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# **Localized Empowerment and Sustainable Social Transformation: Insights from Uganda**

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## **Abstract**

This paper explores how localized empowerment strategies can serve as drivers of sustainable social transformation in under-resourced communities, drawing insights from Uganda's grassroots social work practice. Based on nine years of field experience with Meeting Point Hoima, the study examines community-based initiatives focused on psychosocial support for orphans and vulnerable children, youth empowerment, and the integration of social work within education and health systems. Using a qualitative, participatory approach, the research highlights how culturally rooted, community-owned interventions strengthen resilience, enhance social inclusion, and improve educational outcomes. Evidence from youth-led peer groups shows measurable gains in school retention and community participation, demonstrating the transformative potential of locally guided initiatives. The paper argues that sustainable social change is most effective when communities are empowered to design and lead their own development processes, offering valuable lessons for policymakers and practitioners working toward inclusive, context-driven development across Sub-Saharan Africa and beyond. This abstract presents my interest in participating in the 10th International Academic Conference on Research in Social Sciences (IACRSS 2026) to engage in cross-cultural academic exchange and contribute insights from grassroots social work in Uganda and worldwide. I am deeply passionate about sustainable social transformation, particularly within under-resourced communities in Sub-Saharan Africa. This abstract presents my interest in participating in the 10th International Academic Conference on Research in Social Sciences (IACRSS 2026) to engage in cross-cultural academic exchange and contribute insights from grassroots social work in Uganda and worldwide. Participating in the 10th International Academic Conference on Research in Social Sciences (IACRSS 2026) presents a valuable opportunity to share insights from my grassroots social work practice in Uganda and to learn from diverse global perspectives. I am eager to engage in scholarly dialogue on sustainable social transformation, contribute evidence from community-based empowerment initiatives, and strengthen collaborative research networks. I believe that exchanging knowledge with fellow practitioners and researchers will enrich my

capacity to design inclusive, culturally grounded interventions that address social inequalities and promote lasting development across Sub-Saharan Africa and beyond.

In my current role with Meeting Point Hoima, I have led community-based programs focusing on psychosocial support for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), capacity-building for youth, and integrating social work with health and education systems. A key initiative was establishing youth-led peer-support groups which resulted in a 47% increase in school retention and a 35% reduction in early drop-out among the cohort within 3 years (2021-2024). This practical experience shaped my conceptual grounding in how localized empowerment frameworks, rooted in culture and community ownership, can lead to social transformation. My focus is on exploring how inclusive policymaking, education access, and community-led initiatives can reshape fragile social systems. Drawing on my field experience working with marginalized youth and women, I aim to present findings that demonstrate the impact of localized empowerment strategies in improving livelihoods, reducing inequalities, and promoting resilience in rural communities. Attending this conference would not only expand my global academic network but also enrich my capacity to implement evidence-based solutions in Uganda and worldwide. I believe this opportunity will help amplify voices from the Global South and inspire collaborative solutions that transcend borders.

**Keywords:** Context-driven development, Social change, Cross-cultural academic, Exchange Collaborative research