

A REFLECTION OF FHRI'S 30 YEARS OF ACTIVISM

Established in 1991, Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI) has been on an exciting and eventful journey in the pursuit of democratic governance and respect for fundamental human rights in Uganda and beyond. Over time, FHRI has notched up several milestones which have defined its 30-year legacy.

During the thirty years of human rights advocacy work, FHRI has grown from a small organisation with minimal capacity to one with great potential through a set of nine multi-faceted human rights programmes.

FHRI's programmes have reached out to a diverse constituency: universities, local government, community-based groups, Justice Law and Order Sector (JLOS) institutions, media, civil society, private and public sector, parliament, constitutional bodies such as Law Reform Commission, Uganda Human Rights Commission and Electoral Commission, upcoming human rights defenders, and regional and international bodies such as the East African Community, African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, World Coalition Against the Death Penalty, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), UN bodies among others.

FHRI'S TIMELINE

In 1991, FHRI is born in a small office in downtown Kampala. At that time, Uganda was undergoing several policy and constitutional changes. With a turbulent history of over thirty years since independence, Uganda was just putting her house in order.

The first activity FHRI conducted was the national human rights workshop under the theme: *'Human Rights and Development: Strategies for a National Plan of Action for the 1990's in Uganda'*. The workshop held in 1992, was convened to examine the pressing human rights issues in Uganda with a view of adopting a national human rights strategy.

In 1992, FHRI launched her pioneer Three Year Programme (1992 – 1994) focussing on the promotion and protection of human rights in Uganda. The programme had projects which were people-centred, cutting across the very fabric of a genuine democratic struggle.

1993: FHRI unveils its flagship project, the Paralegal Training Project. It is a profound intervention that established the organisation in the communities where it continues to work up to today. The project empowered people to demand for their rights by creating a pool of informed people at the grassroots knowledgeable about human rights and the law. The project led to the formation of several community-based groups which have since acted as the eyes and ears of the community on democracy and human rights related matters. These paralegals, over the years have provided pro-bono legal first aid services to the rural and urban poor, especially women and children in difficult situations and hard-to-reach areas across the country. FHRI reached out to various sub-countries and/or districts and among them were: Buliisa, Bujenje

and Kibanda (Masindi district), Bamunanika, Nakaseke, (Luweero district) Nakasongola, Kayunga, Mukono, Masaka, Busia, Sembabule, Busia, Tororo, Buikwe. In winding up the project in 1999, there were over 794 paralegals and before its closure FHRI organised a training of trainers from all the districts trained to ensure sustainability.

In 1994, FHRI introduced several interventions such as civic empowerment, penal reform, the death penalty campaign which demonstrated that with a clear vision, strategic thinking and teamwork, one can implement even the most ambitious programme.

Human rights awareness without a mechanism of dealing with abuses when they occur would be meaningless. As such, in 1994 FHRI instituted a mechanism of providing legal relief to deserving cases. Legal aid provision includes court representation, mediation, counselling, legal advice, referral to partner organisations and offering legal rights awareness sessions. The Legal Aid Unit that started as the Citizens Advice Bureau has supported over 150,000 people seeking legal assistance. Provision of this support was first done at FHRI office headquarters. The legal aid scheme was later expanded with the opening of field offices in both Kalangala and Wakiso districts. While legal aid camps were conducted in Kiboga, Kalangala, Masaka, Bundibugyo, Kampala, Wakiso, Kibaale and Jinja among other districts, a toll free line was put in place as well as sponsoring radio talk shows where legal support is provided to a wider audience. FHRI continues to offer legal support including on spot legal assistance. Several cases have been closed successfully, others have been referred and others are still pending appropriate remedy.

The Constitutional Rights Project was established in 1994 with the objectives of formulating a clear, well researched plan for inclusion of human rights in the 1995 Ugandan Constitution as well as encouraging an informed discussion on human rights within the Constituent Assembly. FHRI organised regional conferences under the theme: *'The new Uganda Constitution: a basis for democratic governance, issues and concerns'* on the new constitution of Uganda for top district leaders aiming at raising public awareness of human rights, constitutional provisions and available remedies. These conferences generated debate on far reaching concerns that continued to shape the constitutional road of Uganda. Given that the conferences took place at the height of political campaigns for the Presidency and Parliamentary elections in 1996, they also set the pace for discussion of national concerns such as free and fair elections, a fair electoral law and a political level playing field.

