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UN UGANDA BULLETIN

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



GOVERNMENT AND UN DISCUSS KEY PRIORITIES AT JOINT STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

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



Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Robinah Nabbanja and UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Susan Namondo Ngongi Co-chairing the Government-UN Joint Steering Committee meeting on 9 May 2024 ©UN Uganda

The annual Government-United Nations Joint Steering Committee meeting to review progress on implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2021-2025) was held in Kampala on 9 May 2024. The meeting was co-chaired by the Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Robinah Nabbanja and UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Susan Namondo Ngongi.

The meeting was attended by representatives from Government (Ministries, Departments and Agencies) including Ministers, Permanent Secretaries and technical staff; the Local Development Partners Group (LDPG); Private Sector and Civil Society Organisations.

The meeting reviewed collective humanitarian and development efforts by the UN system in 2023 in support of implementation the third National Development Plan (NDP III). The meeting also provided strategic guidance on pertinent issues including enhanced coordination and key priorities going forward to benefit all Ugandans.

OVERVIEW

- Building Self-Reliance Model
- Proactive nutrition initiative
- Transforming Plastic into Sewing Threads
- Promoting physical and mental health
- Police key in ending AIDS
- University students debate Health
- A woman's Journey to Justice
- Empowered to thrive
- Teacher Turned Coffee Entrepreneur
- Fostering Sustainable Agribusiness
- From Sugarcane Fields to Apprenticeship
- Migrant Workers to Restart Life
- Youth Driving Force to Prosperity
- UN Entebbe Empowers Military and Police
- Responding to Organized Crime
- Thousands of trees planted



DECADE OF ACTION



The Prime Minister highlighted Uganda's partnership with the UN, which has contributed significantly to development. She emphasized the importance of aligning the next UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2026 - 2030 with the country's national objectives, particularly the implementation of the fourth National Development Plan (NDP IV), whose formulation is underway. UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Susan Namondo Ngongi, stressed the need to strategically position the partnership for the future, with a next UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2026-2030 expected to be finalized by the end of next year. She noted that the collaboration between the Government of Uganda, the UN, and multiple development actors remains crucial for driving progress.

The meeting demonstrated the commitment to multilateral cooperation and partnership progress, paving the way for continued advancement in Uganda's development and humanitarian efforts.

Several key areas of focus emerged from the meeting, which will guide joint efforts moving forward:

- **Disability Inclusion:** Deliberate integration of disability considerations in all programming.
- **Health Promotion:** Prioritizing health promotion to reduce the disease burden.
- **Sustainable Urban Development:** Emphasis on well-planned towns and decent housing.
- **Strategic Growth Areas:** Aligning UN programmes with Uganda's strategy to grow tenfold in sectors like agro-industrialisation, tourism, mineral beneficiation, and science and innovation.
- **Early Warning Mechanisms:** Strengthening these systems to enhance preparedness for shocks and disasters.
- **Improved Coordination:** Breaking silos to ensure better coordination and avoid duplication of efforts and resources 🌍



Participants at the annual Government-UN Joint Steering Committee meeting to review progress on implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2021-2025) on 9 May 2024 ©UN Uganda



BUILDING RESILIENCE: THE SELF-RELIANCE MODEL IN UGANDA

By Badre Bahaji, United Nations World Food Programme (WFP)



Hasan and his partner packing honey in their shop in Nakivale Refugee Settlement. ©WFP/Badre Bahaji



Yvette's harvested eggplants near their solar-irrigated vegetable garden ©WFP/Badre Bahaji

We learned beekeeping from our parents, the traditional way. Now, we want to modernize it, so the business can improve our living standards,” said Hasan Nkubito who is engaged in beekeeping in Nakivale Refugee Settlement.

Having been in Uganda for over 10 years, Hassan hopes honey can support his family to be self-reliant.

“I came to Uganda from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I have spent many years here in Uganda but I don't need to continuously be supported. I want to work for myself,” Hassan said. “We started beekeeping to be able to provide for our families. I managed to buy cows, and invest in my children's education,” he adds.

Refugees in Uganda face multiple and intersecting challenges. With funding for refugee programmes dwindling and increasingly unpredictable weather conditions, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has collaborated with the Government of Uganda and other partners to support refugees and host communities transition from depending on humanitarian assistance to meeting their own food needs. The Self-Reliance Model, funded by the governments of Ireland, Norway and United Kingdom, promotes income generation, access to social protection, social norms change, and financial skills.

WFP is already supporting communal farming for refugees and host

communities by providing them with solar-powered irrigation to produce enough to eat and sell through their vegetable gardens. Under the Self-Reliance Model, WFP aims to scale up such interventions to enable more people to earn a decent living from farming and other activities.

At only 19-year-old, Yvette Nyiramushiga has engaged in solar-powered vegetable farming since 2022. “I was four when my family fled to Uganda from DR Congo. I want to support my family so we no longer depend on WFP's assistance,” said Yvette. “We eat some of what we produce and take some to the market. At the last harvest, I made 100,000 Uganda shillings. I am saving some of the money I get from farming to invest in a tailoring business,” she adds.

Conflict and climate crises in the region continue to drive the influx of refugees into the country. In 2023, at least 130,000 new refugees were registered in Uganda, most fleeing conflict in Sudan, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

“The United Nations is committed to providing innovative interventions that holistically address the challenges that refugees are facing and give them tools to earn a decent living and contribute fully to society,” said Ms. Susan Namondo Ngongi, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Uganda. “The Self-Reliance Model is an example of a model 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.” 🌍

EMPOWERING REFUGEE COMMUNITIES THROUGH PROACTIVE NUTRITION INITIATIVES

By Leah M. Cherotich, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)



Care Group mothers in Kyangwali refugee settlement served power porridge (millet flour, water, eggs, and avocado) to children below 6 years old in Katikara village in Kyangwali refugee settlement in Kikuube district on April 22, 2024. Kikuube district is one of the beneficiaries of the UKAID funded Building Resilience and Effective Emergency Refugee Response (BRAER) program implemented by UNICEF ©UNICEF Uganda

A success story is unfolding in Rubaba Village, a model community in Kamwenge District that has taken proactive steps in tackling malnutrition.

Every month, the community gathers for a Village Health Committee meeting under Primary Health Care and Community Empowerment Initiative (PHCCEI) led by the area chairman, Mugisa William. During these gatherings, children are monitored for any nutrition challenges with growth monitoring equipment like MUAC tapes, height boards and Salter weighing scales provided by UNICEF with funding from UKaid. Mothers are also counselled by members of the Village Health Teams (VHTs) on best nutrition practices and sensitised through dramatic presentations of music and dance.

"In 2022, the district health team officials came and assessed the community and noted several challenges. We then formed a Village Health Committee and produced an action plan which tackles all the pain points they identified," Mugisa says.

Their commitment to this action plan is evident in the tangible results seen through the quelling of malnutrition in the village and success in implementing complementary projects like improved access to safe water and cultivation of kitchen gardens.

Emmanuel Tumusiime, a Kamwenge District local government nutritionist, underscores the significance of adherence to the PHCCEI action plan by the VHTs in addressing nutritional deficiencies comprehensively.

"Central to Rubaba Village's success is the pivotal role played by VHTs, whose training equips them with the knowledge and tools to screen for malnutrition at community level. Armed with growth monitoring equipment and nutritional training from UNICEF, VHTs engage mothers, sensitise communities, and refer cases to health centres for further management, when necessary," Tumusiime says.

The statistics in Rubaba Village are promising and the leaders consistently refer to it as a malnutrition-free zone. Kwebiha Agnes, a VHT, says that they are not about

to relax while explaining that this stringent adherence is why their village maintains its green status.

