



## **KINGFO ANNUAL REPORT, 2023**

### **PROGRAMME AND MANAGEMENT**

[www.kitgumngoforum.org](http://www.kitgumngoforum.org)

**COMPILED BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR KINGFO**

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## ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Organization
CIG	Community Interest Group
CMGs	Community Monitoring Group
CRETA	Community Responsibility for Enhancing Transparency and Accountability
CT	Community Trainer
CVT	Center for Victims of Torture
DR DIP	Development Response to Displacement Impact Project
GIZ CPS	GIZ Civil Peace Services
GIZ CUSP	GIZ Civil Society in Uganda Support Programme
HR-MDR	Human Rights Monitoring Documentation and Reporting
<i>JINGO</i>	An Acholi word for “Strengthening”
NUHRP	Northern Uganda Human Rights Partnership
PPDA	Public Procurement and Disposal Authority
PSEA	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
STJE	Strengthening Transitional Justice Efforts
SWG	Sector Working Group
URSB	Uganda Registration Services Bureau
WORUDET	Women in Rural Development

**FOREWORD**

*The year 2023 marked a new dawn for Kitgum NGO Forum as a new Board was just elected in the previous year. It was also the first year of implementation of the organization’s newly launched strategic plan 2022-2026 which set the organization on a new path compatible with the current global and national development agenda.*

*The year was also quite revealing of the internal workings of CSOs in the country as so many regrettable occurrences including staff exploitation and embezzlement of funds were found to be rife in the sector. This revelation was courtesy of a social media movement baptized as #NGOexhibition. Closer to home, in one of our very own member CSOs a sex scandal played out in the public gallery involving an executive and a junior staff. These happenings caused the protagonist of the sector to do some soul searching and worse the regulators to claw back a significant amount CSO operating space.*

*Notable in the year also was the level of estrangement that a number of local CSOs and Member Organizations of the Forum have had with the DLGs. Apparently many CSOs/NGOs don’t file annual returns with the DNMC as required by law. Secondly there has been limited opportunity for regular interface between CSOs and their district line departments. This disconnect makes it hard to determine the contribution CSOs make to service delivery in the district; it also makes advocacy by CSOs very difficult as they are not well known to duty bearers. As such there is mutual suspicion between CSOs and the district LGs which dents CSO operating space.*

*On a positive note I would like to commend the Secretariat for the numerous good works done including securing a new funding partner, CVT, which will spur our peace and human rights programming in the coming months. This partnership will enable KINGFO pay its operational and personnel costs comfortably for a year with a likelihood of continuation given good performance. I thank all CSOs, Member Organizations, partners and stakeholders who supported the organization in various ways across the year. I pledge to lead the organization in its quest to serve the community better in the coming calendar year 2024.*

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*Mr. Otto Vantorino*

*Chairperson KINGFO, Executive Committee*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This report covers the period January to December 2023. In the report attention is paid to implementation of planned and emerging activities. The report also covers key management issues such as personnel, finance/assets and other critical developments for the organization. Finally, the report outlines some of the challenges encountered, lessons learnt and recommendations for the next year going forward.

## **2.0 PLANNED/FUNDED ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED**

### **2.1 HUMAN RIGHTS AND PEACEBUILDING SUB SECTOR**

#### **2.1.1 Strengthening Transitional Justice Efforts project**

In October 2023 KINGFO was awarded a sub grant by the US Department of Justice through Center for Victims of Torture (CVT) to implement a one-year pilot project titled Strengthening Transitional Justice Efforts (STJE) in Uganda. The project objectives three and four which are to be implemented by sub grantees, namely, i) advancing justice for survivors of conflicts and ii) fostering social cohesion in communities affected by past conflicts, fit quite well with KINGFO's strategic objective of building a peaceable community where there is freedom and respect for human rights. The project is being implemented in Latanya, Acholibur sub county and Madi Opei sub county/Town Council until September 2024.

