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Tech Talks:

NAVIGATING THE ICT LAND SCAPE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY TESO REGIONAL CONTEXT CONVERSATION

Context Conversation

The CIVFUND strategic focus aimed at promoting social justice and human rights through capacity building for civil society reached a milestone this year with a new grant initiative. The focus of this venture was on funding regional context conversations in Northern and Eastern Uganda. The conversation in Teso was organized in collaboration with Civsource Africa and Teso Initiative for Peace (TIP). It took place in Soroti District.

Insights from the 2014 UBOS census report revealed that only 26.6% of Ugandans own phones. The spillover effects of this evidence are exhibited in the ICT related challenges faced by CSOs. One of the main challenges identified was the slow adoption to ICT by CSOs demonstrated through instances of email neglect and limited civic engagement using the available platforms.

The event brought together a diverse group of actors from civil society and government in the Teso region. The discussions revolved around the impact of ICT on social rights, its associated threats, and its potential future contributions to CSO agendas. Key topics included leveraging ICT for mobilization, communication, fundraising, and advocacy. The conversation also aimed to mobilize and reflect on leveraging available ICT platforms to hold the government accountable in community work.

The keynote address was delivered by Henry Muguzi, Executive Director of Alliance for Finance Monitoring. The theme of his paper was on "Using ICT for Leveraging CSO reducing space." The key points emphasized from his presentation included defining civil society beyond NGOs, the purposes of ICT, and its role in enabling advocacy, free speech, and accountability.

A rich discussion that provided valuable insights emerged following his speech. Participants discussed maximizing the benefits of ICT, acknowledging its power in advocacy, democracy promotion, and government accountability. Recommendations included securing data and systems, using end-to-

end encryption, and being aware of cybersecurity threats. Strategies for resource mobilization through online platforms were also highlighted and e-advocacy using social media platforms to mobilise the population and influence policy.

Attendees characterized the event as impactful, serving as a valuable platform for networking and collaboration. Some feedback underscored the need for additional follow-up engagements and a deeper understanding of collaborative efforts to effectively leverage ICT in advancing CSO agendas. Participants warmly received the event, underscoring the importance of ongoing capacity building in the constantly evolving civil society landscape.

During the event, suggestions were made for extended durations and increased participation of women in future conversations. These constructive inputs will be taken into account to enhance the effectiveness of upcoming initiatives, aligning with the aspiration of fostering a robust civil society in the Teso region.

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