



STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2028

Building Young People's Resilience



NETWORK FOR ACTIVE CITIZENS (NAC)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This strategic plan outlines how the Network for Active Citizens (NAC) seeks to enhance the socio-economic resilience and well-being of 30,000 young people aged 18-30 years in Uganda over 5 years, from 2024 to 2028. This plan has emerged from an internal review, extensive consultations with young people, staff, development partners, and other stakeholders, and an analysis of relevant local and national plans and policy documents to gain an in-depth understanding of the issues and desired direction. For the next 5 years, NAC's work will be guided by 5 key strategic pillars, with carefully considered objectives and outcomes for each pillar. In the context of this strategic plan, specific strategies have been laid out for the respective strategic pillars to guide our work. Over the 5 years of this plan, the strategic objectives and outcomes will be closely monitored and reviewed to ensure their realization.

VISION

A resilient and prosperous Uganda

MISSION

To build youth resilience in Uganda through capability development and policy outreach.

STRATEGIC GOAL

To enhance the economic resilience and well-being of 30,000 young people aged between 18 and 30 years in Uganda by 2028.

WHO WE ARE:

Established in 2017, NAC is a youth-focused non-governmental, and community-driven development organization working to shape local and national pro-youth policy development and action to meet the needs of young people and enhance the sustainable development of their communities.

We provide a platform for a family of young people to connect, find what they care about, and drive their socio-economic resilience, democratic governance, and development agenda in their communities.

OUR CORE VALUES

Youth-centric. We put young people at the heart of the design and implementation of our interventions.

Grassroots: We work with and for the young people in communities to build socio-economic resilience.

Dynamic: We embrace change and adaptability in our work.

Solidarity. We work together with young people and like-minded organizations for the common good of young people.

Accountability. We take responsibility for what we do and are obliged to give justification for all our actions to all the people we work with, serve, and those who support us.

OUR APPROACH (CODI)

We create platforms and opportunities for young people to strengthen their abilities to build their future.

Connect. We create an inclusive space for young people to co-create and co-lead collective action and drive change.

Develop. We build the capability of young people to drive impact.

Influence. We engage young people to tell their own stories, gather hard facts, and elevate their voices with compelling and actionable information to shape public policies.

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION MODALITY

The implementation of this strategy requires joining forces and working with operational partners to provide long-lasting, sustainable solutions to the challenges faced by the young people the strategy seeks to address. To this end, NAC will use the Operational Partners Implementation Modality (OPIM) to carry out projects or programmes in collaboration with youth non-profit and profit actors to achieve more sustainable results. We will, therefore;

- (a) Collaborate with youth-led and youth-focused organizations to increase ownership at national and local levels, better access the expertise available on the ground, tap into the knowledge of young professionals, and build their capacity.
- (b) Remain fully accountable for the resources received from the resource partners, ensuring that funds are used for their intended purposes as well as the technical soundness of the project/programme results.
- (c) Undertake capacity assessments of the potential Operational Partners, sign legally binding agreements, spot checks, audit and monitor progress during implementation to manage risks associated with the implementation modality.

WHERE WE WILL WORK

We will work to reach the target young people to meet their needs and deepen our impact in the regions of:

- (a) Northern Uganda (majorly Arua and Yumbe districts)
- (b) Central Uganda (majorly Kampala district)
- (c) Eastern Uganda (majorly Mayuge, and Jinja), and
- (d) Western Uganda (majorly Ntungamo and Mbarara)

OUR TARGET GROUP

30,000 young women and men aged between 18 to 30 years in underrepresented communities of Uganda who are poor, face deprivation, and are at high risk of exploitation.

Underserved, marginalized,

NAC STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

In the preparation of this Strategic Plan, we reflected on and analysed NAC's current internal environment which informed this Strategic Plan.

