



NEWSLETTER

January – March

2024



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Dear Readers

Welcome to the first newsletter of The Human Rights Centre Uganda for the year 2024, covering the months of January to March. As we embark on another year of advocacy, empowerment, and action, we extend our warmest greetings to you, our valued partner, HRD, and ally in the fight for human rights and the work of human rights defenders in Uganda.

In this edition, HRCU is thrilled to share with you the latest updates, initiatives, and achievements of the organization as we continue to work tirelessly to contribute towards the protection and promotion of fundamental rights and freedoms, specifically those of human rights defenders.

In order to promote and defend human rights, including those of HRDs in Uganda, HRCU carried out a number of initiatives and activities. These included the launch of the third series of the youth mentorship programme (#HRCUMentorshipSeries2024#, capacity building workshops in Northern Uganda, and reflection meetings between NGO Bureau, District/City NGO Monitoring Committees, and NGOs from the Acholi Sub region among others as documented in this edition.

We are optimistic and determined to keep up our important work in collaboration with you, our allies and supporters, as we look forward to the upcoming months.

Enjoy the read!



NEWS AND INFORMATION



3 HRCU's Head of Programmes Mr. Eric Namungalu giving remarks at the reflection meeting

Celebrating Excellence: HRCU's Executive Director Ms. Margaret Sekaggya Awarded and Recognised for Her Instrumental Role as Chairperson at Uganda Human Rights Commission

We are delighted to announce that on March 1, 2024, Ms. Margaret Sekaggya was awarded the ABETO Peace Award for her instrumental role and leadership as Chairperson at the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) from 1996 to 2009.

During Ms. Sekaggya's leadership, the UHRC was and continues to be at the forefront of promoting and protecting human rights and freedoms across Uganda. This prestigious recognition underscores Ms. Sekaggya's exceptional leadership, dedication, and unwavering commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights in Uganda.

At HRCU, we once again extend our heartfelt congratulations to Ms. Margaret Sekaggya for this well-deserved recognition of her outstanding leadership and contributions to the promotion and protection of human rights and the work of human rights defenders in Uganda.

Gulu: CSOs urged to operate within set Guidelines

In our ongoing efforts to enhance a sustainable relationship between Government and the CSO sector in Uganda, we in March, conjointly with NGO Bureau and Uganda National NGO Forum, held a regional reflection meeting in Gulu covering and representing Acholi Sub region.



Ms. Mercy Awino from PDPO Taking Participants through the personal data and privacy law and best practices for NGOs



Gulu Reflection Meeting

As our niche, building sustainable relationships between the government and CSOs is essential for promoting good governance, accountability, and the protection of human rights in Uganda.

The Financial Intelligence Authority (FIA), the Personal Data Protection Office (PDPO), the Inspectorate of Government (IGG), and the Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB) all presented at this reflection meeting. The Financial Intelligence Authority session trained participants on aspects of money laundering, terrorism financing, and how NGOs can remain watchful, while the URSB session focused on training participants about Beneficial Ownership. In addition to providing training on how to comply with the Data Protection and Privacy Act as an NGO, the session with the Personal Data Protection Office (PDPO) emphasized how important it is for responsible and ethical operations in the NGO sector to adhere to the law.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Acholi sub region were urged to adhere to regulations by the Government while executing their works. The call was made by Mr. Stephen Okello, the Executive Director of the National Bureau for NGOs, while addressing a two-day-regional reflection meeting between NGO Bureau, District NGO Monitoring Committees and NGOs from Acholi sub region conducted from March 12th and 13th 2024 at Bomah Hotel, Gulu.

[Read more](#)



ADVOCACY AND NETWORKING

Throughout January to March, our team actively engaged in a range of advocacy and networking initiatives, aimed at raising awareness, influencing policy, and driving positive change on the working environment of HRDs in Uganda. From organizing grassroots campaigns, radio talk shows to participating in high-level discussions, we have remained dedicated to amplifying the voices of HRDs and the legitimacy of their work.

