



CENTER FOR CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE (CCG)

ANNUAL REPORT (2025)



(L-R): Constitutional scholar Prof. Frederick Ssempebwa, Justice James Ogoola (Principal Judge Emeritus), and CCG Executive Director Dr. Sarah Bireete joined by Chief Guest Rt. Hon. Thomas Tayebwa (Deputy Speaker of Parliament) and Keynote Speaker Justice Johann Kriegler (Justice Emeritus, South Africa). Also pictured are Mr. Godber Tumushabe (CCG Board Chairperson/Associate Director, GLISS) and Dr. Moses Isooba (Executive Director, UNNGOF) at the annual conference of the constitution organized by CCG in November 2025 at the Sheraton Kampala Hotel.

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2025 reporting period marked a milestone year for the Center for Constitutional Governance (CCG). Centered on the 30th anniversary of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, CCG's activities focused on the theme of "Guardianship"—evaluating the past three decades of constitutionalism while preparing the citizenry for the 2026 general elections.

CCG successfully executed two flagship programs: the National Conference on the Constitution 2025 and Season Five of the Inter-University Debate Interface. These initiatives reached across 25 universities and engaged the highest levels of the judiciary, legislature, and civil society. Key outcomes included the adoption of a National Communiqué on institutional integrity and the empowerment of a new generation of "constitutional guardians" through the Hope Initiative Clubs. Despite challenges regarding resource constraints and a shrinking civic space, CCG remains a pivotal regional watchdog, bridging the gap between constitutional policy and grassroots practice in East Africa.

2.0 Mission and Vision

The Center for Constitutional Governance (CCG) is a regional watchdog based in Kampala, Uganda. We operate across the East and Horn of Africa, including Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, and South Sudan through our partners.

2.1 Mission Statement

Our core mission is to strengthen constitutional governance by bridging the critical gap between what the law promises (policy) and what actually happens on the ground (practice). We work to promote constitutional governance through carrying out constitutional literacy campaigns and advocacy across East Africa.

2.2 Vision Statement

Building a center that empowers citizens to fully utilize their constitutional rights and obligations so as to meaningfully participate in their governance; ensure that governance is grounded in the Constitution, citizens are empowered to defend their rights and institutions respect the rule of law.

3.0 Organizational Overview

CCG is a constitutional watchdog working in the East and Horn of Africa, based in Kampala-Uganda. The mission of CCG is to make the Constitution a People's document through citizens engagements, civil society partnerships, government actors and regional organizations. CCG's core work is to: Analyze, Generate and Disseminate constitutional knowledge and information regarding observation, protection and violations of the Constitution. This is done through research and analysis, outreach and advocacy, and institutional growth.

4.0 Programs and Activities

Center for Constitutional Governance (CCG) continued to implement a wide array of activities organized around defined thematic areas:

1. Constitutionalism: Focused literacy, advocacy and defense of the Constitution.
2. University Students' Program: Delivered through the Hope Initiative Clubs.
3. Engagements on Civic Space TV: A media-based initiative dedicated to public discourse.
4. Digital Rights
5. Review of the NGO Laws

Beyond these primary programmatic areas, the organization also successfully carried out numerous activities addressing cross-cutting themes throughout the reporting period.

4.1 Constitutionalism

Constitutionalism is the foundation of democracy, characterized by the rule of law, separation of powers, and the protection of individual rights.

In 2025, the Center for Constitutional Governance (CCG) continued its crucial mission of advocating for and defending the Constitution and promoting constitutionalism across Uganda and East Africa. To achieve this, we executed a robust program of activities, including conferences, workshops, and debates, engaging various stakeholders to build consensus and drive the realization of these core democratic values and ideals.

The year 2025 held unique significance for both Uganda and CCG: the 1995 Ugandan Constitution marked its 30th anniversary. This key milestone served as a powerful catalyst for national dialogue and critical reflection. Consequently, it became the dominant theme at CCG's annual Conference on the Constitution and the highlight of Season Five of the Interuniversity Debates Interface.

4.1.1 The Conference on the Constitution 2025: Commemorating 30 Years of the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda

The Center for Constitutional Governance (CCG) in partnership with the Uganda National NGO Forum (UNNGOF), successfully convened the Conference on the Constitution 2025 under the theme **“Guardians of the Constitution: Strengthening Institutions for Democracy, Justice, and the Rule of Law.”**

The conference, held on Friday, October 10, 2025, at the Sheraton Kampala Hotel, marked the 30th anniversary of the promulgation of the 1995 Constitution a cornerstone of Uganda’s democratic and governance framework. The event provided a platform for reflection, dialogue, and commitment toward reviving the spirit of constitutionalism and strengthening institutional integrity.

The event brought together civil society actors, policymakers, academia and students from the Hope Initiative Program cutting across 25 universities culminating in a national communique outlining shared commitments and actionable steps toward deepening democratic governance.

4.1.2 Remarks by Dr. Sarah Bireete, Executive Director, CCG

In her address, CCG Executive Director Dr. Sarah Bireete emphasized that the 1995 Constitution fundamentally positioned the people of Uganda as the nation’s sovereigns. She specifically challenged the youth, recognizing them as the first generation living fully under the Constitution, to transition “from promises to action” in upholding its principles.

Dr. Bireete strongly reiterated that the Constitution's true purpose is not to be utilized as a tool of authority but as a shield for the vulnerable against the powerful. She charged civic movements and youth clubs to champion constitutional advocacy as an essential generational responsibility.



Photo: Dr. Sarah Bireete, ED CCG making her welcome remarks

Civic Space TV Link: https://www.youtube.com/live/hHI=awAdbY?si=81DUqUJ_B86TwElc

4.1.3 Remarks by Dr. Moses Isooba, Executive Director, Uganda National NGO Forum (UNNGOF)

Dr. Moses Isooba called upon all stakeholders for a “collective reclamation of the Constitution”—viewing it as a unifying shield for the nation. He emphasized that the anniversary demanded reflection, renewal, and a committed return to the original dreams of 1995. Furthermore, Dr. Isooba stressed the critical importance of fostering solidarity among civil society organizations, academia, and the government.



Photo: Dr Moses Isooba, ED UNNGOF making his remarks.

Civic Space TV Link: https://www.youtube.com/live/hHIzaowAdbY?si=81DUqUJ_B86TwElc



Photo: Rt. Hon. Thomas Tayebwa (left), Dr. Sarah Bireete (center), Rtd. Hon. Justice James Ogoola stands at the conference.

4.1.4 Remarks by the Chief Guest, Rt. Hon. Thomas Tayebwa, the Deputy Speaker of Parliament

Rt. Hon. Thomas Tayebwa, the Deputy Speaker of Parliament, opened his remarks by commending the 1995 Constitution for successfully ushering in an era of stability and robust institutional growth. He then focused on the future, stressing the need to secure and consolidate these critical gains. According to the Deputy Speaker, this requires dedicated action in three key areas: comprehensive justice sector reform, the promotion of efficient parliamentary administration, and the active participation of the elite in national politics and governance.

4.1.5 Keynote Address by Rtd. Hon. Justice Johann Kriegler, Justice Emeritus of the Constitutional Court of South Africa

The Keynote Address was delivered by Rtd. Hon. Justice Johann Kriegler, Justice Emeritus of the Constitutional Court of South Africa and former Head of the post-apartheid Independent Electoral Commission (1994). Reflecting on South Africa’s constitutional evolution, he made the powerful assertion that laws are insufficient to change a people—it is the people themselves who change laws. The Justice delivered a pointed caution regarding two major threats: politically motivated kidnappings and systemic, state-led violations of the Rule of Law. He appealed to Uganda to continue upholding its constitutional values and maintain its stature as a regional exemplar of constitutional democracy.

4.1.6 Summary of the Keynote Address

Rtd. Hon. Justice Johann Kriegler, Justice Emeritus of the Constitutional Court of South Africa, delivered a profound Keynote Address that balanced commendation with cautionary critique.

Justice Kriegler began by commending the Center for Constitutional Governance (CCG) and local civil society groups for their steadfast commitment to democratic governance, labeling civil society as the greatest natural resource of any nation. He cited South Africa’s successful transition from apartheid as proof of the strength and resilience of a vigorous civic sector. Acknowledging his role as a foreign guest, he asserted his shared regional destiny with Uganda, clarifying that his frankness was born of an invitation to speak truthfully, not to offer diplomatic pleasantries.

Drawing parallels between Uganda’s 1995 Constitution and South Africa’s 1994 democratic Constitution—noting their similar histories and institutional aspirations—he introduced the central thesis of his address: “Laws do not change people; people change laws.” He stressed that a

constitution's effectiveness is entirely dependent on the integrity and commitment of the society implementing it.

Justice Kriegler provided global and African examples to demonstrate how even well-designed constitutional structures fail when political actors lack integrity.

- He highlighted the decline of judicial independence in the United States, citing the partisan manipulation of the Supreme Court appointments process.
- He illustrated the failures of Judicial Service Commissions in both South Africa and the Maldives, where partisan politics consistently undermined their intended non-partisan purpose.

