



ACFODE August Newsletter

Dear Partner, Friend, and Supporter,

Warm greetings from Action for Development (ACFODE) and welcome to the **August 2025 edition of the ACFODE Newsletter!** As we continue our journey in 2025, August has been a month of reflection, progress, and renewed commitment to advancing women's rights, gender equality, and social justice in Uganda.

Inside, you'll find inspiring stories from work we have done for the month of August and early September, updates from key engagements, and a glimpse into how we are shaping the next chapter of women's rights and gender equality in Uganda and beyond. We invite you to read, share, and walk this journey with us.

Please note: This year is particularly special to us as we mark **40 years of service (1985 – 2025)**, a celebration of the strides we have taken together with you, our partners, beneficiaries, and supporters.

Happy reading!

Our ED, Ms. Regina Bafaki Joins Feminist Leaders at Just Transition Forum in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



ED Ms. Regina Bafaki joins a panel discussion of EWHRDs sharing experiences, challenges, and opportunities in advancing their work across the region.

Early this month, **our Executive Director, Ms. Regina Bafaki**, traveled to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to take part in the **Feminist Just Transition Forum** (4–5 September 2025).

The forum, held just before the Africa Climate Summit, brought together feminists, youth, and women environmental human rights defenders from across the continent under the theme “*Centering Feminist Voices in Africa’s Just Transition.*” It was a powerful space for women and girls to reflect on their lived experiences of climate change and to shape a collective feminist agenda that will influence continental and global climate policies.

Throughout the discussions, participants highlighted how women across Africa are disproportionately affected by climate change through food insecurity, economic vulnerability, and environmental degradation, yet continue to be at the forefront of locally led climate solutions. The forum stressed the importance of protecting women environmental human rights defenders, pushing for gender-responsive climate policies, and ensuring that women and youth have a seat at the decision-making table.

One of the key outcomes was a commitment to draft a **Feminist Just Transition Statement** to be presented at the Africa Climate Summit and **CoP30**, ensuring that African women's voices shape both regional and global climate conversations.

For us at ACFODE, ED's participation was not just about attending another conference. It was about standing with sisters from across the continent, ensuring that Uganda's feminist voice is heard, and reinforcing our belief that **climate justice is gender justice**.

As we prepare to celebrate **ACFODE@40**, this moment reminds us that our legacy is not only about the progress we have made in women's rights and gender equality over the past four decades, but also about how we position ourselves for the future. Linking women's empowerment to the urgent climate justice agenda is part of how we will continue to remain relevant, bold, and impactful in the years to come.

Highlights from August

Feature Highlight of the Month: Climate Justice 🌱

Climate change is not just an environmental issue; it is a **gender justice issue**. Women, especially in rural communities, are on the frontline of its effects: from food insecurity to loss of livelihoods and increased care burdens. Yet, they remain powerful **agents of resilience and innovation**.

On August 19, 2025, ACFODE, in partnership with FIDA Uganda and with support from UNDP under the Global Women CSO Environmental Human Rights Defenders Flagship Programme, convened a National Strategic Engagement for Women and Youth Environmental Human Rights Defenders (EHRDs) at UNICEF Hall, Mbuya

The workshop, themed "*Strengthening Youth Coalitions and Women Environmental Human Rights Defenders' Political Participation and Influence for a Just, Green Future*", brought together civil society, government, development partners, district officials, and grassroots leaders to **amplify women's and youth voices in environmental governance**.

Key highlights included:

- **Hon. Lady Justice Susan Okalany** calling for **specialized environmental courts** to handle climate-related cases and highlighting the urgent need for greater women's representation in judicial leadership.
- **Our Executive Director, Ms. Regina Bafaki**, stressing the importance of empowering **women-led CSOs and youth coalitions** to influence governance and climate priorities.
- **UNDP's Ian King** reaffirming UNDP's commitment to co-creating solutions that advance **equity, resilience, and a just green future**.

- Strong calls from **youth activists** demanding meaningful inclusion beyond tokenism, emphasizing that young voices must be **seated at decision-making tables** where climate policies are shaped.

During the event, UNDP and its partners, including **the Republic of Korea (KOICA)**, **the Netherlands**, and **Luxembourg**, reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening civic space and advancing gender-responsive climate justice, while ensuring that initiatives such as the Spotlight Initiative remain inclusive and impactful.

The engagement underscored the need for **multi-sectoral responses** that integrate gender and climate justice, strengthen coalitions, and amplify grassroots priorities at the national level.

For ACFODE, this workshop served as a reaffirmation that climate justice is inherently linked to **gender justice**. By championing the voices of women and youth, we continue to shape a more just, inclusive, and sustainable Uganda.



Action for Development (ACFODE) 's Executive Director, Regina Bafaki, interacts with High Court Justice Susan Okalany during the National Workshop for Women and Youth Environmental Human Rights Defenders at the UNICEF head offices in Kampala on August 19, 2025. Looking on is UNDP's Annet Mpabulungi (left).

Spotlight Initiative Kicks Off with District Inception Meetings

This August, ACFODE officially rolled out the Spotlight Initiative project, supported by UNDP, funded by the European Union and the Government of the Netherlands, in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD). The project is aimed at eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls.

To get started, inception meetings were held across the eight target districts—Arua, Terego, Amudat, Tororo, Gulu, Kitgum, Kyegegwa, and Kasese. These sessions brought together over 100 stakeholders, including district leaders, community-based organizations, cultural and religious leaders, and grassroots groups. Their voices and insights helped shape the implementation framework and ensured strong local ownership. Leaders commended ACFODE’s participatory approach, especially our efforts to align project activities with community needs. District officials officially assigned sub-counties for operations and welcomed us to begin work.

