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UN UGANDA BULLETIN

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

EMPOWERING UGANDA'S YOUTH: US \$22 MILLION UGANDA UN JOINT ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH PROGRAMME LAUNCHED

By Monicah Aturinda, United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO)



President Yoweri Museveni (far left) with UNFPA Representative, Dr. Mary Othieno (far right) representing the UN Resident Coordinator; UNDP Resident Representative, Ms. Elsie Attafua (second from left); and UN Women Representative, Dr. Paulina Chiwangu (second from right); after the launch of the Uganda UN Joint Adolescent and Youth Programme ©UN Uganda

The lush green hills of Kigezi reverberated with excitement as young minds gathered at Kigezi High Primary School in Kabale District to celebrate International Youth Day on 18 August 2023 under a national theme, "Accelerating Recovery from COVID-19 and the Full Implementation of the 2030 Agenda: The Role of Youth."

In his inspiring address at the International Youth Day celebration, Mr. Jacob Eyeru, Chairperson of the Uganda National Youth Council, spoke on behalf of the youth in Uganda, emphasizing the importance of both vision and action for the younger generation. He noted, "Youth are ready to lead; they only need guidance, not instruction because they understand the issues that affect them."

Mr. Jacob Eyeru concluded with a call to action for his fellow youth, saying, "As youth, we must take responsibility for nurturing innovations that will help our country generate revenue and move away from depending on foreign aid."

OVERVIEW

- UNFPA HackLab to end Teenage Pregnancy
- Giving Women Refugees hope away from home
- Amudat GBV Shelter protecting Women and Girls
- Tackling malnutrition through fish farming
- Malnutrition still a challenge for children in Karamoja
- WHO/KOICA saving lives of mothers and babies in Busoga
- Ebola Response: IOM hands over supplies
- Engaging Female Sex Workers to prevent Ebola
- Uniting against Bullying in Schools
- UN Entebbe opens doors to Refugee market vendors
- Reaping the Rewards of Data
- UN Women and Absa plant trees in schools
- Performance arts fostering social cohesion in refugee settlements
- SDGs People's Festival thrills Kampala



DECADE
OF
ACTION



8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Uganda, a nation brimming with promise, boasts a significant youth population, with 76% under the age of 30. Their potential for development is boundless, provided the right investments are made in education, health, and protection. Neglect, on the other hand, can render them vulnerable, jeopardizing their well-being.

President Museveni shared his wisdom with the young people of Uganda and the world, urging them to maintain focus and develop self-discipline. He encouraged them to concentrate on their studies to acquire knowledge and qualifications that will serve them well in life. "Desist from the mentality of parasitism," he emphasized.

In a resounding commitment to empower Uganda's youth, a groundbreaking initiative was launched on International Youth Day 2023. Under the banner of "Empowering Adolescents and Youth to Realise Their Full Potential," the United Nations (UN) unveiled the Joint UN Adolescents and Youth Programme.

This visionary programme is firmly rooted in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2021-2025), highlighting the profound collaboration between the Government of Uganda and the United Nations system.

Speaking on behalf of the UN Resident Coordinator, Dr. Mary Otiemo, UNFPA Uganda Country Representative, called upon all development actors to join the UN family in building the capacities of youth to innovate around their issues and realize the Sustainable Development Goals. Dr. Otiemo emphasized that investing in young people would significantly contribute to meeting Uganda's development goals, delivering a "triple dividend" of improved health and well-being now, throughout their lives, and for future generations.

The first phase of the programme, spanning from 2023 to 2025 and worth US \$22 million, will be implemented in the districts of Abim, Kampala, Kiryandongo, Kotido, Lamwo, and Moroto. The Program represents a joint initiative between the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Sports, National Youth Council, Uganda National Students Association, and the 13 UN agencies, including FAO,



Mr. Jacob Eyeru, Chairperson National Youth Council (centre), flanked by members of the National Youth Council, delivering his speech during the National Commemoration of International Youth Day in Kabale District on 18 August 2023 ©UNFPA Uganda

ILO, IOM, UNAIDS, UNCDF, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, UN Women, and WHO.

The Adolescent and Youth Joint Programme has three outcomes:

- 1) Responsive quality social and protective services are available, equitably accessible and used by Adolescents and Youth;
- 2) Adolescents and Youth (A&Y) in and out of school have improved access to education, skills, livelihoods, and safe, decent employment opportunities;
- 3) A&Y actively participate in development, peace, security, and climate action.

As the celebration of International Youth Day came to a close, a sense of optimism filled the air, with the promise of a brighter future for Uganda's youth, driven by their passion, determination, and the unwavering support of the nation and the international community. 🌍

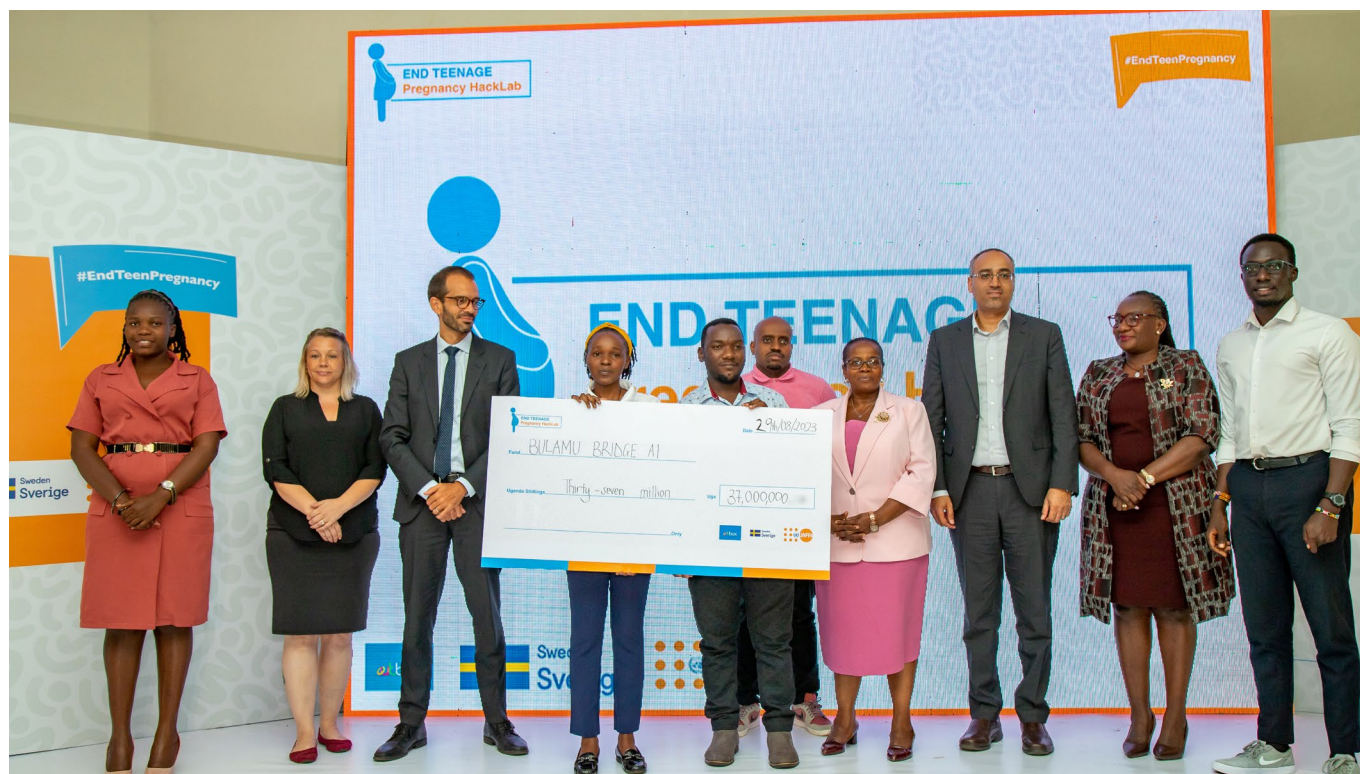


Dr. Mary Othieno (centre) delivering a speech on behalf of the UN Resident Coordinator; flanked by UNDP Resident Representative, Ms. Elsie Attafuah (right); and UN Women Representative, Dr. Paulina Chiwangu (left); during the National Commemoration of International Youth Day in Kabale District on 18 August 2023 ©UNFPA Uganda



UNFPA HACKLAB ENGAGES YOUTH TO INNOVATE SOCIAL CHANGE SOLUTIONS TO END TEENAGE PREGNANCY IN UGANDA

By Josephine Zhane and Emmanet Nabwire, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)



Winning Innovators pose for a group photo with the delegates from the Swedish Embassy, UNFPA and Ministry of Gender after being awarded in the grand finale of the End Teenage Pregnancy HackLab pitch event ©UNFPA Uganda

As part of its initiative to end early and unintended teenage pregnancy through social change innovative solutions, UNFPA, the United Nations Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Agency, organised the End Teenage Pregnancy HackLab pitch event on 29 August 2023 at Serena Hotel, Kampala.

