



EMPOWERED
FOR
ACTION

EMPOWERED TO ACT

Enhancing Women and Youth Effective Participation in Politics and Decision-making project implemented by Action for Development (ACFODE) with funding from Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS).

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS)

KAS is a German political foundation engaged in the worldwide promotion of democracy, human rights, and rule of law. Together the partners have executed interventions to elevate the status of women and youth in the Ugandan society. A combination of strategies, which have included capacity building through mentorship, training, networking and for the youth in particular the Inter Institutional Debate Competitions have been employed at national and local level.

Action for Development (ACFODE)

ACFODE is a Ugandan non-governmental women’s organisation focusing on human rights, enhancing women’s participation in politics and decision making and promotion of gender equality in all spheres of society, and good governance and democracy.

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FORWARD



For 30 years **Action for Development (ACFODE)** and the **Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS)** have worked together to empower women and young people in Uganda know, pursue, fulfil and realise their human rights.

Under the **Empowered to Act: Enhancing Women and Youth Effective Participation in Politics and Decision-making** project; we aim to improve the status of women and youth in the Ugandan society across the social, political and economic dimensions. More specifically the programme aimed at:



- ✓ Promoting the appreciation of **gender equality** among women and men as well as working towards a society that guarantees **equal opportunity** for women and girls.
- ✓ Supporting **women and youth** to participate more effectively and to take up an **active role in the politics and decision-making** processes at local and national levels.

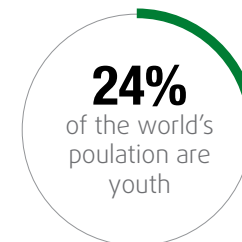
A TIME TO ELEVATE

The world today is home to the largest generation of young people in history, preparing them to lead and succeed is a critical responsibility.

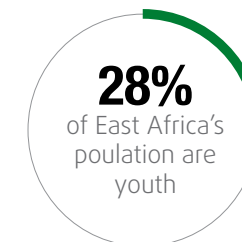


90% of the world is young

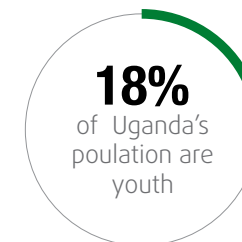
This is unprecedented, the world's largest number of young people are at the heart of innovations, socioeconomic development, political change and building the futures of their communities.



World population is 7.5 billion with 1.8 billion young people (10 – 24 years) and 85% (1.5 billion) of them live in developing countries



45% of East Africa's population is below 15 years and a further 28% are youth (15 and 24 years old).



Uganda has one of the youngest countries in the World with 18% of the population being youth and 60% of these youth below 18 years old.

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

Participation of youth (both female and male) in democracy and governance processes is institutionalised in legal and policy frameworks. These laws provide for equal participation of citizen groups in leadership and specifically for youth, a context or entry points engagement with the policy process. They include: The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995), The National Youth Council Act, The Local Government Act and the National Youth Policy.

The National Youth Council Act provides for gender sensitive elected committees to represent youth at all administrative levels (village, parish, sub-county, district, and national level). The role of the youth council is to empower youth through promoting their participation in decision making at all levels, coordinate youth organizations and carry out different training and education programmes.

The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development has a Department for Youth Affairs, which is responsible for policy formulation and coordination of youth affairs. There is a National Youth Policy, 2016 aimed at enhancing youth participation in overall development processes and to improve the quality of life of youth.

The youth unemployment rate stands at 6.5%, which is attributed to mismatch between education and labour market demands. According to The Uganda Bureau of Statistics and Uganda Investment Authority, 2018 (UIA), of the more than 500,000 young Ugandans who enter the labour market each year, only 113,000 are absorbed in formal employment. The National Youth policy recognizes lack of employable skills, emphasis on experience as a requirement for employment, lack of access to resources, lack of a comprehensive employment policy; gender discrimination, negative cultural attitudes and limited investment in agriculture and the informal sector as the main causes of high unemployment in Uganda.

In 2014, the Government of Uganda launched the Youth Livelihood Fund worth Uganda Shillings 265 Billion to support programmes to skill youth with marketable vocational and entrepreneurship skills and provide start up tools to enable them create jobs, start income generating activities to improve their livelihoods. Youths have also organized themselves into vibrant civil society organizations, where they voice their concerns and harness opportunities for leadership, education, career and personal growth.

Given the changing developmental realities of young adults today, combined with the increasing complexity of our society in general, young people need a measure of support and guidance from the older generation in order to take a more active role in governance processes, carve out a space where their demands and concerns can be heard and addressed; and make informed decisions on matters that affect them.

AN EMPOWERMENT APPROACH: THE DEBATE CLASS

When ACFODE celebrated her Silver Jubilee in 2010, the theme of the celebration was **“Embracing the Youth and Looking Ahead”**. There was urgent need to bring the youth into the gender equality agenda and this gave rise to the Youth Programme.

The Youth Programme has adopted a competitive inter-institutional debate approach informed by the British Parliamentary debate format. The target of the programme is both male and female students. Since their inception, ACFODE has partnered with over 18 institutions of higher learning in the four regions of Uganda during which over 2,000 students have been trained.

Training workshops precede the debates in order to sensitize and equip the students with debating skills and also create political awareness about democratic, human rights and good governance, gender equality and participation in politics and decision-making processes. But most importantly, the youth obtain vital information in the area of gender. KAS has supported ACFODE in this undertaking, which is in line with KAS’ overall goals and aims of justice and democracy, and the empowerment of women and youth.



UNIVERSITY PARTICIPANTS IN THE YOUTH DEBATE PROGRAMME

THE
GREAT
DEBATERS

Northern Region

- Gulu University
- Kumi University
- Soroti Flying School
- Soroti Uganda College of Commerce
- Soroti Nursing School
- Unyama National Teachers College
- Loro Primary Teachers College
- Uganda Christian Institution for Professional Development

Western Region

- Mbarara University
- Kabale National Teachers College
- Mutolere Nursing School
- Bishop Stuart University
- Kabale University

Eastern Region

- Islamic University in Uganda
- Livingstone University
- Mbale School of Clinical Officers
- Uganda Christian University (Mbale Campus)
- Uganda Martyrs University (Mbale Campus)

Central Region

- Kampala International University
- Kyambogo University
- Uganda Christian University
- Makerere University
- Makerere University Business School
- Nkumba University
- Kampala International University
- Mutesa II Royal University



A close-up portrait of Faith Kamusiime Kizito, a young woman with short, dark, curly hair, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a small, ornate earring. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape with warm, golden light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise.

A SHINING EXAMPLE

FAITH KAMUSIIME KIZITO

When young girls in Kabale are looking for a female role model, they turn to Faith Kamusiime Kizito.

