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17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

GULU CITY CELEBRATES WITH THE UN ON ITS 78TH ANNIVERSARY

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



Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Robinah Nabbanja (third from left) welcomed by UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Susan Namondo (far left); State Minister for Northern Uganda, Hon. Grace Kwiycwiny (second from left); UN Women Representative, Dr. Paulina Chiwangu (second from right); and music artiste Lady Zulu (third from right) to the national commemoration of United Nations Day at Kaunda Grounds, Gulu City on 24 October 2023 ©UN Uganda

In the heart of Northern Uganda, Gulu City adorned itself with its brightest colours and warmest smiles to welcome a very special guest—the United Nations—on the 24th of October 2023. This was no ordinary day; it marked the 78th anniversary of an organization born from the ashes of World War II, dedicated to ensuring peace and development across the world.

Celebrated under the theme, "Accelerating the Achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals," this year's commemoration in Gulu City aimed to spotlight the United Nations' contributions in the northern region of Uganda.

Addressing the gathering, Ms. Susan Namondo, UN Resident Coordinator in Uganda, emphasized that the anniversary is a moment to recommit ourselves to achieving the SDGs. "Our focus should remain on delivering on the Sustainable Development Goals," she added.

The event brought together representatives from the central government, district local governments, development partners, civil society organizations, the private sector, youth, students, UN staff, and the communities of Gulu and its neighbouring areas.

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In her remarks, the chief guest, Rt. Hon Robinah Nabbanja, Prime Minister of Uganda, acknowledged the strong partnership between the United Nations and the Government of Uganda, which has been instrumental in our journey of peace and development.



“Today, as we stand united under the banner of 'Leaving No One Behind', we recognize the importance of grassroots engagement in localizing and popularizing the SDGs,” said Rt. Hon. Nabajja.

The UN Day celebration in Gulu City was more than just a commemoration; it was a testament to what can be achieved when diverse stakeholders join hands. It was a call to action, a reminder that the journey towards a better world is a collective endeavour, and no one should be left behind.

The UN Day commemoration festivities kicked off with an exciting SDGs Run on Sunday 22 October 2023, where enthusiastic participants took to the streets at the break of dawn. They painted the city with vibrant shades, their footsteps echoing with the rhythm of progress. Later in the afternoon, the spirit of unity soared higher as UN staff and the community came together for a spirited football match, sharing laughter and goals.

Monday 23 October 2023, saw Gulu University as the backdrop for a thought-provoking public dialogue on SDGs. Simultaneously, the city embraced a day of outreach activities. Invited guests and UN staff fanned out across Gulu City, their hands busy planting trees—a symbol of growth, of nurturing a sustainable tomorrow.

Then came the grand climax on Tuesday 24 October 2023. At 9 am, an awareness march commenced, a river of humanity winding its way through the streets. Gulu City itself became an open canvas, adorned with an exhibition showcasing the marvels of innovation in the pursuit of SDGs crowned by cultural and modern music and dance performances from local troupes and artistes including Polite Mosko, Lady Zulu, and Kiddy Face and Jenneth Prisca who performed a special SDG song that they composed in commemoration of 78th anniversary of the United Nations.

Gulu City spoke a language of promise, of shared dreams, and a pledge to leave no one behind. As the sun painted the sky with its golden shades, Gulu City whispered its gratitude to the UN. The echoes of that magical day will forever dance in the hearts of those who stood together, a reminder that in unity, we find the strength to create a world of peace, happiness, and boundless possibilities. 🌍



Participants at the start of the SDG Run as part of the national commemoration of United Nations Day in Gulu City on 23 October 2023 ©UN Uganda



The United Nations Day Cake at Kaunda Grounds, Gulu City on 24 October 2023 ©UN Uganda



A cultural troupe performs at the national commemoration of United Nations Day at Kaunda Grounds, Gulu City on 24 October 2023 ©UN Uganda



The marching procession arriving at the national commemoration of United Nations Day at Kaunda Grounds, Gulu City on 24 October 2023 ©UN Uganda

ANTHEMS OF THE WORLD CONCERT IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 78TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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



The Makorale – a Makerere University community choir performing during the “Anthems of the World” concert in commemoration of United Nations Day at Makerere University on 31 October 2023 ©UN Uganda

The “Anthems of World” Concert in celebration of the 78th Anniversary of the United Nations was held on 31 October at Makerere University.

The concert was curated by The Makorale – a Makerere University community choir – featured national anthems of selected countries of the world.

The concert was attended by several ambassadors, heads of diplomatic missions, members of the diplomatic community, staff and students of Makerere University, UN staff and members of the general public.

In her speech, the UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Susan Namondo noted that, “music is a universal language that bridges divides, reflecting the diversity and unique contributions of cultures around the world, and national anthems are compact summaries of a country’s heritage, values, history, struggles and aspirations, creatively presented through poems and song. So, it is entirely fitting that we are commemorating UN Day here in Kampala with this wonderful musical performance.”

Some of the ambassadors and consuls made remarks before their nations national anthems were sang explaining the origins of their nations national anthems and highlighting the shared values with the United Nations including values of social harmony and universal peace.

In her remarks, South African High Commissioner to Uganda, Her Excellency Ms. Lulama M. Xingwana, explained the origins of *Nkosi Sikeleli Africa*, which is a reflection of the struggles against apartheid. She noted that the anthem was considered to be the Anthem for Africa and had been adopted by several African countries including Zambia, Zimbabwe and Tanzania.

The other dignitaries who spoke passionately about their national anthems included Her Excellency, Ms. Maria Håkansson, Ambassador of Sweden; His Excellency, Mr. Fukuzawa Hidemoto, Ambassador of Japan; Mr. William D. Bent, Deputy Chief of Mission of the United States; Dr. Janos Terenyi, Chargé d’Affaires a.i. of Hungary; Ms. Maria Odido, Honorary Consul of Botswana and Mrs. Abius Tushemerirwe, Spanish Subject Coordinator, who spoke of behalf of the Ambassador of Cuba.

Other dignitaries in attendance were Her Excellency Ms. Anne Kristin Hermansen, Ambassador of Norway; His Excellency Mr. Matthias Schauer, Ambassador of Germany; Her Excellency Ms. Hildigunnur Engilbertsdóttir, Ambassador of Iceland; His Excellency, Ibrahim Ahmed Sultan, Ambassador of Libya.

In his remarks the curator and choir master, Dr Milton Milton Wabyona, Department of Performing Arts and Film, Makerere University, noted that the United Nations Anthem was a very special piece musically. He noted that it was a hymn about music, while promoting the values of the United Nations, highlighting from the anthem:

“Let music for peace
Be the paradigm,
For peace means to change
At the right time”



The Makorale – a Makerere University community choir and invited guests including ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions during the “Anthems of the World” concert in commemoration of United Nations Day at Makerere University on 31 October 2023 ©UN Uganda

IOM SUPPORTS UGANDA-JORDAN CONSULTATIONS ON LABOUR MIGRATION

By Richard M Kavuma, International Organization for Migration (IOM)



A group photo after the meeting at the Jordan Ministry of Labour. (L-R) Jordan Labour Ministry Assistant Secretary General Abdullah Al-Jabour; Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) Permanent Secretary, Mr. Aggrey Kibenge; Minister of MGLSD, Hon. Betty Ongom Amongi; Jordan Labour Ministry Secretary General Farouk Al-Hadidi; Uganda State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon. Henry Oryem Okello; IOM Uganda Chief of Mission, Mr. Sanusi Tejan Savage; and Ambassador Isaac Biruma Sebulime, Head Mission at Uganda's Embassy in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia ©IOM Uganda

From 21 to 25 August 2023, IOM Uganda supported senior Ugandan Government officials to attend bilateral meetings with counterparts in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

The visit to Jordan was part of IOM's continuing support to the Uganda Government to review/negotiate bilateral labour migration agreements (BLMAs) with major destination countries. It was part of a project funded by the USA Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration.

