagements with relevant authorities both at local and national levels to explain our mandate and ensure it is respected.

The other challenge has been the sub-division of districts, which has affected our modalities for implementing programmes. The sub-divisions have in some cases split our beneficiaries into new and old districts. This has necessitated re-training or identifying new target groups, making it difficult to consolidate our impact. New districts also come with new challenges. Some of the leadership there has high expectations while others look at our interventions as a source of income. This causes conflicts that hinder smooth operations. In addressing this challenge, ACFODE develops Memoranda of Understanding with the districts that spell out the interventions we make, our roles as well as those for the local government. We also utilise events such as project launches to harmonise expectations, and where necessary work with the local government officials as resource persons. ACFODE field officers are also resourceful in strengthening our partnerships in the districts.

### **What plans do you have for ACFODE?**

In the next 20 years, I want to see ACFODE continue to be a champion for gender equality and a self-reliant organisation that depends less on donor agencies. This is possible if we utilise well ACFODE's assets, specifically the land that houses ACFODE offices and one at Nsimbiziwoome in Bukoto. This land is in a prime location. If developed, it can generate income to make ACFODE self-reliant. I want to see a new structure at the current office premises for ACFODE offices and extra space for rent by other NGOs and private companies.

I want to see ACFODE establish a National Women's Centre on the land at Nsimbiziwoome, a centre that is multipurpose for skills development for women and girls, with conference and accommodation facilities, shelter for GBV survivors, space for rent, and a mini-museum with a collection of women's artwork, gender resource centre that contains ACFODE's work on women's rights and gender equality and other related literature. The centre will make ACFODE a renowned gender reference centre.

**I also want to see an ACFODE foundation established and funding women organisations' programmes.**



# ACFODE's Baby Steps Interview With the First Executive Director, Maude Mugisha

*by Angelica Nandudu (2010 Interview)*



**M**aude Mugisha is a great pillar of ACFODE, having served as her first Executive Director (that time Executive Secretary) from September 1987. Her fond memories of the passion and vigour at ACFODE are evident.

I opened the interview by asking her what it was like working as ACFODE's first Executive Director.

Maude recalls the first months at ACFODE when there was no office, no administration, nothing except the resilience and commitment of her first members. She began work by setting up the administration and finance departments, and programmes as well. Maude recollects the programme areas namely Research and documentation, net working and the job center, which was an income generating initiative that offered opportunities like secretarial training and encouraged members to aim higher.

## **What was ACFODE's first location like?**

We first worked at Makerere University in Prof. Maxine Ankrah's office. Prof. Ankrah was the second ACFODE chairperson. After that, we

relocated to Spear House. It was at Spear House where we saved money and and were able to buy ACFODE in 1991. This is where we still are. In 1991 and even today, there are not many organisations that owned their property. We actually had money to purchase a bigger house but those days, there were fewer options of purchasing buildings than today.

## **How active was the membership?**

There was no one in the country that did not know about ACFODE. We had a very active membership of about 300 members; especially from 1987 to the mid 1990s. we used to have monthly general meetings. The taxi drivers would wonder where so many women were going to during the Wednesday monthly meetings after regularly dropping off many of them at the office. ACFODE used to own a van and a landcruiser

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"One of the ACFODE drivers described the organisation as a church because of the devotion of her members those days."

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that would collect university girls to attend the meetings. The van would also pick people from the city center and bring them to the office. ACFODE was always busy.

### What milestones are worth celebrating?

It is worth celebrating the way ACFODE set the pace and nurtured the women's movement, especially those years. Each individual that passed through ACFODE changed. They were empowered through the many trainings that really shaped their lives. Many can testify. During the meetings, we would have relevant topics which experts would talk about. Many members went back to school as a result to study their post graduate degrees. There would also be writing workshops so that members and writers would

perfect their own writing for various publications like the A rise magazine. Sheila Kawamala for example, previously a journalist, benefited greatly from ACFODE. I must recognize Konrad Adenauer Stiftung for the support towards training. One of the drivers described ACFODE as a church because of the devotion of her members.

In 1994, ACFODE was the first organisation to observe elections with international observer group during the constituent Assembly elections. There used to be daily radio programmes during this period and from 1994 to 1995, ACFODE would hold these radio link programmes towards the amalgamation of the constitution. It was extremely exciting to work at ACFODE. There were about 24 members of Staff then.

### What is your message for the celebrations?

The issues we stood for then are still pertinent today. Women and girls are still marginalized. There is need to invigorate the advocacy for women's empowerment. There is still a lot to do. There is need for us to energise as women and to launch a defined agenda because as it is, women are scattered in various places and doing the same work. Now there should be gender parity at all levels. Fifteen years ago, we decided that in 2011, we would field a presidential candidate. It is a shame that Beti Kamyu, the only woman presidential candidate of 2011, does not have women rallying behind her. Transformation lies with women. We were determined to do the groundwork in 1997 so that by 2011, we would have our candidate to make a statement. Women should at this point create the change and not just demand for change. ACFODE has now reached maturity and responsibility towards the direction of the women's movement.

# Testimonies from ACFODE Members

"ACFODE gave me a platform for interacting with other women, women with similar aspirations and thinking. It also helped me develop a strong network of women I could rely on to take on any issue concerning women's rights. No wonder it is one of most powerful national women's organisations we have in Uganda today." **Ambassador Bernadette Olowo- Freers, Former ACFODE Vice Chairperson**

"I joined ACFODE with an open mind as a Grade V Teacher. Dr. Ankrh Maxine gave me my first assignment. It necessitated me to research on problems facing girls in education for a UN Conference that was going to take place in Jinja. As I researched, I was touched by the information I came across about the state of women and girls' rights in this country. Hence, I was inspired to a self help project in my home village which addressed issues on girl child education, good hygiene, community sanitation among others. It is still running to date." **Gertrude Sekabira, Former Chairperson Board of Directors**

# 'I got it all from ACFODE - relevant networks, a good wife, work ethics, and much more,' Mr Kabaale Robert, a longtime ACFODE member.

I am a proud member of ACFODE. I also sit on ACFODE's Board of Governance. My journey with ACFODE started in 1997 when a group of ACFODE members came to Makerere University campus and sensitised us about ACFODE's mission on promoting gender equality and women empowerment. I was doing a course on gender and women's studies at the university so I decided to join the organisation so I could enrich my knowledge.

I have since become a committed ACFODE member. It is now close to 20 years. And for these years, I have been actively involved in the implementation of the organisation's programmes such as research, skills training, sensitisation and recruitment of new members.

As a Board member, I have participated in the amendment of the ACFODE constitution, formulation of the membership policy, human resource and procurement policy and others. I have represented ACFODE on different occasions and participated in the ACFODE transforming process that made it the new, vibrant organisation that she is today.

As a man, being a part of a women's advocacy organisation has taught me a number of things. I learnt how to work with women. And working with women of substance helped me get a woman of substance for marriage from ACFODE. My wife is an ACFODE member. We now have four children.

As a student doing a course on women's rights and gender studies, I always harboured a yearning for positively impacting women's lives but had no idea how to go about it. However, all

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'As a university student doing a course on women and gender studies, I always harboured a yearning for positively impacting women's lives but had no idea how to go about it. However, all this changed after I joined ACFODE and underwent a number of trainings. I have since begun using this knowledge, power and influence in my different capacities to mobilise and organise different stakeholders to advocate for women's rights.'

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this changed after I joined ACFODE. I have since begun using my knowledge, power and influence to mobilise and organise different stakeholders to advocate women's rights.

Apart from being married to an ACFODE member, I have also gained professional skills in change process and organisational and community development. I have networked and made a number of great friends. For instance through ACFODE, I have on a number of occasions got opportunities to work with other women organisations like Uganda Women's Network

(UWONET) and the National Association of Women Organisations in Uganda (NAWOU).

I have come to understand that when rendered support, women can change the lives of others. They are confident, therefore the latter should just support them. The benefits from ACFODE are enormous.

## ACFODE was my grooming ground career-wise - Gladys Nairuba

'ACFODE was my grooming ground, and many individuals have similar testimonies. You can easily tell someone groomed by ACFODE; they are unstoppable, professional and have that cutting edge.'

I became an ACFODE member while still at university in 2002. I was inspired to join the organisation when my sister who hosted a local radio talk show interviewed an ACFODE staff member. The interview was about ACFODE work. When the interviewee talked about ACFODE membership, I decided to apply. Fortunately, I was admitted.

My first field trip was to Pallisa district while I was still at university. I provided support to the training team on participants' registration and introducing training objectives and expectations. By the end of the training, I was certain I wanted to promote social justice and human rights. My other experience while still a student was drafting an introductory letter to one of the district officials for a planned activity, which I had to do right in the shortest time possible if I was to travel for fieldwork before it was dark. I edited and printed the letter four times. That was real training!

Since then, I have been involved in ACFODE programmes of empowering women and local leaders in gender and human rights, building the capacity of women to effectively participate in elective politics, and monitoring national elections. I have worked with three other organisations since on electoral democracy, gender and politics, all because of the foundation I had at ACFODE.

ACFODE was my grooming ground, and many individuals have similar testimonies. You can easily tell someone groomed by ACFODE; they are unstoppable, professional and have that cutting edge. ACFODE has a wide network of people, who have been important in my personal and professional development.

I always get back to the organisation and it feels like I never stopped working there. It is a family I am proud to be part of. I wish you many more years of ground-breaking impact.

## We steered ACFODE back to her feet - Jane Nakintu Kigongo



I served as ACFODE chairperson from May 2008 to May 2011. By 2008, ACFODE was 23 years old but incidentally was facing serious problems. Her growth curve was tending downwards. The majority of the founder members thought the organisation should close shop. The donors had lost trust in the organisation too. Most of them had abandoned us. There were few paid-up members so the organisation was resource-constrained. It was hard accepting responsibility to lead an organisation with dwindling

when we owned up to the mistakes committed in the past that had led them to withdraw support. With time, I restored faith among staff that I could steer the organisation back to her former glory.

We organised a members' reunion which brought together all members. They did not only share their fond memories of ACFODE but gave us ideas on how to take ACFODE to greater heights. We successfully organised the ACFODE Silver Jubilee in 2010 which brought together all members, beneficiaries, stakeholders and the public. They were amazed by the progress we had registered. My outstanding achievement at ACFODE, therefore, was being able to revitalise the organisation.

I am proud to have been part of the team that served ACFODE at such a trying moment, a time when the organisation could not even afford to pay staff. I am happy that with the supportive team, I managed to put the organisation back on her feet and by the time I left, the ACFODE resource base had increased tremendously.

In the next 20 years I would like to see ACFODE with 90 per cent young female and male members. I want to see ACFODE governed and managed by a young generation with the capacity to address emerging gender inequalities facing young women. I envisage older men and women members giving the young generation space to lead the organisation and only come up to give support when called upon.

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'Donors were impressed by our honesty when we owned up to the mistakes committed in the past. With time, I restored faith among staff that steered the organisation back to her former glory. I am proud to have been part of the team that served ACFODE at such a trying moment.'

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resources and loss of trust. However, some of the founders and members of the organisation believed I had what it takes to turn around the organisation so I accepted the responsibility. It was a difficult task to take on but the trust people had in me was a big motivating factor.

I harnessed support from the Board of Directors and the management team whom I rallied to work as a team to confront the obstacles before us. There was openness which helped us to check each other and addressed weaknesses whenever they manifested. Donors were impressed by our honesty

# ACFODE is not a Competitor but a Partner in Development – The Hon. Victoria Sekitoleko



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'Over the last 30 years, ACFODE has not lost touch with the cause of supporting women and women's organisations and programmes in the country. Her approach of being a partner in development over being a competitor makes her very effective.'

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The Hon. Sekitoleko is one of the founder members of ACFODE. She is the current chairperson and founder of the Board of Uganda Agribusiness Alliance, and the Managing Director of the Uganda Culture Community Centre. She is a former Member of Parliament, Government Minister and Director and Representative at the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

Before joining politics, the Hon. Sekitoleko was an active ACFODE member who participated in ACFODE activities of recruiting, sensitising and training several new members and networking with different women's organisations in the country. 'As ACFODE founder member, I am glad the organisation is performing so well and upholds the values for which it was founded,' says Sekitoleko. 'ACFODE has not lost touch with the cause of supporting women and women's organisations and programmes in the country. She is not a competitor but supporter of women programmes, which makes her effective.'

# It's Been an Enriching Professional Experience at ACFODE – Helen Twongyeirwe

I joined ACFODE in 1995. It was a workmate, an ACFODE member, who introduced me to ACFODE. I knew her as a serious person so when she told me about ACFODE, I believed that ACFODE was a good place. Around the same time, I was looking for something that would get me out of the routine and offer me a fresh perspective on life.

Owing to my professional background as a teacher, as soon as I joined ACFODE, I worked under the education unit. In the same year I joined, I was invited by the Training Officer at the time, to go to Bombo Secondary School for a session with adolescents. This marked the beginning of my involvement in ACFODE activities that included adolescents' sexual and reproductive health in Luwero, life skills and leadership training for teachers and counsellors and monitoring micro-finance groups in Kiboga.

I was also in charge of the ACFODE bursary scheme that started in 1997 after a research study was conducted by ACFODE that established that there were several primary school girl-child dropouts due to lack of school fees and family pressures. We introduced the scheme as a pilot scheme to ascertain what worked best to ensure girls remained in school.

About 100 bright but needy primary school girls in Kampala and 15 secondary school girls in Lira and Soroti benefited from the scheme, enabling them to complete primary school and O' level. ACFODE also used the Family Life Education Project to sensitise the girls' parents and guardians about issues that hinder girls' education.

I have worked with ACFODE in different capacities, including representing ACFODE on Boards of affiliate organisations and in international conferences. My professional life has been immensely enriched. I have learnt to recognise gender issues that underlie decisions and actions and I am always alert to raise a finger to bring to attention to stakeholders issues affecting women, say at the workplace. I have been at the forefront of supporting girls to stay in school, where I fundraised for a number of those that mostly had challenges of school fees.



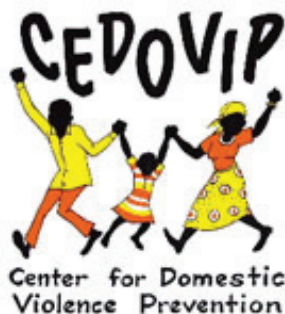
I am more proactive and innovative when solving problems that students face. I learnt those skills at ACFODE. For example, in my previous school, I initiated a 'Let's Talk and Act Campaign'. The campaign was students-led where students would talk about issues affecting their performance and find solutions. This was possible because of the community mobilisation skills that I learnt on an exchange programme in the USA, which was made possible by ACFODE. The promotion I got to the position of head teacher had a lot to do with my involvement in ACFODE activities that acquainted me with vast knowledge and skills. I am the head teacher at Kiggwa Senior Secondary School in Mityana District.

At a personal level, I have made many friends, networked and rubbed shoulders with the highly placed persons in society. My involvement with ACFODE has also strongly boosted my confidence and I have acquired skills I never learnt in school but at ACFODE. Some of these skills include training and monitoring and evaluation. I have also been able to do self-development projects using the savings I make on allowances I earn when I participate in ACFODE work.

