

OUR HISTORY – OUR JOURNEY

DATE	MILESTONE
1989	<p>Franciska moves back home to Ghana from the USA to accept the invitation of Ghana's Head of State at the time, Flight Lt. J. J. Rawlings, to work as a Deputy Minister for Local Government (Deputy Secretary equivalent). She held this position for 5 years, during which time she accepted a concurrent portfolio to head the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), then a department under the Ministry of Local Government. It was during Franciska's leadership that the EPA was converted into a full Ministry (Cabinet Department). The first Minister (Cabinet Secretary) for this ministry was a woman whom Franciska interviewed and hired to the then EPA. She was also one of the women that CENSUDI trained to win her elections into the Ghanaian Parliament in 1992.</p> <p>"There were so few of us women in government (barely 5%), and the greater proportion (90%) of us were also deputies working under more powerful male bosses, often having to defer to them in most things. Political leadership was new to many of us, and additionally, a good number of us were not gender aware. It was therefore no surprise that when it came to advocating for female needs and concerns in the policies, plans and programs that our offices oversaw, we were found wanting." (Franciska Issaka)</p> <p>This very valuable hands-on leadership experience, coupled with Franciska's volunteer work with Gender Advocacy Nonprofits while studying abroad, sowed the initial seed in her to start an organization dedicated to advocating the needs and concerns of women and girls.</p>
1992/93	We carry out consultations to establish if there is a need for an organization to address women's concerns.
1993 1994	<p>Following these consultations, CENSUDI is founded in Accra by the sisters Franciska Issaka, Elizabeth Issaka, Margaret Mary Issaka, Martin Akukua Anthony and Emmanuel Ashiagbor</p> <p>Mission: To identify and strengthen the capacity of women to participate in decision-making at all levels of society.</p> <p>Vision: A world where communities and governments provide an enabling environment for women and girls to realize their full potential and contribute their best to the common good.</p>
1995	First Board formed and chaired by Madam Melanie Kasise, Franciska's Senior Housemistress when she was a student at The Bolgatanga Women's Training College from 1968-1972
1995	CENSUDI receives our first international grant from the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, UK, to conduct a public life skills workshop for about 100 women. The funding was for 3 months only
1995	CENSUDI wins a second international grant from the Commonwealth Foundation to conduct a political campaign skills workshop for female candidates and their key campaign team members. This funding was also for 3 months
1994 1996	CENSUDI operates out of Franciska's house in Accra. We had no paid staff, only 3 volunteers. Gratefully, everyone gave generously their time, energy and ideas.

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1996	<p>CENSUDI moved our work and headquarters to Bolgatanga so we could focus our activities on the three (3) northern regions of Ghana. This move was guided by a number of reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> At the time, there were, a number of other non-profit organizations based in Accra and working in similar advocacy areas as CENSUDI. There were none in the three (3) Regions or States located in the northern part of Ghana A socio-economic study of Ghana published at this time confirmed that the three regions located in northern Ghana ranked among the poorest in the country. The study also revealed that a major likely cause of these high poverty rates was their higher-than-normal exclusion of female voices and concerns in all their activities. As a daughter of Northern Ghana, I felt a strong edge to answer this beckoning need of my region and people.
1996	<p>First office space rented on Commercial Street in Bolgatanga, the Upper East regional capital town. First full-time employee hired – Cecilia Awuni. Thank you! First used motorbike acquired to facilitate her work</p>
1996	British High Commission in Accra donates a used pickup for office use
1996 & 1997	<p>The British Council and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation supports CENSUDI to conduct three workshops that increase the number of women elected to Parliament by 300% and five women appointed as ministers and deputy ministers in government. Media Awareness and positive coverage of females and their events also sour.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Campaign skills workshops for actual and potential female candidates and their campaign team members Gender workshop for Political Party Executives Gender workshop for media <p>Some of these national workshops are held in Tamale</p>
1997	Board renewed with two new members with legal expertise. CENSUDI also recruits an accountant.
1998	CENSUDI wins a grant from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation; to implement a project dubbed “Women’s Participation in District Assembly (Local Council) Elections” The successful implementation of this Project results in a 400% increase in the number of women elected to the District Assemblies (Local Councils) in the Upper East Region
1998 2001	<p>In partnership with the Active Learning Centre, an NGO based in the United Kingdom, CENSUDI wins European Union Funding to implement the Women in Public life Project (WIPPL) project. At this time, a major finding of a United Nations (UN) funded research was that when women constitute at least 30% of a group or organization, they are more likely to have a significant impact on decision-making and culture change, particularly in traditionally male dominated fields like politics, business, etc. WIPPL therefore aimed at identifying and equipping enough women and some men with gender and development skills to take up these positions. Staff from thirty (30) Community Based Organizations (CBOs) from the three (3) northern regions are trained in gender, advocacy and leadership, NGO and project management skills. Funding is provided in the budget for the salary payments for just one staff member and this goes to the Executive Director Margaret Mary who has been volunteering since the inception of the organization. Our Secretary (Cecilia Awuni) is and the part time Accountant (James Anaba Atinga) are still paid from our own internally generated resources.</p>