The Ugandan delegation included the Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Hon Betty Amongi; the State Minister for International Affairs, Hon Henry Oryem Okello; the Permanent

Secretary of the Gender Ministry, Mr Aggrey David Kibenge; the Employment Services Commissioner, Mr Lawrence Egulu, and IOM Uganda Chief of Mission Sanusi Tejan Savage, among others. The Jordanian side included officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates; Ministry of Labour; IOM Jordan; the Jordan Chamber of Commerce; and recruitment agencies.

Jordan and Uganda entered into a BLMA in 2016 and this was renewed in 2020. But Uganda subsequently suspended the agreement, citing breach of contracts by Jordanian employers. Yet many Ugandan migrant workers still end up in Jordan recruited through informal channels. Uganda has no diplomatic mission in Jordan, the closest embassy being in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The two delegations agreed on steps towards opening a consulate in Aman, reviving the suspended BLMA, and improving consular services for distressed Ugandans, including those in detention. 🌍



THE SECOND JOINT EXTERNAL EVALUATION EXERCISE APPLAUDS UGANDA FOR HAVING ONE OF THE BEST EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE SYSTEMS IN AFRICA

By Elise Tcheutchoua Yonkeu, World Health Organization (WHO)



Hon. Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng, Minister of Health, launching of the JEE exercise in Kampala ©WHO Uganda



Dr. Shikanga O-Tipo, Lead of the JEE External Evaluation Team presenting finding of the exercise ©WHO Uganda

Uganda has one of the best emergency preparedness and response systems in Africa.

This is the finding of the second Joint External Evaluation (JEE) exercise that assessed the country's capacity to detect, prevent, and respond rapidly to public health emergencies in accordance with the International Health Regulations (IHR, 2005).

The JEE is a peer review, voluntary, collaborative, multi-sectoral capacity assessment exercise conducted every 4 to 5 years. It took place in Kampala 23 – 27 October 2023 and was coordinated by the Prime Minister's Office, with support from the World Health Organization and other stakeholders.

It helps countries identify the most critical gaps in their wider health system and prioritize actions to improve preparedness and response capacities. The process begins with an internal multisectoral assessment by the country and its national stakeholders, which is then presented to an international external team for a more in-depth evaluation.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, the Minister of Health, Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng Oceru, explained the importance of the exercise for the health system noting that, "it is always important to know our strengths and weaknesses in terms of emergency preparedness and response, to improve our strategy and actions." This, she added, "is the reason why we requested WHO to support Uganda in carrying out the JEE exercise."

During this JEE, a team of external evaluators mobilized through WHO assessed the measures taken by the country to strengthen its pandemic prevention, early detection, and rapid response capacities since 2017, when the first evaluation exercise was carried out.

The evaluation found that Uganda has a strong immunization system to prevent and contain epidemics. The country was also commended for its strong surveillance system, which enables early detection of outbreaks. In addition, the public health emergency management system is strong, as evidenced by the existence of public health emergency operations centres.

"Uganda has one of the best emergency preparedness and response systems on the continent. It has a good laboratory system across the different sectors. I encourage other countries to learn from Uganda," said Dr. Shikanga O-Tipo who led the external evaluation team.

The JEE also identified some weaknesses to which evaluators made several recommendations such as strengthening the multisectoral health security workforce to respond effectively to health emergencies. The evaluators also called for improved capacity to combat antimicrobial resistance (AMR). This, they noted would in addition improve the country's infection prevention and control strategic interventions.

Consequently, Dr. Aceng stressed the need to work together to improve the country's ability to prevent and respond to health emergencies. "One sector alone cannot cope with health emergencies, a sustained multi-sectoral approach between ministries and partners is needed to ensure an adequate response to public health events."

Speaking at the closing ceremony, Dr. Elizabeth Mgamb, WHO Emergency Preparedness and Response Country Team Lead, noted that this edition of the JEE comes after Uganda experienced two major public health events of Ebola and COVID-19. "We hope that the lessons learned during these emergencies and the assessment made by the JEE will contribute to informing the next 5-year National Action Plan for Health Security in the country," she said.

"This will go a long way to ensuring that national capacities in health emergency prevention, preparedness, response and recovery are properly planned, built, strengthened and sustained for an improved regional and global health security," Dr. Mgambo concluded. 🌍

UNFPA'S SUPPORT TOWARDS MIDWIFERY SERVICES TO ACHIEVE GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF MOTHERS IN UGANDA

By Cinderella Anena, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)



Ms. Pimer Gleisha Jovia, a UNFPA-supported midwife attending to a refugee beneficiary at the ANC clinic at Panyadoli refugee settlement ©UNFPA Uganda



A joyful moment for Pimer and a refugee mother after delivering a baby at Panyadoli Health Centre IV in Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement ©UNFPA Uganda

Panyadoli - Refugees face high vulnerability to Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and challenges accessing healthcare services, including maternal health services. Childbirth is perhaps the riskiest and most miraculous time in a woman's life.

For women and girls who fled armed conflict to seek refuge in Uganda, access to quality Sexual, Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Adolescent Health (SRMNAH) is an essential component of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement is a home to 65,272 refugees and a host population of 322,300 nationals in the mid-western part of Uganda. Uganda is one of the largest refugee-hosting nations in the world, with the majority of the refugees having fled from South Sudan. UNFPA is delivering Integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (ISRHR) as a means to respond to the acute needs of women, girls and young people in refugee-hosting and other emergency responses, most notably maternal health care, family planning, HIV services, prevention and response to GBV among others.

In a rural end of Cluster K located in Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement, Pimer Gleisha Jovia is one of the midwives deployed by UNFPA to deliver lifesaving care to refugees and host communities. She works at Panyadoli Health Centre IV in the rural refugee settlement where more than 400 babies are delivered each month under skilled birth attendants like Jovia in this health sub-district.

Jovia handles patients like a mother does to her children, paying close attention to ensure they access the best services and deliver safely.

In the past six months, I have supported safe delivery of more than 130 babies, with over 500 mothers benefitting from Ante-Natal Care (ANC) services, family planning counseling and services, to mention but a few," Pimer affirms.



We ensure mothers who come for antenatal care services are also provided with information on family planning so that they are able to protect women from any health risks that may occur before, during or after childbirth."

In the wake of the protracted humanitarian situation in this country, the continuity of delivery of lifesaving integrated SRHR remains very pertinent. Pimer serves beyond her call of duty to provide quality midwifery care to refugees and host women and newborns in Kiryandongo. Other complicated cases are handled at the facility, while others are referred to Kiryandongo Hospital.

