



# CENTER FOR COMMUNITY HOLISTIC ENGAGEMENT AND TRANSFORMATION ACTION - (COTA)

NEWSLETTER

1st issue



## Message from the Executive Director

Dear Friends, Partners, and Community Members,

It is with great joy that I welcome you to the very first issue of the COTA Newsletter. At the Center for Community Holistic and Transformation Action (COTA), we believe that real change begins with empowering communities to take charge of their future. This newsletter will serve as a platform to share our journey, highlight stories of resilience, and keep you connected with the work we are doing together.

Over the past year, we have made significant strides in advancing climate justice, women's empowerment, and community resilience in Imvepi Refugee Settlement and the wider West Nile region.

Through the Climate Justice Academy Grant, we established safe spaces for women to engage in climate advocacy and environmental decision-making. We also trained over 200 women and youth in agroecological practices, helping families adapt to the challenges of climate change while building sustainable livelihoods.

As we look ahead, our focus remains clear: to amplify community voices, particularly those of women and youth, in shaping climate action and inclusive development. We are grateful to our partners, supporters, and the communities who walk this journey with us.

Together, we can build a future that is just, sustainable, and filled with hope.

Warm regards,  
**Tumwesigye Juliet**  
 Executive Director  
 Center for Community Holistic and Transformation Action  
 (COTA)

## Project Highlights

### ◆ Women's Voice and Leadership (WVL)

Through CARE Uganda's support, COTA has made key strides in institutional strengthening:

- Secured a 5-year MOU with Terego District.
- Confirmed NGO registration, now fully recognised as an indigenous national organisation.
- Purchased a motorcycle to boost field outreach.
- Joined WECISNET, amplifying our advocacy voice.
- Developed policies for compliance and governance.
- Socialised staff to build a shared culture of accountability and teamwork.

➡ These steps position COTA as a credible, compliant, and nationally recognised organisation, ready to scale impact for women, youth, and communities.



### ◆ Climate Justice Academy Grant Project (2024–2025)

In Village 12, Zone 1, Imvepi, COTA empowered 29 women through the Women’s Climate Advocacy Committee (WCAC). Through storytelling, training, and tree planting, they’ve moved from silence to influence — engaging duty bearers on water access, firewood safety, and land use. Youth groups joined in, amplifying the call for inclusive climate action.

### ◆ SPA II & Loss and Damage

COTA planted over 13,000 trees and supported 66 women-led enterprises in soap-making, baking, and tailoring. SRH camps reached 449 women and girls, while youth groups like Smart Spenders and Elonga Bakery now drive climate action and economic resilience. The project also piloted community dialogues on loss and damage, linking local stories to global climate justice frameworks.



### ◆ UNHCR Livelihood Project

193 direct beneficiaries were trained in agroecology, horticulture, and recycling. Women-led farming clusters now use drought-resistant seeds and organic fertilizers. Plastic waste is being upcycled into plant pots and poultry feeders — turning pollution into profit. The project also supported poultry rearing, kitchen gardens, and market linkage for refugee and host communities.



### Reflective Summary

Behind every compost heap and classroom garden, behind every soap bar and recycled pot, there is a story not just of survival, but of strategy, of spirit, of rising.

**These highlights are not just numbers on a page. They are echoes of women who dared to speak, youth who chose to build, and communities who refused to wait for change they became it.**

**We’ve seen dry soil bloom.** We’ve watched plastic waste become purpose. We’ve heard voices once silenced now shaping decisions. This is what transformation looks like when rooted in trust, grown through collaboration, and harvested with hope.

**And yet, the road ahead is layered with challenges still unmet, systems still unjust, and opportunities still untapped.**

**So as we turn the page, we invite you to walk with us into the heart of the issues, into the solutions shaped by those who live them.**



**Climate Vulnerability & Limited Agroecology Knowledge**

**Women’s Exclusion from Climate Decision-Making**

**Limited Livelihood Options in Climate-Stressed Communities**

In West Nile, erratic rainfall, degraded soils, and limited access to climate-smart farming knowledge have left women and youth vulnerable to food insecurity and economic instability.

In Imvepi and surrounding zones, women have long been excluded from environmental decision-making processes. Despite bearing the brunt of climate impacts from firewood scarcity to water access their voices are missing in local planning and advocacy spaces.

In refugee-hosting zones like Imvepi, women and youth face shrinking livelihood opportunities due to climate shocks, market isolation, and limited access to startup capital. Plastic waste, food insecurity, and unemployment compound the vulnerability

Founded by 15 youth under SPA II, Elonga Bakery began with basic baking skills and a shared charcoal oven. Today, they supply bread to 3 local schools, employ 10 young people, and reinvest profits into tree planting and farming and VSLAs. Their bakery uses fuel-efficient stoves and sources ingredients from local agroecology gardens.

