



2025 – 1985

CAPABILITY STATEMENT



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Action for Development (ACFODE) is an indigenous, voluntary, non-governmental women's rights organisation with over 40 years of experience advancing gender equality, women's rights, and social justice in Uganda.

Founded in 1985, ACFODE emerged at a critical moment in Uganda's history, driven by the vision of creating an inclusive movement that would empower women and girls to fully participate in social, political, and economic development processes. Over the decades, the organisation has evolved into one of Uganda's leading feminist and gender justice institutions, with a strong legacy of influencing policy, strengthening institutions, transforming communities, and amplifying women's voices at local, national, regional, and global levels.

For four decades, ACFODE has remained at the forefront of advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Uganda. **Working across more than 100 districts and supported by field offices strategically located in Northern, Eastern, Western, and Central Uganda**, ACFODE has championed women's leadership and participation in governance, influenced gender-responsive laws and policies, promoted economic justice, strengthened youth leadership, supported girls' education, engaged men and boys as allies for gender equality, and led efforts to prevent and respond to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV).

Through evidence-based advocacy, community mobilisation, strategic partnerships, and institutional strengthening, the organisation has contributed significantly to shaping Uganda's gender equality landscape and expanding opportunities for women and girls across generations.

ACFODE's impact over the last 40 years is reflected not only in policies influenced and systems strengthened, but also in the lives transformed through its interventions.

The organisation has **empowered over 80,000 women leaders, mentored thousands of young people, strengthened more than 2,000 Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), reached millions of citizens through integrated media and community engagement, and supported the establishment of sustainable community structures advancing women's rights and social transformation.** Its work has also contributed to landmark national legal and policy frameworks, strengthened grassroots movements, and promoted inclusive approaches to governance, economic empowerment, peacebuilding, and accountability.

This capability statement therefore highlights ACFODE's four-decade journey of impact from 1985 to 2025, showcasing key milestones, achievements, transformative approaches, partnerships, and institutional strengths that continue to position the organisation as a leading force in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Uganda and beyond. While much progress has been made, ACFODE remains committed to sustaining and expanding this legacy as it continues to respond to both longstanding and emerging challenges affecting women and girls.

40 YEARS OF IMPACT AT A GLANCE



Nationwide Footprint: Established a strong presence across **100+ districts**, with regional field offices strategically located in **Northern, Eastern, Western, and Central Uganda**, bringing gender equality programming closer to communities.



Empowered and **trained 80,000+ women leaders** across local and national leadership structures in governance, advocacy, gender equality, and decision-making.



Influenced **10+ national laws and policies and 50+ district bylaws and ordinances**, including the allocation of 10% district budgets to gender-responsive programming.



Contributed to the development of landmark national frameworks including the 1995 Constitution of Uganda, the Equal Opportunities Commission Act (2007), the Domestic Violence Act (2010), the National Land Policy (2013), and The National Policy on Elimination of Gender-Based Violence (GBV).



Spearheaded and or strengthened major national and regional coalitions and platforms including NAWOU, UWONET, UDN, HURINET, UNGOF, SOAWR, S4HL, WDG, NOCEM, DEMGroup, and the Women's Situation Room.



Established and strengthened **1,500+ women's networks and caucuses** driving grassroots accountability, advocacy, and women's participation in governance at the regional, national, district, and sub-county levels.



Provided training to **2,000+ national and community-based civil society organisations** on gender justice and gender mainstreaming in programming, reaching over **10,000,000 rights holders, duty bearers, and community actors** through strengthened advocacy, accountability, and inclusive development initiatives.



Mentored 20,000+ students across 40 institutions of higher learning through youth leadership and debate platforms promoting governance, public speaking, and civic engagement.



Equipped 15,000+ youth and young professionals with leadership, advocacy, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, communication, and life skills through targeted youth empowerment programmes such as DECIDE NOW! and SAUTI YA SASA with **over 80% female participation**.



Provided internship and volunteer opportunities to 500+ university students, fresh graduates, and youth transitioning careers, equipping them with practical workforce and advocacy skills.



Reached more than 6,500,000 cooperative members (65% women) through gender-responsive economic empowerment and cooperative strengthening initiatives.



Supported the establishment and growth of **5,000+ women groups** through early revolving fund initiatives, and **1,500+ women-led enterprises** across multiple districts in Uganda.



Established and strengthened **5,000+ Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs)**, impacting over **150,000 women** with financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and livelihood skills.



Trained over **20,000 male champions** in gender equality and positive masculinity, who subsequently cascaded this knowledge to more than **3,700,000 men, women, girls and boys** through community mobilization and awareness initiatives facilitated by ACFODE.



Trained and commissioned **6,000 model couples**, reaching over **120,000 citizens** with information on SGBV prevention, positive parenting, and peaceful co-existence.



Established sustainable community structures including CEDAW Committees, Peace Huts, Survivors Savings Groups, GBV Prevention School Clubs, and Listener Clubs to strengthen prevention and response to Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).



Enhanced the capacity of more than **2,000,000 duty bearers** including the Police, cultural and religious leaders, paralegals, Village Health Teams (VHTs), and Local Council Chairpersons through over **20,000 multi-stakeholder** engagements to strengthen coordinated prevention and response to sexual and gender based violence (SGBV).



Reached **365,000+ young people and 2,000+ teachers** through school-based gender equality and SGBV prevention interventions.



Established **1,000+ GBV Prevention School Clubs and Listener Clubs** promoting positive social norms and community awareness.



Built capacity of **60+ Environmental Human Rights Defenders**, leading to the establishment of two community environmental justice networks in the Mt. Elgon region.



Became the first women's rights organisation in Uganda to implement programmes within refugee settlements and host communities, including the establishment of the Peace Hut in Kyaka II Refugee Settlement.



Reached 20M+ Ugandans through integrated media engagement including television, radio, print, and digital advocacy campaigns such as #ItsNotYourFault and #NotAnotherWoman.



