



2024

ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT

Theme: Sow, Grow, Reform



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| Acronym

ACTV.....	African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims
CSO.....	Civil Society Organization
MDA.....	Ministry, Department and Agency
NGO.....	Non-Governmental Organization
UN.....	United Nations
HRBA.....	Human Rights Based Approach
ICT.....	Information, Communication and Technology (ICT)
UHRC.....	Uganda Human Rights Commission
CAT.....	Coalition Against Torture
MoU.....	Memorandum of Understandings
FCA.....	Finn Church Aid
EASC.....	East African Standards Committee
TC.....	Technical Committee
UNBS.....	Uganda National Bureau of Standards
DEAS.....	Draft East African Standards

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special appreciation goes to Mr. Asingizibwe Ambrose the Executive Director who led and guided efforts for the compilation of this report. AGROREF appreciates staff who contributed to the drafting (Mr. Okongo Desiderio), Review (Mr. Iddi Kibuuka) and Mr. Twahah Kaweesi that designed the report.

Executive Summary

AGROREF Uganda implemented activities throughout the year inline with its goals and objectives, and programme areas. AgroRef's interventions are organized in four strategic programmes which include; Access to Justice, Human Rights, Social Inclusion; Capacity Building and Cooperatives Systems Change; Research and Development Plus Learning and lastly Advocacy and Networking.

Under the Human Rights and social inclusion program, effort was put on strengthening internal capacity to deliver legal aid services to farmers and cooperatives. Partnerships were also built especially with human rights institutions. Under capacity building, AgroRef participated in 2 capacity building workshops and organized 2 capacity engagement for its stakeholders. On the theme of advocacy and networking; AgroRef participated in 20 advocacy and networking activities. A number of papers and policy briefs were developed and uploaded on the organisations website under the research, development and learning programme.

Key challenges inhibited our operations; however, these were expected especially for a newly established organization. Our strength has been hinged in our partners who have provided a fertile platform to promote our initiatives, popularize issues within the agriculture sector in general and the cooperatives in particular.

Our approach is based on the Human Rights Based Approach, civic empowerment and mindset change of our small-holder farmers in Uganda.

REMARKS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON BOARD OF DIRECTORS

As we reflect on the year 2024, it is with great pride and optimism that I present this inaugural Annual Activity Report for AGROREF Uganda popularly known as the Agriculture Reform Hub Uganda. This year marks a significant milestone in our journey as a newly established organization, dedicated to advancing agricultural policy reforms in Uganda's agricultural sector and the agricultural cooperatives in particular.

AGROREF's focus on fostering the values of equity, accountability, transparency, and sustainability within the cooperatives has been our driving force. These principles are at the core of our mission, particularly as we work to empower smallholder farmer through a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA). Our goal is to ensure that the voices of small-scale farmers are heard in decision-making processes and that their rights to fair policies, adequate resources, and inclusive opportunities are upheld.

The year 2024 has been one of laying strong foundations, forging key partnerships, and implementing pilot initiatives aimed at promoting meaningful agricultural policy reforms. We have worked tirelessly to create a platform for dialogue between policy makers, civil society, and farmer organizations, advocating for the prioritization of agricultural development and its integration into national development frameworks.

As a Board, we are deeply committed to ensuring that AGROREF remains true to its mission of creating a more equitable, accountable, and sustainable agricultural ecosystem. In this report, you will find highlights of our achievements, challenges faced, and the road ahead. It is our hope that this report serves as a testament to the determination and resilience of our team, partners, and stakeholders who have worked together to bring AGROREF's vision to life.

As we look ahead to the years to come, we are more determined than ever to strengthen our efforts to influence positive change in the agricultural policy landscape, support farmer organizations, and contribute to a more just and sustainable food system in Uganda.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who have supported us in our first year of operations. We remain steadfast in our commitment to building a brighter, more inclusive future for Uganda's farmers and the agricultural sector at large.

Mr. Eric Namungalu,
Chairperson, Board of Directors.

