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THE SILENT CRISIS: FUNDING SHORTAGES DEEPEN MALNUTRITION AMONG UGANDA'S REFUGEES

By Didas Kisembo, World Food Programme (WFP); Isaac Kabazzi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); and Edmond Mwebembezi, United Nations Children's (UNICEF)

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Congolese refugees at the overcrowded Nyakabande Transit Centre, Uganda. The centre is operating at 6 times capacity with critical shortages of water and sanitation facilities, raising disease risk. © UNHCR/Yonna Tukundane, 27 March 2025

In the Nakivale Refugee Settlement in Uganda's southwest, Fancine, 20, waits in line for her food ration, cradling her visibly undernourished, months-old baby Espoir, who winces and cries frequently.

The wait is painful, but it's just one chapter in her story of survival. Her journey, marked by violence and loss, began in Ruchuro, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where she fled to escape escalating conflict.

"We were farming in my garden with my husband when we heard bullets," Fancine recounts, her voice trembling. "We had to flee with my child to Uganda, searching for peace. My husband was killed as we fled, leaving me alone with my child."

Upon arrival at Nyakabande Transit Centre in Kisoro District, Fancine and Espoir were immediately screened for malnutrition and other illnesses, part of a joint emergency response supported by UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, the Ministry of Health, and partners. Espoir was diagnosed with acute malnutrition and quickly received treatment.



DECADE
OF
ACTION



Through consistent medical care and the provision of specialised nutritious foods supplied by WFP and distributed under UNHCR's coordination, Espoir began visibly recovering. Regular nutrition education sessions delivered by Medical Teams International, a health partner in the response, helped Fancine learn how to prepare balanced meals using the limited food items available and prevent diseases.

Espoir's early recovery was possible thanks to joint efforts by all partners working together to address urgent nutrition needs at transit and reception centres. In April 2025 alone, 8,885 children under five and 2,424 pregnant and breastfeeding women have been reached through these efforts across Nyakabande, Kabazana, and Matanda.

Due to severe funding constraints, WFP has had to prioritise nutrition support at transit and reception centres only, where malnutrition rates are critically high. Comprehensive services like the Maternal and Child Health Nutrition Programme and the broader Targeted Supplementary Feeding Programme have been suspended across most settlements, including in Nakivale, where Fancine has been relocated. This leaves over 51,000 children under two and 42,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women at risk of malnutrition.

This comes at a time when food rations have been slashed, with monthly support to the equivalent of USD 4.9 per person per month for highly vulnerable refugees and USD 2.70 per person per month for moderately vulnerable refugees. These are the lowest ration sizes WFP is providing in East Africa.

Meanwhile, UNHCR and UNICEF continue supporting treatment services for severe acute malnutrition across refugee settlements but face increasing challenges due to shortages of human resources, nutrition commodities, and medical supplies. Uganda's national nutrition pipeline, managed by the National Medical Stores, is projected to break by June 2025, threatening the continuity of treatment for nearly 20,000 children.

Today, Espoir's recovery from malnutrition is under threat due to the reduced food rations, which may cause him to fall back into malnutrition.

"What I need most is help with medical care and food for my child," Fancine says, determination in her eyes despite everything she's endured.

Global Appeal with Local Consequences

Despite significant successes, funding cuts have had far-reaching consequences beyond immediate hunger. The sharp increase in refugee arrivals - particularly from the DRC, South Sudan and Sudan - with over 90,000 refugees arriving in Uganda by April 2025 alone, has worsened malnutrition, with Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rates spiking as high as 21.5% among newly arriving refugees—a critical situation requiring urgent and continued nutrition support.

"The influx of refugees opens us up to diseases we've not dealt with before. Funding cuts have reduced support for maternal and child health programmes, leading to increased anaemia and malnutrition," explained Dr. Alex Paul Tezita, the in-charge at the Panyadoli Health Centre in the Kiryandongo Refugee Settlement, home to over 144,000 refugees, mainly from Sudan, South Sudan and the DRC. "We've also seen a decline in antenatal and postnatal care attendance."

The Human Cost of Funding Shortages

As of April 2025, Uganda hosts over 1.8 million refugees and asylum seekers, primarily from the DRC, Sudan, and South Sudan. Despite the increase in numbers, only 9% of the Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan (UCRRP) for Quarter 1 of 2025 has been funded — a 26% decrease compared to the same period in 2024. This severe underfunding has left critical gaps, particularly in Protection (68% decrease) and Health and Nutrition (61% decrease), impacting the ability of WFP, UNHCR, and UNICEF to meet urgent needs.