Although she is a young university student, Faith has accomplished much in her life as a result of participating in debates.

“I was pursuing a Bachelors of Education when ACFODE came to Kabale University to mobilise students to train to be debaters. I picked an interest and I was chosen to represent my faculty.

We undertook a training in Gender, Governance and British Parliamentary Debate Format.”

- FAITH

After the training, Faith and her fellow students began to compete all over the country. “We participated in regional interuniversity competitions that took place in Mbarara and later in national interuniversity debating competitions in Kampala.”

Today, Faith uses the leadership skills she gained to mobilise more students to join debating activities. “Between 2013 and 2016, I was the patron of the debate club at Kigezi College Butobere, where I was able to support its growth. I mentored students to appreciate gender-related issues, empowerment and good governance. I also supported Solberg College in Kabale to start a debate club and nurtured it to grow.” Faith takes gender issues very seriously, and mentors young girls to stay in school.

Faith’s leadership skills have not gone unnoticed. “I was selected to be a judge by the National Debate Council and have adjudicated at a national secondary debate competitions in 2017.”

Since being trained in debate, Faith’s self-esteem has risen, and she has excelled academically. Faith is currently

pursuing a Master’s degree in Public Health Leadership and Uganda Christian University, Mukono.

She believes that youth involvement in debates is limited, especially at the primary school level, and that the effect of debate skills on personal growth has not been explored adequately. There is also limited follow-up of students after they leave their academic institutions. Faith would like to see the government promote debating, especially under the Ministry of Education and Sports so that institutions incorporate debating into their curriculum right from the primary school level.



THE SPEAKER

HILARY AHIMBISIBWE

When Hilary talks, people listen. He is currently the youth chairperson in the Southern Division Kabale municipality, and is regularly consulted by the town's leadership, to offer his opinion about critical community issues.

This is new for Hilary who was once a young man that was shy - lacking the confidence to speak in public especially in the city where people seemed to speak so eloquently and fast compared to his village mates. All of that changed when Hilary was selected to be trained in debating, through a partnership between ACFODE and Kabale University where he was studying. "In 2012, while acting as a representative of Development Studies students at the guild council of Kabale University, I was informed that ACFODE was mobilising students to participate in debating. Each course mobilised at least four students and I was among those that were selected to participate."

Hilary and his colleagues were trained on gender issues, governance and the British Parliamentary Debate format. After the trainings, they shared their new found knowledge with other students.

"When we came back, we mobilised more students and trained them in British Parliamentary Debate format, Gender, Empowerment, Governance, HIV/AIDS and other development topics. This was in preparation for the National Inter University Competitions that took place

in November 2013, in which we had two teams that competed."

The trainings greatly impacted Hilary's personality.

“ My confidence and self-esteem was increased [...] especially coming from a rural university and competed those in urban areas like Kampala and Mbarara.

This confidence helped me defend my masters' thesis."

- HILARY

Hilary's research, analytical and managerial skills increased as well and have helped him run his three businesses in Kabale - a stationery shop, a guest house and parking fee collection.

Hilary believes the biggest challenge facing debate in Uganda is limited awareness amongst students about its importance. He would like to see the government and academic institutions promote debating more aggressively.

SETTING THE STANDARD

100%

JACOB EYERU

The most outstanding part of the debate training Jacob Eyeru attended was about Gender Equality. It was an unexpected wake up call.

He first joined debating in high school at Bishop Kihangire Senior Secondary School, and helped to form a university debate club when he joined Makerere University. In 2013, ACFODE invited Jacob and his colleagues to a training that would change his world view. It focused on gender, human rights and the British Parliamentary Debate Format.

"This was my first time in life to engage on issues of women rights." Jacob had been born and raised in a society that didn't lay emphasis on inclusiveness and the fact that women and men have equal rights and ability.

When he returned from these trainings, he mobilised over thirty students, especially women, and to create mixed gender teams. It has been a rich learning experience and a **'value set shifter'** that has transformed the way he sees the world with both men and women as equals in every way.

A GAME CHANGER

KANSIIME MUKAMA TAREMWA

Despite having began debating while at Ntare High School in Western Uganda, it was at university that the world of debate opened up for Kansime Mukama Taremwa. Recruited by Jacob Eyeru (then president of the Makerere University Debating Union), Kansime's enthusiasm helped him excel during his comprehensive training on debating, the role of women in governance and development, and the British Parliament Debate format.

He went on to participate in debating competitions such as the national inter university debate competition, where he and his debate partner Patrick Mukiga emerged as champions. His expertise soon led to invitations from Civil Society Organisations such as Center for Health, Human Rights and Development (CEHURD) to judge debates by prominent) to judge debates.

He was elected as the president of Makerere Law Society in 2017/18 - something he attributes to being an active debater. It strengthened his leadership skills, improved his public speaking, his confidence and raised his popularity in the law fraternity and the university at large.

Kansiime has also travelled the world - judging regional secondary school debate competitions in Mbarara, and assuming the role of deputy chief adjudicator at the East African University championship debates in Rwanda and Kenya. He also attended the Africa Human Rights Moot court in Mauritius in 2017, and the Jessip International Law Moot court in the United States in 2019.

"I owe my success to ACFODE. I had never won any championship before I joined debating supported by the KAS-ACFODE."

Kansiime would like to see more funding, sensitisation and mobilisation for debating throughout the country.

ON THE AIR



PAMELA NIMWAMANYA

It was Pamela Niwamanya's first time stepping into a large hotel and dining with leaders and influencers. She could not believe that this was the result of joining a debate team only a few months prior.

"I joined debating after my university's former Guild Minster for Education invited me to fill in a gap on the girls' debating team." ACFODE had partnered with her university to train several selected students in Gender, Governance and the British Parliamentary Debate format.

Pamela had never debated before, and she was extremely nervous. Moreover, students were reluctant to pair up with her as she was new to the concept of debate and the chances of winning with her as a partner seemed slim. "Luckily a business student agreed to pair up with me and we won the mock debates. I was selected to be among those to represent the university in the National Inter University Debating competitions that took place in Kampala Nob View Hotel in 2013."

Pamela found herself dining in a large hotel with leaders, "It was like a dream" she says. Things have only gotten better Pamela was able to secure a job that required her speaking and debating skills.

Her career path has been influenced by the networks and experiences she obtained from debating and she is

currently pursuing a degree in Mass Communication. She wishes more people took interest in this life changing skill.

“ I managed to get a job with Rubanda FM radio station in Kabale as a result of confidence gained from Debating. I'm currently one of the popular presenters hosting a weekly morning show.

I also gained a lot of leadership skills that have influence my current job.”

- PAMELA

STEPPING UP

BEATRICE KAYITERA

Although Beatrice Kayitera's debating journey began in high school, where she was president of the Debate Club, it was not until university that she became an expert.