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UNAIDS AND PARTNERS LAUNCH OF THE CHOICE MANIFESTO

By Sarah Nakku, The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)



Participants at the launch of the Choice Manifesto in Kampala ©UNAIDS Uganda

The launch of the Choice Manifesto happened on the 8th of September 2023 at Lake Victoria Serena Resort Kampala. The African Women HIV Prevention Community Accountability Board (AWPCAB), International Community of Women Living with HIV Eastern Africa (ICWEA) in partnership with UNAIDS launched the Choice Manifesto. The launch brought together an array of critical stakeholders in HIV prevention including representation from Uganda AIDS Commission, Ministry of Health, UNICEF, PEPFAR, UNWOMEN, ViiV, Population Council, AIDS Fond Foundation and young women from 8 countries. The countries represented were Rwanda, Malawi, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

The launch convened women's coalitions and groups from Sub-Saharan Africa in Kampala, Uganda for a high-level meeting with UNAIDS, its co-sponsors and selected development partners to listen to Women and young girls choices from the region on HIV prevention choices. The meeting sought to address the critical issue of expanding choice in HIV prevention, particularly focusing on increasing access to long-acting HIV health technologies for vulnerable populations in the region.

UNAIDS Executive Director, Winnie Byanyima, joined women's coalitions, government officials, development partners and community groups from across East and Southern Africa to launch the HIV Prevention Choice Manifesto. Led by AWPCAB and ICWEA and Advocacy for Prevention of HIV and AIDS (APHA), the Choice Manifesto advocates for choice in the HIV prevention options available for women and a commitment to expanding access to long-acting HIV

health technologies. Further, these options should be people centered, women-centered and women-led.

The manifesto's three key areas to making women-centered, people-centered prevention approaches work are: tackling inequalities for girls and women; addressing unequal access to health technologies; and putting communities & women in the lead.

Ms. Byanyima signed the Choice Manifesto on behalf of UNAIDS and committed to supporting and amplifying the voices of African women and confirmed that UNAIDS will continue to convene partners and government to find solutions.

"I congratulate you for the HIV Prevention Choice Manifesto. It's about pushing everyone towards people-centered, women-centered and women-led approaches to HIV prevention. You have fought with your lives to get here. You are fearless feminists. Women must lead for themselves," said Ms. Byanyima.

"We must trust women, let women lead, let African women lead! The AWPCAB board is 12 women from 6 countries from Eastern and Southern Africa. Our focus is on the choice agenda, access and roll out to make sure choice is a reality for all women," said Ms. Yvette Raphael, on behalf of AWPCAB and APHA.

The Choice Manifesto is an important moment in the HIV response and should take its rightful place next to the Denver Declaration and GIPA principles as a watershed moment. Developed and driven by African women for African women and relevant for all women. 🌍

UNFPA's support towards midwifery services to achieve good health and well-being of mothers in Uganda

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Pimer, the compassionate midwife conducts health education to mothers at the ANC waiting area of Panyadoli Health Centre IV ©UNFPA Uganda

This is affirmed by pregnant women such as Cho Garang, who is a refugee.

I confidently carry this pregnancy, with high hopes through to the D-date for my delivery, because my midwife has provided quality Ante-Natal Care Services, and together with my family, we made the necessary birth preparedness plan as guided," she explains.

Midwives like Pimer save the lives of mothers and children during childbirth. With the support of the midwives can ably deliver safely with the assurance of living thereafter. This highlights the significant contribution of midwives towards delivering the most needed Basic Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care (BEMONC) in humanitarian settings.

Across Uganda, UNFPA extends its support towards refugee response in several refugee hosting districts: Adjumani, Madi Okollo, Terego, Lamwo, Kamwenge, Kiryandongo, Kikuube, Kyegegwa, Obongi, Rwamwanja, Yumbe and Isingiro.

To ensure a world where every childbirth is safe, UNFPA continues to expand access to and strengthen an integrated people-centered package of sexual and reproductive health rights through a human rights-based approach towards achieving the transformative result of ending preventable maternal deaths by 2030. 🌍

JOVIA, JOLES AND LEARNING TO LIVE AGAIN: UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT THROUGH THE LENS OF ARMED CONFLICT SURVIVORS IN KASESE DISTRICT, WESTERN UGANDA

By Hope M. E. Muzungu, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)



Charles Bukenya, a clinical psychologist, counselling a family affected by trauma and psychological distress in Kasese ©UNICEF Uganda

Kasese, the newly built two-bedroom brick house stands firm, with the sun rays glistening off a shiny iron roof. It is Jovia and Joles Duduma's home in Nabugando II Village in Mpondwe Lhubiriha Town Council, Kasese District, in western Uganda. Next to the house is a freshly cemented grave where their father is buried. Besides it, a heaped mound of brown earth with a foot-long wooden cross over it, marks the grave of their mother. Right behind it, another pile of fresh-looking earth reminds the family where their late grandmother lies. All three were killed during an armed rebel attack in Kasese District in June 2023.

"Daddy never got to sleep in his new house, so we buried him next to it," 23-year-old Joles says haltingly, as 31-year-old Jovia stares at the ground.

On June 16, 2023, an armed group attacked Mpondwe Lhubiriha Secondary School killing 38 children and five adults and affecting over 115,000 people in 12 sub counties/ town councils. In the aftermath, over 4,500 people were displaced, entire communities abandoned their homes, businesses and took their children out of school, with physical and emotional wounds continuing to haunt children, young people, women, and men.

Muhindo Jovia Duduma (left) and her brother, Jockim Duduma, stand in the doorway holding a photo of their parents who were killed during an attack by armed groups on their community in June 2023.

In collaboration with the Kasese District Local Government, UNICEF is supporting communities to recover and rebuild. Using a database of health and para-social workers (PSWs) trained by Butabika Mental Health Referral Hospital with UNICEF support, the district mobilized teams to provide specialized mental health

support services to the survivors and bereaved families across the 12 affected sub-counties.

"Because parasocial workers live within the community, they are not only the first but also fast respondents in emergency cases and ensure sustained response until community members get back on their feet," says Susan Birungi Nyakoojo, the Programme Officer - Emergency at UNICEF Mbarara Zonal Office.

The morning after the rebel attack, the PSWs accompanied by psychiatric nurses made multiple visits to affected homes and conducted community dialogues to offer psychosocial support, working with the district probation and social welfare and security teams.

The work of the PSWs and psychiatric nurses is not easy. Charles Bukenya, a psychiatric nurse at Bwera Hospital in Mpondwe Lhubiriha Town Council reports that they were greeted with loud wails, listless looks and palpable fear whenever they visited most homesteads. Over weeks of psychosocial support, with recognition of a long road still ahead, it is heartening to note that progress has been made.

"We keep reminding them that the tragedy should not mark the end of their existence," the psychiatric nurse notes, speaking of the Duduma household. "They used to cry a lot but can now smile and freely chat about different aspects of life." From five visits a week, the team now makes only two visits weekly.

Bukenya Charles, a clinical psychologist, was one of the first on the scene after the devastating armed group attack on the secondary school. "When the attack happened, many people were affected they are traumatised and psychologically distressed," says Charles.