REMARKS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Esteemed Partners, Stakeholders, and Friends of AGROREF, It is with great pride and gratitude that I present to you the first Annual Activity Report for the year 2024. As a newly established organization, our journey this year has been one of tremendous growth, learning, unlearning and re-learning. We have laid a strong foundation for our long-term mission and vision. Established with a vision of transforming Uganda's agricultural landscape through policy advocacy, system building, and strengthening the capacities of smallholder farmer organizations, AGROREF is proud to have made significant strides in its maiden year.

The journey of AGROREF in 2024 has been one of collaboration, resilience, and innovation. Throughout the year, we focused on advancing agricultural policy reforms that resonate with the needs of Uganda's smallholder farmers, promoting sustainable farming practices, and fostering inclusive systems that ensure equitable participation in decision-making processes. By advocating for policies that are transparent, accountable, and human-rights based, we aim to empower farmers, especially those in cooperatives, ensuring that they are no longer marginalized but central to the decisions that affect their livelihoods.

As a newly established organization, our first year has not been without its challenges. However, we have been fortunate to partner with a range of stakeholders who share our commitment to positive change. From local communities to policy makers, our collaborative efforts have demonstrated that real and lasting transformation is possible when we all work together towards a common goal. I wish to extend our heartfelt gratitude to our partners including, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV), Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS) and Sensitise Uganda for the collaboration and space you provided for AGROREF to shine. To farmers especially the Bulambuli District Farmers Advocacy Forum, thank you for your resilience and determination in building a platform that brings key stakeholders in the agricultural sector to voice out their issues.

Special appreciation goes to the Board that has steered AgroRef Uganda through its first formative year. We are proud to have such a strong leadership that steer us in the right direction.

As the Executive Director, I wish to offer special thanks to the following individuals for their financial contribution to AgroRef; Mr. Eric Namungalu, Mr. Kennedy Ochieng, Ms. Leticia Ngaju, Mr. Andrew Muhirwa and Mr. Kwetegyeka Edgar

As we look ahead to 2025 and beyond, we remain committed to deepening our impact, scaling our initiatives, and ensuring that the voices of smallholder farmers are heard and respected at every level.

Together, we will continue to build a more equitable, sustainable, and resilient agricultural sector in Uganda.

Asingizibwe Ambrose, Executive Director

ABOUT AGRICULTURE REFORM HUB UGANDA (AGROREF)

AgroRef Uganda is a Not-for -Profit Organization focusing on advancing agricultural policy reforms, budget advocacy and supporting building of systems, fostering values of equity, accountability, transparency and sustainability of organisations especially small holder farmer organizations including but not limited to agricultural cooperatives using a Human Rights Based Approach.

Vision

We aim to create a world where farming communities flourish, and food security is a reality for all.

Mission

To drive agricultural policy reforms especially for agricultural cooperatives prioritizing inclusivity and sustainability, driving a Human Rights Approach coupled with strengthening management and governance of farmer led and focused organizations.

• Core values

- Probity and integrity
- Respect for systems
- Accountability and Transparency
- Equity and Fairness
- People centered

• Program areas

- Access To Justice, Human Rights, Gender and Social Inclusion
- Capacity Building, Transformative Agriculture and Cooperatives Systems Change
- Research And Development Plus Learning
- Advocacy and Networking

1. WHAT HAS BEEN DONE UNDER EACH PROGRAM

1.1. ACCESS TO JUSTICE, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Introduction

Access to justice, respect for human rights and inclusivity in the agricultural sector and cooperatives continue to dominate the conversation in Uganda as ingredients that are key to the survival and sustainability of the sector. AgroRef Uganda prioritizes a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) in all its engagements. This is not by a mistake but its at the core of our organization.

Inequality is seen as a powerful barrier to agriculture action because it reinforces vulnerability to agriculture and cooperatives impacts and prohibits participation in making changes through aggregated success. Addressing limitations and inadequate power dynamics can help women, youth, Refugees, PWDs and typically marginalized and vulnerable groups to embrace transformative agricultural and cooperatives results, embrace adaptation measures and strengthen their flexibility.

