



Strengthening Grassroots Social Accountability

Success Stories on Social Accountability

Bukedi Region

1.0 Introduction & Background

The Uganda National NGO Forum (UNNGOF) is currently implementing the *Strengthening Grassroots Social Accountability Project* in Maracha, Yumbe, Budaka and Kibuku districts, with funding from the European Union. This 3-year initiative, running from 2023 to 2025, is strategically designed to promote a balance of power between citizens and their leaders, ensuring that citizens can meaningfully participate in decision-making and development processes within their communities.

The project is part of UNNGOF's broader agenda to strengthen grassroots social accountability mechanisms and enhance citizen engagement in local governance. Through this project, UNNGOF is working to cultivate a culture of civic responsibility, where citizens can confidently hold their leaders accountable for public services.

1.1 Purpose of the Documentation Exercise

1. UNNGOF made visited project operation areas in October 2024 in Kibuku and Budaka districts in Bukedi region to determine the progress made so far. The goal of these visits was to profile and document stories of change of citizens whose lives and actions have been influenced by the project in Budaka and Kibuku Districts in Bukedi Sub-Region, identify and highlight successful approaches that can be replicated or scaled in similar initiatives, and use the insights gained from these stories to shape future strategies, ensuring that projects remain responsive to community needs and challenges.

2.0 Methodology

The documentation team visited selected sub-counties within Budaka and Kibuku districts to collect first-hand narratives from project beneficiaries and local leaders. This involved conducting interviews with citizens who have been involved in the project to understand how their engagement with local government officials had changed; capturing the perspectives of local officials on how the project has influenced their governance practices and relationships with

citizens; and documenting visual evidence of changes in community infrastructure, public services, or other tangible results stemming from the project.

4.0 The Success Stories

4.1 Education Sector

Community Advocacy Brings Transformation to Nambiri Primary School

Nambiri Primary School, located in Nakonkooli Parish, Kagumu Sub-County, in Kibuku district has long served as an important educational institution in the community. Founded in 1974 and later taken over by the government in 1998, the school has grown to an enrolment of 1,708 students; 691 boys and 743 girls but struggles with inadequate essential facilities, including desks, handwashing facilities, and pit latrines.

These challenges led to many learners, especially in the lower classes, sitting on dusty floors, compromising hygiene and affecting their motivation to attend school. With support from the European Union (EU), through the Strengthening Grassroot Social Accountability project, UNNGOF enhanced the capacity of the Kagumu Resource Monitors, a community group operating under the "Topowa" (meaning "do not give up") model, to advocate for authorities to take action to address these pressing needs. The model has emerged as a response to local apathy toward governance and service delivery issues, focusing on engaging citizens in discussions around accountability and public services. The group members identified the issues hindering effective learning environment to learners in the school and then presented them to Mr. Mbuje Fazali-Local councilor and Mr. Okanya Martin-Chairperson School Management Committee (SMC).

Mr. Mbuje Fazali, together with the SMC members presented the issue of inadequate desks to the Kagumu Sub-County Council, detailing the effects of inadequate seating on learners' hygiene, comfort, and overall school attendance and performance

In May 2024, the sub-county delivered eight (8) desks to Nambiri Primary School under the Development Equalization Grant for the FY 2023/2024. In September 2024, the sub county leadership delivered another seven (7) desks to make a total of 15 desks in the school.

"I used to have a poor handwriting when we used to sit on the floor, but now, the teacher enjoys marking my work because of a good handwriting." P.6 Pupil



Mr. Damba Wilson, Sub County Accountant and Mr. Ngiri Wilson (left), the LCIII Chairperson, Kagumu Sub county, Kibuku District handing over 8 desks to Nambiri primary school on 3rd May 2024

During the June 2024 presentation of the Community Scorecard (CSC) report findings to Kibuku District leadership, Mr. Kirya Paul Sajja, the District Planner, acknowledged the need for more desks and committed to providing 25 additional desks in the FY 2024/2025. This commitment reflects the recognition by district leadership of the critical role adequate infrastructure plays in enhancing educational outcomes.