# REMARKS FROM SOME OF ACFODE'S PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

ACFODE is unique in addressing women vulnerability from all angles –Tina Musuya, Executive Director, Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention (CEDOVIP)

'Every organisation has some uniqueness. The uniqueness with ACFODE is their ability to address women vulnerability from all angles, from the everyday woman at grassroots to the women leaders at national level, and their ability to watch political space for women. But also to mention is ACFODE's ability to have senior women activists work alongside young women activists. That intergeneration mix is outstanding. Happy birthday ACFODE! I wish to see you grow stronger and better for the next 1000 years.'



CEDOVIP have had close collaboration with ACFODE since both organisations work on a common cause of promoting women's rights. We cooperate on a number of platforms to promote women's rights in politics and at personal level, that is women living their rights in everyday life. That is where we address issues like GBV. The issue of women's rights at a personal level is important because some people say it is okay for a woman to participate in politics, that women can even have 'their money'. However, when it comes to how much power the women should have in the home, for instance, and how much control she should have over her own life, this is when everything becomes controversial.

At CEDOVIP, we have been collaborating with ACFODE on this front to ensure that women have their rights. We have been working on preventing GBV in the communities through capacity-building. Together we stand for women's rights.

CEDOVIP also worked very closely with ACFODE on the Domestic Violence Act 2010. We successfully got it passed by Parliament and are currently advocating its implementation.

Our close ties with ACFODE are also enhanced by the fact that most of our key stakeholders have been mentored by ACFODE. So are our



staff members and the communities where we implement programmes. Together we have a strong network of activists, which is a good space for us. We use it whenever we have an issue to put across. The partnership with ACFODE has been a big empowering process.

Every organisation has some uniqueness. The uniqueness with ACFODE is their ability to address women's vulnerability from all angles, from everyday woman at the grass roots to women leaders at national level, say in Parliament. ACFODE's capacity-building for women leaders is a nice programme, and their ability to watch political space for women is super-unique.

There are many lessons to draw from this partnership. The partnership is good for building synergy. But also to mention is ACFODE's ability to have senior women activists work alongside young women activists. That intergeneration mix is outstanding. Happy birthday ACFODE @30!

**ACFODE opened the door for women organisations in Uganda; she is the grandmother of the women's movement in this country! – Ms Perry Aritua, Executive Director, Women's Democracy Network-Uganda (WDN-U) Chapter**



**'WDN-U, like many other women organisations in Uganda, owes much to ACFODE. ACFODE's experience in advocacy for women's rights and gender equality over the last 30 years has enhanced our collective advocacy work as women organisations in the country. ACFODE has over the years run various projects but, in my view, capacity-building for women remains a hallmark of her work, and that can be seen through the beneficiaries of her programmes who currently are leaders in various spheres of political, economic and social life in Uganda.'**

WDN-U has had a strong mutual partnership with ACFODE. Our partnership has involved working on joint programmes for advocacy for women's rights and empowerment. We currently implement a project entitled Strengthening Women's Influence in Leadership and Decision-making Processes for Gender Responsiveness and Political Accountability. The activities under the project include:

- Mentorship and supervision of women caucuses in 50 districts of Uganda;
- Assessment of the implementation of party manifestos of the four major political parties – the Democratic Party (DP), Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), the National Resistance Movement (NRM) and Uganda People's Congress (UPC) for the period 2011-2016;
- Development of the national women's manifesto 2016-2021 and its dissemination;
- Mapping of women candidates in 50 districts of Uganda;
- Candidate training for women aspiring for election in 50 districts; and
- Advocacy and networking for the advancement of women's rights and gender equality.

WDN-U, like many other women organisations in Uganda, owes much to ACFODE. ACFODE's experience in advocacy for women's rights and gender equality over the last 30 years has enhanced our collective advocacy work as women organisations in the country. ACFODE has over the years run various projects but, in my view, capacity-building for women remains a hallmark of her work, and that can be seen

## PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

through the beneficiaries of her programmes who currently are leaders in various spheres of political, economic and social life in Uganda.

The partnership we have with ACFODE has revealed the fact that working with women and men passionate about women's rights and gender equality makes the struggle worth it. In 2015, for example, we participated in an ACFODE marathon to raise funds to improve the state of maternal health in Kisoro district. It was such a commendable piece of work. It proved that when organisations are passionate about a cause and are innovative about it, resources can be realised internally and the lives of the people for whom the assistance is sought are improved.

ACFODE's work over the years has yielded results because of the passion with which she undertakes this formidable task. The organisation has opened the door for many women organisations in Uganda. At 30 years, ACFODE has realised numerous achievements, particularly in the policy and legislative framework for gender equality in Uganda's constitution.

Even when the challenges facing women's rights and gender equality in Uganda still seem insurmountable, the contribution ACFODE has made to women's rights and gender equality only make her work all the more admirable.

**ACFODE developed the Communication Strategy on Zero Tolerance to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) that was adopted during the ICGLR Conference – Ms Patience Ayebazibwe, Programme Officer, Akina Maama Wa Afrika (AMWA)**



**'If anyone wants to reach out to the community, ACFODE is the ideal partner. As long as they believe in the cause, they will take it up and pursue it. The organisation has done marvellous work and has a built a strong reputation over time. It's because of these very reasons that no one can talk about women's rights in Uganda without talking about ACFODE.'**

AMWA is a women's rights organisation that works to promote and advocate women's rights. We have leadership training and capacity-building programmes for women leaders. We work with partners to fulfil that mandate and that is how we came to partner with ACFODE. The first joint programme we worked on was to popularise the Maputo Protocol on the rights of African women. As Uganda prepared to host the African Union Summit, we wanted government to ratify the protocol but that could not be done without communities knowing what the protocol was about. We needed to create awareness to build momentum, we needed voices from the communities demanding the ratification of the protocol, and because ACFODE works with communities, she was the most appropriate partner to work with.

That was around 2008 and the timeline we set for ourselves was 2012 to have the protocol ratified but because of ACFODE's hard work, the protocol was ratified in 2010, two years earlier. The success we registered was because we rode on the mandate of partner organisations like ACFODE.

AMWA also worked with ACFODE on the Sexual Offences Bill. The bill had gathered dust but ACFODE picked it up, mobilised us and other organisations and pushed for its enactment. Though Parliament rejected it on grounds that most of the articles therein were embedded in other existing laws, ACFODE's efforts were commendable.

In 2011, ahead of a special heads of state summit on zero tolerance to sexual and gender based violence, the Great Lakes region civil society organisations (CSOs) committee mobilised CSOs in the region to influence the outcomes of the summit. It was ACFODE that developed a communication strategy, which was not only adopted by the CSOs but governments. We greatly relied on the expertise of ACFODE in that area.

ACFODE is very committed to the cause of promoting women's rights. If anyone wants to reach out to the community, ACFODE is the ideal partner.

As long as they believe in the cause, they will take it up and pursue it. The organisation has done marvellous work and has built a strong reputation. There is no one who can talk about women's rights in Uganda without talking about ACFODE.

It is 30 years of work so one might ask: What do women still want? They have attained it all. But the fact is we still need organisations like ACFODE. The journey seems to have just begun. ACFODE, your work is still needed. We still need the partnerships to build synergies to reach out to more women.

**ACFODE was a key partner in organising a successful regional conference on rural finance and gender equality – Mr Mwendya Augustine, Executive Secretary, Uganda National Farmers Federation (UNFFE)**



**'The most memorable incident that has stemmed out of this relationship was organising what has been named so far by our development partner We Effect, the best-ever regional conference out of the nine conferences that have been held in the past years. ACFODE was very instrumental when it came to developing a very effective and strong digital and public relations campaign for the conference. As a result, a lot of awareness was created about the event prior to its occurrence, and it also received very positive media coverage in major press outlets in the country and region as a whole.'**

Uganda National Farmers Federation (UNFFE) relationship with ACFODE developed from the fact that ACFODE and UNFFE have a common funder, We Effect. Although there is no memorandum of understanding or any formal agreement between the two organisations, both organisations undertook a big assignment that required them to organise the East African Rural Finance and Gender Equality Conference 2015, which was held at Speke Resort Munyonyo, Kampala in September 2015. UNFFE chaired the conference's National Organising Committee deputised by ACFODE. Further, ACFODE chaired the Finance and Communication and Publicity sub-committees for the conference.

Although UNFFE's experience of working with ACFODE has not been long, the most memorable incident that has stemmed out of this relationship was organising what has been named so far by our development partner We Effect as the best-ever regional conference out of the nine conferences that have been held in the past years.

ACFODE was very instrumental when it came to developing a very effective and strong digital and public relations campaign for the conference. As a result, a lot of awareness was created about the event prior to its occurrence, and it also received very positive media coverage in major press outlets in the country and region as a whole. I realised during this time that the personnel at ACFODE are very professional, organised and focused and work with dedication. The organisation has got an incredible reputation nationally of strong women development organisation.

# IMPACT OF SOME OF ACFODE'S PROGRAMMES

## Promoting Women's Participation in Politics and Decision-Making Processes

Since its establishment 30 years ago, ACFODE has trained and inspired more than 60,000 women leaders to champion women issues at the local and national levels. During such training, participants are equipped with the requisite skills, knowledge and expertise in various aspects of good governance, and have their ability to lobby for women's rights and the overall network of politically active women strengthened.

### Testimonies

**'I am a beloved leader in my community because of ACFODE,' Betty Muzanira, Rukungiri district**

*'The impact ACFODE has had on the personal lives and professional careers of Ugandan women is enormous. Many have been trained by the organisation and have as a result climbed the career ladder from local to national levels. I therefore cannot hold my gratitude to ACFODE for equipping me with leadership skills that have enabled me to be the beloved leader I am today in my community.'*

At age 29, Betty Muzanira was a town councillor in Rukungiri district, western Uganda. But like several of her colleagues, Muzanira had little or no knowledge of the law, Acts of Parliament and the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda. It was then in 1998 that under the ACFODE Leadership Training Programme for Women that Muzanira, along with other women leaders in the district, was trained. They did not only acquire knowledge and information but were also given hard copies of Uganda's constitution and other relevant Acts related to governance and women's rights issues. This was the beginning of a journey of empowering them to be informed and effective leaders. Muzanira would then participate in

consequent ACFODE training programmes in the district.

Muzanira effectively manages her school, Little Angels Primary School in Rukungiri, and serves as Speaker, Rukungiri Municipality Council, and as the vice chairperson for Uganda Urban Speakers Association. 'I am a teacher professionally and a politician with a difference,' she states Muzanira, who also sits on a number of management committees. 'I hold my gratitude to ACFODE for equipping me with leadership skills that have enabled me to be the beloved leader in my community today.'

One cannot but wonder how Muzanira manages to fulfil her several equally demanding duties – wife and mother, politician, administrator and teacher – and remain effective. 'One of the things I learnt from ACFODE trainings was how to manage time and balance responsibilities,' she offers an explanation.

Other skills Muzanira has acquired from ACFODE training include public speaking and communication skills, which make her voice as a woman heard in the often male-dominated municipal council meetings. She learnt how to lobby and advocate causes, which has enabled her to often get promoted and assigned more responsibilities.

She embarked on deliberate efforts to share her skills and knowledge with fellow women. Since 2002 Muzanira has occasionally facilitated ACFODE training for women politicians (aspiring and incumbent) in Masaka and Rukungiri districts. In 2015, Muzanira participated in making the women's manifesto ahead of the 2016 national elections. She is now seeking higher office – standing for the position of Woman Member of Parliament for Rukungiri district on the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) party ticket. Muzanira can only rise higher.

## I got election winning tactics through ACFODE/KAS training – Santa Angela

*'I contested for the post after hearing of vibrant women politicians like Hon. Cecilia Ogwal. But I lacked the confidence to go to where campaign meetings were being held. With this, there was no way I was going to win. However, when I attended ACFODE trainings for aspiring women leaders, I was equipped with effective campaign strategies such networking, developing an effective campaign message, establishing key relations among others.'*

My name is Santa Angela. I live in Opelo village, Boroboro parish, Adekokwok sub- county, Erute south constituency in Lira district. I am the district councillor and chairperson for Community-Based Services, Lira district. I rose to this position using the knowledge and skills I got from an ACFODE training programme for women leaders.

Before I got to this position, I contested for the women councillor post in 2001 but did not go through due to lack of winning tactics. Fortunately after the loss, I was invited for an ACFODE leadership training for women leaders. During the training, I realised that the reason I failed in the elections was because I did not believe in myself. I lacked self-confidence. This was influenced by the fact that I had the lowest level of education among the contestants and I lacked the confidence to go to where campaign meetings were being held. There was no way I was going to win. Above all, I had fear of men because I believed men were superior to women. However, this changed when through ACFODE training I learnt how to effectively participate in politics and decision-making. I contested for the position of chairperson Women Council for Adekokwok sub-county, which I won. I occupied that position up to 2005.

Before the ACFODE training, my life circumstances were miserable. I had lost my husband with whom I had two children and I cultivated other people's gardens to get basic necessities of life like soap and salt. I was a Senior One dropout and only went to contest for a post after hearing of vibrant women politicians like Hon. Cecilia Ogwal. But I lacked the confidence myself.

After the ACFODE leadership training, I realised the remarkable importance and contribution of formal education to leadership. I resolved to go back to school. In 2005 while I was in Senior Four, I picked the forms to contest in the 2006 elections. I wanted to go for a higher office. By the time elections were held, my results for the Uganda Certificate of Education were out and I had passed very well. In March of 2006, I was voted as the female councillor for my sub-county to the Lira district Local Council V. I had learnt the election winning tactics.

Putting to use the knowledge and skills of multitasking that I got from ACFODE leadership training, I served as councillor and continued with my education and completed Advanced Level of education where I did Literature, Economics, Geography and Entrepreneurship. I later joined university. Today I am a professional social worker, mentor and a counsellor.

ACFODE has had an enormous impact on my career and personal life. I am the best councillor during council meetings in terms of contribution, effectiveness, eloquence and boldness. I compete with men in all areas. I am focusing on rising higher; I hope to contest for the position of District Speaker in the 2016 elections.

Congratulations ACFODE at 30. Continue to nurture women and create education opportunities for all women here in Uganda and abroad.

## ACFODE boosted my leadership abilities – Helen Nshimiye

*'I am able to do all my work as a young woman leader and mother, and achieve great results because of the experience I gained from ACFODE.'*

My name is Helen Nshimiye. I am the District Deputy Speaker, Kisoro and the chairperson of the District Women Leaders Caucus Group supported by ACFODE. The organisation assisted me in acquiring the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) scholarship for a Master of Arts in Local Governance and Human

Rights. I am currently in my second year at Uganda Martyrs University. This master's programme will boost my career.