While expressing admiration for Uganda's visible progress and stability, Justice Kriegler issued a stark warning that deep constitutional fissures lie beneath the surface. He identified several serious threats to the Rule of Law:

- The militarization of politics and the justice system.
- Ongoing, politically motivated abductions of opposition figures.
- The overall deterioration of the Rule of Law, exemplified by the repeated poor treatment of opposition leader Dr. Kizza Besigye and the political class's failure to learn from past mistakes.

He stressed that politically motivated detentions, regardless of whether they are officially sanctioned or carried out by rogue elements, constitute a grave assault on the Rule of Law and pose a fundamental threat to the state's long-term stability. He cautioned that Uganda risks repeating the political tragedies that have historically plagued other African nations whose post-independence leaders-built systems reliant on personal power rather than strong institutions.

Justice Kriegler closed with an urgent appeal: the militarization of politics and elections is fundamentally incompatible with democracy. As Uganda approaches its seventh election under the same leadership, the process must be manifestly free, fair, and free of security-force interference. Failure to ensure this, he warned, risks a downward spiral into democratic decay. He urged Uganda to fulfil its destiny as a beacon of stability and constitutionalism in a fragile region.

4.1.7 Recommendations from the Keynote Address

Justice Johann Kriegler presented the following nine key recommendations for strengthening constitutional democracy in Uganda:

1. Strengthen and Protect Civil Society:

- Recognize civil society as a core national asset essential for democratic resilience.
- Ensure an enabling environment for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), academia, youth movements, and human rights defenders.

2. Rebuild Trust and Independence in State Institutions:

- Restore the credibility and independence of the Judiciary, including implementing a strict merit-based appointment system.
- Insulate judicial institutions from partisan interference, intimidation, and military influence.

3. End the Militarization of Politics and Justice:

- Immediately remove armed forces from judicial processes, political disputes, and elections.
- Prohibit the deployment of uniformed personnel at polling stations.
- Strengthen civilian oversight over security agencies.

4. Address Politically Motivated Abductions:

- Immediately halt all extrajudicial detentions, kidnappings, and unlawful transfers across borders.
- Investigate and hold accountable all those responsible, whether state actors or otherwise.
- Publicly reaffirm that such actions are illegal and fundamentally undermine the constitutional order.

5. Learn from Past Mistakes and Prevent Recurrence:

- Acknowledge and prevent the repetition of recognized patterns of political repression (e.g., the repeated treatment of Dr. Kizza Besigye).
- Establish robust institutional mechanisms for peaceful political competition and the accommodation of opposition voices.

6. Prepare Adequately for Political Transition:

- Develop clear, institutionalized plans for succession and leadership changes to proactively avoid instability once the current President leaves office.
- Strengthen state institutions so that national stability is dependent on systems, not individual leaders.

7. Safeguard the Rule of Law:

- Reaffirm the Rule of Law as a non-negotiable principle; the State must always obey the law, as State-led violation of the law leads to chaos.
- Ensure all security agencies operate strictly within constitutional limits.

8. Ensure a Free, Fair, and Credible Electoral Process:

- Guarantee that the upcoming general election is manifestly peaceful, transparent, and absolutely free from security-force intimidation and interference.

9. Empower Citizen Participation:

- Recognize that constitutional success ultimately depends on the citizenry.
- Encourage active, sustained citizen participation in protecting and implementing the Constitution.

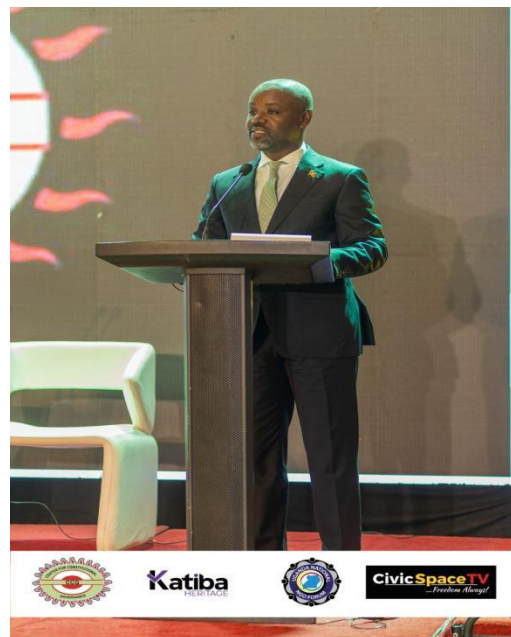


Photo: Rt. Hon. Thomas Tayebwa, Deputy Speaker of the 11th Parliament of Uganda.
Civic Space TV Link: https://www.youtube.com/live/hH1zaowAdbY?si=81DUqUJ_B86TwElc



Photo: RTD. Hon. Justice Johann Kriegler making his keynote address

Civic Space TV Link: https://www.youtube.com/live/hH1zaowAdbY?si=81DUqUJ_B86TwElc

4.1.8 Speakers’ Reflections

Professor Frederick Ssempebwa

Professor Frederick Ssempebwa is an eminent constitutional lawyer with over 50 years of distinguished legal practice. Widely revered as one of Uganda’s foremost legal scholars, his expertise spans Revenue and Taxation, Constitutional Law, Contracts, Conveyancing, and General Litigation. A foundational figure in Uganda’s legal framework, he served as a member of the 1995 Constitutional Commission and later chaired the Uganda Constitutional Review Commission. Professor Ssempebwa continues to contribute to the legal field through his private practice.

Prof. Ssempebwa, questioned the nature of Uganda’s current stability, asking whether it was genuinely consensual or merely imposed. Using the powerful analogy of “a husband who commands his home,” he argued that stability achieved without corresponding freedom and institutional checks and balances is ultimately illusory. He specifically called for robust judicial independence and the absolute restraint of military interference in judicial processes, asserting, “We cannot play politics in court.”

Justice James Ogoola (Rtd.)

Justice James Ogoola is the Principal Judge Emeritus of the High Court of Uganda and one of the nation’s most distinguished legal minds. Beyond his storied judicial career, he served as the Chairperson of the Judicial Service Commission and was a member of the Constitutional

Commission that helped shape the 1995 Constitution. Renowned for his unwavering integrity and intellect, Justice Ogoola is also a celebrated poet and author and well known for his commitment to the Rule of Law.

Justice Ogoola critically interrogated Uganda’s constitutional journey by posing a pointed question to the audience: “Where did the Constitution go?” He proposed the need for a “Constitutional Accountability Audit” to systematically evaluate how the four key governance pillars—the Executive, Legislature, Judiciary, and citizens—have upheld constitutional integrity.

His key reflections included the following sector-specific points:

- Judiciary: Must exercise boldness and clarity in constitutional adjudication, drawing inspiration from precedents like the Kenyan Supreme Court.
- Legislature: Has been culpable in desecrating the Constitution through the politically charged removal of term and age limits.
- Executive: Must demonstrate fidelity to the Rule of Law by obeying court orders and refraining from trying civilians in military courts.
- Citizens: Should actively defend the Constitution through peaceful protests, strategic litigation, and sustained civic participation.

Justice Ogoola concluded by stating that obedience to the Constitution is a patriotic duty, urging citizens to: “Adhere to it like a leech on the skin.”

Hon. Dr. Miria Matembe

Dr. Miria Matembe is a renowned political leader, human rights defender, and veteran of Uganda’s constitutional journey. Her profound influence on the nation’s legal landscape began in 1988 as a key member of the Constitutional Commission, where she was instrumental in ensuring women’s voices were represented in the drafting of the 1995 Constitution. Having served as both a Minister of Ethics and Integrity and a Member of Parliament, Dr. Matembe remains a leading moral authority and a tireless champion for the empowerment of women in leadership.

Hon. Dr. Miria Matembe lamented the erosion of constitutional integrity, stating starkly that “the 1995 Constitution died after ten years.” She noted that meaningful implementation effectively ended with the 7th Parliament. Dr. Matembe decried the systemic weakening of constitutional safeguards and urged all Ugandans to rekindle the vibrant spirit of 1995 through renewed activism and vigilance.



Photo: *Prof. Frederick Ssempebwa making his submissions*

Civic Space TV Link: https://www.youtube.com/live/hHIzaowAdbY?si=81DUqUJ_B86TwElc



Photo: *Rtd. Justice James Ogola & Hon. Dr. Miria Matembe share a light moment*

4. Thematic Discussions

The dialogue centered around four critical areas:

1. **Institutional Performance and Independence:** Assessing the Judiciary, Parliament, and the Executive and strategies to insulate them from political capture.
2. **The Bill of Rights and Civic Space:** Addressing shrinking civic space and the need for renewed defense of human rights.
3. **Youth and Constitutionalism:** Mobilizing Millennials and Gen Z to become “guardians of the Constitution.”
4. **Comparative Constitutionalism in Africa:** Drawing lessons from nations that have maintained democratic continuity despite challenges.