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“NOTHING GOOD COMES OUT OF EARLY MARRIAGE” WFP NUTRICASH IS ENABLING GIRLS TO RETURN TO SCHOOL AFTER TEENAGE PREGNANCY

By Patience Akumu, World Food Programme (WFP)



Anyuarach and the headteacher ©WFP Uganda

During COVID-19, the Uganda government closed schools for nearly two years. This went on record as the longest COVID-19 school closure in the world. Beatrice Anyuarach*, then 17, found herself going to village discos and spending time with other girls her age at trading centres in Madi Okollo, a district in West Nile, a fast-growing region with the highest refugee population in Uganda – an East African country which itself hosts 1.4 million refugees, more than any African country.

On the day Anyuarach was raped, two men waited for her at a pharmacy where her father had sent her to buy medicine. When she got in, they bolted the door and forcefully had sex with her.

“I did not plan to tell anyone. But then I missed my periods and I had to explain to my father what happened,” Anyuarach, who is now 19, says – her shoulders hunched against the camera as she recalls the traumatic experience.

She could only identify one of the men. He fled the village when he found out that Anyuarach’s parents were looking for him. They involved the police and local leaders to join the search. He was found months later, paid some money to her parents, and disappeared again.

“I knew I did not want to get married because nothing good comes out of early marriage. But I did not know what I would do with the baby,” Anyuarach says.

It is at this moment of despair that she met Gladys Aromborach, one of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) mobilizers for the Child Sensitive Social Protection Programme. Implemented in West Nile, the programme, through its nutrition component known as Nutri-cash, provides 48,000 (about 14 USD) shillings per month to children under two and pregnant and breast-feeding mothers from the poorest households. This money helps them to buy nutritious food. Of this, the mothers save 14,000 (about 4 USD) every month as part of a revolving fund to help them start small enterprises.

Understanding mental health and psychosocial support through the lens of armed conflict survivors in Kasese District, Western Uganda

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Jovia notes that she is no longer terrified of the dark and can even sit outside their house till 11 p.m., whereas previously, she would not get out of the house past 5 p.m.

“I have become stronger,” she says, adding, “I even counsel my younger siblings.”

Staring at a photo of their deceased parents, Joles retells that their father had promised to send him to nursing school upon completing the house. After a pause, he adds that after weeks of counsel, he started making bricks to earn some money that is now helping him and his siblings. With government support, the siblings have roofed the new house and are currently living in it.

“We miss our parents,” Joles notes, sadness permeating his words, “but life has to go on.”

As the psychiatric nurse and parasocial worker complete their visit, Joles and Jovia walk them to the road. They say many words in their local dialect Lukhonzho, as they clasp the hands of their visitors, but some ring out:

Mwasingya kutsibu – Thank you very much.

Mwasingya eribya imunimutughumuzikania - Thank you for counselling us.

Through UNICEF support to the local government in Kasese, a total of 8,562 children and 8,601 adults have been reached with community-based psychosocial support while 192 survivors and bereaved parents have been provided with specialised MHPSS services. 🌈



Anyuarach and Gladys ©WFP Uganda

Funded by Sweden, the WFP and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) joint Programme began as a COVID-19 emergency cash transfer for both refugees and host communities then evolved into a social protection intervention. The West Nile sub-region is one of Uganda’s poorest and experiences challenges with service delivery. In addition to high levels of poverty, communities face food insecurity and malnutrition exacerbated by land pressure and worsening climate shocks. Nearly three out of every ten children in West Nile are stunted. Additionally, half of all children and more than a quarter of women are anaemic, according to the 2021 Food and Nutrition Assessment (FSNA). Nearly half the deaths among children under five in this region are due to malnutrition.

“Many of us who got pregnant during COVID-19 saw Nutricash as our only hope,” Anyuarach says. “Gladys found me in another tree planting group and told me about the programme. I was so happy. I knew the man responsible could not help me but at least I had some hope with Nutricash money.”

According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), there was a spike in teenage pregnancies and sexual violence during the COVID-19 lockdown in Uganda. At least 600,000 teenage pregnancies were registered.

“It was very common for girls to get pregnant during COVID-19. We had no information, and the men were just waiting for us,” Anyuarach says. “We did not even know how to look after our children.”

The first time she received the money, she bought cabbages, rice, posho and some chicken that she now rears. Then she started saving for her return to school.

“I had seen many girls get married and then return home miserable. My dream is to become a nurse and pregnancy would not stop me.”

When her baby was three months, and schools had just reopened in 2022, she went up to Jessica Adoch, the Head Teacher of her school, Pumit Primary, and asked to return to school. She was enrolled into Primary six and is now in Primary seven. For secondary school, she dreams of joining Excel College in Pakwach, a neighbouring district.

“When Anyuarach came to me, I sat with her in my office and told her, ‘There is nothing you cannot do. You just need to concentrate,’” Adoch, the only female teacher in Pumit

Primary school, says and Anyuarach’s eyes light up when she hears the conviction in her Head Teacher’s voice.

Adoch explains that while the government policy is that children should be allowed in school even when they are pregnant or after they have had babies, girls face stigma that makes it hard for them to return to school. In some cases, schools do not support their return.

“At Pundit Primary school, we were happy to receive Anyuarach and we ask other girls who have had children to return to school,” Adoch says. “We give Anyuarach time off to breast feed. My door is open for her any time.”

With support from her school, Anyuarach embarked on her studies. She gained respect from other mothers and became the lead mother in her NutriCash group where she and other women learn how to take care of themselves and their children.

“I know how to read and write,” she says of the reason why she was chosen to lead the group. “I am determined. I am more knowledgeable since I joined the group and, most importantly, I at least have money to feed my child. I have shown a lot of leadership to my friends who got pregnant and still fear to return to school.”

To other girls such as 22-year Immaculate Sida, Adoch is a beacon of hope after the life-altering incident of getting pregnant while at school.

“Our society is tough,” Sida, who also got pregnant at 19 during the COVID-19 school closure, says. She had just completed her O-levels. “When I got pregnant, I ashamed my parents. But I know there are girls who have returned to school because they at least have some money to take care of their babies. I, too, I am saving 4000 shillings every month from the money I receive from WFP so that I can return to school and achieve my dreams.”

Nutricash has so far reached over 13500 people, going beyond nutrition to enable mothers return to school and fulfil their dreams. 🌍



UN WOMEN SIGNS MOU WITH CEO SUMMIT TO MOBILISE SUPPORT FOR GENDER EQUALITY WITHIN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

By Samuel Wamuttu, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)

On 31st August 2023, UN Women Uganda signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with CEO Summit, a regional platform that brings together leaders to discuss economic development.



UN Women Representative, Dr. Paulina Chiwangu (second from left) and CEO Summit Managing Director, Mr. Stephen Mukasa signing the Memorandum of Understanding ©UN Women Uganda

The signing ceremony was held at the UN Women head office conference hall in Kampala. The purpose of the MOU was for both organisations to commit to the promotion of gender equality, empowering women and advancing women economic empowerment including supporting women led businesses among other strategies.

Dr. Pauline Chiwangu, UN Women Uganda Country Representative, in her speech said that prioritized partnerships with the private sector is part of the organisation's Global Strategic Note 2022-2025

for Uganda. She noted that private sector plays an important role in empowering women and mobilizing capital to finance gender equality.

