

## **Strengthening Citizens' Engagement and Public Accountability.**

**Project Title:** Strengthening Citizens' Engagement and Public Accountability.

The Strengthening Citizens' Engagement and Public Accountability (SCEPA) Project is a 44-month initiative designed to rekindle the spirit of active citizenship, foster accountability, and strengthen civil society.

The project's overall goal is to contribute towards an organized and engaged citizenry actively holding public institutions accountable.

The specific objectives include,

1. Youth, women and other marginalized groups empowered and organized to meaningfully shape outcomes of decision-making processes.
2. Strengthened engagement between state and non-state actors on legal and policy and institutional frameworks to advance civic engagements.
3. Strong, healthy and well-coordinated CSOs able to influence governance and accountability processes.

The SCEPA project is being implemented in Lira in collaboration with the Uganda National NGO Forum-UNNGOF, with funding from the Royal Danish Embassy, the Embassy of Ireland, Sweden Sverige and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

### **Key Highlights:**

- Mapped, identified and capacitated 10 topowa groups and chairpersons to steer citizens conversations.
- Capacitated the Lira DPAC on their roles and responsibilities
- Held 30 citizen conversations in Lira City and Lira District focusing on Identify service delivery gaps
- Presented a citizens chatter for validation and approval in Amolator, Lira and Otuke districts.
- Validated a regional Citizens Manifesto in Lira, bringing together leaders from the region.

### **Success Story:**

**Reviving Abongorwot Primary School: A Journey towards Improved Education and Community Engagement**

In March 2025, the Topowa conversations began in Lira City and the Lira District within the Lango sub-region, sparking a spirit of collaboration and hope. On 13 March 2025, a significant discussion took place with the Abongorwot Beekeeping Group, focusing on key issues in Education, Agriculture, Health, Roads, and Security. Among the many topics discussed, the plight of Abongorwot Primary School stood out, as its renovation faced challenges due to conflicts between the district's technical team and the church.

The renovation, which started in January 2025, had a contractually stipulated timeline of three months, but progress slowed. As the school term began, pupils found themselves studying outside under trees, and parents, deeply worried about their children's safety as the rainy season approached, considered withdrawing them from school.

In a heartfelt conversation with Deputy Head Teacher Okuka Francis, the joint efforts of the district education office and the Catholic Church in funding the renovation were highlighted. Unfortunately, setbacks occurred due to poor workmanship affecting the quality of the ring beam, and work on one classroom block halted without explanation, causing frustration and concern among the community.

By March 2025, Abongorwot Primary School had 707 eager learners, yet the rainy season led to an increase in dropouts, especially in Primary 6. In response, FAPAD organised a crucial meeting with the District Education Officer and the secretary of community-based services to address the urgent needs of the school. Both officials pledged to accelerate the renovation process, aiming to ensure that learners could enjoy proper classrooms before the first term ended.

Through ongoing engagement with the church, the community, school administration, and the district's technical team, construction reached an impressive 95% completion, enabling learners to return to classes in the improved facilities. The momentum generated within the community has also contributed to a rise in enrolment from 707 to 780 learners.

As we celebrate this progress, there remains a call to complete final touches, such as painting the doors and repairing the window shutters, ensuring that the school stands not only as a place of learning but also as a beacon of hope and resilience for the future

Pictorials:



Above, a primary two classroom housed under a tree in Abongorwot before renovation works began



Above, the lower primary classroom block during the renovation process



Above: the classroom block renovated by the church at 100% completion



The lower primary block is at 95% completion