AgroRef emphasizes the vital role of human rights, justice and equity in strengthening and delivering effective small-holder farmers' benefits and cooperatives relevance in national transformation. Through this thematic area, AgroRef is interested in improving the quality of access to justice for small-holder farmers in Uganda. AgroRef plans to put in place a legal aid clinic that will provide, support and to follow up on cases especially human rights violations and abuses, land injustices and discrimination in the agriculture and cooperatives sector.

Issues of land disputes and injustices have for years dominated and continue to affect everyone in Uganda regardless of social status. However, those most affected are low-income earners, the less privileged including women especially old and windowed women. Those with resources, power and connections have taken advantage of the weak implementation of the existing laws to unfairly and unjustly steal land from the weak. Incidents of panga wielding goons destroying farmers gardens, livestock and other property is no longer news but a common occurrence. Land grabbing has become so common and violent that many people have lost lives, killed and lives shattered.

Land is key resource in the agriculture sector and without prioritizing justice, fairness and rule of law to the land question, the agriculture sector will continue to suffer setbacks, affecting livelihoods of small-holder farmers who make majority of the population.

In our first year, priority as an organization, we have focused on institutionalizing and building internal structures that would support access to justice. The organization has set up a legal aid department headed by the legal, justice and Human Rights

Associate. AgroRef also further prides in the fact that, its chairperson Board of Directors is a lawyer with extensive knowledge and experience in human rights; this choice was not by mistake but a deliberate and intentional decision to support the department with high level guidance. Furthermore, the founding Director Mr. Musinguzi Kenneth is also a lawyer with more than 12 years of experience working with reputable organizations supporting farmers in the coffee and cotton sub-sectors.

We partnered with key national level organisations with the intention of highlighting issues of human rights in the agriculture sector and make them a centre of national discussion. We partnered with Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) a national human rights institution (NHRI) mandated by article 52 of the constitution to promote and monitor the human rights situation in the country.

AgroRef further partnered and actively engaged with the African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV) an organization that focuses on providing holistic remedies to survivors of torture.

1.1.1. International Human Rights Day 2024

AgroRef Uganda was a key stakeholder and partner in organizing the International Human Rights Day 2024 spearheaded by the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC). The organization attended all the five planning meetings held at UHRC headquarters. AGROREF Uganda was very instrumental in influencing and bringing to attention issues of agriculture and cooperatives and their relationship to theme of the IHRD 24 which was, “Reducing Inequalities in the Enforcement of Environmental Rights and in the Mitigation of Environmental Degradation”, which was particularly relevant in the context of smallholder farmers. Farmers, while contributing significantly to food production and economic development, are also central to the environmental challenges Uganda faces. Agroref participated fully in identifying the topics for discussion, identifying panelists for the dialogue and drafting of the press statement that was read by the Chairperson UHRC Ms. Mariam Wagadya on 3rd December 2024.

Finally, we also attended a public dialogue that brought key stakeholders on the D-Day at Golf Course Hotel on 10th December 2024



On top, our E.D at the extreme left during the press conference and below, a group photo at a public dialogue on 10th Dec.2024

1.1.2. Online meeting on refugee employment pathways by UNHCR

AgroRef staff attended an online meeting that was organized by UNHCR; the Third Complementary Pathways Contact Group Meeting focusing on building third-country employment pathways in Uganda which took place on 25th April 2024. The meeting had speakers from Canada, New York and FCA and discussed approaches in linking livelihoods programming in Uganda to durable solutions which would ensure refugees get quality skilling that is competitive at the global market and locally both in country of asylum to ease integration and country of origin if repatriated.

1.1.3. UN International Day in support of survivors of torture

Every year, the Coalition Against Torture (CAT) coordinated by ACTV organizes and holds commemorative activities for the UN Day in support of torture survivors that takes place annually on June 26th. AGROREF Uganda was invited by the Coalition to participate in the planning activities including attending all the 5 preparatory meetings that were held at the offices of ACTV. A Press conference was also organized at the offices of UHCR to launch the commemoration activities. On the D-day, a procession was held around Kampala city highlighting the extent of torture in the country and thereafter, a public dialogue was held at the Railway grounds attended by key partners and state agencies.