UNFPA initially launched the End Teenage Pregnancy HackLab in partnership with Outbox Uganda and funding from the Embassy of Sweden on 7 July 2023, to accelerate collective efforts towards ending Early and Unintended Pregnancy in Uganda.

The inception of the End Teenage Pregnancy HackLab was driven by a vision to create a world where communities, including girls and young women, are supported to lead the campaign against early and unintended pregnancy. The HackLab engaged young innovators to scale innovative solutions focusing on the 16 districts of Abim, Amuria, Kaboong, Kaberamaido, Kiryandongo, Kotido, Napak, Nakapiripirit, Pader, Yumbe, Moroto, Gulu, Bundibugyo, Kamuli, Mayuge and Kampala.

The End Teenage Pregnancy HackLab 2023 explores innovations that accelerate efforts towards achieving the three Transformative Results including ending preventable maternal mortality, ending unmet need for family planning and ending sexual and gender-based violence and harmful

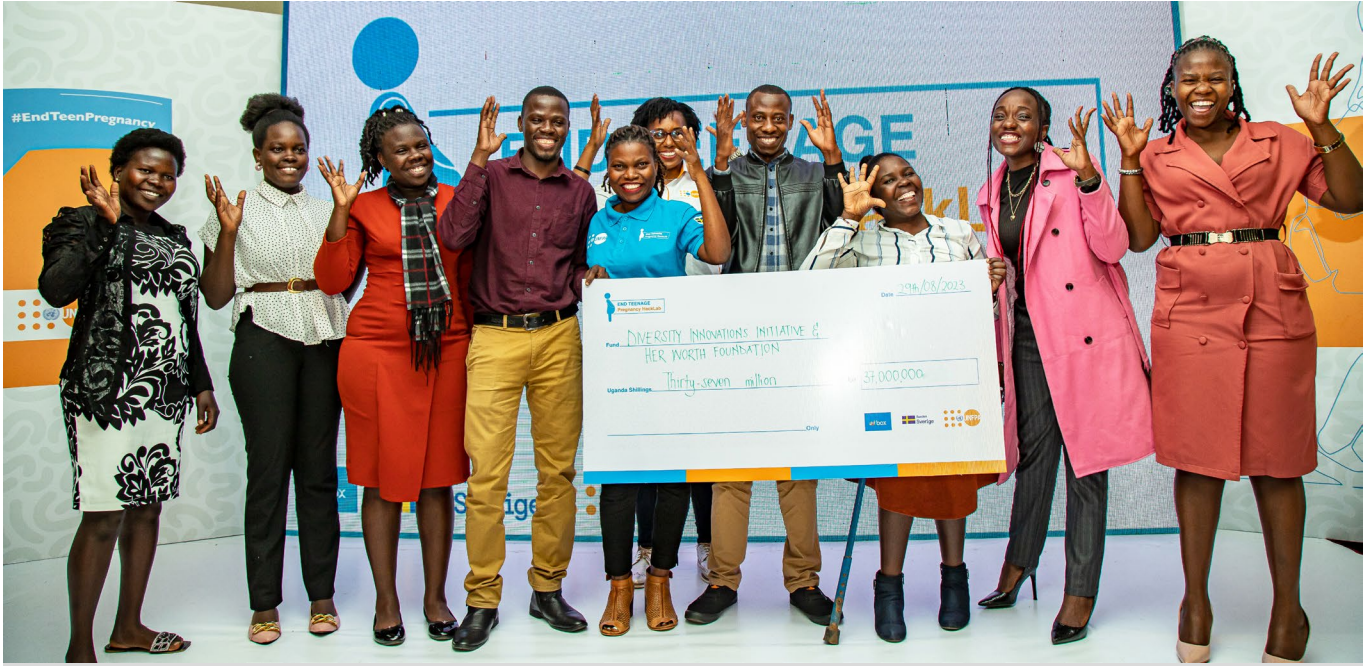
practices all by 2030, and ensuring protection and fulfillment of girls' rights. The HackLab targets young innovators who have aspiring solutions that, when taken to scale, can make impactful change for girls at risk of early pregnancy.

The HackLab call received 127 innovations from across the nation. Among these, 25 eligible innovations were chosen to undergo a 3-day boot camp that not only trained the young innovators based on business prospectus, but also enabled them to refine their ideas, priming them for further shortlisting. Ten selected Innovators showcased their solutions towards ending early and unintended pregnancies in Uganda at The End Teenage Pregnancy HackLab Pitch event.

Four youth innovation groups won seed funding worth US\$ 10,000 each and another US\$10,000 worth of technical business support including marketing, brand positioning, investment readiness among others.

Bulamu Bridge AI emerged the winners of the HackLab followed by Ndaba Hub, the Diversity Innovations Initiative formerly known as Disability Innovations, and Her Worth Foundation.

Bulamu Bridge AI developed an AI chatbot which has SRHR-oriented features including the menstrual period tracker, personalized contraceptive recommendations, STD/STI information and HIV/AIDS among others.



Innovators; Her Worth Foundation and Diversity Innovations Initiative Uganda celebrate after the End Teenage Pregnancy HackLab Pitch event at Kampala Serena Hotel ©UNFPA Uganda



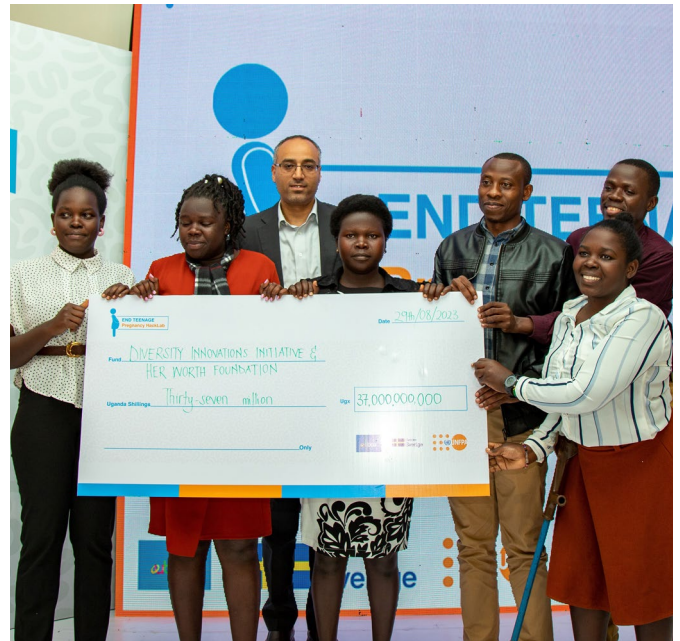
We seek to contribute highly to ending early and unintended teenage pregnancy with the US\$10,000 from UNFPA with support from Sweden to implement our innovative solutions in the 16 target districts in Uganda,” said Bridge AI innovators during the pitch event in Kampala Serena Hotel after emerging the winners of the grant.

Ndaba Innovation Hub aims to provide SRHR information access through comic animated books, creating Ndaba peer Clubs to hold teenage girls accountable in the Eastern Region districts of Amuria and Kaberamaido.

Hillary Odeke, one of the Ndaba Innovation Hub’s representatives, emphasized the significance of giving credible information for dealing with serious challenges and ensuring that girls make informed decisions about sexual reproductive health.

The high rates of teenage pregnancies in Uganda have been linked to factors such as limited access to reproductive health services, deeply entrenched cultural norms, childhood sexual abuse, high unmet needs for family planning, and child marriage among others.

UNFPA’s Strategic Plan 2022-2025 identified innovations as a key accelerator to meet tomorrow’s challenges and boost its impact, especially in addressing the needs of the population left furthest behind. It is with such HackLabs that we reimagine the delivery of our programmes and spearhead innovative solutions to accelerate progress for women and girls, by disrupting inequalities and removing the barriers between women and girls and their rights and choices.



UNFPA Deputy Representative, Mr. Daniel Alemu (third from left), with innovators; Diversity Innovations Initiative Uganda Her Worth Foundation after the End Teenage Pregnancy HackLab Pitch event ©UNFPA Uganda

The Uganda Demographic Health Surveys conducted in 2016, 2011, and 2006 consistently revealed that nearly 58.2% of women aged 20 to 49 began childbearing during their teenage years. Shockingly, the rate of teenage pregnancies in Uganda has remained stagnant at 25% for over a decade.

The innovative solutions presented by the youth during the pitch event, indicate UNFPA’s continued commitment to investing in young people to socially participate in creating solutions towards the much needed equal access to universal sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as zero early and unintended adolescent pregnancy across the country. 🌍

GIVING WOMEN REFUGEES HOPE AWAY FROM HOME

By Isabella Bwiire, UN Women



UN Women works with partners to provide psychosocial services ©UN Women Uganda

Amla (not real name) a refugee from DRC, has been settled in Nakivale Refugee Settlement since 2016. The 26-year-old mother of two children, lost both parents and known close family members due to war in DRC.