Building on this momentum, ACFODE also conducted targeted capacity-building activities in the districts. In Gulu and Kitgum, 60 male Gender Champions—including cultural and religious leaders, youth leaders, boda boda leaders, local councilors, and teachers—were oriented on positive masculinities to strengthen GBV and Violence Against Children (VAC) prevention and response. The champions developed action plans to tackle GBV, VAC, and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) challenges within their communities.

In Arua, Terego, Kasese, Kyegegwa, Tororo, and Amudat, 120 Local Council Committee (LCC) representatives participated in orientations on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) prevention and SRHR promotion. These sessions enhanced their understanding of roles and responsibilities in identifying, supporting, and referring SGBV cases while also fostering inclusive leadership by encouraging the active participation of women and youth. The LCC representatives further designed work plans for community outreaches to raise awareness and strengthen grassroots advocacy.

Key priorities raised during the inception meetings included:

- Engaging cultural and religious leaders to influence positive social attitudes.
- Addressing harmful practices such as bride price and rigid gender roles.
- Including activities for young people vulnerable to school dropout, substance abuse, and marginalization.
- Integrating economic empowerment through Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs).
- Strengthening Local Council Committees for GBV prevention and response.
- Using radio, spot messages, social media, and translated IEC materials to spread awareness widely.

To reinforce transparency, ACFODE handed over reports and publications from past projects to district leaders, while Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with Local Governments are being finalized to formalize collaboration.

These meetings and orientations laid a strong foundation for partnership, capacity building, and context-specific interventions. With communities and leaders on board, the Spotlight Initiative is well on its way to creating safer, more inclusive spaces where women and girls can live free from violence.



ACFODE Executive Director, Ms.Regina Bafaki, handing over some of the IEC materials to the DCDO, Gulu District



Kasese ACFODE team handing over previous projects to the DCDO, RDC, and CAO of Kasese district

Kasese Women Dream Beyond Coffee: A Journey into Social Enterprise

On the morning of August 21st, a group of 29 women gathered in Kasese, their voices filled with excitement and curiosity. These were women co-operators from the Mt. Rwenzori Coffee Farmers' Cooperative Union (MRCFCU), and for two days, they left behind the daily routines of farming and family to take part in something different, a training on the **social enterprise model**, organized by ACFODE with support from **Women Strong International**.

For many of them, coffee has always been the backbone of their livelihoods. But this training was about daring to ask, *what else is possible?* Could women create other ventures that not only supplement income but also give them more independence?

Through presentations, group discussions, and even joyful singing sessions, the women opened up to new ideas. Slowly but surely, business dreams began to take shape: cassava flour production, beekeeping, piggyery, and even specialty coffee products. They sketched out plans, defined markets, and imagined futures where their enterprises could thrive.

It wasn't just about business skills. The training touched on leadership, financial management, and the importance of women stepping into decision-making roles. Some difficult truths also surfaced, like how domestic violence, dependency on husbands, and lack of initiative can hold

women back. But together, the women confronted these realities and looked for solutions: stronger leadership, collaboration, and planning for sustainability.

By the end of the two days, the energy in the room had shifted. The women were no longer just coffee growers, they were budding entrepreneurs with new confidence and fresh ideas.

Tools That Build Trust

Beyond the training, ACFODE also delivered something practical yet powerful: a **weighing scale** and **moisture meter** to the cooperative. For women in coffee, these tools mean fairness and quality. No more disputes about weight, no more uncertainty about moisture content. Just trust, accuracy, and better market opportunities.

The Katulu Coffee Buying and Selling Group and Muhokya Women's Super Group were the first beneficiaries, and their excitement was contagious. With these tools, they felt better equipped to compete and succeed.

As we left Kasese, one thing was clear: this wasn't just about coffee, cassava, or pigs. It was about women discovering their power to dream, plan, and create. And when women rise, entire communities rise with them.



ACFODE Board member, Ms. Allen Baguma, handing over a moisture meter to Mr. Kule Jovenal of MRCFCU



Group photo after the training with the women cooperators in Kasese.

ACFODE@40 Highlights

We are thrilled to announce that preparations for the **ACFODEat40 Anniversary Celebrations** are in full swing. This milestone event will not only celebrate our legacy but also highlight the way forward in building a just and equal society for all.

Stay tuned for details on the preparations and celebrations. We invite you to walk this journey with us by amplifying our messages on social media, sharing your stories, and supporting our activities.

Did You Know?

Since 1985, ACFODE has:

- Trained over **50,000 women leaders** at the grassroots and national levels.
 - Advocated for key gender-responsive policies in Uganda.
 - Mentored **thousands of young women** to become bold voices for change.
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Looking Ahead

In the coming months, ACFODE will: (A Few are highlighted)

- Continue to prepare for **ACFODEat40 celebrations** in November
 - Conduct training for both primary and secondary school teachers in Kyegegwa district, equipping them to serve as GBV ambassadors, promote and protect students' rights, and unpack peace-building concepts to strengthen their role in creating safe and inclusive learning environments.
 - Awareness Sessions with 400 school girls in Refugee Settlements and Host Community on GBV and SRHR services under the Spotlight Programme
 - Training community Human Rights Defenders and Conservation Champions on Policy Advocacy under the Defenders Programme
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Stay Connected

Follow us on our social media platforms for daily updates, stories, and reflections as we count down to **#ACFODE@40**

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Thank You for Reading!

