

THE NCHRD-U DIGEST

SEPTEMBER 2025



About the DIGEST

The NCHRD-U Digest is a digital newsletter published on a quarterly basis. It tells stories on all activities conducted in a quarter (3 months) and it is released 4 times in a year.

You can access our digests on <u>www.hrdcoalition.ug</u>. You can also contribute my sharing HRDs based story in Uganda on <u>communications@hrdcoalition.ug</u>

The NCHRD-U

The National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Uganda (NCHRD-U) is an organization of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) working in Uganda that was formed in June 2013.

It seeks to strengthen the work of HRDs throughout the country through synergy and collaboration at national, regional and international level, to enhance the protection mechanisms for HRDs and their capacity to effectively defend human rights.

Our 03 core programs are; Capacity building, Advocacy and Networking, and Emergency and Protection.

Top News

- 1. Change of Executive board leadership
- 2. Retooling of HRDs
- 3. Commemoration of the International Youth Day 2025
- 4. HRD Services providers meetings held
- 5. Shuttle Diplomacy Meeting.
- 6. Regional UPR meetings.
- 7. Radio talk show engagements on LEDs
- 8. Establishment of Sub regional coalition networks.







Robert R. Kirenga

Executive Director

Word from the Executive Director

Dear Our Esteemed Partners and HRDs,

Welcome to this edition of our newsletter from the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Uganda (NCHRD-U). In these pages, we share key highlights of our recent work, partnerships, and ongoing efforts to protect and support human rights defenders and their work across the country.

Civic space continues to evolve, we remain committed to amplifying the voices of HRDs and strengthening protection mechanisms from grassroots to national level. We thank all our partners and stakeholders for walking this journey with us.

Together, we defend rights and protect defenders and their work in Uganda.

Thank you!



Advocacy Engagements



New Board leadership takes over at NCHRD-U

The NCHRD-U announced a new Board of Directors to lead the organization until 2028. Elected on 1st July 2025, the new leadership is chaired by Mr. Robert Ssempala of HRNJ-U, succeeding Ms. Margaret Sekaggya of HRCU. Other members include Ms. Sheila Muwanga (Deputy Chairperson), Ms. Helen Namyalo (Treasurer), Mr. Moses Isooba (Secretary), Ms. Tabitha Netuwa, and four grassroots leaders elected during the 2025 Annual General Assembly namely; Rashida Adong, Albert Taremwa, Charles Masumbuko, and Rashida Adong.

The Board will steer NCHRD-U's strategic direction, policy, and resource mobilization while ensuring accountability and good governance. Leadership renewal every three years enhances institutional growth, innovation, and democratic governance. The new Board will build on past achievements to strengthen the protection and recognition of human rights defenders across Uganda.

NCHRD-U Fosters Dialogue Between Land Defenders and State Actors through shuttle diplomacy

On July 29, 2025, the NCHRD-U held a shuttle diplomacy meeting at Protea Hotel in Kampala. The meeting provided a rare platform for open dialogue, where defenders voiced concerns about human rights violations and state representatives offered responses and commitments to address them

This brought together land and environmental defenders from the Albertine sub-region, state actors, and corporate entities in the oil and gas sector.

The engagement enhanced mutual understanding, strengthened trust among stakeholders, and marked a key step toward improving accountability and collaboration in protecting community rights within Uganda's rapidly developing extractive sector.







NCHRD-U ENGAGES CSOS IN REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS ON UGANDA'S UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

In September, the NCHRD-U held four Regional Consultative Meetings on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) across the Western, Northern, Eastern, and Central regions. The meetings focused on identifying emerging human rights issues in relations to recommendations that the Government of Uganda accepted at the UPR cycle.

As the main coordinator of CSO reporting under UN Charter-based mechanisms, NCHRD-U is leading the development of Uganda's CSO shadow report.

These engagements strengthened regional participation, enhanced coordination among human rights actors, and ensured that diverse grassroots perspectives inform Uganda's UPR process contributing to stronger advocacy and accountability for human rights commitments.