The project activities include community dialogues on TJ efforts, monument reconstruction and reburial ceremonies, training of reconciliation groups, and emergent/protracted conflict mediation among others. Since its inception, the target communities have expressed great need and appreciation of the project. It will be easy for the project team to commence core activity implementation in 2024 given the proper launch which was undertaken in the first quarter of the project in 2023.



Figure 1 KINGFO STJE/Jingo project inception meeting attended by the LC V Chairpersons of Kitgum, Pader and Lamwo DLGs.



Figure 2 Latanya, Amoko massacre memorial prayer in November and the monument site

### 2.1.2 Youth Human Rights Defenders Activities

Human Rights Center Uganda, a Kampala based HRD organization is currently implementing a youth human rights defenders project in Kitgum district. This project is expected to go on for the next three years. In the project selected youth mentees are placed with human rights organization regarded as mentors who engage them in various human rights activities (MDR). The organizations (including KINGFO) also provide exposure for the mentees to various Justice Law and Order Institutions such as the court, police and prisons learn firsthand what transpires in these places to gain a better perspective of human rights work. Further KINGFO signed an MoU with HRCU to host some activities of the organization/project namely the quarterly YHRDs quarterly review meeting. This quarterly meeting was conducted twice in 2023 whereby the mentees were in position to share their experiences, receive guidance from legal experts and learn from each other.

### 2.1.3 Land rights intervention

KINGFO has since the NUHRP coalition establishment in 2010 been involved in various communal land rights defending activities in Lamwo and Kitgum districts. This has mostly been through dialogue and media platforms whereby community members are sensitized about their rights and engaged conversations around land documentation, access, use, control and ownership. These interventions are a result of the onslaught of land grabbers in the sub region following the protracted LRA insurgency.

Lately, KINGFO has been a member of Acholi Large Scale Investment Interest Group which is supported by GIZ CPS. Under the framework, in 2023, KINGFO participated in a multi-stakeholder dialogue to benchmark and chart a new course of action to further push the frontier of land rights promotion and protection for vulnerable land owners in Teso, Acholi and Karamoja sub regions. On its own accord the organization undertook Monitoring, Documentation and Reporting (Mapping and referral) of emerging land conflict cases for action by more specialized and better resourced partners doing similar works in the sub region.

### 2.1.4 Dialogue for un-integrated youth

Once again under the NUHRP, KINGFO was in position to implement a dialogue meeting purposed to raise awareness and find solution to the plight of un-integrated youth (otherwise known as

children in the streets/aguu). These children ended up on the streets due to various reasons including neglect, as children born of war and substance abuse among others. The numbers of these children continue to rise (in hundreds) in urban centers across Acholi sub region.

Safer World in partnership with NUHRP coalition members formulated appropriate activities namely district stakeholder dialogue meeting and radio talk show to engage the public and relevant authorities about this challenge. The dialogue attracted the LC V Chairperson, the Municipal Mayor, the RDC, religious leaders, cultural leaders, technocrats and CSOs. It was resolved that these children should not be regarded as criminal elements but rather as a vulnerable group in need of all our concerted efforts to have them re-integrated in mainstream society again.

#### 2.1.5 The 16 Days of activism against Gender Based Violence

KINGFO played a key leadership role in marking this important period (25<sup>th</sup> November to 10<sup>th</sup> December) which is commemorated every calendar year. Together with Kitgum district Community Services department, KINGFO convened a couple multi stakeholder meetings to prepare for the event. The events were primarily sponsored by CSOs who are members of KINGFO. KINGFO therefore played a critical role in mobilizing and coordinating their efforts towards the commemoration. CSOs/partners organized independent activities as well as participated with others in some like the launch function to mark the 16 days of activism.

The year 2023 commemoration comes on the heels of heightened GBV, maternal deaths and teenage pregnancies in the district.

## 2.2 GOVERNANCE SUB SECTOR

### 2.2.1 CRETA project

In 2018 KINGFO signed its first MoU with the Inspectorate of Government to implement an anti-corruption project titled; Community Responsibility for Enhancing Transparency and Accountability - CRETA. This intervention is aimed at empowering grassroots community structures to combat corruption in sub projects under special government programmes like NUSAF, DR DIP etc. as well as regular service delivery. In 2023 KINGFO renewed its MoU with the

IG to finish implementation of the remainder of activities from yet another MoU it had signed with the agency in the year 2022.

