



Working Group Uganda

# Women In Humanitarian Leadership Summit

November 26, 2024

“Galvanising Women’s Leadership in Humanitarian Development, Peace (HDP) Nexus and Influencing Decision-Making Spaces”

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# Acknowledgments

The Charter for Change (C4C) Working Group Uganda acknowledges with deep gratitude the remarkable contributions of the following persons and organizations mentioned below. Their support and enthusiasm added to the event's success, and we deeply appreciate their contributions.

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**Media (TV, Print, Digital, Online & social media)-** NBS, UBC, The New Vision, Daily Monitor Newspapers, Social Media Influencers, etc.

**Service Providers:** Hotel Africana, Printing Bureaus, and the Various Media Houses

**Rapporteur Team:** Mr. Richard Obedi and Ms. Apio Laboke

**Signatories:** Oxfam, CARE International, DCA, Plan International, CRS, FCA, Save the Children, AAH, Street Child, World Vision and Action Aid. The activities of C4C Working Group Uganda are made possible with financial support from the signatories

**With Gratitude,**



Ms. Joyce Julian Acoko,  
Chairperson of the C4C Working Group Uganda

# Executive Summary

In a significant step towards promoting, recognizing, and strengthening the role of women in humanitarian leadership, the Charter for Change (C4C) Working Group Uganda convened its Annual Women in Humanitarian Leadership Summit on Tuesday, 26th November 2024, at Hotel Africana, Kampala, Uganda. The summit was held under the theme: **“Galvanising Women’s Leadership in the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus and Influencing Decision-Making Spaces.”**

The theme was based on the reality that the leadership and work of women-led humanitarian, development, and peace nexus organizations often remain unrecognised. This is largely due to limited visibility, insufficient resources, and the lack of platforms to showcase their achievements, innovative practices, and transformative ideas. Yet, these **women-led organizations are frequently the first responders during crises, mobilizing support and delivering assistance to the most vulnerable in their communities.**

**The summit brought together a wide range of participants**, including executive directors of women-led humanitarian organizations, C4C associate members from all regions of Uganda, signatories, endorsers, allies, civil society actors (especially those representing women and girls from diverse backgrounds), members of academia, researchers, journalists and media outlets, the business community, philanthropists, international organizations, the private sector, donor agencies, members of the diplomatic corps, government officials, parliamentarians, financial institutions, and other distinguished local and national actors.

Throughout the summit, **participants reflected on the urgent need to further empower women-led organizations and ensure the full and meaningful participation of women in leadership and decision-making processes.** Discussions echoed a strong call for women to be recognized not merely as beneficiaries, but as key leaders and change agents within the humanitarian, development, and peace sectors.

**The event served as a powerful reminder of the essential role women play in these sectors, highlighting their equal participation as critical to achieving inclusive and sustainable outcomes.** To ensure broad relevance, panel sessions were designed to reflect both thematic and geographic diversity, with representation from various sectors connected to the summit’s priority theme.

# About Charter for Change Working Group Uganda



## COMMITMENTS

The Charter for Change includes 8 Commitments that INGOs agree to implement, to address imbalances and inequality in the global humanitarian system.

The Uganda Charter for Change Working Group provides a platform that brings together C4C endorsers, signatories and allies with the aim of promoting, advocating, and practically implementing the localisation agenda. The Group identifies and implements ways of shifting power to local and national actors in humanitarian and development, in alignment with the 8 Points of the Charter for Change. Signatories are expected to deliver and report on their commitments, and endorsers work to hold signatories to account while also signing and adhering to the Charter of Accountability. Together, signatories, endorsers, and allies engage in joint advocacy, continuous learning, and sharing of best practices to effectively advance localisation in Uganda.

- 1 DIRECT FUNDING**  
Commit to pass 25% of humanitarian funding to National NGOs
- 2 PARTNERSHIPS**  
Reaffirm principles of partnership
- 3 TRANSPARENCY**  
Publish the amount or percentage of funding that is passed to NGOs
- 4 RECRUITMENT**  
Address and prevent the negative impact of recruiting NGO staff during emergencies
- 5 ADVOCACY**  
Emphasise the importance of national actors to humanitarian donors
- 6 EQUALITY**  
Address subcontracting and ensure equality in decision-making
- 7 SUPPORT**  
Provide robust organisational support and capacity building
- 8 PROMOTION**  
Promote the role of local actors to media and public



Photo: Ms. Joyce Julian Acoko, Executive Director- NUWOSO, Chairperson C4C WGU

## Key Insights

- Women are front-runners in humanitarian action.
- The Women in Humanitarian Leadership Summit is a key platform for capacity building and advocacy.
- Charter for Change Uganda ensures that women-led organizations actively shape humanitarian response.

