TOP NOTCH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (TOP NOTCH-CDI)



Annual Report

2024

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Abbreviations

AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ART: Antiretroviral Therapy
CCYA: Concerned Children and Youth Association
CDI: Community Development Initiative
CHAU: Community Health Alliance Uganda
COP 16: 16TH Conference of Parties
CSG: Child Safe Guarding
CSO: Civil Society Organization
DAC: Day of African Child
ED: Executive Director
FE: Formal Education
HR: Human Resource
IDP: Internal Displaced Persons
JEFORT: Joint Effort for Rural Development
KSA: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
M & E: Monitoring and Evaluation
MOU: Memorandum of Understanding
NGO: Non-Governmental Organization
OVC: Orphans and Vulnerable Children
OAU: Organization of African Union
AU: African Union
PHE: Population Health & Environment
PSHEA: Prevention of Sexual Harassment, Exploitation & Abuse
PWD: People with Disabilities
UNCCD: United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
WASH: Water Sanitation & Hygiene
YOSL: Youth Skilling and Livelihood



Word from the Board Chairperson

On behalf of the Board, I write to express our heartfelt message acknowledging the contributions of all stakeholders in this year including Development Partners, community members, districts of Lira, Kyenjojo, Hoima and Wakiso, my follow board members, staff and volunteers without the support and trust from each of you, we would not achieve much in 2024.

This report is a public accountability and transparency document and enhances stakeholders' confidence and trust in our work. Over the year, the Board continued to provide the policy and governance oversight to the organization amidst limited resources. We approved a number of policies and we are happy that they are being complied with. We thank management and the technical staff for translating work plans into action and doing the work professionally to protect our brand and clearly advance our vision and mission.

We call upon everyone to continue providing dedicated services to the organization to maximize results and impact on the ground as we serve humanity

Thank you once again

Tumwebaze Topher

Chairperson
Board of Directors



Word from the Executive Director.

Welcome readers of this report. This report provides details on the project activities and achievements that Top Notch-CDI accomplished in 2024. Over the year, we were limited to the scope of work in Kyenjojo, Lira, Hoima and Wakiso districts with some activities at national level and participation in the global events.

Throughout the year, we made significant progress and gained valuable insights together, largely under the HIV prevention project targeting Adolescent Girls, Young Mothers (AGYM), infants and children in Kyenjojo district as well as our staff that participated in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. As a team, we will use the lessons learned to better serve our communities in the next financial and Programme year.

Top Notch-CDI appreciates the financial support from Africa Reach, our key implementing partners i.e. Community Health Alliance-Uganda (CHAU), Concerned Children and Youth Association (CCYA) and Joint Effort for Rural Development (JEFORD); line ministries and agencies especially Uganda AIDS Commission, District local governments (host districts) and beneficiaries. We appreciate the support from the Board members, well-wishers including the private sector for their contribution, our staff and volunteers

On behalf of management team, I extend my sincere thanks to all who worked diligently to realize our organizational goals It's our anticipation that we will continue walking the journey together in other coming years. I believe that the information provided will be put to use by different stakeholders to make better work for the organization and communities we serve.

Mwesigwa Robert J
Executive Director

Executive summary

1.**HIV prevention:** Over this year, Top Notch-CDI in partnership with Community Health Alliance Uganda (CHAU) successfully implemented Africa Reach phase 1 project on ***"Reaching to the Last child"*** whose project goal was to contribute to the reduction of new pediatric HIV infections by increasing demand and uptake of HIV prevention services among adolescences and young women. This project was instrumental in improving access to HIV prevention, care and treatment services among the infants, children, AGYW and their families. The lessons learned will inform future programming around HIV prevention, care and treatment services in the district and beyond.

2. Climate action: Top Notch-CDI during the year continued to mainstream/integrate climate actions in all operations. At community level, we continued to promote tree-planting, activities that improve soil health and cleaning energy among others. This was done in liaison with community leaders, community CSOs, education institutions and other structures. Top Notch-CDI started the initial process to become a member of PELUM Uganda. PELUM Uganda is a network of civil society organizations working together to improve the livelihoods of small scale farmers and sustainable agriculture

3. Participation in National and global events: Top Notch-CDI participated in key national and global events including the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia as a participant and Observer at UNCCD - COP16 Riyadh. Five (5) staff from Top Notch-CDI attended and shared experiences on combating desertification in Uganda. Over 50 international delegates visited the Top Notch-CDI stall to exchange knowledge and information. In addition, Top Notch-CDI was recognized and invited by the Ministry of Education and Sports to participate in the celebrations of "Day of African Child" (DAC) in Kiryandongo District. Top Notch-CDI attended to demonstrate our commitment to a holistic approach in supporting vulnerable children in Uganda.

4. Young people and youth skilling: Over the year, Top Notch-CDI developed a full –fledged department of youth skills for various trades including shoemaking, jelly/Vaseline production, liquid and bar soap making, tailing and mushroom production among others to create employment opportunities for the youth and build their resilience against sexual exploitation and abuse.

5. Partnership with research and university institutions: Additionally, Top Notch-CDI as part of research and partnership building with Universities hosted an intern from Bugema University that enabled him to graduate in project planning and management (Bachelor's Degree).