Out of this MoU KINGFO trained additional five Community Monitoring Groups – CMGs with a total of 50 members in greater Palabek sub district (six more groups will be trained upon disbursement of the second tranche). These five groups and 24 other groups trained the previous year were accorded follow up support visits to ensure they effectively engage in their designated work under the intervention. A number of sub projects were monitored, for example the Abera Sub County street solar lighting initiative whose procurement process had gone wrong. With the intervention of the CIG, CMG and the organization through its CTs, this matter was clarified.

### 2.2.2 PPDA CMS intervention

The organization was privileged to sign a cooperation agreement with PPDA, yet another anti-corruption government agency, to implement an online Contract Monitoring System for public projects and procurement. This intervention aligns well with KINGFO strategic objective of promoting good governance in public offices. KINGFO focal point persons in the governance sub sector were trained in using the online application for documenting and reporting affected public projects and procurement.

In the year 2023 seven (07) public projects/contracts were documented and reported for remedial action on the platform. This include; construction of Kitgum main market, construction of four classroom blocks in Ojuma PS, Aringomone small scale irrigation project in Porogali sub county, Pader district etc. In this exercise the relevant district departments, leaders and project managers are engaged to share relevant project information as well as participate in identifying redress for problematic procurement and delivery of projects in their dockets.



*Figure 3 Aringo-Mone mini irrigation project; poorly maintained (Before and after photo) as documented by our Monitoring Officer Okot Churchill Peny-Can*

## 2.3 CSO NETWORKING AND COORDINATION ENGAGEMENTS

In 2020 GIZ supported KINGFO in streamlining its CSO coordination engagement. Previously KINGFO undertook this task in a rather haphazard manner with little sense of direction and impact. GIZ CUSP helped KINGFO to put in place a CSO coordination mechanism/TOR with a clear structure, activities, roles and responsibilities of leaders. The mechanism also clarified the limits of KINGFO coordination engagement vis-à-vis that of the District Local Government. So in 2023 like in the years before since the mechanism was launched, KINGFO implemented 05 SWG meetings which addressed specific CSO intervention sectors including; production, community services, health and education with a view of identifying and fronting pertinent advocacy issues for policy action by the relevant department, sector committee or district council. Several advocacy issues like increased substance abuse among young people in the district, poor health service delivery, Karamojong cattle rustling etc. were identified and are being followed up by CSOs for action by the duty bearers.

## 2.4 OTHER EMERGING ACTIVITIES AND ENGAGEMENTS

### 2.4.1 CSO training on labor and employment laws of Uganda

As a requirement for all law abiding CSOs, an organization should adopt an employment/personnel policy that is based on the relevant employment/labor laws of the

country for its employees and volunteers. KINGFO is always keen to provide member organizations and all CSOs operating in Kitgum and Lamwo district with any opportunity for capacity building. KINGFO also encourages resource persons and organization within the CSO fraternity with any training capacity to share to do so in collaboration with the Forum.

In 2023 WORUDET offered to train CSOs (30 participants) on labor laws/regulation/policy in collaboration with KINGFO. Their legal officer took members through the employment Act, Regulation and policy while conducting real time benchmarking to establish the standing of participating organizations on some of the key provisions for immediate guidance.

#### 2.4.2 Karamojong cattle rustling petition

The sub counties on the eastern borders of Kitgum and Agago districts have been embattled by protracted cattle raids orchestrated by Karamojong cattle rustlers. This problem came to a climax in June 2023 where hundreds if not thousands of villagers were displaced to nearby trading centers and institutions like health centers, churches and schools where there was relative security. The Karamojong raided hundreds of animals most of which were never recovered by soldiers and the local authorities, many people lost their lives, many more were maimed and tens of huts/granaries were burnt to ashes by the marauding warriors. While in their displacement the humanitarian situation got so bad for the IDPs to the extent that there was not enough clean water, limited shelter, inadequate food and medicines. This situation was reported by one CSO based in Orom sub county in a community services SWG group meeting which resolved that a petition be written to Parliament demanding government to provide adequate security and humanitarian relief for the affected communities.