The CEO Summit stands as a premier regional platform, convening influential CEOs, Bankers, and investors. Mr. Stephen Mukasa, Managing Director for CEO Summit said the private sector is very clear on enhancing women empowerment. "The sustainable development goal 5 is very dear to us and we are therefore, very much willing to work jointly on this." 🌍

UNLOCKING BARRIERS FOR WOMEN IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

By Angella Tusiime, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)



Seated left to right is Ms. Sharon Lesa Nyambe; Ms. Pamela Tibihikirra-Kalyegira; Ms. Shifrah Lukwago; Hon. Lady Justice Jane Frances Abodo; Hon. Lady Justice Henrietta Wolayo; Can. Dr. Johnson Byabashajja; Ms. Susan Ngongi Namondo; Odde de Jong; and SCP Hadijja Namutebi together with some of the key speakers at the regional conference ©Uganda Prisons Service

As part of efforts to promote gender-sensitive approaches in the criminal justice system across Africa, UNODC in Uganda, partnered with Penal Reform International, Uganda Prisons Service, Uganda Human Rights Commission, and Uganda Police Force, to facilitate a three-day regional conference on the rights of justice affected women under the theme "Unlocking Barriers: Rights of Women in the Criminal Justice System in Africa" from 18 to 20

October 2023.

Bringing together justice actors from Uganda, Kenya, South Sudan, Zambia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Central Africa Republic, South Africa, and Europe, the purpose of the regional conference was to discuss the existing access to justice gaps affecting women in the criminal justice system, and share lessons and good practices from



Officials from Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces and Uganda Police Force participating in the regional conference discussions ©Penal Reform International in Africa

different jurisdictions to inform policies and more gender-responsive criminal justice systems across the African continent.

This regional conference engaged participants on several key issues including regional and international criminal justice system standards, crime prevention and violence against women, and gender-sensitive rehabilitation and reintegration services. Participants were briefed on experiences from East Africa on women's access to justice. The conference also focused on access to justice for women in fragile, conflict and post-conflict settings, the health and safety for women in the criminal justice system, and women facing the death penalty.

The keynote address from the Chief Justice of Uganda, which was presented by Lady Justice Damalie Lwanga, noted that addressing gender-based discrimination in the justice system is key to engendering the administration of justice thus making it inclusive.

Speaking on behalf of the Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Uganda, Odde de Jong, the 1st Secretary Security and Rule of Law at the Netherlands Embassy in Kampala, highlighted the increase in the number of women in prisons worldwide compared to men. "This calls for deliberate efforts aimed at integrating gender-sensitive approaches in the criminal justice system including during arrest, pre-trial detention, trial, and imprisonment," Odde said.

Hon. Simeon Nsubuga, a Commissioner at Uganda Human Rights Commission emphasized the need to protect the rights of women including those in prison, adding that advocating for women's rights does not mean weakening the rights of men, but rather it brings out the specific needs for women and how those needs can be met.

Representing the Inspector General of Police, Senior Commissioner of Police Hadijja Namutebi informed participants that Uganda Police Force has established a robust policy framework aimed at enhancing women's access to justice. "Our officers undergo training in gender and human rights studies to ensure a more inclusive and sensitive approach policing," she noted.

On his part, Can. Dr. Johnson Byabashaija, the Commissioner General of Prisons, Uganda Prisons Service, noted the challenge of prisons congestion attributed to increase in prison population. Can. Dr. Byabashaija emphasized the need to



Officials from Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces and Uganda Police Force participating in the regional conference discussions ©Penal Reform International in Africa

confront root causes of increased prison population, specifically the community challenges that lead women into the criminal justice system.

Ms. Susan Ngongi Namondo, the UN Resident Coordinator in Uganda underscored the urgent need to develop informed policies and more gender-responsive criminal justice systems in Uganda to achieve UN's approach of "leaving no one behind" and the Sustainable Development Goals.

A joint communique on recommendations to address gaps in treatment of women in the criminal justice system was issued, which included reducing imprisonment and prioritising the non-custodial alternatives for women; recruiting and assisting lawyers to represent women in the justice system; and invest in rehabilitation programs to empower women especially women in prisons. 🌍



DATA INNOVATORS TO GUIDE NEW CITIES INTO AN EVIDENCE-BASED FUTURE

By Enock Wanderema, UN Global Pulse Uganda (UNGP)



Representatives from Ministry of ICT & National Guidance, UN Global Pulse Uganda and Uganda Pentecostal University posing for a photo after an engagement that would result in the enrichment of the unfolding National Data Strategy/Courtesy Photo

As the Government of Uganda commences with the establishment of 15 new cities, Sunbird AI, UN Global Pulse Uganda, and ToroDev – a consortium of organisations innovating with data are embarking on an ambitious initiative to transform Fort Portal and Jinja cities into hubs of data-driven practices.

At the heart of this effort is the mission to empower city officials and residents with the tools of data and evidence. The organisations intend to create resilient urban environments through building trust, enhancing capacities, and implementing innovative data strategies,

“The focus is on providing tangible, data-backed solutions to the unique challenges faced by each city, ensuring their sustainable development,” said Dr. Martin Mubangizi, the team lead for UN Global Pulse Uganda.

Recognizing the hurdles of conflicting priorities and low confidence in available data, stakeholders are rigorously being engaged in dialogue. This aligns with national goals, swift pilot projects, and in-depth needs assessments, as the initiative aims to instill confidence in the power of data-driven decisions.

The initiative adopts a phased, inclusive approach, rooted in the diverse needs of the communities involved. Beginning with comprehensive needs



Ministry of ICT & National Guidance and UN Global Pulse Uganda team promoting the data for cities project and its benefits at Voice of Toro 101 FM/Courtesy Photo

assessments, the initiative delves into workshops designed to enhance data appreciation among city officials. Subsequently, the focus advances to developing city-level data strategies that are tailor-made to address local challenges. Pilot projects, strategically designed for quick wins, will serve as templates for future initiatives, ensuring a sustainable and scalable impact.

“The visionary project aims to not only transform Fort Portal and Jinja but serve as a blueprint for future urban development initiatives across Uganda,” said Bright Onapito from UN Global Pulse.

By equipping cities with the tools to harness data, these communities are poised for a future where decisions are not just made but are informed, precise, and impactful. As this initiative unfolds, Uganda's cities are on the brink of a data-driven renaissance, promising a future where innovation meets information, and growth meets guided progress.

The collaboration of the three organisations brings a wealth of experience and expertise to the project. Guided by ToroDev's comprehensive baseline study, the initiative gains crucial insights into the specific needs of Fort Portal and Jinja. UN Global Pulse Uganda's ongoing efforts in data and strategic actions for optimal data use ensure alignment with national objectives, fostering seamless integration. Additionally, Sunbird AI's vast experience in applying practical Artificial Intelligence for social good in African and Ugandan contexts introduces innovative approaches. 🌍



UNCDF COMPLETES HANDOVER OF DINU PROJECTS, SPURRING DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHERN UGANDA

By Amadou Sy, United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)



Ms. Caroline Adriaensen, Head of Cooperation - EU Delegation in Uganda and Dr. Dmitry Pozhidaev, Head of the UNCDF Office in Uganda, hand over land title to a customary landowner. As part of the DINU project, the first Certificate of Customary Land Ownership registry has been established in Agago, Apac and Maracha districts ©UNCDF Uganda

The United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) recently held handover ceremonies to officially transfer infrastructure projects to local leaders in Agago, Moyo, and Yumbe districts. These projects were implemented under UNCDF's 7-year, EU-funded Development Initiative for Northern Uganda (DINU) programme to drive recovery and growth in the post-conflict region.