Yet that is not all that I owe to ACFODE. The ACFODE training and capacity-building workshops helped me acquire project management skills and boosted my leadership abilities. Since attending the training in 2011, I have taken on various roles. I have been coordinator for the Saving Lives at Birth (SLAB) project in Kisoro district since 2013 with White Ribbon Alliance for safe motherhood Uganda. I chair district committee meetings, and facilitate community awareness meetings on advocacy and social accountability. I compile reports and make presentations at the district and national levels. All this is because ACFODE operated in my area and I benefited from her programmes. And because I execute my duties with distinction, I was selected to facilitate training for lower local government women leaders in the whole of Kisoro district. I am able to do all this as a young woman leader and mother, and achieve great results because of the experience I gained from ACFODE.

### A female beneficiary/councillor from ACFODE KAS programmes in Apac district

**“Before I joined ACFODE, my life was hard because at times the man in the house would not allow me to go anywhere or do anything...Life was hard because you could go and call people for a meeting and you find only men in that meeting, women remain in the village because the ‘law’ does not allow them to come for the meeting. Women would not be in the meeting because their husbands didn’t understand that it is important for the women to be in the meetings as well. ...I always waited for my husband to provide what to eat and wear. Even if I admired something, I had to wait upon my husband. ...I was just a mere housewife until ACFODE trained me.”**

## Influencing the Formulation/ Review of Policy and Legislation that Effectively Promotes Gender Equality

**A**CFODE has influenced legislation formulation and reform, and has also partnered in and contributed to the implementation of major laws and instruments in the country. For instance, ACFODE spearheaded the civil society coalition that was charged with advocating and pushing for the enactment of the Equal Opportunities Commission Act that was passed in 2007. The Act provides a legal basis to challenge laws, policies, customs and traditions that discriminate against women and girls.

ACFODE also successfully lobbied for the inclusion and enactment of gender-related human rights provisions appearing in the 1995 Ugandan Constitution, specifically the preamble, and the National Objectives and Directive Principles of State policy. She also was proactive in influencing the content and outcome of article 78 and 180 of the Constitution that guaranteed women's representation in Parliament and local government structures.

Through extensive advocacy in her districts of operation, the organisation has also been able to influence reviews and formulation of ordinances and district by-laws that are gender-sensitive. For instance, in Apac district, the district leadership enacted an ordinance providing for the allocation of 10% of the 2013/2014 district budget towards gender-responsive programmes such as the economic empowerment of women and girl-child education; while in Kole district, an ordinance that obliges the



Participants at the Women Public Administrators Regional Conference held at Mbale Resort pose for a group photo with the Chief Guest, the First Lady of Uganda Hon. Janet Kataaha Museveni

district to plan and budget for the recruitment of health care personnel was endorsed as a result of ACFODE's advocacy efforts. It also encompasses the health care dimensions of family planning, preconception, prenatal and postnatal care in order to reduce maternal morbidity and mortality. Examples of other by-laws that have been passed as a result of ACFODE's extensive advocacy work include a decree that regulates the issuing of birth certificates to offer children (especially the girl child) protection against all forms of abuse and exploitation such as forced and/or early marriage, child labour and participation in armed conflicts in Nyarusiza sub-county; and a decree restricting the distribution of pornography in public places that was passed to protect children from sexual abuse in Nyakabande sub-county, Kisoro district.

In Dokolo district, a number of by-laws have been passed. These include one on the right to equality in education as a means of promoting girl-child education in Agwata sub-county. The law requires that both boys and girls are provided with equal learning opportunities. It also obliges schools to ensure that the educational needs of all students, including those with special educational needs such as girls, are identified and provided for. In addition, the law penalises parents who encourage their children, especially the girls, to get married at a tender age. Thus, schools have been

challenged to establish and maintain an admissions policy that provides for maximum accessibility and which ensures that principles of equality are respected. The other is on public intoxication. This one incriminates any person who appears in a public place under the influence of alcohol, marijuana or any other drug to the degree that he endangers him/herself or another person and property. And lastly, a by-law on domestic violence. The law makes it illegal for anyone to exercise coercive control over their partner, and provides criminal rules for punishing those who cause emotional or physical harm to others with whom they share a family or other close relationship.

ACFODE also engages with policy-makers such the legislature, key stakeholders in the Justice, Law and Order (JLOS) sector and other like-minded organisations to influence the enactment of women-friendly laws and policies such as the Sexual Offences Bill (SOB) and the Marriage and Divorce Bill (MAD). This is usually done through coalition-building, networking meetings with Members of Parliament (MPs), and other varying ranks of status, stretching from Cabinet and State Ministers to local council executives, and balancing pressure and persuasion to bring the importance of such issues to the attention of key decision-makers. A case in point is when ACFODE petitioned MPs over the SOB Bill, which seeks to consolidate laws relating to sexual

offences, combatting sexual violence, providing for the punishment of perpetrators of sexual offences, providing for procedural and evidential requirements during the trial of sexual offences and other related matters. However, the processes of amendment and presentation of the Bill have been delayed owing to various social and political factors. During the meeting, MPs were put to task to finalise the Bill, and also to push for its immediate passage.

Another good example is a petition on the persistent high incidence of sexual violence against women and girls that was hosted and run by ACFODE in 2013. It called on government and other key stakeholders to end discrimination against women and girl survivors of sexual violence by amending harmful and discriminatory laws and ensuring accountability and support through making available legal remedies that are sensitive to the needs of survivors of sexual violence. Simultaneously, a press conference was held to popularise the petition, and also to get public support. After getting over 1,254 signatures, the petition was presented to the Speaker of Parliament through the Hon. Sarah Mateeke, Woman MP for Kisoro, to make the legislature aware of the situation and also request immediate action.

## Enhancing Equality and Quality in Education



Pupils from Kampala International school jubilate after attending a training on peace and human rights at ACFODE House in Bukoto

To empower the Ugandan community to create responsible citizens and leaders based on the values of democracy, liberty, quality and equality, ACFODE has implemented a number of programmes aimed at improving the quality of education at all levels and at ensuring that every student (especially the girl child) has access to a 21st Century education. This has been key in developing the attributes and skills that the beneficiaries need to achieve their potential as human beings and members of society.

Examples of such programmes include: the ACFODE Bursary Scheme, also commonly known as the Keep Girls in School Project (KGIS), that was launched in 1987 and aimed at bridging the gap in education between girls and boys. The bursary scheme was a pilot project for ACFODE to try and identify advocacy issues for girls' education, increase their access, enrolment, retention and good performance for the duration of their schooling. It supported girls in primary and secondary schools who were intelligent but economically disadvantaged. The beneficiaries came mainly from homes of single mothers engaged in odd jobs and petty businesses, mainly in and around Kampala. Later the scheme was extended to Lira, Pallisa, Kiboga, Rukungiri, Kabale, Arua, Soroti and Mpigi.

Also worth mentioning is the KAS Scholarship Programme, which has been awarded to ACFODE affiliates, with exceptional academic achievement and outstanding political or social commitment.



# Testimonies

## Bursary Schemes

For many of the girls, getting to the bursary scheme was like a dream come true. Jacinta Apolot, who was sponsored to study at Soroti Community Secondary School, testified thus: 'I became actively involved in the Family Life Education programme when ACFODE came to Kadungulu Primary School where I was a student. I was a peer educator. After Primary Seven, I could not proceed with my education because of lack of tuition. I had stayed home for one term when ACFODE surprised me with the offer to support my secondary education. I was very happy when I received the news of the bursary. It was a dream come true. The day I arrived at Kidetok Senior Secondary School, a good boarding school, I was overwhelmed. I resolved to read hard and complete my studies. I even became a leader in one of the school clubs. If ACFODE had not supported me, I would not have reached where I am now. I would have already been married off in the villages. I am very grateful to ACFODE and I ask them to assist other girls facing a similar problem.'

One of the head teachers of some of the girls, Mr David Williams Kizito, who was at the time heading Bbunga Primary School notes that, 'ACFODE did a great job of taking care of the girls' education in our school. Before ACFODE's intervention, these girls were not stable in class. Their attendance was irregular, because we could keep on sending them away for school fees and other school requirements.' He commended ACFODE for selecting the girls that really deserved support because some were orphans while others came from extremely poor families that could not afford school dues.

Mr Kizito said that ACFODE's support helped the girls to improve their class performance and to excel in their Primary Leaving Examinations. The school took advantage of the textbooks that ACFODE gave to their beneficiaries and used them to teach other pupils as well. This, according to Mr Kizito, raised the general academic standards of the school. He was also impressed by the Family Life Education activities that were running alongside the bursary scheme, which he said was very crucial in empowering students with self-efficacy.

At Namungoona Salaf Islamic Primary School, ACFODE rescued three girls from their plight. The deputy head teacher, Ms Sarah Namutebi, said that although the three girls were very bright, their attendance had previously been irregular and they were on the verge of dropping out of school. She said ACFODE's support gave them confidence. They settled and concentrated and as a result they all passed in Grade One, with one of the beneficiaries topping the school with aggregate 7.

The KAS scholarship boosted my understanding of governance and human rights issues



**'All I had was passion and may be the knowledge about women and gender from my undergraduate degree programme and work experience with ACFODE. The master's programme has, however, heightened my understanding of governance and human rights, particularly women's rights.'**

My name is Ainomugisha Happy. I work with ACFODE as a Programmes Assistant in the Department of Governance and Human Rights. I have a bachelor's degree from Makerere University in Women and Gender Studies and Social Administration.

I recently completed a master's programme in Human Rights and Governance from Nkonzi University. I got the scholarship for the programme from Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) through ACFODE. It was a very competitive process but I thank God that out of over 100 applicants I was one of the selected beneficiaries.

Studying this master's programme has enhanced my understanding of the issues of governance and human rights, particularly women's rights, which I had very little knowledge about. I am able to relate well what I study and what I actually do at ACFODE.

Before the scholarship, all I had was passion and maybe the knowledge about women and gender from my undergraduate degree programme and work experience with ACFODE. However, the master's programme has tremendously heightened my understanding of these issues. The other advantage I have is I am rightfully placed in an organisation that promotes gender equality. ACFODE works closely with women and understands women's issues. I can only say thank you, KAS; thank you, ACFODE.

I am glad to be part of celebrations of ACFODE @30. I joined the organisation when I was a fresh graduate from Makerere University. It is here that my career has grown. I commend ACFODE not only from a personal point of view but also for the many opportunities she provides to several young women and men in promoting women's rights and empowerment. It is through such work that a society where gender equality is a reality can be realised.

**I was one of the very first people, maybe the first that Konrad Adenauer Foundation (now Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung) sponsored to study project management in Germany at a place called Academy Clausenhoff, for three months. This gave me an opportunity to acquire knowledge but also to network and learn more about the German society. (Former staff and board member, ACFODE).**

## Creating a Cadre of Young People who are Gender-Sensitive



ACFODE has created a cadre of young people who are gender-sensitive and appreciate women and girls' rights. This is as a result of engagement with institutions of learning such as primary and secondary schools, where a number of training programmes and sensitisation on the prevention and handling of sexual violence are conducted. Such events usually target District Inspectors of Schools, head teachers, health workers, senior women and men teachers, student leaders, Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) along with School Management Committees (SMCs).

In partnership with institutions of higher learning, ACFODE, through its internship programme, has provided work experience opportunities to university students, fresh graduates and youth considering career changes. This has prepared beneficiaries to enter the 21st Century workforce empowered with different skills, ranging from communication and writing, to public speaking, project planning and management, facilitation, research, advocacy, as well as commitment to excellence. In addition, their potential to advocate gender equality and to monitor progress towards gender justice within their communities is strengthened.

ACFODE has also built the capacity of young women and men who

understand and appreciate concepts of gender equality, functional democracy and advocacy through inter- and intra-university debate competitions using the British parliamentary format. Eighteen higher institutions of learning, such as Makerere University, Kyambogo University, Kampala International University, Nkozi University, Kabale University



and Islamic University in Uganda have participated in the debates.

As a result of these interventions, GBV clubs that spearheaded the 'End Sexual Violence' campaign in schools have been established. So have debating clubs in institutions of higher learning. These exert influence on their communities in several ways, including: the introduction of intra-school/university debates with emphasis on GBV-related motions; insertion of GBV messages into school/university activities such as thematic music, dance and drama competitions; establishment of 'talking compounds' and learning corners; and the pioneering of gender awareness dialogues between parents and students.

## Testimonies

I win elections because of the mentoring I received from ACFODE/ KAS debate programmes – Kilenga Africa



**'The impact ACFODE is making on the youth in our country is tremendous. Personally it has always been a pleasure and privilege to be associated with the ACFODE brand. The skills you have imparted in me are invaluable. You've opened for me gates I never thought I would open. You might say your contribution to my life was small but sometimes the simplest things mean the most.'**

**M**y name is Kilenga Africa. I am 24 years old and a student at Kampala International University in fourth year doing law. My first interaction with ACFODE was in 2012 in my first year at university. It was during a three-day debate tournament ACFODE organised in the central region. It was held at Nob View Hotel, Ntinda. My team emerged the best in the competition.

In 2013, ACFODE again organised another tournament, this time for the champions from various regions. My team reached the finals. In 2014 when a similar tournament was organised, I

did not participate as a debater but as an adjudicator in the regional and national competitions.

The experience as a debater and later an adjudicator in ACFODE's debate programme has had a profound impact on me. I have learnt critical thinking and effective communication skills, independent research and teamwork. These skills have boosted my political career, helping me win elections at college. I am able to critically examine the pronouncements of my political leaders and make informed judgements about crucial issues. The same skills have become very crucial in my profession as a lawyer. I work with Bwire, Kalinaki and Co. Advocates in Kampala.

ACFODE debates also taught me the principles of tolerance, non-violence and respect for opinions. This is important because our background is diverse so debates can close the gaps between minority and majority cultures and other groups divided by long-standing animosities.

One of the most important lessons I learnt was that because gender biases are embedded in culture, it is very difficult to eliminate them without having a holistic approach and the involvement of men and that it is important to create an open and friendly atmosphere to address gender discrimination issues.

I have been able to put to use the skills I acquired. In April this year, I organised an inter-university anti-corruption debate tournament where 12 universities competed. The Inspectorate of Government facilitated the activity and I am working with the Integrity Ambassadors Clubs under the same office. All this is because of the experience from the ACFODE debates. I just cannot wait to use more of the knowledge and skills ACFODE equipped me with.

The impact ACFODE is making on the youth in our country is tremendous. Personally it has always been a pleasure and privilege to be associated with the ACFODE brand. The skills it has imparted to me for the last three years are invaluable. They have opened for me gates I never thought I would open. My special thanks go to the ACFODE Executive Director, Ms Regina Bafaki, Ms Belinda Kyomuhendo and Ms Daphine Agaba. I am so grateful and honoured to have had the chance of working with you; you are amazing. You might say your contribution to my life was small but sometimes the simplest things mean the most.

As you celebrate together the 30 years of a noble cause, I pray you cultivate a way to bring together all former debaters. We shall be a family of friends and together advance the noble cause of making gender equality a reality. Long live ACFODE.