An emergency appeal of USD 44 million has been launched by Inter-Agency partners to support the response to 80,000 expected new arrivals from the DRC by September 2025. The response involves seven UN agencies, 15 international NGOs, and two national partners, and forms part of the Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan (UCRRP). The appeal focuses on addressing urgent, life-saving needs, including nutrition, as malnutrition



Fancine (Right, in Red) at a WFP food distribution point in Nakivale. With supplementary nutrition support ended by WFP in settlements, monthly balanced food rations are vital for refugees. New arrivals like Francine face imminent cuts from 100% to 60% in May © WFP/Amone Okello, 14 March 2025



A mother feeds her child during a UNICEF-supported community nutrition training in Nyumanzi, Adjumani. Care group volunteers lead nutrition dialogues and cooking demonstrations, becoming "nutrition doctors" in their communities. © UNICEF/Anthony, 5 March 2025

remains a critical concern - especially among children, pregnant women, and other vulnerable groups.

For Fancine and thousands like her, these funding shortages are not abstract figures—they represent a matter of survival. For now, her daily struggle continues, sustained only by hope—reflected in her child's name, Espoir, the French word for "hope"—that help will soon arrive for both of them. 🌍



FROM DECLARATION TO ACTION: AFRICA'S TRANSFORMATION MUST BE LED BY AFRICA ITSELF

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



United Nations Resident Coordinator in Uganda, Mr. Leonard Zulu delivering closing remarks at the Eleventh Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD) in Kampala on 11 April 2025 ©UN Uganda



Delegates at the Eleventh Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD) in Kampala 9 April 2025 ©UN Uganda

From powerful calls for value addition to bold new commitments for youth and green jobs, the Eleventh Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD) in Kampala from 9–11 April 2025 co-organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the Government of Uganda, set a new tempo for Africa's development Journey.

Bringing together Presidents, Ministers, thought leaders, United Nations officials, Academia and civil society actors, the Forum radiated urgency and hope under the theme: "Driving Job Creation and Economic Growth through Sustainable, Inclusive, Science-based and Evidence-based Solutions."

In a high-profile opening session, Uganda's President, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, called for an end to Africa's dependency on the export of raw materials. "We must add value to our produce, invest in low-cost transport, and improve industry," he declared, sharing Uganda's bold moves like banning the export of unprocessed minerals. His call resonated with the wider challenge facing Africa to innovate, industrialize, and integrate.

This rallying call was echoed by other distinguished leaders including Uganda's Prime Minister Robinah Nabbanja, UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, and Executive Secretary of UNECA, Claver Gatete. Each emphasized Africa's responsibility to lead its own transformation—through bold leadership, intra-African trade, meaningful youth and women's participation, and new financing models beyond aid.

Following the high-level opening, the Forum shifted into dynamic sessions including presidential dialogues, high-level panels, and expert roundtables that addressed Africa's top priorities: sustainable finance, climate resilience, digital innovation, and job creation. These were not just discussions, but the shaping of tangible commitments.

Key messages emerged loud and clear:

- Africa must pivot to value addition and manufacturing, especially in agriculture and mining.
- Domestic resource mobilization, innovative finance mechanisms like green bonds, and stronger South-South cooperation are fundamental.
- Youth and women must be at the heart of job creation, technology, and policy leadership.
- The African Continental Free Trade Area remains a cornerstone for driving inclusive growth.
- Sustainable solutions must be data-driven, evidence-based, and rooted in Africa's own priorities.

The Forum concluded with the unanimous adoption of the Kampala Declaration—a powerful pledge to accelerate progress on both the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

As more than a thousand delegates prepared to leave Kampala, the UN Resident Coordinator for Uganda, Mr. Leonard Zulu, closed the Forum with a powerful call to action:

"As we depart Kampala, let us convert our vibrant discussions into meaningful actions. Let us move forward inspired, determined, and united."

Echoing President Museveni's vision, he called for a transformative mindset across the continent: "We must invest in our systems and add value to our abundant resources."

