

YECA FEBRUARY 2025 NEWSLETTER

LEGAL EMPOWERMENT, A KEY TOOL TO BREAK THE CYCLE OF ABUSE IN UGANDA.



Youth Climate Activists from youth-led organizations after a two-day capacity-building workshop.

INTRODUCTION

Dear Reader, welcome to our February 2025 Newsletter.

The newsletter discusses the legal and policy gaps that have limited youth to fully exercise their rights and suggests recommendations that need to be put in place. Further, the newsletter discusses the activities the organization implemented in February 2025.

Background

More than five billion people around the world are denied meaningful access to justice. They are driven from their land, denied basic services, and intimidated by violence. In Uganda, many young people remain ignorant about their rights and this has made them suffer injustices in their everyday work. With over 70% of the total population being youth, Uganda's youth population continues to face numerous challenges, including limited awareness and understanding of their legal rights and responsibilities. This ignorance of the law has led to various issues, including exploitation, abuse, and unjust treatment.

It should be noted that Uganda has put in place many documents to safeguard youth's rights including the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995), especially Article 32 which recognizes the rights of youth to participation, protection, and development, the Youth Act (2011) that Provides for the promotion of youth development, empowerment, and participation and the Children Act (2016) that Protects the rights and welfare of children and youth. However, despite the existence of these laws, many youths in Uganda remain unaware of their rights and responsibilities, leading to various issues, including exploitation, abuse, and limited access to justice

among others. The ignorance of the law among youth in Uganda is a significant challenge that needs to be addressed by providing youth with access to information, education, and legal aid to empower them to claim their rights and participate in decision-making processes. Policy reforms and sensitization programs are also crucial in addressing the issues faced by youth due to ignorance of the law. Every day we see youth climate activists being arrested whenever they come out to exercise their rights to peaceful assembly. It should be noted that most of these youths being arrested have no understanding of the law and they end up being victims of injustice. They do not know the laws that allow them to organize peaceful protests and this has made them suffer consequences since they are brutally arrested whenever they come out to raise their voices.

In 2024, YECA launched a campaign called ‘KNOW YOUR RIGHTS’ to spread awareness about the legal and policies that allow youth to exercise their rights. The campaign is still ongoing and we have reached thousands of people via media and our physical meetings. However, the gap still exists which has made youth vulnerable and caught outside the law.

To fill the legal gap, in February 2025, YECA organized a capacity-building training for youth climate activists in Kampala to understand the youth’s levels of understanding when it comes to laws that protect their rights. The training was attended by youth participants drawn from youth organizations, and individual youth climate activists to understand what the law requires them to do.

Therefore, our February newsletter discusses issues and gaps in legal and policies that have affected youth’s rights and discusses the activities YECA has been able to implement for February 2025.

Enjoy the newsletter.

Section 1

On February 20-23, Youth for Environmental Justice and Climate Action (YECA) organized youth capacity-building workshop to empower youth about their human and land rights in pursuit of their climate justice work. The training happened at Hotel J-flight in Kikoni where youth participants were drawn from youth-led organizations, individual youth activists, and other civil society Organisations. The training aimed at empowering youth climate activists to understand, use, and shape the laws that affect them and train youth as paralegals with law and policy skills like mediation, organizing, and advocacy to help people seek concrete solutions to instances of injustice, engaging formal and traditional institutions.

Below we bring you gaps that were observed during the training and solutions needed to fill these gaps.

● **Limited access to information:** Andrew Arijuka who was one of the participants from Ntungamo district indicated that most of the youth in Uganda including himself do not know where to find the documents that they can read to find information. ‘I downloaded the constitution on my phone but the English is too much for me to understand, Andrew Narrates a story. He further mentioned that many of his fellows in the community have no idea about the laws that protect them and they end up being cheated and discriminated against. This was observed from the training that YECA organized where many youths did not know anything about the articles in the constitution that protect their rights.

● **Poor Education system:** Ainomugisha Rose who was one of the participants said that most of them don’t understand the laws because they did not study them in school. It should be noted that laws are not taught in both lower and upper curriculum education levels. This has left Rose

and many others in darkness failing to understand what the laws require them to do. She said that it would be so much important for Laws to be included in lower education levels for students to understand laws at early stages. Rose's experience calls for more amendments in the education curriculum for these law studies to be included in the syllabus.