Produced and disseminated 500,000+ publications including policy briefs, research reports, training manuals, issue papers, simplified laws, advocacy materials, documentaries, and impact reports, some translated into local languages for grassroots accessibility.



Built a growing digital community of 30,000+ followers across X, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, while maintaining an interactive website with 50,000+ annual visitors.



Established a Regional Digital Women Administrators Forum connecting 2,000+ women professionals across East Africa for mentorship, networking, and leadership development.



Published the **ARISE Magazine for over 30 years** as a flagship platform amplifying discourse on women's rights, gender equality, governance, and social justice in Uganda.



Recognised as a Gender Lighthouse Organisation under the Horizont 3000 (H3) programme, providing technical support to partners across Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and South Sudan.



Awarded the Best Visionary Women Supporting Organisation Award (2023) by the Government of Uganda in recognition of outstanding contribution towards Uganda's Vision 2040 and middle-income aspirations.

LOBBYING & ADVOCACY

ACFODE has influenced legislative formulation and reform and has partnered in the implementation of major laws, policies, and institutional frameworks advancing gender equality and women's rights in Uganda over the last four decades.

One of ACFODE's earliest national contributions has been amplifying celebrations of **International Women's Day (IWD)** in Uganda in **1988** by mobilising women's organisations to organise week-long national activities, with the President invited as Chief Guest. At the time, there was no government ministry responsible for spearheading such commemorations. During these engagements, ACFODE and partner organisations successfully lobbied for the recognition of International Women's Day as a public holiday, which was eventually granted in 1991.

In **1989**, ACFODE organised the largest national seminar in Mukono as a follow-up to the **Third United Nations World Conference on Women**. A total of 317 women, including 120 rural women, participated. During the seminar, the Chief Guest, Dr. Samson Kisekka, acknowledged the important role women could play in society and national recovery programmes but noted that government lacked information on qualified women for leadership positions. In response, ACFODE volunteered to compile a database and curriculum vitae of qualified women and submitted them to the Prime Minister. This initiative contributed to the appointment of women to national decision-making positions including Commissioners, Judges, Ambassadors, and other senior leadership roles.

The same year, ACFODE lobbied H.E. President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni for the establishment of a dedicated **Ministry of Women in Development (WID)**. As a result, the Ministry was established in 1989, alongside women's desks in government ministries and district administrative structures. The Ministry later evolved into the **Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD)**, mandated to promote gender equality, community mobilisation, labour productivity, and protection of vulnerable groups.

In **1991**, ACFODE joined hands with the University Women's Association to advocate for the establishment of a gender-focused academic department at Makerere University. This process began with a presentation to a donor conference where ACFODE made a compelling case for institutionalising gender studies within higher education. Their efforts led to the establishment of the **Department of Women Studies** in 1991, initially offering postgraduate programmes and later undergraduate programmes in Gender Studies. The department eventually evolved into the **School of Women and Gender Studies (SWGS)**, now the **Institute of Gender and Development Studies (IGDS)** under the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

ACFODE also played a key role in establishing the **Women's Vision** supplement in the New Vision newspaper by lobbying for the introduction of a dedicated women's page as early as **1991**. In the absence of a formal implementation mechanism, ACFODE members personally compiled stories and worked directly with newsroom teams to edit and design

the page layout. The platform aimed at amplifying women's achievements, improving women's visibility in society, and influencing attitudes and perceptions limiting women's progress and emancipation. Today, major newspapers in Uganda have dedicated pages focusing on women and gender issues.

In the lead-up to the promulgation of the **1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda**, ACFODE successfully lobbied for the inclusion of gender-responsive human rights provisions within the Constitution, particularly within the Preamble and the National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy. ACFODE also proactively influenced **Articles 78 and 180**, which guarantee women's representation in Parliament and local government structures, as well as **Article 32** on affirmative action for marginalised groups. Additionally, ACFODE contributed to early discussions that resulted in the introduction of the **1.5-point increment policy for girls joining public universities**, aimed at bridging the gender gap in higher education and encouraging girls to pursue professional courses.

Building on these gains, ACFODE has continued to influence national policy and legal reforms through evidence-based advocacy, strategic coalitions, and policy engagement. The organisation spearheaded a coalition of 22 Civil Society Organisations that successfully advocated for the enactment of the **Equal Opportunities Commission Act (2007)** and the subsequent establishment of the **Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC)** in accordance with Articles 23(3) and 32(4) of the Constitution. The Commission continues to play a critical role in addressing discrimination, promoting affirmative action, and ensuring gender

equity compliance in government policies and budgets.

ACFODE has further contributed to the review, formulation, and implementation of several national laws and policies affecting the lives of women and men. These include the **Refugees Act (2006)**, the **Succession (Amendment) Bill (2009)**, the **Domestic Violence Act (2010)**, the **Refugees Regulations (2010)**, the **National Land Policy (2013)**, the **Land Act (2013)**, the **Marriage and Divorce Bill (2013 to date)**, the **National Microfinance Policy (2015)**, the **Policy to Eliminate Gender-Based Violence (2016)**, the **National Housing Policy (2016)**, the **Employment (Amendment) Bill (2018)**, affirmative action frameworks, the **Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol)**, and the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, among others.

Through the **Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR)** coalition, ACFODE has spearheaded advocacy for the domestication and implementation of the **Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol)**, particularly focusing on Articles 2, 5, 9, 12, and 13.

At the local government level, **ACFODE has facilitated and influenced the development of gender-responsive bylaws and ordinances across districts and sub-counties** addressing violence against women and children, gender equality, education, and community protection. For example, in Apac District, ACFODE influenced the allocation of 10% of the district budget towards gender-responsive programmes. In Kole District,

the organisation supported advocacy for the recruitment of healthcare personnel, while in Dokolo it promoted equality in education. In Kisoro, Kanungu, Rubanda, Rukiga, Bukomansimbi, and Kalungu districts, ACFODE supported interventions addressing school dropout, forced marriage, child labour, abuse, exploitation, and drug abuse.