1.0 Background and Introduction

Top Notch Community Development Initiative was founded in Uganda in 2018 and was formerly registered with Uganda Registration Service Bureau as an NGO to become a legal entity in 2021. Its secretariat is located in Wakiso District and currently operates in the districts of Kyenjojo, Hoima, Rwampara and Lira Districts of Uganda.

This report provided achievements, lessons and challenges for the year 2024. It also highlights key recommendations to improve programming and maximize impact in communities in 2025. Over the year, the organization continued to implement her Five –Year strategic plan (2023-2027). Over the year, we pursued the following priorities; HIV and AIDS, climate change, Youth Skilling and Livelihoods, Child Safeguarding, Formal Education, Prevention of Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse and partnership building. In the implementation of the above, Top Notch-CDI continued to focus on her vision, mission and values as follows;

1.1. Vision

A world where the most vulnerable enjoy impactful and sustainable services they desire.

1.2 Mission

To provide the most impactful and sustainable context specific services through alignment with government and other partner development frameworks, community resilient building and people cantered service delivery approaches.

1.3. Organizational values

- Professional & accountability
- Sustainability & responsiveness
- Value for money-result oriented
- Transparency & accountability
- People centered
- Partnership
- Last mile service delivery
- Non- discriminative & inclusive
- Non-partisan

2.0. Achievements in 20242

2.1. HIV prevention

Over this year, Top Notch-CDI in partnership with Community Health Alliance Uganda (CHAU) successfully implemented Africa Reach phase 1 project on "***Reaching to the Last child***" whose project goal was to contribute to the reduction of new pediatric HIV infections by increasing demand and uptake of HIV prevention services among adolescences and young women. This project was instrumental in improving access to HIV prevention, care and treatment services among the infannts, children, AGYW and their families. The lessons learned will inform future programming around HIV prevention, care and treatment services in the district and beyond.

The projects objectives were;

1. To identify undiagnosed infants and children exposed to and living with HIV in Kyenjojo District by November
2. Increase demand and uptake of HIV prevention services among adolescence and young women to reduce new HIV infections during pregnancy and lactation
3. To increase enrolment and treatment coverage for women, mothers, infants and their families who are living with or directly impacted by HIV in Kyenjojo District by November
4. To strengthen targeted advocacy for addressing barriers to access and utilization of quality HIV prevention, care and treatment services among infants, children, adolescents and women in Kyenjojo District by November
5. The project had aimed at reducing new paediatric HIV infections by improving access to testing, treatment, and care for infants, children, adolescents, as well as young mothers and their partners.

2.1.1..Community empowerment for HIV preventions and treatment

During the implementations, Top Notch-CDI trained 40 community champions in Kyenjojo district on eMTCT to reduce vertical transmission of HIV. Top Notch-CDI post training reports indicate that the trained champions continued to support HIV prevention and treatment activities through linking AGYW to health facilities to access the needed services as well as advocacy campaigns. Those trained came from three sub-counties of Mbale, Kigoyera and Kyarusozi



Top Notch-CDI staff training community champions on eMTCT

Integration of TB and malarial: During the implementation of the above activities, Top Notch-CDI emphasized the need for integration of information about malaria, TB, Hepatitis B and other NCDs as part of community systems strengthening in Kyenjojo District

2.1.2.. National stakeholder advocacy and engagement

Over this year, Top Notch-CDI organized a high-level national level dialogue on universal test and treat Policy (UTT) that was held in Kampala on 25 June 2024. The dialogue which attracted 25 participants, included representatives from; Ministry of health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, health workers, social worker's policy makers, association leader, Village health workers (VHTs), expert clients, and adults living with (HIV). The objectives of the dialogue were;

Objectives:

- To Share detailed results and insights from the district level consultative meetings on UTT, highlighting both successes and challenges of the Test and Treat policy implementation in Kyenjojo District.
- To Propose and discuss practical solutions to overcome the primary barriers to effective HIV prevention, care, and treatment services, such as frequent drug stock outs, limited testing points, and inadequate counselling services and lack of counsellors
- To encourage the policy makers to consider the possibility of reviewing the UTT to better align with community needs

The national level dialogue on universal test and treat (UTT) policy, organized by Top Notch-CDI brought together key stakeholders, including representatives from Kyenjojo District, local government; Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, health workers, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and community resource persons and beneficiaries from Kyenjojo district. The dialogue intended to address in HIV treatment and care, focusing on blockades such as staffing gap, drug stock outs, limited testing points, and inadequate counseling services.

Key accomplishments of the dialogue included; hands-on recommendations like integrating HIV treatment into school curriculums, strengthening outreach programs and promoting economic empowerment. The dialogue emphasized on the importance of inclusive nutritional initiatives and self-sufficiency projects. The dialogue adopted a collaborative environment for continued upgrading and proactive answers providing a rock-solid base for future advocacy and programing efforts. This collective effort aims to enhance the efficacy of service and contribute to the eradication of HIV/AIDS in Uganda.