Fig 1: Some of the Primary Six pupils utilizing the new desks acquired from Kagumu Sub-County on 22nd October, 2024

In addition to the desks, the school received a capitation grant of UGX 8 million and installed four hand washing facilities around school compound with water and soap to ensure that they maintain hygiene and sanitation by both learners and teachers, renovated one bathroom floor for the girls and the boys, and dug a rubbish pit, further improving hygiene and safety for both the learners and the teachers.



Fig 2: Pupils at Nambiri Primary School using one of the newly acquired handwashing facility on 22nd October 2024.

“I appreciate the work of the community because they constantly remind us to do our work.” Mr. Mbulakyalo Dan, Head Teacher, Nambiri Primary School.



Fig. 3: A rubbish pit dug at Nambiri Primary School.

Parents, recognizing the importance of accountability and involvement, agreed to contribute toward construction of a changing room for girls. The head teacher committed to convene a Parents Teachers Association meeting to agree on the contribution to be made by the parents. Monthly monitoring by Kagumu Resource Monitors SACCO, a community group of 30 members, helps track these improvements and ensures commitments are met. The Sub-County leadership, while constrained by limited revenue, expressed their dedication to improving the school's infrastructure, appealing for more resources from the central government to support education and other critical areas.



Fig 4: A photo of the bathroom that was renovated with a cemented floor taken on 22nd October, 2024.

“We have visited the school several times, we acknowledge the challenges, but our hands are tied, as a Sub-County, we are struggling with low revenue collections which would otherwise boost what we receive from the Ministry of Finance. We can only address the issues in bits because there are so many other schools equally in need.” Mr. Mpeereze Azed-Sub-County Chief, Kagumu Sub-County

Through collaborative community action, Nambiri Primary School is making progress, enhancing the learning environment for its pupils and promoting local accountability and governance.

Kameruka Sub-County Leadership Intervenes in the Learning Crisis at Kameruka Primary School

In Kameruka Sub-County, Budaka District, Kameruka Primary School is now a place of academic hope and growth. This government-aided school has an enrollment of 975 learners; 518 boys and 457 girls. But not long ago, the school struggled with challenges that cast a shadow over its potential. Service delivery affected by teacher absenteeism, a poor learning environment, and a high dropout rate, especially among girls, had become critical barriers to children’s learning.

Things started to change when Kameruka Development Association through the Topowa engagements, along with the Sub-County leaders, picked interest in addressing these concerns. In July 2024, the headteacher convened a meeting with the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) to discuss how to address them. At this meeting, they discovered that one reason for teacher absenteeism was the lack of a kitchen, which meant teachers had no proper place to prepare their meals; there was no staff room where teachers could sit and mark learners’ books, do lesson plans

and also have their meals from and learners were studying in very dusty classrooms, which affected effective learning.

Topowa Group members continuously engaged local leaders about the situation at Kameruka Primary School asking them to support the school. This proactiveness arose as a result of UNNGOF empowering community members and service providers (teachers) conducting scorecards sessions in the school on the stake of service delivery on 20th May 2024. The Local Council III Chairperson, Musana Moses, and his Vice Chairperson, Mugandi Almanzan, visited the school and spoke with the school management to find solutions.

Mr. Robert Mamaye, the head teacher of the school committed to repairing broken desks together with the support of the SMC after the community scorecard report findings were discussed at the district level in June 2024. This prompted him to take quick action by repairing broken desks to ensure that more learners could have proper seating. The Sub-County also supported by delivering eight new desks and a portable chalkboard to the school.

The school leadership further improved the cleanliness of the Primary Six classroom by cementing the classroom floor, which made the room healthier and more comfortable and renovated one classroom block where by one room has become staff room. The classrooms are cleaner and more welcoming, for both the learners and the teachers



Fig. 1. A photo taken on 22nd October, 2024 showing the cemented classroom at Kameruka Primary School, together with the repaired desks in use. In the picture from right to left are the LC III of Kameruka sub county, the Head teacher and class teacher.

In an effort to improve menstrual hygiene management, Mr. Mamaye ensured that girls received sanitary pads, helping them feel comfortable at school. The Senior Woman at the school also started training the school girls how to make reusable pads, which helps them stay in school and focus on learning.



