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GOVERNMENT AND UNITED NATIONS LAUNCH JOINT PROGRAMME FOR DATA AND STATISTICS *By Michael Wangusa, United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO)*



First Deputy Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Rebecca Kadaga with UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Susan Ngongi Namondo, UN Heads of Agencies and Senior Government officials during the launch of the Joint Programme for Data and Statistics (JPDS) in Uganda on 30 January 2024 in Kampala ©UN Uganda

The joint programme is a strategic instrument to create catalytic change in the improvement of the quality, relevance and use of SDG data and statistics in Uganda.

Government and the United Nations System in Uganda have launched the Joint Programme for Data and Statistics (JPDS) in Uganda on 30 January 2024 in Kampala. The US\$ 41,898,295 joint programme implemented by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) and 12 UN entities in Uganda is anchored on Uganda's third National Development Plan (NDP III) 2020/2021 - 2024/2025, the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021-2025 and the Third Plan for National Statistical Development (PNSD III) 2020/21-2024/25.

The joint programme is a strategic instrument to create catalytic change in the improvement of the quality, relevance and use of SDG data and statistics in Uganda consistent with international human rights and gender equality norms and principles. The joint programme aims at improving the capacity of the National Statistical System to produce, disseminate and use data and statistics.

While launching the joint programme, First Deputy Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Rebecca Kadaga speaking on behalf of the Prime Minister noted that, "as a country, we are at that critical take-off stage where we must continuously and simultaneously plan ahead, reflect on progress and weigh the options on the best way forward towards sustainable social and economic development across all sectors."

OVERVIEW

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- Improving Food Standards
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State Minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Hon. Amos Lugolobi said, “I am confident that this initiative will revolutionize our National Statistical System to tap into mainstreaming administrative and citizen generated data into the realm of official statistics.”

While the Chairperson of the Board of UBOS, Dr. Albert Byamugisha observed that “the joint programme will greatly enhance the Development of the National Statistical System (NSS) and make the Bureau’s mandate more achievable by bringing all stakeholders on board.”

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In his remarks Executive Director of UBOS, Dr. Chris Mukiza noted that, “the joint programme was conceived mainly to close several gaps that have persistently affected Uganda’s data ecosystem despite all the progressive initiative over the years including lack of baseline information for some SDG indicators, slow pace of producing data series from administrative sources, limited technical skills for compilation of new SDG indicators and harnessing data from non-traditional sources; inadequate financial resources to procure requisite equipment for data collection and analysis and inadequate human resources.”

UN Resident Coordinator in Uganda, Susan Namondo called “the launch a celebration of a new approach. Several UN agencies were supporting the Government on data and statistics, but this was in a fragmented way, so a lot of synergies remained untapped. The new approach would augment the good work already happening.”

Twelve (12) United Nations (UN) agencies have partnered with the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) to develop a Joint Programme for Data and Statistics in Uganda are the following: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Entity for Gender Entity and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Health Organisation (WHO), the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the International Office of Migration (IOM) and United Nations Global Pulse (UNGP).

The launch was attended by representatives from Government, Development Partners, civil society, faith and cultural leaders, the private sector, academia and research institutions and the media. During the launch the findings of the status review of data and statistics in Uganda were disseminated. Technical experts during the panel discussion re-affirmed the critical role of data and



UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Susan Ngongi Namondo delivering her speech during the launch of the Joint Programme for Data and Statistics (JPDS) in Uganda ©UN Uganda



Executive Director of Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), Dr. Chris Mukiza delivering his speech during the launch of the Joint Programme for Data and Statistics (JPDS) in Uganda ©UN Uganda

statistics in tracking and accelerating progress on SDGs in Uganda. They also highlighted the need to consolidate existing and build new partnerships in the implementation of the Joint Programme for Data and Statistics in Uganda. The launch drew commitment from partners to support implementation of the joint programme for data and statistics in Uganda. 🌐



WFP'S SHIFT TOWARDS SELF-RELIANCE AMONG REFUGEES AND HOST COMMUNITIES

By Caroline Ariba, United Nations World Food Programme (WFP)



Hon. Hilary Onek, Minister for Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees (5th from left); Hon. Bright Rwamirama, Minister of State for Animal Industry (6th from left); Ms. Susan Namondo, UN Resident Coordinator (centre); Mr. Abdirahman Meygag, WFP Uganda Country Representative (4th from left); H.E. Ann Kristin Hermansen, Norwegian Ambassador to Uganda (6th from right) and H.E. Kevin Colgan, Ambassador of Ireland to Uganda (third from right) during the launch of the Self-Reliance Model at Oruchinga Refugee Settlement on 27 February 2024 ©WFP Uganda

Hundreds of refugees and members of host communities gathered at the Oruchinga Refugee Settlement football pitch in Isingiro District to witness the launch of the Self-Reliance Model (SRM) amid heavy down pour.

The February 27 event, mostly a showcase of long-term resilience interventions that lie ahead, was organised by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP).

In the face of limited funding and unpredictable climatic conditions, the SRM was established by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in collaboration with the Government of Uganda and key implementing partners. Through the SRM, US\$15 Million from the governments of Ireland and Norway will go towards fostering the integration of different strategies to promote income generation, social protection, social norms change, and financial literacy.

Speaking at the launch, Mr. Abdirahman Meygag, WFP Uganda Country Representative reiterated the importance of enabling refugees and host communities to transition from aid dependence to having the tools and knowledge to meet their own food needs.

"Refugees have communicated for so long that they do not want to depend on aid forever. They would like to be given the tools to take care of their families so that they can live a fulfilling and dignified life," he said. "The Self-Reliance Model is our response to refugees' requests. Our assistance should support refugees to get back on their feet. It is not sustainable or even desirable to keep people on aid forever."

Through the SRM model, WFP has put in place a harmonized system to measure progress towards self-reliance which will be used by the government and all other actors. Hon. Hilary Onek, Minister for Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees re-echoed these perks, and those of the SRM in general.

"We have already seen from WFP that it is possible to build self-reliance and that after people receive emergency humanitarian response, they can stand on their feet and transform their own lives," the minister noted. "Uganda has become an example of what is possible when we prioritise humanity over fear, compassion over division and solidarity over indifference. As the country that hosts the highest number of refugees in Africa, we know from experience that there is need for comprehensive development approaches that go beyond immediate humanitarian support."

While phase one of the model will be implemented in the Southwestern and West Nile refugee settlements in Uganda, the target is to ultimately reach every refugee deemed ready for the transition to self-reliance. With fertile soils and two rainy seasons, those with a knack for Agriculture will be supported to flourish through SRM. Today, among many other endeavours, WFP is supporting communal farming for refugees and host communities by providing them with services such as solar-powered irrigation.

The Norwegian Ambassador to Uganda, Ann Kristin Hermansen applauded the SRM as a chance for refugees to become resilient to several shocks.