Life in the settlement became very hard for her since she had no family support and could not provide for her children's needs. She then transferred that anger, bitterness, and sadness to beating the children whenever they asked something from her.

Amla was not working, could hardly find a meal or income generating activity in the settlement, so she spent most of her nights awake, thinking of what the following day would look like to her and the children. She resorted to crying all night and day. She started thinking of ending her life.

Killing myself was the only way out, I had no one to share my problems with, after losing my parents and brothers, I remained alone and there was no one to support me and my children," says Amla.

In 2022, UN Women with funding from the Government of Japan partnered with Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO Uganda) to provide

mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services to refugees and members of the host community in South West, Isingiro and Yumbe, Adjumani districts. Through TPO, Amla was identified during community mobilization, screened, and enrolled for advanced psychosocial support through group psychotherapy termed Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

Amla and other members of the community were able to receive Mental Health and Psychosocial Support services. This enabled her improve resilience, psychosocial well-being, and positive coping mechanisms to come to terms with past traumatic experiences and possible future crises.

Amla was further supported individually to overcome the suicidal ideations. She attended all the 10 group therapeutic sessions and as indicated in her daily mood scale. Amla positively responded to the therapy; this was at the same time observed through her interactions with other group members but also the way she relates with her children and other family members.

"The sessions changed my mind, I am hopeful for the future, I know how to talk to my children as a parent, which wasn't the case before, I use to beat them even when they have done nothing," says Amla.

A start-up capital of UGX 1,830,000 was granted to Amla and her other group members upon graduation, to engage in income generating activities and enhance economic growth and improve on household income and sustain treatment outcomes.

The group became like a family, we do business together which is helping us support our families, we are also saving and in case one of us needs some money to support herself she can borrow from our group. We meet every week whereby besides discussing business progress, we check on how each of us is doing," added Amla. 🌈



Women, men and children line up for registration and processing at the transit Centre in Kisoro District ©UN Women Uganda

AMUDAT GBV SHELTER PROTECTING WOMEN AND GIRLS

By Joel Akena, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)



Amudat GBV Shelter ©UNDP Uganda

UNDP together with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and Action Aid International Uganda have opened the Amudat Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Shelter, constructed with support from the joint EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls.

The Amudat GBV Shelter will provide temporary safe spaces to women and girls who will seek refuge when their families and community fail to shield them from violence and violation of their human rights. This initiative has also established the Terego GBV Reception Centre which was launched in April 2022.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women are central to UNDP's global development agenda. The organization recognizes that sustainable human development hinges on the equal participation of women and girls alongside men and boys in their respective communities. However, the attainment of gender equality is affected by persistent cases of GBV that impact the wellbeing of women and girls and restrict their participation in economic activity.

The Uganda Police Force 2022 Annual Crime Report documented a slight increase of 0.94% in reported cases of domestic violence compared to the previous year. Additionally, Uganda's Demographic Health Survey 2016 revealed that 51% of women aged 15-49 had experienced physical violence. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, physical violence among women and girls aged 10-59 is highest in Amudat Town at 31% and sexual violence among girls aged 10-59 is highest in Amudat Town at 12% in 2022.

The Spotlight Initiative support in Amudat district has therefore been driven by the alarming surge in cases of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), domestic violence, teenage pregnancies, and child marriages throughout the country.

By supporting the construction of the shelters, UNDP seeks to strengthen government institutions that are critical in the provision of essential services to women and girls experiencing GBV.



One of the dormitories at the Amudat GBV Shelter ©UNDP Uganda

The Amudat District leadership, represented by the District Chairperson, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and Resident District Commissioner (RDC) expressed their pride, noting that the women and girls in this district now have a haven where they can stay. Beyond offering sanctuary during times of distress, the Amudat GBV Shelter will serve as a hub for disseminating information on sexual and reproductive health and rights to community members, facilitate referrals for GBV survivors to seek essential services and equipping them with life skills to enable them to strengthen livelihoods after they leave the GBV Shelter.

The Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development representative Ms. Christine Akumu emphasized the Government's commitment to establishing GBV shelters nationwide to act as comprehensive centres for victim rehabilitation and provision of legal aid. She added that through innovative partnerships, Uganda has now established 14 GBV shelters across the country.

Luta Shaba, the Coordinator of the Spotlight Initiative in Uganda, expressed enthusiasm for the launch of the GBV Shelter in Amudat district: "This shelter aims to combat various forms of violence against women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices. Women and girls in Amudat district who previously didn't have safe spaces when fleeing domestic violations, do have a home now."

Continued on page 7



TACKLING MALNUTRITION THROUGH FISH FARMING IN UGANDA

By Aidah Nanyonjo, World Food Programme



Samuel (yellow shirt) with fellow youth smoking fish ©WFP Uganda

In Karamoja, Uganda's north-east region, the lean season between March-July, leaves people struggling to find enough food to eat.

Last year, communities experienced failed harvests and an unusual long lean season.

Unpredictable weather patterns, combined with insecurity and the reverberating effects of COVID-19 have left the most vulnerable worse off.

Samuel Oluoch, 28, and his family struggled to find food during the 2022 lean season which left over 500,000 people in Karamoja and Teso regions hungry. His family was selected to participate in the fish farming project in his district, Karenga, Karamoja sub-region. He went from digging in other people's gardens to fish farming.

Two hundred families were part of the project. More than half of these families had a child diagnosed with acute malnutrition during the lean season. WFP and its implementing partner Andre Foods International taught families how to sustainably manage fishponds to ensure that they withstand environmental hazards.

WFP also provided training on basic financial literacy and marketing and connected them to the market. The project was integrated with vegetable growing near the fishponds, which enabled group members to use water from the neighbouring drainages and swamps to irrigate the vegetables.

Families sold fish to get extra income while using some of it for home consumption. With fish on their menu, Oluoch's 2-year-old son recovered from malnutrition, and is growing healthy.

"My wife and our four children can now have a nutritious balanced diet. Before this project, we used to depend on cabbages and pumpkin leaves but now we have fish added to our meal," Oluoch said. "I have also got skills in rearing fish, and learnt to preserve through smoking, and deep frying. I can now earn money and support my family."

In February 2022, the project was launched by stocking 20 fishponds at Didit fish farming site. A year later, communities can communally own fishponds, harvest and sell fish to nearby hotels and trading centres. The fishponds are expected to give a harvest of over 30,000 fish, totalling 12 Metric Tons. Plans are underway to scaleup the project to

Continued on page 8

Amudat GBV Shelter protecting Women and Girls

Beatrice Mugambe, UNDP Gender Advisor underscored UNDP's heartfelt gratitude to all EU-UN Spotlight Initiative partners for contributing to the construction of the GBV shelter. She appreciated the Amudat District Local Government for their substantial contributions in the form of land and provision of technical oversight during the construction phase.

The core objective of the Spotlight Initiative is the global eradication of violence against women and girls. It aims at generating a significant and sustainable positive impact on the lives of women and girls with a focus on vulnerable and marginalized communities. By addressing the underlying causes of violence and promoting gender equality, the initiative strives to create a world that is safer and more equitable for all.

Community Member Voices

"We are thankful to UNDP for the construction of this GBV shelter. As a district we really do appreciate and now know that the issues of domestic violence that have been high are going to reduce with time to come," said Limo Mark Okiror, Probation and Social Welfare Officer, Amudat District.

"I personally experienced gender-based violence growing up and I know how it feels to be unsafe. It warms my heart that now our girls are going to be safe in this newly constructed GBV Shelter," said Pennina Kyeruuto, Woman Councillor, Amudat District.



We have previously received a lot of support from UNDP in terms of trainings on vocational skills, and now for this GBV Shelter we say thank you because this is going to help us greatly as a community," said Poulina Chepkomon, Mother from Amudat District. 🌍

MALNUTRITION STILL A CHALLENGE FOR CHILDREN IN KARAMOJA

By Robert Mukasa, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)



Claudia Amongin (mother) and her baby, Rachele Ichumara at Moroto Regional Referral Hospital. The baby, who was suffering acute malnutrition is today recovering as hope has been reinstalled by the mother ©UNICEF Uganda

In Karamoja, a tragic portrait of human suffering unfolds. The world has classified it as one of its most destitute corners, where an overwhelming 61 percent of the 1.2 million people are condemned to live in absolute poverty, according to the Uganda Demographic and Health Survey of 2016.

Annually, about 1,014 children under five out of a target population of 22,740 are expected to be referred to the Nutrition ward at Moroto Referral Hospital with severe malnutrition, according to hospital statistics for the financial year 2022-2023.

The haunting reality of Karamoja's despair can scarcely be put into words; it's a sorrow that must be seen to be believed. Yet, one place where the grim statistic takes on a horrifying life of its own is the Nutrition ward, or Inpatient Therapeutic ward, at Moroto Referral Hospital.