1.0 Radio Talk Show in Commemoration of International Women's Day

HRCU conducted a range of engagements and informative radio talk shows that took place from January to March. Through these platforms, HRCU was able to reach a wider audience, and raise awareness about human rights issues, access to justice and the working environment of HRDs in Uganda.

As part of our continued effort to lessen cases of human rights abuses and violations in the northern Uganda selected district of Pader and Lira, a radio talk show was held on Voice of Lango (VOL) - FM 100.4 - Lira, in commemoration of International Women's Day. The talk show served as a platform to amplify WHRDs voices, raised awareness, and propelled meaningful dialogue on pressing human rights issues faced by Women and WHRDs in Lango sub region. Time was also allocated to sharing a message about women human rights defenders and their contribution towards promotion, protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Lango sub region. Through engaging discussions and interactive segments, the talk show encouraged listeners to reflect on the significance of human rights and gender equality in their daily lives. Central to the talk show was the amplification of local voices and view point and as such, community members (listeners) were invited to call in, share their experiences, and ask questions.



2.0 Community Dialogue in Gulu to Assess the Level of Appreciation of NGO work by Community Members

In a stride to amplify the impact of NGO work and also assess the level of appreciation, HRCU in partnership with National Bureau for NGOs (NGO Bureau), and the Uganda National NGO Forum (NGO Forum under the good governance and enhancement of a sustainable relationship between Government and CSOs, on March 15, 2024, held a community dialogue at Wigweng Village, Paicho Sub County, Gulu district to among other things, assess the composition and effectiveness of the Sub County NGO Monitoring Committee, examine the level of appreciation of the roles of NGOs/CBOs operating in the sub county. A total of 98 community members (55M 43F) participated in the dialogue, strengthening their knowledge and capacity regarding NGO work. In order to further improve the regulation and operations of NGOs/CBOs, the community dialogue aided in the establishment of a functional Sub-County NGO Monitoring Committee (SNMC), as required by the NGO Act, 2016.





3.0 Community Dialogue to Raise Awareness On Concepts of Human Rights and Principles

Throughout the period under review, HRCU continued with its ‘Empowering Communities initiative,’ where one community dialogue was held at Aroma sub county, Lira district on 7th March 2024. A total of 260 community members and 18 duty bearers were reached with information pertaining to their rights and responsibilities through exploring concepts of human rights principles, dignity and justice. In addition to raising awareness, the dialogue aimed to build the capacity of community members, grass root HRDs and duty bearers to advocate for and protect human rights in the communities they serve and also become agents of constructive community change.

Community members at the dialogue raised key human rights issues including how best to report cases of domestic violence and neglect of children; women doing more work while men overdrink and take the little resources that would otherwise support their families to achieve their rights. The duty bearers present were able to respond to the matters that arose at the community dialogue.