“We bake bread, we build futures. Our ovens are powered by purpose.” – t44 Bakery chairperson



**Women & Youth Leadership: From trainees to trainers**

At just 19, Betty joined COTA’s safe space sessions and discovered her leadership potential. She now leads tree planting drives, facilitates community dialogues, and represents her village in environmental forums. “Before, I thought leadership wasn’t for someone like me. Now, I help plan actions for my community.”

Through the Climate Justice Academy Grant Project, COTA established safe spaces and launched the Women’s Climate Advocacy Committee (WCAC) in Village 12, Zone 1. Women received training in climate literacy, storytelling, and advocacy. They engaged duty bearers on land use, firewood safety, and water access – shifting from passive recipients to active agents of change.



**Agroecology for Resilience**

Before the training, Hayati’s plot was dry and unproductive. Today, it’s a thriving demo garden showcasing composting, intercropping, and water-efficient irrigation. The group mentors other farmers and supplies vegetables to nearby households.

“We turned dry land into green hope. Our compost feeds more than crops – it feeds change.” – Hayati Group Leader

To address these vulnerabilities, COTA launched agroecology trainings across Zones 3 and 4, focusing on practical, low-cost techniques:

- 200+ women and youth trained in composting, bucket irrigation, and drought-resilient farming
- 2 demonstration gardens established by Hayati and Ma Ecora farmer groups
- 1 compost hub launched to promote soil regeneration
- 3 youth-led irrigation pilots tested using recycled containers/buckets and gravity-fed systems
- Continuous mentorship provided by trained farmer coordinators

These efforts are building food security, restoring soil health, and empowering communities to adapt.

# ★ Spotlight Story: t44 Bakery – Youth Rising Through Climate Enterprise

## Zone 1 | SPA II Project | Youth-Led Innovation

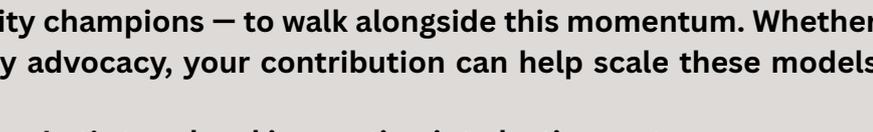
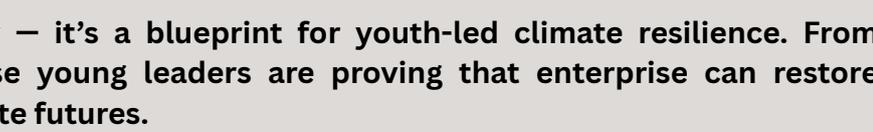
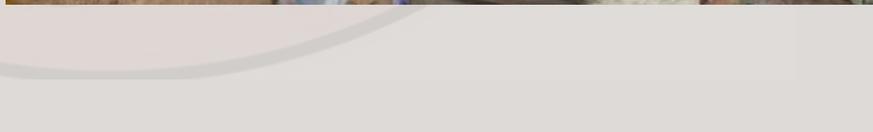
In Zone 1 v.12, a group of young people saw more than unemployment and plastic waste – they saw potential. With support from COTA's SPA II project, they launched Elonga Bakery, a youth-led enterprise that blends agroecology, recycling, and baking into a model of climate-smart resilience.

The team began with basic baking skills and a shared charcoal oven. Through COTA's training, they learned to produce bread using locally sourced ingredients like cassava and sweet potatoes from agroecology gardens. They also received mentorship in branding, hygiene, and market linkage.

Today, Elonga Bakery supplies bread to three local schools, employs 12 youth, and reinvests profits into tree planting, SRH outreach, and plastic recycling. Their ovens run on biomass briquettes, cutting fuel costs and reducing deforestation. They've also innovated by turning plastic waste into poultry feeders and plant pots – merging enterprise with environmental action.

“We bake bread, we build futures. Our ovens are powered by purpose.” – Elonga Bakery Co-Founder

Elonga Bakery is more than a business – it's a movement. Their model has inspired replication in Zones 1 and 4, and was showcased during COTA's Climate Justice Academy as a best practice in integrated livelihoods.