Since 1994, FHRI has pursued the death penalty campaign using various approaches. The death penalty campaign aims at the progressive abolition of capital punishment. One of the major steps undertaken in the campaign was the petition against capital punishment by the entire death row population. The landmark case of *Susan Kigula & 417 Others vs. Attorney General (AG)* filed in 2003 was the first of its kind in world history to challenge the constitutionality of the death penalty. It was spearheaded by FHRI together with the Coalition Against the Death penalty in Uganda. Following the Constitutional Court ruling on the 10th June 2005 and subsequent Supreme Court 21st January 2009 ruling, court struck down the mandatory death

penalty provision and ruled it a violation of fundamental human rights. The court gave two years to re-sentence everyone on death row after hearing the petition. FHRI provided legal assistance to death row inmates through preparation of mitigation briefs, witness tracking and provision of legal advice and representation. As at 17th March 2022, there were 124 prisoners on death row (121 men, 3 women).



Susan Kigula at the Human Rights House, 2016.

When the mandatory death sentences were outlawed in the Susan Kigula case, FHRI started to advocate for the establishment of a new sentencing regime to enhance uniformity, consistency and transparency in sentencing in capital cases. Through advocacy efforts of promoting policy and law reform that is consistent with agreed human rights principles, FHRI made several submissions to parliament. As a result, the Law Revision (Penalties in Criminal Matters) Miscellaneous Amendment Act, 2019 was enacted. The Act reduced on the number of offences that attract the death penalty in Uganda.



At the Judiciary Sentencing Guidelines Committee meeting at the High Court chaired by the Principal Judge His Lordship Dr Yorokamu Bamwine on 25th October 2019

The outcome of the campaign also stimulated dialogue on the suitability of the death penalty within the public, the JLOS and policy makers who now discuss the merits and demerits of the punishment and its implications on the enjoyment of human rights of both victim and the perpetrator.

As part of the broader campaign, FHRI has spearheaded the commemoration of the World Day Against the Death Penalty in Uganda on every 10th October for over 15 years. Besides marking the global event, solidarity visits to death row prisoners in Luzira Prison have gone on for several years. In 2008, the book titled; *'Towards Abolition of the Death Penalty in Uganda'* was published and in 2020 a thematic research booklet titled *'Access to Counsel: A matter of Life or death in Uganda'* was also launched. To deepen the campaign among the youth, the 11th and 12th Inter-University Human Rights Competitions were dedicated to the global themes for 2020 and 2021 World Day against the Death Penalty respectively.

The campaign against the Death Penalty was also extended to the Great Lakes region (Democratic Republic of the Congo (D.R.C.), Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda) in 2011. A regional Conference on the application of the Death Penalty was convened within the framework of a joint project with Penal Reform International (PRI).

FHRI has twice commissioned an Opinion Poll of the Death Penalty – in 2016 and found that 64% of Ugandans did not support the death sentence for capital offences compared to 32% in 2013.

In 2021, a Memorandum of Understanding was also entered into with Messrs. Katende, Sempebwa & Co. Advocates to provide legal assistance in an appeal case, expected to trigger useful jurisprudence in death penalty cases.

As a strong proponent of increased public awareness of the rights guaranteed in the 1995 Ugandan constitution and the international human rights treaties, FHRI has over the years empowered the population with human rights knowledge so as to build their civic competence to demand for change. FHRI continues to avail human rights information to the public. This is done through publication of action-oriented research reports, books, posters, documentaries among others designed to educate and inform the community and generate public debate on pertinent and current human rights issues. Other approaches such as trainings and workshops, mass communication, music and drama to reach out to both the urban and rural Ugandan have also been used. A Human Rights and Democracy Information Centre was also established to support programme implementation.



Exhibition of FHRI Publications at the Annual General Meeting held at the Human Rights House.