Strengths (a) Legitimate, legally registered, and respected organization with good reputation. (b) Has political support for its actions; (c) Has community acceptance (d) Is less bureaucratic; (e) Has a high sense of voluntarism (f) Has a knowledgeable, experienced, and committed team with diverse skills. (g) Uses participatory and evidence-based long-term impact-oriented and self-reliance-building intervention (h) Prioritize marginalized young people from underserved communities (i) Good working relationships, networks, and collaborative approaches in place with young people, stakeholders, and partners. (j) Has good, transparent, and accountable partnership with donors and beneficiary communities (k) Commitment of volunteers	Weaknesses (a) Limited funding base to meet operational costs and retain staff (b) Weak corporate governance (c) Implement mainly short-term projects other than the programme approach (d) Lack of a fundraising strategy (e) Has a weak M&E system (f) Has no organizational sustainability plan (g) Has limited gender and environment mainstreaming skills
Opportunities (a) The energy and creativity of young people (b) International youth work (c) Changing demographic profile (d) Increasing diversity (e) Legal and policy frameworks that promote youth work (f) The existence of many youths' civil society organizations that share our aspirations (g) Political stability (h) Uganda government adoption of a rights-based approach to participation in planning and development processes.	Threats (a) Narrowing and restrictive funding streams (b) Restrictive NGO regulatory framework (c) Decreasing level of volunteerism among the young people (d) Youth apathy (e) Increasing poverty level in Uganda's communities we work in (f) Dependency syndrome of implementing partner organizations

CONTEXT

Youth Demographics

Uganda has one of the youngest demographics in Africa. Uganda's total population is approximately 43.7 million people, growing at an annual growth rate of 3.1%¹, Uganda's population is predominantly young people under the age of 30 years who constitute about 75.5%². The glaring statistics bear evidence that young people are critical in shaping Uganda's development agenda.

Youth Unemployment and Poverty

Despite Uganda's impressive overall economic growth over the years, the country struggles to accommodate the influx of young people entering the workforce. About 13% of young people remain unemployed, higher than the national unemployment rate of 10%,³ and according to the National Planning Authority (NPA), about 700,000 million young people who graduate from higher institutions of learning compete for only 90,000 available jobs every year. Thus, youth unemployment represents a significant factor in the persistence of extreme poverty. About 30.1% of the Ugandan population live in poverty⁴, the majority are young people, who are the lowest income earners. Yet agriculture has a great potential to provide income and job-generating opportunities for young people to lift themselves out of poverty.

Youth Participation in decision-making

Young people who constitute the majority of the population, have the right to participate and be heard in different spheres of decision-making under existing laws. Despite the strides made to put in place existing policies and legal frameworks especially affirmative action to include youth in the public decision-making spheres in Uganda, the actual meaningful participation of young people in the public decision-making structure remains extremely limited. Young people aged between 18-30 years continue to be marginalized and vastly underrepresented in mainstream politics and decision-making where power is exercised. While young people constitute more than half of Uganda's population, only 5 members of the 11th parliament represent the young people, 7.4%⁵ of the parliamentarians of the national parliament are aged 33 years below, and the number of youth leaders who are ministers, members of local government councils, and heads of public institutions is equally minimal, leaving the aging old to represent the young generation. The low level of youth participation in decision-making is often attributed to traditional beliefs that young people are too young to lead and older adults are the wise ones. This is perpetuated by many young people remaining unaware of their civic rights and obligations; lack the knowledge and skills to effectively influence decision-making or governance processes that are responsive to their needs and are unfamiliar with how to hold elected and appointed government duty-bearers accountable; and they lack opportunities to discuss or dialogue on youth-centric issues and concerns. As a result, youth needs are being insufficiently resourced, public policies are not designed to address the particular needs of young people and the country is denied youth perspectives, creativity, and talent to contribute to national public policies that improve their lives and that of their communities.