"When I joined Makerere University I joined the debating union and we were introduced to the ACFODE-supported debating program. I got exposed to the British Parliamentary Debating Format and other development concepts of gender and governance."

After the trainings, Beatrice participated in national and regional debate competitions and she eventually became an adjudicator. "I have travelled and judged at a number of competitions in East Africa. For instance, in 2017 I adjudicated at the East African Region Universities debate championship in Kigali, and in 2015 for the Kenya Debate Society."

Aside from the ability to travel and expand her networks beyond Uganda, Beatrice's leadership skills have increased as a result of debating.

She is also much more aware about her rights as a Uganda citizen. "My civic responsibility has tremendously improved and I'm now more aware of my civic rights. I also value the role of women in society."

"ACFODE has grown me professionally. Debating has opened up doors for many good things.

I'm currently the Minister for Foreign Affairs at Cavendish University where I'm pursuing my second degree in Political Science and International Relations."

- BEATRICE

REACHING FOR GREATNESS



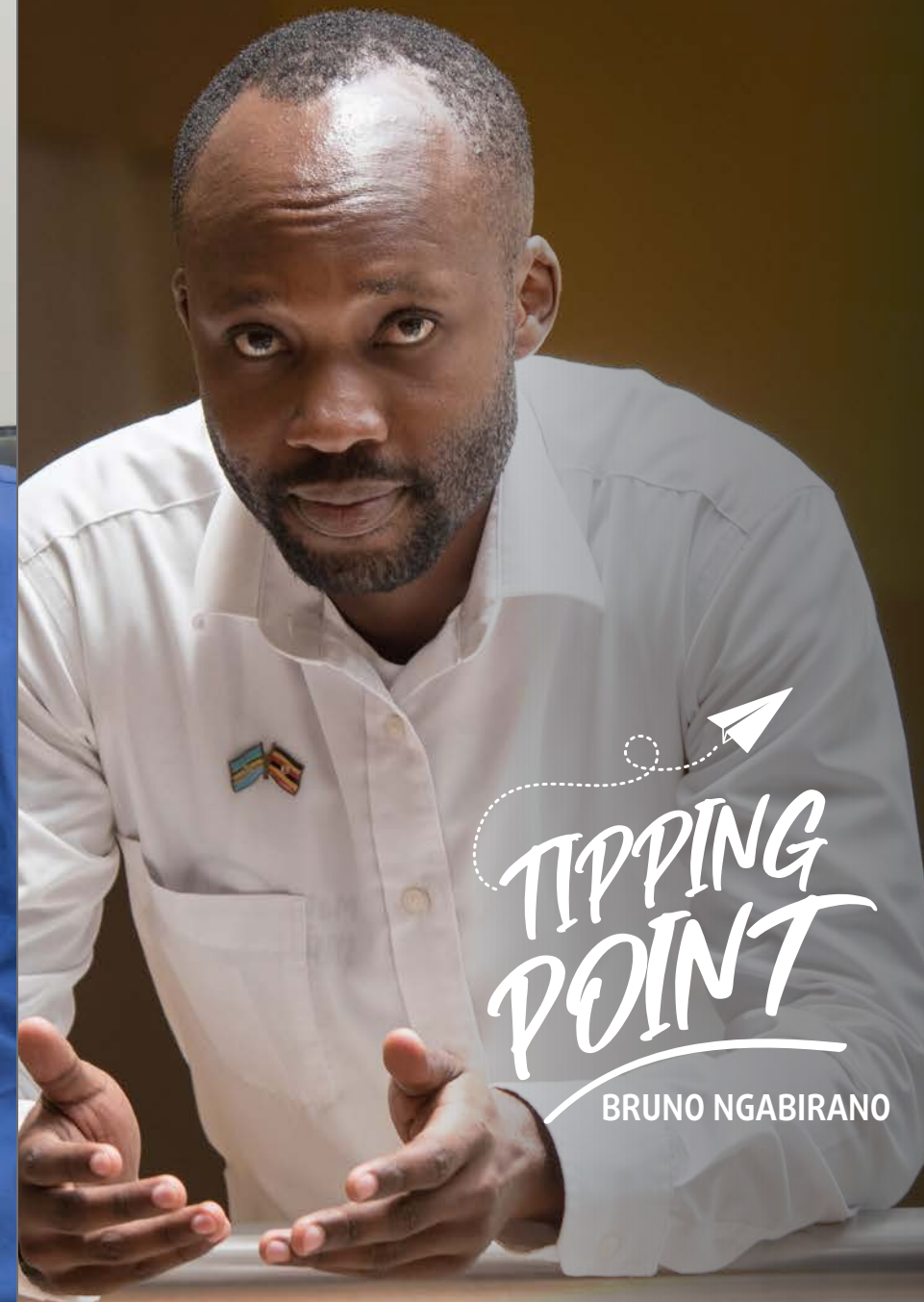
DONALD MASSA

Donald Maasa has been debating since he was a high school student, at Kira College, Butiki in Jinja. When he began studying mechanical engineering at Makerere University, he found there was no organised debate club. He immediately took action - linking up with his former classmates (now fellow university students) and forming a debate club.

After, ACFODE trained them in gender concepts and British Parliamentary Debating format, Donald and his colleagues participated in the intra and inter university debating competitions in 2013. He went on to head the Makerere Debating Unions and was elected as the Minister of Constitutional Affairs in the Makerere Guild Council. His leadership, public speaking, negotiation, as well as research and analysis skills tremendously improved.

"I have been invited as an independent adjudicator at national university debate competitions organised by Open Space. In 2019, I was deputy chief adjudicator at National Inter University competitions and in 2018 I participated in East African University debating competitions. I have travelled to South Africa, Tanzania, Kenya and the United States to participate in debating activities. I have also met and interacted with many important people including my role models such as Hon Gerald Karuhanga, MP Ntungamo Municipality in Ntungamo District."

Donald would like to see civil society organizations coordinate debating activities better, and he would like to see the government allocate more resources, in order to improve debate.



When Bruno was first approached by a friend to form a debate partnership. At that time, he was a student of software engineering at Makerere University. Jotham Yamulebire (a second-year law student), convinced him to participate in an intra-university mock debate competition. They practiced using the ACFODE-KAS guidelines on the British parliamentary debate method, and their hardwork helped them win the debate and go on to participate in an inter university debating competition as part of the university team. According to him, the debate experience led him to reflect on what he wanted to do with his life; it prompted him to change his course to Social Sciences.

"Debate helped me learn how to do research, it built my confidence and empowered me to network effectively. I was selected as a judge for the national debating competition in 2018. I have been an ambassador for the East African Community, promoting debate among the youth. My exposure and connection expanded. Imagine a university student staying in a good hotel like Nob View or having lunch at Grand Global with other debaters and professionals. It was for me a dream come true."