In Agago District, the DINU programme constructed the Alwa Livestock Market which is enabling women to break into the traditionally male-dominated livestock trade. As described in a district report, women have typically been excluded from selling livestock in Agago. But the new market facility constructed in Omot Sub-county is providing opportunities for women like Jacinta to participate in livestock trading.

For instance, Jacinta recently sold her own bull at the market for UGX 950,000, much higher than her husband used to get. She credited the market with empowering women financially and helping improve her family's income and food security. The District Veterinary Officer hopes the market will continue to draw more women into livestock farming and trading as an income boosting endeavour.

The Agago District Chairperson also endorsed the livestock market, constructed under DINU-LGEF, as part of a broader push by government to economically empower women in Northern Uganda. The Omot Sub-County Chairperson similarly welcomed the market, though he noted the continued need to upgrade stalls and infrastructure at the adjoining main market. The facilities so far have increased district revenue from the market tender fees. But officials plan to develop the site further into a modern farmer market to fully leverage the economic potential.

For the Adibo Piped Water Supply System project in Yumbe District, DINU-LGEF provided UGX 1.47 billion in funding while the district contributed UGX 715 million to complete the UGX 2.18 billion project. It has benefitted over 9,100 people across five parishes with clean water access through components like a pump station, reservoir tank, distribution network, and 108 yard taps. Among the results so far, the project has increased water coverage in Arafa Sub-county from 49.2% to 59.2% and created 113

local construction jobs. The water system has also been connected to a new public sanitation facility in Adibo Trading Centre. But high community demand remains for expanded piped water connections in the future.

In Yumbe District, DINU also constructed the UGX 736 million Kuru Market in Kuru Town Council which contains 130 market stalls, offices, latrines, fencing, and solar power. It was co-funded by the district and other partners. The improved infrastructure has boosted vendor incomes, market revenue collection, and value for perishable goods. For instance, annual revenue from the market has already grown 12.3% in 2022/2023 over the previous year. The market's central location and proximity to the Yumbe Regional Referral Hospital is also expected to expand its customer base and traffic. But continued upgrades are still needed.

Additionally, in Yumbe, UNCDF upgraded Lobe Market with storage units, sanitation facilities, a child play area, and water supply. It serves over 130 vendors including refugees from South Sudan. The improved amenities have increased economic opportunities.

The DINU programme tackled Northern Uganda's inadequate infrastructure to drive socio-economic recovery. Additional facilities including roads were constructed across the region over 7 years. UNCDF pledged continued engagement with local governments for sustainability. 🌍



Hon. Grace Freedom Kwiyucwiny, Minister State Minister for Northern Uganda and Ms. Caroline Adriaensen, Head of Cooperation - EU Delegation in Uganda witness the extension of water to households that previously had no access to water ©UNCDF Uganda



SIX SCHOOLS WIN FAO-SWEDEN NATIONAL CLIMATE CHANGE AWARDS

By Agatha Ayebayibwe, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)



Swedish Ambassador to Uganda, H.E. Maria Håkansson (centre); and FAO Representative, Dr. Antonio Querido (far right) after handing over the trophy to the winners of the Green Schools national competition Sacred Heart School ©FAO Uganda

The year-long Green Schools national competition has come to an end, with six schools emerging as winners in the highly competitive Green Schools Initiative. The winners, led by Sacred Heart School in Mushanga, were announced at Makerere University's Yusuf Lule Central Teaching Facility.

The awards were categorised under debate and project activity implementation.

Around a year ago, 100 secondary schools in 10 districts across Uganda were presented with a challenge to develop innovative, yet practical strategies aimed at mitigating the effects of climate change and promoting green spaces within their school environments. The initiative was a joint effort between the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and Vision Group, with funding support from the Swedish Embassy in Uganda. In addition to the project work, the participating schools engaged in a climate change debate at both regional and national levels.

The debate's grand finale concluded in September, with Sacred Heart Secondary School in Mushanga, Sheema District, winning the trophy and a cash prize of sh10m. The runner-up, Mengo Senior School, received sh7.5m while Soroti Secondary School, the second runner-up, was awarded sh6m and Ntare School, in fourth place, received sh5m.

St. Kizito High School in Wakiso District emerged as the winner of the project category and was awarded sh12m, the highest prize. The second prize of sh10m went to Kololo Senior Secondary School, while Tororo Girls School secured the third position and received sh7.5m. Kibubura Girls Secondary School in Ibanda came fourth and was awarded sh6m. Gayaza High School and Immaculate Heart School Nyakibare secured fifth and sixth place respectively and received sh5m each.

Speaking at the national awarding ceremony, the FAO Country Representative Dr. Antonio Querido applauded the participants for the excellent innovations they and their schools are involved in, saying that young people, if supported and provided with knowledge and skills, have the capacity to develop sustainable innovations that can address many of today's local challenges, including climate change.

“

We have heard the voices, minds, and expressions of young people, as they passionately debated issues concerning the environment and climate change. We have been blown away by the extent to which learners have deliberated on these issues. Their voices are so important and young people need to be given such platforms if we are to develop policies and programs for sustainable development,” said Dr. Querido.

The Green Schools Initiative project has played a very big role in priming the young generation to become conscious of their actions and innovative with solutions to minimise pollution, degradation, and climate change.

H.E. Ms. Maria Håkansson, the Swedish Ambassador to Uganda, said that climate change and biodiversity loss are among the most critical challenges facing the planet and that young people are strong agents of change as they are the future leaders and decision-makers of tomorrow.

“By engaging them this early in their life, we can build their capacity to choose environmentally friendly and climate-smart lifestyles in the future to design appropriate policies and actions and to educate and drive change in their communities,” she said, adding that, “We need to act with urgency and resolve to tackle the climate crisis, and Sweden is committed to this task and wants to partner with Uganda on this mission. Through this Green Schools Initiative, we are doing exactly that.”

Mr. Gervase Ndyababo, the Deputy Managing Director of Vision Group, emphasized that the severe consequences of climate change call for immediate and long-term action.

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SOLVATTEN KIT HELPING REFUGEES EASE COST OF LIVING

By Yonna Tukundane, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)



Hellen with her solar powered water purification Kit ©UNHCR Uganda

Hellen Akita, a resilient 52-year-old widow, has lived as a refugee in Uganda for the past seven years. Her journey began when she sought refuge in Uganda after escaping the turmoil in South Sudan.

In September 2023, she was settled by UNHCR in a humble home in Village 1, Zone 3 within Bidibidi Refugee Settlement.

"Life, as we knew it, has never been the same for our family. We have endured immense suffering, but I'm grateful we are still alive," said Hellen.

A mother of three children, two of whom are currently in primary school, Hellen faces the added challenge of caring for her eldest daughter, who struggles with a severe mental illness.