“The ACFODE KAS debate programme is an outstanding initiative that has seen very many promising results. It is exposing youngsters in Uganda to great role models and providing them with the tools to respond in a constructive, non-violent way to life challenges. When you see firsthand the mind shift of the participants, you realise how invaluable this programme really is.”  
**Kenneth Opolot – Senior Adjudicator ACFODE KAS Debates**

“I had the most incredible experience that left me with no doubt that ACFODE KAS debate programme is a natural fit! My confidence and argumentation skills were enhanced, and I was also given the proficiency that will help me re-engage in school and community service, and ultimately get a job. So, do not be surprised when you see me holding one of the top leadership positions in this country in the near future.”  
**Ruth Namara, Kabale University**

“Through the debate programme, I got the knowledge of accountability, I learnt that accountability is not all about financial accountability but even what you do amongst individuals, for example, performing your duties, and failing to perform, that's not being accountable as a leader especially and above all, I also got the knowledge that you should to help other people who never had a chance and I was able to provide some sensitisation basing on the knowledge that I got from the programme.”  
**(Male participant, Gulu University)**

It was a good initiative and as university students, we had to engage with as many institutions as possible to bring positive messages that benefit our understanding of certain problems and make broader understanding of the issues that face us. The debates were about thinking critically and analyzing issues or bringing to the platform issues that one could engage with to be part of the solutions.  
**(Male participant, Makerere University)**

The debates build my confidence and exposure as well my public speaking skills. The debates exposed me to new people, I was known by so many people, which gave me an opportunity to be consulted by many people.  
**(Female participant, Mbarara University)**

## I counselled a friend out of a forced marriage - Esther Musimenta, 17, Senior Four student at Mubende Parents Day and Boarding Secondary School

**B**efore ACFODE came to our school to teach us about GBV and gender roles, I thought women were assigned certain roles and could not perform others. But now I know what a man and a woman can do, and that men can also do roles that seemed to be assigned to women, such as domestic chores. Our school has since started a club to sensitise fellow students and raise awareness on GBV. Some of the members of the club were coming from homes where there were fights and violence but now such students are ambassadors of peace in their homes and communities. Personally, I have the capacity to counsel girls going through difficult circumstances. For instance, there was a girl who was forced into early marriage by her parents but I talked to her and encouraged her to leave the marriage. I do that because I was trained by ACFODE. I encourage girls to stay in school as a way to

stop violence caused by poverty and ignorance. I also encourage fellow students to sensitise their parents, but in a humble way of course, because if the parents are not in the know of such issues and how they affect our lives, they are most likely to perpetuate violence against their children.

**'Congratulations ACFODE upon your 30th anniversary. As you mark 30 years, I appeal to you to consider reaching out to more girls in schools, especially in remote areas where projects like this are not accessed.'**

## I now know that both men and women are equal - Ivan Twinematsiko, Senior Four Student

**I** learnt about equality and the fact that all persons, men and women, have rights during the human rights sensitisation meetings that ACFODE carries out in my school. I also learnt about the different ways of preventing sexual harassment in the community and ways of keeping the environment safe and conducive for girls to stay in school. For instance, some girls just need counselling when they have problems that may hinder them from attending school. ACFODE also showed us videos on GBV and I found them to be rather informative. For instance, from one of the films

that have been showcased in my school, I have learnt that however hard a situation is, it can be overcome. The project had indeed had a very big impact on us. In my school, the girls are now more confident in class and also exhibit high levels of self-esteem. This has made it very difficult for the boys who want to take advantage of them.

**'Congratulations ACFODE, go further in your mission to sensitise people on gender equality. The more people will hear the message, the more they will learn to prevent GBV.'**



Pupils from Mutolere Primary School present a skit on SGBV during a community sensitisation meeting in Kisoro District.

## **I acquired valuable skills every employer looks for while at ACFODE - Daniel Amanyire, former ACFODE volunteer**

**A**manyire chose to do his internship with ACFODE because of the organisation's exceptional reputation of being a women's development organisation promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. However, all he had as an undergraduate student was nothing more than the knowledge attained in the classroom, not in the real world, the world of employment.

When he was given the chance to join ACFODE as an intern under the Human Rights and Governance Department, Amanyire learnt about women's rights and gender equality. He also met and interacted with and had access to the organisation's rich resource base of contacts in the political, academic, government and civil society fields. And assisting in several projects offered Amanyire the opportunity to put into practice the knowledge he had attained in lecture rooms.

'The internship enabled me to develop valuable skills that employers look for, such as writing and communication skills, public speaking, project planning and management, the ability to work under pressure, time management, social etiquette, and interpersonal skills. I also liked ACFODE's human rights-based approaches to development at the grass-roots level,' he shares.

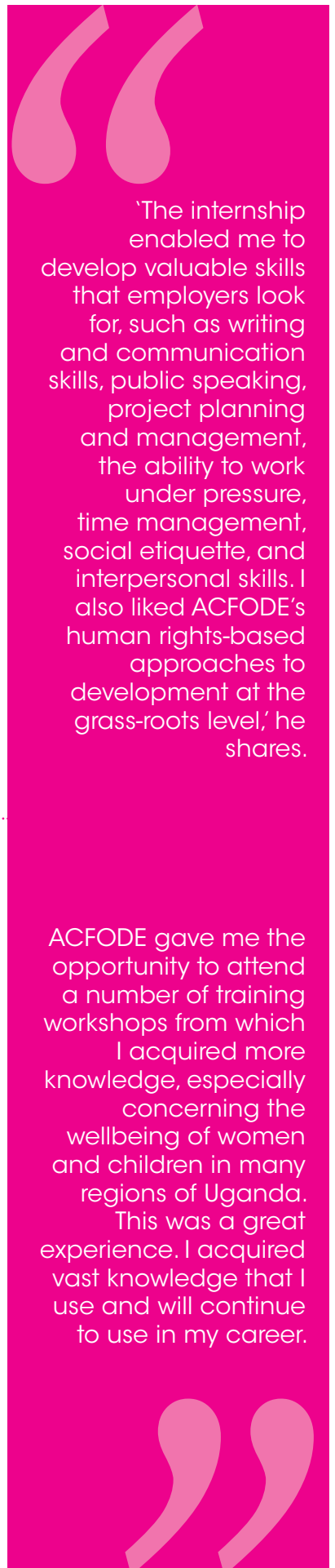
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## **ACFODE taught that even the little things in life matter- Sheba Kanyonyonzi, former ACFODE intern**

**M**y name is Sheba Kanyonyonzi. I joined ACFODE in 2014 as an intern in my Senior Six vacation. I was there for four months and I truly learnt many new things about work and the working environment. I gained various skills like communication and report writing, organisational and interpersonal skills. ACFODE taught me even the little things like using email and making correspondence.

ACFODE gave me opportunity to attend a number of training workshops from which I acquired more knowledge, especially concerning the wellbeing of women and children in many regions of Uganda. This was a great experience. I acquired vast knowledge that I use and will continue to use in my career.

I was involved in a number of activities and this helped me to not only receive but contribute to ACFODE's cause for gender equality and women's empowerment. It was a pleasure working with ACFODE, an unforgettable experience.



## ACFODE identified, tapped and utilised my potential - Denis Nuwagaba

‘Women are equal partners in development and should thus be given equal opportunities in education, access to land resource and credit facilities. Women should also have equal representation in decision-making in order to have holistic development.’ This is the view Denis Nuwagaba, a social worker, holds.

Nuwagaba worked as a volunteer with Uganda Rural Women’s Development (URWA), a local economic empowerment organisation for the rural women, which gave him insights into the disadvantaged position of women socially, economically and politically. His urge to join a more established women’s organisation was awakened, and the opportunity came in November 1990. Nuwagaba had accompanied a friend to an ACFODE meeting. It was a moment that would see him join and work with ACFODE.

Nuwagaba joined the Education and Training and Research units of the organisation. He was trained as a Family Life Education (FLE) facilitator and later, along with members of the unit, with support from Path Finders, implemented the FLE project in 20 schools in Kampala and 10 in Luwero district. The project sensitised parents, teachers and pupils to the importance of open discussions on reproductive health issues.

Nuwagaba also received training in Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) and research methodologies. He would later apply these skills to the gender dimension of poverty alleviation programmes in Uganda, which was a pilot survey in Kiboga district. ‘ACFODE identified my potential, tapped and utilised it,’ he remarked. ‘Using the networking skills I acquired, I made friends who have been important in my personal and professional development.’

Nuwagaba’s other memorable experience was when he participated in the four-phased organisation development exercise, which was a SWOT analysis of ACFODE when the organisation underwent structural transformation. ‘My colleagues and I realised that despite our fear of change, change and transformation were probably the only ways for ACFODE to soar. And this year we celebrate 30 years of promoting gender equality and women’s empowerment.’



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‘We realised that despite our fear of change, change and transformation were probably the only ways for ACFODE to soar. And here we are celebrating 30 years.’

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# Promoting Violence Free Families, Homes, and Communities



ACFODE community agents of change from the Lango sub-region, Northern Uganda pose for a group photo after being commissioned to advocate for violence free homes and communities

**A**CFODE has advocated for the elimination of structural constraints that perpetuate women's marginalization and discrimination, and the denial of women the freedom to enjoy their rights. This is because although the Government of Uganda has made several commitments aimed at achieving gender equality for instance the National Gender Policy, the Equal Opportunities Act (2007), the Employment Act (2006) among others; these commitments have not achieved the desired goals because resources have not been directed to their objectives since violence against women in all its forms is still evident, both within the private and public sphere yet justice eludes them. Disturbing demographics and worrying social trends also persist especially in sectors that have a direct effect on women; due to negative attitudes towards gender equality, poor resource allocation and in most cases, limited implementation of policies and laws in existence.

Thus, ACFODE has identified and trained community

leaders and social actors such as local council chairpersons, opinion leaders, District Community Development Officers (CDOs), religious and cultural leaders, health official, police officers, and model couples in human rights, SGBV, legal redress, women and girls' rights. These have been commissioned as Community Agents of Change (CACs) in charge of advocating for VAW free homes and communities. They conduct community sensitization sessions using existing platforms such as village health teams, religious assemblies, and meetings of ambulance, women, youth and farmers' groups among others. They also act as referral points within their communities. Through such platforms, community members are sensitised on the effects of negative cultural practices such as wife beating and swapping, widow inheritance, property grabbing, denial of the girl child the right to education, and early / forced marriages. Consequently, an empowered citizenry that is aware of their rights and responsibilities and also tactical about women and girls' rights has been created.



ACFODE has also unpacked, translated, published and disseminated legal instruments such as the CEEDAW, the EOC Policy and Act, as well as the DVA (2010), and used them to sensitise and promote gender equality in local communities around the country. Apart from this, such laws e.g. the DVA provides procedures and guidelines to be followed by different stakeholders/ service providers who are the referral points where survivors seek redress and support; by highlighting their roles in protecting the survivors within the communities.

Furthermore, the organisation has extensive experience in producing information, communication and education materials such as policy briefs, research reports, and advocacy materials like posters, magazines, newsletters, stickers, and t-shirts, change stories, information tool kits, training manuals, research reports, as well as video documentaries that raise awareness and also advocate for VAW free homes and communities. These also enable end users to initiate, sustain, and maintain positive and desirable behaviour outcomes that promote women and girls' rights.

On top of this, the organisation uses "Graphic Advocacy" to challenge all kinds of impunities committed against women and girls. For example, ACFODE has organised numerous public photo exhibitions such as such as "Know Your Role in the Fight against Sexual and Gender Based Violence" that was carried out in 2013 at the Uganda National Museum. During such expositions, artefacts depicting the state of gender equality in Uganda are showcased. As mediums of social change and records of the women's movement struggles and women rights abuses, the artefacts, with their bold and persuasive messages inspire viewers to become advocates of gender equality and women's empowerment within their local communities.

What's more, the organisation is utilising the growing popularity of digital and media advocacy. Thus, radio and television stations, as well as newspapers are used to raise awareness on women's rights such as: the right to health, including sexual reproductive needs, the right to quality education, and the right to vote among others.

The organisation also hinges on social media to reach out and engage with the public about women's issues in real time. The face book page, whose popularity has reached over 1040 and the Twitter page, which has a followership of over 1340 fans are utilized to share opportunities and information for the advancement of women's rights in Uganda, in addition to running regular

gender equality focused discussions and campaigns.

The organization's website hosted on URL [www.acfode.org](http://www.acfode.org) is also utilized as the main channel for issuing out vital information and is accessible 24/7 by users. It also hosts a number of public electronic mailing lists such as ([acfdoe@list.acfode.org](mailto:acfdoe@list.acfode.org)) with a subscription of over 1800 fans. It registered web traffic of close to 55,000 visitors in 2014.

The website is interactive, and has a community blog and a forum's section that respect people's right to freedom of expression. Hence, users have the ability to express and see differing views and opinions on a diverse range of topics revolving around VAW, GBV, SGBV and other pertinent women issues.



*"...there was too much violence especially among the married. Previously, men dominated all issues of women's lives. Since we had the trainings conducted by ACFODE and KAS in our community, the majority of women have been empowered, they know their rights. They cannot allow to be battered, they are very assertive and ready to report any form of violence by men to police... (Female participant, Soroti municipality)*

*In the past men could decide to sell property without telling the spouses but now they consult them before sale of the property/ land. In the past, wives could hear rumours that their husbands bought particular land but right now in case a man wants to buy land, he first consults the wife about it and if he decided to buy he puts the wife and children on the agreement compared to the past. Now men value their wives when selling their property/ land. Again a man cannot sell the property without consulting the wife. Men value their wives now.... (Male Beneficiary ACFODE KAS Programmes, Pallisa district)*

*"ACFODE and KAS helped with children's rights. Parents have learnt about the children's rights to education and have enrolled back to school those that had dropped out.*

*Before ACFODE and KAS programmes came, girl-child education was taken as less important whereby if a parent had limited funds he would only send male children leaving the females at home. But after ACFODE's training, awareness of women's value increased in the community and girls and boys are now equally sent to school." (Male key informant, Rukungiri district)*



# Amplifying Women's Voices in Economic and Public Administration Development



Women leaders from Dokolo District pose for a group photo after an ACFODE training

**T**remendous progress has been made in championing women's rights and ensuring equal opportunity for all but there still remain significant challenges. Women in Uganda continue to be marginalised in both the private and public spheres. Current statistics on female employment rates in the public sector, for instance, do clearly indicate how women are concentrated at the lowest levels of the labour hierarchy as secretaries, nurses and class room teachers (particularly for lower classes). Whilst the legal, policy and administrative frameworks for women's public participation exist in the country today, the ratio of women to men in senior and top-level managerial positions is glaringly wide and does not reflect the population vein of 51% women. Existing governance structures with quasi-leaders constitute concrete embodiments of political influence; and a highly patriarchal social setting which makes it difficult to influence public policy, especially from a gender perspective by women legislators, largely influences this. The patriarchal settings of most institutions in the country lead to women not being viewed as capable leaders but rather as 'kitchen' attendants.