●**High Poverty Levels:** According to Alex Mujungu who was one of the participants indicated that his dream was to study law at Makerere University and become a lawyer. Unfortunately, Alex was not admitted to the law program at Makerere University. Due to his passion for studying law, Alex applied to Uganda Christian University (UCU) to do the same law course. Fortunately and unfortunately, Alex was given a law course for four years, unfortunately, Alex took the admission home and the parents weren't able to pay the high tuition that was indicated for him to study law. This demotivated Alex to return and study a diploma since he failed to raise tuition to study law. Alex said that he has tried to read the constitution of Uganda and indicated that the English in the constitution needs some class work to understand some of the words and meanings. Alex is one of the many who have wanted to do law but due to limited finances, has ended up majoring in other fields which has made them remain with limited information about the laws that govern them.

●**Limited media coverage:** Flavia Ayesigye who is a youth activist against EACOP project from Hoima said that the media is focused on politics and fails to spread awareness about human rights laws that would protect them from exploitation. Flavia said that the media both National and Local ones have no adverts about human rights laws and this has left most of them unaware of the law they can use to defend the oil and gas injustices caused by oil companies in the area. She said that the media in Uganda should also

focus on legal empowerment awareness for youth, especially in local communities to understand their human and land rights.

●**Language Barrier:** From the meeting, it was observed that most youth especially those in rural communities do not understand English. Dorothy Mugumany who was one of the participants said that she had not found the Ugandan 1995 version of the constitution which is written in their local language (Runyankole), she said this would be easy for communities to read. Unfortunately, the government of Uganda hasn't done much to translate the Ugandan Constitution into local languages for communities to understand. This has left a big gap for communities to understand and shape the laws that affect their daily life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the workshop, youth suggested recommendations that can be employed to increase their understanding of the laws that undermine their participation.

●The government of Uganda should carry out Mass sensitization and educational programs to inform youth about their rights and responsibilities.

●The government should provide youth with access to information about the law and their rights and localize the services at least at the village level.

●Youth also want the government and private sector to Provide legal aid services to help them access justice.

●Youth also want policy reforms to address laws that affect and limit their participation in different sector

●Youth also want the constitution of Uganda translated into local languages for the communities to read and understand.

ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED IN FEBRUARY 2025

In February 2025, YECA implemented the following activities.



On February 5, 2025, YECA organized a youth capacity -building workshop to empower youth climate activists to understand the legal frameworks that govern their work. The objective of the training was to empower youth to know the laws and understand which laws they can use to defend their rights. Twenty-two youth climate activists from youth organizations, individual youth activists, and CSOs participated in the meeting.



On February 12, 2025, we organized a meeting with students from Ndegge University to discuss their role in driving the energy transition in Uganda. The youth were introduced to Uganda's energy transition plan and they got to know about the Repower Afrika campaign. The meeting was attended by 29 youth students from Ndegge University. This is part of our series in university institutions to empower youth to foster the energy transition in Uganda from fossil fuels to clean energy sources.



On February 15, 2025, CERAI supported youth to have a climate action awareness campaign in Makerere Kikoni. The campaign brought together students from Makerere University, Youth-led organizations, and youth climate activists. The main objective of the activity was to raise awareness about the role of the community in living in a healthy environment.



On February 20, 2025, YECA supported youth to participate in the court hearing for the 20 youth climate activists who were arrested in November 2024 and later given bail. The court hearing was supposed to happen at Buganda Road court but unfortunately, the hearing did not take place due to the absence of a trial magistrate. The case was pushed to April 7, 2024. We continue to support youth climate activists with legal aid support to do their climate activism work.



On February 28, 2025, YECA attended the annual Youth Climate Mentorship program launch that happened at Hotel Africana Kampala. Under the Fridays for Future Uganda, one of our team leaders was selected to be part of this climate justice annual program for 2025. We hope for the selected individuals to learn many skills, collaborate, and network with other like-minded youth to build a strong climate justice movement in Uganda.

About YECA

Youth for Environmental Justice and Climate Action is a youth-led non-profit organization in Uganda. The organization was formed to build a climate justice movement in Uganda with a focus on youth especially in educational institutions. We are currently working with oil-affected communities to build resistance against the expansion of oil and gas projects in Uganda. Our goal is to stop these oil projects and advocate for clean renewable energy sources. Through building a movement of youth climate justice leaders, these oil projects will be stopped in Uganda.

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