COMMEMORATION OF INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY 2025

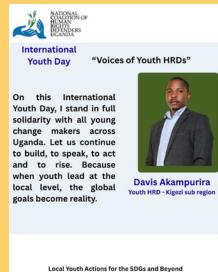
The NCHRD-U marked this significant occasion under the theme: "Local Youth Actions for the SDGs and Beyond."

This was based on UN data that over 65% of SDG targets require local implementation, argue for more policy space and resources for youth-led advocacy.

This started with a X (formerly twitter) Space on the 13th August 2025. The discourse was centered on the topic; "Beyond 2030: How today's youth actions will shape the next global development agenda. 976 people managed to tune in, listen and participate to the discussion.







Disseminated 10 flyers (IEC materials) with grass root youth HRDs and their inspiring messages about the day on our X (formerly twitter) platforms. This managed to reach 5456 people.





NCHRD-U AMPLIFIES HRDS' VOICES ON REGIONAL RADIO TALK SHOWS

As part of efforts to raise awareness on human rights and civic engagement ahead of the 2026 elections, the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders-Uganda (NCHRD-U) held three regional radio talk shows across the country.

The discussions aired on Arua One FM in West Nile during the commemoration of International Youth Day 2025, on Spice FM in the Albertine region, and on Ateker FM in Moroto, Karamoja.

Human rights defenders engaged listeners on land and environmental rights, youth participation, and community empowerment. The programs reached an estimated 1.5 million listeners, enhancing public understanding of HRDs' work and promoting dialogue on protecting civic space across Uganda.





HRDs' testmonies

Empowering Youth, Strengthening Impact: YEI's Growth Through NCHRD-U Support

The Youth Elevation Initiative (YEI) in Kabale District has grown into a more effective and organized youth-led organization, thanks to institutional support from the NCHRD-U. With equipment such as a desktop computer and filing cabinet, YEI has improved data management, accountability, and professionalism.

Beyond administration, the computer now trains youth in digital literacy, leadership, and communication, expanding mentorship opportunities and empowering more young people. NCHRD-U's continuous guidance and follow-up have strengthened YEI's capacity and connected it to a national network of human rights defenders.

This partnership has transformed YEI into a vibrant hub for youth empowerment and human rights advocacy in the Kigezi sub-region.







Capacity building

NCHRD-U Strengthens Grassroots Coordination Through New Sub-Regional Networks



The NCHRD-U held two half-day meetings to establish the Kigezi and Southern Buganda sub-regional networks. These networks, composed of district representatives from thematic clusters—Women, Youth, PWDs, Key Populations, Ethnic Minorities, Media/Journalists, and Environment HRDs form part NCHRD-U's broader organizational structure feeding Technical Thematic Working Group (TTWG).

platforms aim new to strengthen grassroots coordination, enhance protection mechanisms, and improve collective advocacy human rights. By empowering local defenders through regional coordinators and focal persons, NCHRD-U is deepening its reach and ensuring that human rights protection and response mechanisms effectively extend to HRDs operating in hardto-reach communities.







NCHRD-U ENHANCES SECURITY AND CAPACITY OF GRASSROOTS HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS

Between September 8–11, 2025, the NCHRD-U strengthened the security protocols of 13 grassroots human rights organizations across the Buganda and Kigezi sub-regions. The support followed an earlier needs assessment in eight districts that identified safety and operational gaps among HRDs.

During the retooling exercise, organizations received tailored protection and administrative equipment, including CCTV systems, computers, solar lighting, and backup drives. NCHRD-U Executive Director Robert Kirenga emphasized that the tools represent an investment in defenders' safety, effectiveness, and resilience.

This intervention has enhanced the operational capacity, data security, and sustainability of grassroots organizations, empowering them to continue advocating for human rights and community development in increasingly challenging environments.







NCHRD-U STAFF STRENGTHEN SKILLS IN GENDER MAINSTREAMING, DIGITAL SECURITY, AND COMMUNICATION

From July 21–25, 2025, the NCHRD-U conducted a week-long staff training focused on gender mainstreaming, digital security, and impactful communication. The training equipped staff with practical skills to integrate gender considerations across all programs, budgets, and decisions—ensuring inclusivity and equality in implementation.