Participants during the national level dialogue on Test and Treat Policy in

Key outcomes of the dialogue

- The dialogue managed to deliver a comprehensive summary on the UTT policy implementation in Uganda, mainly emphasizing it's gains and challenges in Kyenjojo District. Participants gained valuable insight into challenges such as drug stock outs, long distance, stigma and limited testing points.
- The discussions and brainstorming sessions efficiently recognized the primary barriers to effective HIV prevention, care, and treatment services. These included frequent drug stock outs, limited testing points, inadequate counselling services, and a shortage of counsellors.
- The dialogue produced hands-on resolutions to address the known blockades. Endorsements included integrating HIV treatment and care into the school curriculum, strengthening outreach programs, empowering young men and women economically, and encouraging moonlight counselling and testing.
- Participants recommended policy changes to better align the UTT policy with community needs. Suggestions included revising the policy to address enrolling a patient prematurely on medication before proper counseling and preparations, staffing gap and other health system barriers, and incorporating comprehensive support measures for people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups.
- The dialogue enabled alliance between several participants, including representatives from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, health workers, and community representatives. This teamwork is vital for the effective implementation of the suggested resolutions.

2.2. Representation and Participation in national and international conferences

Top Notch-CDI participated in 3 key events that included;
(i) the World AIDS Day (WAD),
(ii), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia as a participant and Observer at UNCCD - COP16 Riyadh and
(iii). The Day of the African Child (DAC)

2.2.1. Participation in World AIDS Day

This took place at the district level in Kyarusozi sub-county where Top Notch-CDI was recognized and invited to share their work on HIV prevention activities in the district. Top Notch–CDI challenged the district to own and sustain the investments being done in the district. During the event, the district commended Top Notch-CDI work in the district and committed to continue working with Top Notch and other partners to prevent new HIV infections and scale up the efforts



Top Notch-CDI staff (right) district leaders paused for a photo during the WAD

2.2.2. Celebrated in the Day of African Child (DAC)

Over this year, Top Notch-CDI was recognized and invited by the Ministry of Education and Sports to participate in the celebrations of "Day of African Child" (DAC) in Kiryandongo district. Top Notch-CDI attended to demonstrate our commitment to a holistic approach in supporting vulnerable children in Uganda. Top Notch-CDI was among the National organizing committee of the "Day of African Child (DAC)" in Kiryandongo district. Celebrations lasted for 2 days from 15th to 16th of June 2024 at Kiryandongo district headquarters and Byeyare refugee camp respectively with the theme: **"Education for all children in Africa; the Time is Now".** This event takes place every 16th of June every year as part of Organization of African Union (OAU) / African Union (AU) in honor of victims of children who participated in the 16th June, 1976 student uprising in South Africa.



Top Notch-CDI staff (Right) during DAC cerebrations

The event was comprised of a series of meetings and discussions by CSOs, government institutions, school managements and the private sector to discuss issues affecting children in Africa. Besides, there was "children's parliament" moderated by facilitators and teachers who discussed challenges they faced in accessing education and other issues such as HIV and the parliament was comprised of children from Uganda and abroad. The 2nd day of celebrations of DAC were held at refugee camp in Bweyale town council with the Minister for Gender, labor and social development Honorable Betty Among as the Guest of honor and the state minister of youth and children affairs Honorable Barugahara Balaam. By participating in the event, Top Notch-CDI achieved the following during,

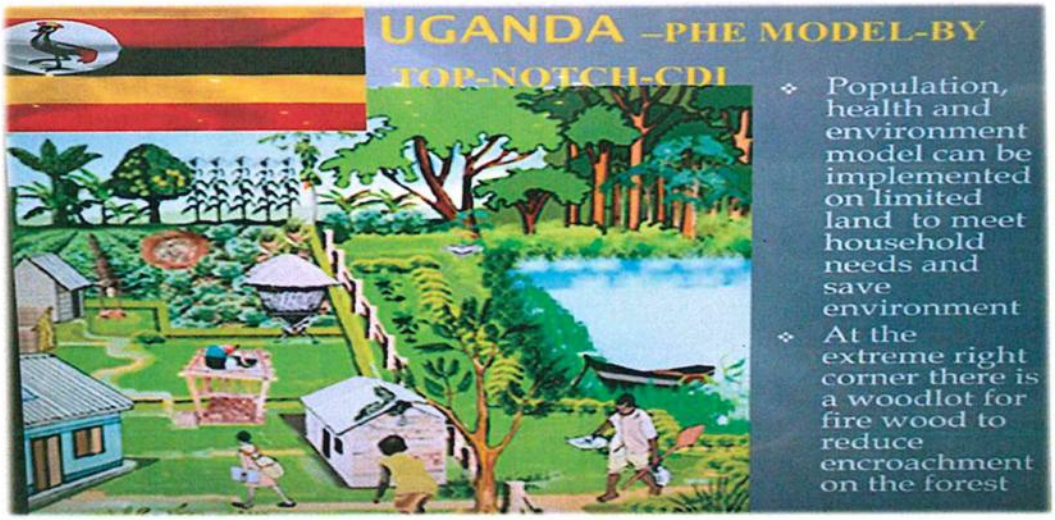
- Obtained more insights about **"The National Strategy to End Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy"** 2023/2024-2026/2027, this book contains statistics and more information concerning children. Information will be utilized to strengthen programming under Top Notch-CDI's intervention on Prevention of Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse (PSHEA) and HIV prevention
- Top Notch-CDI gained an additional platform for improved networking, collaborations, information sharing and advocacy for Top Notch-CDI's interventions mainly Child Safeguarding (CSG), PSHEA & Formal Education (FE) which concerns children's rights and Health that is related to the theme of the celebration
- Acquired additional knowledge and information on multirole issues that affect children participation in programs child neglect and forceful marriages and how report such cases among others. Top Notch-CDI will utilize this information to tackle violence against children Uganda