As an organization that promotes and strives for the protection of the rights and freedoms of small-holder farmers, the day was a platform to start the process of highlighting issues of torture, inhumane and degrading treatment in the agriculture sector.



AgroRef Uganda during the preparatory meetings for the UN Day in support of survivors of torture

1.2. CAPACITY BUILDING, AND COOPERATIVES SYSTEMS

Building the capacity of cooperatives and small holder farmers on different aspects is a key strategic area of operation of AgroRef Uganda. It is important to note that AgroRef was established after identifying capacity gaps experienced by the cooperatives in areas of accountability, transparency, organizational management and governance and observing/respecting the core values and principles of cooperatives as laid down by the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA).

Through training, capacity development and community engagement, AgroRef Uganda strives to empower farmers, farmer organisations, cooperatives with skills and knowledge on different aspects including; accountability and transparent systems strengthening, personal and digital security training, Human Rights Based Approach and civic awareness, fundraising and resources mobilization, international, regional and national agriculture and cooperatives promotion mechanisms, research, monitoring and documentation among others through capacity building training workshops and community sensitization forums.

AgroRef focuses on the intangible aspects such as leadership capabilities; strategic planning; human resource development; marketing strategy; Business Development Services, member satisfaction practices; risk management approaches; communication and collaboration within the organization; knowledge transfer principles; compliance with rules and regulations; information management approaches; data analysis methods; adaptability to changing conditions; and the ability to identify new opportunities.

1.2.1. Training on integration of institutional mental health and selfcare among HRDs and Journalists

AGROREF UGANDA was nominated and invited to attend a 3 days training on integration of institutional mental health and self-care programs among Human Rights Defenders and Journalists organisation. The training took place from 10th to 12th December 2024.

ACTV through her long-term work has built capacities and created awareness on Mental Health among communities and human rights organisations. Through these programs ACTV observed that Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) often face challenges that significantly affect their mental health and psychological wellbeing which hinders them to effectively do their work of defending the rights of others. With this, there was an eminent need for organisations that work on Human Rights to intentionally integrate programs aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of mental health challenges faced by Human Rights Defenders. Therefore, the training was tailored towards capacity building program to support human rights organisations and networks to integrate mental health and selfcare within the routine organization's work.

The training focused on empowering AGROREF UGANDA to be more resilient in the complex context of its work through integration of mental health and self-care programs.



On the right, Mr. Asingizibwe Ambrose demonstrating his self-care awareness and, on the left, a group photo of the participants

1.2.2. Meeting to Assess the Progress of Bulambuli Farmers Advocacy Platform

AGROREF was invited to attend a half day meeting organised by the steering committee of Bulambuli Farmers Advocacy Forum held at the district headquarters. The meeting focused on strategizing for the sustainability of the farmers advocacy platform that was established in 2022. AGROREF was invited to offer advice and guidance on the way forward and forge a partnership for strengthening the platform. The meeting was attended by 6 participants and was held on 16th July 2024 at Bulambul District Local Government Headquarters. AGROREF was represented by the E.D and Mr. Iddi Kibuuka the Program Officer Livelihood and Resilience. The main purpose of the field visit was to guide the steering committee members and assess the progress/ sustainability strategies of the District Farmers Advocacy Platform of Bulambuli District.

AGROREF's involvement revitalizes the platforms' role as spaces that foster participation in the legislative processes at local levels, and where farmers/POs voice their concerns. The intervention also seeks to stimulate the sustainability efforts that had been started by the DLG and motivate others to adopt good practices. AGROREF will also continue sharing experiences and learning to encourage similar efforts in other districts.