Aside from her family responsibilities, Hellen also faces challenges in accessing safe and clean water, and enough land to cultivate crops to supplement the ration she receives from World Food Program (WFP).

"Each month, I bear the expense of the water we consume in our household, and at times, it becomes challenging. When I don't have the money to pay for water, I resort to fetching water from a nearby stream. However, this water requires boiling, and the scarcity of firewood adds to the difficulty. When I received the Solvatten Kit, there has an improvement because it boils and purifies," said Hellen.

Hellen stressed the importance of the kit for purifying drinking water, pointing out that the hardships she previously endured in the quest for cooking fuel such as firewood and charcoal to boil drinking water at home have now been completely eradicated.

"I no longer have to worry about scouring the bush for firewood or spending money on charcoal at the market, where a small pack costs 500 Uganda shillings. I simply place my kit and water in the sun to purify it," she adds.

Aside from, purifying drinking water, Hellen makes tea for the family, and warms their bathing water using the same kit.

On rainy or cloudy days, she faces challenges as there isn't sufficient sunshine to power the kit.

Hellen's story is a reminder that even in the toughest of circumstances, a small water purification kit can make a huge difference.

Six schools win FAO-Sweden national Climate Change Awards

Continued from page 15

He noted that the impact of climate change on global ecosystems and the need for sustainable solutions, has never been more urgent.

"The Green Schools National Initiative and Climate Change Debate Championship aim to highlight the importance of addressing climate change through education and action. By recognising and celebrating the efforts of schools and students who have made significant contributions to sustainability, this event inspires and encourages others to take part in the fight against climate change," said Mr. Ndyababo.

Background – The Green Schools Initiative is a project of the Food and Agriculture Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization in partnership with the Vision Group, with funding from the Government of Sweden through the Embassy of Sweden in Uganda. The 15-month initiative is being executed in 100 secondary schools from 10 regions nationwide.

The project rolled off last year with a call for secondary schools to implement climate-smart activities and for those with similar proposals to apply for consideration. Over 300 schools expressed interest.

The Green Schools Initiative seeks to raise awareness of climate change among school-going students in Uganda to increase their understanding of climate change and environmental degradation while empowering them to take an active role in the solutions to environmental challenges.

The second phase of the initiative will be launched next year, to bring more schools on board and consolidate the gains from phase one. 🌍



TEACHER'S SOCIAL DIALOGUE HELD IN COMMEMORATION OF WORLD TEACHER'S DAY

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



Educators from the Central Region actively participating in the teacher social dialogue, held in the lead up to World Teachers' Day Celebrations 2023 in Uganda ©UNESCO Uganda

As Uganda joined the rest of the world in commemorating the World Teachers Day 2023, the Central Regional Social Dialogue for teachers brought together a diverse group of participants, including educators, government officials, and education advocates.

The two-day social dialogue was a precursor for the WTD celebrations, held every year on 5 October to recognize the contribution of teachers towards education in Uganda. Jointly organised by UNESCO, the Norwegian Teacher Initiative (NTI), Ministry of Education and Sports, the Uganda National Association of Teacher Unions (UNATU) as well as UNICEF, the event was hosted at Ridah Hotel in Seeta Mukono District. It was well attended by more than 140 stakeholders, ranging from teachers and school managers to government representatives.

The Central Regional Social Dialogue served as a platform to address the challenges, accomplishments, and opportunities within Uganda's education system. It emphasized the need for teacher empowerment and professional development as critical elements in shaping the future of education. To enhance the role of education stakeholders in improving the quality of teachers' well-being, performance and welfare, participants were invited to propose strategies for empowering teachers.

Principal Education Officer, Mr. Andrew Tabura, delivered remarks on behalf of the Commissioner for Teacher Education and Training Department (TEDT), Mr. Joseph Kikomoko. Mr. Kikomoko's address highlighted the various instruments, policies and frameworks developed by the Ministry of Education and its partners to streamline teacher programming in the country. Examples include the National Teacher Policy, Social Dialogue Framework and Teacher Bill, among others. The Commissioner commended UNESCO for the unwavering support it continues to render across the education sector in Uganda and acknowledged UNESCO's role in redefining and shaping positive education outcomes.

National Projects Coordinator for Uganda, Mr. Charles Draecabo, delivered remarks on behalf of UNESCO. He implored the stakeholders to reflect on the theme for this year's celebration and commit themselves to changing Ugandan and global narratives around issues of teacher quality and quantity. "We strongly believe that to transform the education agenda, teachers are key stakeholders that cannot be left out," he emphasized, "to change the narratives around the current negative global statistics around teachers, we need to revamp the status of the teachers that we want, for the education we need."



As teachers we need to be mindful and careful about the source and authenticity of information we consume. The mental health of many of our teachers have been greatly affected due to over reliance on information from unverified sources in relation to the countrywide phase-out of various teacher training institutions and existing teaching grades,' Mr. Filbert Baguma, General Secretary, Uganda National Teachers Union (UNATU).



Educators were given a platform to voice their concerns and propose strategies to empower teachers and enhance their well-being, performance and welfare in Uganda. © Vincent Ogal/ UNESCO

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APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME IMPROVES EMPLOYABILITY AND SELF-RELIANCE FOR REFUGEE AND HOST COMMUNITY YOUTH

By Melissa Kyeyune, International Labour Organization (ILO)



Mambo Samuel Longa, 28, a South Sudan refugee and graduate of the apprenticeship Programme © ILO Uganda

When you visit the White Castle Hotel in Arua City and order a cake, you will mostly likely enjoy a tasty product of Samuel Mambo's baking skills. Samuel is a young refugee from South Sudan, now living in Uganda.

On Tuesday 31 October 2023, Samuel was one of ninety young men and women whose lives were transformed. On this day, they became graduates of an apprenticeship programme supported by the International Labour Organization (ILO), through the PROSPECTS Partnership funded by the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The apprenticeship programme is designed to improve the employability of refugees and host community members in Uganda through work-based learning, with 70% learning happening at the workplace while 30% at the college. The programme is jointly implemented by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), Uganda Hotel Owners' Association (UHOA) and the Uganda Hotel and Tourism Training Institute (UHTTI).

The colorful graduation event was held at the Sheraton Hotel in Kampala, a fitting location, as some of the refugee graduates were trained at the same hotel, with 4 of them now retained and employed as Chefs and front office staff. In this innovative apprenticeship programme, ILO worked with the Private Sector to mobilize 40 other hotels across the country, led by UHOA, to offer workplace training for the apprentices. The apprentices were trained in four occupations of Food Production (Chefs), Front Office Management, House Keeping and laundry and, food and beverages services. So far, up to 67 percent

Teacher's social dialogue held in commemoration of World Teacher's Day



Mr. Filbert Baguma of UNATU (top), Ms. Mariam Seguya Nalubega of RDC, Kiboga (bottom) provide their inputs on the discussion at the teachers' social dialogue ©UNESCO Uganda

The social dialogue offered educators the opportunity to voice a range of pressing issues, while reflecting on their commitment to the education sector and the welfare of their learners. Challenges raised by participants included: teacher well-being, salaries, working conditions, and access to healthcare, lack of recognition and rewards, sexual harassment, as well as poor infrastructure. The educators also voiced desire for more accessible training programs, workshops, and resources that can help them stay updated with evolving educational practices.