Fig. 2: Headteacher (L), and LC III, Kameruka Sub County shows off the sanitary pads provided to the girls at Kameruka Primary School on 22nd October 2024

A kitchen was also constructed which allows teachers to have meals at school and has reduced teacher absenteeism, keeping them focused on teaching. It's clear that citizen engagement and responsive leadership are critical for facilitating processes and improvement in service delivery.



Fig.3: Newly built kitchen for teachers at Kameruka Primary School as captured on 22nd October 2024

Renovation of Old Classroom Block Nakisenyi Primary School: Lyama Town Council, Budaka District

At Nakisenyi Primary School, the school leadership worked closely with the Topowa members, using the community scorecard process to uncover various service delivery concerns affecting the learners. As a result of these discussions, the head teacher wrote letters to the district leadership.



Old classroom block of Nakisenye Primary School, Lyama Town Council, Budaka District (Photo taken on 22nd May 2024)

The district responded by renovating a two-classroom block with an office, repairing classroom desks, and even beginning to fence the school premises. By October 2024, learners had started using the newly refurbished classrooms.



Fig. 1: The new classroom block at Nakisenye Primary School captured on 23rd October 2024

Initially, Mr. Kirya Felix William, the headteacher was skeptical of the Topowa engagements, seeing them as a form of undue scrutiny. However, as improvements took shape and the school's environment transformed, he began to see the value of the community's involvement. *“At first, I didn't like it at all,”* he shared. *“But I've taken their advice, and they're helping us improve service delivery at the school.”*



Fig.2: Some of the new fence poles in site at Nakisenyi Primary School (Photo captured on 23rd October 2024)

Lyama Seed School to Get Piped Water

For a very long time, Lyama Seed School was facing a challenge of no water source within the school premises which made it difficult for both the students and the teachers. Water was being fetched from a nearby health centre; Lyama Health Centre III.

It took the intervention of the Topowa Members (Lyama Local Council group), with support of the Parents Teachers Association who raised the matter with the district leadership.



Fig.1: A new water source (tap) under construction at Lyama Seed School. (Photo captured on 23rd October 2024)

In September 2024, the district leadership ensured that the process of connecting piped water commences. It was anticipated that by the end of October 2024, the school would have flowing water.

Community-Led Action Transforms the Learning Environment at Lerya Primary School

Located in Lerya Parish, Kameruka Sub- County, Budaka District of Eastern Uganda, Lerya Primary School made significant strides in improving the learning environment and addressing critical barriers to education, particularly for girls with support from EU funding. Through the collective efforts of the SMC, Parent Teacher Association (PTA), school leadership, and external support, the school initiated sustainable solutions to long-standing challenges.

One of the key issues tackled was the lack of menstrual hygiene management (MHM) facilities and materials for girls. During a **Topowa** discussion on hygiene and sanitation, the SMC Chairperson highlighted the urgency of addressing this issue and committed to discussing a budget for emergency menstrual pads with the Head Teacher. By **29th October 2024**, this commitment resulted in a budget allocation to purchase emergency pads, now stocked in the Head Teacher's office. These pads provide immediate support to girls, ensuring they do not have to return home while in their menstrual cycles.

To complement this effort and create a long-term solution, the school embarked on an initiative to equip girls with skills to make reusable menstrual pads. Leveraging contributions from parents and resources provided by HEROES (a consortium promoting gender-transformative action) during Term III, the senior woman teacher was preparing to launch training sessions for girls. This initiative will address the immediate need for menstrual products and will equip the learners with practical skills and promotes self-reliance.

Lerya Primary School also prioritized the repair of broken furniture, such as doors, windows, desks, and benches. By **7th October 2024**, the school had made significant repairs, enabling more learners to access functional furniture instead of sitting on the floor. This effort was spearheaded by the SMC, PTA, and the Head Teacher, with a commitment to making repairs a continuous practice for sustainability.