Sessions on cybersecurity and data management enhanced staff capacity to protect digital information and operate confidently while addressing human rights issues. Additionally, communication and storytelling sessions improved staff's ability to document and share impact-driven narratives.

The training marked another milestone in NCHRD-U's ongoing institutional capacity strengthening, fostering a more gender-responsive, secure, and communicatively effective secretariat.





Protection and Emergency support

NCHRD-U remains pivotal in protecting HRDs at risk



Amidst limited resources, the NCHRD-U continues to stand firmly with HRDs facing threats and risks. Through our protection program, we provided timely support to HRDs in distress ranging from relocation to safer spaces, safe transport, medical and psychosocial support, to upkeep and Legal support.

Where our internal mechanisms could not fully meet the specific needs of an HRD, we ensured seamless referrals to trusted partners capable of providing the necessary intervention.

If you or someone you know is an HRD in need of assistance, please reach out to us through any of the following channels:

**** Helpline: 0763 565 154

℃ Toll-Free Line: 0800 100 250

Referral Portal: https://referral.hrdcoalition.ug

USSD Code: 284*444# (for HRDs in Albertine and Karamoja sub-regions)

HRDs safety is our priority. Together, we defend rights and protect defenders.





NCHRD-U ORIENTS NEWLY ELECTED TECHNICAL THEMATIC WORKING GROUP (TTWG) MEMBERS

The NCHRD-U held a three-day orientation workshop from August 5–8, 2025, at Grik Hotel, Entebbe, for its newly elected TTWG.

The TTWG is designated as the Advisory Board in the structure of the NCHRD-U reporting to the Board of Directors. These members are elected at Annual General Assembly and chaired by the chairperson who presides over all Committee meetings. It comprises of the five regional representatives and the seven different thematic representatives.

The workshop equipped members with knowledge of their roles, the Coalition's structure, and the TTWG Charter, while reinforcing accountability and coordination among NCHRD-U structures. Members also elected new leaders: Akiiso Joseph (Chairperson), Faith Namansa (Vice Chairperson), and Komugisha Jovia Matsiko (Secretary).

The orientation strengthened the TTWG's advisory role, ensuring effective coordination, improved governance, and a more responsive protection program for human rights defenders across Uganda.







NCHRD-U STRENGTHENS HRD PROTECTION COORDINATION AHEAD OF ELECTIONS

On July 30, 2025, the NCHRD-U convened a strategic coordination meeting in Gulu City with key service providers and human rights defenders (HRDs). The dialogue focused on harmonizing protection efforts and enhancing collaboration ahead of the 2026 general elections.

Participants included legal aid organizations, psychosocial support providers, digital security experts, and emergency response teams.

The meeting provided a vital platform for stakeholders to share best practices, address emerging challenges, and strengthen regional protection mechanisms.

As a result, HRDs in the Acholi region are now better connected to a coordinated support network, improving their safety, response capacity, and resilience as they continue defending human rights in a sensitive preelection context.





Safety and security tips for HRDs in this period

Update passwords regularly and use two-factor authentication on all accounts.

Avoid sharing sensitive information on unsecured platforms or public Wi-Fi.

Encrypt devices and back up important data on secure, offline storage.

Verify links and sources before clicking or sharing—disinformation is high during elections. systems.

Create peer support groups or access psychosocial support services when needed.

Stay connected with HRD networks, coalitions, and early warning systems.



NCHRD-U Hosts Partners for Strengthened Human Rights Collaboration

NCHRD-U was pleased to welcome representatives from Petroleum Authority Uganda, Pollicy Uganda, Diakonia, Resource Rights Africa, Earth Rights Initiative, AGHNET, and DW Akademie who paid a courtesy visit to our office. The engagements focused on exploring areas of partnership, coordination, and future collaboration in advancing human rights defense in Uganda. The visit strengthened mutual understanding, opened doors for joint initiatives, and reaffirmed the shared commitment to protecting human rights defenders and promoting a more just and inclusive society.









National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders Uganda

Plot 148 Semawata road P.O BOX 302, Ntinda, Kampala, Uganda Phone: +256 414 699 373

Toll-free: 0800 100 250

Helpline: +256 763 565 154

Email: info@hrdcoalition.ug