

FOWODE

October Newsletter



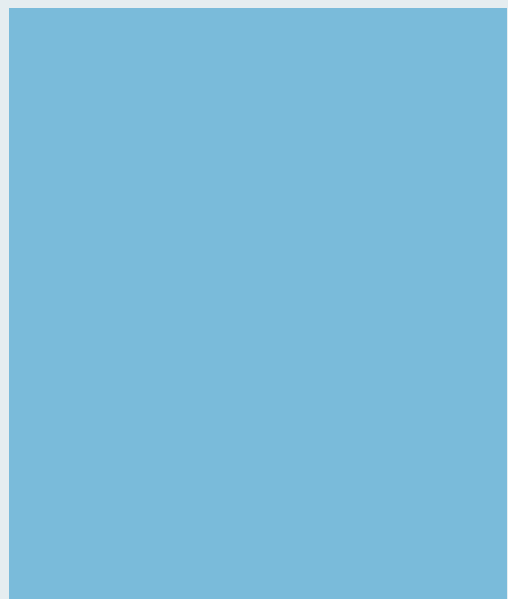
Hello and welcome to our October newsletter!

As we step into the final quarter of the year, we're excited to share the progress, milestones, and impact stories that continue to drive our vision forward. Here's a look at what's inside this edition:



Newsletter Highlights

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FOWODE and RAHU Unite for the Electrifying Imara Girls Festival 2024



The second edition of the **Imara Girls Festival**, organized by the Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) and Reach a Hand Uganda (RAHU), burst into life on October 12, 2024, at Kati Kati grounds in Kampala. This vibrant celebration showcased the powerful voices, creativity, and innovative spirit of young women, all while shining a spotlight on the socio-economic issues affecting women and girls. The festival served as a dynamic platform for discussions, sharing experiences, and offering actionable solutions.

In commemoration of the **International Day of the Girl Child**, this year's festival, themed "**Invest in Her, Unleash Her Potential**," emphasized the significance of empowering young women as key drivers of local and global development.

No celebration would be complete without a dash of fun! Festival-goers enjoyed an exciting array of games and activities, alongside electrifying performances by renowned female artists such as Jackie Chandiru, Lillian Mbabazi, Nina Rose, Karole Kasita, Kateleya and Kandle, Jowy Landa, Racheal Ray, and Ava Peace.

Beyond the celebrations, the festival served as a key fundraising and awareness platform for the Imara Women's Centre (IWC), a transformative project dedicated to advancing women's rights. The Imara Women's Centre (IWC) will serve as a vibrant space for learning and independent organizing; fostering creativity and innovation; rejuvenation and healing. To support the Centre's construction, the Imara Festival promoted the **#1KForImara Campaign**, calling on a million people to contribute at least **1,000** shillings monthly.

We extend our deepest thanks to everyone; young women, men, students, artists, exhibitors, sponsors, and community members who made the Imara Girls Festival 2024 a remarkable success.

FOWODE calls upon the public to journey with us in this critical mission of making the Centre a reality. Consider committing a small, consistent amount, for as low as Shs.1000 or more every month over the next three years. You can also become ambassadors for the cause in your networks, connect Imara with potential supporters, and promote our fundraising initiatives through your social media channels. Your actions can profoundly impact the lives of women, girls and boys in our country.