From 1994, Radio Uganda (now Uganda Broadcasting Corporation) hosted FHRI's programme, *'Dembe Teligulwa' (It's your right)* both on the blue and red channels in Luganda and Luo/English respectively in collaboration with the Uganda Media Development Foundation for 6 years. In 2001, FHRI launched a phone in programme on Central Broadcasting Service (CBS FM) called *'Manya Eddembe Lyo' (Know your rights)*. These programmes hosted various speakers who discussed the current events and stimulated wide debate on critical human rights related matters while playing an advocacy role. The *Manya Eddembe Lyo*, programme was broadcast every week and was considered one of the foremost radio education programmes in Uganda for almost a decade.

Under the Penal Reform Project that began in 1994 to date, FHRI has routinely inspected almost all Uganda's places of detention especially the Uganda Prison Services and Uganda Police Force. Prison visits are an integral part of FHRI's research programme and the findings are compiled and discussed with the relevant authorities.

As a result, FHRI has advocated for the observation of the standard minimum rules for the treatment of prisoners. Several training programmes have been undertaken for organs in the justice, law and order sector with the objective of empowering them with knowledge and the international human rights law regarding the treatment of offenders. The work of FHRI raised the concern of implementing the Standard Minimum Rules for Treatment of Prisoners, use of non-custodial options for petty offenders, promotion of general understanding and application of human rights in the Uganda Prison System, and a bigger budget for the prisons department.

Big steps were undertaken, a result of FHRI's advocacy efforts such as the use of alternative non-custodial sentencing since 1996; The Community Service Act was passed in 2000 and in the same vein, FHRI advocated for the enactment of the Prisons Act 2006. Human rights desks in police stations were also established in 2011. A case in point is when FHRI visited Kitalya Prison in July 2015, the inmates applauded FHRI's intervention and noted that the human rights situation in Kitalya Prison had changed immensely with better observance of inmates' rights and the introduction of a human rights committee.

Under the Alternatives Project, FHRI contributed to creating awareness of the UN Bangkok Rules on the treatment of female offenders, both at the national, regional and international level. As a pilot project that began in 2013 and jointly implemented with PRI, a network of regional child rights activists in East Africa who are championing the implementation of child friendly justice systems and promoting the rights of women offenders using the UN Bangkok rules was created. The project sought to reduce the unnecessary use of imprisonment. Research and trainings were undertaken and two reports were launched; *'Who are women prisoners? Survey results from Uganda'* and *'Children of Imprisoned Parents in Uganda'*

In 1995, the second programme (1995-1997) that underscored the consolidation of FHRI activities at the time was released.

Like the radio programme, drama is a very effective tool in adult education. In 1996, FHRI integrated drama in her human rights education agenda. A local actor's group called Bakayimbira Dramactors were commissioned to write and stage a play on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948. The play titled: *The Police Sergeant (Kigenya Agenya)* was hence launched and performed for numerous audiences in several parts of Uganda and was also broadcasted on Ugandan televisions from 1996 to 1998 to massive success. It exclusively focused on challenges of promoting human rights in society.

For FHRI to promote the campaign against torture, it further sponsored St. Balikuddembe Secondary School, Kisoga and Image Africa to produce a music festival on torture titled; *'Tomutulugunya (Do not Torture!)* launched in 2005. In 2012 a human rights centred music piece titled; *'Ddembe Lyaffe'*(Our rights) by a one Dr. Hilderman of Zungli Hood entertainment was sponsored. In 2013, the song hit the top ten music charts and was also nominated by the New Vision readers in association with Twaweza Initiative as one of the best songs of the year because of its powerful message.

The Conflict Management and Resolution project raised the momentum for new policy options and strategies in addressing pre and post conflict related issues. FHRI was vocal on the conflict in the D.R.C., Northern and Western Uganda and was unequivocal on the need for peaceful resolution of conflicts in the region. The discussion was enhanced through a regional conference on the conflict in the Great Lakes Region under the theme: *'Strategies for Conflict Resolution and Peace Building'* in October 1998. This followed the conference on the conflict in the Northern part of Uganda held in Gulu in July 1997 which set the pace for national debate on peace building efforts and strategies. In 1999, a National Roundtable on the Referendum was also convened to discuss the controversial nature of the referendum that was to be held in 2000 and its potential to contribute to the escalation of the already existing conflict in the country. In 2001, FHRI's advocacy efforts on issues of internally displaced people (IDP) raised their plight to the fore of the Human Rights Agenda in Uganda. Camp conditions and policy matters preoccupied many discussions in various agencies and government institutions.