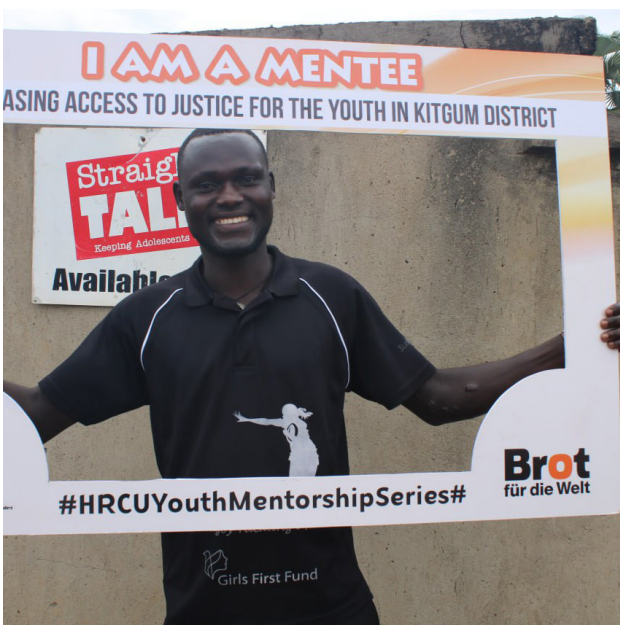


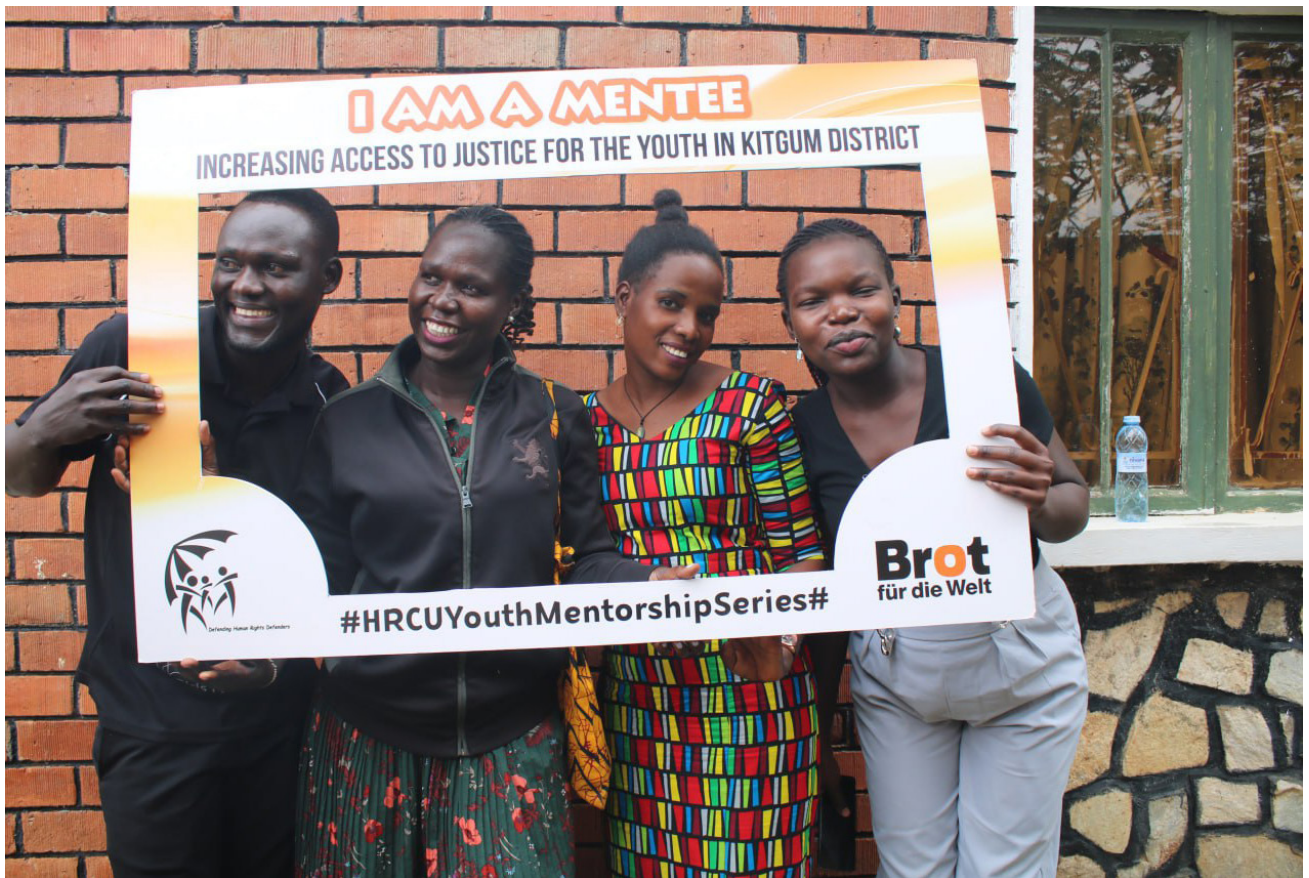
CAPACITY BUILDING

As part of HRCU’s commitment to support and empower human rights defenders (HRDs) in their noble endeavors, we are thrilled to share updates on our recent capacity-building initiatives. These efforts are aimed at enhancing the skills, knowledge, and resilience of HRDs, ensuring they are equipped to effectively advocate for human rights in the communities they serve and beyond. Under this initiative, HRCU trained and equipped 52 (30M 22F) participant who included HRDs, duty bearers and Government MDAs on concepts of human rights, access to justice, human rights based approach to implementation of laws.