“Refugees and host communities should be given an opportunity to improve their livelihoods and venture into income-generating activities. This is captured well in the Self-Reliance Model where Norway has contributed US\$3m,” she said.

Ms. Susan Namondo, UN Resident Coordinator in Uganda emphasized the UN’s commitment to innovative interventions that holistically address the challenges that refugees are facing.

“The Self-Reliance Model is an example of a tool that will enable not just WFP but also other UN agencies, partners and government to not only implement self-reliance projects but be able to measure progress, learn and improve services,” she said.

A delighted Kevin Colgan, Ambassador of Ireland to Uganda and Rwanda said the SRM was a chance for WFP to go beyond emergency response and see refugees and their host communities thriving.

“The Self-Reliance Model will create economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable refugee responses in Uganda,” he added. 🌍

A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION: Uganda, FAO’s evaluation of the national food control system set to improve food standards

By Agatha Ayebazibwe, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)



Stakeholders from Uganda’s food control system at the final assessment workshop at Hotel Africana, Kampala on 2 February 2024 ©FAO Uganda

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the Government of Uganda concluded an eight-month assessment of Uganda’s food control system with a final workshop in Kampala where high level policy makers endorsed the recommendations of the final assessment report and committed to implementing its strategic plan.

The assessment is part of “Strengthening of Capacities and Governance in Food and Phytosanitary Control,” a 5-million-euro project funded by the European Union (EU), which began in November 2022. The project entails technical support and working with Competent Authorities and other leading institutions in 12 African Union Member Countries. It is designed to build up capabilities, strengthen governance and improve strategic planning around two main components: food safety and plant health.

The EU recently granted the project an extension, allowing four additional assessments to be carried out in the region. Uganda is one of the countries benefiting from the extension. In the coming weeks, its government will conduct a phytosanitary capacity evaluation with the support of the International Plant Protection Commission Secretariat.

The initiative aligns with the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Policy Framework for Africa, a framework developed by the African Union (AU) laying the foundations for trade opportunities among AU Member States. This project is implemented closely with the African Commission Division for Rural Economy and Agriculture (AUC DARBE). Uganda is among six countries in the region to have concluded the food control safety assessment.

Assessment of the National Food Control System in Uganda

Project activities in Uganda began with an inception and training workshop in May 2023. A team of FAO food safety experts worked closely with 35 focal points from local Competent Authorities for food safety and relevant stakeholders to gather data and information across several system dimensions. Once the data was collected and analysed, the FAO team conducted field visits and interviews. It produced a draft report on the status of the country's food control system with recommendations to improve it.

Pivotal to the project was the introduction of the FAO/WHO Food Control System Assessment Tool, a unique instrument developed by both United Nations agencies to assess the national food control system comprehensively by examining the entire food chain, including production, distribution, retail market, and consumers. Ultimately, the assessment aims to assist Uganda in adhering to international standards that will allow greater regional harmonisation and trade.

Conclusion of the project and the final workshop

The final workshop culminated the assessment, with stakeholders, experts, and officials from ministries involved in Uganda's food control system convening to review and endorse the findings and recommendations of the assessment, agree on priorities, and develop a strategic action plan to facilitate their implementation.

The key moment of the workshop was on February 2, when high-level officials from Ministries across the country's food control

system approved and endorsed the recommendations and a shared vision, committing to implement the strategic action plan stemming from the assessment, promote synergies and engage donors.



This assessment is critical, as it helps Uganda assess its capacity and readiness to cater for food hygiene and address contaminants in agrifood sector, allowing to address public health concerns about food borne diseases and Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)," said Dr Antonio Querido, FAO Representative in Uganda.

Querido noted underscored the importance of the assessment saying that it allows the country to identify gaps and weaknesses in its food control systems, paving the way for upgrading its institutional and infrastructure capacity for food control through targeted investments and capacity building initiatives.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF), Commissioner for Crop Inspection and Certification, Mr. Paul Mwambu, expressed gratitude to FAO and the EU for providing technical expertise and funding for the survey, whose results will serve as the foundation for strategic interventions.

"In the past few months, we have seen significant advancements in improving food control in Uganda. We identified and trained 35 committed Focal Points, providing them with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively carry out their responsibilities and enhancing their capacity to conduct future assessments," he said.

The assessment outcomes will help shape the future of food safety in Uganda" 🌍



Empowered women diligently sun-drying silver fish, preserving tradition while nurturing livelihood ©FAO Uganda



UGANDA STEPS UP EFFORTS TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC FROM SECONDHAND TOBACCO SMOKE

By Elise Tcheutchoua Yonkeu, World Health Organization (WHO)



Participants during an awareness raising campaign on the negative impact of tobacco smoke on the health of second-hand smokers, Entebbe, Uganda @WHO Uganda

David Komaketch is a 37-year-old man who lives in Mbale, Uganda. A father of three, David was constantly exposed to tobacco smoke, which has put him at risk of cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. In 2016, he suffered respiratory distress, a frequent problem among second-hand smokers.

"Although I have never been a smoker, I was in constant contact with tobacco smokers. Often, I was exposed to cigarette and shisha smoke on official trips with colleagues or when going out to restaurants or nightclubs," he said.

Just like other secondhand smokers, continuous exposure to tobacco smoke had negative consequences for Komaketch. "In 2016, I experienced respiratory difficulties, and, after an examination, the doctor found that my lungs were affected by smoking. He therefore recommended that I avoid all contact with tobacco products".

Exposure to secondhand smoke is a problem in Uganda, and young people are more affected with 19.7% of whom (over 1.7 million) are exposed to tobacco smoke at home, while 30% (2.7 million) are exposed in enclosed public places.

As part of Uganda's efforts to protect current and future generations from the harmful effects of tobacco, the country ratified the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) in June 2007 and subsequently passed the Tobacco Control Act in 2015. Article 12 of this law bans smoking in public places, workplaces, and means of public transport, protecting secondhand smokers like Komaketch from the health problems caused by tobacco smoke.

However, there are several challenges to implementing the smoke-free article, including the growing presence of new tobacco products, such as shisha.

"Tobacco is one of the main causes of cardiovascular disease, premature death, and disability worldwide, and shisha is a flavored tobacco product that is more dangerous than cigarettes," said Dr Yonas Tegegn Woldemariam, WHO Representative to Uganda. "Smoking shisha for 40 minutes is equivalent to smoking 100 cigarettes. This is a health challenge that requires strong actions," he added.

Between 2022 and 2023, WHO supported the Ministry of Health to train 157 law enforcement officers and 15 national trainers from five regions to equip enforcers with skills and knowledge and foster awareness raising of the ban on smoking in public places to ensure compliance. The training was followed by enforcement activities in the targeted Cities of Mbale, Jinja, Hoima, Masaka, and Kabale.