Through strategic coalitions and partnerships such as the **Stand for Her Land (S4HL) Campaign**, the **Domestic Violence Act Coalition**, and the **Gender Based Violence (GBV) Prevention Network**, ACFODE has significantly contributed to advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) at national and regional levels.

The organisation has spearheaded and contributed to the establishment of several national civil society advocacy platforms including the **National Association of Women Organisations in Uganda (NAWOU)**, the **Uganda Women's Network (UWONET)**, the **Uganda Debt Network (UDN)**, the **Human Rights Network Uganda (HURINET-U)**, and the **Uganda National NGO Forum (UNGOF)**. ACFODE has additionally contributed to key national, regional, and international reporting and accountability processes including the **Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Report (2020)**, the **Beijing Platform for Action, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)** shadow reports, Uganda's National Development Plans, and the **Voluntary National Review (VNR) process (2024)** focusing on **Sustainable Development Goals SDGs 1, 2, 13, 16, and 17**.

In addition, ACFODE conducted an assessment of the contribution of Ugandan Women's Rights Organisations

(WROs) towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) between 2016 and 2023, involving 35 organisations. The assessment focused on Sustainable Development Goals 1, 3, 5, and 13, with findings disseminated to key stakeholders to strengthen evidence-based advocacy and policy engagement.

The organisation has also **organised numerous strategic national and local level advocacy engagements** including knowledge cafés on women's land rights, food security, and economic empowerment; dialogues on gender transformation and peacebuilding; and national discussions on women's political participation, the digital divide, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), and the prevention of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) in humanitarian settings.

At regional and global levels, ACFODE has participated in major advocacy and policy platforms on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE), including the **Beijing Platform for Action, Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)**, international human rights conferences, intergenerational dialogues on sustainable development organised by the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)**, and multi-stakeholder engagements convened by the **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)** on gender, youth, deforestation, and forest crime in Uganda.

Furthermore, ACFODE has strengthened the visibility and recognition of organisations promoting women's rights through documentation and knowledge production initiatives such as the publication **Visible At Last: NGO Contribution to Women's Recognition in Uganda**, which highlights the contribution of NGOs

towards addressing gender inequalities and expanding opportunities for women.

ACFODE has built a cadre of empowered frontline communities in the Elgon region to advocate for the implementation of gender-responsive environmental laws and policies. The organisation conducted a research study on the status of human rights in the Mt. Elgon conservation areas and analysed conservation laws and policies in Uganda, with findings utilised for both national and regional advocacy.

Conversely, ACFODE established community committees and sensitised communities on gender and human rights

within conservation processes, while equipping them with monitoring tools to document human rights violations. The organisation further built the capacity of **60 Environmental Human Rights Defenders** in the Elgon region, leading to the establishment of two networks: the **Mt. Elgon Environment Human Rights Defenders Association** and the **Wanale Community Environmental Defenders Forum**. These structures now mentor peers, monitor commitments, and contribute to the development of local bylaws and conservation action plans.

Lobbying & Advocacy Impact Timeline

1988

- ▶ Mobilised nationwide advocacy for International Women's Day (IWD) celebrations in Uganda
- ▶ Contributed to the recognition of International Women's Day as a national public holiday in 1991

1989

- ▶ Organised the largest national seminar as a follow-up to the Third United Nations World Conference on Women
- ▶ Contributed to the appointment of women into national leadership positions including Commissioners, Judges, and Ambassadors
- ▶ Successfully lobbied for the establishment of the Ministry of Women in Development (WID), now the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD)

1991

- ▶ Successfully advocated for the establishment of the Department of Women Studies at Makerere University, now the Institute of Gender and Development Studies (IGDS)
- ▶ Influenced the establishment of the Women's Vision supplement in the New Vision newspaper
- ▶ Contributed to advocacy efforts that influenced the introduction of the 1.5-point affirmative action policy for girls joining public universities

1995

- ▶ Influenced gender-responsive provisions within the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda
- ▶ Secured women's representation and affirmative action protections through Articles 32, 78, and 180 of the Constitution

2000s

Onwards

- ▶ Spearheaded and contributed to the establishment of national civil society advocacy platforms including the National Association of Women Organisations in Uganda (NAWOU), the Uganda Women's Network (UWONET), the Uganda Debt Network (UDN), the Human Rights Network Uganda (HURINET-U), and the Uganda National NGO Forum (UNGOF)
- ▶ Strengthened advocacy through strategic coalitions including the Stand for Her Land (S4HL) Campaign, the Domestic Violence Act Coalition, the Gender-Based Violence Prevention Network, and the Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR) coalition

2006 – 2016

- ▶ Contributed to advocacy and implementation of key laws and policies including the Refugees Act (2006), Equal Opportunities Commission Act (2007), Domestic Violence Act (2010), National Land Policy (2013), Land Act (2013), National Microfinance Policy (2015), and the Policy to Eliminate Gender-Based Violence (2016)
- ▶ Advocated for reforms around the Sexual Offences Bill, Marriage Bill, Succession Amendment Act, and Employment Amendment Act

2007

Led a coalition of 22 Civil Society Organisations to advocate for the enactment of the Equal Opportunities Commission Act and establishment of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC)

Regional, Global & Environmental Justice Advocacy

Participated in major regional and international advocacy platforms including the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) reporting processes, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, and the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process

- ▶ Conducted advocacy and research on environmental justice and conservation in the Mt. Elgon region
- ▶ Built the capacity of 60 Environmental Human Rights Defenders and supported the establishment of two community environmental justice networks

Grassroots Advocacy & National Dialogue

- ▶ Influenced district bylaws and ordinances addressing gender equality, education, violence against women and children, and community protection across multiple districts
- ▶ Successfully advocated for the allocation of 10% of Apac District's budget towards gender-responsive programming
- ▶ Organised national dialogues and knowledge cafés on women's land rights, peacebuilding, food security, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), digital inclusion, and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)

GOOD GOVERNANCE & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

ACFODE has been a leading advocate for good governance, women's participation in politics and decision-making processes, accountability, and youth leadership development in Uganda. This has been achieved through active participation in election observation, voter education, civic engagement, leadership mentorship, and capacity strengthening initiatives targeting women, youth, duty bearers, and grassroots structures over the last four decades.

