

NIRAS supported the Civil Society in Uganda Support Programme (CUSP) with the development and implementation of innovative and interactive trainings for Ugandan civil society organisations (CSOs)

Situation of Ugandan CSOs and the approach of CUSP

During the last two decades, the civil society sector in Uganda has experienced an exponential growth in the number of registered civil society organisations (CSOs). Even though the number of CSOs has increased, their influence and participation in political processes are often restricted and instead their role is often restricted to service delivery. In addition to the quite limited space of action, Ugandan CSOs often have insufficient capacities. Therefore, the Civil Society in Uganda Support Programme (CUSP) was launched in 2018, aiming to strengthen the capacities of CSOs in Uganda. The programme was implemented in three action areas:

- Strengthening an enabling environment for civil society;
- Improving civil society participation; and
- Strengthening service delivery and advocacy of CSOs.

To achieve these goals, CUSP supported state and non-state actors both at national and sub-national level to promote a productive dialogue on the role of civil society and to integrate civil society perspectives more effectively into policy processes.



Members of the selected CSOs engage in a discussion during one of the training sessions



“The EU believes in the strong role CSOs play for any country's development. The CUSP programme will leverage CSOs' contributions and their complementarity to government- and private sector-led interventions towards the objective of contributing to reduced poverty through better governance.”

H.E Attilio Pacifici
European Union Ambassador to Uganda



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The European Union and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) jointly funded CUSP. The project had a strong focus on technical assistance and capacity development both of CSOs and relevant state institutions.

NIRAS was contracted in March 2019 to support GIZ in the implementation of the training component of CUSP.

Development and implementation of trainings for Ugandan CSOs

NIRAS prepared standardised trainings for eight highly relevant topics:

- Resource Mobilisation
- Internal Governance
- Lobbying and Advocacy
- Leadership
- Mainstreaming
- Result-based Management
- Financial Management
- Computer Skills

While initially standardised in-classroom trainings for a nation-wide implementation were developed, during COVID-19 NIRAS switched to a blended learning approach to facilitate continuous learning progress even during strict nation-wide COVID restrictions.



The blended learning approach combined interactive e-learning sessions (6 hours/week), which included educational interviews, diverse explanations, tools and tests. These sessions were hosted on the GIZ digital learning platform

Donor: GIZ

Location: Uganda

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atingi (www.atingi.org). In addition to working through the online content, the participants were asked to submit weekly practical tasks which had to be done offline to apply the new theoretical knowledge. In addition, the NIRAS team offered offline/ in-person 1-on-1 coaching and feedback to the weekly tasks from training professionals and weekly consulting hours for participants to discuss individual or organisational challenges.



Trainees and facilitators pose for a photo as they celebrate the conclusion of a training exercise



1654

Number of participants who completed the training - the initial target was 1200



44%

of the total number of participants were female



"This has been one of my most enriching and practical courses I have done in recent years. It's very relevant, challenging and empowering. It has enriched my work as a chief executive of a growing organisation, accredited trainer and a mentor."

An e-learning participant

Advantages of the blended learning approach

While NIRAS is aware that the online-trainings are not the best solution for everyone - specifically for CSOs up-country with no or few IT equipment and a rather weak internet connection - the offering of on-line trainings was the only feasible and COVID-safe solution at that time. It offered several advantages for the participants:

Practice-oriented trainings (experimental learning): Participants had the chance to learn by doing.

Real-life coaching: The participants had 1-on-1 mentoring with an experienced trainer and could contact the trainer to ask questions about any issue in their own CSO and get immediate feedback.

Learn how to learn: Introduction of learning diary and professional self-reflection on learning styles and personal time management through online coaching and telephone service.

Uganda specific content: The content of the courses was customised and case studies and exercises were taken from the Ugandan context.

Peer-to-peer learning: Participants had the chance to learn from each other. They were able to connect with each other, share ideas and discuss solutions to challenges.

"Digitalisation is here to stay and this project proved that you can actually confront people with e-learning as long as you assess their circumstances properly and apply a tailored approach. It obviously also depends on what you want to achieve with your training. In-person training enables discussion and network creation, whereas e-learning is more suitable if the objective of the training is transfer of knowledge. You cannot replace in person training with the digital format. But you can mix the two and achieve great results!"

Ulrich Stephan, Team Leader, NIRAS