## Opening Remarks

The Chairperson of the Charter for Change (C4C) Working Group Uganda, Joyce Julian Acoko, welcomed participants to the Women in Humanitarian Leadership Summit 2024, a significant gathering for the humanitarian sector, particularly for women-led organizations.

She emphasized that women have always been at the forefront of humanitarian action mobilizing resources, providing care, and offering hope during crises, yet their leadership has long been overshadowed and underrecognized.

Ms. Acoko noted that the journey to elevate women's leadership in the humanitarian sector gained momentum in 2020 with the launch of the first Women in Humanitarian Leadership Training. This initiative has since grown into the annual Women in Humanitarian Leadership Summit, now a key platform for capacity building, experience sharing, and advocacy.

Ms. Acoko expressed pride in the collective effort to localize humanitarian action and amplify women's leadership in decision-making spaces. She noted that the C4C Working Group Uganda has consistently championed the localization agenda through its advocacy, ensuring that women-led organizations are not just participants but active shapers of the humanitarian sector's future.

Referring to the summit's theme, "**Galvanizing Women's Leadership in Humanitarian Development, Peace (HDP) Nexus and Influencing Decision-Making Spaces**," Ms. Acoko urged that women should be given tools and opportunities to lead effectively. She called on all women to rise beyond the annual "16 Days of Activism" and take bold action against gender-based violence, reiterating that this is a shared commitment.

Ms. Acoko thanked the organisers and partners, acknowledging the presence of diverse stakeholders, including government agencies, UN agencies, donors, international and local organizations, the private sector, academia, and the media, stating that this was a testament to collective responsibility.



Photo: Ms. Donna Juliet Eyokia, former C4C Chairperson

## Key Insights

### The Women in Humanitarian Leadership Summit:

- 1** Helps create synergies with networks that encourage women's participation.
- 2** Provides an opportunity to explore joint interventions to achieve gender equality.
- 3** Promotes the mentorship of young women.

## Overview

### Goal & Purposes of the Women in Humanitarian Leadership Summit

The overview of the C4C Women in Humanitarian Leadership Summit was presented by Ms. Donna Juliet Eyokia, who previously served as the Chairperson of the Charter for Change (C4C) Working Group Uganda.

Ms. Eyokia stated that the summit aimed to build partnerships by creating synergies with networks that encourage women's participation and support knowledge-sharing. She stated that this would enable participants, particularly women-led and women's rights local organizations, to establish new collaborations, secure funding, share resources, and enhance their capacity to deliver effective humanitarian assistance.

She further explained that the Summit provided an opportunity for both international and local humanitarian actors to take stock of key trends, identify gaps in policy responses, and highlight good practices. It also served as a platform to explore areas for joint interventions to address gendered poverty, promote gender-sensitive public institutions, and bridge financing gaps toward achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

Ms. Eyokia also mentioned that the Summit acted as a forum for discussing critical issues affecting the women-led humanitarian and development sector in Uganda.

These included disaster and emergency preparedness, partnerships, anticipatory action, and the integration of humanitarian and development efforts commonly referred to as the humanitarian-development nexus. According to her, such discussions were essential for shaping future strategies and ensuring that interventions remained responsive to the evolving needs of communities.

She concluded by emphasizing the Summit's role in promoting the mentorship of young women by strengthening their capacity to participate in leadership and decision-making processes.

“

**Leadership is not about power and domineering.  
Leadership is about service. The greatest is a servant.  
While in a Leadership position please remember that it  
is transient.**

”

Ms. Donna Juliet Eyokia, Former C4C Chairperson/Advisor



Photo: Ms. Emily Drijaru, Executive Director ICS and C4C-WGU Coordinator, West Nile Sub-Region

## Overview

### Charter for Change (C4C) Working Group Uganda

Ms. Emily Drijaru, the Executive Director of ICS and the Regional Coordinator of West Nile, presented the history of the C4C Working Group Uganda, its commitments, milestones, and localization agenda philosophy.

The Charter for Change (C4C) working group in Uganda is an initiative led by both National and International NGOs to practically implement changes to the way the Humanitarian System operates to enable a more locally-led response. The group brings together signatories, endorsers, and allies of localization. C4C was established and officially launched in November 2019, and since then, the number of endorsers has grown exponentially to 319.

### Key Insights



Charter for Change Uganda exists to advocate for a locally-led humanitarian response.



As of November 2024, C4C had 319 national and international endorsers.



C4C is imploring international humanitarian INGOs to recognize and leverage the critical role of local actors.

The international humanitarian system has long been criticized for marginalizing groups that are from crisis-affected areas, often referred to as "local" humanitarian actors. Historically, these local actors have received less than 3% of direct humanitarian funding, have been excluded from humanitarian decision-making and coordination mechanisms, have been treated as subcontractors or vendors when partnering with international groups, and have often had their capacities called into question.