While he has enjoyed great success debating, Bruno is aware of the inherent factors that hold back other young people in Uganda from joining the movement. These include: a poor research and reading culture perpetuated in the education system, as well as a lack of appropriate recognition of the benefits of debate as part of university education.



A MAN OF ACTION

ASASIRA GILBERT

A three-month leadership course in the United States, and appearances on Ugandan television are just some of the results of Asasira Gilbert's participation in debating. He began debating in high school, even attending national competitions. However, when Gilbert got to university, he found that the debating club had collapsed. He decided to take action.

“When I joined Makerere University in 2011, I hooked up with my former debating colleagues and other students who were interested in debating.

We revived the Makerere Debating Union. We got training in debating and research from National Debating Council.”

- GILBERT

In 2012, a year after Gilbert joined university, ACFODE partnered with the learning institution to promote debate and train students in the British Parliamentary Debate format. Gilbert was one of the selected students for the training. The trained students eventually competed in national and regional debating competition.

Gilbert has gained a lot from debating. “It has made me whom I am today. I have developed leadership skills. For example, I represented the Faculty of Agriculture students at Makerere Guild Council. In 2013, I was guild minister for National and Pan African Affairs. I also competed for the guild speakership role.

Debating has contributed to Gilbert's career path. “In 2016, I competed and won a scholarship for a 3 months course on leadership in the United States of America. My ability to express myself was nurtured through debating and it has increased my networks both nationally and internationally.”

Gilbert is also a debate trainer and has adjudicated at a number of debate competitions including the African Debate

Championship that took place in Kampala in 2018, and most of the ACFODE-organised debate competitions nationally and regionally.

Gilbert would like to see debating be made a compulsory part of the school curriculum, and receive additional funding from the government.



IN THE MEDIA

IVAN RUGAMBWA

Ivan would not be appearing on people's television sets every now and then, nor would his voice be heard on radio every Friday discussing the week's events, if not for debating.

He has accomplished many things in life, he attributes most of his achievements to his debating skills. "I joined debating while I was still in Primary School in Sembabule district. I continued debating in high school at Valley College in Bushenyi district. At Makerere University, I participated in inter halls debate and inter college debates as well."

In 2012, Ivan joined the ACFODE organised debate competitions through the Makerere Debating Union and participated in regional and national debating competitions in 2013 and 2014.

Here, he became exposed to gender issues. "I also learnt how to contribute towards improving the status of women in society."

Ivan continues to support debate in a number of ways. "I have been a judge at many debating competitions in this country. I'm the founder member of Debating Society of Uganda that is promoting debate beyond university student life."

Ivan considers himself 'a sum total of the greatness of debate.' In order for debate

in Uganda to improve, he would like to see a national policy created, as well as a new curriculum developed to keep up with the times.

“ Debating has built my confidence and influenced my life. I am now a highly respected member of society. I'm a member of KFM radio station Friday Panel of Journalists that discuss key events of the week. I'm also a regular contributor on Uganda's popular TV talk show called 4th Estate on Nation TV (NTV). I host radio talk shows.”

- IVAN

SHAPING GREAT MINDS



KENNETH OPOLOT

Kenneth loves to teach people how to debate, so much so, that he founded his own learning institution, the 'Edumania Debate Academy'. He learned how to train people after being recruited by ACFODE in 2010 - "They invited me to train debaters and adjudicate university debates."

"I gained knowledge on how to promote Gender Equality and Equity. I was a Chief Adjudicator at national school and university debate championships in Uganda, South Africa and Thailand from 2010 to 2014. I have also been invited by several debate organisations to train and adjudicate debates."

Kenneth believes that for young people, debate has developed their skills in critical thinking, public speaking, argumentation, research, free speech and advocacy.

He believes that debate still faces challenges including a lack of knowledge about new debate formats, and a lack of time on the part of students. He also believes that debate can be improved by the training of more trainers and additional funding for wider coverage in Uganda.



READY FOR ANYTHING



JOSIAH ADIEMA

Josiah - a Uganda Christian University student - was enticed to join the ACFODE Silver Jubilee Debate Championship in 2010, because of one message - "Come and enjoy the battle of wits and spill blood on the debate floor using Debate as a tool of Advocacy for Women's Rights!"

The training he received in gender dynamics and his participation in debate, afforded Josiah many opportunities. "I co-founded the Kenya National Debate Council out of these experiences. It shaped me to become the avid debate and public speaking expert that I am now. Above all, it has shaped me to become a trainer in Gender Rights, Women Participation in Governance and similar fields." He also got to travel far and wide within Uganda and Africa as an adjudicator, forming different productive relationships and bonds along the way.

"I started my adjudication in Uganda in 2011, and transcended to adjudicate and train debate judges in Kenya. The highlight of my adjudication is having been a Member of the Core Adjudication Panel of the Pan African Debates in South Africa as a deputy Chief Adjudicator."

Josiah has seen debate sharpen the voices of youths, teaching them critical thinking and life skills. Although he jokes that the biggest challenge to debate is not winning, he believes that a lack of proper training in debating has lowered the level of argumentation. He would like to see all institutions create well-funded debate associations, and school tournaments which can prepare students for larger tournaments. He would also like to see teams of mentors and trainers visiting every school.



Ezekeri was almost giving up on debate, his university had just lost to another in the Karl Popper mode of debates. Although he had been voted the best speaker - with the most points for public speaking and presentation, his life-long love of debating was severely diminished by the loss.



"I have debated since the primary school days, in the so-called debates of 'fire is better than water'. My spirit of argumentation grew day by day and followed me up to university. I couldn't resist an argument and debate created a confidence in me that even transferred to leadership."

He was disheartened by his university debate team's loss and fed up with the current mode of debate. Ezekiel thought of giving up. However, during his final semester, a breakthrough occurred.

“ACFODE came and introduced us to the 'British Parliamentary Format' mode of debate. It was so interesting. I gave it a shot and I was able to represent the entire western region at the national debating championship, which has been the best moment of my life."

- EZEKIEL

Although he didn't win the championship, it gave him a much needed boost in confidence. Something he still finds useful when interacting with his peers, workmates, at job interviews and when analyzing issues in general.

After the ACFODE debate trainings, Ezekiel was offered the opportunity to adjudicate debate competitions. This gave him the chance to travel to different places and interact with different cultures.

"I have been able to see how people argue out issues maturely and differently under the British Parliamentary Format. I want to thank ACFODE for a well thought-out programme allowing the youth to spearhead gender equality and good governance, through a more improved and articulate debate format."

Ezekiel is now a business development manager at the company - 'Eco-Fresh Solutions Ltd.' where he still utilizes the different skills he learned as a debater.