"I want to commend all teachers for diligently delivering your responsibilities amidst all the challenges you continue to encounter. You are our heroes," Ms. Mariam Seguya Nalubega, Resident District Commissioner (RDC) Kiboga District. 🌍



The apprenticeship graduates © ILO Uganda



Stephen Opio, Head of Office ILO Uganda © ILO Uganda

of the graduates either been retained at their hotels of training and got employment while others started their own small businesses related to the Hotel service sector.

The apprenticeship graduates came from diverse backgrounds, and for Samuel Mambo, this day was a long time coming. Having lost all hope for achieving an economic livelihood to support his parents and ten siblings, Samuel had thoughts about returning to South Sudan, a place his family had fled when he was ten in search for safety. Thanks to the apprenticeship programme, Samuel is now a trained Chef at the White Castle Hotel in Arua City, and he specializes in baking elaborate-looking, tasty cakes.

For Umayya Sekyanzi, a host community member living with a hearing disability, the apprenticeship programme turned his life around for the better. Umayya's life had previously turned upside down when he suddenly lost his hearing in 2009 due to an illness. Even then, he managed to obtain a degree but there were no employment opportunities in sight. "Life was very challenging, especially during COVID-19. People have bad attitudes about us." As part of the apprenticeship programme, Umayya was trained in food production at Agip Motel in Mbarara City. "This programme is inclusive. I pray that at least five special slots should be provided in this programme to other disabled persons, who are often ignored by the community. If opportunities are given to us, it can improve our lives."

According to Stephen Opio, Chief Technical Adviser of the PROSPECTS Programme and Officer-in Charge of the ILO in Uganda, government will be supported to scale up this apprenticeship programme as a pathway for increasing youth employability, in line with the Uganda National Apprenticeship Framework. He stated that the ILO is strengthening government and social partners ability to design and implement programmes that offer Decent Work opportunities including for self-reliance of refugees and host communities through apprenticeships and entrepreneurship among others. The ILO's Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) for Uganda is focused on; shared prosperity in a healthy environment; human wellbeing and resilience; and social dialogue and tripartism.

Speaking during the graduation ceremony, Ms. Susan Namondo, the UN Resident Coordinator urged the refugee and host community gradates to value life-long learning and commended Uganda's progressive refugee policy.

"The amazing thing about this apprenticeship programme, is that Ugandans and refugees were trained side-by-side, including some refugees from the East and Horn of Africa. This in part promotes regional integration." She further noted that the apprenticeship programme aligns with Agenda 2030 and Uganda's National Development Plan, both of which emphasize the need to address the youth unemployment.

Speaking at the same graduation event, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Netherlands in Uganda, Her Excellency Karin Boven, remarked how her country is happy to have provided financial support for the intervention through the PROSPECTS Partnership, and pledged to continue supporting the inclusive skills development agenda. Funded by the Netherlands, the PROSPECTS Partnership works to bridge the humanitarian to development nexus in the refugee response, bringing together the International Finance Cooperation, International Labor Organization, United National Children Fund, United Nations High Commission for Refugees and the World Bank. The five agencies work closely to devise collaborative and innovative approaches for inclusive job creation and education in contexts characterized by forced displacement. 🌍

MT. RWENZORI MARATHON: UNDP TAKES CRUCIAL STEP TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF UGANDA'S TOURISM SECTOR

By Joel Akena, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)



UNDP Resident Representative, Ms. Elsie Attafua, (centre), captures the moment with a group of marathon participants just before the race begins ©UNDP Uganda

Uganda, named the Pearl of Africa by the great Sir. Winston Churchill is a richly gifted nation with a diverse cultural heritage, biodiversity and an all-year-round conducive tropical climate that has made it one of the most sought-after destinations for tourists around the world.

It is home to Africa's big 5, the spectacular Rwenzori Mountains, the highest non-volcanic non-orogenic mountains in the world. Subsequently, Uganda's tourism sector contributes 7.7% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) opening new opportunities for women and youth. For instance, before the COVID19 pandemic hit, the sector employed 589,300 people (3.6 % of the total employment). As such, the National Development Plan (NDP III), Uganda's current economic framework aspires to make the country one of the top five tourism destinations in Africa by 2025.

The Rwenzori mountain-range, sometimes referred to as the "Mountains of the Moon", spans an area of 996-sqkm and has been at the heart of Uganda's tourism for decades. It is a host to 70 different mammal species, over 210 bird species including the Albertine Rift endemic and some of the world's rarest plant species.

Despite these statistics, tourism around the Rwenzori Mountains has fought to get back on its feet since the COVID19 pandemic, struggling to realize its inherent economic potential. Even more worrying are the effects of climate change on its snow-capped peaks.

In such context, UNDP embarked on several initiatives in the past three years to enable the sector to bounce back and ensure it benefits the local communities who need it the most, while catering to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 13) for climate action and environmental friendliness. In 2021, UNDP joined the Government of Uganda on International Mountains Day under the theme "Sustainable Mountain Tourism" to support national efforts aimed at the recovery of the sector that had been critically hit by the COVID19 pandemic. The project sought to create jobs for the youth, women, and men and to rebuild resilient livelihoods through greener development pathways.

In 2022, UNDP joined Uganda Wildlife Authority and other key partners in the first-ever Mt. Rwenzori Marathon, which, besides its health implications, was aimed at shining a spotlight on the potential that the ranges harbor for the sustainable development of the country and highlight the effects of climate change plaguing them. The exercise which took place on 3 September 2022, attracted both professional and amateur runners keen to be a part of Uganda's evolving tourism journey.

This year, UNDP extended its efforts once again as the second Mt. Rwenzori Marathon took place on 2 September 2023. As with the previous run, the marathon consisted of a 42km full marathon, a 21km half marathon and a 5km family fun-run.

Highlighting the essence of the marathon, the UNDP Resident Representative, Elsie Attafua noted the need for a climate friendly eco-system in the areas surrounding the Rwenzori Ranges.

"Climate change is affecting the Rwenzori Mountains – a UNESCO World Heritage Site - in different ways. The most visible is the rapid loss of glaciers which have resulted in destructive floods coupled with a pattern of less frequent but heavier rainfall. We are convinced that through the Rwenzori Marathon, UNDP is creating awareness on the urgent need for decisive global scale climate action and conservation of Rwenzori Mountain ranges' unique biodiversity," Attafua said.

The marathon was also a way to scout out new talent in athletics and provide opportunities for the local population to improve their livelihoods.

Attafua stated that "As we work with you all to build forward better from these unprecedented crises, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development continues to be our compass in co-creating cutting-edge solutions to development challenges. We firmly believe that tourism - a labor-intensive sector with multiple links across the economic value chain - represents an opportunity to uplift local communities and stimulate socioeconomic growth. This marathon affords us a unique opportunity to broaden meaningful economic participation of the Rwenzori community in the tourism value chain; and thereby advance prosperity and drive inclusive and sustainable development."

This year's run attracted up to 2,000 local and international runners across 14 different nations, adding to the relentless efforts by the Organization to the United Nations SDGs.

Ms. Attafua emphasized that Uganda possesses numerous attractive tourism destinations, including the mountains in the rift valley and yet their potential remains a largely unexploited resource. 🌍