A group photo with members of the steering committee of Bulambuli District Farmers Advocacy Platform

1.3. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PLUS LEARNING

Research is a key component of AgroRef Uganda. The thematic objective is to enhance capacity building, advocacy and networking intended for a just and fair legal and policy environment that promote agriculture, cooperatives development, rural transformation, equality and non-discrimination. The goal is to achieve systemic changes towards the realization of the rights of small holder farmers, members of cooperatives informed by evidence-based advocacy and development. AgroRef strives to be a key leader in the generation of cutting-edge research on various dimensions of agriculture, small-holder farmers, cooperatives and public policy in Uganda and beyond. Our work focuses on legal analysis of laws, policies and bills, baselines on new areas of interest, human rights violations, land related issues among others.

Through the thematic area, AgroRef works to contribute towards enhancing an enabling legal and policy environment for small-holder farmers for agricultural transformation.

It involves monitoring, analyzing and documenting the situation/environment in which farmers operate in Uganda. Since its inception AgroRef has been undertaking studies on the situation of small-holder farmers, cooperatives and agriculture in Uganda; analyzing their working environment, challenges, threats, opportunities and strategies.

Research is carried out all year round since issues keep emerging that affect the environment in which farmers and cooperators operate. Through research, AgroRef has produced reports, publications that have increased the body of knowledge and promoted effective advocacy for improved operating environment of farmers in Uganda.

1.3.1. Lest You Forget, Weekly Agrico-News Updates

In order to keep our key stakeholders informed about new developments, AGROREF Uganda started publishing a bi-weekly news updates of news compiled from different newspapers and online platforms. The Lest You Forget series were published through the year and shared on the organisation's blog page, twitter, the website and widely shared again on email to numerous individuals. In total, 19 editions were published and shared in 2024.

At AgroRef, we believe that Ugandans especially farmers and cooperators have a right to know about what duty bearers and other key stakeholders are involved in supporting their work; are doing or planning to do to improve the status of small-holder farmers. Different platforms including mainstream traditional media, government MDA's information and communication platforms regularly publicize news especially news related to implementation of government programmes.

The lest you forget series are intended to keep reminding Ugandans of these promises and information published by different outlets with the view of sustaining citizens interest in pursuing accountability but also support government in monitoring the same programmes.

1.3.2. Other publications

AgroRef also conducted desktop research on a number of topics, developed and published position papers and policy briefs all of which can be found on the organisation's website including the following;

1. Agriculture and The Environment-Brief Commemorating the International Human Rights Day 2024
2. Human Rights and Agriculture
3. Memoranda On the Contract Farming Bill
4. Brief On the History of The Conference of The Parties (Cop) And Its Relevance to The Global South
5. Statement on the Bulambuli Landslide Tragedy
6. Statement on World Aids Day

1.3.3. Elephants attacking farmers in Moyo (BBC story)

On 21st May 2024, AgroRef Uganda was contacted Ms. Bisi Adebayo a journalist working for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), World Service. She wanted AgroRef's help in collaborating a story published by the Daily Monitor on issues of elephants crossing from South Sudan, attacking farmers and destroying crops

(<https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/elephants-return-to-haunt-moyo-farmers-4629772>).

The Executive Director identified local leaders in Moyo district and farmers affected by the issue and they were interviewed by the journalist and the story was aired on the 22nd May 2024

(<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w172zbjzmq067bb?partner=uk.co.bbc&origin=share-mobile>)

1.4. ADVOCACY AND NETWORKING

AgroRef recognizes the importance of advocacy in promoting and strengthening the role of agriculture, small holder farmers, and cooperatives in national development. The organization focuses on its mandate of contributing to a conducive environment for the promotion of small-holder farmers in particular and agriculture and cooperatives in general in Uganda. At the core of AgroRef's advocacy initiatives is the need to ensure views and voices of farmers and cooperators are heard by policy and decision makers at national, regional and local levels and strategic, deliberate, intentional and broad-based action is taken by government, local leaders and other responsible stakeholders. AgroRef's advocacy and networking efforts to support agriculture and cooperatives are geographically limitless as synergies shall be derived across the regions to create sustainable.