THE WINNER TAKES IT ALL

GENDER LAKER FANCY

Gender Laker Fancy always aims to win the argument and usually does. After all, she is a lawyer. She first developed an interest in the law while she debated for the Human Rights and Debate Society at Gulu University.

Together with her colleagues, Gender went through several trainings and would compete amongst themselves in order to be selected as debaters representing the university. The trainings improved Gender's debating skills, as well as her research, analytical, critical thinking and argumentation skills. Debate polished her leadership skills by improving on her self-confidence and public speaking abilities. Gender's opportunities in and out of the university increased greatly owing to her participation in the debate club; it allowed her to meet many people who have assisted her throughout her life and career.

"I attended several conferences by ACFODE including the Intergenerational Dialogue in 2017. I also appear on the ACFODE pullups and banners. Debate also increased my popularity at the University. I was appointed as the Vice Guild President of Gulu University Students Guild 2016/2017. I have also been invited as a panellist on several platforms including: an episode of the live television program 'NBS Situation Room' (organized by UWONET), to evaluate the Gulu District Local Governments Alcohol Ordinance in 2017; the 16 Days of Activism against

Gender-Based Violence, a dialogue organized by UNWOMEN in 2016 in Gulu District; and a radio program 'Opuk Republic' at a local station Radio Rupiny 95.7, which discusses different issues in the country."

She has also adjudicated several inter-university, inter-secondary schools and inter-primary schools debates all over Uganda. Gender does not keep her knowledge to herself.

“ I have had the opportunity to train students in debate, coach them, judge debates and groom several young people especially in Northern Uganda. I am also the founding member of the Northern Uganda Debate Society which organises debates and community dialogues among other activities in Northern Uganda.”

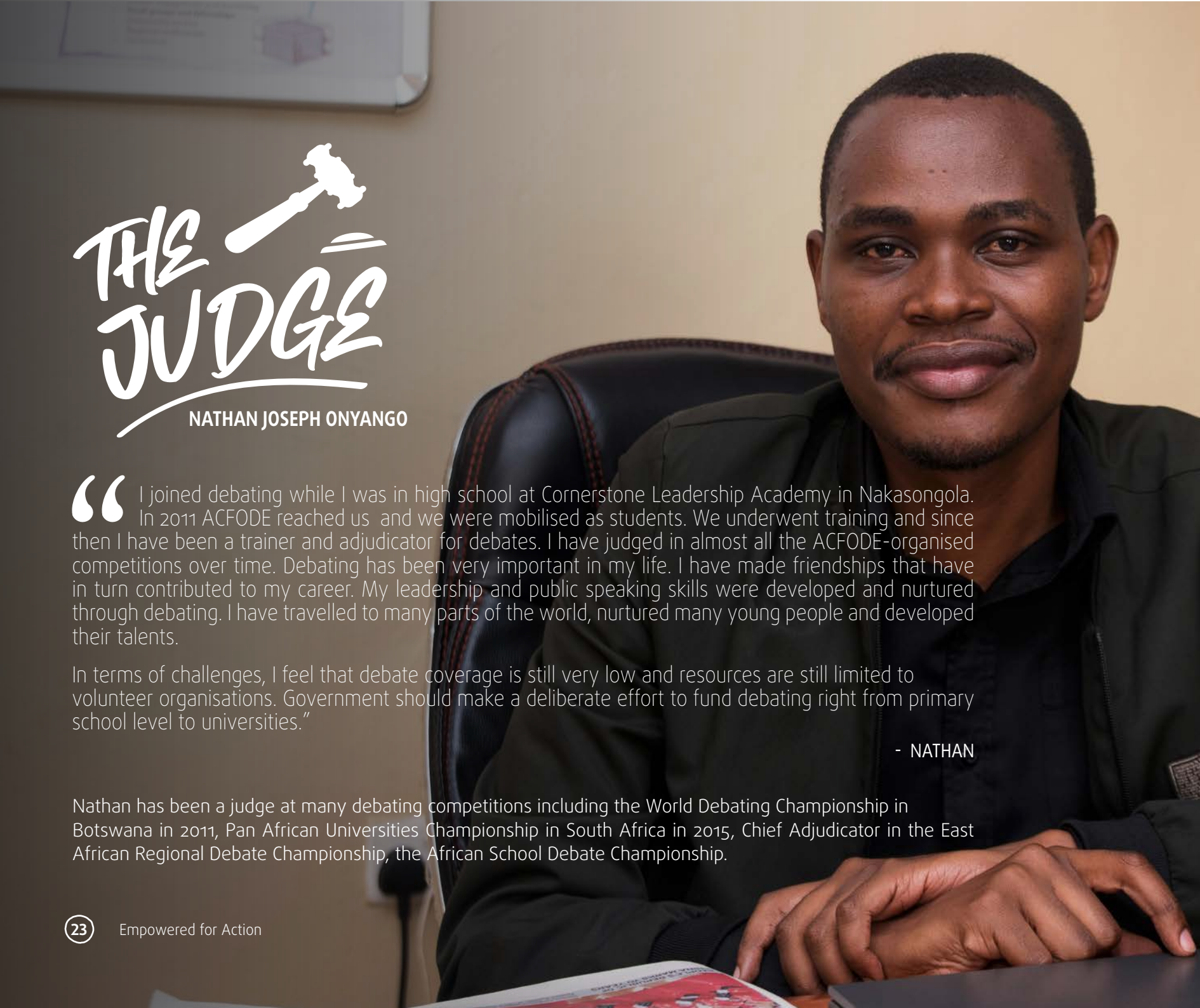
- GENDER

On how debate trainings have impacted young people, Gender says that young people now live more resourceful lives. For her personally, Gender learnt how to be a great lawyer.

"In both law and debate we construct arguments and due to debate I learned how to construct better arguments as a lawyer."

She believes that financial and time constraints are the biggest challenges that debate students face. She recommends that debate winners should be taken to international competitions, as motivation for people.

"This would encourage hard work, research, and better debates. It would make debate more competitive, since winning a tournament would become more prestigious. Winners will gain a lot of international experience and become better. This would make debate grow."

A portrait of Nathan Joseph Onyango, a young Black man with short dark hair and a slight smile, wearing a dark jacket. He is sitting in a black leather chair. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

THE JUDGE

NATHAN JOSEPH ONYANGO

“ I joined debating while I was in high school at Cornerstone Leadership Academy in Nakasongola. In 2011 ACFODE reached us and we were mobilised as students. We underwent training and since then I have been a trainer and adjudicator for debates. I have judged in almost all the ACFODE-organised competitions over time. Debating has been very important in my life. I have made friendships that have in turn contributed to my career. My leadership and public speaking skills were developed and nurtured through debating. I have travelled to many parts of the world, nurtured many young people and developed their talents.