1.0 Empowering the Next Generation of HRDs: Launch of the Youth Mentorship Programme Series 3 #HRCUMentorshipSeries#

During the reporting period, under the enhancing access to justice for youth HRDs program, HRCU launched the third cycle of the youth mentorship series. Through the **#HRCUMentorshipSeries#**, we seek to amplify the voices of young HRDs and provide them with a platform to share their perspectives, experiences, and aspirations. The Youth Mentorship Programme also aims to cultivate the leadership and empowerment potentials of youth HRDs passionate about human rights in Kitgum district. Through a series of mentorship sessions, workshops, and interactive discussions, mentees will develop essential leadership skills, including communication, advocacy, and strategic planning. A total of 20 passionate, motivated, and dedicated young people will be selected to participate in this programme and will receive strategic training in advocacy to become champions of rights and freedoms in the communities they live in.





Youth Mentorship programme

2.0 Enhancing Access to Justice: Training Local Leaders in Kitgum District Local Leaders Training in Kitgum district

Between January and March, under the enhancing access to justice for the youth activity currently running in Kitgum district, a total of 20(11 males and 9 female) local, religious and cultural leaders were drawn across Kitgum district and trained on aspects of human rights, access to justice, Uganda's criminal justice system and how local leaders can collaborate and cooperate with law enforcement in respect to bringing about access to Justice for the youth. The 2-day training was conducted from 25th -26th March 2024 and aimed to equip local leaders with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to address human rights and access to justice components effectively. By means of this intervention, local leaders were endowed with the requisite skills and knowledge to function as reliable providers of counsel and assistance for young people dealing with legal matters, thereby augmenting their accessibility to justice.

3.0 Capacity Building Workshop for HRDs and Duty Bearers on Human Rights Based Approach to Implementation of laws.

This workshop, held on 5th and 6th March 2024 in Lira city brought together a total of 30 (13 M and 17F) passionate HRDs and stakeholders committed to advancing human rights and fundamental freedoms. These included key government institutions such as Uganda Police Force; Uganda Prisons Service; Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces; Uganda Human Rights Commission; Local Government and civil society organisations. The primary aim of the workshop was to deepen the understanding of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) and Duty Bearers regarding the Human Rights Based Approach to implementation of laws and human rights standards. Duty bearers also had time to interact and share experiences which enabled them to enhance collaboration and strengthen the referral pathway for promotion and protection of human rights in Northern Uganda.



Stakeholders pose for a group photo during the workshop training

<https://twitter.com/HRCUG/status/1765060100203614306>



PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION SPOT LIGHT

At HRCU, we recognize the power of collaboration in amplifying our impact. In this section, we highlight the invaluable contributions of our partners and allies who share our commitment to upholding human rights principles and creating a more just and equitable world.



<https://twitter.com/HRCUG/status/1755877372631318608/photo/3>

1.0 HRCU hosts Avocats Sans Frontières (ASF) Team

In an important move towards collaboration and strengthening partnerships in the realm of our work, HRCU had the privilege of hosting a collaborative meeting with Avocats Sans Frontières (ASF) team on March 13, 2024. This meeting served as a platform for both organizations to come together and strategize on joint initiatives aimed at improving on the working environment of HRDs and the overall civic space in Uganda. During this meeting, HRCU illustrated the situation of Uganda's civic space and working environment for HRDs in Uganda shedding light on the challenges faced by HRDs, NGOs and the general human rights landscape.