Across the five days, the Forum tackled Africa's deepest challenges: aid dependency, lack of robust institutions, and limited local value creation. But beyond plenary halls, a wide range of high-level panels and parallel events enriched the dialogue. From calls for stronger regional integration through the African Continental Free Trade Area, to finance sessions exploring green bonds and diaspora investment, and panels on science, innovation, gender equality, and the blue economy; every conversation pointed to one conclusion: Africa's transformation must be led by Africa itself.

In every sense, the Eleventh ARFSD was a moment of reawakening. Africa left Munyonyo, Kampala with a sharpened blueprint for action, a renewed sense of solidarity, and a clear message to the world: Africa's future will be built by Africa—sustainably, inclusively, and boldly. 🌍



UGANDA TRIUMPHS OVER EBOLA: A story of resilience, partnership and vigilance

At the heart of the response was the tireless support of WHO and UNICEF with funding from partners

By Chinyere Nwonye and Anthony Bugembe, World Health Organization (WHO) and Bernard Atuhaire, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)



The Minister of Health, Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng making the End of Ebola outbreak declaration on 26 April 2025 in Mbale City ©WHO Uganda

On 26 April 2025 Uganda officially declared the end of the Ebola disease outbreak, which was confirmed on 30 January 2025 by Uganda's Ministry of Health. The outbreak infected 14 people, two of whom were probable (not confirmed by laboratory tests) and caused four deaths (including two probable).

Disease outbreaks, such as Ebola, Marburg, and yellow fever, are not new in Uganda. The country has faced multiple outbreaks and, in doing so, has built a resilient health system capable of detecting and containing outbreaks rapidly. With active support from the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund, and other partners, this outbreak again demonstrated Uganda's capacity to deal with such challenges.

The latest Ebola disease outbreak occurred in the bustling, highly mobile city of Kampala. In many places, such an announcement could have triggered widespread panic. But, within 72 hours of confirmation, the Ministry of Health, actively supported by the WHO, UNICEF and health partners, activated its response mechanisms. Rapid response teams were deployed on the ground, identifying contacts to the confirmed patient, collecting samples for testing, setting up treatment units, and educating the community about Ebola prevention.

Similarly, within 24 hours of notification, the WHO Deputy Director General and Executive Director for Emergencies, Dr. Mike Ryan, was in Uganda to guide

WHO's strategic and operational support to the response.

"The outbreak occurring in an urban setting is of significant concern to us, given past experiences. In this outbreak, every minute is of the essence, and we must set up rapidly to avert a potential disaster," said Dr. Ryan upon arrival in the country.

WHO mobilized 129 national and international staff to support the response. They brought a wealth of technical expertise, ensuring that WHO's input was present at every critical stage.

The impact of these efforts was quickly evident. On 14 March 2025, the last confirmed patient was discharged, and 534 contacts had been successfully identified and followed up daily. This is no mean achievement given the area in which the outbreak occurred. It is a testament to Uganda's strengthened capacity to detect and respond to disease outbreaks in line with the International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005, for which WHO is the principal custodian.

Uganda completed the 42-day mandatory countdown without a confirmed Ebola case. During



Training of health care workers at Mulago National Referral Hospital Ebola Isolation Unit on infection prevention and control, and patient care during the 2025 outbreak ©WHO Uganda

this critical period, WHO and UNICEF worked closely with the Ministry of Health to conduct active case search and mortality surveillance to ensure that no potential transmission chains went undetected.

It is important to acknowledge the groundwork that made this rapid response possible. WHO's presence on the ground through its regional hubs and prior technical leadership in helping Uganda develop a multisectoral preparedness and response plan were pivotal. These provided clear direction for all responding actors, enabling effective coordination, optimizing resource allocation, and preventing duplication.

Another key enabler was the swift deployment by WHO of 165 multidisciplinary Rapid Response Team members (RRTs) to hotspot districts. These members strengthened local capacity for alert management, case investigation, and contact tracing, even in remote areas. Backed by WHO's technical training and tools, the RRTs worked hand in hand with district teams to ensure that no case went undetected. This strong collaboration helped halt the further spread of the disease.

The UN's contribution was both visible and indispensable across multiple response pillars, standing out as a leading actor in Uganda's successful Ebola containment. UNICEF ensured access to clean water and hygiene facilities in schools, health centres and communities through distributing tap stands, bleach and sanitizer critical to limiting the spread of the virus.

WHO gave special attention to border health. With the international imperative to prevent cross-border transmission, health workers were rapidly reoriented, thermal scanners were deployed, and screening protocols were enforced at 13 key entry points, especially at Entebbe International Airport.