Photo: *Mr. Godber Tumushabe, Board Chairman CCG making his contributions during the plenary*

Civic Space TV Link: https://www.youtube.com/live/hHIzaowAdbY?si=81DUqUJ_B86TwElc



Photo: *Ocero Ronald, President of the Hope Initiative Club, Kampala International University (KIU), Western Campus making contributions during plenary*

Civic Space TV Link: https://www.youtube.com/live/hHIzaowAdbY?si=81DUqUJ_B86TwElc



Photo: *All invited guests following the discussions*



Photo: Former Gulu Municipality MP Hon. Lyandro Komakech (Left), CCG Board Chairperson Mr. Godber Tumushabe, East African Legislative Assembly Member (Uganda) Hon. George Stephen Odongo (central), Lawyer Ms. Piloya Nyeko, & Electoral Commission Spokesperson Mr. Julius Mucunguzi (right) during the networking session.

5. Resolutions and Communiqué Highlights

The Conference culminated in the adoption of a Communiqué affirming participants shared responsibility to defend constitutionalism.

Key commitments included:

- Building political culture beyond textual interpretation of the Constitution.
- Promoting civic agency and cross-generational solidarity.
- Defending institutions of governance.
- Promoting truth-telling, justice, reconciliation and national healing.
- Integrating youth and digital innovation in constitutional advocacy.
- Institutionalizing the Conference on the Constitution as an annual accountability platform.

6. Expected Outcomes and Impact

Drawing from the Concept Note and the adopted Communiqué, the Conference achieved:

- ✚ Strengthened Partnerships: Enhanced collaboration between CSOs, government and international actors.
- ✚ Youth Empowerment: Solidified the commitment to nurture young Ugandans as constitutional guardians.
- ✚ Public Awareness: Revived national consciousness on constitutionalism and governance.

✚ Institutionalization of Dialogue: Agreement to sustain this conference as an annual civic audit.

7. Conclusion

The 2025 Conference on the Constitution reaffirmed that the endurance of Uganda’s democracy depends on the courage of its citizens and the integrity of its institutions. From the reflections of Justice Kriegler to the commitments of the youth, the message was clear: *“Ask not what the Constitution can do for you, but what you can do to protect and defend it.”*

The Center for Constitutional Governance and the Uganda National NGO Forum remain steadfast in steering this movement toward a Uganda that truly lives the spirit and promise of the 1995 Constitution for democracy, justice and the Rule of Law.

4.2 The Inter University Debate Interface Competitions



4.2.1. Introduction

The Center for Constitutional Governance (CCG) through its Hope Initiative Clubs continues to champion civic education, youth empowerment, and constitutional literacy across institutions of higher learning in Uganda. With the 2026 general elections fast approaching, national conversations around electoral credibility, citizen participation, and democratic accountability have become increasingly urgent. According to National Housing and Population Census 2024 conducted by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), youth aged 18–35 constitute 22.7% of the population, while Ugandans under 35 account for over 77.8%. Although they form the majority and should significantly shape national discourse, young people still face limited avenues for meaningful participation in governance.

Recognizing the need to expand these avenues, CCG convened Season Five of the Inter-University Debate Interface as a platform to equip young people with the skills and opportunities to engage constructively in democratic processes. The 2025 edition, held under the theme “**Uganda’s Unending Quest for Credible, Free and Fair Elections,**” was designed to stimulate critical analysis of Uganda’s electoral trajectory and nurture youth leaders who can shape public discourse and contribute effectively to democratic reforms.

4.2.2. Objectives of the Inter-University Debate Interface 2025

Overall Objective

To promote constitutional literacy, civic engagement, and informed public dialogue among university students ahead of Uganda’s 2026 general elections.

Specific Objectives

- a. To provide a national platform for youth to discuss electoral credibility, democratic reforms, and governance challenges.
- b. To strengthen critical thinking, research skills, and public speaking among university students.
- c. To promote gender-inclusive leadership and participation in critical public discourse.
- d. To foster collaboration among universities through constructive debate and peer-to-peer learning.
- e. To generate youth perspectives that can inform CCG’s future civic education campaigns.

4.2.3. Activity Description

(i) Pre-Interface Activities

In preparation for the 2025 Inter-University Debate Interface, the Hope Initiative Clubs were revitalized following their restructuring across 25 universities in 2024. As part of this process, all Clubs established fully constituted student leadership cabinets of 13 members, including Faculty and school-year representatives, and conducted membership drives to enhance participation. Each Club held at least one internal debate on the interface theme to identify their four strongest

speakers, who were subsequently featured on Civic Space TV through the Inter-University Debate Show. The students then selected their overall best representatives for the interface. To generate excitement and engagement ahead of the main event, Clubs also took part in additional pre-interface activities, such as a Slogan Challenge and a Video Challenge to encourage creativity and active student involvement. The Center for Constitutional Governance also featured a Spotlight on Hope Initiative Club Alumni, showcasing how their participation in such debates and civic activities has positively influenced their personal and professional growth, with the aim of inspiring current students to actively engage in the program.

(ii) Inter-University Interface Debate Competitions- 2025

The 2025 Inter-University Debate Interface brought together 25 universities, each represented by four students, forming a diverse pool of debaters from both public and private institutions. It also featured universities within Kampala metropolitan and up-country institutions under the Hope Initiative Clubs network. The competitions were held at Hotel Africana in Kampala. CCG provided all necessary logistics to cater for students from universities outside Kampala. Students from universities within Kampala commuted daily to the venue to participate in the competition.

The two-day event featured structured panel-style debates with interactive sessions, where panelists were allowed to ask each other questions and student representatives could actively participate. Preliminary rounds divided the universities into five groups of five, with each group represented by their best debater competing on assigned topics. Judges assessed participants on knowledge, argumentation, evidence, communication, and responsiveness, selecting the top two from each group to advance to the next round and subsequently to the finals. In the semi-final rounds, the qualified debaters competed in two separate groups, from which five top performers were selected to proceed to the grand finale, where the ultimate winner and runners-up were determined. The team of independent judges ensured impartiality and credibility, while moderators guided the sessions to maintain rules, constructive engagement, and good conduct.

The guest speaker for the 2025 Inter-University Debate Interface was Hon. Shakemore Wellington Timburwa, a distinguished entrepreneur and legislator from Zimbabwe. Hon. Timburwa shared insights on leadership, civic engagement, and the role of youth in shaping democratic processes. Drawing from his extensive experience in both business and governance, he inspired students to actively participate in civic and political discourse, emphasizing the importance of critical thinking, ethical leadership, and constructive debate as tools for national development. His presence added significant value to the interface, offering mentorship and motivation to the next generation of civic leaders.

4.2.4 Results and Outcomes

The 2025 Inter-University Debate Interface successfully achieved full representation from all 25 participating universities, with a significant number of young women forming panels and actively representing their institutions. The students engaged in rigorous and intellectually stimulating debates, which attracted extensive coverage from national media outlets, reflecting the high public interest in the event. After a series of competitive rounds, the top five universities were Uganda Christian University, Gulu University, Kampala International University (Western Campus) –

second runner-up, Kyambogo University – first runner-up, and Makerere University – overall winner. The three highest-performing universities were awarded medals, with Makerere University receiving the championship trophy, while all participants were presented with certificates of participation in recognition of their contribution.

4.2.5 Achievements & Impact

- **Representation from all Universities under Hope Initiative Club**

The debate interface attracted students from 25 universities, illustrating strong national interest and the growing influence of Hope Initiative Clubs.
- **Gender Inclusion and Leadership**

One of the most significant achievements was the inclusion of female contestants in the debate and the subsequent emergence of Ms. Apili Cynthia from Makerere University as the overall winner. Her outstanding performance demonstrated the intellectual strength and leadership potential of young women in governance spaces and highlighted CCG’s commitment to gender-balanced civic empowerment.
- **Strengthened Civic Knowledge**

Participants demonstrated a deep understanding of electoral processes, accountability mechanisms, and constitutional principles. The interface enhanced their ability to analyze and articulate governance issues affecting the country.
- **Enhanced Public Speaking and Debate Skills**

Students improved their research abilities, argumentation, teamwork, and confidence, all essential competencies for future civic leaders.
Here’s a formal way to frame them as two achievements:
- **Distinguished Guest Speaker**

The interface featured Hon. Shakemore Wellington Timburwa, a Zimbabwean entrepreneur and legislator, whose insights on leadership, civic engagement, and democratic participation inspired students and provided valuable mentorship to emerging civic leaders.
- **Extensive Media Coverage**

The debates attracted widespread coverage from national media outlets, amplifying the impact of the event, showcasing youth engagement, and raising public awareness on electoral credibility and democratic discourse.
- **Strengthening the Hope Initiative Clubs Network**

The event solidified partnerships between Center for Constitutional Governance and the 25 participating universities, promoting stronger coordination, visibility, and continuity of civic education activities.
- **Contribution to Pre-Election Civic Preparedness**

The discussions and perspectives generated during the interface will inform Center for Constitutional Governance's outreach messaging, voter education materials, and civic dialogues ahead of the 2026 elections.

4.2.6 Challenges

The 2025 Inter-University Debate Interface encountered several challenges despite its success:

- **Time Constraints:** The preliminary rounds were limited by time due to the large number of participating teams, which reduced the depth of engagement in some debates.
- **Resource Strain:** Accommodating and facilitating a high number of students, alongside extensive media coverage and documentation, placed significant pressure on available resources.
- **Capacity Limitations:** Demand for more representatives exceeded the event's capacity, preventing a larger number of students from participating.
- **High Student Expectations:** Students had high expectations for facilitation and support, adding pressure on the organizing team.
- **Limited Independent Research:** While research guidelines were provided, many participants relied solely on these materials, limiting the depth and diversity of arguments in certain debates.