Since the **1994 Constituent Assembly Elections**, ACFODE has actively participated in election observation and voter education processes aimed at promoting democratic governance, peaceful elections, and inclusive political participation. The organisation has been a member of key electoral governance coalitions and platforms including the **National Organisation for Civic Education and Elections Monitoring (NOCEM)** established in 1993, the **National NGO Election Monitoring Group (NEMGroup – Uganda)** in 2000, the **Democracy Monitoring Group (DEMGroup)** in 2006 and 2011, the **Women Democracy Group (WDG)** established in 2011, and the Women's Situation Room, a mechanism established to promote peaceful elections in Uganda since 2016.

Through sustained investments in leadership development, **ACFODE has built the capacities of individual women, youth, young professionals, networks, and duty bearers in leadership, governance, advocacy, civic engagement, and gender-responsive planning and budgeting.** This has contributed to the establishment of a cadre of informed and resourceful individuals who continue to advance the gender equality agenda at local, national and regional levels.

ACFODE's Women's Leadership Programme has empowered over 80,000 aspiring and elected women leaders at local and national levels with skills and knowledge in leadership, governance, gender equality, advocacy, communication, and gender-responsive planning and budgeting. These interventions have contributed to strengthening women's participation and influence within political and decision-making spaces.

In support of women's empowerment and grassroots accountability, **ACFODE has facilitated the establishment of 1,500+ women's networks and caucuses across the country.** These structures have played an important role in monitoring public service delivery, influencing policy change, and advocating for gender equality concerns within communities. They have successfully contributed to advocacy on social issues including education, alcohol and drug abuse, gender-based violence, forced marriage, child marriage, domestic violence, and the prioritisation of women and other marginalised groups within local and national plans and budgets.

ACFODE has also provided **training to over 2,000+ national and community-based Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)** on gender-responsive laws, governance, and women's rights. These organisations have in turn reached approximately **1,000,000** rights holders and duty bearers through community barazas, dialogues, and accountability platforms addressing gender equality, human rights, access to justice, public service delivery, and economic wellbeing.

Under the **Women's Democracy Group (WDG)** consortium, ACFODE has contributed to the development of the **Women's Manifestos** for 2011–2016, 2016–2021, and 2021–2026. Developed through nationwide consultations with women, these manifestos highlight priority issues including women's health and wellbeing, equitable and quality education, women's economic empowerment, leadership and decision-making, and land and property rights. The manifestos continue to serve as advocacy and accountability tools for electoral candidates, elected leaders, and women's rights actors in Uganda.

Supported the development of 35,000+ young people through internship, volunteer, and gender equality programmes, enhancing their leadership, professional, and civic engagement skills

Through **partnerships with 40 institutions of higher learning** in Uganda, **ACFODE has empowered and mentored over 20,000 students**, nurturing them into advocates for gender equality, human rights, and good governance. At the centre of this initiative is the competitive inter-institutional debate method inspired by the British Parliamentary debate format. Through this approach, young people have had their public speaking skills strengthened, expanded networks, gained exposure and built capacity to advocate for gender-responsive policies. As a result, many youth have risen to leadership positions within their institutions and communities.

ACFODE has further mentored and coached young professionals from various regions of the country, supporting over 15,000 youth with skills in public speaking, goal setting, business development, financial literacy, personal branding, presentation skills, civic engagement, leadership, team dynamics, gender, and human rights. Through targeted youth programmes such as **DECIDE NOW!** and **SAUTI YA SASA**, with over 80% female participation, young people have also been equipped with entrepreneurial and livelihood skills including business strategy development, sales and marketing, financial literacy, and gender-responsive approaches to economic empowerment. These interventions reflect ACFODE's commitment to nurturing a new generation of informed, skilled, and empowered advocates capable of driving transformative social change within their communities.

In partnership with institutions of higher learning, **ACFODE has also implemented an internship programme that has provided work experience opportunities to over 500 university students, fresh graduates, and young people exploring career transitions** over the last 40 years. Through the programme, beneficiaries have been equipped with practical skills in communication, writing, public speaking, project planning and management, facilitation, research, and advocacy. This has strengthened their preparedness for the 21st-century workforce while enhancing their capacity to champion gender equality and social transformation within their communities.

ACFODE has additionally leveraged its extensive media networks and experience in producing Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials, radio and television talk shows, and social media campaigns to conduct civic education and promote women's participation in leadership and governance. One notable example was the production and airing of the 30-minute television programme **Fasi Fasi (Give Way)** in 2019, which addressed myths and stereotypes surrounding women's leadership and promoted positive behavioural change around social, economic and political issues discouraging women from participating in leadership. According to a survey conducted by GeoPoll, the first seven episodes of the programme reached over 7,338,000 Ugandans, including 2,806,000 women and 4,532,000 men. Feedback from audiences indicated that the programme contributed positively towards changing societal attitudes and perceptions regarding women's leadership and political participation.

ACFODE has also established the **Women Administrators' Forum**, a vibrant online platform bringing together over 2,000 women administrators across East Africa. The platform serves as a hub for mentorship, peer learning, career growth, networking, sharing opportunities, and discussing issues affecting women professionals individually and collectively.