The laboratory response was equally robust. Over 1500 samples were collected, transported, and tested, with national labs rising to the challenge. Thanks to WHO's prior technical support, Uganda had the capacity to manage samples under strict biosafety and quality standards. Laboratory teams at the Uganda Virus Research Institute and Central Public Health Laboratories handled the workload professionally and efficiently, earning praise for their quick turnaround.

At the heart of the response was a courageous and well-prepared case management team. Equipped with WHO Ebola supplies designed to protect health workers and support clinical care, they treated patients with professionalism and care. Of the 12 confirmed cases, two patients succumbed, while the rest were successfully treated and reintegrated into their communities. Two probable cases were identified after their death, therefore not managed in the treatment center.

WHO-supported 78 Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs) further reinforced case management efforts. These highly trained and well-equipped teams ensured the safe transportation and treatment of patients across affected regions, delivering high-quality care at every step. WHO and UNICEF supported the establishment of emergency treatment units at Mulago National Referral Hospital in Kampala and Mbale Regional Referral Hospital in eastern Uganda. WHO also supported Ministry of Health to establish additional isolation units in Jinja city, Fort Portal City and Kasese District to support care for confirmed and suspect cases.

In an environment of fear and misinformation, UNICEF and WHO led efforts to provide timely, accurate information to communities, by providing Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials empowering them to make informed decisions and



Risk communication and community engagement teams sensitizing communities on Ebola ©WHO Uganda

trust the public health response. The two agencies worked closely with community health workers to sustain maternal, child health and nutrition services throughout the outbreak, ensuring other health needs were not neglected. For the second time in an Ebola outbreak caused by the Sudan virus in Uganda, WHO deployed anthropologists, risk communication experts, and community engagement teams. These specialists worked directly with communities to address stigma, mistrust, and misinformation, while providing real-time public health information. Their efforts were instrumental in gaining trust and reinforcing safety practices.

Despite the absence of a licensed vaccine against the Sudan virus, candidate vaccines are in various phases of clinical trials, recommended by the independent WHO candidate vaccine prioritization working group. Within four days of the government's declaration of the outbreak, a randomized clinical trial for vaccine safety and efficacy using the ring vaccination approach was launched. In addition, the administration of Remdesivir treatment under the Monitored Emergency Use of Unregistered and Experimental Interventions (MEURI) protocol was initiated.

Ecological studies aimed at identifying the source of infection were initiated and are continuing. These are important because they help to anticipate risks of outbreaks as well as ensure health systems are well prepared and ready to detect outbreaks early and respond effectively.

Behind the scenes, coordination and partner engagement played crucial roles. WHO was responsible for aligning resources, reducing duplication, and maximizing impact. Through its coordination role, WHO mapped out key stakeholders and facilitated effective resource use at all levels of the response.

No successful outbreak response is complete without adequate financial backing. So far, WHO has mobilized and utilized US \$6.2 million for this response. This support, along with in-kind contributions of essential medicines, supplies, and equipment, has been vital in maintaining the momentum of operations.

WHO acknowledges and deeply appreciates all partners who contributed through the WHO Contingency Fund for Emergencies (CFE), including: Germany, Norway, Ireland, Canada, France, New Zealand, Kuwait, Portugal, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, Estonia, and the WHO Foundation. Thanks to the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, the Netherlands, the European Commission - Health Emergency Preparedness and Response (HERA), International Development Research Centre (IDRC), European Commission - European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) and the African Public Health Emergency Fund (APHEF) for supporting WHO's interventions. Thanks to the United States and Sweden for supporting the national response efforts through UNICEF.

As the situation in Uganda stabilizes, this outbreak highlights three clear lessons: early preparedness saves lives, rapid response is critical, solidarity is indispensable, and the United Nations support remains vital, not only for Uganda, but for global health security. 🌍

SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES AND EMBRACING INCLUSIVITY

By Caroline Magambo, The Joint United Nations HIV/AIDS Programme (UNAIDS)



Participants at the training in Mbarara ©UNAIDS Uganda

When 30-year-old Jonathan, a medical clinical officer from Bushenyi Prison in Western Uganda was invited by Ministry of Health to participate in a training in Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital, he wasn't sure what to expect.