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2003	The Media Advocacy Project to sensitize the public and create awareness about gender issues in the Upper East Region begins with funding from the Ford Foundation. The project was designed with UK partners “Radio for Development” for 3 years. We requested a budget of five hundred thousand US. Dollars (\$500,000). Unfortunately, the FORD Foundation approved the project with funding of only one hundred thousand (\$100,000). Gratefully, salary and benefits are provided for one staff member and some small monthly allowance for an accountant to keep the books monthly on part-time basis.
2004	<p>LACOSREP, which stands for the Land Conservation and Smallholder Rehabilitation Project, was a project in Ghana, specifically focused on the Upper East Region, because of its high poverty rate. It was funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) from 1991-2005 and aimed to improve food security and incomes for rural populations through various components.</p> <p>CENSUDI won a grant from LACOSREP during the second phase to implement an initiative, “the Family Credit Scheme,” aimed at preparing female small business owners and entrepreneurs in underserved communities to access the capital and technical assistance they needed to grow and succeed. We were happy to play a pivotal role here yet could not get LACOSREP to fund the staff that we required to implement this project effectively. Our Accountant then doubled as the Project officer for this so that he continued to get his full salary and benefits even though he was doing an extra job.</p>
2004	An Initiative to end gender-based violence and provide support to violence survivors, dubbed “The Rural Response System Project (RRSP)” wins funding from Womankind Worldwide and begins. This three (3) year project reduces the incidence of domestic violence in the three rural pilot communities mainly because it supported them to strengthen their own traditional systems of managing violence against women. Funds are provided for the recruitment of a full-time Project Officer and some monthly allowance for the Executive Director to oversee this work.
2005	CARE International funds the “Security of Land Tenure (SLATE)” project for 3 years (pilot) to ensure that females have legally recognized and protected rights to land and other resources. In approving this project, CARE provides funds for a project officer and partial support to our Executive Director and the Accountant. Also provides a used motorbike for project activities. At a CENSUDI raises concerns on the selective focus of donors/partners on providing funds for project activities, with virtually none for administrative costs and all the staff required to facilitate the full and successful implementation of activities. CARE recommends an assessment of CENSUDI’s capacity and hires CIKOD to do this.
2005	Christian Aid expresses interest in partnering with CENSUDI and provides some money for participatory proposal development with Ten (10) rural communities. This year-long process identifies traditional policies and practices that discriminate against women (TRAPPDAW) as the underlying causes of endemic poverty in the Upper East. Region A ten (10)-year program is birthed from this process. The goal of this initiative is to work with forty (40) rural communities to eliminate TRAPPDAW. The Project is called the Community Driven Gender Advocacy Project or CODRIGAP. This project is designed to be implemented in two phases: win funding from Christian Aid, Cordaid and MATCH International Women’s Fund.

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2006 & 2007	<p>To strengthen CENSUDI's capacity to implement CODRIGAP while building on the findings from the CIKOD organizational Assessment process, Christian Aid enables a second, more professional organizational assessment by John Nkum and Associates. Under the guidance of this Organizational Development (OD) coach, we revamped the Board of Directors, who in turn guide us to achieve the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal restructuring to minimize conflict and duplication at the top management level • Recruitment of Heads of Programs and Finance, Accountant, Administrative Assistant, Field and Project officers • The development of key human resources and program policies <p>We are grateful that both organizational capacity assessments were fully funded by CARE and Christian Aid. However, the implementation of the findings was then left fully in CENSUDI's hands with little to no financial contribution from our partners/donors.</p>
2008	<p>The Davidson's were private donors to Christian Aid who heard about our scholarship activities dubbed "Education Improvement Program (EIP)" targeting brilliant adolescent girls from poor families. During the organizational Assessment, CENSUDI changed the name EIP to Apoka, after a female folk hero whose actions drove away slave raiders from her community. Apoka's single feat ended slave raids in that Community and all surrounding ones. The Davidsons had decided to fund 30% of this project.</p> <p>In 2008, Ghana experienced severe flooding, particularly in the northern regions, following heavy rainfall from August 24th to 29th and the opening of the Bagre Dam in Burkina Faso on August 27th, 2008. The floods resulted in displacement, destruction of homes and farmlands, and infrastructure damage, with estimates indicating</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. About 275,000 people were displaced b. around 20,000 homes were destroyed c. Also damaged thousands of hectares of farmland, impacting food security <p>CENSUDI developed a Disaster Relief project to provide financial assistance and support to our partner communities, their populations and organizations. Christian Aid and CORDAID granted us 60% of the funds needed to implement this initiative.</p>
2009	<p>The successes of the Security of Land Tenure (SLATE) pilot are used to develop the Equitable Community-Based Land Management Systems (ECOBLAS) Project. This initiative shifts power to the communities, enabling them to address their environments, particularly emphasizing women's needs and their involvement in decisions about land use and ownership. CENSUDI wins a grant from Christian Aid to implement ECOBLAS for just one year, not the entire five (5) year duration of the project</p>
2009	<p>We secured funding to implement the second phase of CODRIGAP from Christian Aid and Cordaid, but now at rates far less than the 2006 funding levels because of the global financial crisis. Christian Aid levels are cut by 30% and CORDAID by 80%. MATCH drops out completely</p>