**Elonga Bakery is more than a success story – it's a blueprint for youth-led climate resilience. From recycled ovens to school partnerships, these young leaders are proving that enterprise can restore ecosystems, empower communities, and rewrite futures.**

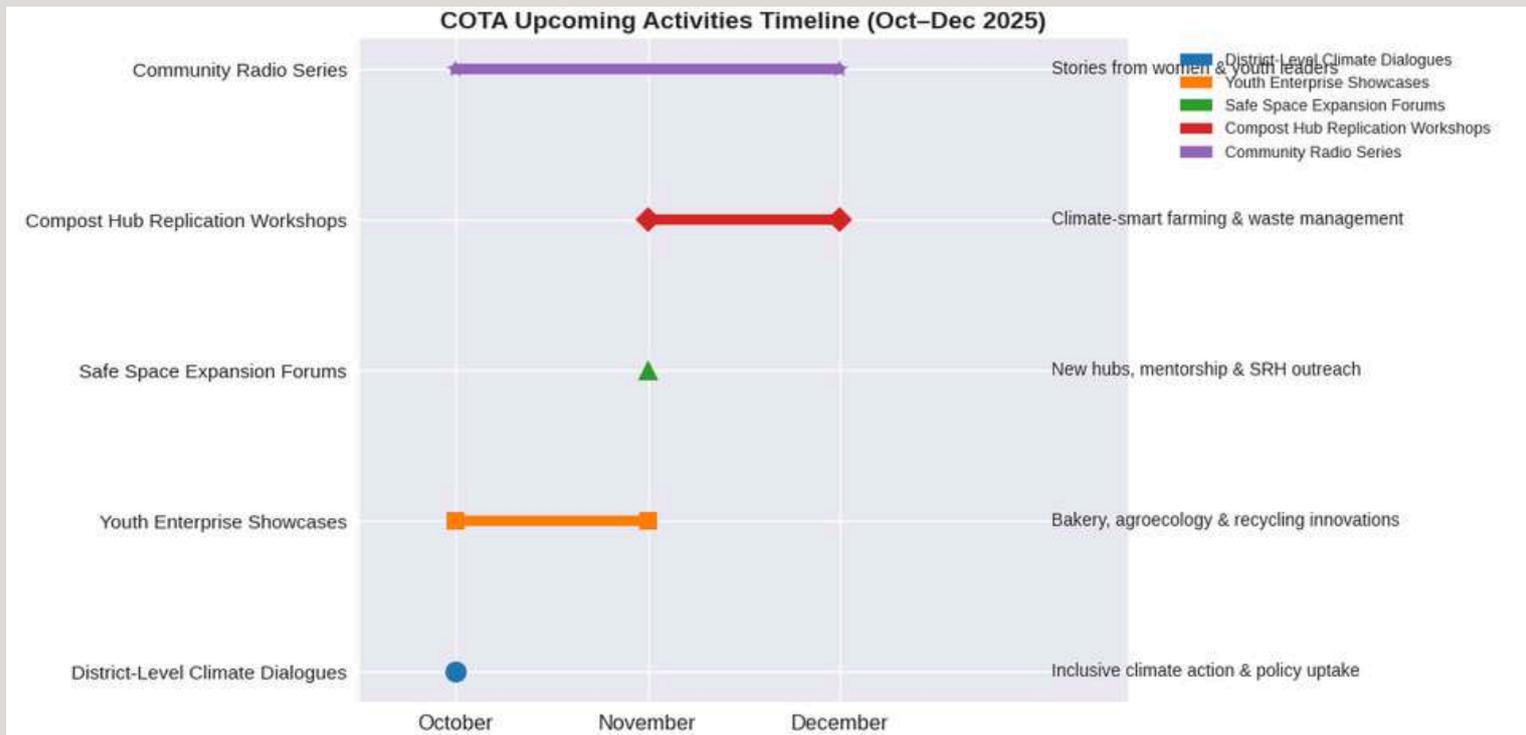
**COTA invites you – partners, donors, community champions – to walk alongside this momentum. Whether through mentorship, market support, or policy advocacy, your contribution can help scale these models across West Nile and beyond.**

**Let's invest in ideas that rise from the ground up. Let's turn local innovation into lasting systems.**

**🌱 Partner with purpose. 🛒 Buy local, build local. 🗣️ Amplify youth voices. 🌍 Co-create climate justice.**



# Upcoming Activities



## 🤝 Our Partnerships

We gratefully acknowledge the support and collaboration of our partners who walk with us in advancing women’s empowerment, youth leadership livelihoods, and climate justice and resilience in Imvepi Refugee Settlement and beyond:



ActionAid international  
Uganda



UNHCR



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER (OPM)  
(Local Government & Networks (including WECISNET))



CARE INTERNATIONAL UGANDA



ActionAid Denmark & Climate Justice  
Academy

**& ALL OUR PARTNERS IN THIS JOURNEY**

**OUR**

**CALL TO**

**ACTION**



# GET INVOLVED

## CO-CREATE WITH US

COTA is more than a team it's a movement. We invite partners, donors, and community members to walk with us as we scale safe spaces, build resilient systems, and amplify grassroots leadership.

Whether you're a policymaker, funder, youth leader, or local champion, there's a place for you in this journey.



### Ways to Collaborate

- Fund a safe space or compost hub
- Mentor youth-led enterprises
- Support storytelling and visibility efforts
- Join our district-level dialogues
- Amplify our work on your platforms



### Contact Us

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