The year 1998, marked the commencement of a new three-year programme, the (1998 - 2000) premised on "Innovation, Advancement and Sustainability", the third strategic plan in the row. In this programme FHRI continued to identify several human rights issues that deserved consistent intervention and routinely responded to them.

For several years, FHRI has fostered and enjoyed an enriched partnership with the Ugandan Judiciary. Through the Access to Justice Project, FHRI promoted the campaign of improving the administration of justice in Uganda through research, strategic litigation, capacity building for the judiciary among other interventions. From 1998 to 2004, FHRI together with the Judicial

Training Committee convened 6 Annual Judicial Officers Conferences that mainly focused on: the independence of the judiciary, judicial activism, and the application of international human rights standards in the adjudication process. These raised awareness of the international human rights instruments and their relevance to the Ugandan Judiciary. The proactive engagement of the judiciary contributed to the emergence of a human rights friendly assertive and independent judiciary. From 2006 to 2008, FHRI continued building on the already existing relationship with more activities such as roundtables on judicial independence; examining the extent of domestication and application of human rights standards in Uganda alongside other pertinent issues especially that raised the statistics of judicial cases such as land matters.



A group photo of Judges training at Entebbe, March 2012

In 2012, FHRI was appointed as a member of the Judicial Task force on sentencing guidelines. Through this mandate, FHRI advocated for the establishment of a new sentencing regime to enhance uniformity, consistency and transparency in sentencing of capital crimes. The outcome of the committee was *The Constitution (Sentencing Guidelines for Courts of Judicature) (Practice) Directions, 2013*.

FHRI worked with Freedom House to strengthen the capacity and independence of the judiciary to reach just decisions and uphold human rights between 2014 -2019. It is in this period where

judicial officers were trained on a range of topics alongside community members and students who got empowered with judicial processes.

FHRI takes pride in research, monitoring, documenting and reporting human rights abuses as a check towards counteracting excesses. Research has been highlighted as an innovative strategy with high returns. The monitoring and research work has earned FHRI a premier position within the sector as a credible and a critical voice. As a local watchdog, human rights abuses perpetuated against citizens have been exposed through FHRI periodic reports and demanded for redress including prosecution, restitution, compensation or administrative action through advocacy.

Since 1998, FHRI has released over 20 research reports on the human rights situation in Uganda. The reports that focused on almost the entire human rights spectrum for a year evolved into bi-annual thematic reports in 2006. Many times, the reports generated and stimulated debate; protracted public and media analyses on the pertinent issues raised and have been used as reference material in research and advocacy. As a result, Government agencies including parliament itself have operationalised some policies and enacted laws due to FHRI findings, and have used them as reference materials in negotiating agreements.



Hon Justice G W Kanyeihamba-FHRI Patron; the principal Judge of Uganda, Hon Yorokamu Bamwine and Mr Livingstone Sewanyana at the Launch of the Report on the Right to a fair trial in Uganda; 2012.

A case in point, the FHRI campaign on juvenile justice initiated in 2009 with the publication of a thematic report on Juvenile Justice in Uganda, yielded some results. In 2012, three juveniles detained with adult offenders in Nakasongola prison were transferred to Kasaana prison which has a juvenile detention facility and two juveniles detained with adults were transferred to Naguru Remand Home from Muduma prison in Mityana and Kauga prison in Mukono after independent medical professionals opined that they were under 18 years of age.

In 2019, FHRI in partnership with FIDH commenced research in the oil extractive industry in the Albertine Graben districts. In 2020 the report **on the Human Rights Impact Assessment of the Oil extractive Industries on the Local Communities in the Albertine Graben - the Report titled “New Oil Same Business: At a Crossroads to Avert Catastrophe in Uganda.”** was launched. The **Report** focused on the districts of Buliisa, Kikuube and Hoima



Consultative meeting in Kikuube District on 14th September 2018

In 2001, the construction of the Human Rights House (a one stop centre for human rights defenders) was completed and FHRI secretariat moved into its permanent home.