"In addition to the 2015 Tobacco Control Act, which bans smoking in public places, the law bans importation and consumption of shisha in the country," said Ms. Christine Ahimbisibwe, Program Officer, Mental Health Division at the Ministry of Health.

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

With financial support from WHO and in collaboration with district health officials, police, and the media, the Ministry of Health conducted 5-day enforcement activities in 86 public places within the five targeted regions in December 2023. “We were able to destroy confiscated shisha pots and arrest 83 offenders,” Ms. Ahimbisibwe added.

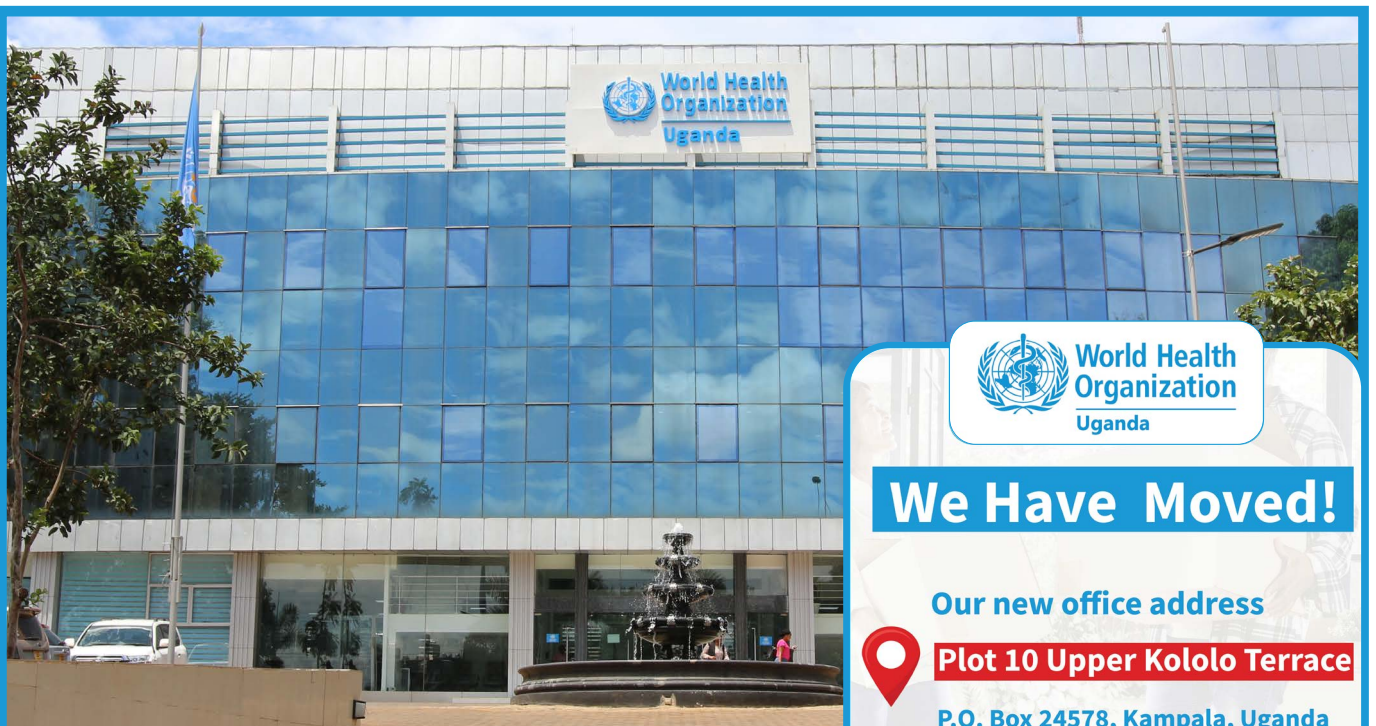


Participants during an awareness raising campaign on the negative impact of tobacco smoke on the health of second-hand smokers, Entebbe, Uganda @WHO Uganda

The enforcement of the smoke-free law in the identified cities served as an awareness raising and a warning against smoking in public places across the country.

Since December 2023, David says he has seen an increased presence of anti-smoking signages across the city, including in hotels, restaurants, and nightclubs. “My friends and colleagues have stopped smoking in front of me. I feel safer now,” he said.

“WHO will continue to support the government’s enforcement efforts to ensure full compliance with the tobacco control law and to protect the public from exposure to secondhand smoke. Another urgent action is to support the country move tobacco farmers to alternative crops,” Dr. Hafisa Kasule, WHO technical officer for non-communicable diseases, concluded. 🌐



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WHO OFFICE RELOCATION NOTICE

The World Health Organization in Uganda has relocated. The new office address is Plot 10, Upper Kololo Terrace. WHO is committed to continue working with its partners to support the Government of Uganda in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 3 on Good Health and Well-being.

RACHEL'S STRENGTH AS SHE NAVIGATES THE TRIALS OF MOTHERHOOD WITH HOPE AND SUPPORT

By Rebecca Nyiriimana Ahaadi, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)



Rachel tenderly pours water over her son's head, providing relief and easing the pain of hydrocephalus ©UNICEF Uganda

Rachel's days in the Kyaka II Refugee Settlement are tough and draining but this has not deterred her unwavering motherly love.

From the moment she wakes up until she finally rests her weary body at night, her life revolves around the care of her one-year-old son who faces a multitude of challenges due to hydrocephalus—the buildup of fluid in cavities called ventricles deep within the brain.

With a child on her back, crying in uneasy pain and being patted by Rachel to sleep, she narrates the story with a voice filled with anguish as she recounts the struggles, she and her son endure daily.

"His head swollen significantly, his vision fading, my son is unable to experience the simple joys of childhood – sitting, standing, or seeing the world around him. Instead, his cries of discomfort fill the air, a constant reminder of his pain," Rachel reveals.

"As you can observe, I am unable to sit down and have a conversation. I must constantly stand, soothing him on my back," Rachel explains, her voice sombre and low-pitched. Her own needs take a backseat to the relentless demands of caring for her son.

The journey has been long and difficult for Rachel and her son. Countless trips to hospitals, from Fort Portal in western Uganda to Mulago National Referral Hospital in Kampala, yielded slight improvement.

"His head was akin to a split avocado," Rachel remarks, describing the severity of his condition. But then, a glimmer of hope emerged in through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Finn Church Aid's (FCA) Interventions for Disability in Early Childhood (IDEC) programme.

Through this programme, Rachel and her son found a lifeline. Directed to Mbale Regional Referral Hospital in eastern Uganda, with the assistance of FCA, the child received the medical attention he so desperately needed. "I am immensely grateful for the IDEC program by UNICEF and FCA," Rachel expresses, her gratitude overflowing. The once-swollen head, began to decrease in size, signalling a potential return to normalcy for the child.

The support does not end there. The IDEC project, spanning across five districts in Western Uganda including Mubende, Kassanda, Kikuube, Kabarole, and Kyegegwa, provides essential financial and emotional assistance to families like Rachel's. Caregiver skills training and community support groups offer invaluable resources for mothers navigating the challenges of raising children with disabilities.