The Charter for Change (C4C) working group in Uganda is committed to shifting the paradigms by strategically positioning the unified voices of local and national NGOs as key actors in local development, emphasizing the critical role they play in humanitarian responses. In line with this, C4C is imploring the International NGO fraternity to play fairly, starting with addressing the imbalances in the global humanitarian system and considering fully adopting a localization agenda.

While there is still a lack of consensus about what “localization” means, in Uganda’s context, C4C uses it to refer to a loosely defined agenda to more systematically include Ugandan-based/registered humanitarian actors in the international system. It also includes reforms to center local leadership in humanitarian response.

## **Philosophy, Justification, and Rationale for localization**

- Local is fairer.
- Local is where work happens.
- Local people know what is needed and what works.
- Localization is common sense.
- Localization is by the people for the people.
- Localization is part of 21st-century humanitarian programming.
- Only local actors know the reality.
- Ownership.
- Power and control for affected people.
- Power lies with the people.
- Relevance matters.
- Results into better aid.
- Sustainable.
- The answers are not always at the top.
- The voice of the locals must be heard.
- There is no alternative.

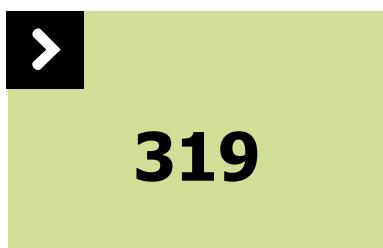
## **C4C Working Group Uganda Aspirations, Objectives, and Mandate**

- Champion the localization of international aid (humanitarian, development & peace nexus) in Uganda.
- Monitor national progress on localization and link them to international discussions through participation in global spaces.
- Proactively influence signatories to fulfil their commitments in C4C donor's influence through a collective voice to fulfil the commitments in the Grand Bargain.
- Provide space for sharing information and resources on the localization of humanitarian aid.
- Supporting endorsers to have better representation with strong coordination mechanisms.
- To practically implement changes to the way the Humanitarian System operates to enable a more locally-led response.

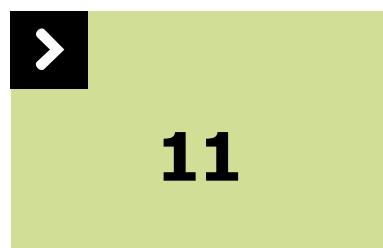
## Milestones and Achievements

- Promoted women's leadership: By having women in leadership roles, the C4C WG is also bringing local women's voices into humanitarian coordination spaces.
- Promoted the visibility of local and national humanitarian organizations.
- Increased capacity-building opportunities for local NGOs (LNGOs).
- Enhanced partnerships with international NGOs (INGOs) and improved access to funding opportunities for LNGOs from international agencies.

### The numbers



Endorsers' membership exponentially increased from 90 (2022) to 319 (2024)



Number of signatories increased from 3 to 11.



Mapped 219 local actors in 44 districts and 7 sub-regions

# Challenges and Barriers of Women-Led Organizations

## Definitions

### A Women-Led Organization

A women-led organization (WLO) is an organization that is either governed by women or has a leadership team that is at least 50% women

### A Women's Rights Organizations:

A women's rights organization (WRO) is a civil society organization that focuses on women's and girls' rights, gender equality, or feminism.

## Internal Challenges and Barriers

- Governance pitfalls, such as non-implementable or non-existent policies.
- Lack of a clear strategy or alignment with the vision & mission (The headless chicken syndrome).
- Lack of mentoring and coaching: Many women leaders do not reach out for help.
- Limited financial capacity.
- Limited or poor human resource capacity.
- No alternative sources of income, i.e., NO IGAs, especially for social enterprises.
- No rest & restitute (burnout).
- Poor compliance with statutory regulatory requirements.
- Poor documentation of work, which results in lack of visibility.
- Unhealthy competition, sabotage, jealousy, unprofessionalism, etc.
- Very weak MEAL Systems and thus, no measurement of impact.
- Weak coordination, networks and synergies among women-led organizations.