"We haven't always been malnutrition-free," she explains. "When we started our work, a few cases were identified as red and referred for further management at the regional referral hospital, while the yellow cases were managed by the VHTs. We are always alert as we comb through the village looking out for any new cases. The good thing is that our mothers are also supporting these efforts from their homes by using MUAC tapes to monitor their children and making sure their children are eating nutritious meals."

Among the caregivers attending the meeting is 65-year-old Beatrice Bonabana, who has brought her one-and-a-half-year-old grandson, Godwin, to the meeting. She says the child was left in her care after her daughter-in-law abandoned her son. With limited resources and lacking proper education, Bonabana fed the child the same food she ate at home, leading to his malnourishment.

"Fortunately, a VHT visited us during a monitoring visit and discovered that the child was in the yellow zone. They taught me how to properly feed Godwin by teaching me how to make a locally made multi-mix meal called 'ekitobero' which resolved the malnutrition soon after."

Kebirungi Medinah, the Rubaba PHCCEI Ward Agent, says that the mothers in the area have

2 ZERO HUNGER

always had access to plenty of food because the Tooro sub region where Rubaba Village is found is food-rich, however there was a gap because mothers lacked basic nutrition knowledge.

"Caregivers in the area previously fed children with carbohydrate rich food like cassava and mandazi while ignoring other food groups including proteins and vitamins but thanks to the VHTs knowledge sharing efforts, the mothers are now well informed," Kebirungi reflects.

Kebirungi vividly remembers the case of 5-year-old Catherine, who was left in the care of an elderly grandmother struggling with alcoholism. By the time she was discovered, Catherine was in the red zone because she was neglected and only fed with cassava. The child was placed in the care of a compassionate caregiver by the village leaders and underwent aggressive treatment by the VHTs with ekitobero and Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) provided by UNICEF.

"As I speak now, Catherine is in perfect health," she says.

Stunting in Tooro

However, challenges persist, particularly in the Tooro sub-region. Tumusiime says that Tooro has the country's highest levels of stunting, a condition where a child is too short for their age due to chronic or recurrent malnutrition, reaching 42 per cent. He explains that stunting has far-reaching effects, including the impediment of physical growth and cognitive development.

Statistics from the Ministry of Education and Sports, show that the average result in Kamwenge District in the 2023 Primary Leaving Exams was a dismal 21 aggregates. Tumusiime attributes this concerning performance to the high prevalence of stunting in the district, emphasising its link to consequential cognitive impairment among children.

The World Health Organization highlights that malnutrition during the critical periods of growth and development, especially in early childhood, can lead to irreversible cognitive deficits.

Despite these challenges, Tumusiime remains optimistic that ongoing nutrition interventions in Kamwenge District will contribute to significant improvements in school performance over time.

"Addressing the root causes of stunting and its associated cognitive impacts and implementing interventions like those in Rubaba Village hold promise for fostering a healthier and more academically successful future for the children of Kamwenge District," he says.

A concerted effort

Sharon Nalunkuuma, a program manager with Kabarole Research and Resource Centre at the Kyaka II Refugee Settlement field office in Kyegegwa District says UNICEF's role is deeply intertwined with other actors in the pivotal task of addressing malnutrition in the refugee communities across western Uganda.

"Preventing malnutrition requires a comprehensive approach, encompassing maternal and child health alongside nutrition interventions. Working in close partnership with UNICEF, we have recognised that addressing stunting—a chronic issue requiring long-term support—is essential for ensuring the overall well-being of our community. To tackle stunting effectively, we have developed strategies in collaboration with UNICEF, including strengthening the care group approach," Nalunkuuma says. This has all been possible with funding from UKAID.



Care Group leaders read the nutrition cards supplied by UNICEFC in the Kyangwali refugee settlement in Katikara village in the Kyangwali refugee settlement in Kikuube District ©UNICEF Uganda



A medical officer administers Vitamin A supplement to Musimenta Derrick, 30 months old, at Butoole Primary School Kikuube district ©UNICEF Uganda

Care groups, comprising at least 10 mothers with children under two years or those who are pregnant, serve as vital channels for disseminating information and fostering community support.

"By identifying mothers during antenatal and immunization visits and organizing them into groups, we facilitate peer-to-peer education and knowledge sharing," she says.

In his capacity as a nutritionist at Kikuube District, Albert Mugabi highlights that UNICEF has supported efforts to scale up nutritional interventions, particularly micronutrient interventions and the management of acute malnutrition for children.

"UNICEF has aided in capacity-building efforts at the national level by training trainers and supporting regional rollouts. At the regional level, they train district teams who, in turn, educate community teams on various aspects of nutrition, including integrated management of acute malnutrition. Additionally, they provide support for deworming, vitamin A supplementation, food security, and routine outreach programs for nutritional assessment," Mugabi says. 🌍

TRANSFORMING PLASTIC INTO HIGH QUALITY SEWING THREADS

By Joel Akena, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)



Hellen Munyasa sorting thread in the production room ©UNDP Uganda

Plastic waste presents a serious global challenge. According to the United Nations, the world is producing 430 million tonnes of plastic per year – a staggering 66% of which are only used for a short period of time, including single-use plastics such as water bottles, food packaging and plastic utensils.

This brief life cycle has consequences: every day, the equivalent of over 2,000 garbage trucks full of plastic are dumped into our oceans, rivers, and lakes. As a result, plastic pollution is set to triple by 2060 if no action is taken.

In Uganda alone, current statistics from the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) show that the country generates 600 metric tonnes of plastics daily. About 40% of plastic waste is collected for disposal and 60% is left in the environment. Kampala, Uganda's capital city, itself generates 800,000 metric tonnes of plastic every year.

Faced with such urgency, Hellen Munyasa, a youth partner under the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Youth4Business Innovation and Entrepreneurship Facility is innovatively transforming plastics to high quality sewing threads through her company Helton Traders.

Through an innovative recycling process, the start-up collects plastic, shreds it into small pieces, mixes it with cotton waste, and transforms it into thread which is later sold in markets across Uganda.

By manufacturing locally, Helton Traders reduces costs incurred by textile traders from import taxes, transportation and enables faster delivery (4-7 days) to customers. Their sustainable and eco-friendly practices also appeal to businesses seeking an environmentally conscious supply chain.



When UNDP came in, they greatly helped us, and they are still helping us. We received a grant and are also receiving business training and mentorship. Through the forums we attended, we have been able to understand our business very well and have also been connected to major players in the manufacturing industry. This has enabled us to be investor ready," said Hellen Munyasa, Helton Traders.

With UNDP's support, Hellen has been able to forge partnerships with major stakeholders in the manufacturing industry, like Fine Spinners who have provided her with



Hellen Munyasa holding a thread role at the final production point ©UNDP Uganda

the machinery to produce final products for the market. Through platforms like YouthConnekt Africa, she has also connected to other young entrepreneurs in Kigali and Nairobi to generate ideas.

As the world commemorated World Creativity and Innovation Day 21 April 2024 the voices and visions of creative and innovative entrepreneurs such as Hellen Munyasa were amplified. Voices that advance creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship, and environmental protection as pathways to human development and empowerment of marginalized groups, particularly women and youth.

It is on this note that UNDP is working with the Government of Uganda and stakeholders to nurture Uganda’s creatives ecosystem, providing support to young entrepreneurs like Hellen who depend on the growth of this sector for their livelihood, and to create job opportunities for more young people. Hellen is a participant and beneficiary of the UNDP Innovation Challenge, which has supported 49 different individuals and enterprises in the creatives and cultural industry of Uganda.