4.2.7 Recommendations

Based on the outcomes and challenges of the 2025 Inter-University Debate Interface, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance future editions:

- ✓ **Extend Preliminary Round Timeframes:** Allocate more time for preliminary debates to ensure that all teams have sufficient opportunity to present and engage in thorough discussions.
- ✓ **Expand Event Capacity and Resources:** Increase logistical resources to accommodate more students and universities, including additional accommodation, facilitation, and media coverage support.
- ✓ **Encourage Broader Participation:** Consider strategies to include universities that could not participate due to capacity limitations, such as regional qualifying rounds or hybrid/virtual participation.
- ✓ **Strengthen Pre-Debate Preparation:** Provide more comprehensive research guidelines and mentorship opportunities to encourage students to go beyond the provided materials, fostering deeper and more diverse arguments.
- ✓ **Manage Student Expectations:** Clearly communicate the scope of facilitation, support, and available resources in advance to manage expectations and ensure smooth coordination.

- ✓ Enhance Gender Inclusion: Continue to actively promote and support the participation of young women in debates, ensuring balanced representation on panels and in leadership roles.
- ✓ Leverage Media and Public Engagement: Maintain and expand media coverage to showcase youth engagement, promote civic education, and amplify the impact of the interface on public discourse.
- ✓ Sustain Alumni Engagement: Continue spotlighting Hope Initiative Club alumni to inspire current students and provide mentorship opportunities, demonstrating the long-term benefits of participation in civic programs.
- ✓ Pre-Interface Competitions: Continue and expand pre-interface activities such as Slogan Challenges, Video Challenges, and internal club debates to build student skills, engagement, and excitement ahead of the main event.

These recommendations aim to strengthen the quality, inclusivity, and impact of future Inter-University Debate Interfaces while fostering a culture of critical thinking, civic engagement, and youth leadership across Uganda.

4.2.8 Conclusion

The 2025 Inter-University Debate Interface successfully provided a national platform for university students to engage critically with issues of electoral credibility, governance, and democratic participation. The event not only strengthened civic knowledge, research, and public speaking skills but also promoted gender-inclusive leadership and collaboration among universities. Despite challenges related to time, resources, and participant expectations, the interface achieved significant outcomes, including high youth participation, extensive media coverage, and meaningful engagement with distinguished speakers. The insights, perspectives, and skills gained through the debates will contribute to informed civic engagement ahead of Uganda’s 2026 general elections and serve as a foundation for sustaining and expanding the impact of the Hope Initiative Clubs across the country.





4.2.9 Visual Documentation

Interface Live Coverage and photos

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1vp19WiFzF5f-6kUih17KfDwB31gU5k-0?usp=sharing>

<https://www.youtube.com/live/MGUriYYsmbc?si=CY432jpGANc0c44a>

Interface Media Coverage

<https://ccgea.org/interface-debates-2025/>

4.3 Uganda Multi-stakeholder Country Forum

4.3.1 Introduction

On Thursday, July 3, 2025, the Center for Constitutional Governance (CCG), in collaboration with the Uganda National NGO Forum (UNNGOF) and the Alliance for Finance Monitoring (ACFIM), and with support from the East and Horn of Africa Election Observers Network (E-HORN), successfully convened a multi-stakeholder forum at Hotel Africana in Kampala. This crucial Country Forum was organized under the EU-funded AHEAD Africa Program. Details about the program can be found at <https://ahead.africa/en/>. Over 90 participants attended, including key representatives from the Electoral Commission (EC), Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), political parties, civil society organizations (CSOs), academia, security agencies, and the media. The forum's primary objective was to discuss crucial pathways toward peaceful, transparent, and inclusive elections in Uganda. The event was officially opened by the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Honorable Norbert Mao.

The forum identified several significant barriers to electoral integrity, such as the increasing commercialization of politics, selective enforcement of laws, media restrictions, and limited

accreditation of CSOs. A prominent concern raised was the role of security forces and the emergence of paramilitary groups, particularly their potential to disrupt electoral peace.

Key discussions emphasized the importance of:

- Strengthening the legal and institutional framework for elections.
- Promoting civic education and voter awareness.
- Enhancing transparency through real-time results publication and digital reporting.
- Regulating political financing and introducing campaign spending limits.
- Building trust among stakeholders through continuous engagement and accountability.

Among the key recommendations were fast-tracking CSO accreditation for observing and monitoring the 2026 General Elections, establishing a special Electoral Offenses Court, reviewing public funding allocations to political parties, and prohibiting foreign campaign contributions. Stakeholders also called for the establishment of "democracy schools" to enhance civic knowledge and legal literacy among citizens and political actors.

Honorable Norbert Mao reaffirmed the government's commitment to democratic principles while acknowledging the pressing need for reforms, restraint by security agencies, and greater inclusion in the electoral process.

This report comprehensively outlines the forum's key deliberations, outcomes, and strategic recommendations, aiming to inform future electoral reforms and collaborative actions ahead of the 2026 general elections.

4.3.2 Background and Context

Uganda is set to hold its next general elections in January 2026, a pivotal moment in the nation's democratic journey. As a multiparty system, Uganda's elections are expected to genuinely reflect the will of the people, promote inclusive participation, and uphold democratic accountability. However, persistent concerns over the past two decades suggest that these ideals remain largely aspirational.

Despite operating under a legal framework that supports multiparty democracy, Uganda continues to grapple with significant democratic and governance challenges. These include rising political violence, the shrinking of civic and political space, and enduring doubts about the credibility of the electoral process. These concerns are not only raised domestically but have also been highlighted by independent international assessments. For instance, Freedom House (2024) categorizes Uganda as "Not Free," assigning it a score of 34 out of 100 in terms of political rights and civil liberties. Similarly, the CIVICUS Monitor (2024) rates Uganda's civic space as

"Repressed," with a score of 30 out of 100, underscoring restrictions on freedoms of expression, assembly, and association.

In response to this increasingly constrained democratic environment, the Center for Constitutional Governance (CCG), in partnership with the Uganda National NGO Forum (UNNGOF) and the Alliance for Finance Monitoring (ACFIM), and with support from the East and Horn of Africa Election Observation Network (E-HORN), organized this multi-stakeholder forum. The forum's primary objective was to assess Uganda's current political and electoral landscape, advocate for necessary reforms, and identify areas requiring urgent attention before the 2026 elections.

Held on July 3, 2025, at Hotel Africana in Kampala, the forum brought together over 50 participants from key democratic institutions and sectors. This diverse group included representatives from the Electoral Commission, the Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC), political parties, civil society organizations, security agencies, academia, and the media. The event also featured Honorable Norbert Mao, Minister for Justice and Constitutional Affairs, who attended as the Chief Guest and shared valuable insights on legal and institutional preparedness for the upcoming elections.

This report details the key deliberations, emerging concerns, and actionable recommendations from the forum, all aimed at strengthening Uganda's democratic processes and fostering a peaceful, free, and fair electoral environment in 2026.

4.3.3 Purpose

The overarching goal of the Uganda Country Forum is to contribute to creating an enabling and peaceful environment for credible, free, and fair general elections in 2026, while ensuring enhanced citizen participation and the safeguarding of fundamental democratic principles.

Specifically, the forum aimed to:

- Facilitate constructive dialogue among diverse stakeholders on the challenges to, and opportunities for, enhancing electoral integrity and transparency in Uganda.
- Identify and analyze the root causes of political violence and restrictions on civil and political liberties, and propose practical mitigation measures.
- Promote a shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities of various actors in upholding democratic principles throughout the electoral cycle.
- Strengthen collaboration and coordination among civil society organizations, political parties, the Electoral Commission, security agencies, academia, and the media to collectively address identified concerns.

4.3.4 Methodology

The forum experienced strong in-person attendance, attracting a diverse group of participants from key democratic institutions and civil society. In addition to those physically present, many others followed the proceedings virtually through a live broadcast on Civic Space TV, the Center for Constitutional Governance's digital platform on YouTube. Engagement was further amplified on social media via the hashtags #EyesOnElections and #UgandaDecides2026, which facilitated wider public participation and real-time discourse on the forum's key messages. A sign language interpreter was also present to ensure inclusivity.

The forum's structure included remarks from key stakeholders, insightful panel discussions, and interactive plenary sessions to foster inclusive engagement. Ms. Judith Atim, Programs Lead at the Center for Constitutional Governance, expertly moderated the event.

4.3.5 Opening Remarks: Dr. Sarah Bireete

Dr. Sarah Bireete extended a warm welcome to delegates from South Sudan, Kenya, and Tanzania. She introduced E-HORN's mission, which is to strengthen and monitor elections across the East and Horn of Africa. She highlighted several key challenges currently affecting Uganda, including:

- Increasing human rights violations, particularly by the police.
- Restrictions on media freedom, with a pointed question to the Minister regarding the government's intentions behind such blockades.
- Hindrances to Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) whose mandate covers elections.
- Extreme commercialization of elections.
- Selective application of the law.