Yet, Rachel's journey is far from over. Her son's visual impairment remains untreated, a persistent concern for his mother." Mbale Hospital in eastern Uganda suggested seeking medical help for his eyes at Mbarara Hospital in western Uganda," Rachel explains, "I am currently awaiting our turn for assistance through the IDEC project."

In the face of adversity, Rachel finds strength in the solidarity of her community and the unwavering support of organisations like UNICEF and FCA. As she continues to walk this challenging path alongside her son, she remains steadfast in her determination to provide him with the love and care he deserves. And in her eyes, there is a glimmer of hope. 🌈



ASUMPTA APUTU'S JOURNEY TO LEADERSHIP: Learning to write my name paved my journey to be a community leader

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



Asumpta is a community activist supporting social norms transformation in Bidibidi Refugee Settlement ©UN Women Uganda



(L-R) Asumpta in a group photo with fellow community activists and UN Women staff during a visit by the Norwegian Ambassador, H.E. Anne Kristin Hermansen, who paid a courtesy call to the group ©UN Women Uganda

Asumpta Aputu, a 33-year-old South Sudanese refugee in Bidibidi Refugee Settlement in northwestern Uganda, never had an opportunity for formal education at an early age.

Raised by an uncle in Yei County of South Sudan, Asumpta's childhood was marked by a lack of formal education and an unjust distribution of domestic responsibilities.

"My uncle believed that educating a girl child was a total waste of his resources. He only sent his boys to school while me and my cousins were subjected to tasks of digging and cooking for the family," she recalls.

In 2016, after violence erupted in her country of South Sudan, Asumpta was forced to flee to Uganda alongside many other families from her community.

"I never understood English, communicating and writing in the new environment became one of my greatest hurdles," she remarks.

In 2022, Asumpta through a community leader in Bidibidi Settlement learned about the English for Adults (EFA) training programme that equips refugee and host community women with literacy, numeracy and leadership skills. The EFA programme is one of the interventions under UN Women's integrated four-year Leadership, Empowerment Access and Protection (LEAP) project funded by Government of Norway and implemented in refugee hosting districts of Yumbe, Adjumani, Terego and Kyegegwa. The EFA programme implemented by UN Women's partner, Refugee Law Project aims at improving lives and employment prospects of refugees by ensuring that refugees and host women gain knowledge and skills to engage in economic empowerment initiatives as well as self-advocacy, which involves refugees speaking for themselves for inclusion in existing humanitarian response planning and programming.

Asumpta is one of the 1,478 (1,154F, 324M) refugees who benefited from the EFA programme in 2023 through the Government of Norway funding.



I'm so grateful to have been chosen to participate in this programme. I often got challenged whenever there were meetings in the community requiring us to write down our names. I felt embarrassed that I couldn't write my own name at my age. Since the training, I have been able to write my names clearly in addition to expressing myself to a health worker whenever I'm unwell as well as have interactions with school authorities about my children's education," Asumpta explains with a smile.

Asumpta is now using her leadership skills to advocate for ending violence against women and girls, sharing information on sexual reproductive health for adolescents as well as liaising with school authorities to retain girls longer in school and reintegrate those who dropped out due to various reasons.

"I have been able to reintegrate 20 girls back to school. Majority of these girls dropped out of school due to pregnancy related issues," she says.

Asumpta's impact reverberates through Bidibidi Refugee Settlement, where community members applaud her for instigating significant behavioral changes. Her efforts are instrumental in disseminating vital information, especially regarding supporting adolescent youth to lead meaningful lives. 🌍

RESTORING DIGNITY FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE:

Bridget survived Obstetric Fistula *By Prisca Uwera, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)*



Tomas Lundström, Counsellor for Health from the Embassy of Sweden (right) in Uganda speaking to participants during the launch of the Survivors Treatment and Obstetrics Fistula Prevention Programme (STOP), in Namayingo District ©UNFPA Uganda



Bridget was surgically repaired at the UNFPA-supported medical camp and completely healed of obstetric fistula.

It is the morning of the launch of the Survivors Treatment and Obstetrics Fistula Prevention Programme (STOP), in Namayingo District, and part of the invited delegation has one detour, a visit to some of the survivors of obstetric fistula at Buyinja Health Centre IV.

The six women, each with a unique story, arrive one by one on the popular Ugandan motorcycle 'boda boda'. Each woman has lived through unimaginable fear, anguish, sadness, and isolation that words cannot describe.

Among the women, Bridget's story is particularly poignant. At 16 years of age, a girl is supposed to enjoy painting a carefree and unstoppable dream on her canvas of life, to experience young love and joys of girlhood. For Bridget, now 18 years old, her 16th birthday marked the beginning of a forced adulthood, one that she was not prepared for, one that would go beyond the uncertainty and fear of bringing a child into this life, while being a child herself, to isolation, pain and fear.

"When I went into labour, I was very scared, and at first, I didn't want to tell my parents, so I attempted to push the baby at home..." Bridget reflects. After hours of trying to deliver, she later went to one of the nearest health facilities where she was told that the baby was too big for her to deliver vaginally.

They referred her to a hospital in a neighbouring Busia District. She later underwent a caesarean section to deliver a healthy baby. Unbeknown to her, the damage had already been done. When she returned home, she realized that she had faecal incontinence - she had obstetric fistula. She stayed in this condition for four months before getting help from one of the village health team members, who was sensitizing the community about fistula services available at the UNFPA-supported Ministry of Health obstetric fistula medical camp.

In Uganda, about 1,900 women get obstetric fistula every year. Due to the high teenage pregnancy rates in Namayingo, girls in this area are especially vulnerable to obstetric fistula. And yet, many of the affected women remain undiagnosed due to limited knowledge, myths and misconceptions. They are unable to access the effective life-saving repair to restore their lives and dignity. They are left to endure the agony of fistula, a condition that not only robs them of health, but also casts them out from the community.

Bridget was surgically repaired at the medical camp and completely healed of obstetric fistula.

I am now healthy, and I can sit in the community and among friends without feeling ashamed. Everyone would shun me, but not anymore," she smiles shyly.

UNFPA—the United Nations Population Fund, with support from the Maternal Health Thematic Fund (MHTF), collaborates with the Ministry of Health of Uganda to deliver impactful maternal health programmes for Uganda. One of these key programmes includes skilling of midwives and medical doctors to ensure safe birth and restorative services for those that undergo complications like obstetric fistula.

Listening to these strong women's stories, Tomas Lundström, Counsellor for Health from the Embassy of Sweden in Uganda, is moved. He says to the women, "Although you are thanking us today, we should be thanking you. You have overcome so much adversity and yet you continue to reach out to others. Thank you for your strength!" He also thanked the men who supported their spouses during their time of need.