In terms of challenges, I feel that debate coverage is still very low and resources are still limited to volunteer organisations. Government should make a deliberate effort to fund debating right from primary school level to universities.”

- NATHAN

Nathan has been a judge at many debating competitions including the World Debating Championship in Botswana in 2011, Pan African Universities Championship in South Africa in 2015, Chief Adjudicator in the East African Regional Debate Championship, the African School Debate Championship.

A portrait of Hawa Kimbugwe, a young Black woman wearing a blue hijab and a dark jacket. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people.

ONWARD & UPWARD

HAWA KIMBUGWE

“ I have had an interest in debating since my childhood. I was a member of the debating club in my high school and when I joined Kyambogo University, I became a member of the Kyambogo University Debating Society.

We were trained on topics such as gender, human rights and the different forms of debating including the British Parliamentary Debate format. We later on participated in the Inter University Debating competitions organised by ACFODE. Through debating, I have been able to improve my research skills, confidence, negotiations skills, open-mindedness and my networks have expanded. I have travelled to Rwanda on a debating mission and have adjudicated in ACFODE-organised competitions in 2018 and 2019 at the Esella Country Club.

One challenge to debating in Uganda is that the quality is low due to limited research skills by students. Also, the judges are few and at times are biased in favour of their former institutions. There is also a lack of interest in some students, for instance most of the debate club members in Kyambogo University were from science-based courses. More sensitisation needs to be done to attract students from all courses. Debating needs to be fully funded by government and judges should be recruited and trained to become competent.”

- HAWA

LISTEN & LEARN



ANNET NAKAITI

Annet has learned many things through debate, but perhaps the biggest lesson was the art of listening to other points of view.

"It was a challenge for me to learn how to respectfully disagree with others and give them space to say, even the things I might not have wanted to hear. This was quite difficult but with consistency, I learnt how to deal with it."



When ACFODE first approached Annet in 2010, she was an eighteen-year old university student and the gender-rights organization was celebrating 25 years of existence. ACFODE wanted to engage students through an inter-university debate championship on gender equality and equity. Annet was part of the students' leadership as Speaker. She was approached by an ACFODE staff member, who explained what they were doing.

Annet and her colleagues were trained in the British Parliamentary Debate Format and key aspects of gender issues. She also developed skills in public speaking, research and active listening, seeing debate as a way of learning teamwork.

"Through debate, I built a network of 'debate friends' who to this day have been very helpful and supportive. Most importantly, I learnt how to be assertive and have an eye for detail, which has pushed me to greater heights."

She became an adjudicator with ACFODE in different universities and at different regional and national tournaments between 2011 and 2013. She has

adjudicated and mentored secondary school students from over 100 schools across Uganda and Rwanda; empowering and training students in key aspects of debate, public speaking, and critical thinking among others. Annet also co-founded an organization with friends called "Writing our World" - working to amplify youth voices, integrating debate as an advocacy tool. Annet sees debate as a valuable skill for young people to learn.

Debate helps young people build their confidence in public speaking and research skills. Through debate, young people are able to critically think through situations and come up with innovative solutions."

Just as she learned to listen to other points of view, the young people she works with are learning to do the same.

"Debate allows young people to peacefully live with others even when they have differing views. It creates co-existence and harmony where youth can maturely discuss issues."



THE TRAINER

ISABELLA AKITENG

“ In the mid-2000s, I was volunteering with an organisation called Conflict Resolution by the Youth (CRY). I and other youth were recruited into debate activities through the Open Space initiative. We were trained in debating, undertook exchange visits and got accredited as debaters. After that we started promoting debating in secondary schools and supporting young leaders. Later I began working with ACFODE staff and have trained university students in debating skills using different approaches including the British Parliamentary Debate Format. I have also adjudicated in almost all the ACFODE-organised debate competitions and I deliver key note addresses at events.

Debating has offered me opportunities that I would not have gotten otherwise. I have been able to develop public speaking skills and communication skills as well. I currently work as a Program Manager for a women rights organisation and I'm using the leadership skills acquired through debating. I have been able to travel around the world and promote debating to many young people who are contributing to the development of their societies. Through debating, I was empowered to advocate for the rights of disadvantaged including, women, girls and children. The quality of debating is still low in Uganda. Coordination amongst stakeholders is not well streamlined and they tend to duplicate the events with minimal impact. Debating needs to be fully funded by government like any other educational programme.”

- ISABELLA



THE GLOBE TROTTER

MURUNGI PATRICK

“ I began debating in high school, and when I joined Makerere University I reached out to my old friends who were already members of Makerere Debating Union. I participated in ACFODE organised trainings on Gender and the British Parliamentary Debate Format. I then entered the Inter University Debate competitions where my team won.

As a result of participating in the debates, I have travelled to Zambia, Kenya and Rwanda. I have adjudicated at the East African Inter University Championship in Rwanda 2017, and the Uganda University Debate Championship in Kampala in 2018. I have managed to become a tab master and compiled the results for ACFODE-organised tournaments. My networks have expanded beyond Uganda and I have gained more information on key development issues. The main challenges facing debate in Uganda are a lack of investment, and a poor reading culture by students. We should sensitise students about the importance of debates.”

- PATRICK



THE PEACEMAKER

FRED ONGOM

Fred knows all about resolving conflicts and bringing people together. He has 23 siblings, which means that early in his childhood he had to learn about dialogue and engagement.

"I enrolled in debating at an early age." While still a young boy, he participated in a number of community-led programs aimed at creating awareness on key issues that affect their development. He even participated in the International Day of the African Child. In 2015 as a student at Gulu University, Fred got a chance to take his debating skills to another level.

"A team from ACFODE visited our university and recruited us into the debating activities. We were trained in various skills such as British Parliamentary Debating format, Gender Equity and Equality, Good governance, Entrepreneurial skills, Advocacy, Networking among others."

The training gave Fred and his fellow students knowledge and skills beyond what they were being taught at university. "This greatly improved my way of living and expanded my world view."

The aspect of Fred's life that changed the most was his self-esteem. Fred Ongom grew up in Northern Uganda at the height of the region's armed conflict, and what he saw as a child had diminished his confidence and social skills. Debating changed all of that.

"I acquired leadership skills that have enabled me to take on leadership positions. I am currently the President of Northern Uganda Debating Society and have mentored many young people to join the debating society. I have also been able to increase on my social capital that has enabled me to meet and dine with important people in this country."

Under his presidency, NUDS coordinated the National Inter-University Debating Competition, which raised the society's profile throughout Uganda. Fred has also had the opportunity to take his debating skills outside Uganda. "I have also been able to adjudicate at debating competitions both in Uganda and surrounding countries."