## External Barriers

- A non-enabling civic space: Inhibiting laws; harassment, intimidation, threats of closure.
- Lack of funding for existing women's networks, resulting in many working in silos.
- Few funding opportunities for WL/ROs. No overheads covered, short-term funding, and inverted prism funding.
- Patriarchy, power and culture: Deeply entrenched social & gender norms impact funding mechanisms due to pre-conceived notions of the incapacity of WL/ROs to manage funding, which negate our decision-making abilities. Tokenism–symbolic gestures to partners and in working with WL/ROs.
- Sexual harassment and Gender-Based Violence when challenging power & society, accessing funding.
- Weak coordination, networks and synergies



Photo: Ms. Annet Lekuru, Executive Director, Femi Nature Uganda, presents challenges of women-led organizations

## What do we want?

- To belong to, support and build strong women's movements.
- Continuous policy dialogue and advocacy for reforms for a more enabling environment.
- Develop/review pragmatic & implementable internal policies and controls.
- Increase and uphold compliance.
- Increase funding to WL/RO individual organizations, covering overheads, and providing multi-year grants.
- Increased documentation and visibility.
- Intentional capacity enhancement for women's organizations.
- Need to innovate and be adaptable.
- Need to move beyond tokenism when increasing the voice and participation of marginalized groups, including women in leadership positions.
- Start social enterprises/IGAs.
- Strengthen the capacity of existing women's networks and channel funding to these networks for sustained impact.
- WL/ROs need to stay focused and build a niche. Have clear strategic plans.

“

**We want to build a strong and resilient women's movement. Historically, women have played pivotal roles in community resilience and recovery during times of crisis. Yet, their leadership has often been overlooked or undervalued in formal humanitarian structures. We bring a unique perspective to humanitarian and development aid, and we must be involved in the decision-making in preparing humanitarian and development programming. This way, we can contribute to a comprehensive approach to assisting our people in need.**

”

Ms. Annet Letaru, Executive Director of Feminature, Uganda, West Nile



Photo: Ms. Primerose Kobusingye, Head of Marketing at FINCA Bank (U) Limited, makes a presentation on women's access to capital

## Key Insights

An in-depth understanding of women entrepreneurs' needs is essential to create appropriate financial products.



Empowering women financially is not a soft metric; it's an economic imperative.



The more women educate themselves, the more they can take control of their financial health and success.



## Keynote Address

### **Women's Access to Capital: Overcoming Challenges and Finding Opportunities**

In her keynote address on women's access to capital, Ms. Primerose Kobusingye, Head of Marketing at FINCA Bank (U) Limited, emphasized that a thorough understanding of women entrepreneurs' needs and goals, along with thoughtful design, is essential to create financial products that are both appealing and appropriate.

She stated that empowering women financially is not just a soft metric but an economic imperative. By tackling the challenges women face in the financial realm, ranging from career limitations to lack of access to venture capital and financial literacy, and by implementing inclusive solutions, a more equitable and prosperous future for all could be built.

As a financial advisor, Ms. Kobusingye shared that she personally feels responsible for championing efforts towards a world where women have equal opportunities to thrive in finance. She pointed out that the lack of women in key decision-making roles within financial institutions significantly contributes to the absence of understanding about the unique challenges women encounter. This, she noted, often results in a gap in tailored financial products and services that effectively meet the specific needs of female entrepreneurs.

She stressed the power of knowledge, remarking that the more women educate themselves, the more they can take control of their financial health and success. She added that working with a trusted financial advisor is an important part of this process.

To address the financial access issues faced by women, Ms. Kobusingye suggested starting early. She stated that young women need role models in the financial field to demonstrate what is possible and shared that she actively mentors young women on her team. She emphasized that women are not just participants, but key stakeholders who ought to sit at the table and make decisions.

Ms. Kobusingye highlighted the many opportunities that exist and stressed the need to be strategic, innovative, and to embrace digitalization. Referring to platforms like TikTok as tools for marketing and access to funding, she remarked that "the world is digital," and underscored the importance of catching up so as not to be left behind. "We need to market ourselves. This is 2024. Learn to ask for support and be resilient in a challenging world. We need to know who needs help. Be intentional in embracing digital tools," she said.

She concluded her address by appreciating the organizers of the summit, noting that having a blend of women from different sectors supporting the delivery of humanitarian assistance was wise and commendable.



Photo: Ms. Primerose Kobusingye, Head of Marketing at FINCA Bank (U) Limited, makes a presentation on women's access to capital

## Panel Session

### **Women's Leadership in the Humanitarian Sector: Breaking Barriers, Advancing Equity, and Shaping Impact**

#### **Panelists**

- Ms. Alum Luana Oloya, Executive Director, Caritas Moroto
- Ms. Florah Tumwebaze, Partnership Coordinator, Fin Church Aid
- Ms. Frances Birungi, Executive Director, UCOBAC
- Ms. Flavia Tracy Anena, Executive Director, NWODI
- Ms. Lillian Ojandiru, A gender expert, human rights activist and Program Manager at CRS

## **What are some of the strategies to end gender-based violence against women and girls in our communities?**

**Ms. Florah Tumwebaze:**

Every day we have the opportunity to examine our behaviours and beliefs for biases that permit rape culture to continue. We should think about how we define masculinity and femininity, and how our own biases and stereotypes influence us. From the attitudes we have about gender identities to the policies we support in our communities; we can all take action to stand against rape culture.