Dr. Bireete also raised major concerns regarding electoral integrity, such as:

- Election-related violence.
- Lack of transparency in the tabulation and transfer of election results, particularly at the national tally center.
- Denial of accreditation to CSOs with a mandate on constitutionalism.

She offered the following recommendations:

- Emphasize the use of technology in elections, as highlighted by the President, and urged the Electoral Commission to communicate clearly on all election-related issues.
- Prioritize stopping election violence and developing a clear code of conduct for security forces.
- Increase transparency, especially concerning presidential results.
- Promote comprehensive voter education.
- Ensure respect for the rule of law and adherence to rules-based electoral processes.

4.3.6. Overview of E-HORN: Eustace Kinywa, E-HORN Secretariat

Eustace Kinywa provided an overview of E-HORN, a network of election observer groups established in 2013 with seven founding organizations. Its core ambition is to promote free and fair elections across the East and Horn of Africa.

He elaborated on the A-HEAD Project, which empowers CSOs to contribute to civic knowledge with the intent to conduct national, regional, and international advocacy. The project's objectives include:

- Improving electoral transparency.
- Promoting evidence-based electoral governance.
- Invigorating dialogue spaces for electoral reforms.
- Building a community of support and practice.
- Engaging a broader range of CSOs.

4.3.7. Remarks from Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC): Ms. Mariam Wangadya, Chairperson, UHRC

Ms. Mariam Wangadya underscored that elections represent dignity, not merely ballots. She acknowledged that Ugandan elections sometimes involve an element of fear, stressing the need for the country to learn from Kenya's experiences. She offered the following key recommendations:

- Security forces must protect human rights.
- The media must uphold and defend the truth.
- Religious and cultural leaders must actively promote peace.
- CSOs must diligently monitor and hold the government accountable.
- The government must adequately fund civic education initiatives.
- Ms. Wangadya further emphasized the critical importance of building a chain of trust among all stakeholders through continuous and meaningful engagement.

4.3.8. Remarks from Electoral Commission (EC): Julius Mucunguzi, EC Spokesperson

Representing the EC Chairperson, Justice Simon Mugenyi Byabakama, Mr. Julius Mucunguzi underscored the fundamental principles of credible elections: they must be rules-based, participatory, and competitive. He affirmed the Electoral Commission's unwavering commitment to these principles. While acknowledging existing gaps in participation, he pledged ongoing efforts for improvement and urged all actors to collectively work towards peace

4.3.9. Remarks from Chief Guest Hon. Norbert Mao, Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs

Honorable Norbert Mao highlighted three critical environments that significantly impact elections:

- Legal Environment: He noted that many discussions around elections often occur without a thorough understanding of the law. He urged citizens to become familiar with the relevant laws and to act with genuine intent.

- **Conscious (Mind) Environment:** Hon. Mao questioned the electorate's genuine interest in elections when they are often unfamiliar with their leaders. He encouraged participants to actively get to know their local leaders and understand their political surroundings.
- **Security Environment:** Expressing concern about Uganda's increasing guns per capita, Hon. Mao called for accountability and restraint among security forces before resorting to violence. He also reminded security forces to communicate openly with the public before taking any action, fostering a positive perception of security forces in Uganda. He urged CSOs to maintain their convictions, even when facing government scrutiny.

He lamented the high levels of poverty and material deprivation, which, unfortunately, significantly influence political decisions, voting patterns, and existing governance struggles. He encouraged participants to understand the mindset of the "broker of power" in Uganda—the President—when engaging in discourse about the country's democratic state.

Lastly, he extended an invitation to participants to partner with the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs to commemorate 30 years of the 1995 Constitution (as amended) in 2025. Specifically, he asked CCG to co-convene this year's week-long commemorative event. Hon. Mao made the following calls to action:

- Marginalization of extremists across all political spectrums.
- Launching a "no violence" campaign and publicly denouncing all perpetrators of violence by naming them.
- Promoting proactive voices against torture.
- Ensuring impartial and objective reporting by the media.
- Fostering a culture of organized defiance with clear objectives.
- Encouraging dialogue, reconciliation, and progressive reforms.

4.3.10. Plenary Discussions

The plenary session featured active engagement from various participants, who raised critical questions and concerns to the panelists.

Participant Concerns

- **Electoral Integrity:** Raised issues regarding the manipulation of electoral materials, outdated voter registers, lack of transparency in counting opposition votes, and the need for cameras at polling stations.
- **Security & Violence:** Questioned the army's involvement in policing, the harassment of activists, arbitrary arrests, and the lack of a clear code of conduct for security agencies.
- **EC Accountability:** Challenged the Electoral Commission (EC) on its impartiality, its perceived complicity in state violence, and the "trust deficit" between the commission and the public.
- **Civil Society & Reforms:** Called for permanent CSO accreditation, a review of the 1995 Constitution (specifically term limits), and the revision of the Public Order Management Act (POMA).

- **Panelist Responses**
- **Hon. Mao:** Acknowledged the need for constitutional reviews and a security code of conduct. He highlighted efforts toward transitional justice, the release of political prisoners, and new legislation (Human Rights Defenders Bill), while cautioning activists on the dangers of political struggle.
- **Electoral Commission (Mr. Julius Mucunguzi):** Admitted to a trust deficit and the need for institutional improvement. He advocated for better stakeholder cooperation, campaign spending caps, real-time result displays, and more supportive accreditation processes for CSOs.

4.3.11. Session One & Three: Topic 1: Towards a Free, Fair, and Inclusive 2026: Upholding Civic Freedoms, Empowering Responsible Media, and Ensuring All Voices are Heard; Topic 3: Addressing Political Violence and Promoting Peaceful Electoral Processes

Moderator: Job Kijja

Panelists:

- Julius Mucunguzi, EC Spokesperson
- Perry Aritua, Executive Director, Women in Democracy Network Uganda
- Kulaigye Hillary, Deputy Chief Political Commissar, Uganda Police Force
- Saasi Marvin, Secretary for Diaspora Affairs, National Unity Platform (NUP)

Key Discussions:

- **Electoral Commission on CSO Accreditation:** Urged CSOs to seek accreditation despite delays, promising eventual responses.
- **Use of Technology:** The EC stated its use of biometric voter verification to prevent ballot stuffing.
- **CSO Preparedness:** CSOs complement government efforts and utilize social media and informal groups for voter education.
- **Internet Shutdown Preparation:** CSOs are strategizing to maintain voter education despite potential internet shutdowns.
- **Police on Paramilitary Groups:** Emphasized that all paramilitary groups are illegal and vowed to stop them.

- NUP on Paramilitary Group Egaali: Argued for the constitutional right to associate, stating that the group (Egaali) aims to protect voters' rights non-violently, and thus, it is not a paramilitary group.

Individual Panelist Contributions:

Perry Aritua, Executive Director, Women in Democracy Network Uganda (WDN):

- Acknowledged the laws governing elections as the basis for the existence and operations of CSOs.
- Asked the EC to complement and protect CSOs to ensure effective work.
- Spoke about the roles CSOs play, including providing a platform for voter education, and called on the government to view CSOs as partners, not adversaries.
- Noted that CSOs are employing diverse approaches, such as including more people and referring individuals to the EC.
- Stated that CSOs are also training candidates vying for elective office to ensure the country has committed leaders. These trainings and support are conducted using established informal groups in society, such as religious platforms, to promote peaceful elections.
- Encouraged different stakeholders to form useful partnerships with the EC.

Julius Mucunguzi, EC Spokesperson:

- Emphasized the importance of accrediting CSOs, especially during election season, despite systemic weaknesses.
- Acknowledged the EC's weaknesses and committed to improving the electoral process.
- Noted that voter and civic education should not be solely tied to elections, adding that the EC will provide clarification to CSOs who applied for accreditation to observe elections based on their adherence to the law.
- Stated that the EC would employ technology in the elections, specifically using biometric machines for voter verification to ensure transparency.
- Regarding reforms, he stressed that they must be timely, adding that the electoral season is too short to allow sufficient time for reforms. Electoral reforms, he argued, must be undertaken much earlier and outside the election season.

- Encouraged participants to remain optimistic about elections and their outcomes, provided they fulfill their roles according to the law.

Kulaigye Hillary, Deputy Chief Political Commissar, Uganda Police Force:

- Acknowledged the role of the Uganda Police Force and the laws governing the invitation of other national security agencies to support the police.
- Acknowledged the shortcomings of security agencies in previous elections, particularly the unprecedented violence unleashed on voters during the Kawempe North by-election. He informed participants that investigations are underway, though classified.
- Reassured participants that the upcoming elections would be peaceful, as the police force is better prepared and has learned from past mistakes.
- Raised concerns about emerging paramilitary groups, stating they are illegal and must be stopped. He added that security forces have been harmed by paramilitary groups like the Egaali group.
- Noted that previous elections occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic with stringent regulations, but these regulations have now been relaxed post-pandemic.

Saasi Marvin, Secretary for Diaspora Affairs, National Unity Platform (NUP):

- Defined "Egaali" as vote protection units employed by opposition parties due to the EC's perceived inaction in ensuring credible elections.
- Called out the ruling party and government institutions for allegedly conspiring to consolidate power for the regime. In this regard, he accused the police of double standards against opposition parties, claiming they do not deal with them in good faith. He also accused the EC of complicity with security forces.
- Emphasized the constitutional right to associate and encouraged participants to avoid falling for narratives designed to portray the opposition's Egaali as paramilitary groups.