HRCU hosts a team from ASF

2.0 Meeting with Austrian Development Cooperation's Governance and Program Manager for Uganda

With a step towards deepening collaborations, HRCU on March 22, 2024 held a meeting with representatives of ADC. This meeting, provided an opportunity for HRCU to strengthen existing and strong partnership with ADC, discuss the past, and ongoing project on access to justice and promotion of human rights in Uganda. The Governance and Program Manager at ADC Ms. Irene Novotny highlighted ADC's priorities and focus areas in Uganda, particularly in relation to governance, human rights and access to justice. Through the exchange of ideas and knowledge made possible by the meeting, ADC and HRCU were able to learn from each other's experiences and best practices in the areas of good governance, human rights, and access to justice.





HRCU's team meets with ADC's Governance and Program Manager Ms. Irene Novotny

3.0 New Year Civil Society Press Briefing

On January 31, 2024 HRCU's Executive Director Ms. Margaret Sekaggya, read out the CSO new year press briefing, which took place at NGO Forum head offices in Kampala under the theme **'Embracing the New Year: Reflecting on Achievements and Aspiring for Transformation.'** In her message, Ms. Sekaggya, thanked CSO leaders for their incredible strength and underlying spirit and determination in moving Uganda forward. Ms. Sekaggya concluded the briefing with a call to action, urging CSO leaders in Uganda to commit to not only envisioning but enacting a year where efforts nurture a vibrant and thriving CSO sector in Uganda. Whether it's through raising awareness, participating in advocacy campaigns, or supporting our initiatives, every contribution is valuable in our collective pursuit for a conducive working environment of HRDs and CSOs.

Advisory Committee meetings of the reduction in cases of human rights abuses and violation activity

One Advisory Committee meeting was held on 1st February 2024 at HRCU offices and this brought together representatives from Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) Uganda Police Force, Uganda Prisons Service, Uganda Law Society, JLOS Secretariat, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, African Centre for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims (ACTV) and Human Rights Centre Uganda. The project was introduced to all the stakeholders who welcomed it and pledged their support whenever called upon to offer guidance in the implementation of the project. The meeting was attended by 14 members (9 males and 5 females).

4.0 Press and Media Campaigns

Throughout January and March, HRCU intensified its media presence and visibility efforts through targeted social media campaigns, issue of a press statement on international women’s day and update of its website. 3 campaigns under the enhancing a sustainable relationship between Government and NGO sector in Uganda through dialogue initiative, were conducted and these managed to reach a total of 500 people and garnered over 5000 impressions. Additionally, on March 12 and 13, NBS TV was able to broadcast live coverage of the regional reflection meeting that took place in Gulu between NGO Bureau, District NGO Monitoring Committees, NGOs and key MDAs in Acholi sub region.

Find out more: [Here](#)

Under the reduction in cases of human rights abuses and violation in Northern Uganda activity, we embarked on a campaign under the hashtag **#NorthernUGRightsRestore#** to amplify our interventions towards this activity and raise awareness about the importance of protecting and promoting human rights in Northern Uganda, a region that was gravely affected by the protracted LRA war.

4.1 Press statement to commemorate International Women’s Day

In honour of this year’s International Women’s Day, HRCU released a press release during the period under review. The press release recognised the extraordinary work of women human rights defenders and highlighted their resilience, determination, and unshakable commitment to championing rights and gender equality. Aligned with this year’s theme of International Women’s Day, “Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress,” the press statement emphasized the incredible strength, and contributionsof women and WHRDs in Uganda. Investing in women is not just a matter of fairness; it is an imperative for progress, the statement emphasized. The press statement also called upon HRDs, CSOs, government MDAs, and other relevant stakeholders to take concrete action and prioritise protecting WHRDs from all forms of violence, harassment, and reprisal. Investing in resources, capacity-building initiatives, and financial support for WHRDs to strengthen their resilience, skills, and networks remains key their advocacy and activism.

Read more [here](#)



Dialogue Meeting between the Minister of Internal Affairs and CSOs in Uganda

Youth Mentorship Programme 2024

Regional Reflection Meeting in Mbale district

Radio talkshow in commemoration of World Press Freedom



The Human Rights Centre Uganda
Defending Human Rights Defenders