As a result of this, many women, especially those in the public administration sector, have continued to face enormous challenges, and these are not limited to gender stereotyping, women's own low self-esteem, lack of mentors from whom to learn and get inspired, limited negotiation, lobbying and advocacy as well as public speaking skills. Women also have to grapple with insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of their agenda. All these challenges and constraints greatly impede the effective performance of women in administration, leaving many to lag behind in comparison to their male counterparts. Also, whereas many women join politics and other leadership circles, they lack the necessary skills and training, resulting in their low efficiency in the leadership sphere. It is against this backdrop that ACFODE rolled out initiatives that built and amplified women's voices in political and economic development.

Furthermore, Ugandan women, like many in sub-Saharan Africa, provide the bulk of farm labour at household level with the needed capacity (knowledge, access to improved inputs, agricultural extension services and markets) to make a tangible difference to their livelihoods.

# How we did it: Women groups as a sustainable mechanism for change



Namutumba Women farmers receive Agriculture inputs i.e. G nut shellers, cassava chippers, spray pumps to enhance their food production and in turn livelihoods from ACFODE

**W**e targeted women groups as they create an organised forum of peers to support learning, development and collective accountability. Targeting groups provides for more sustainable achievements and enables positive change on a large scale as each member is in a position to transfer learnings to their individual households and communities. Key groups were Women Farmers Groups, Women Administrators' Groups and women councillors groups across our districts of operation.

Through the groups, we addressed the core needs of the members and key government policies, especially on agriculture, food rights and equal opportunity rights.

We have also worked towards ensuring that women have the same opportunities as men and own key economic assets and access to agricultural, education and extension services tailored to their needs. The training included, but was not limited to, debt-free investment, strategic planning, stocking, record-keeping, market and price analysis.

“

*Among the several women whose lives were transformed was Joyce Okabo from Dokolo district, whose family relied on small-scale farming but could neither meet their nutritional needs nor generate an income. However, through training, Okabo learnt about kitchen gardens, which she established with her husband. The Okabos embarked on a thriving vegetable growing business.*

*For the Gavamukulya Women Farmer Group in Namutumba district, value addition to their produce was one solid lesson learnt from the training. 'Using the knowledge I got from ACFODE training, I no longer sell raw but shelled groundnuts which fetch a better price,' said Sarah Muzinge, a member of the group. 'The money has helped in paying for our children's school fees, expand our garden and meet other household needs,' she added.*

*Another major impact registered was the formation of District Women Administrator Forums. These are forums where the voices of women administrators would be amplified and become one irresistible voice. The women administrators were trained and mentored to advocate good legislation and policies that promote gender equity and equality.*

*Margaret Eyatu, a head teacher at Iguli Primary School, Dokolo district, learnt about the importance of a good legacy and that effective leaders make their voice heard on important issues. She went on to encourage her female teaching staff to take on opportunities to improve their teaching skills as well as leadership positions to effectively contribute to quality education in the district.*

*Through the forums, women administrators also started Savings and Credit Associations (SACCOs) to enable them to mobilise capital for economic activities.*

”

# Institutional Support to Like-Minded Organisations

Since its inception, ACFODE has remained open to extending support to relevant like-minded organisations and institutions through incentives such as capacity-building, knowledge- and information-sharing, as well as networking for greater impact. ACFODE has also, over the years, encouraged the establishment of institutions desirous of promoting women’s rights and empowerment. Examples include: the Department of Gender Studies at Makerere University, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Uganda Women’s Network (UWONET), Uganda Debt Network (UDN), Human Rights Network Uganda (HURINET), and Hope After Rape (HAP), among others.

## Testimonies

### ACFODE is a pacesetter – Uganda’s Human Rights Network

ACFODE is one of the eight founding members of Human Rights Network Uganda (HURINET-U) and has played a great role in shaping the growth of HURINET-U by providing strategic leadership and stewardship to the network. Since the inception of HURINET-U, ACFODE has on two occasions been elected to the chairpersonship of HURINET-U’s Board of Directors.

ACFODE has also provided leadership in the network, especially in the women rights thematic area. Through active participation in the network activities and sharing of experience, ACFODE has facilitated knowledge transfer and replication of good practices. Notably, ACFODE’s communication and publicity strategy is admirable. She is a pacesetter within HURINET-U membership.

On the whole, ACFODE has played a catalytic role in mass mobilisation, advocacy and shaping the women’s movement in Uganda, and is an indispensable partner in promoting, protecting and ensuring respect for human rights in the country.

### ACFODE played a key role in establishing the School of Gender Studies at Makerere University – Prof. Deborah Kasente

**‘The women agreed to work to establish an academic wing of the women’s movement at Makerere University. This was a significant contribution to what started as a small department that has grown into a fully-fledged School of Women and Gender Studies, recognised among the top ten gender studies centres in the world... a few of the many achievements we have registered in which ACFODE played part. Congratulations to ACFODE for remaining relevant and continuing the struggle for gender equality.’**

The process of establishing the then Department of Gender Studies, now the School of Gender Studies, at Makerere University has its roots in the Nairobi Women’s Conference of 1985 where some women from Uganda who attended the conference got exposed to the trends of women’s movement in developed countries. They

were inspired to widen efforts of promoting women in politics in Uganda, from merely talking about it to putting it into action. ACFODE, too, was founded as a CSO as a result of this conference.

A few months after founding ACFODE, it was realised that research was required to provide scientific information about the status of women and significant trends concerning women's livelihoods and other issues in Uganda. There was absolute lack of awareness about the existence of legitimate approaches to addressing gender inequality in academia and social settings.

The women agreed to work towards establishing an academic wing of the women's movement at Makerere University. However, there was tremendous resistance against the idea of starting the department mainly because gender inequality was perceived as a minor issue that was part of life. Nevertheless ACFODE, Uganda Association of University Women and other professional women NGOs, with assistance from development partners, worked very hard to get the department established.

A department whose main objective was to start a women-focused academic discipline at the university was established. Its purpose was to bring to light the importance of understanding women's position and situation in the different sectors in the country as well as provide reliable information for use by politicians and activists to make a case for gender equality. This was a significant contribution to what started as a small department that has grown into a fully-fledged School of Women and Gender Studies, recognised among the top ten gender studies centres in the world.

Today there is quantified research on gender. There are very many graduates in gender and women studies, some of whom have gone ahead to get PhDs. The school is a source of gender experts for government, civil society and international organisations. A Gender Mainstreaming division was established under the Academic Registrar's Department to operationalise gender mainstreaming at the university. The school is doing well in training scholars at undergraduate, master's and PhD levels. We have highly qualified academic staff with three professors and many PhD holders. The impact of what started as the Department of Gender is greater than we ever imagined at its inception.

The school's impact beyond the borders of Uganda is also immense. At regional level, we have been called upon to help other universities set up gender studies at different levels. We provide experts to facilitate regional and international forums to design and assess policies and programmes. We have students and scholars coming from different universities and organisations in response to the brand that the school is now known for worldwide. These are the few of the many achievements we have registered in which ACFODE played part. Congratulations ACFODE for making 30 years.

## Strengthening collaborations for the promotion of women's rights

**'The project built linkages and networks among different stakeholders such as clan and religious institutions to work together in achieving a common goal, upholding women rights. As a result, there are reduced rates of domestic violence reported to the police nowadays.'**

Mr Felix Arum, with his organisation, CADOVIC, was working hard to reduce the high domestic violence prevalence in communities in Apac. CADOVIC's work was on advocacy and counselling and guidance. But the organisation scored little success. There was certainly willingness in the community to change attitudes towards women, but Mr Arum was frustrated by the socio-cultural system. 'All the perpetrators were men; leaders of socio-cultural institutions such as clan leaders owing to cultural beliefs and influences that held men to be superior to women. Men administered the referral points for justice. It was difficult to see change,' he lamented.

In 2013, however, ACFODE launched a project in Apac and Dokolo codenamed 'Strengthening Institutions to Promote Gender Responsive Social Cultures'. ACFODE worked with CBOs in the area to implement the project, Arum's CADOVIC being one of them. The project brought together key stakeholders in the area and drew up a referral list with all stakeholders and commitments to end violence against women and girls in the community. Arum realised it was his approach to addressing GBV that brought little success. 'I realised that leaders of socio-cultural institutions like elders and clan leaders who were lead perpetrators of violence against women can appreciate cultural practices that

infringe on the women's rights like wife-beating and forceful wife inheritance need to be changed.'

The project built linkages and networks among different stakeholders, such as clan and religious institutions, to work together in achieving a common goal, upholding women's rights. As a result, there were reduced rates of domestic violence reported to the police. 'I greatly attribute the success to ACFODE because of empowering leaders of socio-cultural institutions and using men as role models of gender equality in the communities.

One such role model is Mr Simon Peter Ongom who was chosen by the community leaders as one of the key influential people in the community to participate in the project. He was one in charge of all clan meetings and would judge and hand down sentences. In his clan, Ogoro, women were not entitled to inherit customary land and household property but boys. He shared his first experience in one of the ACFODE meetings: 'I sat quietly and in my heart I knew the people in the meeting were being deceived and made to accept different beliefs. I was shocked at how they even wanted women to participate in clan meetings and decision-making.'

However, after the meeting he approached the other clan leader and Community Development Officer (CDO) and sought to understand why they wanted to change the custom. 'I learnt the project did not intend to discard our culture but promote those positive practices which would lead to development,' he remarked. 'I heard testimonies of women who had suffered negative socio-cultural practices, some of them administered by my own clan council. For example, there was a woman who was evicted from her land with nine children and suffered as a result. I realised the decisions that were taken by my own clan council were unfair. I think it was also because there was no woman representative on the council. I took on the responsibility myself to sensitise my fellow clansmen and through programmes on radio.'

As Ongom testified, the project was a great success. Among others, women have started receiving a share of customary land from their fathers. This is done in the presence of clan leaders, which has increased agricultural production.

## The background to ACFODE's success and implementation strategies in the eyes of Prof. Joy Kwesiga



**'In 1985, ACFODE was formed by Ugandan women who had a common goal to rid women of oppression arising out of the gender imbalance in society. The organisation set off with a method of work and structure that encompassed all talents, specialties, individual interests as well as a rural outreach programme to cater for women in that section of society.'**

ACFODE's membership grew from 30 members to almost 300 and when a new government took over power in 1986, ACFODE provided names of qualified women for appointment in the public sector. This was to increase the representation of women by influencing policy, particularly the increase in the number of women in decision-making positions.

On another front, in the New Vision newspaper, ACFODE countered the negative portrayal of women by writing the Women's Vision page for a period of three years. Today, newspapers have weekly columns, pullouts and supplements on gender issues.

ACFODE, together with Uganda Association of University Women, paved the way for the establishment of a Women's Studies Department at Makerere University. ACFODE was also instrumental in advocating affirmative action for girls at the university.

Although ACFODE's prior major focus was on women only, it expanded to include men in its several projects and programmes, like the civic education programme. Men are now admitted as Associate Members into ACFODE.'

## Summary of ACFODE'S Key Milestone Since Inception

ACFODE prides herself on being the mother of action aimed at addressing women's issues, hitherto ignored. Now, 30 years since her inception and with so many achievements in the struggle for a just society, where gender equality is a reality, ACFODE is glad to share with you her remarkable story punctuated with a rich history of experiences, both pleasant and challenging, with tangible success and achievements in the struggle for gender equality and women's empowerment.



ACFODE's Executive Director Ms. Regina Bafaki receiving the 2012 Women's Achievers Award from Hon. Rebecca Kadaga – the Speaker of Parliament.

1986

### Presentation of memorandum on the plight of women to the president

In March 1986, during the commemoration of the International Women's Day, ACFODE organised women's NGOs in different parts of Kampala to participate in the week-long events. The highlight of the events was a ceremony officiated by then newly sworn-in President of Uganda, HE Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, at the Uganda Conference Centre. ACFODE seized this opportunity to present to the president a memorandum which vividly showed the plight of the Ugandan women and the need to urgently address their situation. This would greatly contribute to the gradual inclusion of women on the national agenda.

### Presenting qualified women for political appointments

As a follow-up to the Third United Nations World Conference on Women, ACFODE held a national seminar in December 1986 in Mukono. Three hundred seventeen women, 120 of whom were from the rural areas, attended the seminar. The seminar focused on sharing the outcomes of the conference, their relationship to the Ugandan situation and a follow-up plan for Uganda. The then Prime Minister of Uganda, Dr Samson Kisekka, revealed that the government was reviewing the managerial positions of government institutions but lacked knowledge of qualified women to appoint. ACFODE volunteered to assist by compiling a list of qualified women, as well as their curricula vitae (CVs), capable of effectively managing government bodies and parastatals. The list was handed to the prime minister. This timely intervention by ACFODE marked the beginning of the appointment of women to decision-making positions at the national level. ACFODE also publicly pressed for the establishment of a ministry for women, a women's desk in all ministries, and women representation at all levels in local government, and asked for an independent umbrella organisation for women.

1988

### Establishment of the Ministry of Women in Development

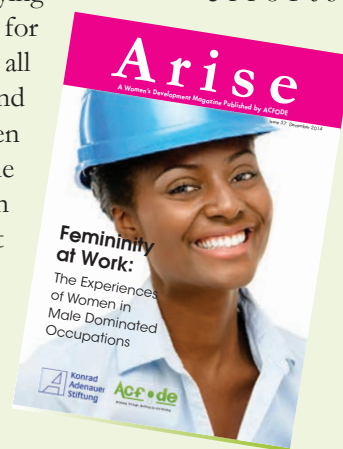
ACFODE championed the establishment of the Ministry of Women in Development under the President's Office in 1988. There was also the formation of women's desks in other government ministries and in public offices in local governments. This ministry later merged with the Ministry of Youth and Culture

to form the current Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. Today, the ministry is responsible for the overall formulation and coordination of policies on women, and is a catalyst for sensitising government organs to gender issues

1989

### Entrenching affirmative action in government institutions

ACFODE played a major role in ensuring affirmative action was embedded in the institutions of government. It is through its undying efforts that seats were secured for women representatives at all levels of government and a directorate of Women Affairs was set up at the NRM Secretariat. Women had the opportunity to sit in Parliament as district women representatives as well as contest directly for elected MP seats.



1991

### Arise magazine

As part of a wider programme of information dissemination and publication, ACFODE launched the first issue of Arise magazine to highlight and publicise information regarding the advancement of women as well as enhance organisational documentation. Apart from building confidence in women and enhancing their positive public image, the magazine would cover achievements, best practices and the challenges that gender activism encountered locally, nationally and internationally.

### Lobbied for the visibility of the women's cause in the mainstream media

ACFODE made arrangement with the New Vision, a government owned newspaper to actively publicise the women's cause in the main stream media. The initial agreement was to have a women's page covering women's issues, giving voice to women and positively changing societal attitudes towards women. The page has since grown into a four page weekly pullout titled 'Her Vision' which is part of the Tuesday edition of The New Vision newspaper.



## **Establishment of the Department of Women Studies at Makerere University**

After a considerable period of lobbying for and advocating a Women's Studies department at Makerere University, ACFODE, together with Uganda Women's Association, finally achieved this goal in 1991. The department started off offering a postgraduate course in Gender Studies and later an undergraduate course. The department has since grown into the School of Gender Studies at Makerere University.