Plenary Session

Participant Questions & Feedback

- **Security & Military Overreach:** Questioned why the military (CDF) appears to dominate the Electoral Commission (EC) and whether elections qualify as a "national emergency" justifying army involvement.

- **Vigilantism vs. Protection:** Expressed divided views on "Egaali" (vote protection units); some saw them as necessary due to EC inaction, while others labeled them dangerous paramilitary groups requiring a strict code of conduct.
- **EC Transparency:** Accused the EC of "deliberately" delaying CSO accreditation, failing to provide registers to the opposition, and lacking the capacity to manage national elections following poor local election experiences.
- **Institutional Trust:** Raised concerns over police impartiality, discrepancies in NIRA data, and the EC's recognition of "illegally declared" internal party winners.

Panelist Feedback & Responses

- **Julius Mucunguzi (EC):** Acknowledged systemic weaknesses but defended the need for accreditation and biometric technology. He argued that electoral reforms must happen well before the election season and called for collective stakeholder advocacy.
- **Kulaigye Hillary (Police):** Admitted to past security failures (e.g., Kawempe North) but reassured the public of better preparedness. He maintained that all paramilitary groups are illegal and stated that the CDF's actions are guided by legal provisions.
- **Saasi Marvin (NUP):** Defended "Egaali" as a constitutional right to associate and a necessary tool for vote protection. He accused the government of a "culture of impunity" and double standards aimed at excluding the opposition.
- **Perry Aritua (CSOs):** Urged the state to view CSOs as partners rather than adversaries. She condemned internet shutdowns and demanded that the EC and police meet international human rights standards to rebuild public trust.

4.3.12. Session Two: Political Finance as the Next Frontier of Democratic Reform in Uganda: Rethinking the Role of Money in Politics Ahead of the 2026 General Elections

Speaker: Henry Muguzi, Executive Director, ACFIM

Henry Muguzi examined the pervasive influence of money in elections, noting that it now unfortunately dictates electoral outcomes behind the scenes, thereby discrediting credible representation. He called for a comprehensive legislative overhaul, stronger oversight, increased transparency, digital reporting, enhanced voter education, and vigorous investigative journalism to address this issue.

4.3.13 Panel Discussion

Moderator: Judith Atim

Panelist: Hon. Lyandro Komakech, Former MP

Honorable Lyandro Komakech delivered a presentation that seamlessly blended policy issues with general challenges in Uganda. He acknowledged the enduring contribution of Uganda's colonial

legacy and identified poverty as the biggest inhibitor of issue-based politics. He recommended enforcing campaign finance regulations and called for an electoral offenses court to ensure the timely resolution of election-related disputes, in addition to other recommendations from previous speakers.

4.3.14 Plenary

Summary of Political Finance Discussions (Sections 4.3.12 – 4.3.14)

Participant Questions & Feedback

- **Funding Inequality:** Criticized the current legal framework (IPOD standards) for enshrining a cycle of inequality among political parties.
- **Transparency & Regulation:** Called for the mandatory disclosure of donation sources and the regulation of money to curb political corruption.
- **Sovereignty & Public Finance:** Argued that public financing is essential to ensure impartiality and protect local politics from foreign influence.
- **Systemic Solutions:** Suggested regional coordination to tackle violence, a specialized police unit for human rights during elections, and "people-centered" solutions rather than ineffective laws.
- **Political Will:** Warned that without genuine political commitment, any financing regulations would be a "mere façade."

Panelist & Speaker Feedback

- **Henry Muguzi (ACFIM):** Warned that money now dictates electoral outcomes, undermining credible representation. He advocated for a legislative overhaul, digital reporting of finances, and vigorous investigative journalism.
- **Hon. Lyandro Komakech:** Identified poverty as the primary barrier to issue-based politics. He recommended the enforcement of campaign finance regulations and the establishment of a specialized **electoral offenses court** to resolve disputes timely.

4.3.15 General Recommendations:

The forum concluded with a strategy to reform Uganda's electoral landscape, focusing on four key areas:

- **Financial Reform:** Enforce campaign finance regulations, mandate public expenditure disclosure, and prohibit foreign donations. It specifically calls for restructuring public funding to eliminate the 80% imbalance favoring the ruling party.

- **Legal & Judicial Accountability:** Establish a dedicated Electoral Offenses Court for swift dispute resolution and close loopholes that allow politicians with pending offenses to remain in office.
- **Civic & Moral Education:** Launch nationwide initiatives to promote issue-based voting over financial incentives. This includes partnering with religious and faith-based organizations to advocate for values-based leadership.
- **Institutional Strengthening:** Strengthen laws against vote-buying, link funding to gender inclusion and policy engagement, and reform the IPOD framework to empower smaller parties.

5.0 Enhancing State and Non-State Actors' Understanding of the Contentious Legal Issues Underlying the NGO Legal Framework in Uganda.

The project aimed at strengthening the understanding of the contentious legal issues in Uganda's NGO regulatory framework and targeted both state and non-state actors, emphasizing collaborative, evidence-based legal reform advocacy.

5.1.1 Legal Review and Validation Workshop

Held on **21st February 2025** at Arch Apartments, this workshop reviewed expert findings for review and captured opinions of the CSO leaders which resulted in the formation of a position paper. Participants validated priority reform issues and finalized an advocacy roadmap. 40 CSO leaders from different parts of the country (20 from upcountry, 20 central region) attended.

Key Issues Discussed:

- **Legal inconsistencies and unconstitutional provisions:**

The NGO Act, 2016 contains several legal inconsistencies and provisions that are arguably unconstitutional because they conflict with rights guaranteed under the 1995 Constitution of Uganda. Key among these is the requirement for NGOs to obtain recommendation letters and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) from local government structures before operating can create political and administrative bottlenecks, effectively infringing on the constitutional freedom of association under Article 29(1)(e). The Act further imposes overly restrictive operational

conditions, including limiting NGOs strictly to their stated objectives and criminalising work outside those objectives, even when community needs evolve.

These restrictions, coupled with mandatory annual renewals of operational permits, place an unnecessary burden on NGOs and can be interpreted as indirect limitations on the constitutional freedoms of assembly, association, and expression. Provisions that allow government authorities to halt activities without a court order also contravene the principle of separation of powers and the right to a fair hearing under Article 28 of the Constitution. Taken together, these inconsistencies and overreaching powers create a legal framework that is prone to abuse and does not fully align with Uganda’s constitutional guarantees.

- **Impact of mainstreaming the NGO Bureau into a Ministry:**

In October 2024, the NGO Bureau ceased to be an autonomous entity after its dissolution and integration as the Department of NGO Management in the Ministry of Internal Affairs as part of the Rationalization of Government Agencies and Public Expenditure (RAPEX) Policy of 2021. This has significantly impacted the activities of NGOs especially when it comes to issues such as renewal of licenses, etc.



Representatives from various NGOs at the validation workshop

YouTube link to the validation workshop:

https://www.youtube.com/live/i8xI_3nDsIQ?si=4uBndCfFbvVQse6Z | Civic Space TV

5.1.2 Policy Brief

The Policy Brief focused on issues for review in the Act to ensure a smooth and vibrant NGO sector in Uganda. The meeting took cognizance of the fact that Uganda has one of the most regulated NGO sectors in the world, NGOs have to meet obligations under more than 15 laws. The NGO Act (2016) which is the main law that governs NGOs in Uganda has numerous obligations and requirements that could potentially affect the efficiency of the regulators and the performance of NGOs. The law creates several entities from sub county to national level, some of which have not been operational because the government has not provided funding for them.

The **Policy Brief** outlines legal and operational concerns in the NGO framework and practical reform proposals:

The legal and operational concerns in the NGO framework under the NGO Act, 2016 can be understood as arising from provisions that create an environment of restrictive oversight, administrative burdens, and legal uncertainty for NGOs.

The law grants wide discretionary powers to the National Bureau for NGOs in registering, monitoring, and regulating NGOs. While the intention is to ensure accountability, the scope of these powers is so broad that it risks arbitrary decision-making. For example, registration is contingent on multiple layers of approval, including recommendation letters from local government structures, which can be influenced by local politics. This delays the operationalisation of NGOs and can be exploited to block critical voices in the sector.

The Act also requires NGOs to obtain operational permits in addition to registration, and these permits must be periodically renewed. This creates a dual compliance burden—organisations must meet the conditions for registration and continually satisfy operational licensing requirements. For smaller, community-based groups with limited resources, this recurrent bureaucracy diverts time and finances away from their actual development or humanitarian work.

Another legal concern is the vague and far-reaching grounds for suspension or cancellation of an NGO's registration. Phrases such as "acting contrary to the laws of Uganda" or "operating in contravention of the conditions of the permit" are open to broad interpretation. Such vagueness

gives regulators excessive latitude, which can be used to target organisations engaging in legitimate advocacy, particularly on governance, human rights, or accountability issues.