A petition was formulated and shared online and in hard copy for CSO representatives to sign. Over 100 signatories have been collected so far from a diverse range of people from across the country and globally towards the cause. The area MP Hon. Lamwaka Margaret Odwar is willing and ready to accompany CSOs and stakeholders to deliver the petition to Parliament anytime.

#### 2.4.3 Press conference on Karamojong cattle rustling

In the same vein, the community services sector CSOs held a press briefing involving local and sub-regional media houses to amplify this call by mobilizing popular and political support for its

success. Media houses including Jambo FM, Tembo FM, Mighty FM, Nile online TV, and Nation Media attended the briefing, filed and broadcast the information shared. The media houses were also given opportunity to ask questions for clarifications by CSOs about the petition and the problem which it intended to address.

#### 2.4.4 Press conference on a local NGO office sex scandal

In our effort to protect local CSO operating space and keep a good name of the fraternity before the public eye, KINGFO management and CSOs convened another press conference to dispel a dark cloud which had formed above the fraternity following a lurid social media footage of a CEO of one of the local organization involving in a sex act with one of his junior staff in their offices. The name of this local NGO together with the rest of the CSO fraternity was dragged in mad over the scandalous act. The main media houses in the district were invited and CSOs representatives led by the Chairperson Board read out a statement dissociating the fraternity from the act as well as condemning it. CSOs representative underlined the leadership role they play in combating sexual harassment and exploitation at work places as well as in the community. This same statement was widely shared on KINGFO's various social media handles including X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and WhatsApp.



#### 2.4.5 Training of CSOs on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

Following the above incident, KINGFO and a few other CSOs including ADRA and WORUDET saw the need to build the capacity of local organizations on PSEA policy. Over thirty representatives of local organization were trained at a half day workshop at the refugee law project office. ADRA and WORUDET have very strong PSEA policies with designated officers appointed to oversee their implementation. It was these focal point officers from the two organizations that facilitated the training exercise on that day. They explained to members key terms, situations and remedial steps for helping survivors of SEA. Organizations were then given a sample of the PSEA policy from which to develop their own.



Figure 4 The PSEA training session underway at NMPDC - Kitgum LDLG HQ

### 3.0 MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

#### 3.1 Personnel

KINGFO had a total of 12 staff members in 2023 including senior management, program staff, volunteers, and support staff. The senior management staff were the Executive Director and the Accountant, three program staff under the STJE/*JINGO* project, two Community Trainers, two support staff, and three volunteers. Most of these staff members were retained from the previous years except two program staff under the new CVT sponsored *JINGO* project.

For the better half the year most of these personnel worked as volunteers except for the two CTs and support staff. It was until October when the organization acquired the JINGO project that everyone including volunteers were in position to be paid some emoluments/stipends. Seven of the personnel were eventually enrolled on full monthly pay and all volunteers put on stipends.

### 3.2 Capacity building

The advent of CVT, KINGFO's new partner, brought about numerous opportunities for staff training under what was dubbed Cross-CSO-Training. The training topics were mostly technical specifically for the project team such as; therapeutic documentation, trauma informed care, storytelling etc. These training particularly benefitted three personnel i.e. two program officers under the *JINGO* project and the Executive Director. As a practice these three training beneficiaries also organized in-house training sessions on the same topics for the staff and volunteers who didn't have the opportunity.

Further, our partner the Human Rights Center Uganda organized training on Human Rights Monitoring, Documentation, and Reporting which was attended by two of our volunteers. The volunteers are now engaging in HR work with confidence and commendable competence.

We also received training on Contract Monitoring System with our partner the PPDA. This training event was convened in Gulu for three days for CSOs from Acholi, Lango and West Nile sub regions. Three of our staff including the Accountant received the training. Following the training, the organization is now capable to smoothly use the online application to effectively report affected public projects that require redress by PPDA and other anti-corruption agencies.