2.2.3: Participation in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) COP16 conference - RIYADH 2024

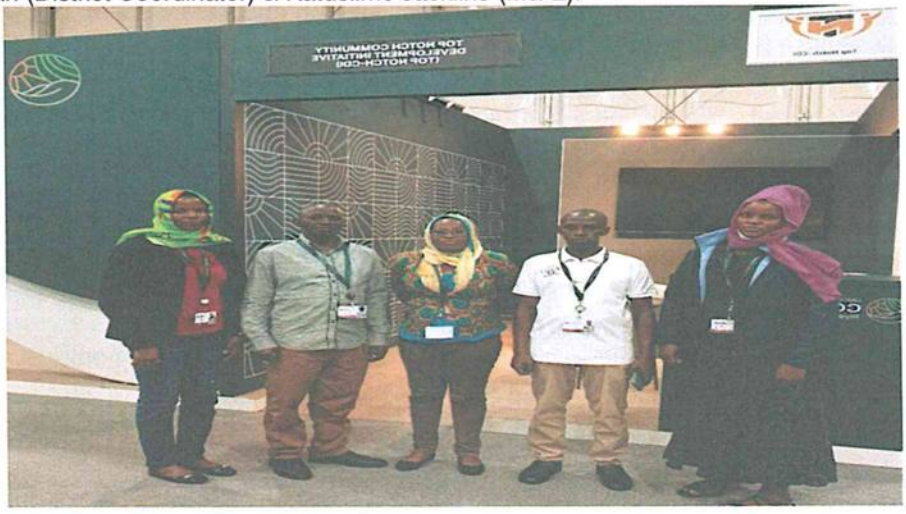
Top Notch-CDI was one of the few organizations that were accredited by UNCCD to represent CSOs from Uganda. The conference intended to share experiences and ideas to tame desertification. This would benefit Top Notch-CDIs 2024 climate action agenda in Uganda with the following objectives

1. To create community awareness on the pressing issues of deforestation, wetland encroachment, and unsustainable land use due to lack of knowledge on how to conserve environment in Districts of operation
2. To empower local communities to lead restoration efforts and adopt sustainable practices while improving community livelihoods, aligning with climate and environmental goals
3. Engage with local and national governments to strengthen policy enforcement on forest and wetland conservation.

Top Notch-CDI presented the population Health and Environment (PHE) model being implemented in Uganda. Top Notch-CDI emphasized that the model focuses on preventing degradation, restoring degraded lands, community development and resilience, all geared towards striking a balance between meeting the needs of community and preserving environment. This approach fosters a peaceful co-existence between people and the environment, advancing both social equity and ecological sustainability. Below is the Population, Health and Environment (PHE) model that was presented at the conference



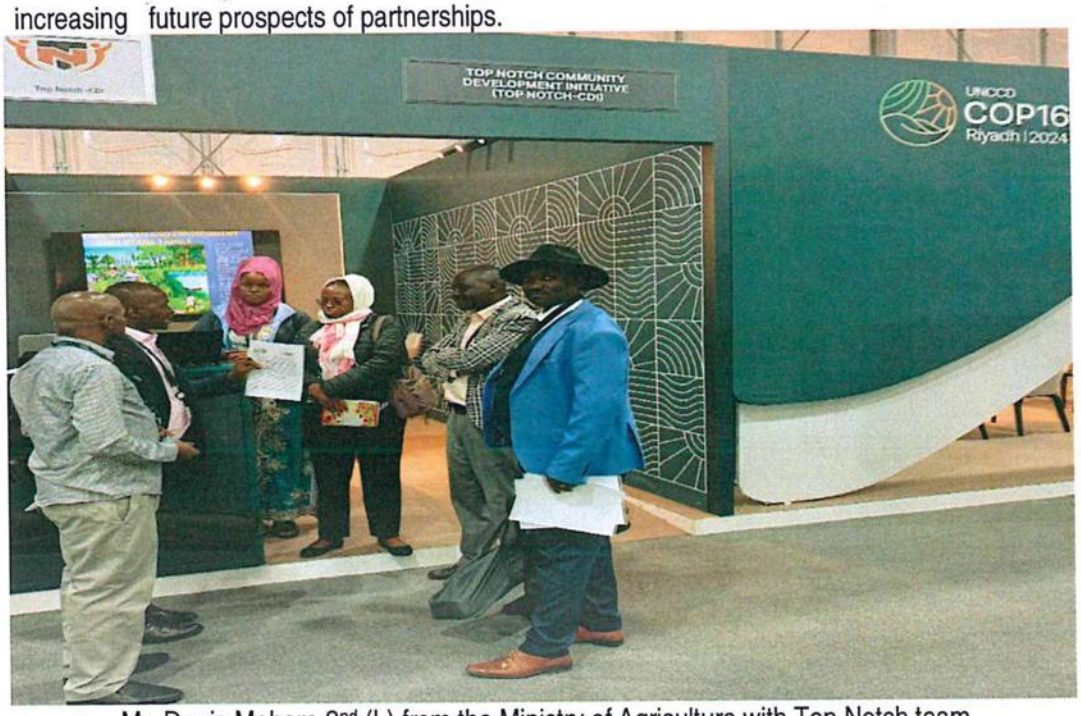
Five (5) staff from Top Notch-CDI attended and shared experiences on combating desertification in Uganda. Over 80 international delegates visited the Top Notch-CDI stall to exchange knowledge and information. The staff who represented Top Notch-CDI were; from left Birungi Sarah (District Coordinator), Mwesigwa Robert (ED), Chepngetich Caroline (PO), Barugahare Jordan (District Coordinator) & Katusiime Jackline (M& E).