1.4.1. Courtesy visit to Restless Development, AYDL

In order to create a wider and greater impact, AgroRef's prides in building strong networks, collaborations and alliances. On 6th February 2024, the Executive Director paid a courtesy visit to the offices of Restless Development Uganda where he met with the country coordinator Mr. Gabriel Iguma. He introduced AgroRef Uganda and its role in bridging the negative perception by youth towards agriculture. The National Coordinator of Restless Development was positive and assured AgroRef of future partnership between the two organisations. On the same day, he visited African Youth Development Link (AYDL) and had an engagement with the Executive Director Mr. Martin Wanzala and Head of Programs Ms.Kizza Teopista.

1.4.2. Oil seeds and oils harmonization meeting

AgroRef Uganda received an official invitation to participate in the EASC/TC 015, Edible fats and oils harmonization and editing meeting by Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS). AgroRef was represented by the Executive Director of the meeting that took place at the Headquarters of UNBS from the 18th – 22nd March 2024. There were also delegations from other East African. Below were the standards harmonized.

- a) DEAS 887:2023, Crude and semi refined palm oil – Specification
- b) DEAS 1168:2023, Virgin Coconut oils – Specification
- c) DEAS 1169:2023, Raw macadamia nuts in shell – Specification
- d) DEAS 1170:2023, Cashew flour – Specification
- e) DEAS 1171:2023, Peanut/groundnut flour – Specification



Members during the harmonization meeting at the UNBS headquarters in Bweyogerere

1.4.3. ACTV at 30 years

As ACTV celebrated its 30 years of existence, AGROREF Uganda was invited to be part of the commemorations which were held on the 12th of April 2024 at Serena Hotel, Kampala. It was during this event that our E.D committed to contribute shs, 300,000 (Three hundred thousand shillings) towards the construction of a permanent home for survivors of torture.

1.4.4. Online meeting with UNHCR

During the ACTV 30th Anniversary celebrations, AGROREF's Executive Director had a conversation with the Deputy Country Director of United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) Mr. Jason Hepps who got interested in the work AGROREF does especially around issues of farming and cooperatives with the refugees and refugee hosting communities. After the event, he helped coordinate and set up a meeting with the Resilience and livelihood Working Group team at UNHCR which was held on 23rd April, 2024 via Microsoft team.

The meeting focused on understanding better AGROREF's operations and brainstormed on any potential collaboration to support both refugees and host community farmer groups and cooperatives in Kamwenge, Kyegegwa and other areas.

1.4.5. M&E Meeting at UNHCR

AGROREF also attend a meeting for LRSWG members and partners and for data focal points on the new assistance data collection tool. The training took place on 8th May 2024 10:00 am to 12:00 pm at the UNHCR LION boardroom, Kampala.

AGROREF represented by the legal officer Mr. Okongo Desiderio attend the LRSWG meeting that took place on Wednesday, 15 May 2024, 02:30 pm – 4:30 pm at UNHCR, Lion room.

The meeting focused on the updates on the self-reliance index, update on training on beneficiary data and next steps, Northern Uganda Resilience Initiative (NURI) and updates from partners (new projects, initiatives).

1.4.6 International Centre for Not-for Profit (ICNL) and AYDL (Youth Participating in election)

Agroref Uganda attended a consultative meeting organised by The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) under the USAID-funded Civil Society Strengthening Activity (CSSA), under the theme: "Supporting Youth CSOs/HRDs Advocacy on Enabling Environment Issues." The consultation built on the "Know Your Rights" roundtables held in 2023 where Special Interest Groups (SIGs), including women, youth, environmental defenders, and persons with disabilities, expressed concern about prevailing threats and restrictions on the enabling environment and how they impact on their operations.

The Consultative meeting sought to enhance capacity of CSOs representing SIGs to engage in advocacy to improve their enabling environment. The meeting brought together youth human rights defenders and CSOs to discuss and consolidate advocacy strategies for engaging authorities on the enabling environment and discussed sector-specific civic space challenges affecting youth CSOs/HRDs; analyzed the regulatory framework for NGOs including the NGO Act and Policy and other applicable laws affecting their organizations and constituents and provided specific recommendations for reform.