In the same year, the 4th strategic programme (2001-2005) is released with a focus on Human Rights Advocacy for a Democratic Uganda in the 21st Century with Emphasis on Specialisation, Advancement and Sustainability. This was pursued through practical human rights education, research, training, promotion of access to justice, networking, legislative and policy advocacy.

In 2005, the Paralegal Advisory Services Project (PAS) is inaugurated. PAS was implemented through a partnership approach with criminal justice institutions, local government administration and community structures. PAS aimed at enhancing access to justice for the poor and vulnerable persons caught up in conflict with the law on both criminal and civil matters. As a pilot project, it was started in 3 districts and in 2018 it had expanded to 63 districts in 13 magisterial areas out of 38. The PAS Project contributed to the decongestion of the remand population in Uganda prisons by 52% in 2017 and linked the organs in the criminal justice system and the advocates for practice change. Over 45,000 people were released by 2018.

Although the bulk of the population is still ignorant about these processes, PAS created a class of beneficiaries; suspects and inmates who are able to self-represent and navigate the justice system more comfortably with sufficient knowledge and confidence. The legal empowerment intervention helped inmates in prisons to apply the knowledge acquired that led to the amendment of their plea for community service orders while others applied for court bond, which was granted. Besides paralegals, the PAS had Community Legal Volunteers (CLVs) running the PAS programme in Busia district. Their intervention improved civil justice in Busia communities through legal representation and diversion of cases from the formal justice system through mediation and reconciliation. The PAS paralegals attended a Paralegal Course at the Law Development Centre in Kampala which deepened and enhanced their understanding of the criminal justice system, court processes and procedure, the rights of inmates and the role of paralegals in this regard.



Group photograph after the plea bargaining and sentencing guidelines training for paralegals and social workers, November 2014.

PAS contributed to the successful implementation of judicial initiatives such as plea bargain, community service, sentencing guidelines, increased criminal sessions, special sessions, small claims and Alternative Dispute Resolution. The Judiciary noted the remarkable contribution of PAS in the success of its programmes in the locations where PAS operated.

In 2006 the 5th strategic programme (2006-2008) codenamed 'High Performance Phase' (HPP) titled "From Theory to Practice: Advancing the human rights agenda in Uganda" kicks off. Its objective was to deepen engagement of the "supply and demand" side of rights, to ensure that state practice was in tandem with the internationally accepted human rights standards. Its areas of focus include: Human rights education and training, Rights Monitoring and Policy advocacy, Access to Justice, Paralegal Advisory Services, Elections Monitoring through (Uganda National Elections Assessment and Monitoring Project of 4 months (Jan – April 2006) (UNELAMP), Focus on Northern Uganda, and Networking and Collaboration.

In an effort to enhance spaces for civic action, create synergy and build civic competences, FHRI has had several interventions, key among them included the University Students Human Rights Network, which has grown to 39 human rights associations in universities and other tertiary institutions. In 2006 student human rights clubs are established out of the schools outreach programme and held debates on an annual basis. This blossomed into annual human rights competitions among universities and so far, FHRI has convened 13 Inter-University Human Rights Competitions since 2007. On average, over 5,500 students from the 39 universities and other tertiary institutions that belong to the University Students Human Rights Network have participated in the annual event. The establishment of university human rights clubs was the beginning of the creation of the young human rights movement among university students. The students are empowered to advocate for change in their communities and the wider society.



Panel of judges at the Inter-University Human Rights Competition that took place at Uganda Christian University, Mukono, 9th March 2013.

In order to heighten interest in the human rights discourse among the young generation and to celebrate the FHRI's milestone of 10 years promotion of human rights among university students, FHRI introduced an Annual Human Rights Award to the best student in the human rights course at the undergraduate level at Uganda Martyrs University, Nkozi in 2017. To complement on the young human rights movement among university students, the former students of the University Human Rights clubs also formed an Alumni Association. The Alumni also pledged to give an annual award to the best student in human rights at Gulu University for a period of 5 years. The award was launched in 2021 during the 12th Inter-University Human Rights competition.