**1993**

## **Creation of an independent umbrella women's organisation**

Working alongside other friendly organisations, ACFODE was instrumental in establishing the National Association of Women Organisations in Uganda (NAWOU), an independent umbrella body for all women NGOs.

**1994**

## **Enhancing women's participation in democratisation processes**

ACFODE greatly contributed to improved participation of women in the democratisation processes by developing and implementing the Link Programme, a comprehensive civic awareness activity that was instituted to facilitate and maintain public interest in the Constituent Assembly debates. Apart from it bridging the gap between the people and the Constituent Assembly delegates, the programme contributed to the nurturing of a culture of popular participation in civil issues as a permanent process. Not only did the programme showcase ACFODE's capacity, it also enhanced her reputation in civic education locally, nationally and internationally.

**1995**

## **Participation in the formulation of the 1995 Constitution of Uganda**

ACFODE actively participated in the formulation and inclusion of gender human-rights provisions in the National Objectives and Directive Principles of State policy. The most outstanding achievement was the inclusion of Articles 78 and 180 in the Constitution of Uganda that guarantee women's representation

in Parliament and local government structures. The specific achievements therein included Objective VI of the National Objectives and Directive Principles of State policy, which stipulates that the state shall ensure gender balance and fair representation of marginalised groups on all constitutional and other bodies. Article 78 (1) (b) stipulates that there shall be one woman representative for every district. Article 180 (2) stipulates that one-third of the membership of each local council shall be reserved for women and that any law enacted by virtue of this article shall provide for affirmative action for all marginalised groups referred to in Article 32 of the Constitution.

## **Giving visibility to the contribution of NGOs to the women's cause**

ACFODE compiled a book entitled Visible at Last: NGO Contribution to Women's Recognition in Uganda, which unveiled the invaluable contribution of NGOs to women's empowerment. The book showcased 47 NGOs and community-based women's groups that were working to empower poor people and give the voiceless and invisible a voice and visibility. In the book, each organisation, including ACFODE, described its origins, aims, activities and future plans. The production of this book was an opportunity to highlight the various opportunities provided by NGOs to address gender inequalities within society as well as the channels of women's empowerment. The book was published to coincide with the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, in 1995. By coincidence, ACFODE was also celebrating her 10th birthday.

**2007**

## **Equal Opportunities Commission Act**

ACFODE headed the civil society coalition that advocated the enactment of the Equal Opportunities Commission Act that was passed in 2007. The Act provides a legal basis to challenge laws, policies, customs and traditions that discriminate against women and girls.

**2012**

## **ACFODE honoured with the Women Achievers Award**

In recognition for her commitment to promote women's rights in Uganda, ACFODE was given the Women Achievers Award 2012 for her 'Contributions in Enhancing Women's Empowerment and Sustaining

## MILESTONES

the Women's Movement in Uganda'. Uganda Women's Network (UWONET), on behalf of the women of Uganda, gave the award during the National Women's Week jubilee celebrations.

### 2014

#### ACFODE lauded with multiple accolades

ACFODE won awards in recognition of our tremendous role in the promotion of women's rights, gender equality and women's empowerment.

During a Gender Summit organised by Diakonia Uganda Country Programme, ACFODE was announced the winner of the 'Champion in Gender Mainstreaming' and the 'Production of Exceptional Information, Communication and Educational Materials' categories. The organisation was also placed first runner-up in the 'Gender Diversity in the Workplace' category.

The champion in Gender Mainstreaming Award recognised ACFODE for ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all its activities, including policy development, research, advocacy, resource allocation and planning, as well as implementation and monitoring of organisation programmes and projects; while the excellence in Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) Materials Production Award acknowledged ACFODE for demonstrating distinction in the design, production and delivery of gender-sensitive IEC materials. On the other hand, the Gender Diversity in the Workplace Award accredited ACFODE for having employee development programmes that combine significant qualities such as gender diversity in the workplace, specifically looking at more meaningful representation and appreciation of both women and men.

Furthermore, ACFODE was acknowledged by Human Rights Network Uganda (HURINET) and Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) for being a founder organisation and a dedicated and committed member, and given an Appreciation Award by ActionAid International and the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development for our 'Excellent Efforts in Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response' during the National Annual Gender-Based Violence Conference that marked the end of Uganda's commemoration of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence under the theme 'Act Now: Stop Teenage Pregnancy, Child and Forced Marriages'.

'Achieving recognition in so many different categories is testament to the success of our transformation strategy

across different borders of gender equality. We are therefore proud to receive all these awards, considering the stiff competition we were up against. We look forward to continuing our efforts and achieving new levels of promoting gender equality,' Regina Bafaki, ACFODE Executive Director.



# Celebrating their 25th Anniversary...Annotations From ACFODE Staff

**'I have worked with ACFODE for more than 20 years, its now in my blood,' Robina Nanfuka, longest-serving ACFODE staff member.**

I found a good culture at ACFODE. Staff members were united and working as a team. We were about 16 employees. Today, the organisation has over 30 employees. Everybody works hard. The team is aggressive in fundraising. It is hard work that explains ACFODE's success. It is also about handling money and our donors well.

*'Many people ask me why I have stayed with ACFODE for this long even in the difficult moments when there was no work and I wasn't paid. Nothing explains that but the grace of God. I get several job offers from organisations where people want me to work for them but I decline all of them. I want to stay at ACFODE. I love ACFODE, it is in my blood.'*

As ACFODE celebrates 30 years, I am so privileged to have worked with the organisation for the bigger part of that period, 20 years since joining the organisation in 1995. I came looking for a job as a cook to help take care of my children. I had four children, one boy and three girls. I had separated with my husband of eight years after my co-wife treated me badly. I decided to return to my parents' home in Bukoto, not far away from the ACFODE offices.

The Executive Director then, who gave the job, was Ms Maude Mugisha. Besides my primary job of cooking, I started learning many things such as photocopying, binding and printing. A year later I was given the job of cleaner so I had two jobs.

I found a good culture at ACFODE. Staff members were united and working as a team. We were about 16 employees. Today, the organisation has over 30 employees. Everybody works hard. The team is aggressive in fundraising. It is hard work that explains ACFODE's success. It is also about handling money and our donors well.

Many people ask me why I have stayed with ACFODE for this long even in the difficult moments when there was no work due to limited donor funding and I wasn't paid. Nothing explains that but the grace of God. I get several job offers from organisations where people want me to work for them but I decline all of them. I want to stay at ACFODE. I love ACFODE; ACFODE is in my blood. I love ACFODE because it got me out of a bad situation to the good life I live today. There were hard moments but being patient has paid off. I have been able to support my family and children in school.

Thankfully, I am not at the level I started at. About three years ago, I was promoted from cooking to office messenger. My current work is to clean the office, photocopy and print and do other office errands.

I pray that even when I retire ACFODE will become stronger and keep moving forward.

## ACFODE has helped advance my career – Sandra Nassali

'I am exceedingly happy ACFODE has made 30 years. Not many organisations celebrate their 30th birthday. Many organisations start and before long they are nowhere. ACFODE has had its challenges over time but has prevailed over them. She has stood the test of time. I wish her the very best in her future endeavours.'

Working at ACFODE has been a great learning experience. I joined the organisation in 2011. With a mass communication professional background, I joined ACFODE as an experienced media practitioner – traditional and new media (web 2.0 technologies and several media software packages) with very good writing and communication skills but had very meagre knowledge of issues to do with women's and human rights in general. I also had limited skills in advocacy, capacity-building and resource mobilisation. However, ACFODE has been the perfect platform for me where I have seen myself grow career-wise.

At ACFODE, we pride ourselves on having a good reputation and we call ourselves the 'grandmother' of women organisations in Uganda because we have been there and have stood the test of time. We are also agenda setters in the civil society movement – where we lead and others follow! So I am really proud to associate myself with the ACFODE brand and wish the organisation the very best in its future endeavours.

My only wish is to see the membership having more young, energetic and vibrant people on board as a sustainability mechanism.

## I am proud to be part of the ACFODE family – Robson Okello

I am the ACFODE Field Officer. I joined the organisation in March 2014. In the one year and eight months I have worked with ACFODE, I have been able to improve my skills in areas such as research, monitoring and evaluation and report writing. I am also more knowledgeable in gender, human rights, violence, governance and accountability.

I have benefited from the organisation's capacity development programmes. I always get guidance from my supervisors and training organised to empower staff and CSO representatives we work with.

I love the culture here. ACFODE staff members are committed to work; they are a loving and welcoming people. It is a testimony I have heard from several of the CSO representatives we work with. They testify about the hospitality of ACFODE staff and love our core values of teamwork.

I am proud to be part of the ACFODE family. I come from a background where people believe getting a job requires you to have a relative to second you. Well, I joined ACFODE through a formal recruitment process. ACFODE is a very transparent organisation.

My job with ACFODE has also benefited me at a personal level. With it I am able look after my family members. I am the first born and have three



'I am exceedingly happy ACFODE has made 30 years. Not many organisations celebrate their 30th birthday. Many organisations start and before long they are nowhere. ACFODE has had its challenges over time but has prevailed over them. She has stood the test of time. I wish her the very best in her future endeavours.'

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brothers and one sister and our father retired from teaching. It is I who supports this family. I am happy I am able to do that. Even the entire family is happy. For instance, currently I am renovating a family house.

My hope is in the next 20 years, ACFODE will have presence in every area of this country with various projects empowering women socially, politically and economically.

## **I am proud to associate with an organisation that is a household name in my district of operation - Kenneth Kabebasize**

I have been an ACFODE Field Officer in Kisoro district since April 2012 where I have witnessed the organisation grow into a household name as a result of setting up a field office and the programmes we run in the district. We closely work with the communities, which has been life-transforming for many individuals in this area. We understand the issues affecting women and innovatively address them. The live example was when we organised a marathon, the first of its kind, to fundraise for maternal health equipment in the district.

From my experience with ACFODE staff, both at Head Office and in the field offices, they are a passionate and inspired people who love their work. They are friendly and fun-loving. The commitment and teamwork of the ACFODE staff, especially under the leadership, guidance and motivation of the Executive Director, is the reason why ACFODE is a success and where it is today.

At a personal level, the biggest moment I share with ACFODE stem from the time I was given the opportunity to serve the community in Kisoro as a Field Officer and thus be part of the change I want to see in the community. Working with ACFODE has improved my skills in project management and community development. I have also made a wide range of friends, from local individuals to high-ranking government officials and development workers, which is good for my professional development.

'Happy 30th Birthday, ACFODE! You are the mother of women's rights organisations in Uganda. I would love, in the next 20 years, to see you spread wings across the whole country and become a household name in every community in Uganda. Not even the sky is the limit for you, ACFODE, continue flying higher.'



'Happy 30th Birthday, ACFODE! You are the mother of women's rights organisations in Uganda. I would love, in the next 20 years, to see you spread wings across the whole country and become a household name in every community in Uganda. Not even the sky is the limit for you, ACFODE, continue flying higher.'



## At ACFODE we rejoice and celebrate every achievement – Jackline Nyiransenga

I am a counsellor at ACFODE in the Kisoro Field Office. It's been two years now since I joined the organisation in November 2013. I enjoy my work at ACFODE because of a friendly environment in the organisation. That does not mean, though, that there are no moments when people get hungry, but the good moments surpass the bad. Since I joined ACFODE, my life has been transformed. Besides my career growth and gaining lots of experience in my field of work, I am a responsible person in the community.

At ACFODE, we cooperate, respect each other and work as one family. We rejoice and celebrate together every achievement. Since her inception in 1985, ACFODE has achieved tremendous success in promoting women's rights in Uganda, and our projects are owned by the community where we operate, an indication of the impact we make in those communities. Today many women know their rights and in case of any violence they understand the reference points.

## Every day is an interesting day at ACFODE – Moses Otwang

I am a Field Officer in Apac. It is hard to point out particular good moments at ACFODE because each day I sit in my office and do my work it feels so great working with ACFODE and it feels much greater when my supervisor appreciates my effort as a team player.

ACFODE staff value teamwork, are results-oriented and are very passionate about women's rights and empowerment. I have also witnessed many of them value physical fitness and their health. It is a team of friendly people and there are moments we get together and have fun like at the end of the year.

I joined ACFODE in May 2013 and I have realised my dream of working with the marginalised groups of people like women, children and the poor in the community. Over time, ACFODE has built my capacity to advocate gender equality. ACFODE has also enhanced my economic status. Through training I acquired skills to start my own income-generating activities.

Over time, I have seen the organisation grow by continuing to attract more funding from donors. I have witnessed ACFODE buy more assets like cars, furniture and computers to facilitate our work. Together we have achieved a lot, and I believe the reason for ACFODE's success is her values of integrity, commitment, learning, volunteerism, respect and teamwork, which are strictly followed by staff.

The establishment of field offices with personnel willing and capable of coordinating ACFODE activities has also been significant in this success. In Apac in particular, signing a memorandum of understanding with the district local government and engaging leaders of social and cultural institutions has made the local people own ACFODE interventions that even when the project ends, the community is able to sustain the achievements of the project. In the next 20 years, I want to see ACFODE in all districts of the country so people from all communities across the



'ACFODE, you are the real mother of women organisations in Uganda; you give fairness where there is injustice, love where there is hatred, hope where there is despair. Congratulations and live long!'



country benefit from her programmes.

'ACFODE, you are the real mother of women organisations in Uganda; you give fairness where there is injustice, love where there is hatred, hope where there is despair. Congratulations and live long!'

## I attribute ACFODE success to good leadership – Belinda Kyomuhendo

'ACFODE has had a great impact on my career development. I joined the organisation immediately after completing my university degree in Economics and I had no knowledge of gender and women rights. I have since gained skills, especially in documentation and project management.'

My name is Belinda Kyomuhendo. I have worked with ACFODE for five years, starting as a volunteer in 2011 before being promoted to Programme Assistant in 2013. During this time, I have witnessed ACFODE grow from having a few departments and projects, to having more projects and personnel. The volunteer and internship programme has also expanded.

What explains this growth and success is the good leadership that ACFODE has which provides guidance and strategic direction of the organisation. ACFODE has built a reputation as a formidable national women's organisation holding key national-level advocacy activities. Her presence in the media has grown as well as the research, documentation and publication departments, which have greatly improved.

ACFODE has a culture of teamwork; it is a family here. We celebrate and mourn with each other; whether it is a birthday, a wedding or loss of a loved one, we celebrate or mourn together.

ACFODE has had a great impact on my career development. I joined the organisation immediately after completing my university degree in Economics and I had no knowledge of gender and women's rights. I have since gained skills, especially in documentation and project management. The organisation has also had an impact on my personal life, for now I know my strengths and weaknesses that I can use appropriately. I have also made many friends.

I have a number of great memories at ACFODE, the most outstanding one being the run for Maternal Health Marathon 2015. It is amazing what a committed and motivated team can do! ACFODE has achieved much and I am convinced the organisation will keep rising. I want to see ACFODE at the very top as the one-stop centre for gender and women's rights research, training and consultancy. Congratulations ACFODE; the women of Uganda are indebted to you.