In 2016, Fred was made the Deputy Chief Adjudicator at a national debating competition organised by National Debating Council, and in 2018 he was the chief adjudicator in the East African Inter-University Debating Competition held in Kigali, Rwanda.

According to Fred, debating in Uganda is given little attention despite the huge role it plays in shaping the behaviour of young

people. He recommends that online debates should be encouraged amongst the youth, and printed materials educating people about debating should be produced.

NUTURING LEADERS

PATRICK SSEMWOGERERE

“ I started debating when I was in Primary School 5 at Kampala Parents School. I continued debating in secondary school but I picked even more interest when I joined Uganda Christian University. We were trained by ACFODE on the British Parliamentary Debate format and other topics such as gender, governance and human rights. We participated in competitions and although we did not win the tournament, it was a turning point in my life.

Debating has built my confidence and promoted my leadership skills. I became a speaker of UCU Law Students Association, President of United Nations Association UCU Branch, East African Youth Ambassador for 2016-2019. I have adjudicated at the Debate Association of Uganda in 2018, Stanbic Secondary Debating Championship, National Debate Championship of 2019, and have been a deputy chief adjudicator at ACFODE-organised regional inter-university championships for throughout Uganda. I have also trained students at Makerere University Business School and Uganda Christian University. In Uganda, the quality of debating is still low due to a lack of appreciation amongst the public, and little investment by government. We need to raise awareness to help people buy in.”

- PATRICK

CROSSING BORDERS

JAMES OJERA ADAJE

“ I started debating while I was in high school and when I joined Gulu University, I was recruited into the Human Rights club which also promoted debating. ACFODE had partnered with the university and members of the Gulu Debating Club were taken through a number of trainings in gender, governance, empowerment. We also learned the British Parliamentary Debate format.

From these trainings we acquired new skills, many of which were critical in supporting our day to day survival as students. Personally, I have made new friends, improved my leadership, research and analytical skills and have travelled beyond Uganda which has opened my eyes to understand what is going beyond our borders. I also represented Gulu University in the inter-university national debating competitions.

There are challenges to debating in Uganda. Very few people are interested in it and at school, it is less popular than other school activities. Primary and secondary schools have not prioritised debates in their school programs. There is limited investment by Government in terms of training instructors, facilitating debating competitions and supporting those who have excelled in debates to advance even further. I recommend that some resources should be committed to promoting debates right from the lower primary up to university level. Instructors should also be trained and certified so that they offer better training to students.”

- JAMES



THE CHANGEMAKER

RITA AGWANG

As a young girl interested in debating, Ritah did not have many options. “Debate had not been a part of the education curriculum in primary school, so I started debating in 2015 while I was at Wanyange girls Senior Secondary School in Jinja.”

When Ritah began university studies, she found there were no debating clubs and associations to join. However this time, Ritah did something about it.

“When I joined Gulu School of Clinical Medicine, I found there was no debating club. I mobilised my friends and we formed one for the college with support from the Northern Uganda Debating Society.”

Ritah’s newly formed debating club practiced hard and even managed to participate in the national debate competitions, where they came in at the 14th position. Ritah credits the debating clubs she has been a part of, for the person she is today.

“Debating skills have improved my leadership skills planning skills, research skills, and my confidence. I have also been able increase my networks. I have been able to interact with very many important people in society.”

Ritah believes that the debating clubs have provided her with an education that goes beyond the classroom to include wider society issues such as good governance, gender human rights among

others. She feels that one challenge to debating is its perception by some. For example, her fellow medical students do not take debating seriously and consider it outside of the realm of their studies. “They think it as an arts subject.”

Ritah wants to see all educational institutions include debating in their curriculum, as part of building communication skills and confidence in communities. She would also like the government to fund debating activities and provide training right from primary to higher institutions of learning.

PASSIONATE FOR PROGRESS

BELINDA KYOMUHENDO

Starting out as a volunteer at ACFODE, Belinda Kyomuhendo was immediately attracted to the idea of using debate to skill and inspire young people for leadership and overall success. Belinda joined the NGO in 2010 as a volunteer, and back then was not as involved in the NGO's programming work. However, all of that was about to change.

“One of the staff members organising the ACFODE Silver Jubilees suggested that we could add debate as one of the activities. The debates were very successful, exciting and interesting. Supporting debate among higher institutions of learning has become part and parcel of ACFODE's core programming and our donor KAS supports it.”

- BELINDA

Seeing it in action was unforgettable. Belinda was captured. According to Belinda, ACFODE has benefitted greatly from organising debating competitions.

“The young talented people that ACFODE has been fortunate to engage in debate are out there now on a mission to promoting human rights, gender equality, inclusion, women's and youth participation in all spheres of society. We couldn't be happier, to think that at investment in the ability to debate has evolved to create youth leaders that are changing our world.”

As a result of the debate program in academic institutions and workplaces we have built strong partnerships with higher institutions of learning, CSOs, the private sector and other stakeholders to move forward the key rights based goals we are working toward.

Belinda is most grateful for the opportunity to witness first-hand how debate can transform young people.

“Students who have participated in the debating have acquired leadership skills, confidence, research skills, public speaking skills and analytical skills. They

also understand issues of governance, empowerment and gender.”

Belinda is also proud that many of the debate alumni now hold high positions in public and private institutions, for example, current member of parliament Hon Gerald Karuhanga, representing Ntungamo Municipality.

At a personal level organising debates has tremendously shaped Belinda's personal and professional life.

“I have been able to expand my networks among the different groups involved in ACFODE debate activities including academicians, the business community and CSOs. My confidence levels have increased from practicing the use of the debate format.”

Belinda would like to see debate be formalised and institutionalised in all academic institutions due to its immense benefits to individuals and society, and for the government to invest time and resources to debate, through the Ministry of Education and Sports.



“ In 2012, a team from ACFODE came to Mbale to conduct inter-university debating competitions and this piqued my interest since I was a language teacher at Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU). Later, ACFODE partnered with my university's debate club and supported capacity building in the areas of gender, human rights, governance and the British Parliamentary Debate format. I was made the patron of the debate club and since then I have interacted with ACFODE. I have supported the growth of debating in IUIU and beyond. Our university participated in the regional debating championships and we emerged as the winners. We have started an outreach program to support secondary schools such as Hamdani Girls Senior Secondary School, Nkoma Senior Secondary school and Mbale Progressive Academy. We have been training them on different formats of debating and have supported them to participate in national debating competitions.

We have also managed to promote gender equality at the university as evidenced by female students who have been recruited into the debating society. Also, the perception of the role of women in development has changed. Participating in debates has made me well-recognized as a debate coach both nationally and internationally. I have been able to increase on my social capital through increased networks and the debating has greatly changed my attitude towards gender. I have travelled to Malaysia with students on a debating mission. I have also been chief adjudicator at secondary school debating competitions.