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) and the Embassy of Sweden in Uganda joined the UNFPA team at the launch of the STOP. The visit to Buyinja health centre was an opportunity to see first-hand the work that the MHTF is doing in this region. Globally, SIDA is among the top 10 contributors to the UNFPA's MHTF. It is through these core funding streams that UNFPA is able to deliver critical sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and maternal and child health interventions for women and girls across the world.

As the sun's rays get stronger, the delegates bid the women farewell, as they leave to join the launch of the new Fistula programme in Namayingo. The USD 3 million STOP will build on the MHTF supported maternal health initiatives that UNFPA implements in Uganda, especially obstetric fistula initiatives. The STOP is funded by the Embassy of Iceland in Uganda and will work to create the much-needed awareness and social norms shift as well as restorative support for women in Namayingo for the next 3 years. 🌈



SHAPING INCLUSIVE FORESIGHT: A Fun, Educational Approach

By Amy Lynn Smith, United Nations Global Pulse (UNGP)



Some of the Futures Cards ©UNGP

UN Global Pulse launched an innovative tool aimed at establishing futures and foresight thinking worldwide. Dubbed Futures Cards, the initiative seeks to empower individuals and teams to engage in participatory foresight approaches, envisioning a more inclusive and equitable future for all.

Launched at the 2023 Dubai Futures Forum, Futures Cards represents a gamified learning experience designed to foster inclusive and decolonial decision-making aligned with the UN Principles for Future Generations. With recommendations on one side and thought-provoking “what if” prompts on the other, participants are encouraged to explore power dynamics, historical inequalities, and potential biases within their foresight processes.

Claudia Saénz Zulueta, Strategic Foresight Senior Analyst at Global Pulse, emphasises the importance of involving diverse perspectives in shaping the future. She underscores the cards’ role in shaping inclusivity — a yardstick to building a just and equitable world. “The cards are intended to prompt collaboration, individual reflection — or both,” Zulueta says.

The journey to develop Futures Cards began in early 2023 through a research project aimed at making foresight accessible to everyone. Led by Zulueta, and supported by Design Strategist Jimena Califa, the project team utilised foresight exercises such as visioning to imagine an ideal future for foresight practices. Through brainstorming and conceptualisation, they curated content validated by outside experts to ensure inclusivity and diversity in the cards’ design.

“

Our first idea was to make a document like a report or a zine, but we realised the cards are easy to engage with, as they have short prompts — like a bite-sized taste of something new you can bring to the table to nurture your discussion and invite more people to actively collaborate and share ideas or reflections,” Califa says.

Notably, Futures Cards reflect a kaleidoscope of perspectives and experiences, as Shanice Da Costa, Creative Communications Officer at UN Global Pulse, crafts illustrations that embody diversity and inclusion. The cards’ launch at the Dubai Futures Forum featured interactive booths where visitors could engage with prompts and share their insights, fostering dialogue and collaboration.

Available for free download, Futures Cards come in digital and printable formats, encouraging individuals and teams to explore new ideas, facilitate brainstorming sessions, and assess the inclusivity of their foresight practices. UN Global Pulse advocates for a diverse and participatory approach to foresight, emphasising the importance of collective action in shaping a more just and equitable future.

Zulueta underpins the urgency of actively engaging in foresight amidst current challenges and uncertainties. She encourages individuals to seize the opportunity to shape a diverse and inclusive future, highlighting the transformative potential of Futures Cards in sparking meaningful conversations and driving concrete action.

In summary, UN Global Pulse’s launch of Futures Cards represents a significant step towards promoting foresight thinking and fostering inclusivity in envisioning the future. By providing a platform for diverse voices and perspectives, Futures Cards empower individuals and teams to actively participate in shaping a better tomorrow for generations to come.

You can download the Futures Cards on UN Global Pulse’s website: <https://www.unglobalpulse.org/document/futures-cards/>.



ESHAN ISMAIL HAMID SAEED'S QUEST FOR EDUCATION AMIDST ADVERSITY

By Protection Team, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)



Eshan in the middle with her mother talking to a UNHCR Protection staff member in Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement ©UNHCR Uganda

Uganda hosts 1.6 million refugees. The numbers continue to rise due to heightened conflicts, particularly in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sudan, and the adverse impacts of drought in the East and Horn of Africa. As of February 2024, 25,000 new refugees had entered the country since the beginning of the year. Sudan contributes the largest share of the new arrivals, emphasizing the pressing need to address the issues fueling displacement. Uganda's refugee population comes from countries including the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Sudan, Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Burundi, Rwanda, and Ethiopia.

While watching news at home with my family in April 2023, we learned of a military clash. My sibling, Mashain, a student at Al Ahfat University for Women, got caught on campus during the conflict. Intensifying fighting forced residents to stay indoors for safety. After 3 days, water and electricity were cut off. Faced with hardship, our father, who was working at a camp for the internally displaced people, urged us to flee. With our mother and siblings, we sought refuge in White Nile State with our paternal uncle. Along the way, we encountered military roadblocks.

In June 2023, my family and I shifted to Kosti Town to be reunited with my father. The areas neighboring the camp where my father worked faced frequent attacks, leading civilians to flee for safety. Following my father's advice, we remained inside our house as a precautionary measure. Despite the ongoing threats, we continued living there until December 2023.

On 19 December 2023, intensified fighting in our area forced hundreds of residents to flee. We hid in one of the rooms in the house until the following day when my father instructed us to flee to Uganda for safety.

In panic and despair, we gathered our belongings and headed to the taxi park, en route to Uganda. Traveling by bus to Juba, and later reaching the Nimule border, we finally crossed into Uganda. Upon arrival, we made our way to Kampala, seeking refuge with a relative.

In Kampala, our relative accompanied my mother to the Old Kampala Police Station, where she reported our status as Sudanese refugees. Subsequently, we were referred to the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) in Kampala, and on 21 January 2024, we were relocated to Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement.

Grateful for the peaceful environment, I hope it will provide the stability needed to continue my education. My aspiration is to become a medical doctor dedicated to saving lives in conflict areas. 🌍

NATIONAL REFLECTION MEETING: CELEBRATING SUCCESSES OF UNESCO-PEKING UNIVERSITY INITIATIVE IN UGANDA

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



A Religious Leader (standing) commits on behalf of his constituents, the plans and interventions towards ensuring sustainability of the project ©Ministry of Education and Sports

The National reflection meeting for the UNESCO-Peking University initiative on promoting girls' health education in the era of COVID 19 implementation in Uganda. The meeting was held on 20 February 2024 with stakeholders reflecting on the processes, outcomes, lessons, challenges and opportunities of implementing the collaborative project.

The event was attended by over 40 stakeholders from the 2 implementation districts, Peking University of China, UNESCO, Ministries Departments and Agencies, other UN Agencies, Education Development partners, organized by Ministry of Education and Sports.