Supported financially by the Netherlands Embassy in collaboration with UNAIDS, the training aimed to equip healthcare providers within the Uganda Prison Service with the necessary knowledge and skills to offer key population (KP)-friendly services. Additionally, it focused on enhancing healthcare access for vulnerable groups, including people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity, sex workers, people who inject drugs, and prisoners.

According to the UNAIDS Global report 2018, globally, 47% of all continuing HIV transmissions are among key populations and their sexual partners. Among men who have sex with men, the rate of new HIV infections was 28 times greater than in the general population. Similarly, the risk of acquiring HIV for people who inject drugs was 22 times higher than that of people who do not inject drugs, 13 times higher for female sex workers (FSW) than adult women aged 15–49 years, and 13 times higher for transgender women than adults aged 15–49 years.

The 2023 Anti Homosexuality Act has worsened existing health access challenges faced by key population communities. It has led to a decrease in their use of health services and has heightened concerns about their safety and security. Additionally, it has increased fears of police arrests, retribution, or disclosure by health workers, as well as stigma and discrimination.

Initially, Jonathan had reservations. He held certain misconceptions and biases about key populations. However, at the end of the training, Jonathan's perspective had changed. He appreciated the diversity of the different key population groups and their unique healthcare needs. In addition, he acknowledged the role healthcare workers play in creating a welcoming and non-

judgmental environment. He further got clarity on the implications of the decision of the Constitutional Court on the Act particularly regarding duties of health care workers to ensure access to services. The Constitutional Court ruling removed the obligation for health workers to disclose alleged acts of homosexuality, which was a positive step towards protecting patient confidentiality and reducing discrimination.

"I now realize that KPs are like any other person. They are entitled to medical services just like everyone else and I will make sure I put in place strategies that eliminate stigma and discrimination," said Jonathan. "I will also ensure that confidentiality and privacy are prioritised so that they feel safe and comfortable accessing services" added Jonathan.

Dr. Gerald Pande, one of the facilitators from Ministry of Health highlights that sensitising police, prison communities, and healthcare workers in prison settings on the laws, policies and ethical commitments is critical for facilitating a shift towards key populations-friendly and non-judgmental service delivery, maintaining confidentiality and upholding human rights.

Jonathan's experience is not isolated. It underscores the transformative power of training in promoting inclusive, non-judgmental healthcare services. While attitudes do not always shift overnight, in some cases knowledge is an important catalyst for change. Jonathan's commitment to fostering a stigma-free environment within the prison healthcare system is a testament to the impact of capacity-building initiatives in improving access to care for key populations.

Through the Working in Solidarity with vulnerable Communities' Project, UNAIDS is working with partners to ensure continued provision of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and HIV prevention, treatment, and care services, and to protect the sexual and reproductive health rights of key populations. 🌈



3 MILLION FARMERS TO BE REACHED FOR AGRICULTURAL INSURANCE BY 2027

Government commits UGX 5 billion to Uganda's Agriculture Insurance Scheme for the year 2025/2026

By Joel Akena, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)



Participants during a 2-day workshop on institutionalizing and scaling up Uganda Agriculture Insurance Scheme (UAIS) ©UNDP Uganda

For decades, Ugandan farmers have faced increasing climate risks. Unpredictable rainfall patterns, prolonged droughts, and devastating floods which have made farming an increasingly precarious livelihood – even more, there have been threats to market volatility for agricultural products.

In today's development world, we are now witnessing increased financial uncertainty, with many donors either reducing or withdrawing development funding – this financial uncertainty and climate risks increase the poverty gap and undermine sustainable development.

It is times like these, that require us to institute more integrated approaches to secure the livelihoods of small-scale farmers from climate risks and financial uncertainty. For Uganda's population, majority depend on agriculture for their livelihood with many farmers mostly practicing subsistence and small-scale agriculture. If we put more efforts towards integrating agricultural insurance approaches to reach the small-scale farmers, we will be reducing the poverty gap and advancing sustainable development.

A New Approach

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with support from the Gates Foundation introduced a structured government collaboration model to scale adoption of Uganda's Insurance Scheme. A dedicated team was formed to introduce the Integrated Agriculture Insurance Agenda, a tool developed by UNDP to institutionalize and expand agriculture insurance. In March 2025, Uganda launched its Integrated Agriculture Insurance Agenda, a comprehensive framework that aligns four strategic pillars: policy, regulation, programs, and financing. This holistic approach moves beyond traditional insurance models to create sustainable solutions for smallholder farmers with a goal to align stakeholders and achieve coverage for 3 million farmers by 2027.