The Consultative meeting was held at the Golf Course Hotel in Kampala on Wednesday, February 21, 2023



Attendees during the consultative meeting

1.4.7. Meeting at Femme Forte Uganda

AGROREF Uganda attended a meeting at Femme Forte Uganda a women's rights focused organization on the 24th Oct, 2024. The meetings objective focused on establishing strategic partnerships between traditional and non-traditional civil society organizations (CSOs) aimed at promoting inclusive advocacy efforts on various key issues, and to mobilize and engage non-traditional actors by linking their sector-specific interests to broader social and structural inequalities, thereby amplifying their contribution to collective advocacy and social change initiatives. This was organized under the Local Leadership Labs (LLL) initiative a project that is pioneering efforts aimed at the political, technical, and behavioral barriers that impede the recognition, empowerment, and resourcing of diverse local civil society groups as pivotal development actors. By fostering radically inclusive spaces, LLL seeks to position these groups at the forefront of policy development and solution creation, working in concert with governments, donors, and other stakeholders.



Participants during a group work discussing collaboration and partnership for civil society organisations

1.4.8. Press conference to launch the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence

On the invitation of the Centre for Rehabilitation of Survivors of Acid and Burns Violence (CERESAV), AgroRef Uganda attended a press conference marking the launch of our 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign under the theme, “16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, 16 Different Faces of Violence

This event celebrated survivors' journeys, recognized them as community peace ambassadors, and feature discussions on Addressing Acid and Burn attacks violence in Uganda: Effects and risk mitigation strategies.



A group photo for survivors of acid and burn attacks after the press conference

1.4.9. Quarterly LRSWG meeting at SKYZ Hotel

AgroRef Uganda represented by our legal officer Mr. Okongo Desiderio attended the livelihoods and resilience sector working group meeting organised by the UNHCR on 20th November, at Skyz Hotel Naguru. The meeting focused on updating performance of the sector by UNHCR and Sector strategy discussion & 2025.



Participants during the workshop meeting organized by the UNHCR at SKYZ Hotel, Naguru

1.4.10. Strategy development workshop for the Coalition Against Torture (CAT)

AGROREF Uganda was also pleased to attend and participate in a 2 days residential workshop that comprehensively discussed the Coalition Against Torture (CAT) advocacy strategy and annual workplan. The workshop was held at Esella Hotel in Najjera from Monday, 16th September 2024 through Tuesday, 17th September 2024.

The workshop benefited from the wide knowledge and experience of Dr. James Nkuubi who was the facilitator for the workshop.



Participants during the workshop that discussed the advocacy strategy for the CAT organized by ACT

1.4.11. Breakfast meeting to unveil CAT advocacy strategy and annual work plan at Golf Course Hotel

On the invitation of ACTV and the CAT, AGROREF UGANDA attended a breakfast meeting on Friday, 15th November 2024 at Golf Course Hotel in Kampala district. The purpose of the meeting was to unveil the advocacy strategy of the CAT and annual work plan of the CAT, update the CAT about the strengthening and recruitment for CAT Membership efforts and to discuss the upcoming International Human Rights Day commemoration for 10th December 2024.



Participants at the launch of the CAT Advocacy Strategy at the Golf Course Hotel

1.4.12. Breakfast meeting to launch a civic education handbook by Sentise Uganda at Hotel Africana

AgroRef Uganda attended the launch of a civic handbook organized by Sensitise Uganda in collaboration with Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC); a civic education handbook for secondary school students themed my country, my rights and my responsibilities. The launch took place on Friday 28th June, 2024 at Hotel Africana.

The handbook was developed as a resource to bridge the knowledge gap in the nurturing young people into responsible and active citizens. It highlights critical elements for encouraging the participation of young people in civic processes. It has sections on; civic rights and responsibilities, patriotism and volunteerism, peace building and conflict resolution, a deep dive into Uganda's Political Journey among other interesting topical areas.