The Act imposes obligations for NGOs to secure Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with District NGOs Monitoring Committees and other local government entities before operating in a given area. While coordination is important, the requirement is operationally burdensome, especially for organisations working across multiple districts, as they must repeat the process in each locality. It also creates potential for undue interference by local authorities who may not support the organization's work.

There are also concerns about limitations on the scope of permissible NGO activities. The law requires NGOs to stick strictly to their stated objectives, and deviations can be penalised. This rigidity does not reflect the dynamic nature of community needs or the adaptive strategies often required in humanitarian or development contexts.

On a broader operational level, the compliance framework under the Act imposes high administrative costs. The mandatory annual returns, audited accounts, and renewal processes are important for accountability, but for small grassroots organisations, they can be prohibitively expensive and time-consuming, limiting their ability to sustain long-term impact.

In summary, the recommendations for review of the NGO Act, the policy brief suggests a comprehensive reform to create a more enabling environment for NGOs while maintaining accountability standards. It calls for streamlining registration and operational licensing into a single process to reduce duplication and bureaucratic delays. It recommends narrowing and clearly defining the grounds for suspension or cancellation of registration to prevent abuse of regulatory power. There is emphasis on removing or revising the mandatory MoUs with district structures to make coordination flexible and non-punitive.

The recommendations also call for proportional compliance requirements, where smaller community-based organisations have lighter reporting obligations compared to large, well-funded NGOs. Additionally, there is a proposal to ensure that the regulatory framework supports rather than restricts advocacy and human rights work, recognising the role of NGOs in democratic governance.

These documents drew on comparative practices from the EAC and SADC regions.

5.1.3 Public Awareness Campaigns

Using Civic Space TV and digital platforms, the project reached over 4,000 citizens with legal education content. Activities included:

- 5 Civic Space TV shows targeting women, youth, university students and PWDs.



University Students discussed the Review of the NGO Laws in Uganda. Civic Space TV link below: <https://youtu.be/s7Cbw9j7JYk?si=tui9SfNuNDDfmdHr>



The youth on the **Youth Round Table** show discussed the **contentious proposals in the review of the NGO Laws**. Civic Space TV link;

<https://youtu.be/n-7J9R1lqWQ?si=e3ukuJ9U02WssPD4>

The women on the **Women Speaking Show** discussed the contentious proposals in the review of the NGOs Laws. Civic Space TV link;

https://youtu.be/9FqW0dEKhoI?si=hQ2G_rnDxvTyohbX

The **Community Show** discussed the “Proposal for creation of a basket fund for NGOs; Understanding the NGO Act. Civic Space TV link;

<https://youtu.be/q2UE9HguSw8?si=jMVAw6vA3DHFt0oZ>

5.1.3 Fundraising and Resource Mobilization training

On 16th and 17th May 2025, the Center for Constitutional Governance (CCG) conducted a two-day staff capacity-building training focused on Resource Mobilization and Fundraising. The training aimed at equipping staff with practical knowledge and strategies for sustainable resource mobilization to enhance the organization’s financial resilience, expand its donor base, and explore innovative fundraising mechanisms. This technical report on follow-up mentorship support includes the priority areas which are aligned with the action points from the training. The training also emphasized staff ownership of resource mobilization responsibilities and highlighted the importance of institutional, programmatic, and innovative approaches to sustainability.

5.1.3.1 Purpose of the mentorship

The primary purpose of the mentorship program was to support CCG staff in operationalizing the knowledge and skills gained during the training by:

- Providing one-on-one and group mentorship on specific technical areas.
- Supporting the development and implementation of strategic initiatives (e.g., Resource mobilization, fundraising & sustainability plan/strategy and communication strategies etc.).
- Building staff confidence and leadership in managing programs and partnerships.

- Strengthening institutional systems and practices through staff-led initiatives.

5.1 Specific Objectives

- To mentor CCG staff in the practical application of institutional governance and compliance standards, tools.
- To support staff in designing and implementing fundraising, communication strategies aligned with CCG's mission.
- To enhance staff capabilities in resource mobilization planning, donor engagement, and concept/proposal development.
- To provide ongoing coaching on organizational resilience, risk management, and adaptive programming.
- To facilitate peer learning and experience sharing across departments.



CCG staff with their trainers on the last day of the fundraising and resource mobilization training

5.1.3.3 Post Resource Mobilization Training technical support: Follow-Up Mentorship Support for CCG Staff in operationalizing the knowledge and skills gained during the training by:

- Providing one-on-one and group mentorship on specific technical areas.
- Supporting the development and implementation of strategic initiatives.
- Building staff confidence and leadership in managing programs and partnerships.
- Strengthening institutional systems and practices through staff-led initiatives.



5.1.3.4 Engagements with the NGO Bureau.

The Center for Constitutional Governance (CCG), reached out to the NGO Bureau and proposed to have a meeting to present its comprehensive position on the existing NGO Laws as well as the policy briefs it developed as well as sharing its views on the ongoing engagements on the proposals for the review of the NGO Laws. However, by the time the project lapsed, CCG had not yet secured an opportunity for a face-to-face engagement with the Bureau.

5.1.4 Lessons Learned

- Legal reform processes require consistent and inclusive stakeholder engagement.
- Evidence-based advocacy, especially with clear legal memoranda and policy briefs, strengthens NGO influence on legislative reform.
- Mainstreaming civic education through digital tools (TV and social media) increases public support and pressure for legal reforms.

- Cross-sectoral alliances (NGOs, academia, media, etc.) offer strategic advantages in policy advocacy.

5.1.5 Challenges

Challenge	Mitigation
Delays in government reform processes	Developed a flexible advocacy timeline and used outputs for continuous lobbying.
Limited government participation	Engaged directly with line ministries and used formal submissions to create accountability.
Duplication by other actors	Coordinated with NGO networks to avoid parallel or conflicting efforts.

5.1.6 Recommendations

1. **Government:** Expedite the comprehensive review of the NGO Act, Policy, and Regulations and institutionalize regular stakeholder consultations.
2. **NGOs:** Maintain unified advocacy coalitions and regularly update position papers in line with political developments.
3. **Development Partners:** Continue supporting NGOs participation in legal and policy processes and invest in civic legal education.
4. **Parliament:** Ensure thorough legislative scrutiny of NGO regulatory bills in line with constitutional and human rights standards.

5.1.7 Conclusion

The project has made significant strides in unpacking the contentious legal issues within Uganda’s NGO framework and mobilizing civil society toward meaningful legal reform. Through structured dialogue, evidence-based tools, and strategic advocacy, CCG and its partners have laid a foundation for a more enabling civic environment and sustained legal accountability.

5.2 Digital Rights Project activities under Oxfam Recipe

During the same reporting period, CCG with support from Oxfam Uganda continued to implement the project “Recentering the Civic Internet through Partner Engagement” (ReCIPE).

During the reporting period, CCG implemented a series of Nine (9) strategic engagements aimed at promoting digital rights, strengthening data protection awareness, and fostering inclusive digital governance in Uganda. These included three (3) virtual and in-person trainings on emerging technologies and Uganda’s Data Protection and Privacy Act (2019) and its 2021 Regulations and tech facilitated violence against women and girls; three roundtable discussions on Civic Space TV, had Digital Rights and Inclusion (DRIF2025) in Zambia, had a national debrief following the outcomes of the discussions from DRIF2025 in Zambia, held focus group discussions with key stakeholders and a national debriefing dialogue on digital rights and inclusion, focus group discussions explored the evolving digital civic space and its implications for human rights.



Mr Hood Lubowa, Oxfam Uganda’s ReCIPE Focal Point addresses participants at the DRIF in Zambia



A panel session at the DRIF debrief workshop in Kampala



Some of the roundtable discussions that featured on Civic Space TV.

The discussions can also be watched via the links below.

<https://youtu.be/6Afv-zaYnlk>

<https://youtu.be/FYdekc2bQ>



Participants at one of the trainings on digital rights and emerging technologies held in Kampala.

The trainings equipped civil society actors, legal professionals, media practitioners, and youth leaders with essential legal, ethical and technical knowledge to operate securely in the digital space and advocate for rights-based governance. The TV discussions **#CommunityShowUG** and **#WomenSpeaking** expanded national discourse on critical issues such as online freedom, electoral misinformation and technology-facilitated gender-based violence, amplifying the voices of underrepresented groups.



A group photo of the participants who attended the Digital Rights training workshop in Jinja City. The participants include Local Government actors, Journalists and youth leaders.

Focus group discussions explored the evolving digital civic space and its implications for human rights and CSO operations, generating actionable insights into emerging threats and policy gaps. The national dialogue served as a platform for reflection and cross-sector collaboration, aligning national priorities with continental agendas such as those discussed at DRIF2025. CCG also contributed to the sustainability of Civic Space TV by conducting a capacity building training for 24 individuals. These included; show moderators, TV and team crew members.

Collectively, these interventions contributed to improved digital literacy, strengthened policy advocacy, and broader access to safe, secure online engagement particularly for women and marginalized groups. CCG's efforts have not only increased national awareness of digital rights and data protection but also laid the groundwork for more inclusive, transparent and accountable digital governance aligned with EU digital principles and ensure the effective delivery of high-quality, engaging, and informative content that promoted civic awareness and public dialogue effort.