These initiatives demonstrate the level of collaboration between school leadership, parents, and community stakeholders hence creating a meaningful and sustainable impact. With these successes, Lerya Primary School is setting an example of resilience and innovation in creating a supportive and inclusive space for learning.

Transforming Education Service Delivery in Lyama Town Council and Tademeru sub county (Greater Lyama Sub County): A Story of Progress and Resilience

In Lyama Town Council and Tademeru Sub- County, education challenges once seemed insurmountable—overcrowded classrooms, a dire shortage of teachers, inadequate furniture, poor sanitation, and water crises. Yet, through collaboration between community members, local leaders, and stakeholders, a story of hope and transformation is emerging.

In Butove Primary School, the teacher shortage was acute, with only 13 teachers for a burgeoning pupil population, two of whom were set to retire in mid-2024. During a community meeting on service delivery in August 2024, a brave Primary 6 pupil shared that they lacked a math teacher. This plea spurred action. By October 2024, when the recruitment cap on teachers was lifted, it allowed the district to recruit first-level teachers. *Funds were secured, and two new teachers were posted to Butove Primary School to replace the retiring staff, ensuring learners receive the guidance they desperately needed.*

Furniture inadequacies also plagued schools like Nakisenyi Primary School, where over 2,000 learners shared just 401 desks, forcing many to sit on the floor. By October 2024, headteachers and local leaders took bold steps to repair broken desks and chairs. Butove Primary School repaired 20 desks and three chairs, while Nakisenyi Primary School refurbished 10 desks and four teacher chairs. Commitments were made by the Lyama Town Council Mayor to procure additional desks in the upcoming financial year, signaling a long-term solution.

Sanitation challenges were equally pressing. In Nalubembe Primary School, inadequate and poorly constructed latrines posed significant risks to both learners and teachers. Thanks to advocacy by community members and partnerships, two new latrine blocks, each with five stances, were constructed; one by the district and another by HEROES. These new facilities provide much-needed relief and improve hygiene standards.

Moreover, the unique needs of female learners were addressed. Nakisenyi and Butove Primary Schools provided emergency menstrual hygiene supplies and changing facilities. The district

further committed to incorporating menstrual hygiene management into future latrine construction plans, ensuring dignity and inclusion for all girls.

Water shortages, particularly in Suuni Primary School, had forced learners to rely on unsafe sources. As a result of Topowa discussions by Lyama Local Council Group, in Lyama Town Council, Budaka District which identified this challenge and consistent advocacy for establishing a clean and safe water source for learners by duty bearers, by September 2024, piped water was connected to the school. However, the challenge of slow pumping persisted. At Lyama Seed School, water extension works were underway, with pipes laid and taps under construction as of October 2024, promising reliable water access in the near future.

This journey of transformation underscores the power of community-driven advocacy and leadership. By tackling service delivery concerns collaboratively, Lyama Town Council and Tademeri sub county are paving the way for a brighter future, where every child can learn in a safe, supportive, and enabling environment. These strides, though significant, mark the beginning of sustained efforts to improve education service delivery for generations to come.

Health Sector

Improving Health Care Delivery at Katira HCIII: Overcoming Challenges with Commitment and Action

Katira Health Centre III, Kameruka Sub County located in Budaka District, is a critical health facility serving a large number of patients, particularly mothers and those living with HIV/AIDS. Despite the dedication of the staff and the community, the health center faced significant challenges, including drug shortages, expired HIV/AIDS medications, late arrivals of medical staff, harassment and abuse by health workers, lack of family planning information, and inadequate sanitation facilities. However, through a series of proactive measures and ongoing community engagement by the Bakyala Bakola Women's Group and Kadatumi Boda-boda Ridder's Association, the facility has seen improvements in service delivery and patient care.

One of the most pressing issues at Katira HCIII was the shortage of emergency maternity drugs. With the growing demand for maternal healthcare services, the facility often faced stockouts, leaving mothers without the necessary treatment. Recognizing the urgency of the situation, the District Health Officer (DHO) committed to lobbying the National Medical Stores (NMS) for an increase in the supply of emergency drugs for maternity. By September 2024, this advocacy led to a significant increase in the availability of essential medicines. As a result, mothers delivering at the health center began to receive the required post-delivery treatments, ensuring better outcomes for both mothers and their babies.