The initiative in Uganda was implemented under the four objectives of; contributing to updating of existing adolescent health education operational guidelines; enhancing the capacities of teachers and other school stakeholders to provide adolescent friendly health information, education and services; increase SRHR/GBV information, education; and services and generating data for evidence-based learning and programming.

The culmination of the 2-year UNESCO-Peking University Joint Project on Health Education for Girls in Africa in Uganda marks a significant milestone in efforts to address the multifaceted challenges facing young girls. The one-day hybrid workshop organized in Kampala provided a platform for sharing experiences about project implementation progress. The project, initiated in January 2022, has seen remarkable strides in enhancing access to vital health services and education for adolescent girls across the two pilot districts of Luuka and Butaleja.



Ms. Rosette Nyanzi, Gender Technical Advisor at the Ministry of Education and Sports ©MoES

A pivotal aspect of the project's success has been the collaborative efforts across key sectors, with ministries of Education, Gender, and Health working together to tackle the complex issues affecting young people. By fostering synergies between schools, health centres, and communities, the project has forged strong linkages that are essential for effective service delivery and support.

Speaking at the event, Ms. Rossette Nyanzi, the project lead implementer and the Gender Technical Advisor at the Ministry of Education and Sports expressed her heartfelt gratitude to UNESCO and the Peking University of China for the support and the transformative initiatives that have been realized as a result of the joint collaboration. Ms. Nyanzi articulated that the project's impact transcends mere interventions; it signifies a profound recognition of Uganda's commitment to fostering inclusive and equitable education for all. "We want to extend our deepest gratitude to our partners, UNESCO and PKU, for their unwavering support and commitment to our shared vision. Your collaboration has been instrumental in catalyzing positive change and empowering communities in Luuka and Butaleja and while we acknowledge the invaluable contributions you have made thus far, we humbly request for even more resources, more expertise, and more collaborative efforts to expand the reach and impact of our initiatives," said Ms. Nyanzi.

Dr. Patricia Machawira, UNESCO Regional Advisor, Education for Health and Wellbeing, ESA Region officiated at the event and in her address underscored the stark reality that girls still face barriers and disparities that limit their access to education, hinder their ability to complete schooling, and deprive them of the full benefits of learning. "Despite the significant progress made towards gender equality in education, girls continue to have fewer opportunities than boys to gain access to, complete and benefit from education." Dr. Machawira further highlighted that strengthening capacities of girls is therefore critical to the efforts towards the achievement of SDG 4 on education and SDG 5 on gender equality.

“ I would like to commend the leaders in Luuka and Butaleja districts for showing active commitment and participation in the project that has greatly enhanced the capacities of the beneficiaries.”
Prof. Ma Peking University of China.

Throughout the implementation period, key achievements have been realized, including the development of crucial resources such as the school health training manual, School health service standards, School health service implementation guidelines, and Learner reading materials. Moreover, over 240 health workers have been trained in adolescent-friendly services, 340 student peer educators, over 250 school managers, and over 300 teachers trained in SRHR, GBV and MHPSS; bolstering the capacity of district stakeholders to provide essential care to young people.

The project also spearheaded the development and piloting of Standard Operating Procedures aimed at strengthening referrals and linkages between schools and health facilities. Additionally, 20 community dialogues involving a wide array of stakeholders have facilitated meaningful discussions on sexual reproductive health and HIV needs, ensuring that the voices of adolescents and parents are heard and addressed.

However, amidst these successes, challenges persist, as highlighted during the meeting. Sandra Mastula, a 15-year-old learner from St. Mary's High School Kapisa in Butaleja, shed light on the ongoing struggles girls face to stay in school especially during the menstrual cycle. "Due to inadequate infrastructure, including a lack of clean water, changing rooms, and toilets, we find ourselves (girls) missing out on education because we make the difficult choices of staying at home during this period. We cannot compete favorably because while we miss school, lessons continue to go on." Sandra underscored. Such obstacles not only impede access



Sandra Mastula, a learner from St. Mary's High School Kapisa in Butaleja, reading an informational resource at the sidelines of the workshop ©MoES



Some of the resource materials developed with support from this initiative. ©MoES

to education but also underscore the urgent need for continued efforts to improve school facilities and support systems for adolescent girls.

Ms. Mary Kasasa, a Senior Woman Teacher at St. Mary's School Kapisa in Butaleja district, expressed heartfelt appreciation for the transformative impact of the project on her perspective and approach to education. She lauded the project as an eye-opener, acknowledging that its initiatives have broadened her understanding of the school as more than just an educational institution. "Instead, I now see the institution as a vital rehabilitation center, where me and my colleagues work tirelessly to support learners facing multifaceted challenges including child mothers and fathers." Expressed Ms. Kasasa.

The reflection workshop was a comprehensive event, showcasing the impactful outcomes of the Project. It featured a panel discussion, presentations, and interactive sessions that delved into the project's successes, challenges, and opportunities. Highlights included presentations on Uganda's progress amidst COVID-19, practical insights from the field, and discussions on strengthening linkages between schools and health facilities. The workshop fostered collaboration and emphasized the importance of sustainability, empowerment and collaboration for the future of girls' education in Uganda. 🌍



UNDP AFRICA REGIONAL DIRECTOR LAUNCHES THE MAKERERE UNIVERSITY INNOVATION POD (UNIPOD)

By Ashley Prigent, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)



UNDP, Government and university leaders launch the Makerere University Innovation Pod (UniPod) ©UNDP Uganda

UN Assistant Secretary-General and UNDP Regional Director for Africa, Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa visited Uganda as part of the UN delegation to attend the Group of Seventy-Seven (G77) and China Conference (Third South Summit), hosted by the Government of Uganda.

On the sidelines of the G77 Summit, Ms. Eziakonwa on behalf of UNDP launched the Makerere University Innovation Pod (UniPod) alongside Hon. Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation Monica Musenero. The Makerere Unipod is part of the 13 UniPods to be established across the continent under UNDP's timbuktoo initiative, a new development model that aims to transform Africa's public universities in to centres of innovation. Through timbuktoo initiative UNDP aims to mobilize and invest US\$ 1 billion of catalytic and commercial capital to transform 100 million livelihoods and create 10 million new jobs over the next 10 years. timbuktoo, the UNDP's pan-African approach to supporting startups focuses on the whole startup ecosystem by connected government policy, universities, corporate institutions, development partners, catalytic partners, and commercial investors.

The Makerere University Innovation Pod (UniPod), which will create a space for young people to leverage their creativity for good, provides a unique opportunity for the exploration of development solutions that are contextualised and responsive to development

challenges facing communities in Uganda and Africa at large. Established strategically within Makerere University, the UniPod will seamlessly link with research and knowledge already in place at the institution through its faculty of technical experts and is designed to tap into the innovative and entrepreneurial spirit of young people to promote impact-driven entrepreneurship, foster innovation, and influence business solutions to address youth unemployment on the continent. The 200-capacity UniPod is open to all Makerere University students as well as members of the public on request.