'ACFODE has had a great impact on my career development. I joined the organisation immediately after completing my university degree in Economics and I had no knowledge of gender and women rights. I have since gained skills, especially in documentation and project management.'



# CONGRATULATORY MESSAGES FROM ACFODE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

## ACFODE's impact in the communities is evident and highly rated - Hans Lind, Regional Director, We Effect East Africa

The transformation caused by the organisation in the communities is evident and highly rated. On a scale of 1 to 10, ACFODE scores 9,' Mr. Hans Lind, Regional Director, We Effect East Africa.



**W**e Effect works through partnerships and ACFODE's work align well with our goal of promoting gender equality. That's how our partnership with ACFODE started in 2013, and we have since provided financial and technical support to ACFODE to facilitate the implementation of a gender equality project that aims at creating a supportive socio-cultural

women, boys and girls have equal opportunities to socio-economic and political development and contribute to ending negative socio-cultural practices mostly targeted at women and girls.

The transformation caused by ACFODE in the communities is evident and highly rated. On a scale of 1 to 10, ACFODE scores 9. ACFODE's work is impressive.

For example, We Effect works with 35 partners in the East African region and organises an annual rural finance and gender equality conference. In 2015, ACFODE co-chaired the organising committee of the conference in Uganda and took great responsibility, including shaping the theme of the conference, organising logistics and sourcing for presenters, among other things, and the conference was very successful. Other partners provided support but the contribution

of ACFODE and their level of networking were outstanding.

ACFODE has a high level of collaboration and builds

ACFODE has a high level of collaboration and builds partnerships both at community and national levels. The organisation's voice is very strong in most gender-related advocacy caucuses in the country and she keeps abreast with regional and international developments and ensures her voice finds a way to discussions around gender equality.

environment that is responsive to gender equality. The project targets key community persons such as cultural and religious leaders, men and boys to ensure men and



partnerships both at community and national levels. The organisation's voice is very strong in most gender-related advocacy caucuses in the country and she keeps abreast with regional and international developments and ensures her voice finds a way to discussions around gender equality.

ACFODE has a reputation of attracting and retaining appropriately qualified and experienced staff and her employees are committed to the organisation's mission. This is one of the things other CSOs can learn from ACFODE that it shouldn't be just about work but belief and commitment in what you do. They should also learn to acquire networking and advocacy skills. ACFODE's observance of deadlines and turnaround time for queries or clarifications is excellent, and her approach of influencing both young boys and girls is commendable.

## **ACFODE has grown in leaps and bounds - Annabel Ogwang Okot, Country Representative, Diakonia Uganda Programme**

'One of our partner donors asked us why we should work with ACFODE but I said to the donor that in the one year I have worked with them, they listen and are willing to learn. I was right and since then, ACFODE has grown in leaps and bounds.'

Diakonia's partnership with ACFODE started in 2008 and we have funded at least three ACFODE projects. The first was in Apac on strengthening civil society or community-based organisations or groups in promoting women's rights. It involved advocacy at local council levels to increase the allocations of resources to key areas affecting women. The project was implemented through these groups because they being in the community best understand the issues that affect women in the area. Two years later the project was extended to Kole and Oyam districts to amplify women's voices in local councils by empowering women councillors but also

other councillors who could advocate women's rights.

Then we realised we were working on building the capacity of women political leaders, which created a gap for the women in public service, so we supported ACFODE in implementing a project on funding leadership opportunities for women in the civil service in Dokolo, Pader and Namutumba districts. This project focusing on women in civil service, especially at local level, was the first of its kind. Women administrators' forums were created as a result and many women enrolled for further studies and got qualifications, which were one of the factors hindering their promotion. Others started mentoring girls. We realised women can perform to their best once given knowledge.

Diakonia's mission is to change the status of women in society so that instead of people asking a woman to give an opinion on a matter, she actually participates in decision-making. We want this to happen right from the grass roots or household to the national level. We work to empower women economically because even if a woman had space for decision-making but she goes back to her husband or whoever for economic favours, that woman really does not have power. This is a cause ACFODE is committed to; that is why we have developed a strong partnership with her.

It has been a process. By the time we started working

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"There are many lessons CSOs can learn from ACFODE. Organisations should have functioning Boards that do not just seek accountability from the management team but are accountable themselves. The ACFODE Board has performance indicators and that is very rare to find elsewhere. Women's rights organisations ought not to alienate men in advocating women's rights. This is something ACFODE does well."

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with ACFODE, the organisation was weak and small. It was recovering from the difficulties they had gone through. In fact, one of our partner donors asked us why we should work with ACFODE but I said to the donor that in the one year I have worked with them,

they listen and are willing to learn. I was right and since then, ACFODE has grown in leaps and bounds. Taking constructive criticism is always not easy but when you listen you learn and that is what ACFODE had done. That is why when we think of a new opportunity to work on, we think about ACFODE.

At Diakonia, we do not just give funding but work to strengthen the systems and structures of partner organisations. We do not want a situation where our partner organisation is strong at field level but weak institutionally. This partnership has seen ACFODE develop strong leadership, right from the Board to the management team.

There are many lessons CSOs can learn from ACFODE. Organisations should have functioning Boards that do not just seek accountability from the management team but are accountable themselves. The ACFODE Board has performance indicators and that is very rare to find elsewhere. Women's rights organisations ought not to alienate men in advocating women's rights. This is something ACFODE does well. Congratulations ACFODE, you have done very well, but there is still much to do, the sky is not even the limit, there is still room at the top.

## **Our partnership with ACFODE is for a common goal of ending GBV - Dr Anthea Bethge, Executive Director, EIRENE**

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**'We are impressed by ACFODE's multi-faceted approach to overcoming sexual violence that does not only involve counselling, but raising awareness, networking and advocacy. And the fact that ACFODE is based in Kampala, but present and working to improve lives of girls and women in Kisoro is also commendable.'**

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EIRENE is proud of the partnership it has with ACFODE. This is not just a partnership to fund ACFODE programmes but one for the common goal of ending GBV. The purpose is to contribute to positive change in the daily lives of girls and women in Kisoro, to protect the rights and dignity of women in Uganda and to strengthen good relationships for the human development of both men and women.

We provide an EIRENE co-worker to ACFODE and thus get involved in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of her programmes. We thus learn from our experiences and celebrate success together. It is now over seven years of working together since 2008, and besides building trust, there are special moments we share. I was impressed by the sharing of experiences Ms Regina did at the partners conference on peace-building and education in 2010 in Germany. It was noted that it is important to build the capacity of the organisation in order to realise its goal. We are grateful to have ACFODE to consult in the South-North volunteer programme.

We are also impressed by ACFODE's multi-faceted approach to overcoming sexual violence that does not only involve counselling, but raising awareness, networking and advocacy. The fact that ACFODE is based in Kampala, but present and working to improve lives of girls and women in Kisoro, is also commendable.

EIRENE values the partnership with ACFODE because it is for a long-term goal and we hope in the near future we will see many activities to improve

the situation of girls and women, more support from the community for GBV survivors and the end of impunity for perpetrators. We hope the next generation will be for young women who are safe from violence and have freedom of choice. Congratulations, ACFODE, upon your 30th anniversary.

## Interview with Mathias Kamp, Country Representative, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) - ACFODE's Longest serving Development Partner

### What kind of support do you extend to ACFODE?

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) started supporting ACFODE in 1989 and for more than 25 years, KAS and ACFODE have been in a partnership with the aim of promoting the appreciation of gender equality, ensuring equal opportunities for women and girls, supporting women to participate more effectively in political affairs and decision-making, and defending the rights of women and girls in line with the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

ACFODE interventions supported by KAS have been targeting selected districts in the country. Currently, KAS is supporting ACFODE to implement the Empowered to Act: Enhancing Women and Youth Effective Participation in Politics and Decision-Making project. We build capacities of newly elected women leaders on their roles and responsibilities, monitor the 2016 general elections with special focus on women and youth participation, strengthening opportunities of interaction and networking among the women and youth and promoting national-level advocacy.

### How do you assess ACFODE's performance on the project you support?

ACFODE has been a reliable and professional partner for many years. The project interventions have been very successful, for there is visible impact in the districts where we work. There is increased participation of

women in politics and decision-making. Women are becoming more visible and outspoken in their communities because there is increased awareness of their rights, knowledge and skills. There is also a reduction in domestic violence, gender stereotypes, and improved household sanitation. ACFODE's work has been an important factor in transforming communities in Uganda for the better.




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**'ACFODE is firm, consistent and committed to the goal of women empowerment.'**

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### Is ACFODE different in the way the organisation implements programmes if compared to other grantees and/or women-focused CSOs? Please explain.

ACFODE is the only long-term institutional partner of KAS in Uganda. Because of this partnership and trust, the organisation has a privileged status among our partners in the country. The basis for this strong partnership is a set of shared values and convictions. What makes ACFODE stand out among other CSOs is the consistency in its focus and pursuit of its vision. ACFODE leadership and staff have for three decades stood firm, consistent and committed to the goal of empowering women – politically, socially and economically – which has made the organisation develop a strong identity.

Approaches, methods and funding sources may have changed over time, but ACFODE has always been clear

on what she stands for. The consistency and coherence in pursuing a clearly stated vision is not something to take for granted, especially when we compare ACFODE to many other CSOs who end up being driven by short-term trends and popular sentiments as well as external factors such as donor interests.

### Can you share with us one or two memorable or special highlights about this partnership?

One very special experience in the partnership was the joint implementation of the EU-supported Action for Strengthening Good Governance and Accountability project in 11 districts across the country between 2011 and 2013, which was a success and a rich learning experience.

Another memorable highlight was the visit of Dr Gerhard Wahlers, Deputy Secretary General and Head of the Department for International Cooperation at KAS, who participated in an inter-institutional debate in Lira in 2011 and was very impressed with the work of ACFODE and the potential of the young debaters.

### What can other organisations learn from ACFODE's methods of work and her 30 years of implementing development programmes in Uganda?

Stay focused and committed to your vision and objectives, maintain a high degree of independence, always keep your final target group at the core of all your considerations, and invest in building networks, relationships and trust. Maintain open and critical dialogue with your partners and ensure that you build internal capacity and keep your team motivated and build an identity for the organisation.

### How do you see ACFODE develop in the future? What goals would you like the organisation to achieve in the next 20 years or so?

Empowering women and strengthening their political participation is a long-term process that requires consistent engagement. The goal of achieving real gender equality will not be achieved over night and probably not within the next 20 years. The women of Uganda will continue to count on ACFODE and the support it offers. My wish is that ACFODE will stay committed to this agenda and will continue to grow stronger. Maybe 20 years from now we will take stock and realise that due to ACFODE's programmes, many cultural barriers and negative stereotypes ended, that there is zero tolerance to all forms of gender-based discrimination, and that women equally participate in leadership and decision-making.

### Any closing remarks, especially as ACFODE celebrates her 30th anniversary?

Keep up the good work and let's continue working together as partners and friends!

*'What makes ACFODE stand out is the consistency in its focus and pursuit of its vision. For three decades, ACFODE has stood firm, consistent and committed to the goal of empowering women, which has made the organisation develop a strong identity.'*

## Congratulatory message to ACFODE on the occasion of celebrating 30 years of existence

On behalf of the British Council Uganda, we extend our heartiest congratulations to Action for Development (ACFODE) for completing 30 glorious years of success. You have always been on top of the list for contributing to a society where women and men are valued equally.

Organizations like yours with a brilliant and dedicated team that is passionate about promoting gender equality as means to achieving sustainable development are truly commendable.

Working with you has been honour and we value the partnership that we have enjoyed strengthening institutions and communities in promoting women's rights".

With your commitment and sincerity you have from time to time proved your worth and have gained the much deserved recognition. With your services, the communities you have been able to reach over the 30 years have gained a lot.

We wish you all the success for many more years to come and we hope to continue working together with you in future.



**Peter Brown**  
Country Director

# Congratulatory Messages from ACFODE District Partners

**“ACFODE Projects in Pallisa impacted not only women, but men as well”**

***Mr. Isa Mbooge, CAO Pallisa District***

Mr. Isa Mbooge is the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Pallisa District. He has served in that capacity for the past 10 years. During his tenure, there have been a number of projects carried out by ACFODE but one he vividly refers to is the Gender Based Violence (GBV) reduction project or what was referred to as “Women Won’t Wait”.

Through the project, a women protection center was started where women receive guidance and counseling. The women have since gained confidence in addressing matters that affect them that issues previously resolved by elders’ are now being spoken about and resolved by women themselves. Apart from amplifying voices of women against GBV in Pallisa district, the project documented issues affecting women in the district.

Women were also empowered and equipped with knowledge and skills to start income generating activities. They started finance support groups or savings and credit societies or SACCOs, which enable them to save and raise seed capital for their businesses. “There exist many SACCOs in Pallisa district but the major SACCO is at the women’s protection center,” states Mbooge.

In anticipation that one day the project will come to an end and yet the district does want to continue with the achievements of the project, Pallisa District administration has integrated the project’s activities into the district’s development plans and programmes. In his capacity as Pallisa CAO, Mbooge has designated a district official to be in charge of these activities.

He says the impact of the project is not only felt by women but by the entire population in Pallisa. He explains, “When women are economically empowered, the benefit is not to them alone but the family and the community. They pay school fees for the children and improve sanitation in the homes, which directly lowers the burden of disease and improves health of household members.”

Among the people transformed by the project is Mbooge himself who says unlike in the past when he never cared about women and gender issues, today he is positive about the same. He always stands to be counted on gender equality. Mbooge also has fond memories for ACFODE, an organisation he remembers in the 1990s to have been instrumental in advocating for the 1.5 affirmative action points for girls joining public universities, which has benefited several girls.

“The project empowered and amplified the voices of women. Yet its impact is not only felt by women but by the entire population in Pallisa.”

**ACFODE was a force to reckon with while in Ntoroko District**

***Boaz Kalitusi***

***District Health Educator***

***Ntoroko District***

ACFODE implemented the Rapid Response on Epidemic outbreak (RARE) Project in Ntoroko District, which created awareness in the community about Viral Hemorrhagic Fevers (VHFs) and related disease outbreaks.

The project empowered local communities with epidermis preparedness and response skills. Women were targeted the most since they are usually affected the most when epidermis break out.

Before ACFODE’s intervention, the district had challenges related to sensitizing hard-to-reach communities and limited funding. However, under this project these hindrances were addressed.

As the organization celebrates its 30th Anniversary, we challenge ACFODE staff and members to bring more projects that we help address the high prevalence of VAW and SGBV in the district.

# COMMEMORATIVE ACTIVITIES HELD SO FAR

**ACFODE donates maternal health equipment worth 40 million shillings to health centres - *Arise Reporter***



Ms Regina Bafaki addressing participants during the ceremony

**A**s part of the activities to mark her 30th anniversary, ACFODE donated maternal health equipment worth 40 million shillings to five health centres in Kisoro district to promote safe motherhood. This took place on 1 October 2015 at Kisoro district headquarters.