In the eight-bed ward, you are met with a sight that wrenches the heart. Children under five years old, shadows of their former selves, lie lethargically on beds or rest in their mothers' laps. Their bodies are thin and wasted; their eyes are dull, tormented by relentless hunger. Swollen bellies, protruding bones, and peeling skin stand as silent testimony to a health that is deteriorating.

Tackling malnutrition through fish farming in Uganda

Continued from page 7



Samuel Trevor having lunch with his family members ©WFP Uganda

other parts of Karamoja, starting with the stocking of 70,000 fingerlings in Kaichom dam in Amudat District.

"Through fish farming, we looked for an alternative way to sustainably empower communities and address the underlying causes of malnutrition," Kennedy Owuor, Head of Karamoja WFP Area Office explains. "This project has enabled us build resilience while treating and preventing malnutrition," he adds.

The Karamoja Regional Coordinator for WFP's implementing partner Andre Foods International, Timothy Chewere said, "Out of the 110 households that were recruited for the first phase of this Asset creation and livelihood project, only two members are still receiving care for acute malnutrition and our goal is to have all of them out of malnutrition in a way that is sustainable."

Chewere said over 15 metric tonnes of fish are expected to be produced by the group from the first stocking. By addressing the underlying causes of malnutrition in Karamoja, which are inadequacy in diet and poverty, WFP provides a sustainable way communities can improve their income and diets.

With funding from the Government of Germany, WFP in Uganda is implementing nutrition-sensitive asset creation and livelihoods activities. In 2022, 846 beneficiaries received US\$26,133 to set up and manage 22 fishponds, four vegetable gardens, and 935 apiaries in Karamoja sub-region. 🌍

In the hospital compound and in the corners of the ward, the mothers sit, overwhelmed with despair. They fail to recognize these acute malnutrition symptoms, attributing them to mere fate or a bout of Malaria or Tuberculosis.

Outside the hospital, Karamoja continues to wither. Hunger and stunting are not mere words here; they are the very fabric of life. Food is not a pleasure but a dream out of reach for many.

Mothers struggle to make ends meet, barely affording a meal even once a day. At the nutrition ward, mothers are informed that malnutrition weakens their children's immune systems, making them susceptible to diseases like tuberculosis. Most of the babies at the ward had bouts of Malaria, Tuberculosis, and Oedema—the buildup of fluid in the body that causes the affected tissue to become swollen, all triggered by malnutrition.

In a joint interview with volunteer nutritionists at the nutrition ward; Peter Lokoru and Richard Odongo, startling statistics were shared about child malnutrition in a region with a catchment population of 1,245,600. Annually, the hospital, which is one of several in the region where children suffering from malnutrition are treated expects referrals for admission of about 1,0141 (4.6%) children under five, with an average of 30 admissions per month from the nine districts that constitute Karamoja.

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The peak of admissions usually occurs during mass screenings in the villages, which help identify malnutrition cases that may otherwise go unnoticed,” Lokoru, a volunteer nutritionist at the Moroto hospital nutrition ward.

Lokoru said the screenings have become vital because many mothers are unable to recognize that their children are malnourished until symptoms like body swelling, skin peeling, and wasting away appear. This misrecognition often leads to late referrals, making treatment more difficult. In July 2023 alone, four children died at the hospital because they were referred too late to the hospital.

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Lokoru said treating a child with severe malnutrition is very difficult. "Managing one very sick child suffering from malnutrition is equivalent to managing two children in the general ward," he said.

These children are usually treated using ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF), a peanut-based paste which is rich in protein and

contains specifically packaged medicine for treating malnutrition in children.

"It contains all the ingredients that the patient needs to recover," reads an RUTF dosage chart pinned in the hospital ward.

The situation is further complicated by parents or care givers who escape from hospital with their sick children to look for food, causing their sick children to miss medication and return in a worsened state. Food insecurity makes it challenging for families to afford a balanced diet rich in proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins, and greens, the nutritionists said.

UNICEF's interventions have been critical in addressing these issues. With funding from the European Union Commission for Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) and other donors, UNICEF supports the Government of Uganda to treat children suffering from malnutrition through mass screening and detection, referral, integrated outreach programmes, supplying RUTF, therapeutic milk and medicines and water, sanitation, and hygiene programmes.

In addition, UNICEF implemented a three-month, cash-transfer support project to families with children suffering from severe malnutrition through mobile money. Although project has ended, it played a significant role in managing malnutrition, Dr. Boaz Idole, a nutritionist at the hospital, said in an interview.


To ensure timely response to the treatment of malnutrition, UNICEF has also handed out transportation vouchers to facilitate the timely delivery of patients and admissions. These actions have not only saved lives but have also supported mothers who often must walk kilometres for medical help, said Dr. Idole.

Whereas 86 percent of the Ugandan population access healthcare within a five-kilometre radius, in Karamoja, only 17 percent of the population is within the recommended five-kilometre distance. Communities walk between 20 and 30 kilometres to access referral services, according to the Uganda Demographic and Health Survey of 2016.

The hospital has also struggled with relapses, according to Dr. Idole. Children who initially recovered, are falling back into malnutrition, and returning within three weeks. The facility must deal with three to 10 admissions daily, managing both moderate and severe cases of malnutrition.

Dr. Idole emphasised that UNICEF's transport vouchers have positively impacted both the communities and the hospital. Timely admissions have been critical in saving the lives of children.

Despite these efforts, challenges persist. Many children arrive in critical condition, making it difficult to save them. The provision of necessities such as hygiene, food, and care remain a struggle, emphasizing the continuous need for support from donors.

In 2022 alone, UNICEF with funding from donors supported the Government of Uganda to provide therapeutic nutritional support to over 77,000 children suffering from severe acute malnutrition in Uganda. 



WHO/KOICA PROJECT SAVING LIVES OF MOTHERS AND BABIES IN BUSOGA

By Allen Ssempe, World Health Organization (WHO)



A patient at Kamuli Hospital being referred to the next unit of care using an ambulance donated by the WHO, KOICA and Ministry of Health project ©WHO Uganda

In many parts of the Busoga region in Eastern Uganda, which has an estimated population of 8.3million people, it was common for *boda bodas* (motorcycles) to be used in transporting patients with medical emergencies requiring specialized care.

This included pregnant women with pregnancy – related complications requiring emergency specialized care being transported either from their homes to the entry level health centers or from lower-level health facilities to higher ones. This practice placed mothers and their unborn babies at the risk of being involved in road accidents, which are prevalent with *boda bodas*.

Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Health have addressed this challenge. Together, with funding from the Government of the Republic of Korea, they are implementing the Health System Strengthening to Improve Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health Services project in five districts of the region. The five districts are Buyende, Bugiri, Kamuli, Iganga, and Mayuge.

The five-year project focuses on strengthening the health system for improved health outcomes in the Busoga region with key interventions including the provision of an ambulance to each district. The ambulances are to facilitate the safe transportation of patients requiring emergency specialized care, including pregnant women.

Improving the referral system was critical in this region because some of the entry health centers are not equipped to handle complications such as excessive bleeding, and high blood

pressure before and after delivery. For babies, resuscitation facilities are not always readily available. Additionally, the distance between various levels of care can be challenging; sometimes as far as 60km from the nearest Health Centre II or III to the more specialized Health Centre IV or General Hospital. In two of the project districts that currently do not have General Hospitals, *boda bodas* were the easiest form of transport for emergency conditions despite the risks attached to them.



The risks were not just about the rough terrain. If one was to use a *boda boda*, they ought to have had money to pay for the fares. The health centers simply referred the patients and our job ended at that,” explains Dr. Fredrick Isabirye, the Buyende District Health Officer (DHO).

Dr. Geoffrey Kasaizaki, the Senior Medical Officer at Nankoma Health Centre IV in Bugiri District recounts the many mothers and their babies lost in transit from the health facility to the hospital where they had been referred before the district received an ambulance.

With the ambulances in place, coordination has been streamlined. The health centers make a call to the facilities where the patients are being referred to allow for prior preparation for their arrival. In most cases, the ambulance has a nurse to provide any care that may be needed along the way. The drivers have also been trained in emergency specialized care so by and large, the risks of losing mothers and babies have been duly mitigated. 🌍

EBOLA RESPONSE: IOM HANDS OVER EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES WORTH \$600,000

By Abubaker Mayemba, International Organization for Migration (IOM)



State Minister for Health, Hon. Anifa Bangirana Kawooya and IOM Uganda Chief of Mission, Mr. Sanusi Tejan Savage, flag off the trucks to deliver the donated items to various ports of entry ©IOM Uganda

Following last year's outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in Uganda, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) recently handed over an assortment of supplies and equipment to the Government, to boost disease surveillance and response at border points.

The items were procured under IOM's EVD Response project at about US \$600,000, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the World Health Organization (WHO). They were formally presented by IOM Uganda Chief of Mission Sanusi Tejan savage to Hon. Anifa Bangirana Kawooya, the state minister for Health (General Duties).