Top Notch-CDI staff at the pavilion in Riyadh

Key achievements and lessons as a result of participating in the conference.

- More than 80 international delegates visited Top Notch pavilion to & understand the PHE model and how it works in Uganda, this boosted the visibility and networking capacity of the organization
- There was Exchange of knowledge, experience, best practices and new ideas in line with drought resilience that leads to food security, there was a common understanding that maize, sorghum are drought resistant
- Top Notch-CDI registered a range of recommendations on how to save the environment as a result of attending different meetings and interactions at the pavilion i.e.
- We learnt that there is need to go back and plant indigenous trees with the aim of protecting environment examples of indigenous trees included; Mvule tree, Musizi trees and fruit trees which can not affect environment and same time fruit trees
- Minimizing wastage of firewood that affects environment for example using one stick of firewood in saving stove and prepares food without using many firewood's that demands a lot that leads to deforestation
- Engaging the youth and put them at the center of protecting environment.
- Greening environment in schools, churches and organizations
- Greater networking was achieved during the various conference meetings and, side events attended; thus increasing future prospects of partnerships.



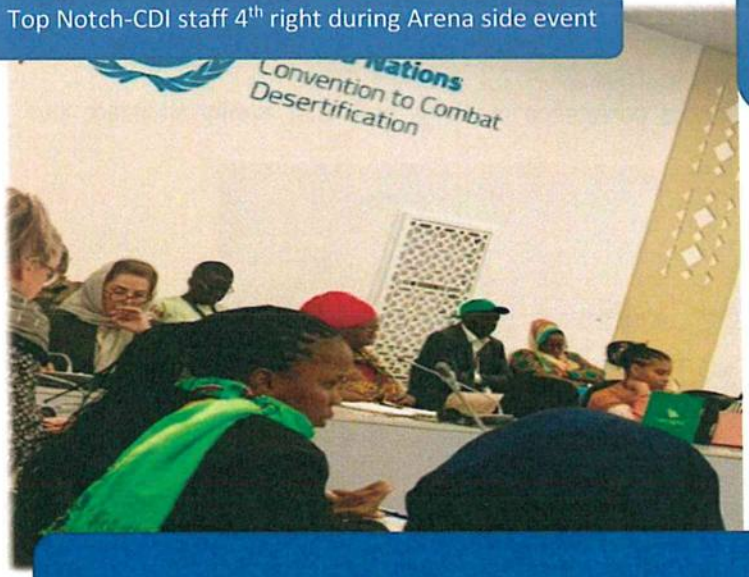
Mr. Denis Mahoro 2nd (L) from the Ministry of Agriculture with Top Notch team



Top Notch-CDI staff 4th right during Arena side event



Top Notch-CDI staff during Brazil side event



Top Notch-CDI staff in a plenary session at Riyadh

2.3. Climate action

Top Notch-CDI during the year continued to mainstream/integrate climate actions in all operations. At community level, we continued to promote tree-planting, activities that improve soil health and cleaning energy among others. This was done in liaison with community leaders, community CSOs, education institutions and other structures. Top Notch-CDI started the initial process to become a member of PELUM Uganda. PELUM Uganda is a network of civil society organizations working together to improve the livelihoods of small-scale farmers and sustainable agriculture. Top Notch-CDI continued to collaborate with youth and engaged them in tree planting to combat climate change and enhance biodiversity. Some community members such is in Kigolobya village (Hoima district) owned woodlots as a way of protecting environment. They also engaged themselves in group savings to solar panels that help in conserving environment

2.4. Young people and youth skilling

Over the year, Top Notch-CDI developed a full –fledged department of youth skills for various trades including beads and shoemaking, Petroleum and jelly formation, liquid and bar soap making, tailing and mushroom production among others to create employment opportunities for the youth and build their resilience against sexual exploitation and abuse. These livelihood activities are critical in the target communities, as they contribute to employment opportunities and income generation, which enables them to overcome barriers such as sexual exploitation and abuse and exposure to HIV. Over the