The handover ceremony was presided over by the Kisoro

Resident District Commissioner (RDC), the Hon. Pulkeria Muhindo, and other guests, including the Kisoro District Health Officer (DHO) and Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), the ACFODE Executive Director, ACFODE members and staff. The ceremony was also part of the activities to mark 30 years of ACFODE's existence. The equipment donated included eight delivery sets, seven delivery beds, five patient beds,



Ms Regina Bafaki handing over the delivery beds and delivery sets to Kisoro Deputy CAO Rita Byiringiro (L) and the DHO Stephen Nsabayunva (2nd L)

five patient mattresses and other assorted equipment used in non-caesarean delivery sections. The benefiting health centres included Buhozi Health Centre III, Busanza Health Centre IV, Muramba Health Centre III, Nyarusiza Health Centre III, and Rubuguri Health Centre IV.

‘Now that we have all the equipment necessary for safe motherhood, let us mobilise mothers to always come and seek medical services,’ said Dr Stephen Nsabayunva, the DHO Kisoro. He further urged all officers in-charge of the selected health centres to take good care of the equipment in terms of storage, maintenance and cleaning. He discouraged them from using Jik detergent to clean equipment since it destroys such equipment.

The Executive Director of ACFODE, Ms Regina Bafaki, appreciated participants from Kisoro for their cooperation and collaboration with ACFODE during her different interventions in Kisoro district for the last 15 years and also applauded all those who had supported ACFODE to raise funds for purchasing the maternal health equipment, including

ActionAid Uganda, Uganda Women’s Network, Sanyu FM, Voice of Muhabura, Pepsi, Case Hospital, and Paragon Hospital, among others. ‘There isn’t a way we can achieve gender equality when health issues are not okay; we hope that this equipment will improve on the health of our mothers,’ remarked Ms Regina Bafaki.

The RDC of Kisoro appreciated ACFODE for the equipment they had donated and pledged to continuously use her space to remind men to always take good care of their wives, especially when they are pregnant. She also thanked ACFODE for her remarkable contribution to the reduction in sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in Kisoro district. ‘ACFODE is an organisation that fights for the rights of women and girls and for all the 30 years of her existence, half of them has been spent in Kisoro district so they deserve special thanks,’ commented Ms Pulkeria Muhindo.

## COMMEMORATIVE ACTIVITIES

### **ACFODE builds alliances with cultural institutions to promote gender equality while marking her 30th anniversary - *Arise Reporter***

Gender identities and gender relations are critical aspects of culture because they shape the way daily life is lived in the family, but also in the wider community and the workplace. Like race or ethnicity, gender functions as an organising principle for society because of the cultural meanings given to being male or female. This is evident in the division of labour according to gender.

At ACFODE, 2015 marks 30 years of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. A number of activities have, therefore, been lined up to celebrate the three decades of ACFODE's milestone, and to unite champions for gender equality across the country, amplify their voices and create synergies for greater impact. One of the planned activities was a National Cultural Symposium.

The National Cultural Symposium was organised under the theme 'Cultural Institutions as a Vehicle to Achieving Gender Equality'. The symposium was held

on 17 November 2015 and brought together different stakeholders in the fields of law enforcement, academia, religious and cultural institutions, representatives of persons with disability, representatives from different cultural institutions, youth groups, university students, CSOs, development partners and the media.

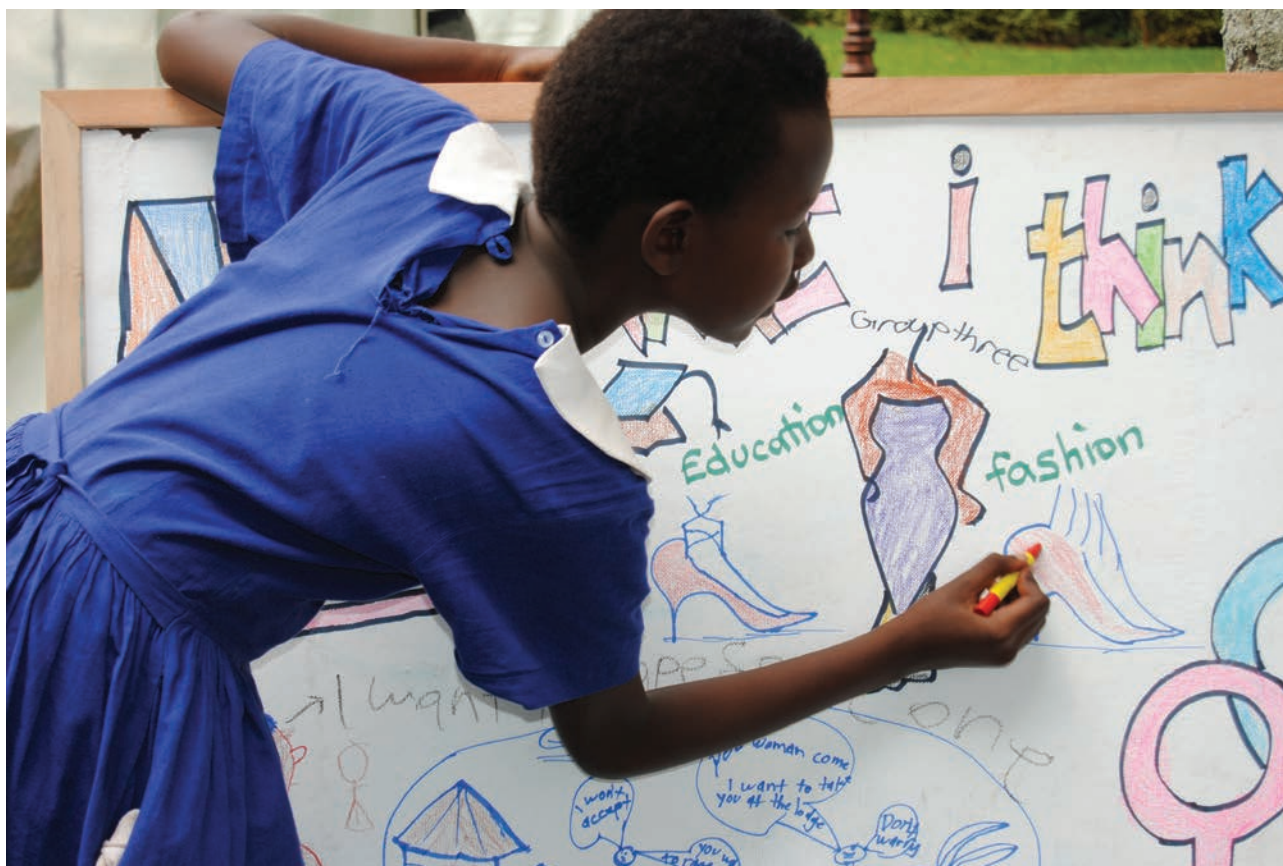
The National Cultural Symposium aimed at enabling participants to gain deeper understanding of the relationship between gender and culture and to broaden participants' knowledge of the current laws and policies on gender and culture with respect to promoting women's rights.

Speaking at the event, the Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development, the Hon. Muruli Mukasa, stated that the government of Uganda attaches great importance to issues of culture and gender. He added that that was why the Ministry of Gender has structures that plan, implement and oversee government's commitment to the implementation of the international and national instruments the government has ratified that promote women's rights and prohibit negative cultural practices. He concluded by calling upon the different stakeholders to use the different spaces, positions, forums and opportunities available for positive steps to provide support to gender equality.



ACFODE members take a look at the Mural during the EXPO





A Peace Ambassador draws an expression of her understanding of gender equality

The Executive Director of ACFODE, Ms Regina Bafaki, on her part, emphasised the need for the abolition of negative social cultural practices; the practices she mentioned include the preference for educating boys to girls, widow inheritance, denial of the right to own land/property to women and not permitting women to participate in decision-making at all levels. Professor Bantebya, who teaches at the School of Gender and Women Studies, Makerere University, urged the government to implement laws to end practices such as domestic violence. Enoch Muhindo, an official from Obusinga Bwa Rwenzururu Kingdom, called for the girls to be afforded equal opportunities as the boys.

## ACFODE holds a public expo to celebrate her journey of passion for a just society - Rukundo Rebecca

The year 2015 marks ACFODE's 30 years of existence and promoting gender equality and women's rights. As part of the activities to mark the celebrations, ACFODE organised an exposition under the theme 'ACFODE@30: A journey of

passion for a just society'. The celebrations took place on 18 November 2015 at Fairway Hotel, Kampala and were attended by a total number of 150 participants. These included ACFODE members, staff, CSOs and the general public. The event was also graced by 31 primary pupils (Peace Ambassadors) from selected partner schools in Kampala, namely Nakivubo Blue Primary School, Pick Hill Primary School, Nakivubo Settlement Primary School and Kawempe Mbogo Primary School. A number of activities took place during the ACFODE-o expo, including the presentation of a women's art piece (mural) depicting ACFODE's 30-year milestone in promoting gender equality and women's rights. The mural allowed women and men to share their concerns through commentary aimed to align new strategies and benchmarks for moving forward with regard to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Some of the comments included:

*'ACFODE's illustration shows that the country has come from far. Its struggle to reach an inclusive society for women is incredible. We hope it stays the same, achieving even better results, especially for women and children.'*

*'The art piece shows a reflection of who the woman is to the man. The various activities shown in the art piece show us what women*



Ms Florence Muhwezi sharing her testimony during the ACFODE expo

*can do behind men, as support to the community; it also shows how at times a woman's rights are violated from childhood as a girl, i.e. through beatings, rape and defilement.'*

'The story has been told very clearly. The achievements are real and have transformed many women. We should do some work towards empowering the boy child who seems to be neglected and has become timid and frightened. The young men look at their wives as enemies because of the empowerment they received and homes are breaking up. Let us work towards harmonious living in that area.'

Another activity was the children's art project where the Peace Ambassadors drew expressions of their understanding of gender equality. They also presented poems, plays and songs on gender equality. Their presentations included messages on prioritising education, the prevention of child marriage and child labour. By working with children, ACFODE aims at building a firm foundation for the future generation to appreciate gender equality (equal rights, equal participation, and equal opportunities for both boys and girls and future leaders of the country).

During the expo, ACFODE members had the opportunity to share testimonies on how ACFODE had impacted on their lives. Ms Florence Muhwezi (current chairperson of the Board of Directors) testified that ACFODE had enabled her to get an opportunity to study her master's degree abroad, Ms Margaret Ntakalimaze (ACFODE member) testified that ACFODE had introduced her to

A cross section of delegates at the youth conference

the Uganda Women Writers Association (FEMRITE) and Ms Robinah Ndikuwera testified that ACFODE had empowered her to become a strong gender activist. A young male ACFODE member, Duncan Ahigika, shared that ACFODE had helped him to integrate and champion gender equality in his community. Mr Ahigika leads a cultural entertainment group (Elohim Entertainment group) that engages both girls and boys. It was visible during the expo that ACFODE members are still vibrant and committed to being part of the women's cause.

The expo also included exhibitions by various ACFODE members and other partners who showcased a variety of social enterprises and business ideas, and how they utilise them to serve the community. Throughout the event, Elohim Entertainment group kept the participants entertained through their cultural songs and dances. Elohim is a group of young boys and girls who are disadvantaged, such as orphans. The group's members are all school-going children and are talented in music, dance and drama. The celebrations were generally successful and as ACFODE, we hope to continue being a model organisation that engages different generations, including the youth, children and older people.

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### **ACFODE@30: Harnessing youth energies in gender equality and governance - Belinda Kyomuhendo**

In an effort to build on the success of the debating competitions and in view of the upcoming 2016 general elections, ACFODE, in partnership with Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, organised a Youth Democracy Forum. The forum provided an opportunity for young people to deliberate and voice their concerns on matters of governance, democracy and their general participation in the country's development process, and facilitated the sharing of experiences about youth participation in governance and decision-making processes. One hundred young people attended the forum, and they came from political parties, civil society, the media and higher institutions of learning.

Youth MPs, the Hon. Gerald Karuhanga and the Hon. Monica Amoding, graced the forum and the discussions led by youth activists Hellena Okiring and Irene Ikomu.



A cross section of delegates at the youth conference

Speaking at the forum, Ms Irene Ikomu urged the young people to get more involved in their communities and to participate in initiatives that impact positively on the lives of the young people in their areas, so that when they want to contest elective positions, they have a strong background and have built support. She remarked, ‘Some of you want to come like Jesus, appear out of nowhere and expect people to follow you. No, you must build support.’

In his remarks, the Hon. Gerald Karuhanga apologised to the young people, saying that in their tenure, the youth MPs had failed on a number of occasions; they had put their own interests ahead of those of their constituents. He spoke about the decision by the Constitutional Court, challenging the legitimacy of youth representation in Parliament and how they were doing everything in their power to fight it.

Finally, he urged young people to join political parties that represent their interests and, most importantly, to

desist from violence.

In her remarks, the Hon. Monica Amoding advised the young people to work with civil society, especially those that work with the youth. She also advised them to be part of the Youth Council as that is one of the ways in which they can build support. She reminded them that in politics not everyone wishes you well and that one must work hard to prove oneself. Finally, she urged the youth to publicise the women’s and youth’s manifests as the blueprint for a better society.

The participants were encouraged to return to their respective villages and encourage more ladies to participate in the 2016 general elections. They were also urged to participate in all the electoral processes and finally join youth forums, create different groups, and to take the gospel of youth participation to the grass roots.

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## ACFODE delivers humanitarian help to Kiryandongo Refugee Camp - *Arise Reporter*

As part of activities to celebrate her 30 years of existence, ACFODE mobilised members, sister organisations, development partners and the general public to donate clothing and household items for the benefit of the refugees in Kiryandongo Refugee Camp. The Kiryandongo Refugee Camp, which is home to about 30,000 refugees, is located in Masindi district in southwestern Uganda.

The settlement has refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi and Kenya. ACFODE planned to visit the refugee settlement to offer in-kind support to women and children living there. This also presented an opportunity to commemorate the 16 days of activism against GBV and to share and highlight the plight of refugees in Uganda and GBV, especially among women.

Speaking at the handover ceremony, Mr Agaba Smart, the Programme Officer, InterAid, profoundly thanked ACFODE and its partners for the clothes, utensils, shoes and the children's toys. He said that at the height of the conflict in South Sudan, they had received 400 refugees per day and that they were still receiving up to 30-40 refugees a day and, therefore, needed all the help they could get. The organisation is also running a campaign to commemorate the 16 days of activism which is pertinent since women comprise up to 82% of the camp.

During a tour of the camp facilities, including the health centre and the school, the team was impressed by the quality of services and the measures taken to rehabilitate the refugees; Ms Cissy Kobusingye, the Relief Coordinator, InterAid, said that people came from as far as Nakasongola to access the services. In their closing remarks, Ms Regina Bafaki, Executive Director, ACFODE, and Ms, Josephine Kasajja, Board member, ACFODE, both reiterated that this visit marked the beginning of a fruitful partnership with the Office of the Prime Minister, the UNHCR and InterAid Uganda.









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