The donation list included prefabricated buildings and isolation tents, water tanks, thermo-scanners to aid in entry and exit screening, personal protective equipment such as gloves, gumboots, disposable gowns, and masks. Others were infection prevention and control items such as sanitizer, soap, disinfectants, thermometers, handwashing stations, and pedal waste bins. To support risk communication and data management, the project also procured flat TV screens, advertising kiosks, audio-visual speakers, and laptop computers, among other items.

In September 2022, Uganda declared an outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in the central district of Mubende, which quickly spread to neighbouring Kassanda. Under its Migration Health division, IOM was among the partners that supported the Ebola response, targeting mobile populations and ports of entry (POEs) to help contain the outbreak within the epicenter and within Uganda. The country was declared free of Ebola four months later, after 143 confirmed cases and 55 deaths. IOM then worked with the Ministry of Health and local authorities

on post-EVD recovery interventions in affected communities as well as 23 border posts and 16 districts.

Speaking at the handover ceremony at the Ministry of Health, IOM Chief of Mission Savage said: "The supplies being handed over today represent a concrete manifestation of IOM's dedication to supporting communities in their journey towards healing, rebuilding, and better preparedness," Savage said. "They [supplies] reflect our collective determination to not only rebuild infrastructure but also to strengthen healthcare systems, and foster community resilience."

The event was witnessed by officials from the Ministry of Health and the beneficiary districts/ POEs, including Isingiro, Mpondwe, Kyotera, Elegu, Bundibugyo, Busia, and Malaba.

While accepting the donation, State Minister Kawooya noted that increased human travel has come with a heightened risk of spreading infectious diseases across borders.

"In the past Uganda has experienced the importation of Ebola in 2019, pneumonic plague in 2019, COVID-19 in 2020 and Measles in 2023. This highlights the importance of having the capacity to detect and respond to public health threats at points of entry," Kawooya said. 🌍

HARNESSING COMMUNITY HEALTH, SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND RESILIENCE SAFE SPACES FOR EFFECTIVE EBOLA PREVENTION, RESPONSE AND RECOVERY The case of grassroots Female Sex Workers CHLEGs Model in Mubende, Kassanda, Masaka, Kampala and Wakiso

By Caroline Magambo, The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and Alliance of Women Advocating for Change (AWAC)



Some of the CHLEG members from the Tweyambe and Never give up Group taking a picture with UNAIDS Senior Regional Adviser for Humanitarian work, Ms. Charlotte Fiercer ©UNAIDS Uganda

On January 11, 2023, Uganda was declared Ebola-free. The citizenry was called to remain vigilant to avoid new infections, deal with the socio-economic impacts of the outbreak, end stigma, and rehabilitate and re-integrate survivors.

Following the declaration, reports still indicated that the after-effects were enormous and hugely impacted the lives of the people living in the districts that were affected. Besides loss of lives, the Ebola outbreak caused treatment and service interruption, raise in violence, antagonizing of economic activities, stigma, psychological distress and systemic exclusion among the already marginalized and at-risk communities including Female Sex Workers and People living with HIV.

“People moved with public speakers telling people not to come close to us. As a result, the community including our family members discriminated us and would not come to our homes,” noted Ssemakula* one of the survivors.

Building on years of responding to HIV, UNAIDS established a consortium of three community organisations - Alliance of Women Advocating for Change (AWAC) for Female Sex Workers, Uganda Neddagala N’obuwangwa Bwaffe (UNNB) for Traditional Healers and the National Forum of People Living with HIV/AIDS Networks in Uganda (NAFOPHANU) - to work alongside the Ministry of Health for more effective risk communication and engagement of affected communities.

“We were able to tap into existing community-led approaches for HIV and integrate the Ebola response, to a great success,” said Jacqueline Makokha, UNAIDS Country Director. “As part of the post Ebola recovery plan, UNAIDS supported communities to take stock of what could have been done better and use the learnings to strengthen preparedness,” noted Makokha.

The three consortium members played a remarkable role in supporting their target populations as frontliners in the Ebola affected districts of Mubende, Kassanda, Masaka, Kampala and Wakiso.

As a result, a community-led innovative model - the Community Health and Livelihoods Enhancement Groups (CHLEGs) was initiated by the Alliance of Women Advocating for Change as a mechanism to empower sex workers economically to be in position to override the effects of Ebola and any future pandemics and epidemics. The CHLEGs, unlike usual VSLAs, has a component on health promotion and sensitization on health issues during the CHLEG gatherings.

Female Sex Workers (FSWs) are often marginalized, stigmatized and labeled mere recipients/beneficiaries of services and vectors of pandemics and epidemics such as Ebola; compromising their potential and abilities to work as partners in prevention and response interventions. This also makes it difficult for them to access health-care and preventive services amidst such exclusion.

Through their networks and relationships with clients, Female Sex Workers disseminated vital information about Ebola prevention and encouraged safe practices forming a powerful network for Ebola prevention and response. They provided crucial information and



Tweyambe GHLEG leaders with AWAC Ebola Community Response Team ©UNAIDS Uganda

education to their hotspot communities, identified and referred suspected cases, and supported individuals and families affected by Ebola.

AWAC also used CHLEGs, as a platform for providing a cocktail of health and socio-economic support. Besides the triple ripple effect of increasing case finding, linkage and retention in HIV and Sexual Reproductive Health Services for female sex workers, CHLEGs has played a significant role in helping the female sex workers discover their potential and alternative livelihood skills.

Five Community Health and Livelihood Enhancement Groups comprising of 20-30 members each were formed. The members acquired knowledge and skills on financial prudence, leadership, team building and tailoring. This emanated self-employment for the sex workers, extra opportunities to earn a living and support their children and families. They were also less likely to participate in risky business options as coping mechanisms in the post Ebola, and recovery period.

This approach also presented an opportunity to call for public investments and blended financing mechanisms into strengthening grassroots community structures, socioeconomic resilience and coordination among marginalized communities for future epidemic responses to enhance adherence to prevention measures and create a sense of shared responsibility and collective action in the fight against epidemics.

“The situation was bad, but I had to take the risk and leave everything to God. However, AWAC came in handy. We established small groups and were taught on savings, and alternative sources of income such that when other epidemics, pandemics and public health emergencies come up, we will be able to bounce back,” noted one of the sex workers who attended the trainings.

Given their vulnerability during the public health emergencies, the community-based response to the Ebola epidemic was an opportunity for Female Sex Worker CHLEGs to present their social economic challenges to the district leadership.

“I am happy to see people who are called sex workers (Baneko). I used to hear about them, speak and fight for their rights through our programmes all the time but I had never got an opportunity to meet with them physically and this has made me very happy,” said Ms. Rosemary Byabasajja, former Resident District Commissioner of Mubende District. “I want your leaders to come to my office for further discussions,” she added.

Overall, the engagement of communities as partners in the Ebola prevention and response was a critical factor in the success of the response.

Through working closely with affected communities such as FSWs survivors and those who suffered the epidemic’s impact, AWAC was able to build an effective and strong rapport with district leaderships through District Community Development Officers, Resident

District Commissioners, and Commercial District Officers to forge a way forward for building post Ebola social economic resilient and sustainable response strategies that are tailored to the needs and concerns of grassroots Female Sex Workers.

As a result of the engagement with the local government leadership, two newly established female sex workers CHLEGs embarked on the process of registering with the Mubende District Local Government to formalize their existence and offered the municipal council hall as venue for the weekly CHLEGs meetings. Additionally, the Resident District Commissioner made an astounding commitment to give ten (10) slots every six months for FSWs to be empowered through the Zonal industrial hub project under the Presidential Initiative on Skilling Uganda Programme.

“It never occurred to me that sex workers who were stigmatized and excluded by leaders and community members can be hosted in such a powerful hall where big people sit to discuss important issues,” exclaimed one of the CHLEG members. “I am now a VIP with permission to enter any big office here and meet in the municipal hall every week to discuss our group saving, loan and health issues free of charge,” she added.

To effectively harness the potential of grassroots communities of female sex workers, it is important to provide them with the necessary training with (accurate and appropriate information), resources, and support. This includes access to personal protective equipment, training on infection prevention and control, and support for income generation activities to address the social economic shocks that come with public health emergencies. The trained female sex workers during the Ebola response testified on how the sensitization engagements were of huge benefit to them, their clients and the community.

“When I learnt that a male Ebola survivor’s semen can contain Ebola up to a year, I took using condoms serious. I used to accept clients with more money for no condom. But after that training, we trained other sex workers at the hotspots about it and now we get condoms every week at the hotspots to ensure we are all safe. Now, no sex worker allows clients or deals of high pay for no condom because we have to raise our children, we don’t want to die of Ebola and other diseases,” said FSW in Mubende District. 🌍



UNITING AGAINST BULLYING: BUSIA DISTRICT'S SENIOR EDUCATORS AND LEADERS TAKE A STAND

By Vincent Ogal, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)



Learners from Nanyuma Primary School participate in one of the orientation sessions at the school ©UNESCO Uganda

Ministry of Education and Sports with support from UNESCO organised school-level activities in the district of Busia responding to the issue of violence against children in schools. The event was held from 17 to 21 July 2023.