Governance & Leadership Development Impact Timeline

Since 1993

- ▶ Strengthened democratic governance and electoral accountability through participation in key electoral and governance coalitions including NOCEM, NEMGroup, DEMGroup, WDG, and the Women's Situation Room

Since 1994

- ▶ Advanced citizen participation, peaceful elections, and democratic governance through sustained election observation and voter education initiatives across Uganda

2011 – 2026

- ▶ Influenced national priorities through the Women's Manifesto (2011–2016, 2016–2021, and 2021–2026), influencing advocacy on women's health, education, economic empowerment, leadership, and land rights

Over 40 Years

- ▶ Empowered 80,000+ women leaders at local and national levels in leadership and governance
- ▶ Established and strengthened **1,500+** women's networks and caucuses driving grassroots accountability and advocacy for GEWE
- ▶ Strengthened **2,000+** CSOs, reaching **10,000,000+** rights holders and duty bearers through community dialogues, barazas, and accountability platforms
- ▶ Mentored **20,000+** students across 40 institutions of higher learning, nurturing advocates for GEWE, human rights, and governance
- ▶ Institutionalised competitive debate platforms across 40 institutions of higher learning, strengthening youth leadership, public speaking, civic engagement, and policy advocacy
- ▶ Equipped **15,000+** young professionals with leadership, advocacy, entrepreneurship, financial literacy, civic engagement, and life skills
- ▶ Provided work experience opportunities to **500+** university students, fresh graduates, and youth through internship and volunteer programmes

Civic Engagement

- ▶ Leveraged media as an advocacy and civic education platform to promote women's participation in leadership and governance

Regional Network Building

- ▶ Established the Women Administrators' Forum, connecting 2,000+ women administrators across East Africa for mentorship, networking, and peer learning

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Community Economic Empowerment & Revolving Fund Initiatives

As early as 1994, ACFODE established a revolving fund aimed at improving the social and economic status of micro-entrepreneurs, with both women and men as beneficiaries. Identified women and men were mobilised and supported to form and sustain groups, while receiving training in business identification and management, group dynamics and leadership, record keeping, and opening and managing bank accounts.

To enhance accessibility and grassroots participation, ACFODE translated the Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) reference booklets into **four local languages** namely Luo, Runyakitara, Luganda, and Lugbara for use in programme districts including Kiboga, Arua, Rukungiri, and Lira. Through this initiative, **30 groups comprising 572 members** benefited from the revolving fund, implemented in collaboration with government structures within the districts of operation.

Enhancing Women Inclusion in Value Chains

ACFODE has worked and continues to work with cooperatives in Kasese, Bundibugyo, Jinja, Bududa, Mbale, and Kampala, reaching **over 6,500,000 million members, 65% of whom are women**, to deliver gender-responsive services and products. This has been achieved through the review and development of operational frameworks including gender policies, sexual harassment policies, board manuals, human resource policies, and business plans, as well as capacity building in gender, leadership, advocacy, gender audits, and value chain analysis.

Reached over 6.5 million cooperative members, 65% of whom were women, through gender-responsive cooperative development initiatives

As a result, cooperatives have **mainstreamed gender into their programmes, leadership, management, and monitoring and evaluation systems**. They have adopted affirmative action measures including ensuring **one-third representation of women on cooperative boards** and establishing gender focal persons, gender champions, and model couples to sustain gender transformation processes within both primary and apex cooperative structures. These interventions have also contributed to the establishment of **women-specific products and services such as soft loans and Women in Business schemes** aimed at strengthening women's economic participation and inclusion.

In 2020, ACFODE, in partnership with cooperatives, conducted joint research on the implementation of the National Land Policy (2013) and documented cases of land rights violations. The findings informed campaigns on women's land rights through awareness dialogues, radio talk shows, and strategic engagements with stakeholders at local and national levels.

ACFODE further supported cooperatives to conduct gender analysis of value chains, particularly coffee and maize. This contributed to **greater recognition of women's roles and contributions across value chains** and the integration of gender-responsive interventions addressing harmful social and cultural norms limiting women's participation. Confidence-building workshops also strengthened **women's participation in leadership, decision-making, and advocacy** within cooperatives and communities.

In partnership with women's groups under the Mt. Rwenzori Coffee Farmers' Cooperative Union in Kasese, ACFODE launched **RWENZO Coffee**, supporting the production, processing, packaging and marketing of pure Arabica coffee by women entrepreneurs. Relatedly, ACFODE established a **SACCO for staff, members, beneficiaries and partners** aimed at providing affordable financial services and improving livelihoods.

Advancing Women's Economic Security Through VSLAs

ACFODE has supported over **5,000 Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs)**, reaching more than **150,000 women** with training in group dynamics, financial literacy, record keeping, and practical livelihood skills, including soap making, tailoring, beading, and briquette production.

**5,000+ VSLAs
comprising
150,000+ women
equipped**

The organisation linked these groups to commercial banks, microfinance institutions, and SACCOs to improve access to credit, micro-insurance and financial literacy support. ACFODE further supported the formal registration of VSLAs at sub-county and district levels and they have been linked to government programmes such as the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP), the Generating Growth Opportunities and Productivity for Women Enterprises (GROW) Project and the Parish Development Model (PDM).

These interventions enabled women to **improve their livelihoods, acquire property including land and improved housing, pay school fees and meet basic household needs**. The VSLAs also became important platforms for women to access information on gender-based violence, land and property rights, justice systems and leadership opportunities, with many women subsequently **taking up leadership positions within their communities**.

Promoting Women and Youth-Led Social Enterprises for Inclusive Growth

ACFODE has supported the establishment of **5,000+** women-led social enterprises across different districts including Kasese, Amolatar, Apac, Kaberamaido, Nebbi Oyam, Kyegegwa, Bundibugyo, Kamwenge, Rubanda, Rukiga, Kisoro, Kanungu, Kalungu and Bukomansimbi. These enterprises include young mothers, survivors of sexual violence groups, women in cooperatives, female youth groups.

