

USAID/Uganda Civil Society Strengthening Activity

*Kuraish addressing the new
GUIDE participants at the launch of the
2023 cohort in February 2023*



USAID/CSSA

BUILDING GLOBAL LEADERS

***“I know stigma like I
know the back of my
hand”***

Kuraish Mubiru

“I know stigma like I know the back of my hand.”
“From a young age, I watched everyone walk away from me when I tested positive for HIV. From my friends at school to my very own father, who sent me away to the village to my maternal grandmother. Apparently, so I could die next to my mother – and that is how I found out that my mother had died of HIV.”

“According to my father, it was only a matter of time before I joined my mother. In his words, why waste money paying school fees for a corpse?”

“Sadly, he was right. I indeed felt like a moving corpse. That year, I became suicidal. My mental health deteriorated so much that it took my grandmother all the strength she had to tie me up so I wouldn’t harm myself,” narrates Kuraish.

But what really counts, they say, are good endings, not flawed beginnings. Like a phoenix, Kuraish rose from the ashes of a dejected childhood to become a global representative, a leader in the civil society, and an inspiration to other young people - and he says he greatly credits the USAID/Uganda Civil Society Strengthening Activity (USAID/CSSA) for making him the leader that he is today.

“USAID/CSSA helped me build the capacity to assist young people who face challenges similar to those I faced growing up, and to influence processes and decisions that affect them, which has also notably impacted Uganda Youth Positives (UYP), the organization that I now lead as Executive Director (ED),” he says.

Kuraish, that took over as UYP’s ED in December 2019, says that, after his traumatizing childhood experience, he developed the desire and determination to prove that HIV wouldn’t limit him from becoming an exemplary leader for his generation.

“Just a couple of months into my tenure as UYP’s ED, the country went into national lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic”, he recalls, “This greatly affected service delivery and access to medication for young people living with HIV. So, I voluntarily used my car to support the Ministry of Health to deliver HIV medication and food door-to-door to young people living with HIV in Kampala.”

“My car, that I call ‘my hero’, and I went all over Kampala, bringing medical services closer to young people living with HIV, and in no time, my car and I were getting recognition from the media and other civil society organizations - and that is when I was invited to join the USAID/CSSA GUIDE program,” he says.

Kuraish is one of 20 pioneer GUIDE program participants (2022 cohort). GUIDE (Giving Rise to Ugandan Indigenous Direction and Experience) is USAID/CSSA’s cutting-edge servant leadership program designed to challenge the present situation in which Ugandan CSOs operate, by creating opportunities for powerful, thoughtful, and strategic collaboration among young leaders representing diverse communities.

During the national lockdown due to Covid-19 , Kuraish used his car to deliver HIV medication and food to young people living with HIV in Kampala door-to-door



“The GUIDE program fueled and repurposed my dream of lighting the candle for young people, especially those living with HIV,” he says.

“I can’t credit USAID/CSSA enough for unlocking my leadership potential in ways I hadn’t envisioned. I obtained substantial servant leadership skills that inspired and propelled me on a journey to be the change I desire to see out there.”

Kuraish says that by attending the virtual and in-person training and mentoring sessions facilitated by Common Grounds Consulting LLC (USAID/CSSA’s implementing partner), he picked up strategies for attaining influence in decision-making platforms and processes to benefit the people and entities he represents.

“That was such a game changer for me. I started to consciously position myself in places where decisions that affect my community are made - and almost immediately, I started to register a lot of tangible achievements”.

“As a result, I was selected to represent the civil society at the PEPFAR Regional Planning Meeting that was held in Johannesburg in March 2023. While at the event, I was selected to present the statement of the young delegates to Mr. John N. Nkengasong, the Ambassador-at-Large and Coordinator of United States Government Activities to Combat HIV/AIDS Globally,” he says. “We were also able to get the PEPFAR Ambassador to agree to establish a PEPFAR Youth Council,” he adds delightfully.

As part of the GUIDE program, Kuraish (center) used board games as a means of gathering young boys and men to involve them in the fight against HIV

“And when I demonstrated to the PEPFAR stakeholder’s platform the work that I have done under Engaging Young Boys and Men in the Fight against HIV initiative, supported by the GUIDE program, PEPFAR invited us to bid for a 3 million USD grant,” he says.

Kuraish, who says he now prides himself of serving young people beyond Uganda’s borders, adds that he was also invited to sit on the Global Fund Community Accountability Steering Committee for Research.

“This is a platform that brings together people from all over the world to highlight Global Fund’s accountability to key and affected populations, and now I get to effectively represent young people, thanks to USAID/CSSA”.

“And that’s not all”, he adds, “The GUIDE program also strengthened my proposal writing skills, as we learned how to develop competitive proposals that directly respond to community challenges. This has translated into actual grants for my organization, on top of the capacity-strengthening grant from USAID/CSSA”.



“For example, shortly after I completed the GUIDE program, we (UYP) were invited to Dar-es-Salam by the Women’s Global Network for Reproductive Rights, where I used the skills I learned from GUIDE to pitch for a project, and we were awarded a grant of 16,000 USD,” he says.

“And I am sure there are still more similar fundraising opportunities to come”.

About USAID/CSSA

USAID/Uganda Civil Society Strengthening Activity is a five-year Activity funded by USAID and implemented by East-West Management Institute that aims at supporting the capacity strengthening of Ugandan Civil Society Organizations to contribute to their improved development outcomes in four thematic areas: Health, with particular attention paid to achieving Uganda’s HIV/AIDS’ reduction goals; Education, youth, and child development; Agriculture and food security; and Democracy, rights, and governance.

Kuraish (center, checked jacket), poses for a group photo with other GUIDE participants during the launch of the program in January 2022