The objectives of the activity were to strengthen the capacity of teachers, district stakeholders, and school leaders to respond to all forms of violence against children including bullying in schools in Busia District. Additionally, the event was organised to empower participants with the knowledge and skills on how to promote gender in schools and how to end Violence against Children in schools, orient participants on their roles and responsibilities at the school level and disseminate the policies and guidelines of the Ministry of Education and Sports.

Over 130 education managers and 400 learners from Busia District were oriented by the Ministry of Education and Sports as part of the interventions aimed at preventing violence against all children in schools.

In Uganda, the right to education is a fundamental human right and every individual irrespective of age, gender, nationality, ethnicity, religion, political affiliation or disability is entitled to education. In demonstration of this commitment of fostering safe and nurturing learning environments, senior women and men teachers, club patrons, members of the senior management committee and learners benefited from an orientation session on the prevention of bullying and all forms of violence in schools.

The face-to-face training for school managers and learners recognized the pivotal role that senior educators and school leaders play in shaping the school's culture and ensuring the well-being of students.

The event commenced with insightful presentations on the various forms of bullying and violence that can occur in schools. The stakeholders were also oriented on a number of resource materials including the reporting, tracking, referral and response guidelines on violence against children in schools, Guidelines on Prevention and Management of Teenage Pregnancy in School Settings, the roles and responsibilities of Senior Women and Men Teachers, as well as the formation, management and strengthening of school clubs, among many other resources. The events were facilitated by officials from the Ministry of Education and Sports.

The District Education Officer Busia, Ms. Harriet Mwesigwa emphasized the importance of recognizing the different parental approaches and highlighted the need for continuous training for teachers who for most periods play the parental role to the learners as they progress through education.



Teaching of children about their rights and encouraging them to appreciate themselves is critical in their upbringing," said Ms. Mwesigwa.

She added that, "by engaging senior educators and leaders, we (the institutions) are taking concrete steps towards eradicating bullying and violence from our schools."



UN ENTEBBE OPENS DOORS TO REFUGEE MARKET VENDORS

By Mark Kaheru, United Nations Regional Service Centre Entebbe (RSCE)



A vendor sells her products to UN staff in Entebbe at the recent World Refugee Day Market at the Regional Service Centre Entebbe ©RSCE

The United Nations in Entebbe accommodates foot traffic of over 800 people a day. This number is inclusive of UN staff members, contractors and suppliers and does not take into consideration visitors and troops and in-transit personnel.

This makes the UN campus in Entebbe one of the most significant employers in Entebbe and, in turn, one of the largest contributors to the local economy.

To further enhance the contribution to the local economy, the United Nations in Entebbe hosts a weekly Farmer's Market for local vendors to sell their produce and goods to the population that occupies the campus.

The market is set up and managed by the Welfare Committee. They host up to thirteen (13) vendors every Thursday. The market is not only set up to bring fresh produce and goods closer but are also an opportunity to uplift the lives of the vendors.

James Otim, Areg Agro Foods is one of the first vendors that joined the initiative. James grows his produce in Namulanda and Luweero utilizing organic methods which he shares with his group of out growers.



We started selling in our local market and our earnings were low. It was difficult to pay our employees because most of our sales were made on credit. Here at the UN Base, we are able to generate much more revenue, and this has benefitted us all," says James.

James lost his father during the war when he was only three (3) months old and was raised by his mother and grandfather who taught him how to farm. Further tragedy struck when his sister lost her husband at an early age, and he was then tasked to look after her children as well as his own.

Uniting Against Bullying: Busia District's Senior Educators and Leaders Take a Stand



A section of teachers who benefited from the training ©UNESCO Uganda

This intervention is part of the wider effort towards the operationalize the Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC), the government's National Child Policy (2020), and the National Strategic Plan on Elimination of Violence against Children. Similar initiatives have already been held in Soroti District.



Martha Gimbo, Senior Woman's Teacher Wanda Primary School said, "the opportunity to participate in this event has enabled me to learn a lot of approaches from both my fellow teachers and facilitators on how to handle learners. I therefore intend to embark on undertaking guidance and counselling sessions for my learners."

Moses Wafula, a teacher at Dabani Girls Primary School, said, "the key learning points that I picked from this training is relevance of health committees. As I go back to my duty station, I commit to establishing health club, human rights clubs and provide equal opportunities to my learners."

“It was very difficult at first but the agribusiness and the Farmer’s Market here in Entebbe have made everything possible. I can provide high quality healthcare, education, and a comfortable home to my children and the six (6) orphans I take care of. This has an impact on my neighbors and is the inspiration to continue operating the business,” he adds.

In June 2023, to commemorate the World Refugee Day, the RSCE hosted two refugee vendors to a market day where they had an opportunity to sell their merchandise and to interact with UN Entebbe staff and share their stories.

The success of this interaction has led to the expansion of the Farmer’s Market concept by introducing a Monthly Arts and Craft Market that will host vendors from the refugee community. The aim of this market is to uplift the livelihoods of the refugees and to educate the UN colleagues on issues surrounding refugees in order to garner support.

Melissa Zakasimba Kubota, a refugee from Democratic Republic of Congo has been in Uganda for the last 23 years. She is from a family of 11 refugees who are all in Uganda engaged in various economic activities.

She has recently opened her own textile shop called Lazaks African Creation on Salaama Road in Kampala and was part of the 2nd Refugee Market Day at the RSCE.

“

The response has been very good. People like what we have and even if they do not buy, they promise and they take our contacts. We hope this can be more regular so we can tap into this new market and show UN staff what we have to offer,” she says.

Melissa is one of three refugees that came to RSCE to sell their wares, but she tells us that they operate as a collective in that when they are invited to market days to sell, they also support their fellow refugees by carrying along their products and help sell them.

“

The last time you had a market here, I did not come but my friend Tabu brought some of my things and they sold out. I was very happy and so I have also brought for my friends.” She added.

Melissa does not only make textile products, but she also teaches refugees women and vulnerable women how to do so through the Wamusho Group in Katwe.

Pontso Tsoeunyane, Welfare Officer at the RSCE says “Every time you spend your shillings at the farmer’s or the refugee’s market, you are planting a seed and assisting in the realization of someone else’s dream. We remain devoted to developing solid relationships with the local communities.”

This year’s theme for 21 September, the International Day of Peace is Actions for Peace: Our Ambition for the #GlobalGoals.

It is a call to action that recognizes our individual and collective responsibility to foster peace. Fostering peace contributes to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals will create a culture of peace for all.

RSCE joins in the #ActNow Challenge through Actions for a better economy by hosting these markets and supporting the local economy. 🌍



James Otim (R) selling his organic produce at the Thursday Farmer’s Market held at the UN Campus in Entebbe ©RSCE

ABOUT RSCE:

The RSCE is the flagship Service Centre for the UN Secretariat and provides administrative, logistics and ICT services to 17 UN missions in Africa. The RSCE manages more than \$5bn of UN Secretariat resources, and processes nearly 66,000 commercial vendors’ invoices.



REAPING THE REWARDS OF DATA: TOWARDS A NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR UGANDA

By Enock Wanderema, UN Global Pulse Uganda (UNGP)



An illustration showing an imaginary eco-friendly tourism industry due to a proper data use culture ©UN Global Pulse Uganda

Imagine a thriving, eco-friendly tourism industry, where standardised data revolutionises the way national tourist agents operate. With effortless precision, they recommend sought-after attractions to visitors, while facilitating effective budget allocation and offering evidence-based ideas to investors.

At the same time, other stakeholders would have access to reliable and timely data that could inform their planning and forecasting decisions. This harmonious blend of personalised experiences and data-driven insights develops a landscape of sustainable socio-economic growth.

In a bid to harness the power of data, Uganda is set to become one of the pioneers in Africa by developing a comprehensive National Data Strategy (NDS). Collaborating with UN Global Pulse Uganda (UNGP) and UNDP, the Ministry of ICT and National Guidance (MoICT&NG) seeks to revolutionise national service delivery, optimising benefits for all citizens.

The strategy is an instrument that would set out the opportunities, challenges, priorities, and actions for optimal data use across different sectors and domains of the country. By harnessing the power of data, Uganda aims to boost its economy sustainably, becoming only the third African nation after Nigeria and Senegal to conceive such an initiative.

Crucial to the strategy's success is a multi-stakeholder approach involving government bodies, academia, private sectors, and the public. The strategy intends to optimise data management, encompassing both digital and non-digital data, to promote responsible and ethical data sharing and usage.