Dr. Sewanyana handing over the Annual Human Rights Award to the best student in the human rights course at the undergraduate level at Uganda Martyrs University, Nkozi, March 2018.

Pre-trial detention is the stage in the criminal justice system when a person accused of committing an offence is arrested and detained as s/he awaits trial and the decision of court. The rights of pre-trial detainees are often overlooked and among them is overstay in detention resulting into overcrowding in detention spaces. As such, in 2006 FHRI with support of the Legal Aid Basket Fund undertook a project entitled *'Enhancing Access to Justice for Pre-trial Detainees through Creation of Awareness and Enforcement of their Constitutional Right to Bail'* The aim of the project is to create awareness among the public of the problem and its effect on the judicial system in the country. Activities were undertaken among which was public education and publication of a handbook titled *'A Citizen's Handbook on the Law Governing Bail in Uganda'*. It was disseminated widely and the key users of the handbook include the Justice, Law and Order Sector institutions, Members of Parliament and people who come into conflict with the law.

A campaign to prioritize the rights of pre-trial detainees was enhanced. Research was conducted on this issue and a report and policy brief published thereof; *The Plight of Pre-trial Detainees in Uganda*, launched in 2017. A campaign to promote our findings ensued among the different sector players including JLOS, Parliament, and within the African and UN human rights system.

In 2019, a *'Legal and Practice Guide to Lawful Pre-trial Detention in Uganda'* was developed. It was subjected to review and debate among the JLOS stakeholders. This was popularised among JLOS institutions on how to reduce pre-trial.

In 2007 FHRI initiated a programme called 'enhancing decentralized governance in Uganda with special reference to Wakiso, Tororo, Mukono and Nakasongola districts.' In 2008, FHRI undertook a situation analysis in the above-mentioned districts, and authored a Practice Guide titled *'Good Practices in Local Governments'*. In 2010 a Local Government capacity building programme was implemented by FHRI which not only provided a forum for knowledge acquisition amongst local leaders but it also promoted participatory planning and improved service delivery. The Practice Guide is an important reference in managing local government.

FHRI has closely worked with community-based organisations (CBOs) in promoting democratic and social accountability that yielded some positive results. This is done with the aim of promoting awareness of human rights and state obligations within their constituencies and to build their capacity to undertake human rights advocacy. Increased demand for respect for rights and better service delivery was noted.

Community neighbourhood assemblies were introduced in 2014 in the central, western and northern regions of Uganda. FHRI acknowledges the work of our community partners with whom it has worked in several districts such as Kayunga, Kalangala, Luweero, Masaka, Lugazi, Kumi, Kiboga, Serere, Kasese, including university students to demand better service delivery, respect for human rights and access to justice. Other programmes held in that light were under the theme: *'Strengthening the Human Rights Movement in Uganda through Capacity Building of Grassroot Human Rights Associations'*, targeting both Community Based Human Rights groups and local leaders.

In 2009, the sixth strategic programme (2009-2011) titled 'Put Our World to Rights: Deepening Democratic Practices in Uganda' is launched. It emphasized civic participation, access to justice, freedom of expression, association, assembly including the media, right to life, liberty and security of person, judicial independence and integrity and leadership development of human rights defenders.

In the same year, the Citizens Coalition for Electoral Democracy in Uganda (CCEDU) was formed to advocate for electoral democracy in Uganda. CCEDU went on to spearhead the formation and operationalisation of the Citizen's Election Observers Network in Uganda (CEON-U) which monitored various aspects of the 2016 general election. CCEDU spearheaded by FHRI was very instrumental in standard setting and providing electoral reform proposals. CEON-U a nine-month-old network was hosted by FHRI to conduct media campaigns and monitor the national register, campaigns and polls through a Parallel Vote Count in order to enhance the credibility and integrity of the electoral process.



CCEDU's Verability Boda Boda Activation at the Human Rights House, April 2015.