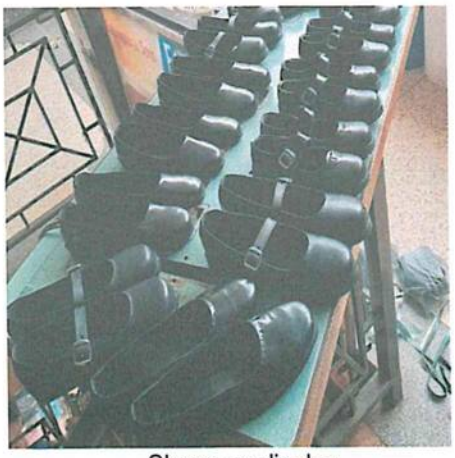
year, about 61 young people benefited but this is below the annual target of 120 due to limited resources. Below are photos of shoes that youth engage in using local materials for sustainability.



Shoes still in workshop



Completed shoes



Shoes on display

2.5. Partnership with research and university institutions

Additionally, Top Notch-CDI as part of research and partnership building with universities hosted an intern from Bugema University that enabled him to graduate in project planning and management (Bachelor's Degree). Hosted an intern from Bugema University. Top Notch-CDI is a home of all categories of people and welcomes different students from different institutions/Universities to carry out internship program. The student (*Ajo James Noel Yosua*) was at Bugema university pursuing bachelors in project planning and grant management, as a requirement of the university . The intern completed the internship in project management, which enabled him to graduate. He also supported Top Notch-CDI in the implementation of project activities. **Bugema University** (**BMU**) is a private, co-educational Ugandan university. The internship training is aimed at giving practical environment which expose students with practical responsibilities as a business personnel or executive administrator, solving business problem while exhibiting skills and practice previously acquired skills. A student who has undergone the industrial training submits an internship report. The choice of the Organization was due to its relevance and ability to provide an all-round learning experience in line with the internship objectives.

Internship objectives

The primary objectives of my internship were:

1. To gain practical experience in project planning and grants management.
2. To develop skills in proposal writing, fundraising, and report writing.
3. To understand the dynamics of working within a community-based organization.

Roles and duties of the intern

During his internship period, he was attached to the programs, Fundraising and resource mobilization where he was under supervision of the organization's program manager. His accomplishments during the period were;

- Assisted in creating project plans that outlined objectives, timelines, and resource requirements. This involved detailed planning sessions and coordination with various stakeholders.
- Participated in discussions to generate innovative project ideas. This required creative thinking and a deep understanding of community needs and organizational goals. This exposed him to the practical realm of planning, implementing and reposting or project activities.
- Conducted research to identify potential funding sources, including foundations, government grants, and private donors. This involved understanding the criteria and priorities of different funders. From different sites and sources.
- Assisted in writing and preparing grant applications, ensuring that they met the specific requirements of each funder. This included compiling necessary documentation and data to support the applications. Taking part in this activity exposed him to the practicality of project fund raising which was vital for his profession as a project and grant manager.
- He joined the fund-raising team of top-notch CDI where he made remarkable contribution to designing projects and was part of writing winning proposals. He particularly engaged in responding to the call for proposal VIIV Innovation funds. His

roles included fact-finding ensuring that the project well-aligns with the 17 sustainable development goals, strategic objectives of the organization and the interests of the donors, highlighting the potential impact and sustainability of the projects. (*see appendix three)*

- He also supported with reviewing already written project proposals, ensuring clarity, coherence, and alignment with both Top Notch-CDI's goals and the expectations of potential donors like ViiV Healthcare. This required strong writing skills and attention to detail. Proposal writing being a key element of project planning and grant management, my engagement in responding to the call to proposal from ViiV innovation fund gave me a hands-on experience of handling call for proposals which as well meets my industrial
- He participated in the planning of project activities including a radio talk show and a national level dialogue with different project stakeholders, where he supported the planning processes including putting together activity concepts and budgets, aided the procurement processes, preparation of report and presentation which were made to the stakeholders at National level dialogue, mobilization of high-level participants including MOH, CSOs, Community representatives.

Intern's evaluation: The interns evaluate organizations in which they are attached to...
Below was his evaluation of Top Notch-CDI

Strengths

i. Deep community roots: Top-Notch-CDI has a strong connection with the local community, understanding their needs and concerns, and finding, reliable, effective and efficient solutions.
ii. Flexibility and adaptability: Top-Notch-CDI can respond quickly to changing community needs and circumstances.
iii. Tailored programming: Top Notch-CDI often provides tailored support to the communities, and these include people living with HIV and Migrants.
iv. Community engagement: Top Notch-CDI fosters community participation, ownership, and social cohesion.
v. Local expertise: Top Notch-CDI possess valuable knowledge of local context, culture, and resources.
vi. The NGO is transparent and accountable