Dr. Martin Mubangizi, Head of UNGP emphasised the unprecedented volume of data available in the modern world. He highlighted that the strategy would help make more informed decisions by utilising the digital footprints left by individuals, potentially transforming areas such as agriculture, human capital development, digital services, trade, logistics, urbanisation, and resource management.

Currently, data exists in silos, and in some cases inaccessible due to formats; there is no comprehensive data governance framework and other enablers, including inadequate capacity to fully utilise the data. The strategy would rectify this by promoting data sharing across sectors, thereby reducing redundant data disclosure.

The strategy matures with built-in principles ensuring responsible data use, "Principle One is about integrity and ethics and there are other principles covering protection, security, transparency and trust," notes Dr. Mubangizi. The strategy envisions collaboration not only within Uganda but also internationally, establishing standards and guidelines for cross-border data handling.

Uganda's forward-looking approach has its roots in the exploration of Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies since 2019, supported by UNGP, GIZ, and the Hewlett Foundation.

The strategy's foundations were laid during a co-creation workshop that gathered key national representatives from different sectors. Urgency to the compilation of the strategy has been underlined by the need for the strategy to inform the development of the fourth National Development Plan of 2025/26 - 2029/30.

As the strategy evolves, the emphasis remains on inclusivity, coordination and synergetic efforts among stakeholders.

While some citizens express concerns about surveillance and privacy, proponents underline the potential for positive transformation. For reassurance, the strategy "Will complement the existing data protection law to ensure ethical data use and foster public engagement by seeking input from citizens, civil society organisations, and privacy advocates," says Ms. Irene Karungi Sekitoleko — Senior ICT Infrastructure Engineer at the MoICT&NG.

Uganda's path towards a data-driven future is bold and ambitious, driven by a belief in its potential to spur socio-economic growth while upholding ethical standards. With a collaborative approach and a focus on responsible data usage, the strategy seeks to unlock Uganda's full potential on the global stage. 🌍



ENVIRONMENT CONSERVATION: UN WOMEN, ABSA BANK AND MY TREE INITIATIVE LAUNCH A PROGRAMME TO ENGAGE 80,000 STUDENTS

By Ismael Tamale, My Tree Initiative and Youth Coalition for SDGs



Absa Bank Uganda's Managing Director, Mr. Mumba Kalifungwa holding seedling (red shirt) plants a tree as UN Women Representative, Dr. Paulina Chiwangu (standing left) looks on ©My Tree Initiative

UN Women in Uganda, Absa Bank and My Tree Initiative have forged a groundbreaking partnership embarking on a united front against climate change through an innovative schools' greening programme that will engage up to 80,000 students from 160 primary and secondary schools to ensure the survival and growth of 160,000 trees.

Through this collaboration, the entities aim to not only bolster the nation's green cover but also set a commendable precedent for corporate-social collaborations in the realm of ecological conservation, benefiting regions of five districts; Kampala, Wakiso, Mukono, Mityana and Mubende.

The programme will entail engaging school staff, students, parents and volunteers in ongoing tree care activities; collaborating with school authorities to incorporate tree-related topics into their curriculum and conducting workshops, seminars, and hands-on activities to educate students about the importance of trees and their role in the ecosystem.

The declaration was officially unveiled during a ceremony hosted at Highland Secondary School in Kisaasi, Kampala on 8 August 2023. At this event, partners, volunteers and students of various schools including St. Joseph's Girls SSS Nsambya, planted 2,000 trees and pledged to replicate this figure within each of the selected schools by December 2023.

Speaking during the ceremony, Dr. Paulina Chiwangu, the UN Women Country Representative to Uganda hailed Absa for the Initiative saying it is timely. Dr. Chiwangu, a Tanzanian said she left

Uganda in 2015, but when she returned to the Country last year, she noticed that the weather was not as good as it was when she left.

The UN in Uganda is committed to take actionable steps to conserve Uganda's natural resources and towards achieving SDG 13, which is taking urgent climate action. We have seen changes, the rising temperatures, landslides, floods and drought which I did not see when I was in this beautiful country 10 years ago. So it (global warming) is happening. It is not a story," she said.

Absa Bank Uganda's Managing Director, Mr. Mumba Kalifungwa, said, "as a pan-African bank, Absa Bank Uganda has a strong belief in the potential of the youth to drive change and shape the future. By encouraging young people to plant trees, we are incorporating within them a culture of responsibility towards and care for the environment, which will reap tremendous benefits for their communities and the country as a whole."

According to Global Forest Watch, from 2001 to 2022, Uganda lost over one million hectares of tree cover, equivalent to a 13% decrease in tree cover, and 463 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions in 2022.

Hon. General Edward Katumba Wamala, Minister of Works and Transport and Patron of MyTree Initiative Organisation emphasized the need for more individuals and institutions of the public to join the drive to restore Uganda's dwindling tree cover.

"Uganda has been blessed with a beautiful natural environment, but the rate at which we are defiling it is going to be detrimental to

Continued on page 19



HARMONIZING LIVES: ILO PROMOTES SOCIAL COHESION AMONG REFUGEES AND HOSTS IN UGANDA

By Agatha Nasikiwa Berya, International Labour Organization (ILO)



The Refugee Global Talent dance group youth members at the Nakivale Refugee Settlement, Isingiro District, Southwest Uganda showcase their talents with their fellow artists. Together with other entertainers, the youth group work together to advocate the promotion of social cohesion and Peaceful through art ©ILO Uganda

About PROSPECTS: Partnership for improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities (PROSPECTS) is a unique four-year partnership funded by the Government of the Netherlands that brings together the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNHCR, UNICEF and the World Bank to facilitate transitioning from humanitarian to development centered assistance, which can address long-term challenges and needs of the host and refugee communities and accelerate sustainable solutions to build a more inclusive, cohesive, and productive society.

As the refugee situation becomes protracted, there is growing international interest and concern about the impact that these displacement situations have on social cohesion. Stretched local resources and perceived competition among communities, often become the point of conflicts in such situations.

In Uganda, the ILO, UN's agency for the world of work, is thus implementing a series of social cohesion initiatives through PROSPECTS programme.

On the Southwest of Uganda in the Nakivale Refugee Settlement in Isingiro District, refugees from the Republic of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Rwanda live together with the Ugandans. The ILO collaborates closely with the host and refugee communities in this settlement to strengthen skill development, access to employment and social protection.

EMPLOYMENT CENTERS TURNED INTO CULTURAL CENTERS

Through PROSPECTS, the ILO has established employment service centers in Nakivale, supporting youth to prepare for accessing jobs and market relevant skills. The ILO partnered with UNLEASHED, a refugee youth led organization in Nakivale and Refugee Global Talent to upgrade these centers to "Youth Centers" as a part of a social cohesion initiative.

Environment conservation: Un Aomen, Absa Bank and my tree initiative launch a programme to engage 80,000 students



Absa Bank Uganda's Managing Director, Mr. Mumba Kalifungwa (red shirt) and Wamala, Minister of Works and Transport and Hon. General Edward Katumba (right) launch the tree planting programme ©My Tree Initiative



Students of Highland Secondary School in Kisaasi, Kampala on launch the tree planting programme 8 August 2023 ©My Tree Initiative

our livelihoods in the long run and deprive future generations of the opportunity to enjoy their home country. I therefore, call upon more people and organisations in the private sector to join this noble cause for the good of our nation and its people," he said.

Mr. Ashraf Enjer, the Executive Director at My Tree Initiative, a Ugandan youth-founded non-profit Organisation dedicated to planting, protecting and promoting trees, said, "the primary objective of the MTI Schools Greening Programme is to promote sustainability in educational institutions, supplement students' diet and engage them in hands on learning experiences, which is why we are recruiting almost 80,000 primary and secondary school students through this drive that they develop a love for their natural environment."

Partner Institutions on this programme include; National Forestry Authority, Case Hospital, Uganda Red Cross Society, Uganda Peoples Defence Forces, FAO, Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Water and Environment, GCIC, Buganda Kingdom, Uganda Broadcasting Corporation, Fairway Hotel and Pepsi Uganda. 🌍

At these Centers, refugees and host community youth from all walks of life converged to socialize, rehearse, and have fun while expressing their talents through music, dance, and drama. Their frequent engagements at the centers have become transformative while promoting social cohesion and peaceful coexistence among refugees and the Ugandan Nationals.

On becoming popular, the Youth Centers, introduced ILO's toolkit on Social Cohesion. Victor Mafigi Turatsinze, founder of UNLEASHED and social cohesion master trainer mentioned, "The partnership with Refugee Global Talent was the most successful in disseminating social cohesion training in Nakivale. The youth easily bonded over what they enjoy doing most and thus learned more than they could from the classroom training sessions."



The youth center has kept my dream of becoming a prominent singer and fashion designer alive. Through these gatherings I have learnt a lot and will continue to learn. Before, I used to isolate myself due to the language barrier, but I am now able to speak three languages," said Lesly Ndikumana, a 17-year-old refugee from Burundi.