2011 saw the birth of a two-year human rights programme codenamed *Promoting multiparty democracy and democratic accountability through legislative advocacy, human rights monitoring and reporting and leadership development of human rights defenders in Uganda (2011 -2013)*. The programme was aimed at strengthening multi-party democracy and democratic accountability in Uganda and the capacity of civil society groups to effectively monitor the democratic process to hold leaders accountable, through legislative advocacy, human rights monitoring and reporting and leadership development of human rights defenders in Uganda.

Under the legislative advocacy intervention, promotion of policy and law reform consistent with agreed human rights principles was pursued through several submissions to parliament. To enhance on her advocacy efforts on matters of human rights with parliament, in 2011 FHRI advocated for the establishment of a parliamentary committee on human rights. In 2017, FHRI made submissions on the *Human Rights Enforcement Bill, 2015* and the *Law Revision (penalties in Criminal Matters) Miscellaneous Amendment Bill, 2015*. In 2015, following the tabling of the Non-Governmental Organisation Bill, 2015 (NGO Bill), FHRI formed a coalition in June 2015 of Non- Governmental Organisations (NGOs), academia and advocates. This coalition aimed at strengthening advocacy for the enactment of a human rights compliant NGO law. In 2021, FHRI made submissions to the Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Committee of Uganda's Parliament on the Succession (Amendment) Bill, 2021.

In 2012 FHRI embarked on the implementation of its seventh strategic programme (2012 – 2016) titled, 'Bridging Rights and Values: Strengthening the Civic and Democratic Culture in Uganda (2012-2016)'. This five-year programme which complements the 6th Strategic Programme, seeks to address the democracy and human rights deficit in Uganda at the policy, legislative and practice levels.

FHRI engaged with non-traditional structures such as manufacturers, small and medium enterprises, medical workers and associations, teachers' unions, farmers associations and the transport sector through the Civil Society Public Private Sector Forum (CSPPSF) that was launched in July 2013. The CSPPS was unveiled to strengthen collaboration between the Private and Public Sectors and Civil Society while exploring possible opportunities to advance social justice in Uganda. The 1stever Annual Social Economic Summit hosted under the auspices of this initiative was held in 2014 where areas of mutual interest were explored including the national budget, investment and tax regime, public sector spending, health, education and the environment.

As part of its corporate social responsibility efforts, FHRI also took part in the fundraising drive of the Buganda Kingdom to reinstate the 130-year-old Kasubi Tombs that were burnt down by unknown arsonist in 2010. In 2014 Owekitibwa Charles Peter Mayiga was hosted by the Human Rights House during the fundraising drive dubbed (*etoffali*) for the reconstruction of the Kasubi Tombs, a UNESCO cultural heritage site that promotes cultural rights. FHRI together with the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network offered its contribution to the cause.

In 2016, FHRI embarked on a pilot campaign to eradicate extreme poverty in Uganda using a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA). Using her thematic report titled: 'Human Rights and Poverty: Eradicating Extreme Poverty in Uganda', FHRI conducted a survey to heighten her efforts in ensuring increased application of HRBA in government programme that eradicate extreme poverty in Uganda.

In 2017, FHRI's eighth strategic programme (2017 – 2021) titled; 'Between Rhetoric and Practice: Bridging the Democracy Divide in Uganda' inspired by the persistent human rights, constitutionalism and democracy deficits in Uganda commenced. The five-year programme sought to strengthen the democratic and civic culture in Uganda. It builds on the aim to further entrench democratic and civic rights and values in the Ugandan society through innovative ways as well as on the achievements and lessons from the past strategic programmes.

FHRI while aware of the importance of peer reviews in advancing human rights, together with both local and international organisations has been at the forefront in the area of Treaty Reporting at the United Nations Human Rights Council and the African Commission of Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). Alternative reports on the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR), on matters of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), torture and the Death Penalty are some of the areas that were considered. FHRI's efforts during Uganda's

2nd periodic review that took place in March 2017 were greatly enhanced when 7 out of the 31 recommendations proposed by FHRI during this review process were adopted by the UN States parties and accepted by the Government of Uganda. These recommendations exceeded FHRI's target of 5, relating to improving access to justice and protecting civil and political rights.