The UNDP in Uganda Country Programme for 2021-2025, has prioritized inclusive and sustainable growth with a major focus on the youth. UNDP is already implementing the following initiatives to promote and support creative industries:

- Youth4Business Innovation and Entrepreneurship Facility
- SMEs4Trade initiative with a focus on harnessing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)
- PEARL Innovation Challenge in tourism



Factory workers sew textiles using thread from Helton Traders ©UNDP Uganda

- Rapid Project to Harness Nature and Technology to recover and build back a resilient tourism sector.
- Youth Re-Skilling and Entrepreneurship Training to tackle critical skills gaps.

Plastic pollution threatens our health, the environment, and socio-economic development. As we strive toward zero waste communities, we need everyone on board – Government, private sector, development partners, civil society, creatives, innovators, entrepreneurs, and communities – to tackle this global challenge and achieve a sustainable future for all. This is a call to action for all: join forces and address one of the most urgent challenges we face. Together, we can create a future that is more sustainable, resilient, and fair. Yes, it's possible! 🌍



UGANDA ENGAGES COMMUNITIES IN PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH ACTIVITIES AS PART OF THE WORLD HEALTH DAY COMMEMORATION

By Elise Tcheutchoua Yonkeu, World Health Organization (WHO)



Participants at the Walkthon event during the World Health Day commemoration ©WHO Uganda

The Ministry of Health, the World Health Organization (WHO), and its partners carried out awareness-raising and community engagement activities to commemorate World Health Day in Uganda. In line with the theme "My health, my right".

These activities included a public sports walk, mass screening for communicable and non-communicable diseases (NCDs), and a blood donation drive.

The event was organized at the WHO Country Office in Kololo, Uganda on April 14, 2024. It brought together the country's stakeholders, including government representatives, the UN family, development and implementation partners, and the media.

World Health is commemorated every 7th of April, this edition takes place just six years before the evaluation of countries' progress toward achieving universal health coverage, the Ministry of Health and WHO emphasized the need to strengthen collaborative efforts to support Uganda in ensuring equitable access to comprehensive health services.

"Ensuring that all Ugandans fully enjoy their right to health requires collaborative efforts from all sectors, partners, and communities under the one health approach," said Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng Oceru, Uganda's Minister of Health. "It is my appeal that we all channel our energies towards achieving universal health coverage in Uganda," she added.

During the "Walk the Talk" public sports walk, participants were encouraged to engage in activities that promote physical and mental health. With support from the STOP TB Partnership, Victoria University Medical Centre, and Uganda Blood Transfusion Services, participants were screened for non-communicable diseases, including diabetes, high blood pressure, and obesity, as well as communicable diseases such as HIV, hepatitis B, and tuberculosis.

Dr. Yonas Tegegn Woldemariam, WHO Representative to Uganda, welcomed the country's progress in key healthcare areas. "Uganda has made significant progress in reducing maternal and child mortality, as well as new HIV infections by 40% between 2010 and 2022. These re-



WHO Representative to Uganda Dr Yonas Tegegn Woldemariam with young people during the commemoration of the 2024 World Health Day ©WHO Uganda

sults are commendable, but further efforts are needed to ensure that all people in Uganda have access to integrated, person-centered health services," he said.

Dr. Tegegn added that implementing the existing public health policies, strategies, and guidelines, improving efficiency in the use of resources, and promoting community empowerment and participation will accelerate Uganda's progress towards achieving universal health coverage.

Like many other countries, Uganda is constantly affected by public health emergencies, including the recent Ebola outbreak, COVID-19, and the current food insecurity in the Karamoja region. The country also faces socio-economic challenges that result in unequal access to comprehensive health services, with more than half of its population not fully covered.

WHO continues to work with its partners, mobilizing financial and technical resources to support the country in improving its health system to achieve Universal Health Coverage. 🌍

ENDING AIDS BY 2030 IS A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY: UGANDA POLICE FORCES AS KEY STAKEHOLDERS

By Caroline Magambo and Agasha Tabaro, The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS)



A group photo of the participants who attended the dialogue ©UNAIDS Uganda

With support from the Embassy of Netherlands, UNAIDS in collaboration with Uganda AIDS Commission held a dialogue with top leadership of the Uganda Police Forces on 26th April 2024 at Hotel Africana.

The dialogue was geared towards sensitizing the police on the burden of HIV and the importance of removal of barriers for Uganda to achieve the 95 - 95 - 95 Global AIDS targets by 2025.

Since the re-introduction of the debate on the Anti Homosexuality Act in March 2023, there have been anecdotal reports from some districts arising out of the different interpretations of the law. Increased anxiety among service providers and the key populations, increased stigma, discrimination, and gender-based violence (GBV) against the equity populations in the districts, at facilities and in the communities have been reported.

“I am pleased to state that our collective work to end AIDS by 2030 as a public health threat is on the right track” said Care Group leaders read the nutrition cards supplied by UNICEFC in the Kyangwali refugee settlement in Katikara village in the Kyangwali refugee settlement in Kikuube District ©UNICEF Uganda, the UN Resident Coordinator in her remarks. “It is on the right track because of the collective and relentless efforts by government, development partners, civil society, communities, and stakeholders, including your effort and support to the HIV response.” She added.

The meeting discussed the dissemination of HIV prevention messages, the revised Equity Plan, and the national commitments therein and importantly, publicizing the Ministry of Health Director General of Health Services and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution’s Circulars. The Circulars focus on the continuity of health services based on non-discrimination, and on the management of cases to minimize arrests and human rights violations, in the current socio-legal context. The meeting also discussed issues of safety and



UN Resident Coordinator, Ms. Susan Namondo Ngongi delivering remarks during the dialogue ©UNAIDS Uganda

security of the potentially affected communities and how best these could be addressed.

Officers from the police leadership welcomed the dialogue, expressing willingness to support ongoing HIV prevention initiatives. They also called for continued engagement with the UN family, including UNAIDS, and with the Uganda AIDS Commission to educate all levels of the police and the wider community, on strategies to end AIDS as a public threat by 2030.

The event was also attended by the UNAIDS Country Director, representatives from the Embassy of the Netherlands, the Acting Director General Uganda AIDS Commission, and members of the National HIV/AIDS Equity Steering Committee.

Currently, with support from Embassy of Netherlands, UNAIDS is working with partners on a programme to support affected communities, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalized members access sexual and reproductive health services, including HIV services. The programme also aims to have the sexual and reproductive health rights of these groups institutionally respected and protected.🌍

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH ISSUES ADDRESSED AT INTER-UNIVERSITY DEBATE IN UGANDA

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



A student from Makerere University Negates a motion during the finals of the Inter-University debate at Makerere University ©MoES



A student of Makerere University Jinja Campus takes to the floor to propose a motion ©MoES

The event aimed to raise awareness about pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and GBV, reflecting UNESCO's report on alarming rates of unprotected sex and Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among students.



A section of students following the proceedings of the debate ©MoES

In a concerted effort to address pressing issues surrounding Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) in tertiary education, the Ministry of Education and Sports, in collaboration with UNESCO, organised an Inter-University Debate held at Makerere University.

The event, which took place on 26 March, 2024, brought together representatives from various O3 (Our rights, Our lives, and Our future) Plus Implementing Universities, students, government officials, and UN Agencies. The primary objective of the debate was to shed light on the multifaceted challenges faced by students regarding SRH and to explore potential solutions.