Beneficiaries have been trained in social enterprise development, financial literacy, insurance, marketing value addition and provided with in-kind support and tools including coffee packaging materials, calibrated weighing scales, moisture meters, veterinary services, and sewing machines to strengthen their enterprises and livelihoods.

ACFODE has also provided vocational training to **3000+ youth (80% female)** in skills such as tailoring, bricklaying, carpentry, salon management, saloon, soap making and motor mechanics. Beneficiaries were further supported with start-up kits to enable them to apply acquired skills, secure employment, establish businesses and have been linked to artisans for further mentoring and coaching.

To strengthen sustainability and learning, ACFODE has facilitated exposure visits for women's groups to acquire practical knowledge in integrated farming, value addition, food storage, biogas production, animal husbandry and environmentally sustainable livelihood practices. The organisation continues to mentor and support women-led enterprises for long-term sustainability and growth.

These initiatives have contributed to **positive shifts in socio-cultural norms around food systems, environmental conservation, family relations, women's economic participation and security**. Empowered women entrepreneurs are increasingly **cascading knowledge on gender equality, women's economic rights, and entrepreneurship** within their households and communities through organised awareness sessions and peer engagements. There has also been a **growing number of women taking up leadership positions in different spaces including schools, churches, cooperatives, market associations and politics**.

Strengthening Women's Roles & Productivity in Agriculture

ACFODE has further empowered **460 women farmers** in Dokolo, Namutumba, and Pader districts to own productive assets and access agricultural education and extension services tailored to their needs. The organisation reviewed and advocated for the re-orientation of government programmes to address barriers affecting women's role in food security and the right to food.

In this regard, **3,894 people, 75% of whom were women**, were mobilised through **52 sensitisation meetings** on food security, nutrition, water, sanitation, hygiene and food rights. To strengthen community awareness, **195 radio spot messages** on food security, food rights, water, sanitation and hygiene were aired on local radio stations across the three districts, while **5,000 Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials** including T-shirts, bags, posters, pencil bags and brochures were produced and disseminated to promote awareness on food use, diet diversification, and healthy, affordable nutrition.

ACFODE also strengthened the knowledge and skills of women farmers in food production, storage, marketing, value addition and food security management. A total of **956 women farmers** were trained in improved agricultural production, storage, marketing and value addition, while **23 farmer groups** were established and supported to formally register with relevant institutions. These groups received training in modern farming, economic cooperatives, bookkeeping, grassroots democracy and social accountability. Formalisation enhanced their **productivity, market access, livelihood opportunities and linkages to government programmes** such as the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS), Community Driven Development (CDD), and other development partners.

Additionally, ACFODE facilitated **90 model farmers** to participate in government agricultural extension programmes and cross-learning visits to improve the quality of agricultural production and market access. Women farmers participated in learning visits at Mukono Zonal Agricultural Research Institute, where they acquired practical skills and innovative farming techniques which they later transferred to their communities. **15 female farmers and programme officers** also participated in exposure visits to Kenya to exchange experiences and learn from peer initiatives on women's economic empowerment and agricultural development.

Economic Empowerment Impact Timeline

1994 – Revolving Fund Initiatives

- ▶ Established a revolving fund supporting micro-entrepreneurs through group formation, business management, leadership, and financial literacy training
- ▶ Translated SIYB business materials into 4 local languages (Luo, Runyakitara, Luganda, and Lugbara) to enhance grassroots accessibility
- ▶ Supported 30 groups comprising 572 members through revolving fund initiatives

Women's Inclusion in Value Chains

- ▶ Reached 6.5M+ cooperative members, 65% of whom are women, through gender-responsive cooperative development initiatives
- ▶ Mainstreamed gender into cooperative governance, leadership, HR, M&E, and operational systems
- ▶ Influenced adoption of affirmative action measures including 1/3 women representation on cooperative boards
- ▶ Supported establishment of gender focal persons, gender champions, model couples, soft loan schemes, and Women in Business initiatives within cooperatives
- ▶ Conducted gender analysis of coffee and maize value chains, strengthening women's participation, leadership, and economic inclusion
- ▶ Launched RWENZO Coffee in partnership with women entrepreneurs under the Mt. Rwenzori Coffee Farmers' Cooperative Union

Women's Financial Inclusion Through VSLAs

- ▶ Supported 5,000+ VSLAs reaching 150,000+ women through training in group dynamics, financial literacy, savings, record keeping, entrepreneurship, and practical livelihood skills
- ▶ Linked women groups to commercial banks, SACCOs, microfinance institutions, UWEP, GROW, and PDM for financial inclusion and economic opportunities
- ▶ Strengthened women's ownership of assets, access to credit, livelihood improvement, and participation in community leadership

Social Enterprise for Inclusive Growth

- ▶ Supported the establishment of 5,000+ women groups and 1,500+ women-led social enterprises across multiple districts in Uganda
- ▶ Trained women entrepreneurs in financial literacy, insurance, value addition, business development, and marketing
- ▶ Provided in-kind livelihood support including coffee packaging materials, weighing scales, moisture meters, veterinary services, and sewing machines
- ▶ Trained 3,000+ youth (80% female) in vocational and entrepreneurship skills including tailoring, carpentry, salon management, bricklaying, and motor mechanics
- ▶ Facilitated exposure visits and mentorship initiatives on integrated farming, value addition, food storage, biogas production, and sustainable livelihoods

Women's Agricultural Empowerment

- ▶ Empowered 460 women farmers with access to productive assets, agricultural education, and extension services
- ▶ Mobilised 3,894 people, 75% of whom were women, through 52 sensitisation meetings on food security, nutrition, hygiene, and food rights
- ▶ Disseminated 195 radio spot messages and 2,000 IEC materials promoting food security, nutrition, and healthy livelihoods
- ▶ Trained 956 women farmers in production, storage, value addition, and marketing
- ▶ Established and strengthened 23 farmer groups linked to NAADS, CDD, and other livelihood support programmes
- ▶ Facilitated 90 model farmers and 15 women farmers/programme officers to participate in national and regional exposure and cross-learning visits