### 3.3 Finances/assets/liabilities

As provided for in the organization's constitution, KINGFO receives its funding from donors/partners (CVT and IG), membership and subscription payments and contribution from well-wishers. In the year, the organization was privileged to get funding from all these sources amounting to some 90 million UGX as stipulated in the finance report attached. 2023 was the best funded year of the organization over the last four years.

During the year especially under the project, KINGFO was in position to restore old equipment to usable conditions (a motor cycle and the office car) and acquire new items i.e. two lap top

computers, one professional canon camera, one projector, internet router/connectivity and new Bajaj motorcycle 125 CC. These assets are documented in the revised assets register of the organization for the year. With this capacity, KINGFO finds itself in a prime position to effectively execute its mandate without much hindrance.

The organization in 2023 had accumulated rent arrears of 11.7 million UGX of which 1 million UGX was cleared leaving a debt of 10.7 million UGX. Further, the organization had salary arrears for the Askari and Welfare Assistant amounting to 2.6 million UGX of which 1.37 million UGX was cleared leaving a debt of 1.23 million UGX.

### 3.4 Membership and subscription

In the year 2023, KINGFO registered 04 new members all of which were CBOs as follows;

1. Pi Rwot Development Association - PRDA
2. Lar Kwo CBO
3. Called to Serve Ministries
4. Community Initiative for Local Development - CILD

The following registered member organizations paid their subscriptions for the year;

1. ADRA TOGETHER
2. Rugby Tacking Life
3. Kitgum Youth Center
4. Called to Serve Ministries
5. Community Led Health Promotion Initiative
6. Diocese of Kitgum
7. Kindness and Peace Family Care and Reconciliation
8. Food for the Hungry Uganda
9. Community Initiative for Local Development
10. Lar Kwo CBO

KINGFO still remains the only CSO network in the two districts attracting especially local and national CSOs (NGOs and CBOs) to its membership.

#### 4.0 ACHIEVEMENTS

- i. Probably the most significant achievement for the organization was the partnership with CVT which resulted into expanding the operating scope of the organization, deepening on its human rights and peacebuilding strategic goals, acquisition and restoration of office equipment, recruitment of new personnel and some remuneration for all personnel of the organization.
- ii. Under the IG partnership, the organization was in position to train five new Community Anti-Corruption Monitoring Groups in the host community in Lamwo district
- iii. The new partnership with PPDA has also leveraged KINGFO's governance and anti-corruption goal by enhancing its reporting capability and collaboration with actors at the Local Government
- iv. The organization has also been in position to attain new capacities given the various training opportunities it took part in through its personnel. With the newfound skills sets, the organization is in a better position to consolidate its work and venture into new areas for better execution of its mandate.

#### 5.0 CHALLENGES

- i. Low levels of compliance by the organization on a number of statutory requirements including filing returns with URSB, permit renewal with the NGO Bureau and MoU renewal with the two District Local Governments. This puts the organization in a very precarious position and the risk of having its operations halted by the authorities.
- ii. Failure to swear in the EC members elect which undermined their capacity to operate and fully support the Secretariat during the year
- iii. High debt burden which is unsustainable in the long run especially the office rent arrears.
- iv. Poor attitude and perception among member organizations of the roles in the civil society space and their expectations of the Forum.
- v. Low levels of subscription and high mortality rate of member organizations
- vi. Narrowing CSO operating space given the shrinking funding landscape and stringent regulatory requirements by the relevant authorities.

## 6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Continue to work with volunteers to bridge the human resource gaps
- ii. Move the office to a more affordable space to avoid paying exorbitant rent amounts
- iii. Build partnership and engage in serious proposal writing in collaboration with resource persons and through consortiums
- iv. Work with CSOs and member organizations to mobilize resources for CSO coordination meetings and engagements
- v. Prioritize statutory compliance with the various relevant government regulatory authorities such as the URSB, NGO Bureau and the District Local Governments.
- vi. Swear in the Board elect and support them to execute their governance and oversight roles in the organization as soon as possible.

Undersign:

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Mr. Otto Ventorino

**Chairperson EC (Elect)**