Under the overarching theme, "The Role of Health and Well-being of Students for Improved Education Outcomes at HTEIs in Uganda," universities such as Makerere, Ndejje, and Kampala International University engaged in rigorous discussions and analyses.

Topics ranging from early pregnancies to HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence (GBV) were thoroughly examined, drawing upon data from a 2018 UNESCO study that revealed alarming rates of unprotected sex and sexually transmitted infections among students.

The debate also featured topics such as integrating sexuality education into academic programs and the effectiveness of peer-to-peer initiatives in delivering SRH messages.

Dr. Hajjat Safina Museene, Acting Director of Higher Education and TVET, underscored the importance of empowering students with accurate and timely SRH

information. Similarly, Prof. Anthony Muwaga Mugagga, representing Makerere University, lauded the initiative for fostering intellectual discourse on critical issues affecting student wellbeing.

"The issues of today (SRH) are key and salient, HIV and Aids are still visible among us. Unfortunately, most young men and women are more concerned with fear of pregnancy than these deadly scavengers on our lives," said Prof Mugaaga Anthony, Principal of Education School at Makerere University.

Teddy Chimulwa, National Programme Officer, highlighted the multifaceted nature of the challenges faced by students and emphasized the role of initiatives like the O3 Plus project in empowering students and fostering healthier campus environments.

"As a country, it is more than urgent that we intensify our efforts in empowering our learners with correct, scientific, and age appropriate and contextualized information about their lives and health," said Dr. Safina Museene, Acting Director Higher Education and TVET.

As part of the broader framework of the O3 Plus project, initiated in 2022 across various Ugandan universities, the Inter-University Debate represents a pivotal intervention aimed at reducing unintended pregnancies, HIV infection, GBV, sexual harassment, and substance abuse among students.

This event served as a significant step towards addressing SRH challenges in Ugandan tertiary education, marking a collaborative effort towards a healthier and more supportive educational environment. 🌍



BREAKING GROUND: BETTY LAKER'S JOURNEY TO JUSTICE IN KITGUM DISTRICT, UGANDA

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



Laker peeling cassava to prepare a lunch meal for her family @ UN Women/Samuel Wamuttu



Laker (2nd right) together with three of her children that stay with her on the reclaimed piece of land that was for her late father @ UN Women/Samuel Wamuttu

It is a Tuesday afternoon as the sun beats down relentlessly, casting its fiery gaze upon the earth below. In a nearby garden, 47-year-old Betty Laker diligently works, her weathered hands delving into the earth as she uproots cassava tubers.

Despite the evident delay in her meal preparations, she remains focused, determined to provide nourishment for herself and her family.

In the tranquil village of Oryang, nestled within the Kitgum District, a remote locale 481 kilometers to the north of Uganda's bustling capital city, Kampala, she finally begins to find solace. Here, she seeks refuge from the torment inflicted upon her by her late husband's relatives.

"They prevented me from cultivating on my husband's land after he passed away. I had no means to feed my four children," she recounts, the anguish of her past hardships evident in her eyes as she reflects on the challenges she faced over the years.

Amidst the relentless barrage of insults and ongoing abuse that endangered her very existence, Laker finally reached her breaking point and made the difficult decision to relocate to her ancestral home, the place of her birth - Oryang Village.

Little did she know that leaving her husband's home in neighboring Palabek-Kal Sub-county, situated in Lamwo District, would not free her from oppression, as her own clan imposed similar constraints upon her.

"I had come to settle on the land of my father being the only surviving child. However, my uncle informed me that I have no entitlement to any portion of the land, as it has already been divided among his younger children," she recounted with a heavy heart.

Like in many parts of Uganda, the prevalence of violence against women and girls, including challenges related to land ownership rights, remains distressingly high.

Today Laker is glad that she received help from the Legal Aid project office in Kitgum, who wrote a letter and summoned her relatives who had illegally settled on her ancestral land.

"At first, they were very arrogant, but they were later advised to divide the land and I was allocated 2 pieces measuring about 2 acres in total. I constructed in one while the other piece is cultivation," Laker explained.

I'm glad to report that ever since we had meetings, they ceased disturbing me plus my children over this land.

“

I'm very grateful to Legal Aid and UN Women for rescuing me. I had lost hope because I didn't expect to be barred from accessing even our ancestral land from my own family members," she added.

Laker is among the many women that are being supported through UN Women's Spotlight initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls, including sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices in Uganda through a European Union (EU) Funding. 🌍

EMPOWERED TO THRIVE: JULIANNA ROSE ABOVE HER COMMUNITY'S EXPECTATIONS FOR WOMEN

By Prisca Uwera, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

In the heart of Amudat District, tales abound of girls as young as 12 years old being forced into marriages. At 23 years old, Julianna knows just how lucky she has been to enjoy her youth without the threat of being married off to a stranger.



Juliana's story serves as a source of inspiration for girls in Koro village, challenging the notion that marriage is the only option for adolescent girls @ UNFPA Uganda

In her community, girls are often married off to older men, driven by the economic exchange of cows. "Girls are usually married off to older men because old men are the ones who have a lot of cows to give to the family," Julianna explains, highlighting the harsh reality of her surroundings.

In this region, half of the girls are forced to get married or have had their first child before their eighteenth birthday. The region also has one of the highest incidences of gender-based violence including female genital mutilation.

Juliana Natee, a determined 23-year-old from the village of Koro, has always possessed a skill for hairdressing. In 2021, she seized the opportunity to join a training programme organised by UNFPA and BRAC. Little did she know this decision would shape her future in ways she never imagined.

As part of the training, Julianna honed her hairdressing skills even further. She embraced the chance to become a trainer, sharing her expertise with others in her community. When the programme called upon her to provide hairdressing services, Julianna saw it as more than just a task – a chance to showcase her talent and potential. With the support of UNFPA and BRAC, Julianna transitioned from a participant in the training programme to a proud business owner.

“

At the end of the programme, they [UNFPA in collaboration with BRAC] gave me start-up capital and salon equipment..." reflects Julianna.

Armed with start-up capital and equipment provided by the organisations, she opened her hair salon. The venture attracted a steady

stream of customers, especially during the peak months from August to January. She says, "On a good day in the peak seasons, I could make up to Shs. 230,000 (\$58) daily through braiding women's hair."

The income generated by her salon exceeded Julianna's expectations, enabling her to reinvest in her business and expand her services. She now runs a separate retail shop during seasons when salon services are not in high demand. She marvels at the lucrative nature of the salon business compared to traditional skills like tailoring. Julianna understands the importance of skilling in business, recognizing it as a pathway to financial independence and empowerment.

In her community, Julianna's entrepreneurial spirit garners respect from both men and women. With her source of income, she defies societal expectations and takes control of her future. Even in her romantic life, Julianna asserts her independence. Dating someone does not mean surrendering her autonomy; instead, it empowers her to stand up for herself.

Reflecting on her journey, Julianna acknowledges the challenges girls face in her community, especially those who lack access to education or resources. She recognizes that programmes like the one she participated in could be life-changing for young women seeking alternatives to early marriage and dependence on men.

Juliana's story serves as a source of inspiration for girls in Koro village, challenging the notion that marriage is the only option for adolescent girls. Through her resilience and determination, she proves that women can chart their paths and create brighter futures for themselves with the proper support and opportunities.

UNFPA, through the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage has skilled over 40,000 girls with business and livelihood skills to earn their own income and control their bodies and lives in Uganda. 