Social Norms Change

- ▶ Contributed to positive shifts in socio-cultural norms around women's economic participation, environmental conservation, food systems, and family relations
- ▶ Strengthened women's leadership and advocacy within cooperatives, communities, schools, churches, and market associations
- ▶ Enhanced community awareness on women's economic rights, land rights, and gender equality through dialogues, radio engagements, and peer learning platforms

GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES

The Model Couple & Male Engagement Approach

ACFODE has been intentional in developing, testing, and scaling gender transformative approaches such as the Model Couple Approach and Engagement of Boys and Men initiatives to support transformation at individual, family and community levels for gender equality.

Through these initiatives, ACFODE has trained and mentored **over 20,000 male role models** as gender equality champions, who have in turn engaged **more than 3,700,000 men, boys, girls and women** on issues of gender equality, positive masculinity and the prevention of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV).

An additional **6,000 couples** have been trained and commissioned as role model couples under the Model Couple Approach. These couples have reached **over 120,000 citizens** with information on SGBV prevention and response, positive parenting, peaceful co-existence, and healthy family relations.

Established a cadre of 365,000+ young people and 2,000+ teachers to promote women's and girls' rights and gender equality in schools and their local communities

Community Structures for GBV Prevention & Response

ACFODE has established and strengthened sustainable community structures that act as agents of change in advocating for Violence Against Women and Girls (VAW/G)-free homes and communities. These structures include **Combating Defilement, Rape and Sexual Harassment (CODERASH) groups, Model Couples, CEDAW Committees, Community Safe Spaces such as the Peace Hut, GBV Prevention School Clubs, Listeners' Clubs and Survivors Savings Groups.**

These platforms utilise existing community spaces including village health teams, religious gatherings, school assemblies, women's groups, youth groups and farmers' groups to raise awareness on GBV causes, consequences, prevention and referral pathways. They also act as referral points that receive, report and follow up GBV cases to promote access to justice and essential support services. Through such initiatives, communities are sensitised on harmful cultural practices and empowered to understand and protect the rights of women and girls.

ACFODE has continuously **identified and trained community leaders and social actors** including Local Council chairpersons, opinion leaders, Community Development Officers (CDOs), religious and cultural leaders, health practitioners, and police officers on women and girls' rights, social norms, GBV prevention and response, and legal redress mechanisms.

As part of strengthening safe spaces and community support systems, **ACFODE constructed a Peace Hut in Kyaka II Refugee Settlement in Kyegegwa District** to serve as a centre for peer support, SGBV awareness, counselling and community dialogue. Functional community-based referral systems and structures were also established to effectively manage cases of Violence Against Women and Children (VAW/C), while **over 300 Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)** were strengthened in prevention, detection and referral pathways.

Additionally, ACFODE has enhanced the capacity of more than **2,000,000 duty bearers** including the Police, cultural and religious leaders, paralegals, Village Health Teams (VHTs), and Local Council Chairpersons through over **20,000 multi-stakeholder engagements** to strengthen coordinated prevention and response to sexual and gender based violence (SGBV).

School & Youth-Based Interventions for Gender Equality

**1,000+ GBV
Response and
Prevention Clubs
established in
schools**

Through partnerships with institutions of learning, ACFODE has established a strong school and youth engagement programme aimed at promoting gender equality, prevention of SGBV and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHRs).

Across different districts of operation, ACFODE has contributed to the creation of a cadre of **365,000 young people and 2,000 teachers** who are gender sensitive and supportive of women, girls' rights and gender equality.

To institutionalise prevention efforts, ACFODE established **over 1,000 Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Prevention School and Listeners' Clubs** targeting girls and boys in and out of school. These clubs spearheaded the "End Sexual Violence" campaign and influenced communities through intra-school debates, assemblies, music, dance and drama, essay writing competitions, talking compounds, learning corners, and gender awareness dialogues involving parents, students, and school management committees.

ACFODE further built the capacity of **300 students, 5,000 pupils, 2,000 teachers, and School Management Committee (SMC) members from 27 secondary schools and 65**

primary schools across 16 districts on GBV prevention, management and SRHRs.

To strengthen awareness creation, **5,500 posters and 5,000 book covers** carrying messages on sexual and reproductive health rights were produced and disseminated. These interventions contributed to the integration of GBV prevention and response into district and school plans and programmes.

More than **90% of Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs)** utilised meetings to sensitise parents on GBV prevention and management, while **80% of schools** initiated regular counselling sessions for survivors of GBV. Schools also established counselling rooms, GBV clubs, youth corners, talking compounds, and dedicated learning materials to strengthen awareness and support systems for students.

Refugee & Humanitarian Response Programming

Notably, ACFODE is among the first women's rights organisations in Uganda to implement programmes within refugee settlements and host communities.

In collaboration with the International Rescue Committee (IRC), ACFODE trained **40 women leaders** from Bidi Bidi and Imvepi Refugee Settlements and host communities in advocacy, lobbying, leadership, and documentation to strengthen women's participation in decision-making processes.

Additionally, **30 Civil Society Organisations** from Palabek Refugee Settlement were strengthened on GBV emergency preparedness and response.

Evidence-Based Advocacy, Accountability & Policy Engagement

ACFODE has demonstrated strong capacity in promoting accountability and evidence-based advocacy on GBV through participatory monitoring and evaluation approaches.

In 2018, ACFODE trained Advocacy Group Members (AGMs) in Lamwo and Omoro districts in the Acholi sub-region to collect and analyse data on the implementation of GBV laws and policies at district and sub-county levels. This informed the development of quarterly monitoring reports, advocacy papers, and two situation analysis reports on GBV in the context of COVID-19 in 2020.