6.0 Civic Space TV Engagements

Civic Space TV is CCG's dynamic digital platform based in Uganda. It serves as a hub for freedom of speech, constitutionalism, and governance and it is primarily hosted on YouTube.

The platform is designed to amplify citizen voices and facilitate informed dialogue on critical socio-political issues. It features a diverse lineup of weekly programming hosted or moderated by experienced journalists and experts. Through the ongoing support of the Ford Build Grant, Civic Space TV continues to strengthen its capacity as a leading platform for civic engagement.

In the current political climate, Civic Space TV provides a vital virtual territory for expression, especially as physical civic spaces face increasing restrictions. It acts as a bridge between high-level policy discussions and the everyday realities of citizens, ensuring that everyone has a say on issues that affect their daily lives.

6.1 Key Programs & Schedule

The channel maintains a consistent weekly broadcast schedule, focusing on different demographics and civic themes:

- **Community Voices (Mondays):** Highlights raw, unfiltered concerns from local communities and grassroots leaders across the country.
- **Women Speaking (Tuesdays):** Features women sharing their perspectives on national policy and critical issues.
- **Youth Round Table (Wednesdays):** An inclusive space for young people outside of formal education to engage in governance dialogue.
- **Inter-University Debates (Thursdays):** A competitive platform where students debate national and global current affairs to sharpen their leadership skills.
- **Citizens' Chat Show (Fridays):** A flagship program (which you are famously associated with) that brings together seasoned perspectives to shape national discourse.
- **Focus on Parliament (Saturdays, 9:00 AM):** A transparency-focused show that analyzes legislative decisions and holds leaders accountable.
- **Women Rise (Saturdays, 3:00 PM):** One-on-one conversations with resilient women to inspire personal and social change.
- **Ugandans In Diaspora (Sundays):** Ensures that the global Ugandan community has a voice in domestic affairs and policy.

6.2 Summary of Reach: Civic Space TV (2025)

Metric Category	Performance Indicator	2025 Impact Data
Audience Size	Total Subscribers	16,600+
Content Volume	Total Videos Published	2,300+ (Cumulative)
Broadcasting	Weekly Streams	7 Regular Shows + Special Events
High-Impact Streams	Top Performing Debates/Interviews	1.0K – 7.1K views per high-stakes session

Youth Engagement	University Representation	25 Universities actively participating
Diversity	Gender-Focused Programming	2 Dedicated Shows (<i>Women Speaking, Women Rise</i>)
Geographic Reach	Global Presence	Ugandans in Diaspora (Sunday segment)

CivicSpaceTV
...Freedom Always!

COMMUNITY VOICES

#CommunityVoicesUg
#CivicSpaceTV

NUP PARTY CARD POLITICS AS THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL HEATS UP TOPIC

HOST
PHILLIP MULISSA
@PhillipMulisa

PANELIST
ANSKUNDA BEST ARNOLD
MP CONTESTANT (ISHURU NORTH (PPF))
@AnskundaBest

PANELIST
SAM BALLEBU
FORMER CONTESTANT (NUP)
@sammybafuku

PANELIST
SAYUNI HELEN
PRESIDENT USANDA YOUNG DEMOCRATS
@HellenonAshaba

PANELIST
WASSWA SSEMANDA
IBRA KAWAALA
YOUTH LEADER NUP LUBAGA NORTH CONSTITUENCY

PANELIST
EMILY NAMALWA
DIRECTOR PALOZ INDUSTRIAL CITY DIVISION REALTY CITY
@emily_namalwa

MONDAY ,6TH OCTOBER 2025| 2PM (EAT)

Center for Constitutional Governance | CivicSpaceTV | @ccgea1 | @CivicSpaceTV | Civic Space TV

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SUBSCRIBE

WOMEN SPEAKING

TOPIC:
POLITICAL MANIFESTOS AND THE PLACE OF WOMEN
63 YEARS AFTER INDEPENDENCE

HOST
NANCY CAROLINE AYOT
@nancyayot

PANELIST
GLORIA KAMAYANGI
Kamayangi Gloria Foundation
@GloriaKamayangi

PANELIST
SHALOM NAKIIZA
ALINEMBABAZI
@ShalomNakiiza

PANELIST
NANA NAMATA NALONGO
MWAFRICA Kampala Women MP
Amateur (PPF)
@nawafwa_nana

TUESDAY | 2PM
7TH OCTOBER 2025 #WomenSpeaking | #CivicSpaceTV

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WOMEN RISE

KISAKYE JACKLINE
CO-FOUNDER SHINES OF HOPE MINISTRIES
@ShineReUxepads

EMPOWERING GIRLS WITH DIGNITY: KISAKYE JACKLINE'S MISSION TO PROMOTE MENSTRUAL HYGIENE THROUGH REUSABLE PADS AT SHINES OF HOPE MINISTRIES

HOST
NAYIGA MADREEN
@NayigaMadreen

SATURDAY
4TH OCT 2024
3PM

#WomenRise | #CivicSpaceTV

Center for Constitutional Governance | CivicSpaceTV | @ccgea1 | @CivicSpaceTV | Civic Space TV

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CITIZEN CHAT SHOW

THEME:
MANIFESTO PROMISES VS CAMPAIGN REALITY
#UGDecides2026

HOST
JUDITH ATIM
Moderator
@judithatim

PANELIST
JOSEPH OCHIEHO
UPC
@josephochieho

PANELIST
DR. ROBERT OJAMBO
Head of History Department - Kyambogo University
@robertojambo

PANELIST
DR. SARAH BIRETE
ED Center for Constitutional Governance
@sarahbirete

PANELIST
HON. HENRY BALENTAKI
Politician

Friday 03rd Oct. 2025 **2PM**

CIVIC SPACE TV #CitizenChatShow #CivicSpaceTV

Center for Constitutional Governance | CivicSpaceTV | @ccgea1 | @CivicSpaceTV | Civic Space TV



TRUMP'S MEETING WITH AFRICAN LEADERS & PARTY PRIMARY ELECTIONS

#UgandansInDiaspora
#CivicSpaceTV

13TH JUL, 2025
2 - 4 PM (EAT)



PHILLIP MURISA
MODERATOR



MIRIAM KYOMUGASHO
DIRECTOR AFRICC



ALBERT BAKASARA
ELDER, WASHINGTON DC



JOSEPH OCHIENG
UPC - UGANDA



FRANCIS KAMUHANDA
ANT, USA



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**THURSDAY
6TH
NOV.25**

9AM EAT

#CivicSpaceTV
#InterUniversityDebates

INTER UNIVERSITY DEBATES

THEME:
**STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE ON THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY IN
EAST AFRICA: CASE OF TANZANIA'S GENERAL ELECTIONS**



HOST
SHARON MUKISA
[@sharonmukisa](https://www.instagram.com/sharonmukisa)



PANELIST
KIBWANGA HENRY
ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY IN
UGANDA
[@kibwanga](https://www.instagram.com/kibwanga)



PANELIST
AMELIO STEVEN
CLARE INTERNATIONAL
UNIVERSITY



PANELIST
TUMUSHAME JACKELINE
MAKERERE UNIVERSITY
[@tumushame_jackeline](https://www.instagram.com/tumushame_jackeline)

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7.0 Engagement with Government Agencies

Throughout the year, CCG maintained productive partnerships with several key government entities. Most notably, we collaborated closely with the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation (UBC), providing expert analysis on matters of national importance. Furthermore, CCG fostered cordial and constructive working relationships with Parliament, the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, the Uganda Human Rights Commission, and the Electoral Commission, ensuring our thematic priorities remained aligned with national policy dialogues.



CCG Executive Director Dr Sarah Bireete (4th Left) in a group photo with Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister Hon Norbert Mao (Center) and other dignitaries at the World Philosophy Day Conference organized by Makerere University in November 2025



Through regular appearances on UBC TV's Behind the Headlines, CCG continues to shape public discourse on key national issues



Left-Right: Uganda Human Rights Commission Chairperson HW Mariam Wangadya, Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister Norbert Mao (Center) and Mr Julius Mucunguzi, Electoral Commission spokesperson at the multi-stakeholder country forum organized by CCG with support of AHEAD Africa in July 2025 at Hotel Africana.



*(L-R): CCG Executive Director **Dr. Sarah Bireete** and retired former Principal Judge **Justice James Ogoola** in conversation with the Deputy Speaker of Parliament, **Rt. Hon. Thomas Tayebwa** (Center). They are joined by **Mr. Godber Tumushabe** (CCG Board Chairperson and Associate Director, GLISS) and **Dr. Moses Isooba** (Executive Director, Uganda National NGO Forum). Standing behind Mr. Tumushabe is **Justice Johann Kriegler**, Justice Emeritus of the Constitutional Court of South Africa and former head of the 1994 Independent Electoral Commission. This was at CCG's 2025 Annual Constitutional Conference at the Sheraton Kampala Hotel.*

CONCLUSION

As we continue to champion the principles of good governance and constitutionalism, we extend our sincerest appreciation to our partners. We are deeply grateful to Oxfam, the Ford Foundation, and GIZ for their unwavering support and shared vision. We also recognize and thank the various government actors and agencies for their continued commitment to constructive dialogue and institutional transparency.