Youth and Climate Change

In Uganda, climate change is adversely impacting the whole population across the country. Climate extreme weather events have become more frequent, intense, and unpredictable, people are experiencing heat waves, erratic and irregular rainfall, and prolonged drought. The growing impact of climate change is fuelling diminishing food security, flooding, stress on water resources, population displacement, increased risk of infectious diseases, and jeopardizing sexual reproductive rights. Though climate change affects everyone, young people are disproportionately and severely

¹ Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2022 Projection

² Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2022 Projection

³ UBOS Statistical Abstract 2021

⁴ Uganda National Household Survey 2019/20

⁵ Parliament Watch Uganda

affected even though they are the least responsible for contributing to the crisis. The majority of poor young people in Uganda have less or no capacity and resources to prepare for and adapt to climate change leaving them most susceptible to the effects of climate change. With insufficient action by the government, the impact of climate change is jeopardizing the progress already made in addressing the injustice of poverty, and millions, the majority of young people are at high risk of falling back into poverty. Nonetheless, many young people lack productive assets including land, access to finance, and information to adapt and remain resilient to climate change. The situation is exacerbated by very limited and many times no participation of young people in the design, planning, and implementation of climate policy at both local and national levels. As a result, public policies coupled with limited action by the government are often not responsive to the specific needs of young people to make them more adaptable and resilient to climate change effects.

Nevertheless, climate change provides an opportunity for young people to harness their untapped to intensify efforts to address it. Acknowledging young people's energy and creativity, it's now more important than ever before to invest in and foster youth to effectively participate in climate policy formulation and lead climate action in Uganda.

Youth Civil Society

Today, Uganda has numerous mushrooming youth civil society organizations, both registered at national and local levels playing critical roles in elevating youth issues and mobilizing and empowering young people for collective action as well as empowering and building capacity. However, the youth organizations lack and struggle to secure sustainable resources such as funding and paid staff to maintain long-term programming and operation as formal organizations. Many lack networks and operate in silos limiting their ability to capitalize on peer expertise and resource sharing to build and sustain resilience. The existing stringent laws and regulations governing NGOs in Uganda stifle the operations and curtail the growth of youth organizations. This continues to limit the effectiveness of youth civil society organizations to position themselves as agents of change through the work they do to implement locally relevant initiatives that address youth-specific challenges. Despite the challenges, active and effective participation of young people in civil society remains essential in providing opportunities for young people to design interventions that address the most pressing social and economic challenges young people face.

Legal and Policy Framework

As a member state of the United Nations, the Commonwealth, and the African Union (AU), Uganda endorsed the UN Actions on Youth, the Commonwealth Action Plan for Youth, and the African Youth Charter respectively to implement youth programmes. Uganda has further developed laws and policies to increase the participation of young people in decision-making processes as well as address the unemployment challenge. The 1995 Uganda Constitution and the National Youth Council Act 1993 provide for youth civic engagement and participation. Specifically, the National Youth Council has been established to mobilize, organize, and engage youth in development activities. In addition, Uganda has put in place the National Youth Policy 2001, revised in 2016 and operationalized by the National Youth Action Plan 2016; the National Employment Policy for Uganda, the Skilling Uganda Strategic Plan 2012- 2022, and the National Youth Council Act all of which provide a framework for youth engagement and employment. Uganda's Vision 2040 also strongly emphasizes skills development and employment. However, structural barriers such as inadequate funding due to insufficient budget allocation and uncoordinated planning among government agencies remain an impediment to efficient and effective policy implementation in the country. The insufficient budget allocation demonstrates limited political will and commitment to supporting the implementation of needed policies to meet the needs of the young people in Uganda. With poor policy implementation, the good policies have continued to remain on paper and not translated into actions limiting the attainment of envisaged outcomes of improving income and livelihood for young Ugandans. This has denied the country to fully utilize and engage young people in driving the development agenda of Uganda, thus limiting their ability to realize their full potential.

OUR STRATEGIC PILLARS

Strategic Pillar 1: Youth Climate Resilience	To build the adaptive capacity and resilience of young people to climate change effects in the most climate-impacted communities.
Outcome: Enhanced climate resilience and economic stability of young people to cope with and adapt to climate change in the most vulnerable communities of Uganda.	