Weaknesses

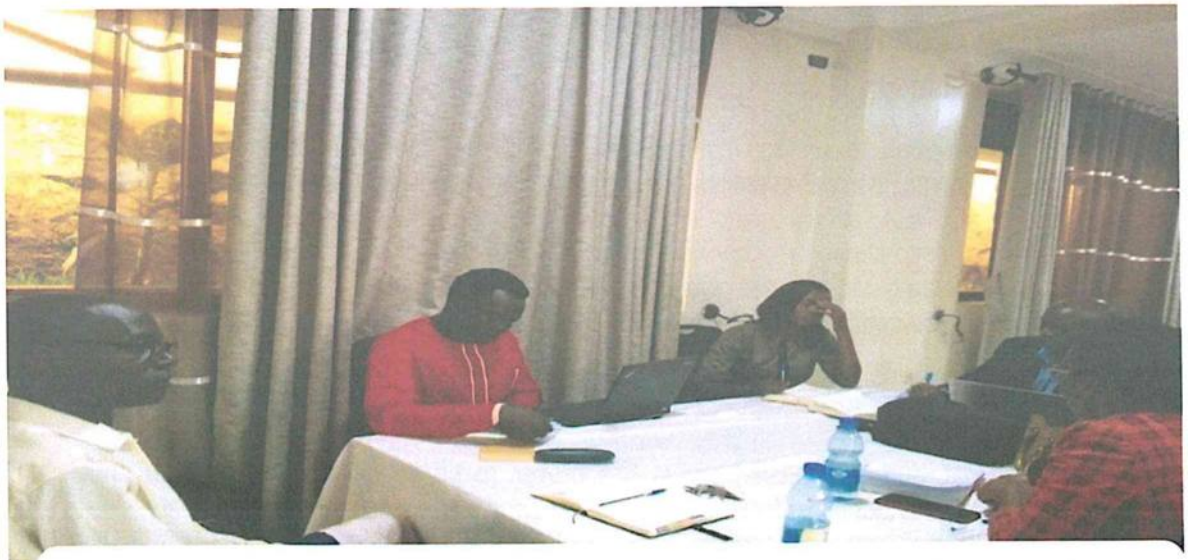
i. Limited resources: The NGO faces funding constraints and inadequate infrastructure
ii. Limited scalability: This is due to funding limitations

Opportunities:

i. Partnerships and collaborations: Top Notch-CDI has and can form alliances with other organizations, government agencies, or businesses to enhance services and impact. In addition, the organization has a strong partnership policy that guides engagement with key partners
ii. Funding opportunities: Top Notch-CDI can explore diverse funding sources, such as grants, donations, or corporate sponsorships.
iii. Advocacy and policy influence: Top Notch-CDI can advocate for policy changes and influence decision-making processes.
iv. Innovative programming: Top Notch-CDI can develop innovative programs and services to address emerging community needs.

Threats:

i. Funding instability: Top Notch-CDI is likely to be affected by the uncertain or reduced funding, impacting their operations and services and this will affect gains made in communities
ii. Changing community needs: community needs change from time to time depending on certain conditions, this may include natural conditions like droughts, floods and landslides, economic conditions like inflations and unemployment or health conditions like disease outbreaks and pandemics. Top Notch-CDI must therefore adapt to shifting community priorities and demographics.
iii. Competition for resources: There is high competition in Uganda among civil society for resources and therefore Top Notch-CDI



Intern (2nd L) was serving as rapporteur during the review of Test and Treat Policy at Arch Apartments in Kampala

2.5.1. Continuing and consolidation of existing partnerships and collaboration

Over this reporting period, Top Notch-CDI continued to nurture and strengthen existing partners with Community Health alliance Uganda (CHAU), Joint Effort for Rural Development (JEFORD) in Hoima district western, Concerned Children and Youth Association (CCYA) from Lira district part of Uganda. We also collaborated with Live Teens Thrive and Youth Africa. Top Notch-CDI continued to enjoy good working relationships with host districts of Kyenjojo, Lira, Wakiso and Hoima. They supported to mobilize communities, participated in field activities, made presentations, monitored our work, invited Top Notch-CDI in their meetings and contributed resources in kind such as venue and personnel to Top Notch-CDI. The role of these partners in enabling Top Notch-CDI register the 2024 achievements was commendable.

2.6. Formal Education (F.E)

Top Notch-CDI was part of the National Organizing committee and also participated in the celebrations of the Day of African Child (DAC) in Kiryandongo district. The two (2) day event took place on the 15th and 16th of June 2024 at Kiryandongo district headquarters and Byeyare refugee camp respectively. It should be remembered that on the 16th of June every year, the continent comes together to commemorate the Day of African Child (DAC) which was gazetted by assembly of heads of state and leadership of OAU/AU, in honor of victims of children who participated in the 16th June, 1976 student uprising in South Africa.