"Innovation is a core part of the ecosystem of industrialization. Today, we gather to launch a space for young people to create the future and solutions that will transform Uganda, Africa and the world. This is a vote of confidence – for Africa's youth, and I have the firm conviction that Uganda is one of those beacons where the ideas that will transform our world will be birthed." said Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa, UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director, Regional Bureau for Africa. 🌍



HARNESSING THE POWER OF VIRTUAL TRAINING: UNCAP's Leap into the Future with VILT

By Uchechukwu Patricia Emodi, United Nations C4ISR Academy for Peace Operations (UNCAP) at Regional Service Centre Entebbe (RSCE)



Three Cyber Security Trainers Test-running a Session at the UN Regional Service Centre in Entebbe ©UNCAP

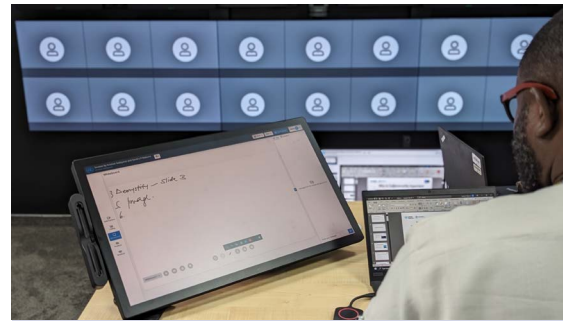
In an era where digital transformation shapes every aspect of our lives, the United Nations C4ISR Academy for Peacekeeping Operations (UNCAP) has made a significant leap in peacekeeping training methodologies with the launch of its Virtual Instructor-Led Training (VILT) capability at the Regional Service Centre Entebbe (RSCE) in Uganda.

This initiative marks a crucial milestone in the evolution of peacekeeping operations training, illustrating a strong commitment to harnessing digital transformation for global peacekeeping excellence.

Developed through a strategic partnership with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the NATO Communications and Information Agency (NCI Academy), the VILT capability is a testament to the power of collaboration in advancing peacekeeping efforts. This partnership draws on NATO's extensive experience in defence and security and the NCI Academy's technological expertise to create a state-of-the-art virtual training environment. This initiative is not only a step towards digital innovation in peacekeeping but also a clear example of effective multilateral cooperation.

The VILT platform is designed to transcend geographical barriers, enabling peacekeepers worldwide to access high-quality training without the limitations of physical presence. This innovative approach not only facilitates wider access to training but also aligns with contemporary needs for agility and adaptability in peacekeeping operations. It represents UNCAP's dedication to innovation and its commitment to equipping peacekeepers with the skills needed to navigate modern conflict scenarios effectively.

For other UN entities in Uganda and beyond, the VILT capability opens up new avenues for enhancing training programs. Its flexibility, cost-effectiveness,



A View of the Interactive Trainer Screen Inside the Virtual Instructor-Led Training (VILT) at the UN Regional Service Centre in Entebbe ©UNCAP



A View of VILT from the Operator's Desk at the UN Regional Service Centre in Entebbe ©UNCAP

and interactive nature make it an invaluable tool for addressing the diverse training needs across various sectors, including humanitarian aid, environmental conservation, and health initiatives. VILT platforms can be customized to deliver specific content tailored to each organization's needs, incorporating real-time interactions and scenario-based learning environments essential for practical training.

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IOM UGANDA, OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER TRAIN OFFICIALS ON MIGRATION GOVERNANCE

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



The IOM Uganda Chief of Mission, Sanusi Tejan Savage, has emphasized the importance of collaboration and concerted action among entities tasked with migration governance.

Mr. Savage spoke in Entebbe on 20 February 2024, at a training workshop for government officials on the Migration Governance Framework in respect of the Flexible Mechanism on Migration and Displacement.

The workshop was a component of a collaborative initiative between IOM, UNHCR and the Government of Uganda, with funding from the European Union. Titled "European Union Support to Uganda's engagement on forced displacement and migration." The project aims to strengthen Uganda's national and sub-national institutions and systems to address the challenges of forced displacement and migration.

The Entebbe workshop is the first of three, with the others soon to follow in Mbarara and Fort Portal. Addressing the opening session, Mr. Savage reiterated that the crosscutting nature of migration governance makes cooperation an operational imperative.

"Migration governance is a cross-cutting issue with various key actors and mandates; If we talk about labour mobility, it has key actors like the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. If we talk about Refugees, we think of the Office of the Prime Minister, but also of border control (Ministry of Internal Affairs). For human trafficking – we think about Internal Affairs, Directorate of Public Prosecution," Mr Savage said.

Harnessing the Power of Virtual Training: UNCAP's Leap into the Future with VILT

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Moreover, the scalability of VILT allows for accommodating more than 32 participants, ensuring that UN agencies operating globally can offer consistent, high-quality training to all personnel. This is particularly beneficial for fostering a culture of continuous learning and operational readiness, essential attributes for organizations involved in complex global missions.

The collaborative features of VILT enhance the learning experience further by promoting engagement, knowledge sharing, and teamwork. Participants can engage in discussions, collaborate on projects, and benefit from a shared knowledge base, fostering a sense of community and enhancing the efficacy of cross-functional and inter-agency initiatives. Additionally, the ability to record and archive training sessions creates a valuable knowledge repository for current and future staff, aiding in the retention of institutional knowledge and supporting ongoing professional development.

From an operational perspective, VILT offers significant cost savings and efficiencies. Transitioning to virtual training sessions reduces the need for travel, accommodation, and venue costs, thereby lowering the environmental impact and financial burden on UN organizations. The flexibility in scheduling and the ease of updating training materials in response to new challenges ensure that personnel are always equipped with the latest skills and information.

In conclusion, the introduction of the VILT capability by UNCAP, in collaboration with NATO and the NCI Academy, represents a forward-thinking approach to peacekeeping training. It not only showcases a commitment to digital transformation and excellence in training but also provides a scalable, efficient, and collaborative platform for other UN entities to enhance their training programs. By leveraging the advantages of VILT, UN organizations can ensure their personnel are well-prepared, adaptable, and ready to contribute effectively to their missions, ultimately advancing the UN's goals of promoting peace, security, and sustainable development worldwide. 🌍



Participants at the training workshop for government officials on the Migration Governance Framework in respect of the Flexible Mechanism on Migration and Displacement ©IOM Uganda

He added: “If we can revitalize inter-ministerial cooperation; if we can strengthen inter-departmental collaboration; if we can breathe new life into inter-agency thinking about migration challenges, we shall end up with stronger migration governance.”

Among the topics covered by trainers included: Migration governance indicators and actors; Humanitarian-Peace-Development Nexus in migration and displacement response; migration and refugees in the National Development Plan III; the role of policy; and migration data management.