Rationale

Uganda's young people are the most affected by extreme climate events. Across the country, they lack assets and access to financial resources limiting their capacity to cope and recover from climate shocks. Unfortunately, they are the least represented in making climate decisions at local and national levels. Consequently, climate policies and action can't inclusively and adequately meet the specific needs of young people to increase their adaptive and resilience capacity. It remains imperative to involve and empower young people to be at the forefront of climate negotiations and policy formulation and drive climate action to attain better and inclusive climate adaptation and resilience as well as economic stability in Uganda.

Strategies:

- Enhance youth capacity to understand climate change and lead climate actions.
- Propel youth-led sustainable, resilient, and regenerative farming in Uganda's most climate-impacted communities.
- Support climate-smart social entrepreneurship in vulnerable communities of Uganda.
- Establish and maintain attractive, accessible, innovative, and creative public green spaces.
- Engage young people in multilevel climate policy negotiations and development processes.
- Foster youth effective engagement in the cooperative movement for wealth and job creation.
- Engage young people in climate information outreach activities to champion climate change agenda and call for climate action.

Strategic Pillar 2: Governance Accountability Advocacy and Participation (GAAP)	To strengthen the ability of young people to provide leadership and influence local and national policies in support of youth development.
Outcome: A stronger network of young leaders shaping public policies to advance youth well-being in Uganda.	

Rationale

Uganda's constitution mandates all citizens to actively participate in the governance and development of their country at all levels. Whereas young Ugandans are the majority of the population, their participation in the formal decision structures at both local and national levels is very limited. They face marginalization arising from a lack of equal opportunities for capacity development, and limited platforms to participate and influence policies, and many are unaware that it is their civic duty to participate in decision-making processes for nation-building. Consequently, their voices are barely heard and public services don't respond to their specific needs. We will therefore focus on developing youth capacities in evidence-based advocacy and transformational leadership and provide platforms for the youth to participate in decision-making processes and constructively dialogue with government duty bearers for pro-youth policies.

Strategies:

- (a) Run SLOGBAA fellowship to strengthen youth advocates' capacity for evidence-based advocacy and policy influence.
- (b) Promote digital engagement through YGB in advocacy spaces to facilitate consultations with young people to draw priorities and recommendations for pro-youth public policies at local levels.
- (c) Develop and disseminate evidence-based advocacy products
- (d) Establish and maintain attractive and accessible youth green civic spaces.
- (e) Provide platforms for young people to dialogue with government duty-bearers to shape pro-youth public policies.
- (f) Strengthen our ability to coordinate and sustain targeted advocacy initiatives for advancing youth well-being across all levels.

Strategic Pillar 3: Communication for Development	To build a platform for young storytellers to amplify youth voices and inspire change in Uganda.
Outcome: A stronger movement of young storytellers influencing action and change in Uganda	

Rationale

Young Ugandans face numerous development challenges ranging from poverty to unemployment and climate change. However, traditional media has been slow to tell youth stories taking into account their own narratives.

Given young people are the experts of their own experience and their voices and solutions to address the challenges they face, it's critical to create a platform to give young people a voice to share their experiences, challenges they have endured, and most importantly, how they are delivering solutions to development challenges. Shining the spotlight on youth issues through creative and impactful storytelling is key to informing public policy development by the government, and inspiring action and change by both government and their communities.

Strategies

- (a) Build the competence of young people in digital storytelling.
- (b) Provide storytelling toolkits and resources to young people across Uganda.
- (c) Engage young people in community journalism to influence public discourse and action to meet youth needs.

Strategic Pillar 4: Youth Organizing and Strengthening	To reinforce youth civil society action to drive inclusive and sustainable change within the youth sector.
Outcome: A thriving network of youth organizations ably sustaining and scaling youth-led development.	