Currently, FHRI is implementing her ninth strategic programme: “Building Back Better: Realizing Human Rights in the Post COVID-19 Era” (2022 – 2026). The programme aims at exposing and documenting human rights abuses that undermine active citizenship, and enjoyment of human rights. It further aspires to contribute towards building a more human rights--responsive legal and constitutional framework and enhance access to justice. The programme goes beyond the human rights discourse and delves into the question of values, linking both rights and civic values.

As a matter of principle, FHRI strongly advocates for networking aimed at building a solid block for human rights advocacy. From 1994, FHRI has spearheaded the establishment of other Civil Society Organisations in form of networks or specialised projects such as CENESA, CEON-U, CCEDU, PAS, HURINET, organisations that have championed advocacy on various human rights issues in the country and beyond. FHRI serves on the steering committee of the World Coalition for the Death Penalty as Vice President and so is the case with FIDH. FHRI's networking and collaboration efforts made human rights work a visible and an active ingredient in the social, economic and political spectrum of Uganda as a nation. FHRI is proud to be associated with the United Nations where the FHRI Executive Director, Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana serves as the United Nations Independent Expert on the Promotion of a Democratic and Equitable International Order.



2nd right: Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana, Independent Expert on the Promotion of a Democratic and Equitable International Order after presenting his vision-casting report to the Human Rights Council, September 2018.

At the organizational level, FHRI has successfully held 23 Annual General Meetings and have had 10 Boards of Directors, the Patron, the Working Group and Board of Trustees under her governance structure that have directed FHRI in ensuring a difference is made. Currently, FHRI has over 1,500 members across the country. The meetings are organised for FHRI members to discuss the progress made by the organisation and to plan for its future.

Whereas FHRI can claim a record of milestones, this is only possible if there is support and a conducive climate for this work. FHRI is a beneficiary of various programmes from our partners. who have made our 30 year long journey exciting and our dream a reality.

Building a citizen's movement for social change is a lifelong struggle which cannot be done individually, but collectively. It is replete with success and reversals. It requires commitment, sacrifice and passion. The obligation to stand up, speak and defend humanity calls for collective action. We take great pride in mentioning our development partners with whom we have

worked together in the 30 years on the basis of mutual partnership and enabled us to attain these striking performance levels.

The success of our work and the related accomplishments could not have been possible without the support, advice, moral, financial contribution of our Members, Trustees, Board of Directors, fellow actors in the social justice sector, Government Agencies, Local, Regional and International bodies, Development Partners among others. FHRI has not only provided information, but also solutions to human rights problems and can proudly assert that we are part of the actors in the evolution of a better Uganda.

As FHRI commemorates 30 years of human rights activism in Uganda, special thanks go to our wide network, agencies and individuals including our Trustees, membership, management, staff, Board of Directors, development partners, peers, beneficiaries and well-wishers for their instrumental contribution that has kept us moving forward. We rededicate ourselves to the cause of human rights in Uganda and beyond and reassure Ugandans of our determination to resist any injustice.

The work of FHRI has not gone unnoticed during the three decades, Key among the accolades received are as follows:

- European Union awarded Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana, Executive Director, FHRI with the prestigious European Union (EU) Human Rights Defenders' Award, 2015
- In 2014, FHRI got the World Savers Excellence Human Rights and Justice Award from World Savers Network.
- The Prestigious Founding Members Award from Human Rights Network – Uganda, 2014.
- 22nd October 2013, Dr. Sewanyana scooped the sub-regional Pan African Human Rights Defenders' Award for Eastern Africa (2012) from the Pan African Human Rights Defenders' Network in Banjul during the 54th Ordinary session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.
- On 15th July 2013, Dr. Sewanyana received the Shanti K. Khinduka Award for Social Development from the Simmons College, School of Social Work, USA, the University of Tennessee together with Makerere University. This was presented during the 18th Biennial International Consortium for Social Development Symposium held in Kampala.
- Best Exhibitor Annual Human Rights Award Book Fair, 2005 from Human Rights Network – Uganda

- In 2005 FHRI was nominated as the best employer of the year in the Non-Governmental Organisations sector by the Federation of Uganda Employers.



Together we make a difference!