**Ms. Lillian Ojandiru:**

Teach the next generation and learn from them: The examples we set for the younger generation shape the way they think about gender, respect, and human rights. Start conversations about gender roles early on, and challenge the traditional features and characteristics assigned to men and women. Point out the stereotypes that children constantly encounter, whether in the media, on the street, or at school, and let them know that it is okay to be different. Encourage a culture of acceptance.

**Ms. Alum Luana Oloya:**

Violence against women and girls is a human rights violation that's been perpetuated for decades. It is pervasive, but it is not inevitable unless we stay silent. Show your solidarity with survivors and where you stand in the fight for women's rights.

**Ms. Flavia Anena**

Donate to local organizations that empower women, amplify their voices, support survivors, and promote acceptance of all genders.

**Ms. Frances Birungi:**

Relevant data collection is key to implementing successful prevention measures and providing survivors with the right support.

## How can Women-Led Organizations overcome institutional challenges?

## How can women-led organizations' leadership be productive, strategic, findable and fundable?

### Ms. Alum Luana Oloya:

- Avoid conflict of interest.
- Build legitimate organizations.
- Build Partnerships that will enhance your organization- Avoid 'donor romance'.
- Women who work together really fly together.

### Ms. Alum Luana Oloya:

- Adopt positive energy. Target high- Marriage is not the only highest achievement in a woman's life.
- Avoid headless chicken syndrome.
- Avoid the Pillow-Case Model.
- Women should learn to multi-task.

### Ms. Flavia Anena:

- Do not lose focus.
- Do not speak abstract: Evidence is required.
- Gender parity continues to deepen if we don't stand up.
- The government should play a critical role in ensuring law enforcement.

### Ms. Fionah Tumwebaze:

- Learn the environment.
- Let's sell ourselves. Show ourselves that we exist. Document and bring ourselves out. Shout! Beat the drum louder etc.

### Ms. Lillian Ojandiru:

- Men engagement: We cannot empower women if men are not on board. Male Change Agents (MCA) are key stakeholders. MCA still exist, (for instance in Karamoja) and with impact, much as the project model ended two years ago. There is also Clarion Call (In Nwoya). We must be careful and strategic with male engagement. As women, we need men as supporters, but they should not take the opportunities/spaces women have fought for over the years.
- We are not here just for show. We are here for a purpose.

**Ms. Frances Birungi:**

- Prioritize and strategize change. Get to know which priorities are in line with the donors' demands and then strategize accordingly.
- Private-public sector collaborations should be based on strategies, values & missions.
- Women's inclusion, especially in governance and leadership positions of key sectors.
- Women with disabilities should be considered in programming.
- Exchange visits are important.
- Be open to constructive feedback.
- Teambuilding activities build trust and cohesion.

**Open Q&A**

**How do we address the authority gaps? How do we navigate the challenges?**

**Panellists' Feedback**

- By being flexible.
- Ensure male engagement/ gender transformative programming (GTP) and gender and equity policy.
- Healing- psychosocial support structures.
- It's important to have policies that align with global practices.
- Know who you are. know your values. Women do not operate in a vacuum.
- Mentorship: The need to share experiences.
- Mindset change is critical.
- Recognize energy levels.
- Seek help, especially when you feel overwhelmed.
- Sheer policy is a pre-requisite for most donors.
- Women need men's involvement in these spaces.



## What accountability and policy frameworks are needed to effectively support Women-Led Organizations (WLOs) in humanitarian settings, and how can these frameworks ensure inclusive participation, equitable funding, and sustained impact?

### Panellists' Feedback

There is an urgent need for accountability and policy frameworks that are inclusive, transparent, and localized. These frameworks should be shaped by the lived realities and priorities of grassroots women leaders rather than imposed from external systems. This can be achieved in the following ways:

- 1. Localization of Policy Development:** Local and national women-led organizations must be directly involved in co-designing humanitarian policies and strategies. Uganda's CRRF and Grand Bargain commitments provide a key opportunity to institutionalize this shift in power.
- 2. Equitable and Direct Funding Mechanisms:** Donor and government funding should flow directly to WLOs, not through intermediaries. Accountability systems must include ring-fenced resources and tools to track the actual funding received by WLOs.
- 3. Gender-Responsive Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E):** M&E frameworks should be gender-sensitive and led by communities to reflect real impact in empowerment and resilience. Tools like community scorecards used by WLOs in Uganda can be scaled for national use.
- 4. Policy Recognition of WLOs as Key Actors:** WLOs should be formally recognized as strategic partners in national humanitarian policies. This includes representation in key decision-making bodies at district and national levels.
- 5. Capacity Strengthening as a Rights-Based Obligation:** Supporting WLOs is a legal and policy obligation, not charity, as outlined in Uganda's NDP III and CEDAW. Accountability indicators should measure support in areas like training, registration, and digital access.
- 6. Transparent Feedback and Redress Systems:** WLOs must have channels to provide feedback on donor practices and access grievance redress mechanisms. Embedding such systems enhances trust and accountability in Uganda's competitive aid environment.
- 7. Harmonization of Standards and Reporting Requirements:** WLOs face strain from multiple donor reporting demands. A harmonized national reporting framework possibly coordinated by C4C Uganda would improve efficiency and reduce administrative burden.