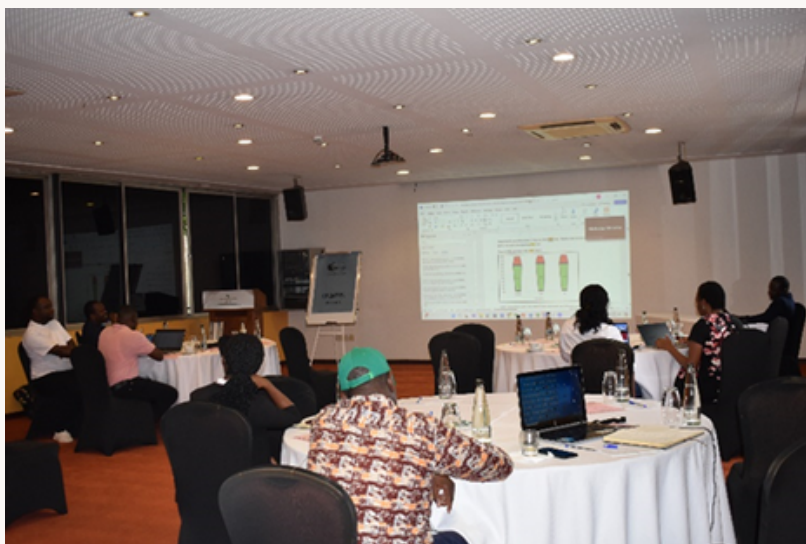
#ImaraCentre #ImagineImaraWithUs

Gender-Responsive Tax Reforms in Uganda: A Call for Inclusive Policy Changes

The Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) recently conducted an assessment of the Gender Responsiveness of Uganda's tax regime. The findings reveal that Uganda's current tax regime places a disproportionate financial burden on women, especially those in informal businesses, exacerbating economic inequalities. This is particularly through indirect taxes, VAT on household items, and mobile money withdrawal fees. Additionally, informal charges, such as service fees and bribes to tax agents, accounted for most of the tax burden for women, underscoring the urgent need for a more inclusive approach to tax policy.

On October 11, 2024, FOWODE hosted a validation meeting at Kabira Country Club to review and refine the study's findings. The team of experts included representatives from the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development, Uganda Revenue Authority, district planners, academia and civil society organizations. The stakeholders discussed challenges faced by women under Uganda's tax system and explored practical steps toward establishing more gender sensitive tax reforms.

The meeting concluded with essential recommendations, including simplifying tax processes for small businesses, launching educational initiatives to improve tax literacy among women, and reconsidering VAT on essential items.



Presentation of the Gender Responsive Tax Reforms report during the validation workshop on 11th October at Kabira Country Club.

Another key suggestion was to establish a national dataset to identify the economic activities of vulnerable groups, ensuring that policy changes address the unique challenges of women, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups.

It is our hope that the generated evidence will further stimulate dialogue and inform advocacy to shape an equitable tax policy that supports inclusive economic growth and gender justice in Uganda.

Watch out for the final study on our communication platforms.

Setting the Pace: FOWODE Leads the AWESOME Consortium at ACHPR's 81st Session in Banjul.

FOWODE leverages on strategic partnerships and spaces at national, regional and global levels to inspire shared visions and strengthen advocacy on women's rights. In October, the organisation coordinated the ***Advancing Women's Engagement: Strengthening Opportunities to Mobilize for Equality (AWESOME)*** consortium's participation at the 81st Session of ***the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)***, held in Banjul, Gambia. The AWESOME consortium works towards ensuring that women movements in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda are strengthened, less fragmented and more representative of diverse groups of women. The event brought together delegates from member states, human rights commissions, CSOs, and international observers and focused on critical themes like women's rights, freedom of expression and human dignity.

Ahead of the main ACHPR session, the AWESOME consortium actively engaged in the NGO Forum, which aimed to strengthen collaboration among NGOs and the African Commission to promote human rights across Africa. Consortium members, **FOWODE (Uganda), Women Challenged to Challenge (Kenya), Siiqqee Women in Development Association (Ethiopia), Ethiopia Women with Disability National Association, and Womankind Worldwide** contributed to thematic discussions that informed the Forum's outcome document, later presented to the ACHPR.

Key resolutions by the AWESOME team included calls for enhanced enforcement of legal frameworks on women's rights and gender-based violence (GBV), regular reporting on GBV, harmonization of laws with international standards, and the ratification of the **ILO (International Labour Organization) ILO 190 Convention** - an international labour standard to address all forms of violence and harassment in the world of work. The consortium also urged the African Union to safeguard marginalized groups and ensure their active social, economic, and political participation.

Elizabeth Ampairwe, the FOWODE Director of Programmes delivered a joint statement on behalf of the AWESOME consortium, urging **AU** member states to work with international human rights bodies to address rights violations and strengthen protections for vulnerable communities, including persons with disabilities, refugees, and women.



L-R: Elizabeth Ampairwe, Director of programmes, reading a joint statement at Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara Conference Centre in Banjul, Gambia.

FOWODE's participation also extended to a panel discussion with Defend Defenders on human rights strategies in Uganda, where Sarah Nakintu, the FOWODE Women and Leadership Programme Officer, highlighted the challenges women leaders face due to shrinking civic space. This partnership is expected to continue, with Defend Defenders pledging to conduct a security assessment and training for FOWODE.