1.4.13. USA EMBASSY FIRESIDE CHAT

Our Executive Director attended a fireside organized by the USA embassy in Uganda. The meeting focused on Data in Food Security & Environmental Sustainability and was held on 18th July 2024 at the Embassy Plaza in Kabalagala.



The Executive Director with Dr. Catherine Nakalembe at the Embassy Plaza after the fireside chat

1.4.14. Launch of the campaign against aflatoxins

AgroRef attended the launch of a campaign, "Kicking out aflatoxins from my food & animal feeds" which was organized by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Food Rights Alliance (FRA). As an org whose vision is a world where farming communities flourish & food security is a reality for all, we shall actively engage in the campaign



2. CHALLENGES

Lack office space

AGROREF Uganda lacks its own independent office premises which adversely affects the organisation's operations. Currently, the organization is hosted by our partner, Senistise Uganda which has done a great service and has kept AGROREF safe for the past one year. However, this poses challenges of privacy to both Sensitise Uganda and AGROREF but also the space is too small which doesn't promote a safe and conducive working environment.

Lack Financial resources

For the past one year, AGROREF's activities have been financed informally by funds raised and mobilized from friends that believe in the vision and mission of the organization. Other funds came from the private funds of the founding directors which not a sustainable model.

Low staff capacity.

Based on the current organization organogram, the organization is ideally understaffed but realistically operating optimally because of the current few implementable activities. All current staff volunteer their services entirely to the organization. However, some key priority positions are still vacant because of the financial constraints the organization is currently facing.

Lack of Equipment

AGROREF Uganda lacks key equipment to effectively, efficiently and optimally operate. These include computers, laptops, printers, projector, office furniture, vehicles among others. These limit the operations of the organization which negatively affects our work.

3. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION

In order to overcome the mentioned challenges and increase the impact of AGROREF Uganda, the following strategies will be employed in advancing its mandate and objectives considering the challenges encountered.

Enhance the Human Resource

AGROREF will continue recruiting staff to fill the positions that are vacant but also continue developing the technical capacities of its staff through regular trainings so as to meet the dynamic working environment in Uganda. AGROREF will strive on retaining highly skilled and competitive personnel through good remunerations and other welfare benefits that add value to the organisation.

Promote Research and Documentation (R&D)

AGROREF is progressively investing in research, documentation and knowledge management on issues of cooperatives, agriculture locally and globally to ensure that its programs and focus are well informed based on realities and development needs. AGROREF will also invest in improving its Monitoring and Evaluation systems and shall keep learning and improving throughout its programs and initiatives.

Promote collaboration and partnerships

AGROREF will continue building new alliances and collaborations throughout the country and beyond. AGROREF is aware that in order to deliver on its mandate, stronger and robust partnerships, alliances and collaborations are very important. We shall strive to improve on our networks through joint implementation, joining coalitions and signing Memorandum of Understandings (MoU) with government agencies, local governments and community-based organizations in order to promote and harness the power of a united advocacy engagement.

Improve resource mobilization mechanisms

AGROREF will develop a fundraising strategy to help in mobilization of resources both internally and externally. A number of initiatives will be devised to mobilize enough resources but most importantly, strategies that reduce donor dependency will be given priority.

Encourage Risk Management systems.

The AGROREF will also develop and implement a Risk Management Strategy. The strategy will be developed for the purpose of identification, evaluation and prioritization of risks followed by coordinated and economical application of resources to minimize, monitor, and control the negative impact of unfortunate or unforeseen events in order to maximize the realization of opportunities.

Increase engagement with the media for increased awareness and visibility

AGROREF will work continuously with both mainstream and social media platforms across the country. AGROREF will reach out and partner with both national and sub national media houses across the country to ensure that its work is known and felt by all the citizens. Increase engagement with state agencies and departments to enhance penetration and acceptance of the proposals put forward for the benefit of farmers and cooperatives.

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OUR PARTNERS