TEACHER TURNED COFFEE ENTREPRENEUR: MICHAEL SSENGOBA'S INSPIRING JOURNEY

By Agatha Ayebazibwe, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)



Michael Ssengoba, a 47-year-old resident of Mulungi omu village, Kagooge Sub-county in Nakasongala District. He is a former teacher turned coffee farmer, who testifies that coffee farming transformed his life ©FAO Uganda

A life-changing story about how coffee changed the life of Michael, a 47-year-old resident of Mulungi omu village, Kagooge sub-county in Nakasongala District

Before COVID-19, Michael was a primary school teacher, a job he had done for 15 years. From this job, he earned 400,000 shillings monthly, and for a long time, he believed that this was going to be his life. He lived with his wife and four children, his mum and a few of his siblings.

Most of his earnings went to paying school fees for his children while he did small jobs on the side to raise money for other basic needs.

In 2019, he heard of a new FAO project that aimed to organize farmers in my village into groups to teach them about better farming practices. Despite being unsure whether he wanted to stay and do agriculture, Michael joined the group anyway. Together with 29 other members, they named their group Twena Twezimbe coffee producers' group.

"We began attending meetings and training sessions where experts taught us on how to cultivate seasonal crops such as beans, maize, and tomatoes, as well as other agricultural practices. I started my farming journey with beans," says Michael.

He was one of the most active individuals in the group and also opened his land and plantation to be a learning field. He was given coffee seedlings to plant on a quarter-acre of land.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020, he had more time at home. Rather than stay idle, he invested more time and his savings to expand his coffee plantation to 1.5 acres. He also took more interest in training to care for coffee plants by weeding, pruning, mulching, and ensuring they thrived.

"Through the project, we were taught how to hole, plant, space, and care for coffee plants, as well as how to identify and address pests and diseases. They supported us throughout the journey on a crop cycle basis," he explains. The group was also taken to Mityana for an exchange visit, one that turned his life around.

"The farmers we visited were rich. They were open to us about their coffee earnings, as well as the challenges. By the time we returned home, I had made up my mind on what I wanted to do with my life."

While coffee has been a part of Michael's life story, being the crop from which his parents earned income to pay for his education, Micheal testifies that he wasn't aware of its potential as an income earner. True to his word, when the pandemic eased and schools started reopening, Michael submitted his resignation. He chose farming over his professional job, a decision he has not regretted.

EU AND UNCDF RENEW COLLABORATION TO FOSTER SUSTAINABLE AGRIBUSINESS GROWTH IN UGANDA

By Rachael Kentenyngi, United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)



President Yoweri Museveni with Jan Sadek, the Ambassador of the European Union (EU) to Uganda; Myriam Ferran, Deputy Director General at DG International Partnerships (DG INTPA), European Commission; and Sophie De Coninck, Head of Uganda Country Office, UNCDF at the launch of START Facility Phase II ©UNCDF Uganda

The European Union Delegation in Uganda, in partnership with the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) on 06 March 2024 announced the launch of a new initiative aimed at promoting sustainable agribusiness growth throughout Uganda.

The facility, known as Support to Agricultural Revitalization and Transformation (START) Phase II, represents an investment of EUR 11.5 million (UGX 48.9 billion) co-financed by the European Union. This initiative is geared towards catalysing economic development, job creation, and sustainable growth in the country.

Building upon the success of START Phase I, where over 50 SMEs received UGX 13.5 billion in concessional loans and reimbursable grants, creating markets for over 120,000 farmers, START II is expanding its reach across Uganda. The overarching objective of this phase is to tackle the significant obstacles faced by agribusiness SMEs in accessing financing for their expansion and growth.

START II will focus on promoting value addition and agro-processing by providing agribusiness SMEs with access to affordable medium-term financing. This support aims to facilitate the expansion of their operations while prioritizing the adoption of

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He has expanded his coffee plantation to four acres with about 2000 coffee plants, each producing six kilograms of coffee annually, which he sells at UGX 12,000 each. This earns him about 129,600,000 Ugandan shillings and 10,800,000 Ugandan shillings monthly.

“I had never dreamt of the money I make today. I no longer struggle to pay for my children’s school fees. In fact, I am among the first parents to pay off all school fees for a full year at both schools where my children attend. I never thought this life was achievable. I cannot stop thanking FAO for this project,” Michaels says.

“I can afford good schools for my children. I am completing a house my father left incomplete because I can, and I want to give my mother a decent place to stay. I have acquired a truck that helps us take our coffee to the market.”

Michael aspires to expand the coffee farm to 10 acres and acquire a coffee holler to semi-process his, and his group’s coffee, add value and increase their earnings.

Michael is one of the 5,700 coffee producers supported through the Global Climate Change Project (GCCA+), which is scaling up agriculture to climate change adaptation and mitigation in Uganda. The project has helped to establish 12 coffee cooperatives, consisting of 228 producer organizations. The project is promoting interventions to improve coffee production, including scaling up coffee varieties that are tolerant to drought and diseases, promoting good agronomic practices, integrated pest and disease management practices, postharvest handling practices, bulking, and marketing, among others.

GCCA+ is a five-year project worth \$10 million funded by the European Union and implemented by FAO in Uganda. Its primary goal is to promote sustainable and gender-transformative climate change mitigation and adaptation actions in rural households. The project aims to enhance these households’ resilience to the effects of climate change and food insecurity. 🌍



Jan Sadek, the Ambassador of the European Union (EU) to Uganda Joins UNCDF staff and partners to launch START Phase II ©UNCDF Uganda

green practices and inclusivity, particularly for vulnerable groups and women-led enterprises. Notably, the initiative is committed to allocating 30% of its resources towards promoting gender equality and supporting green SMEs.



Sophie De Coninck, Head of Uganda Office at UNCDF, remarked, "The launch of the START Facility is a crucial step towards unlocking the potential of agribusiness SMEs in Uganda. By addressing the financing gap and enhancing technical capabilities, we aim to drive sustainable growth, create jobs, and foster economic resilience in the country and beyond."

European Union Ambassador to Uganda Jan Sadek said: "Cultivating sustainable growth and prosperity in Uganda remains a top priority for the European Union. Through our continued collaboration with the United Nations Capital Development Fund, we are committed to empowering agribusiness SMEs and fostering an environment conducive to economic resilience and job creation. The launch of START Phase II underscores our dedication to supporting inclusive and green economic transformation, ultimately contributing to the long-term prosperity of Uganda and its people."

To ensure effective implementation and maximize impact, START II will collaborate with various stakeholders, including financial

institutions, private sector foundations, government bodies, and international organizations. Key partners involved in the implementation of the START facility include the Private Sector Foundation Uganda (PSFU), Federation of Small and Medium Enterprises (FSME), Aceli Africa, and the Uganda Development Bank Limited (UDB).

In summary, START Phase II aims to revolutionize the agribusiness landscape in Uganda by:

- Strengthening institutional capacity through tailored Business Development Services (BDS) and digitalization of SME operations.
- Enhancing technical capacity to create bankable green investment proposals and adopt sustainable practices.
- Enabling access to affordable finance for agribusiness SMEs, with a focus on value addition and responsible agro-processing.

The development challenge addressed by START Phase II is rooted in the difficulties faced by SMEs, particularly agribusinesses, in accessing appropriate and affordable financing mechanisms. With approximately 1.1 million micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) employing around 2.5 million people in Uganda, these businesses play a crucial role in the country's private sector and development. However, challenges such as poor management, lack of records, collateral, and capital hinder their growth potential.