**What are some of the innovative funding mechanisms to support the implementation of WLO work?**

### **Panellists' Feedback**

- Venture Capital
- Community Engagements (Participatory Grantmaking)
- Platforms such as HDPs
- Partnership with CSOs
- Philanthropists
- Social Enterprise
- Pooled Funding Mechanisms
- The C4C is an opportunity to access funding



**Why are accountability and transparency important to WLOs/WROs?**

### **Panellists' Feedback**

Accountability is a critical aspect of transparency that ensures WLOs remain answerable to both their donors and beneficiaries. Adhering to ethical standards not only enhances credibility but also protects organizations from potential scandals or mismanagement that could undermine public trust. By doing so, WLOs can demystify their work, making it easier for the public to engage with and support their missions.

Transparency is increasingly recognized as essential for fostering a sustainable and impactful presence in the communities served. For WLOs, this means providing stakeholders—ranging from donors to beneficiaries—with accessible and comprehensible information about their operations. In an era where public trust is paramount, transparency serves as a bridge between NGOs and the communities they aim to serve. It encompasses the clear communication of goals, processes, and outcomes, allowing stakeholders to understand how resources are utilized and what impact is being achieved.

The concept of transparency is multifaceted, involving not only the disclosure of financial information but also the sharing of strategic decisions, programmatic outcomes, and organizational challenges. The significance of transparency extends beyond mere compliance; it fosters a culture of openness that can enhance collaboration, attract funding, and ultimately lead to more effective interventions. This level of accountability not only strengthens donor relationships but also encourages continued support and investment in future initiatives.

Transparency in the activities of WLOs is a cornerstone of operational integrity and effectiveness. When organizations are transparent about their activities, they cultivate an environment of trust that encourages collaboration and support from various stakeholders. This trust is particularly crucial in sectors where scepticism about the motives and effectiveness of NGOs can be prevalent.

Encourage staff to take ownership of their roles and promote transparency in decision-making. Local communities tend to get involved with NGOs that have shown accountability in the past. Communities will support your cause and will participate in your project implementation. Publishing your annual reports regularly is a great way to ensure that you are fulfilling the required activities responsibly.

# Tokens, Awards and Recognition

Led by the chairperson of C4C, Ms. Joyce Julian Acoko, the Charter for Change Working Group Uganda recognized and awarded the following persons and organizations for their immense contributions to the development of C4C Working Group Uganda:

## Category One: Former Chairpersons (Uganda/Global) from 2019 to date

- Ms. Ritah Nansereko (Posthumously)
- Ms. Donna Juliet Eyokia
- Ms. Claire Atwine
- Ms. Naomi Ayot Oyaro



## Category Two: Regional Coordinators/ Chairpersons

- Ms. Emily Drijaru, West Nile
- Ms. Cathy Nakasinde, Western Uganda
- Ms. Alum Luana Oloya, Karamoja



# Endorsing 16 Days of Activism

## End Gender-Based Violence and Femicide/ Call to Action

In a show of solidarity with 16 Days of Activism, the following key pronouncements were made:



We call upon all stakeholders to end all forms of violence against women and girls. A life free of violence is a human right. Gender-based violence not only devastates the lives of survivors but also imposes significant economic costs.



We call upon policymakers to develop, review and enforce policies, legislation, regulations and support structures to protect women and girls and prevent impunity and secondary victimization in femicide and gender-based violence in all forms – home, work settings, economic, and technology-facilitated gender-based violence.



We call for massive investment in evidence-based and gender-transformative educational policies and programs starting from early childhood that change harmful gender norms, social norms, and stereotypes such as those perpetuated in entertainment and social media, so that everyone in society respects gender equality and prevents all forms of gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF).



We call for an increase in ongoing and well-coordinated financing and funding for prevention, protection, early intervention, and response services to make a sustained impact on reducing the prevalence and incidence of GBVF.



Photo: Ms. Joyce Acoko, C4C Chairperson

Ms. Acoko observed that the role of women in society is a no-brainer, and every woman of goodwill must support and promote women's leadership in women-led/women's rights humanitarian and development organizations because a woman understands their challenges more than anybody else and the time is now for women to face up.