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2010	<p>Twenty-five (25) rural communities that CENSUDI has been working with form a coalition to support one another and strengthen their commitment to promoting gender equality. This network is called Community Driven Gender Advocacy Movement (CODRIGAM), and they agree to raise funds locally to continue with the work in their communities and beyond. This fund is called Mites4Rights.</p> <p>The Community Driven Gender Advocacy Network (CODRIGANET) is another Coalition of NGOS, government and private sector agencies that believe in CODRIGAP and are rallying to support this effort by replicating this in their partner communities as well.</p>
2010	Three of the CODRIGAM communities start the mobilization of resources for the Mites4Rights fund
2010	The main co-founder, Franciska Issaka, leaves to take permanent residence in the USA following her daughter's call for support
2011	With the blessings of the Board, Franciska starts the registration of CENSUDI in the United States of America
2013	501 C 3 Status granted to CENSUDI USA
2013 -2015	Franciska mobilizes all the funds needed to fund all of CENSUDI's initiatives through fair trade sales of baskets and other handcrafted items produced by artisans in our partner communities. This also helped our community partners to receive fair prices for their products, promoted the development of new and improved products as well as the development of sustainable practices. This, in turn, increased income levels in our communities, promoted social and economic development of families, empowering them to send and keep their girls in school in addition to adopting many other livelihood improvement measures.
2016 -2022	Franciska has a long recovery from the rupture of her brain aneurysm in December 2015. At this time, too, CENSUDI's cofounder and Executive Director began to suffer from Frontotemporal Dementia (FTD). As the disease progresses, she stops working and subsequently succumbs to the disease in November 2019. Barely two years later, in March 2021, CENSUDI's other co-founder, Elizabeth, died after a very short illness. All of these tragic and sad occurrences, happening in quick succession of one another, affected the fortunes of CENSUDI.
2023	Franciska is 90% healed from the effects of her brain aneurysm that ruptured in 2015 and vigorously resumes fair trade activities. However, a breast cancer diagnosis this year forces her to slow down so that treatment can commence.

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2025	<p>Breast cancer treatment for Franciska is successful, and she is now in remission.</p> <p>With the support of her Board, CENSUDI raises funds to purchase a vehicle for CENSUDI's activities. The effort raises a total of ten thousand and five hundred (\$10,500.00) U.S. dollars. A million thanks to all our donors and to our indomitable board members who have enabled CENSUDI to endure, adapt and overcome adversities.</p> <p>After several denials to our attempts to purchase the vehicle using CENSUDI's creditworthiness and history, Franciska worked with a used vehicle dealership to purchase a vehicle under a hybrid arrangement using Franciska's credit history and the money raised by CENSUDI as a down payment. We continue to pay for the vehicle from the CENSUDI account, as the vehicle has enabled Franciska to resume fair trade activity in earnest.</p> <p>Working pro-bono to help us revive CENSUDI is Eileen Sa-adatu Saini, one of Franciska's nieces. We are working to redesign the logo and to get the website working again.</p> <p>We are also working with a number of people in Ghana on a contractual basis. These include Ms. Juliana Amoak, Mr. Evans Nsopika, Mr. Peter Sontim and Mr. Simon Mbayel Morimi. Another niece in Ghana has agreed to work pro-bono to give a new and improved form, structure and appearance to CENSUDI. Thanks to all for working around the clock on this.</p>
2025	<p>CENSUDI's current efforts are focused on preventing cervical cancer by promoting cervical health. This focus has been informed by two main reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When Franciska was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2023, it was her second brush with cancer. The first was in 1989, when a routine annual cervical screening exam discovered abnormal precancerous cells. She successfully underwent a complete and total hysterectomy recommended by her gynecologist at the time in Ghana and thrived until her 2023 breast cancer diagnosis. By God's grace, Franciska has successfully fought breast cancer and is in remission again! Her personal experiences have inspired her to encourage and persuade CENSUDI to do a project aimed at improving access to women's cervical health. 2. Additionally, cervical cancer is the second most common cancer in females in Ghana, according to 2023 local registry data and the 2022 global cancer estimates (GLOBOCANⁱ-IARC). Cervical cancer is considered preventable with nationwide coverage of HPV vaccination and cervical cancer screening (WHO - IARC, 2022). However, Ghana does not have a national HPV vaccination program, and screening rates are estimated as low as 16.9% <p>One of our immediate objectives is to increase cervical screening and HPV vaccination rates in Ghana by 2030.</p>

ⁱ GLOBOCAN - Global Cancer Observatory

2 IARC - International Agency for Research on Cancer

3 WHO - World Health Organization