I have managed to influence the university to adopt debating in all the university courses. The university administration is in full support of the debating activities as it has realised the benefits of debates to student's performance. The university has approved to include topics of debate in all the academic programs.”

- ALI



“ I joined debating in 2018 after our patron Hajji Dago Ali mobilised law students to join. We were trained in British Parliamentary Debate Format that was being promoted by ACFODE. We also got trained in gender dynamics, governance, human rights and other topics.

Our university debate team was invited to attend the inter-university debate competition where our two teams won in the first and second positions.

Participating in debates has greatly impacted my life. My confidence and self-esteem has improved, acquired leadership skills, gained new friends and even visited the inner chambers of Parliament.

- IVAN



Ruth went to Kabale University to become a banker, but a call from the Guild President to attend a training on debate by ACFODE, changed her life path. They were trained on the British parliamentary debate system. During the training, they were coached on public speaking. In no time, her confidence and self-esteem grew and soon other girls at the university were asking her how she was able to speak so eloquently - her only secret was the debate training.

She started a debating club, intentionally recruiting many girls in a bid to put down unfair cultural practices. Being an active lead debater at university level qualified her to participate in national competitions. At the national championship, Ruth emerged the best national female speaker, out of over 15 universities in

the country. She believes that her success has in part helped to correct the stereotype that students from rural universities are 'less than' their city peers. Ruth went on to get hired for her first job without an interview and became an Advocacy and Communications officer at Kick Corruption Out of Uganda in Kabale district in 2015.

She credits the ACFODE debate program for shaping her career path and that of many other young people. It has enabled many to use their voice to deliberate over issues that affect them including governance, socio-economics especially youth unemployment. Young people have also been prepared to take up the leadership mantle through which they are acting as vessels for alternative policy development.

Ruth would like the alumna of the debate program to invest in offering this opportunity to other young people through mentoring upcoming debate teams.

"I made so many friends and critical advisors who are still part of my network [...] Grateful cannot do justice to describe my feelings. I have obtained opportunities I never dreamt of and am still moving forward, even the sky is no longer the limit."



“ Being a foreign student, I’m no longer homesick as I have many new friends to rely on, whom I made through debating. I have gained knowledge on women and empowerment which has enabled me to advocate for women’s rights. My confidence has been built and I can now speak in public. I have learnt to undertake research which has promoted my analysis skills.”

- OMAR

“ I began debating in primary school when we were trying to promote peace during the insurgencies in Northern Uganda. In 2012 I joined Kyambogo University as an engineering student and became a member of the Kyambogo Debating Society. Our university entered a partnership with ACFODE to promote debates and for two days in 2013, selected members of the debating society including myself were trained in the British Parliamentary Debating Format, gender concepts, empowerment and human rights. We then trained the other members of our debating society and Kyambogo University won the 2013 competitions.

Participating in debates has greatly impacted my life and career. It has expanded my networks and increased my social capital, as well as self-esteem. This has led to increased job and business opportunities for me. For example, after completing my degree at Kyambogo University, I got a job in Southern Sudan as a result of a contact I got while debating. I currently run a construction company and I'm using the skills acquired undertake marketing, customer care and management.

Since being trained, I have been able to travel and adjudicate events. In 2016, 2017 and 2018, I adjudicated at a debating competition organised by Open Space Inter University Debate Kampala. In 2015 I was the chief adjudicator at the East Africa Inter University Debate in Nairobi, Kenya. In 2016, I represented Uganda at the Pan University Debate Championship at Midland State University in Zimbabwe. In 2019, I adjudicated at the World University Debate. I have been the president of Northern Uganda Debating Society (NUDS) since 2016. I'm a role model to young people and I'm currently mentoring Vanguard Primary School in Gulu, which has been participating in national primary school debating championships.

The main challenges facing debaters in Uganda are limited analytical skills and the ability to reason. There is limited investment in debating skills by government. Also, it is difficult to trace students that have participated in the debating activities. I recommend that the government institutionalizes debating in school, and considers it a core competence or co-curricular activity which all schools should follow. A unit should be created in the Ministry of Education and Sports to support debating in schools.”

- JULIUS

A POSITIVE
ROLE MODEL

KIDEGA JULIUS

“ I was recruited into the debating club at Gulu University in 2012 while studying my law degree. I was already a member of the Human Rights Club that was discussing critical issues of gender and human rights in Northern Uganda. Participating in debates has brought immense opportunities and benefits to me. I was voted as the Guild President of Gulu University in 2013 as a result of my debating skills. I participated in national and international debate forums in South Korea together with the Guild President of Makerere University.

I also participated in national inter-university debating competitions. Participating in debates has also shaped both my professional and career path, and has immensely contributed to who I am today. It has improved my research skills, advocacy skills, public speaking skills, and made me a human rights defender. I was able to get a job with Action Aid Uganda where I work as a Governance and Social Accountability Officer. This has contributed to good governance and accountability in the country. I have been able to support the ongoing efforts to solve land conflicts in the Apa community in Northern Uganda.

I also support the development of advocacy groups such as Acholi Youth Agenda. I promote peace and conflict resolution in northern Uganda through the Northern Uganda Debating Society (NUDS). I support primary and post-primary school debating teams from northern Uganda to compete in national debating competitions. In 2013 one of the schools I support, Scared Heart Girls Senior Secondary School from Northern Uganda, won the National Secondary School debating competitions.

The knowledge and skills I obtained from ACFODE trainings enabled me to undertake further studies in governance and human rights. I completed a Master's degree in Human Rights from Uganda Martyrs' University Nkozi and I'm utilising the skills in my current job.”

- ANDREW

COMMUNITY
BUILDING

OGWETTA ANDREW OTTO

THE NETWORKERS



“ Participating in debates has changed my life greatly and increased my knowledge on societal issues that are not taught in law school, yet are important in the development of society. I came to know and interact with many important people such as Regina Bafaki, the Executive Director of ACFODE who is my role model as a leader. I have been able to make more friends thus increasing my social capital. I have authored a book on debating which is currently under review.”

- **MUKASA AKRAM SSALI**



“ I have made new connections all over the country and region. I have developed advocacy skills in addition to improved public speaking. I was appointed as a judge by the National Debating Council during the national debating competitions of 2018.”

- **MUTAWO GEOFFREY**



“ As a female student at an Islamic University with strict rules, I have been empowered to fight for women’s rights. I have gained new confidence in public speaking, increased my networks, and learnt many things that are not taught in class such as governance, gender, and empowerment which has helped me to boost my self-esteem.”

- **OWEMBABAZI BRASER**



“ Participating in debates has improved my communications skills, analytical skills, research and has exposed me to new information and knowledge. I have also made many new friends thus increasing my social networks.”

- **MWESIGWA NICHOLAS**

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