#### **Ms. Acoko's counsel to women:**

- Know what you are good at and get on the boards of directors.
- Be ready to fail but don't fail to do it.
- Be a thoughtful and daring leader.
- Be courageous and ready to take a strategic risk.
- Mentor with love and build a social network.
- Allow yourself to grow in your career.
- Learn to advocate for yourself, you are your best ally.
- Contribute to fair gender policy, gender is an ideology.
- Nurture both boys and girls so that they become better men and women, so that the world becomes a better place for humanity to live in.
- Be open to learning, unlearning and re-learning.
- Shape policy through conversations to reduce gender parity instead of widening it.
- Involve the boy-child. The boy-child has been left out, and this is affecting women's advocacy.
- Build your careers regularly and step forward.
- The structural barriers limiting women are still huge... be the change agent!

## **Closing Remarks**

### **By the C4C Chairperson**

Ms. Joyce Acoko, the C4C Chairperson, thanked participants for honouring the invitations. She noted that sometimes women's roles are misrepresented and their impacts downplayed, and yet it is the women who are the breadwinners in many families.

Ms. Joyce expressed gratitude to former C4C WGU leaders for their outstanding contributions and unwavering commitment to laying the foundation on which C4C WGU stands, and pledged to carry forward the legacies and dreams of the former leaders.

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**The fact that women can have the physical, mental and emotional capabilities to push babies out into this cruel world is a clear indication that a woman's brain is capable of salvaging itself from any quagmire. Women must learn to overcome fear. Fear is the weapon of defeat. When men pray, God listens, but when women pray, God answers. Rise, women, and be counted. It is no longer business as usual. No one will ever give you the space on a silver platter. You must proactively contribute and show the world what you are capable of doing. Take risks. If you don't take risks, you won't grow or learn.”**

”

Ms. Joyce Julian Acoko, Executive Director of NUWOSO/ Chairperson C4C Working Group Uganda.



Photo: Ms. Suzanne Walisa, Senior Engagement Officer, OPM/CRRF, delivers closing remarks.

Ms. Walisa highlighted the importance of fostering gender equality by empowering women while ensuring that men are also part of the journey. She acknowledged the challenges of male intimidation in the face of women's empowerment, noting how some men feel threatened rather than collaborative. She applauded the men present for their support, emphasizing that empowering women ultimately benefits the entire household and society.

Ms. Walisa stressed the need for a balanced approach to nurturing boys and girls and advocating for a united effort to avoid leaving anyone behind.

She reflected on the challenges of implementing family planning initiatives, emphasizing that empowerment is key to success. For example, when women lack financial independence or decision-making power in their households, accessing healthcare or family planning resources becomes nearly impossible. Empowering women with jobs and opportunities enhances their ability to make informed choices and contribute meaningfully to their families and communities.

According to Ms. Walisa, gender equality is not a battle but a partnership where empowering women uplifts everyone. She thus called for continued efforts to promote collaboration and inclusivity while addressing systemic barriers to women's empowerment.

Ms. Walisa further emphasized the importance of building women's leadership, stressing that empowering women to lead was essential for advancing an inclusive and effective humanitarian response.

## Closing Remarks

### **Government Representative, Ms. Suzanne Walisa, Senior Engagement Officer, OPM/CRRF**

In her closing remarks, Ms. Suzanne Walisa, appreciated the C4C leadership for creating spaces where women could come together to share their stories, laugh, and connect. She commended the initiative for fostering a sense of community and solidarity among women.

She highlighted her work coordinating stakeholders in refugee response—collaborating with NGOs, UN agencies, government bodies, and local actors—and noted how critical it is to integrate women's empowerment into all levels of engagement.

Ms. Walisa highlighted the critical need to:

- Build a consortium or coalition where the Government, INGOs and national NGOs collaborate.
- Invest in supporting grassroots initiatives.
- Learn, manage and share knowledge

She concluded by reaffirming the government's commitment to working collaboratively with local actors, particularly women-led initiatives, to ensure that humanitarian response efforts reflect the voices, needs, and potential of all, especially the most marginalized.

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**Let the good work that you are doing speak for itself. Many good initiatives are going on the ground but unfortunately, they are not being widely shared or known. Instead, we are being overtaken by social media news bytes most of which are negative stories. As a government, we are pleased with the work that you are doing especially the localization agenda. We are committed to walk and work with you all the way. We are developing a policy framework that shall guide our collective vision and implementation of localization and I am pleased to say that Charter for Change Working Group Uganda is a key ally. I thank C4C for organising this important event.**

”