Agribusiness SMEs interested in participating in the START facility are encouraged to apply through the online portal: <https://www.start.go.ug/>. The portal will remain open throughout the year to receive applications. 🌍

FORGING HOPE: MUZAIFA'S JOURNEY FROM SUGARCANE FIELDS TO APPRENTICESHIP

By Molly Namirembe, International Labour Organization (ILO)



Muzaifa showing his skill in weighing scale standards under the supervision of his trainer ©ILO Uganda

In the heart of Iganga District, where sugarcane fields stretch endlessly under the scorching sun, a story of resilience and transformation unfolds.

It began with a call received by Steven Mulyowa, a representative of ANPPCAN, concerning a young boy named Muzaifa. Steven acted swiftly and intervened only to discover a life marred by tragedy and hardship. Muzaifa who was orphaned and abandoned by his father through neglect that forced him out of school, had toiled in the unforgiving fields, a child labourer trapped in the cycle of poverty.

African Network for Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) Uganda, who are one of ILO's implementing partners in Uganda, have developed a service providers directory including Technical Vocational Education and Training institutions in Iganga that aid in referrals. The Tsubira Fox Metal Works is one such institution that was mapped by ANPPCAN. When Steven heard Muzaifa's story, he was quick to identify the referral pathways that he could use to rescue Muzaifa from the sugarcane fields. Under the compassionate guidance of Moses, Muzaifa's trainer at Tsubira Fox Metal Works, he found refuge and an opportunity to learn. "We don't want thieves," Moses initially cautioned, but Muzaifa's earnest desire to learn, coupled with the endorsement from the local chief, opened the doors of the metal works company to him.

As Muzaifa embarked on his apprenticeship journey, he not only gained technical skills but also found a sense of purpose and belonging. The metal works company, once a humble youth group, has over the years blossomed into a thriving enterprise, thanks to the Uganda government youth empowerment program that was aimed at economically empowering the youth. support and a commitment to nurturing the next generation of artisans.

With each passing day, Muzaifa's confidence grew. "I am happy to work under supervision and to be learning through my trainer Musa," he remarked, grateful for the guidance and support he received.

Through the rigorous apprenticeship program overseen by Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS), Muzaifa honed his expertise in weighing scale standards. His dedication did not go unnoticed, as he earned the trust of his clients in the community who are mostly older than him, validating his newfound sense of worth.

Despite the challenges he faced, Muzaifa remained resolute, fuelled by a desire to uplift not only himself but also those he left behind in the village. "I cannot forget about my peers," he asserted, determined to be a beacon of hope for others trapped in the cycle of child labour.

ANPPCAN recognized Muzaifa's potential as a change agent and pledged to empower him further. As Grace Banyar, the project manager, affirmed, Muzaifa's journey serves as inspiration for other children to embrace the transformative power of learning a new skill through apprenticeship.

Yet, challenges persist. Moses lamented the lack of resources needed to expand the apprenticeship program, highlighting the urgent need for support from local authorities.

However, amidst the hurdles, there is hope. ANPPCAN's vision to map apprenticeship centres and ensuring the rescued children are linked up to the existing services, offers a glimmer of possibility, providing a sustainable solution to eradicate child labour in sectors like sugarcane farming, which is one of the worst forms of child labour because of the dangers that the children have to face in the sugarcane fields. Muzaifa's story illustrates that apprenticeship is not merely a training program; it's a lifeline for those seeking to break free from the shackles of child labour exploitation. With determination and collective effort, Muzaifa's journey heralds a new dawn for child labour survivors in Iganga District—a testament to the transformative power of opportunity and compassion.

The ILO CAPSA project is funded by the United States Department of Labour with an aim of strengthening the capacity of Government to address child labour, forced labour, human trafficking and violation of acceptable conditions of work. 🌍

IOM SUPPORTS FORMER MIGRANT WORKERS TO RESTART LIFE IN UGANDA

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



The grantees pose with leaders from IOM Uganda and the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. Left (Front row) is IOM Chief of Mission, Mr. Sanusi Tejan Savage and 4th from Left is Assistant Commissioner, Mr. Milton Turyasiima ©IOM Uganda

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) recently handed over reintegration packages to support five returnee migrant workers as they reestablish themselves in Uganda.

This initiative was part of the Better Regional Migration Management project, funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) of the United Kingdom. The project is implemented by IOM in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), and other entities.

The handover event was presided over by the MGLSD Assistant Commissioner for Employment Services, Mr Milton Turyasiima, and the IOM regional Head of Operations for the Great Lakes, West and Central Africa, Mr Konan Romaric N'Guessan, who represented IOM Uganda Chief of Mission Sanusi Tejan Savage.

The five recipients returned from Gulf countries in recent years, and are taking different routes to reintegrating into socioeconomic life in Uganda – with IOM support. Three received support for businesses in agriculture, catering and interior design, one got an education grant for a diploma in counselling and guidance, while another asked for and received an internship at IOM Uganda. IOM's combined support to the grantees amounted to USD 8,862 (UGX 34,236,430).

Ugandan migrant workers contribute immensely to national development, sending home USD 1.3 million in remittances in 2022. Yet the labour externalization sector is marred by tales of trafficking, deception and human rights abuses in destination countries, meaning that some migrant workers never realize the dreams they toil for.

For instance, one of the five grantees, Stephen, said he left a job paying UGX 1.2 million a month after being promised to earn the equivalent of UGX 3.5 million in the United Arab Emirates.

"I was very happy. To my surprise when I reached Dubai, it reduced to 750 Dirhams

(750,000UGX). It was so devastating. I got depressed; I had many questions and less answers," said Kigozi, who is now into agriculture.

Another grantee, Henry, left Uganda for 'a good job' in Dubai but was instead taken to Iraq. His dream had been to make enough money to study Law degree at university, but by the time he returned home, his family had spent all the hard-earned money he had been religiously sending home.

In recent years, IOM has been working with MGLSD and other stakeholders to promote safe labour migration pathways, so as to improve protection of migrant workers. But according to Victoria Nabiteeko, head of IOM Uganda's Labour Mobility and Social Inclusion unit, not much attention has been given to migrant workers who return after failing to make it out there. The result is that some Ugandans find themselves trapped abroad – unable to make ends meet, and seeing no hope back in a country they left with great expectations. Others return to a life of despair and depression. Nabiteeko cited a Government study that found up to 20 percent of returnees were not engaged in any meaningful economic activity.

In a speech read for him by Mr N'Guessan at the handover, IOM Uganda Chief of Mission Sanusi Tejan Savage said: "This support is coming as a pilot and we are keen to see how much it can transform the lives of our grantees, their families and their communities. I would like to urge the beneficiaries to take this opportunity as a door opening, not only for them but even for other returnees. I say this because it's going to be a benchmark for future interventions and support to others."