The workshop was formally opened by Mr. Roger Kaija Irumba, Under-Secretary for Relief, Disaster Management and Refugees in the Office of the Prime Minister. He, too, reiterated the importance of working together within the boundaries of statutory mandates. Migration, he said, has many actors with separate mandates derived from different laws. All actors needed to reflect on their respective mandates and work with others in a harmonious, complementary manner.



This workshop aims at helping all the stakeholders to be able to define clearly their role and particular contribution in respect of responding to migration and displacement,” Mr Kaija said. “We would want to harmonize our migration governance actions so that we move together in tandem with the expectations of Government from each entity.”



Under-Secretary Roger Irumba Kaija formally opens the training workshop ©IOM Uganda

Mr. Kaija highlighted Uganda’s exemplary response to international displacement, with the country hosting 1.6 million refugees, among the largest number globally.

In terms of migration governance in general, the country has the National Coordination Mechanism on Migration (NCM), which brings together several government and non-government entities, chaired by the Office of the Prime Minister.

However, Uganda is yet to finalize its National Migration Policy (NMP), which has been in the pipeline for more than a decade. IOM has variously supported the NMP process, which is currently being coordinated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The present Flexible Mechanism project will further support the validation of the draft NMP at national and regional levels. 🌍

FORGING A SAFER FUTURE: STRENGTHENING CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE IN UGANDA

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



A panel discussion on the released 2023 annual crime report and the crime trends in Uganda ©UNODC in Uganda

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Uganda has partnered with key justice institutions to enhance crime prevention strategies and strengthen the criminal justice system.

On 21 February 2024, the Uganda Police Force released the annual crime report for 2023, which revealed that 228,074 crime cases were registered in the year. The report revealed that 94,523 cases were under inquiry, 48,632 cases were not detected, and 84,907 cases were taken to court. Of the 84,907 cases that were taken to court, 27,125 cases received convictions, 10,096 cases were dismissed, 843 cases were acquitted, and 46,843 cases are still pending in court. Overall, the report revealed that on average, 19,004 cases were reported to Police monthly.

Against the release of this report, UNODC partnered with the Uganda Police Force and Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs to convene a national dialogue on 27 February 2024, to discuss the findings of the report and craft innovative solutions for addressing the evolving crime trends and the criminal justice system in the country.

The gathering brought together a diverse array of stakeholders, including the Uganda Police Force, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the judiciary, the Uganda Prisons Service, Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies, academia, media, civil society organisations, and development partners.

In Uganda, UNODC is implementing other initiatives aimed to strengthen crime prevention and justice system in the country. On 14 February 2024, UNODC in Uganda handed over a consignment of motorcycles and related safety equipment to the Directorate of Community Service at the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The consignment will support community service officers in conducting supervision, monitoring, and compliance of community service orders, as an alternative measure to imprisonment, in far to reach areas of Uganda in Eastern, Northern, Western, and Mid-central regions.



Ms. Sharon Nyambe (2nd left), the Head of Office, UNODC in Uganda, handing over a consignment of motorcycles to the Directorate of Community Service in the presence of Gen. Joseph Musanyufu (1st left), the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Internal Affairs ©Ministry of Internal Affairs

Similarly, UNODC in Uganda has taken proactive measures to address the issue of violent extremism and terrorism-related crimes within Uganda's prisons. From 20 to 22 February 2024, UNODC in Uganda, in partnership with the Uganda Prisons Service, convened a consultation meeting to develop comprehensive rehabilitation and social reintegration frameworks tailored to the needs of violent extremist prisoners. These initiatives not only seek to prevent radicalization within prison walls but also strive to equip individuals with the skills and support needed for a successful reintegration into society.

Extending beyond the confines of prison walls, UNODC in Uganda, together with Government of Uganda and civil society partners, held a strategic coordination and reflection meeting from 27 February to 1 March 2024 to assess progress in preventing and countering violent extremism crimes. This collaborative endeavour underscores UNODC's unwavering commitment to fostering resilience and promoting sustainable peace and security across Uganda.

As Uganda charts its path towards a safer future, UNODC remains a committed partner to the Government of Uganda and civil society actors in strengthening crime prevention and criminal justice in Uganda. 🌍



UN COUNTRY TEAM RETREAT - CHARTING PATHS TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN UGANDA

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



UN Country Team members at their retreat on 22 February 2024 ©UN Uganda

As the world navigates the complexities of sustainable development amidst a backdrop of evolving challenges, the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Uganda geared up for a pivotal moment of reflection and planning at a two-day retreat at Protea Hotel, Entebbe.

The strategic retreat, held on 22-23 February 2024, provided a safe space for candid reflection, strategic alignment, and collective visioning as the team embarked on the last two years of implementing the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF).

In her opening remarks at the UNCT retreat, Ms. Susan Namondo, UN Resident Coordinator, noted that the stakes were particularly high for Uganda, a nation brimming with potential yet grappling with multifaceted challenges. "As we convene to take stock of our achievements and confront our setbacks, we must candidly assess the successes and shortcomings of our endeavors in 2023, focusing mostly on the valuable lessons to inform our future actions," she emphasized.

"Our strategic vision must translate into actionable plans, encompassing advocacy on crucial issues such as human rights, inequality, inclusion, and conflict prevention," Ms. Namondo continued.

The retreat was not merely a routine gathering but a pivotal moment for fostering unity, camaraderie, and synergy in acceleration of the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in an ever-evolving global landscape.

"Africa is the future! To achieve it, we must overcome the challenges facing the continent, represented by the seven C's: Climate change (bearing the highest price); socioeconomic effects of Covid-19; Conflicts, the growing trend of Coup d'états; Cost of sustainable development being higher; Corruption; and the Cancer of violent extremism and terrorism," said Mr. Yacoub Ali El-Hillo, DCO Regional Director for Africa.

Mr. El-Hillo emphasized the need to invest in independent-minded young Africans and the power of conflict prevention due to its high associated costs. He added that these challenges all pertain to governance and leadership and if not carefully addressed, could hinder the desired development for Africa.



UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Susan Namondo, leading a reflection session at the UNCT Retreat ©UN Uganda

With each deliberation, a shared vision began to emerge—one that was anchored in resilience, innovation, and collective action.

The retreat resonated with a spirit of inclusivity and fresh beginnings as newcomers, including representatives from UNCDF, UNFPA, and UNDP, joined seasoned veterans in this collective endeavor.

"With limited resources and boundless needs, identifying and prioritizing investment pathways for accelerating progress towards the SDGs in Uganda is paramount," said Ms. Namondo.

At the heart of this gathering lay a profound aspiration—to clarify and fortify support for Uganda's transformation, undertake effective advocacy and joint programmes and initiatives. Furthermore, the agenda underscored the pressing need to streamline operational processes and gear up for the formulation of the next Cooperation Framework that guides UN's collaborative efforts in Uganda. 🌍



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