Ms. Suzanne Walisa, Senior Engagement Officer, OPM/CRRF

# The Significance and Relevance of the Summit

- The C4C Women in Humanitarian Leadership Summit (WHLS), amplified women's role in leadership and illustrated what is possible when women themselves are driving humanitarian and development responses. It reinforced the need for collective responsibility and accountability in advancing gender equality. Furthermore, the event presented an opportunity for women-led organizations to showcase emerging good practices in humanitarian action.
- The summit provided an opportunity for women leaders from various backgrounds and share their diverse perspectives on strategies for advancing women's leadership, and to take stock of current efforts aimed at overcoming the barriers to their engagement.
- **The event spotlighted that humanitarian disasters, emergencies and conflict negatively and disproportionately impact women and girls** and consequently, those crises affect their life expectancy, education, maternal health, livelihoods, nutrition, and the levels of violence they experience. The summit recognized that the leadership of women and girls is an integral element of effective humanitarian action. The summit recommended strategies that focus on galvanizing collective responsibility to strengthen women's meaningful participation and leadership in humanitarian and development decision-making.

# Key Resolutions, Recommendations and Initiatives

**The following resolutions, recommendations and initiatives are aimed at empowering women in the humanitarian, development, peace and leadership:**

- **Advocacy vehicle for change:** The Charter for Change (C4C) Working Group Uganda committed to using its advocacy power and network to address a spectrum of opportunities and challenges facing women-led humanitarian, development and peace actors, by providing a platform for nuanced discussions and fostering actionable insights.
- **Event's Timing:** C4C fully associates the event's timing with the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaigns which takes place annually from November 25 (International Day of No Violence against Women) to December 10 (International Human Rights Day). C4C calls upon the government, civil society, and the private sector to accelerate progress toward eliminating violence against women and girls, promote gender equity, and create economic opportunities for women and girls.

## Calls to Action

- **Economic empowerment:** We call upon the government, donors, INGOs, private sector, civil society and community stakeholders to implement strategic actions to achieve women's economic empowerment and gender equality as envisioned in the National Development Plan including reducing the digital gender gap, increasing women's participation in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), supporting women entrepreneurs (WE), ending violence against women, and in social protection, care infrastructure and services.
- **Galvanise support for women-led/women's rights, humanitarian, development and peace organizations:** We call upon all stakeholders to enhance women-led humanitarian, development and peace initiatives and put women at the center of all development processes. Train more women in disaster response mechanisms and enhance their leadership roles.
- **Women and climate justice:** We call upon the government and development partners to prioritise gender-transformative climate funding directed at adaptation and resilience for women dependent on natural resources such as firewood, charcoal and animal droppings. Women and girls in Uganda represent 80% of the victims of climate disasters, which is an unjust, disproportionate burden of the impact of the climate crisis as they remain socially, politically, and economically underserved. Climate change and gender are intricately linked, and addressing gender is essential for effective climate action.
- Furthermore, **we call for direct investment in gender-just climate finance and providing direct funding to women-led climate projects and businesses.** We call upon policymakers to integrate a gender lens into disaster risk reduction and management by implementing early warning systems. To actualize this, we call for developing Women as First Responders in Climate Action programs that will train women as frontline workers in disasters and emergencies and enable gender-responsive plans and actions.

# Participant Reflections



"Leadership is a learnable set of skills and abilities developed through choice, learning, study, observation, practice, action, experimentation, failure, resilience, and experience."

**Ms. Florah Tumwebaze, Partnership Coordinator, Fin Church Aid**



"Cultural biases and gender stereotypes can lead to the perception that leadership is a masculine trait. This can create resistance and scepticism from men when women seek leadership roles."

**Ms. Alum Luana Oloya, Executive Director, Caritas Moroto.**



"To fight cultural biases and gender stereotypes. We need to know who we are before selling our Organizations. The Male Engagement: Gender Transformative Programming (GTP) is critical for success. Connect women with experienced female leaders and male allies who can provide guidance and support. There is absolutely no doubt about the potential of women's leadership. It is a matter of strategic positioning and doing the right thing. Women leaders are more trusted by donors and community stakeholders."

**Ms. Frances Birungi, Executive Director, UCOBAC**



"Many women believe the definition of 'leadership' was cast in stone. Hence, many women, introverts and people from most cultures in Uganda struggle to see themselves as fitting that concept; exacerbated by their belief that leadership also requires a certain skillset. People of all genders should be focused on collaborative and empathetic leadership at every level of society. Women are better positioned to influence policies, and programming than men."

**Ms. Flavia Tracy Anena, Executive Director, NWODI**



"With the marginal numbers of women in humanitarian and development levels of leadership, this myth would seem to be true. Yes, statistically, there are more male leaders represented in most organisations. However, this does not preclude women from taking on leadership roles. While one's genetics can naturally represent certain leadership traits, leadership qualities are also developed. Therefore, if leadership qualities can be developed, there is hope for women and all aspiring leaders."

**Ms. Lillian Ojandiru, Gender Program Officer, CRS**

# We are grateful to our partners



# Charter 4 CHANGE



## Learn More

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