ACFODE has also strengthened the capacities of community members, women caucuses, Local Council leaders, and institutional actors on GBV policies, advocacy, participatory planning, local government budgeting, and policy influence. Through these interventions, local advocacy efforts were strengthened, enabling districts to mobilise additional resources from government and development partners, including support for coordination meetings, updates to the National GBV Database and service delivery.

Knowledge Production, Media Advocacy & Public Awareness

ACFODE has leveraged extensive media networks and expertise in producing Information, Communication, and Education (ICE) materials including print, audio, and digital content to increase citizen awareness and advance women's and girls' rights.

Over the last four decades, ACFODE has produced **500,000+ publications** including policy briefs, research reports, training manuals, issue papers, petitions, press statements, simplified gender-sensitive laws, and end-of-project impact reports, some translated into local languages to enhance grassroots accessibility and engagement.

The organisation has also unpacked, translated, published, and disseminated legal and policy instruments including CEDAW, the Equal Opportunities Commission Act and Policy, the Domestic Violence Act (2010), the Land Act (2013), environmental laws, and the Political Organisations Act to promote gender equality and legal literacy.

Of particular significance is the **ARISE Magazine**, which has served as ACFODE's flagship publication and advocacy platform for over three decades, documenting critical issues on women's rights, youth, governance, and gender equality.

ACFODE has also utilised community dialogues, barazas, mentorship camps, public exhibitions, music, dance and drama, and campaigns such as **"No More Silence"** and **#NotAnotherWoman** to amplify awareness on SGBV, VAWG, and gender justice.

Through integrated media engagement across television, radio, print, and digital platforms, ACFODE has reached **more than 20,000,000 Ugandans** with information and advocacy on gender equality, women's rights, leadership, governance, and social justice. One notable example is the television programme **Fasi Fasi (Give Way)**, whose first seven episodes reached **over 7,300,000 people** and contributed to changing perceptions around women's leadership and political participation.

ACFODE has additionally leveraged digital and social media platforms to expand public engagement and access to information. The organisation currently has a combined online community of **more than 30,000 followers** across X, LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, alongside an interactive website attracting **over 50,000 annual visitors**.

Produced and strategically disseminated 500,000+ publications to support advocacy, knowledge sharing, and public awareness

Institutional Recognition

Through its strong track record as a gender equality organisation, ACFODE was identified as a **Gender Lighthouse Organisation** under the Horizont 3000 (H3) programme to provide technical support in gender transformation ecosystem to partners across Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and South Sudan.

This support has included facilitating the review and development of gender policies and action plans, training in gender mainstreaming, safeguarding, advocacy, male engagement, social norms transformation, and gender-responsive planning and reporting.

ACFODE's efforts were further recognised by the Government of Uganda through the **Best Visionary Women Supporting Organisation Award (2023)** in recognition of its contribution towards Uganda's Vision 2040 and middle-income aspirations.

GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES IMPACT TIMELINE

Male Engagement

- ▶ Trained 20,000+ male champions, reaching 3.7M+ people on gender equality, positive masculinity, and SGBV prevention
- ▶ Trained and commissioned 6,000 model couples, reaching 120,000+ citizens on SGBV prevention and positive parenting

Community Structures & GBV Prevention

- ▶ Strengthened 2,000+ CSOs and organised 20,000+ multi-stakeholder engagements, reaching 2,000,000+ people on GBV prevention and response
- ▶ Established community structures including CODERASH groups, Peace Huts, CEDAW Committees, GBV Clubs, Listeners' Clubs, and Survivors Savings Groups

School & Youth Interventions

- ▶ Reached 365,000+ young people and 2,000+ teachers through school-based gender equality and SGBV prevention initiatives
- ▶ Established 1,000+ GBV Prevention School Clubs and Listeners' Clubs
- ▶ Trained 300 students, 5,000 pupils, and 2,000 teachers/SMC members across 92 schools in 16 districts
- ▶ Produced and disseminated 5,500 posters and 5,000 SRHR book covers

Knowledge Production & Media Advocacy

- ▶ Produced and disseminated 500,000+ publications on gender equality and women's rights
- ▶ Reached 20M+ Ugandans through integrated media and advocacy campaigns
- ▶ Built a digital audience of 30,000+ followers and 50,000+ annual website visitors

Regional & Institutional Recognition

- ▶ Recognised as a Gender Lighthouse Organisation (H3) supporting partners across Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and South Sudan
- ▶ Recipient of the Best Visionary Women Supporting Organisation Award (2023)

INTERNAL ORGANISATION CAPACITY

ACFODE boasts of strong internal organisational capacity and institutional resilience built over four decades through its founders, membership, staff, volunteers, and partners. The organisation currently has **over 100 staff across five physical locations**, alongside a membership of **more than 1,000 qualified gender equality advocates** committed to advancing women's rights and social justice in Uganda and beyond.

In the four decades of its existence, ACFODE has undergone transformative internal processes that have continuously strengthened its advocacy muscle. Without losing focus on its vision and purpose, the organisation undertook a deep institutional Change Process in 2002 that reviewed its strategies, policies, and organisational structure, ultimately granting the Secretariat greater independence to effectively deliver the organisation's mandate.

Through continuous internal capacity development of its members and staff, ACFODE has consistently delivered quality interventions to communities and stakeholders. The organisation prides itself on a strong institutional culture grounded in core feminist values that continue to guide its work and sustain its impact.

Institutional Recognition

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ACFODE's efforts were further recognised by the Government of Uganda through the **Best Visionary Women Supporting Organisation Award (2023)** in recognition of its contribution towards Uganda's Vision 2040 and middle-income aspirations. This is in addition to several awards given by different development partners, Civil Society organisations and government ministries and agencies like the Parliament of Uganda and the Vision Group.



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