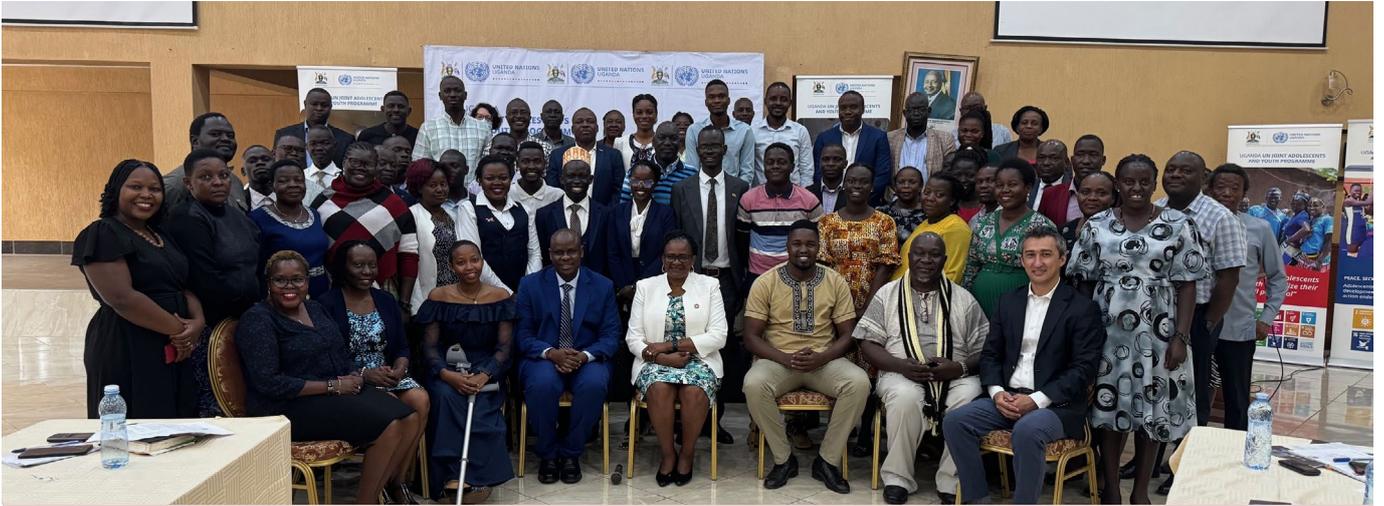
Assistant Commissioner Milton Turyasiima, too, urged the grantees to work very hard and open doors for other vulnerable returnees.

"Don't take this support for granted," he said. "If you don't utilize this equipment and the facilitation you have received, really you will have nobody to blame but yourselves."

Turyasiima said the ministry was working on opening a reception centre to address the psychosocial and other needs of returning migrant workers. 🌍

YOUTH: THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND UGANDA'S JOURNEY TO PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY

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



Hon. Balaam Barugahara, Minister of State for Youth and Children Affairs (seated 4th from left); Ms. Gift Malunga, UNFPA Representative (seated 4th from right); and participants of the orientation workshop for the Uganda UN Joint Adolescent and Youth Programme (UNJAYP) ©UN Uganda

"This experience has been incredibly enriching, empowering me with knowledge, skills, and a platform to voice the concerns and aspirations of our generation," said Consulate Niyibizi, a member of the Adolescents and Youth Reference Group of the Uganda UN Joint Adolescent and Youth Programme (UNJAYP).

Niyibizi emphasized the importance of inclusivity within such programmes aimed at young people. "Often, young people are merely considered at the end of initiatives," she noted. "But here, we are partners, not just beneficiaries. With our diverse networks, we can ensure every adolescent and youth, especially in rural areas, benefits."

This sentiment was echoed by another youth representative, Don Zane Muwanguzi from Awesome Mind Speaks, who expressed enthusiasm, asking, "Who better to guide us than the youth themselves?"

Both Niyibizi and Muwanguzi agreed that messages targeting young people must resonate with both urban and rural youth, necessitating the use of innovative communication methods tailored to their needs.

The two youth representatives shared their views during the national orientation workshop for the UNJAYP held in Entebbe on April 25-26, 2024. The two-day workshop attracted key officials from Ministries, Departments and Agencies, UN Agencies, Civil Society, National Youth Council and the eight districts participating in the first phase of the programme from 2023-2025: Yumbe, Terego, Kotido, Moroto, Kampala, Lamwo, Kiryandongo and Namayingo.

Speaking on behalf of the UN family, Ms. Gift Malunga, UNFPA Representative, emphasized the important role of youth in driving change. "Investments must focus on capacity-building and emerging fields," she stressed. "Young people are natural leaders, and it's imperative to create spaces for meaningful engagement."

Hon. Balaam Barugahara, Minister of State for Youth and Children Affairs highlighted the collaborative nature of the Uganda UN Joint Adolescents and Youth Programme. "This initiative exemplifies unity, with the UN and government working hand in hand," he affirmed. "We must ensure integrated service delivery to reach the furthest behind to fulfill our shared goals."



Consulate Niyibizi, a member of the Adolescents and Youth Reference Group of the Uganda UN Joint Adolescent and Youth Programme (UNJAYP) speaking during the orientation workshop ©UN Uganda

The workshop underscored the urgent need to address issues such as stagnant teenage pregnancy rates and declining education outcomes. With 76% of Ugandans under 30, strategic investments in health, education, and employment are imperative to harnessing the country's demographic dividend.

The Uganda United Nations Joint Adolescent and Youth Programme (UNJAYP) is a collaborative endeavor with a clear mission: to empower vulnerable and marginalized adolescents and youth across various districts, aiming to equip them with the tools and resources necessary for a brighter future.

There are 13 UN agencies participating in the UNJAYP: UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, UNESCO, UNDP, UN Women, ILO, UNHCR, UNAIDS, IOM, FAO, UNODC and UNCDF. 



UNCAP CERTIFIES 13 DRONE OPERATORS AND EMPOWERS 25 MILITARY AND POLICE PERSONNEL

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



Students of the 12th Edition of the Women's Outreach Course at the RFTS Technology Centre Satellite Farm ©RSCE

The UN C4ISR Academy for Peace Operations (UNCAP) recently celebrated the graduation of 38 participants from its specialized training courses, marking a significant advancement in peacekeeping capabilities through technology and gender empowerment.

The graduates completed the 12th Women's Outreach Course (WOC), the 7th Micro Unmanned Aerial Systems (MUAS) Remote Pilot Course, and the 5th MUAS Training the Trainer Course.

Held at the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe, Uganda, the joint closing ceremony featured dignitaries including Mr. Paulin Djomo, Director of RSCE; Lieutenant-colonel Yann Chollet, French military attaché; Ms. Pamela Wright, Consulate General of Canada to Uganda; and Major General Silver Kayemba of the Uganda Permanent Mission to the UNHQ in New York.

The intensive WOC training spanned ten days and covered vital Command, Control, Communication, and Computer (C4ISR) technologies, utilizing a mix of theoretical and practical exercises to enhance participants' effectiveness in UN missions. Meanwhile, the MUAS courses provided robust training in drone operation and management, aiming to equip peacekeepers with the knowledge and tools necessary for effective surveillance, reconnaissance, and operational support, thereby enhancing the overall security and efficiency of peacekeeping missions.

The MUAS course catered specifically to 13 deployed personnel from eight peacekeeping missions such as UNSOS/ATMIS, UNFICYP, UNMISS, UNISFA, MONUSCO, UNOAU, and RSCE while the WOC course welcomed military and police officers from 22 Member States, including Argentina, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Cameroon, China, Fiji, Ghana, Jordan, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Spain, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Togo, Turkey, Uruguay, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.



Trainees working together during the 12th Women's Outreach Course ©RSCE



French Government Trainer, Jimmy Bourrel with Micro UAS TOT trainee, Epaphrodite Utabajimana ©RSCE

The MUAS course was supported by the governments of France, Japan and Canada. This course underscores the increasing reliance on technology to address the complexities of modern peacekeeping. The WOC, sponsored by Canada and Japan, aligns with UN Security Council Resolution 2122 (2013) to boost women's participation in military and police roles, reflecting a global commitment to gender equality and

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UNODC PARTNERS WITH JUSTICE INSTITUTIONS TO STRENGTHEN ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND ENHANCE CAPACITY IN RESPONDING TO ORGANIZED CRIME

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



A participant interacts with a police officer during the National Court Open Day in Kampala © UNODC in Uganda

As part of efforts to promote and support initiatives that prioritize people's needs and rights within the justice sector, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Uganda partnered with the Judiciary to hold the first National Court Open Day for inclusive active citizen engagement and participation.