Rationale

Despite playing an important role in the development of young people and their communities, too often, youth organizations lack sustained funding, struggle to attract and retain talent and face a regulatory environment. These challenges hinder their organizational growth and create obstacles to enhancing motivation in young people to involve themselves in the civil society space. Therefore, we will focus on building a network of youth organizations within the youth sector to connect, align efforts, and share resources to drive collective action to transform the lives of young people in Uganda.

Strategies:

- (a) Proactively link youth-led and focused community-based organizations to each other, development partners, and other relevant stakeholders.
- (b) Host and facilitate networking events to enable peer-to-peer support, and enhance interactivity and learning opportunities.
- (c) Establish and sustain Youth CSO Villas across the regions to host small and growing youth organizations.
- (d) Facilitate collaboration among youth-led and focused organizations on specific issues, themes, and sectors.
- (e) Establish and sustain an innovative funding mechanism for youth-led organizations to advance the well-being of young people in underserved communities of Uganda.
- (f) Proactively recruit youth-led organizations across the regions of Uganda to become members of the network.
- (g) Propel global exchange for cross-learning and experience sharing among young people to champion development agenda.

Strategic Pillar 5: Strengthened and sustainable organization	To build and align human and operational resources to achieve the goals of this strategy.
Outcome: NAC with competent and skilled Board and management staff and efficient and effective programming.	

Rationale

Delivery of NAC's mandate and execution of this strategic plan requires NAC to be effective and efficient, with the right results-based leadership and management, staff, systems, partnerships, infrastructure, and adequate resources. To ensure that NAC is a fit-for-purpose organization, it requires strengthening its institutional capacity in areas of Board oversight functions, human resource, and technical team management competency, value-added partnerships, securing a diversified funding base, and as well as capital investments.

Strategies:

- (a) Recruit, capacitate, and retain a core staff team to deliver high-quality programmes that meet the needs of young people.
- (b) Strengthen the Board's capacity in corporate governance systems and functionality that support the delivery of our mission, provide appropriate oversight, and enable quality outcomes of programmes.
- (c) Build and sustain partnerships, both locally and internationally which support the delivery of our mission and strategy by building our capacity, maximizing funding opportunities, and improving programmes delivery, and advocacy.
- (d) Integrate innovative information technology solutions to enable a highly interactive remote service delivery, effective communications, and operational efficiency.
- (e) Diversify revenue base to generate sufficient income and ensure financial sustainability to deliver our mission and this strategy through increased partnerships with local and international development partners, the private sector, and government agencies.
- (f) Strengthen the infrastructure base for efficient and effective operation.
- (g) Develop and review needed institutional policies and systems.
- (h) Ensure compliance with all Non-Governmental Organizations' legal and regulatory frameworks of Uganda.
- (i) Develop a resource mobilization strategy to enable NAC to sustainably secure adequate resources to implement this strategy.

MONITORING, EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND LEARNING (MEAL)

We will establish and maintain a functional data and information management system with a participatory structure right from the young people through to the youth organizations we work with to the Secretariat, M&E desk. This will allow for participatory and timely data collection, analysis, and reporting. In so doing, we will:

- (a) Develop an M&E system with a clear results chain, data collection tools, and analysis methods;
- (b) Develop participatory monitoring methods at the community level to account for successes based on evidence;
- (c) Develop a database of all beneficiaries and frequently update it annually;
- (d) Conduct baseline studies to benchmark all project indicators;
- (e) Conduct periodic programme staff meetings to review progress, reconcile accountability, and draw lessons and best practices;
- (f) Undertake periodic management field visits and review meetings to ensure that on-spot progress is tracked and remedial actions are taken timely;
- (g) Hold annual stakeholder meetings to review progress and lessons learned;
- (h) Ensure annual financial audits and reporting to the Board of Directors and donors for effective learning and accountability and to keep all stakeholders aware of our work;
- (i) Prepare and share periodic project and organizational reports with all relevant stakeholders;
- (j) Undertake mid-term and end of the project, programme, and strategic plan evaluation will provide evidence of impacts and lessons for replication;
- (k) Develop and implement a visibility strategy to guide documentation and information dissemination.