For 27-year-old Zeal Innocent, an aspiring Ugandan musician and songwriter, attending social cohesion classes helped him overcome the fear he had of interacting with refugees and can now freely collaborate with them on music, photography, and videography projects.

Social cohesion trainings by UNLEASHED and Refugee Global Talent reached 224 artists from eleven groups including – musicians, graphic artists, models and dancers from Nakivale.

Bahati Buhendwa, a 23-year-old Congolese refugee and founder of Refugee Global Talent underwent the training and he revealed; "I was lucky to get selected as one of the community leaders to attend the social cohesion training. The training was a true revelation as I was able to learn about the causes of conflict in society, how to mitigate them and in case they happen, how to overcome them. And as an aspiring musician, I decided to use entertainment to impact society and promote social cohesion.

SOCIAL COHESION THROUGH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and business development training institutions are playing a critical role in developing and implementing training packages on social cohesion and peaceful co-existence.

The social cohesion programme equips apprenticeship training instructors with mental health and psycho-social support skills. It helps them to effectively engage with the refugees and host community members coming from diverse background and underline the importance of inclusive and safe workplaces.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT THROUGH ILO SOCIAL COHESION TOOLKIT

By simultaneously enhancing economic prospects, inter-group contact, and by addressing grievances of the most vulnerable communities, the ILO's Skills and Employability Branch together with the Coordination Unit for Peace and Resilience (CSPR) and under the Partnership for improving prospects for host communities and forcibly displaced persons (PROSPECTS), developed and piloted a new guide to foster the peace responsive role TVET plays in fragile settings, known as the ILO took Kit.

Local refugee led youth organizations adapted ILO's social cohesion training kits and are promoting peaceful co-existence through various initiatives in Nakivale.

Stand for Change in Unity and UNLEASHED rolled out the toolkit in Nakivale Refugee Settlement targeting refugee and host community youth leaders of Congolese, Rwandan, Burundian and Ugandan nationality. Seventy-eight refugees and host communities' members participated in sports, music dance and drama activities following the roll out toolkit.


UNLEASHED trained football coaches, referees, captains, and committee members of the Nakivale Football Association using the ILO Toolkit. In response, a football tournament was organized in 2022 to bring together different communities and promote peace. The football tournament involved eighteen teams (16 male teams and two female teams) registered with Nakivale Football Association and held 17 football matches graced by the Office of Prime Minister (OPM) and 2,500 community members.

UNLEASHED together with Refugee Global Talent organized a Refugee Art Festival in 2019. It had the theme; "Say No to Xenophobia" and the festival shone a light to the increasing xenophobic attacks in South Africa. The festival underlined the need for timely addressal of these issues within the community and used art and entertainment to sensitize the Nakivale community.

SOCIAL COHESION TO STRENGTHEN BUSINESSES.

Stand for Change employed a Village Saving and Loan Association (VLSA) approach and formed 10 VLSA groups which have generated a portfolio of UGX 26 million (US\$7,000) in a period of one year. VLSA members have access to credit for their small businesses and appreciate one another.

Even through the Refugee Art Festival, fifty-six artists from various fields got a chance to perform and received awards in front of an audience of over 2,000 people, which also presented an economic opportunity to local businesses.

Through the fusion of skill development, creative expression, and community engagement, the initiative has cultivated a vibrant atmosphere of social cohesion and understanding among refugees and their Ugandan hosts. By harnessing the power of shared passions, this initiative is not only fostering peaceful coexistence but also paving the way for a more harmonious and prosperous future for all involved. 



PEOPLE'S SDGs FESTIVAL THRILLS KAMPALA

By Michael Wangusa, UN Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO)



Pallaso performing at the People's SDGs Festival at Kampala City Council Authority (KCCA) Grounds, Lugogo on 10 August 2023 ©SDG Secretariat

The fun filled Kampala People's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Festival 2023 under the theme *"Harnessing Citizens' Potential: Fostering Ownership, Expression, Enjoyment, and Innovation for SDGs"* was held on 10 and 11 August 2023.

The festival was organised by the SDG Secretariat at the Office of the Prime Minister in partnership with the Uganda National NGO Forum, UN Resident Coordinator's Office and Kampala City Council Authority (KCCA) with funding from the Royal Danish Embassy. The event was graced by the participation of the Minister of General Duties responsible for SDGs, Rt. Hon. Justine Kasule Lumumba; UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Susan Namondo; Ambassador of Denmark to Uganda, H.E. Ms. Signe Winding Albjerg; Executive Director Uganda National NGO Forum Executive Director, Dr. Moses Isooba; Executive Director KCCA, Ms. Dorothy Kisaka.

The festival began with a marching procession with the police band from Kololo Ceremonial Grounds to KCCA Grounds in Lugogo. Led by the skaters, the aim of the procession which marched a distance of three kilometres, was to raise awareness about the SDGs.

The festival presented Kampala residents with the opportunity to learn more about the SDGs and to contribute views on how to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs. The festival was also a lead-up activity to the SDGs Summit, which will be held ahead of the UN General Assembly in New York in September. The summit will be attended by World Leaders will focus on reviewing progress made towards the achievement of the SDGs at the halfway point.

The Agenda 2030 and the SDGs are a blueprint for a better world, where poverty is eradicated, inequalities are diminished, and environmental sustainability is safeguarded. The SDGs are incorporated in the commitments of Uganda's third National Development Plan (NDP III). Achieving these ambitious goals cannot rest solely on the shoulders of governments, and partners institutions. It is the collective effort by everyone that holds the key to unlocking the true power of the SDGs. A critical step in achieving this is through raising awareness about the SDGs, and that is why the Kampala SDGs Festival was particularly important.

In her remarks UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Susan Namondo noted that, "while the Government has various initiatives supporting job creation and livelihoods especially for the youth, including the Parish Development Model (PDM), the Youth Livelihood programmes and 'Emyooga', more efforts and innovations are needed to overcome the challenges. The lack of access to decent jobs is a global problem, and therefore solutions proposed by young people in Uganda can contribute to global solutions."

During the festival members of the public of all walks of life showed cased innovations and shared views through public dialogues aimed at accelerating the achievement of the SDGs. The public dialogues conversations continued simultaneously online #TondekaMabega #Act Now #GlobalGoals.

The festival had interludes during with variety of entertainment was presented to the public including cultural music and dance, poetry and contemporary music. Leading music artists who performed included Pallaso and Butcherman, Ghetto President.

The festival aimed at fostering ownership of the SDGs within the community to inculcate the notion that everyone has a role to play in making a positive impact, regardless of gender or age. So



The opening panel session at the People's SDGs Festival comprised of the Minister of General Duties and responsible for SDGs, Rt. Hon. Justine Kasule Lumumba (third from right); UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Susan Namondo (second from right); Ambassador of Denmark to Uganda, H.E. Ms. Signe Winding Albjerg (third from left); Executive Director Uganda National NGO Forum, Dr. Moses Isooba (second from left); and Head of the SDG Secretariat, Dr. Albert Byamugisha (far left) ©SDG Secretariat

that citizens would commit themselves to promoting sustainable practices in their daily lives, supporting local initiatives, and holding each other accountable on the collective agenda. Everyone's efforts are needed to see the change we want.

The views obtained through the dialogues at the SDGs festivals in Mbarara, Mubende, Jinja, Lira and Kampala; the online discussions and other consultative processes including the Second Annual National SDGs Conference contributed to formulation of Uganda's commitment paper and rescue plan that will be presented at the SDG Summit New York in September. The commitment will be actualized through future high impact initiatives under auspices of the Government National development plans and programmes.

The SDG festivals will continue to harness citizens' potential for the SDGs. Collaboration and partnership are key. All stakeholders in the country need to join hands and combine efforts to successfully accelerate the achievement of the SDGs. 🌍



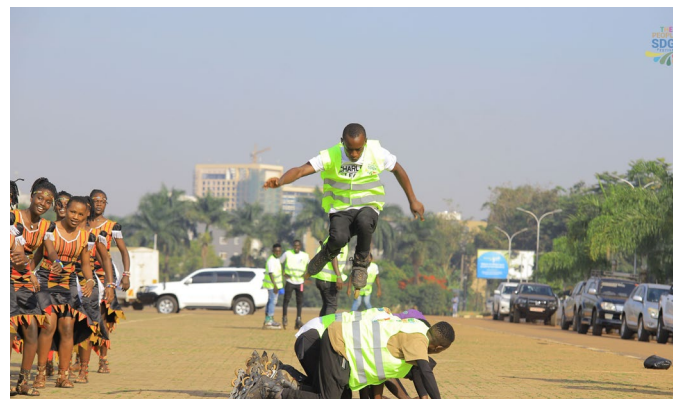
The Exhibition



Marching Procession



Cultural Dancers



Skaters ©SDG Secretariat