Held on 15 April 2024 under the theme “A People-centred Approach to Justice,” over 1,000 participants were sensitized on different court processes and interacted with various justice institutions including the Judiciary, Uganda Police Force, the Office of the Directorate of Public Prosecutions, and the Uganda Prisons Service.

Presiding over the National Court Open Day, Hon. Alfonse Owiny-Dollo, the Chief Justice of Uganda, highlighted that the Judiciary has a duty to account to the public for what it is doing, and in turn the public has the right to question the Judiciary what it is not doing well. “We plan on holding the National Court Open Day on an annual basis so that we can continue engaging with the public to make courts and court experiences better,” noted Hon. Owiny-Dollo.

Similarly, UNODC in Uganda is collaborating with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) to ensure prosecution services are supported to effectively perform

UNCAP Certifies 13 Drone Operators and Empowers 25 Military and Police Personnel

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enhanced operational readiness. The diverse group of trainees enriches the learning experience, fostering collaboration and mutual support among participants from various cultural and operational backgrounds.

Mr. Djomo, in his welcome address noted that “We have now seen a change in the way peacekeeping will be conducted with the Security Council Resolution 2719. As these dedicated women embark on their journey of empowerment and skill development, they not only contribute to the operational effectiveness of UN peacekeeping missions but also serve as inspirational figures, promoting peace, security, and gender equality on a global scale.”

Emmanuel Ngor, the Chief of the Field Technology Service, RSCE captured the essence of the training's impact, stating that, “At the end of the course, we expect the participants to learn three things; technology, UN processes, and the necessary soft skills to survive a peacekeeping mission. The successful completion of these courses represents a unified approach to enriching peacekeepers' skills, promoting gender inclusivity, and leveraging technology to uphold global peace and security.”

Together, the Women's Outreach Course and the MUAS Course symbolize a comprehensive approach to building capacity, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and knowledge exchange among participants, promoting gender inclusivity, and leveraging technology in peacekeeping—a testament to the UN's ongoing commitment to peace and security worldwide. 🌍



Group photo: Some of the prosecutors with the key speakers at the Annual Prosecutors' Symposium in Kampala. © ODPP



Ms Nyambe (Left) receives an award from President Museveni and Lady Justice Jane-Frances Obodo for her contribution to criminal justice in Uganda © UNODC in Uganda

their functions while upholding the human rights of all persons in contact with the criminal justice system. From 22 to 24 April 2024, UNODC in Uganda partnered with the ODPP to equip prosecutors with the required knowledge and skills to effectively manage and prosecute organized and emerging crimes at the Annual Prosecutors' Symposium.

Over 300 prosecutors from across the country were trained on various topics ranging from prosecution of transboundary organized crimes; the trends of human trafficking; cybercrime and law enforcement; effective recovery of assets, proceeds of crime and enforcement of compensation orders; practical aspects of dealing with forensic evidence in criminal proceedings; professional ethics and integrity for prosecutors; and conducting joint investigation with Uganda Police Force, among others.

Building on the Annual Prosecutors' Symposium, UNODC in Uganda further collaborated with the ODPP to pay tribute to the late Joan Kagezi, an accomplished lawyer and prosecutor who was assassinated in the line of duty in 2015, for her significant contribution to the field of criminal justice. Held on 25 April 2024 on the theme "Prosecution of Transnational Organized Crimes to Foster Security and Socio-Economic Development: The Linkage between Terrorism, Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Migrants", the 7th Joan Kagezi Memorial Lecture was graced by H.E Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, the President of Uganda, as the Chief Guest, and other key criminal justice actors.

Giving the keynote address, Ms Sharon Nyambe, the UNODC in Uganda Head of Office, stressed the role of effective prosecution in countering transnational organized crime.



By giving priority to prosecution, enhancing inter-agency cooperation, and embracing a holistic approach that tackles the interconnection between terrorism, human trafficking, and migrant smuggling, we have the potential to cultivate security, safeguard human rights, and advance socio-economic progress in Uganda," said Ms Nyambe.

To further strengthen the country's response to organised crime and to counter risks associated with use of new technology in Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing (ML/FT), UNODC in Uganda collaborated with the Financial Intelligence Authority to build the capacity of the ML/TF National Working Group to conduct oversight of virtual assets and their service providers in Uganda. 🌍



UN WOMEN, MY TREE INITIATIVE AND ABSA BANK PARTNER TO PLANT AND PROTECT 300,000 TREES BY DECEMBER 2024

By Ismael Tamale, My Tree Initiative



The Chief Planter, with guests and staff of Absa, UN Women, and My Tree Initiative; and pupils of Najjembe Church of Uganda Primary School during the tree planting ©My Tree Initiative



The Chief Planter, Minister of State in the Office of the Vice President, Hon. Diana Mutasingwa (kneeling right) planting a tree ©My Tree Initiative

UN Women, My Tree Initiative and Absa Bank Uganda announced a partnership that intends to plant and protect 300,000 trees in 300 schools across Eastern Uganda in partnership with local communities.

The announcement was made on 23 April 2024. The initiative involves 150,000 students in 10 districts.

This ambitious project particularly targets areas in Eastern Uganda that have faced the adverse impact of extreme weather events resulting in landslides, destruction of property and loss of lives, to combat climate change and promote environmental education and awareness.

This is in response to the fact that between 1990 and 2010, Uganda lost an average of 88,150 hectares of tree cover or 1.86% every year, and in total, the country lost 37.1% of its forest cover, or around 1,763,000 hectares during this period.

The official launch that was held at Najjembe Church of Uganda Primary School - Mabira, attracted the attendance of government officials, development partners and key stakeholders, who all reiterated the significance of this project in Uganda's journey towards a sustainable future.

Speaking at the event, the Chief Planter, Minister of State in the Office of the Vice President, Hon. Diana Mutasingwa commended UN Women, My Tree Initiative and Absa Bank for their proactive approach to environmental conservation. "This schools greening project aligns with Uganda's NDP III which recognises that addressing the challenges of climate change is key to enhancing sustainable economic and social development," she said.

Absa Bank Uganda, Marketing Director, Ms. Helen Nangonzi, said that "At Absa, sustainability is at the heart of our business strategy. By encouraging young people to plant trees, we are incorporating within them a culture of responsibility to care for the environment, which will reap tremendous benefits for their communities and the country as a whole."

UN Women Country Representative, Dr. Paulina Chiwangu, in her remarks read by

Ms. Patricia Elotu, the Gender and Climate Smart Agriculture Officer at UN Women said that "By 2050, climate change will push up to 158 million more women and girls into poverty and lead to 236 million more women into hunger across the globe. UN Women is proud to be a partner on this project contributing to SDG 13, climate action and SDG 5, gender equality, by empowering young girls through education and engagement to grow their own trees."

My Tree Initiative, Executive Director, Enjer Ashiraf in his remarks said, "In line with the common saying that if you want to go far, you go with others, we are thankful to Absa Bank for their ongoing generous partnership to spearhead our annual schools greening project. This project follows the success of last year's schools greening project implemented by My Tree Initiative whose impact included a total of 165,382 trees planted in 160 primary and secondary schools across 5 districts. 81 green clubs were established in schools to encourage active youth participation and safeguard steady tree growth, contributing to a 74% increase to students access to fruits and vegetables."

My Tree Initiative is a non-profit organisation, with a proven track record in environmental conservation, dedicated to promoting environmental sustainability through community engagement and education. The organisation has successfully implemented similar projects across Uganda including massive tree planting campaigns, educational workshops and community outreaches. 🌍