Another challenge at Katira HCIII was the delivery of HIV/AIDS supportive drugs that were nearing or had already expired. In early July 2024, expired ARVs were discovered at the facility, raising concerns about the safety and efficacy of the medication provided to patients. Mr. Mulwani Erisa Meywa, the DHO removed the expired drugs and ensured that the facility received a fresh supply of HIV medication for the Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) clinic. The DHO informed the community that HIV/AIDS drugs were supplied by an external organization and not directly controlled by the government, giving them assurance that this would not in any way affect their access to safe, and effective treatment.

Katira HCIII also struggled with late arrivals by medical staff, which could worsen patient conditions, especially in emergencies. In response, the Health Unit Management Committee (HUMC) and Health Centre In-charges committed to holding meetings with staff who were repeatedly late. The DHO emphasized that those who continued to be tardy would face disciplinary action. *Since August 2024, five cases had been forwarded to the Rewards and Sanctions Committee for further action.* This approach has led to improvement in the punctuality and ethical conduct of medical staff, resulting in better service delivery for patients.

Inadequate sanitation facilities also posed a significant challenge at the health center. The pit latrines, which were shared by patients, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), and medical staff, became overcrowded and unpleasant to use, leading to hygiene concerns. The DHO committed to empty the filled-up latrine and constructing a new one. By June 2024, a new latrine for staff had been completed, ensuring that medical personnel had a separate, functional facility. This improvement has enhanced both the comfort and hygiene of the health center, benefiting staff and patients alike.

These improvements at Katira HCIII are a direct result of the collective efforts of the District Health Officer, the health center's staff, and the community

Nabuli Health Centre III Improves Privacy for Mothers in the Delivery Room

At Nabuli Health Centre III in Kagumu sub county-Kibuku district, the privacy of mothers in the delivery room due to lack of curtains on the windows was being compromised. This was discovered by Kagumu Resource Monitor's SACCO, the Topowa members who took it up as an advocacy issue. This not only affected the comfort of the women giving birth but also raised concerns about their dignity during such an intimate and vulnerable time.

Recognizing the importance of privacy in the delivery process, the Topowa members engaged the Health Centre In-charge, together with the Health Unit Management Committee (HUMC) during Community and service provider's score card sessions held at the health facility on 11th June 2024, who took immediate action. In the first quarter of the 2024/2025 fiscal year, they began planning for the procurement of curtains for the delivery room windows. Their goal was to ensure that mothers could deliver in a space that respected their privacy and well-being.

By August 2024, curtains were purchased and installed, transforming the delivery room into a more private and comfortable space for mothers. The addition of curtains improved the physical environment and restored dignity to the women using the facility, allowing them to feel more at ease during one of the most important moments of their lives.



The installation of curtains in the delivery room is a simple yet impactful improvement that has had a lasting positive effect on the facility's services. The facility has since registered an increase in mothers who deliver from there.

Lyama Health Center III, Lyama Town Council, Budaka District Receives a New Delivery Bed for Expectant Mothers

During the presentation of Community Scorecard (CSC) findings for Budaka district 26th June 2024, representatives from the community noted that Lyama Health Center III in Lyama Town Council, Budaka District had only one delivery bed. This shortage created challenges, especially as the health center serves many cases, including patients from Tademeru sub county, which only has a Health Center II, and Nansanga Sub- County. On busier days, some women in labor were forced to deliver on the floor due to the lack of available delivery beds, hence exposing them and the new born babies to infections.

Mr. Masolo Joseph Bosco, the In-charge of the health facility, submitted a formal request for new delivery beds to Mr. Mulwani Erisa Maywa, the District Health Officer (DHO). As a result, the DHO provided an additional delivery bed, sourced from Ikiiki Health Center III's store, to help address this urgent need. On 28th June 2024, Lyama HC III received a new, modern delivery bed.



Fig.1: The new delivery bed at Lyama Health Centre III.

This has brought significant relief to the community, ensuring safer and more dignified birthing conditions for the women in Lyama and neighboring areas.