2.7. Child Safeguarding (CSG)

Over the year, Top Notch-CDI continued to engage communities on child safeguarding intervention through;

- Community awareness sessions on rights of children and wellbeing
- Empowering community- based child protection units with the authority, skills, and tools necessary to effectively carry out their mandated duties.
- Ensuring safe communities by promoting lasting peace so that children can live in comfort and with peace of mind.
- Establishing strict laws against violations of children's rights to deter potential offenders
- Implementing and enforcing laws to ensure accountability, so that some individuals who attempt to undermine the justice system through bribery are held accountable and face appropriate penalties
- Providing parental guidance on effective child-rearing and communication to strengthen understanding between parents, caregivers and children.
- Placing trained whistleblowers in various communities to report cases of child right violation

2.8. Prevention of Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse (PSHEA)

Over the year, Top Notch-CDI continued to engage communities on PSHEA through; Conducting trainings, raise communication awareness campaigns on SEA and Prevention, Advocacy Campaigns on SHEA, using Art and craft to promote human rights including prevention of SHEA, strengthening local leaders and community leaders on PSHEA, developing survivor- and victim-centered response and support mechanisms, training SHEA champions that will report and safeguards culprits of SHEA, empowering and training guardians/care givers on different types of parenting skills like Authoritarian (care and love) and authoritative(harsh) or less concerned about empowering adolescent girls, boys and young mothers to be change agents.

3.0. Lessons and Success stories

- Participating in local, national, and international events has proven to be an effective strategy for enhancing organizational visibility, building partnerships, fostering collaboration, and supporting staff development.
- Community –led actions, particularly those engaging Adolescent Girls and young Women (AGYW) leading HIV prevention awareness and advocacy, proved effective. This approach maximized both impact and sustainability
- During the year, Top Notch-CDI increasingly recognized the value of collaboration with partner organizations in the host districts and their vital role in promoting local ownership and sustainability. Working with partners at both district & National levels has been instrumental in building synergies and leveraging on existing resources. tThis collaboration enabled successful establishment of field offices, strengthened fundraising and communication activities, and contributed to staff capacity building

4.0. Monitoring, Learning, Adaptation and Learning

Top Notch-CDI has a dedicated team in the MEAL department that continued to provide monitoring oversight to ensure that annual target met with high quality standards and on time. Over the year, the MEAL Manager and team organized weekly, monthly and quarterly reviews to reflect on progress towards the quarterly and annual work plan and devise means for fixing barriers. The MEAL team encouraged staff and partners to share lessons, innovations and best practices to scale up. The team also prepared monthly and quarterly reports on time that were used by management and Board to make appropriate and timely decisions. The team continued to guide staff on using data collection and activity reporting tools to generate quality information for decision-making. Additionally, the team supported technical teams and partners on how to conduct learning and exchange visits including on line information sharing to improve impact at community level. The MEAL department also supported teams to prepare and submitted abstracts in ICASA purposely for information sharing at various conferences to show case organizations best practices including the COP 16 conference in RIYADH.

5.0. Leadership and Governance

Over the year, Top Notch-CDI Board continued to provide strategic oversight to the organization. This was done mainly on virtually due to limited resources. The Board approved the new organizational organogram and salary structure; it also approved annual work plan for 2025 and reports, and supported audit functions. The management committee/ team continued to provide effective leadership and enabling environment to staff, which enabled them deliver as appropriate. General monthly staff and senior management team meetings were held as appropriate. However, due to resource constrains staff were occasionally as allowed to work virtually but they remained connected and working as a team. Over the year, the organization had eight full-time staff, two part-time staff and two volunteers

6.0. Challenges

Despite the massive achievements realized over the year, Top Notch-CDI experienced some challenges. Key ones included; (i) Inadequate funding that limited the organization to fully implement her different interventions with in different communities of operation and mostly those that address HIV prevention, climate change and community health issues/needs and

(ii) Limited capacity to cope and use digital emerging technologies .to maximize effective and effectiveness

7.0. Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1. Recommendations

1. Given the continued rise in new HIV infections among young people, the Top Notch-CDI should expand its HIV programming including HIV prevention education and advocacy in Kyenjojo district and beyond.
2. Given the growing demand for skilling among young people and women, Top Notch-CDI should expand this intervention and actively seek funding to support it. Strengthening economic empowerment will enhance individual, family, and community resilience to life shocks, including poverty. Equipping young people and women with the skills and resources needed for self-resilience will enable them to support themselves and contribute to long-term sustainability.
3. There is a need to strengthen climate change programming, with a focus on supporting communities to engage in climate-friendly agriculture and clean energy initiatives
4. Identify suitable partners and / or resources to strengthen internal systems, particularly through the adoption and use of digital technologies

7.2. Conclusions

The year ended positively, with most of the planned activities successfully achieved, these accomplishments, along with emerging needs, remain aligned with the Top Notch-CDI's strategic plan. In particular, Top Notch Community Development Initiative (Top Notch–CDI) empowered communities and transformed lives in its response to preventing HIV in Uganda. The intervention contributed to access to HIV testing and treatment, improved adherence, and strengthened the local health system. Top Notch-CDI played a key role in addressing paediatric and adolescent HIV challenges. . Through advocacy and support to community health workers, it promoted the implementation of an effective electronic health record system, demonstrating a strong commitment to improving the lives of affected children, adolescents, and their families. While challenges persisted, Top Notch-CDI remains committed to continuously reviewing and adapting its plans to meet the evolving priorities of the target populations. We will continue to emphasize community ownership, impact and the local sustainability of our interventions. Moving forward, we are committed to learning from our experiences and leveraging partner support to fulfil the organization's mandate.