FOWODE remains committed to building and leveraging on strategic partnerships and spaces to enhance her profile as a sought-after organization on advancing women's rights and advocating for inclusive and impactful change in line with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.



L-R Sarah Nakintu, Women and Leadership program officer taking part in a panel discussion.

Leaving No Woman, Girl Behind: FOWODE convenes CSO-Government Consultation On SDGs.

Since 2016, FOWODE has coordinated and convened the Uganda Gender Consortium on SDGs (UGCS), a platform that monitors the components of gender equality in the SDGs at the local, national and regional levels. In partnership with the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), the work of UGCS directly feeds into the domestication of the SDG agenda.

On 15th October 2024, FOWODE held an interface meeting at Eureka Hotel to foster strategic dialogue between civil society and government. The meeting was attended by 23 members of UGCS and the National SDG Secretariat under the auspices of the Office of the Prime Minister.

A key objective of the meeting was to develop actionable strategies for collaboration ahead of the upcoming 11th African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD-11) that Uganda will host.

The Forum will be organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the Government of Uganda, the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank, under the theme, ***“Driving job creation and economic growth through sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want”***. The forum will review **SDG 3** (Good Health and wellbeing), **5** (Gender Equality), **8** (Decent work and economic growth), **14** (Life Below water) and **17** (Partnerships for the Goals). One of the goals under review, **SDG 5**, is especially key to the work of UGCS as it aligns with the consortium’s overall objective.

The forum serves as a critical platform for monitoring and evaluating progress towards the SDGs, demonstrating the vitality of continued engagement to ensure these goals are met. By maintaining an active role, UGCS not only underscores its commitment to SDG 5 and gender equality but also contributes to a broader collective push that is essential for achieving the ambitious targets of the 2030 Agenda.



Georgia Tumwesigye, Program Manager at FOWODE, sharing insights on the UGCS meeting objectives at Eureka Place hotel on 15th October 2024.

As the meeting drew to a close, CSO representatives committed to actively engage in activities that support the SDGs, particularly in relation to the upcoming ARFSD-11 Forum.

FOWODE believes that sustained focus and engagement on national, regional and international gender equality commitments, including those contained in the 17 SDGs, will strongly enhance accountability by the government and culminate into the transformation of the lives of women ensuring that **“No one is left behind”**.

Fueling Democracy: Powering citizens’ Participation in Electoral Processes

In a bid to enhance civic engagement and support informed voter participation in the upcoming 2026 General Elections, FOWODE recently conducted 23 civic education sessions in Lyantonde and Masindi districts. The sessions reached a total of **1,179** citizens, comprising **799** women and **380** men.

The overarching objective was to deepen citizens' understanding of the electoral process, promote transparency, and ensure active involvement in the upcoming 2026 elections. The timing of these meetings aligned with key activities in the Electoral Commission’s voter registration and polling station reorganization processes, ensuring citizens were engaged at critical moments in the electoral process.

Over the years, FOWODE has been instrumental in fostering civic engagement, promoting democratic processes, empowering citizens, especially women, to actively participate in electoral processes and hold their leaders accountable. Across nine districts, spanning the regions of Bukedi, Bunyoro, and Acholi, a series of impactful initiatives were executed which laid the foundation for expansion of similar efforts into Lyantonde and Masindi districts.



Assistant Election Administrator Mr. Lubwama Abubaker addressing polling station reorganization issues during a civic education meeting at Kahaara PCU in Miirya Sub County, Masindi District.

The sessions in Lyantonde and Masindi gathered various local stakeholders, including LC1, LC3, and LC5 Chairpersons, Parish Chiefs, Community Development Officers (CDOs), Resident District Commissioners (RDCs), Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs), and members of the media. Topics covered included polling station demarcation, voter registration updates, and citizens' electoral rights.

The key concerns raised were similar in both districts for instance missing names on the voter register, the reassignment of voters to distant polling stations, and polling station demarcation challenges. For instance, residents of Kyabaswa village in Masindi reported difficulty in accessing voting services due to the splitting of polling stations.

FOWODE will sustain her work on civic engagement as the efforts have yielded tangible results, notably increasing citizen awareness and engagement in electoral affairs, commitment to mobilise diverse constituencies and stronger partnerships with electoral bodies and civil society organisations. We hope that the endeavors will pave the way for a more transparent and inclusive electoral landscape.

Thank you for reading!