Nabuli Health Facility Takes Proactive Measures to Tackle Malaria Outbreaks

At Nabuli Health Facility, located in Kagumu sub county- Kibuku District, the absence of mosquito nets in the in-patient ward exposed patients to at the risk of contracting malaria. The issue was particularly critical because the facility was located in a malaria-prone area, where the disease is a major health threat.

Through the Topowa engagements, it was brought to the attention of the District Health Officer (DHO) who recognized the urgency and committed to requesting mosquito nets from the National Medical Stores. This was to ensure that every bed in the ward would be equipped with a protective net to enhance prevent the spread of malaria. Mr. Kasudha Joshua, the Health Center In-charge, requested that the District Health Officer (DHO) equip the facility with mosquito nets available from the district medical store, as they were still awaiting a medical consignment from the National Medical Stores (NMS). He also planned to introduce stricter security measures to prevent patients from taking the nets home after discharge.

This issue had been a challenge, as some patients would steal the nets, leading to shortages.

The efforts to distribute mosquito nets to expecting mothers and hospital patients are ongoing, with a focus on preventing the spread of malaria in health facilities and improving patient outcomes. Some of the mosquito nets had arrived at the facility by the time of the UNNGOF visit on 23rd October 2024.



Fig. 1: A photo showing mosquito nets on some of the beds at the health facility taken on 23rd October 2024 after the nets had arrived.

At the same facility, the Health In-charge also made effort to ensure that there's adequate lighting and a bathroom for the in-patients, thereby improving health service delivery in the area.



Fig 2: A photo (taken on 23rd October 2024) capturing the newly constructed pit latrine and adjacent bathroom at Nabuli Health Facility, designed to improve sanitation and comfort for in-patients. This upgrade reflects ongoing efforts to enhance healthcare infrastructure and meet the needs of the community.

Improvement in the lighting system at Tirinyi HCIII in Tirinyi T/C-Kibuku district.

There was no electricity in the maternity ward. This made the health facility to solely rely on solar power that was not sustainable because once it rained, lights could not go on. Patients and their care takers used their phone torches even while delivering at night. This service delivery concern was presented during first round of citizen-duty bearer's interactions on service delivery in July 2024 at Tirinyi T/C. Mr. Kabaka Lubega Rashid, the Health centre In-charge was compelled to allocate a budget for the procurement of a rechargeable solar bulb and repaired the electricity lighting system at a tune of UGX 450,000 shillings. Right now, there is reliable lighting system all over the health facility.

Contributing Factors

1. Across the different sub-counties, the active involvement of local communities, particularly through the "Topowa" model, has been a central factor. The community, through the citizen groups, consistently advocated for improvements in local services, including education and healthcare. Their persistent engagement with local leaders and officials brought attention to critical issues. Uniting the community around these issues helped to catalyze change and ensured that leaders took responsibility and action.
2. Effective leadership at both the local and district levels played a crucial role in addressing the challenges. From the Health Centre In-charges to the Sub-County Chiefs and District Health Officers, leaders showed responsiveness to community concerns. Their willingness to engage with community groups and prioritize resource allocation for the identified needs was instrumental in bringing about positive changes.
3. All the interventions reflect a strong focus on accountability in governance. Local leaders, including councillors and PTA members, worked together to ensure that promises made were followed through. The transparency of community scorecards, the active monitoring of progress by community groups, and the commitment from district leadership all contributed to ensuring that service delivery met the expectations of the community. In particular, the use of the Community Scorecard process in identifying gaps and holding leadership accountable helped drive tangible improvements.
4. Many of the improvements were initiated by the community itself, with local leaders taking action based on the community's concerns. The solutions were driven by the needs of the community. This ensured that the interventions were relevant, practical, and supported by the people they were meant to serve.
5. Despite financial challenges, local governments showed dedication to improving services. This highlights the importance of local governments working hand-in-hand with communities to address issues that directly affect the welfare of the population.

These stories illustrate that with the right combination of community engagement, leadership, and resources, significant transformations can be achieved in even the most challenging circumstances, leading to long-lasting improvements in service delivery and quality of life.