"This isn't just about insurance policies," explains Mr. Ian King, UNDP, Deputy Resident Representative. "It's about creating an ecosystem where government leadership, regulatory frameworks, comprehensive programs, and innovative financing work together to protect farmers' livelihoods."



A young farmer holding freshly harvested Carrots ©UNDP Uganda

Government Leadership on Uganda's Agriculture Insurance

The Government of Uganda has taken a proactive stance, providing strategic leadership by setting a clear vision for agricultural insurance. This involves appointing established institutions to coordinate stakeholders and drive alignment across the four pillars. Most importantly, the government is institutionalizing this agenda by developing processes and structures to ensure the effective implementation of policies, regulations, programs, and financing mechanisms to reach scale, sustainability, and impact.

During a technical workshop on implementation strategies for institutionalizing and scaling up Uganda Agriculture Insurance Scheme (UAIS) held in Kampala recently, the Insurance Regulatory Representative – Mr. Protazio Sande who opened the session on behalf of Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development (MoFPED) emphasized the importance of mitigating risks for small scale farmers in Uganda, urging a more coordinated approach among all stakeholders.

On his part Mr. Musa Lukwago, from MoFPED, highlighted the Government's plan to double its annual contribution to Uganda's Agriculture Insurance scheme, confirming the annual contribution of the 5 billion Uganda Shillings for the financial year 2025/2026 to support its expansion. He also emphasized that there will be no taxes imposed on UAIS to encourage its growth and tax exemptions including VAT and stamp duty to encourage participation.

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CLEAN WATER, A ROUTE TO LIVELIHOODS AND DREAMS IN KYANGWALI REFUGEE SETTLEMENT

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



Valantin Kasereka Bahamulwa, a Congolese refugee in Uganda fetching water from the water point of the Kavule II Water System in Kyangwali Refugee Settlement ©UNHCR Uganda

In Kyangwali Refugee Settlement, the Kavule II Water System is essential for thousands of refugees and the local community in Kikuube District. Powered by solar energy and a generator, this hybrid system ensures access to clean water, even on cloudy days.

The water pump was constructed with funding from the Government of the United States of America, while the upgrade of the system was funded by the Government of South Korea. The upgrade reduced frequent breakages and improved water flow to collection points across the settlement.

For Valantin Kasereka Bahamulwa, a Congolese refugee in Uganda, the water points provide more than just water — they offer a livelihood. He hand pumps the water into jerricans and then sells the water he fetches to his neighbours and friends in the local community. He began with filling and selling a single jerrican and has gradually increased to rotating ten jerricans. With the income he raised from selling one jerrican of water at a time, he was able to repair his bicycle, which allowed him to carry more jerricans. He describes how he built his business,



When someone sees me with the two jerricans of water, they call me, and I sell to them.”
“Later, I carried eight, then ten, up until now,” he adds proudly.



Valantin delivering water to his customers in Kyangwali Refugee Settlement ©UNHCR Uganda

The improvements to the water system, have transformed lives. Dedan Tugaine, working with the community for UNHCR explains,

“Kyangwali is receiving newly arrived refugees all the time and the challenges include expanding and upgrading water systems, to cope with the hundreds of new arrivals. We aim to upgrade the smaller water systems to match what the amount of water Kavule needs to provide.”

Kavule II Water System has become a reliable water source. The upgrade undertaken in 2024 ensures a steady water supply for all the storage tanks and collection points around the Settlement. For the families that live in Kasereka, access to water means more than being able to fulfill daily water needs— it is an opportunity to earn a living and become self-reliant. 🌍



BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE: RSCE BOOSTS ICT ACCESS IN UGANDAN SCHOOLS

By Jullian Kahara Atukunda – United Nations Regional Service Centre Entebbe (RSCE)



Computer Lab at Kasengejje Secondary School with laptops donated by RSCE connected to desktops donated by UNICEF ©RSCE

In an inspiring move to advance digital education, the Regional Service Centre Entebbe (RSCE) has continued its pledge to promote digital literacy in Uganda by donating computers and printers to schools in Jinja and Wakiso districts as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility.

These efforts come at a time when digital literacy has become an essential skill for youth navigating a world increasingly driven by technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI).

On 9 April 2025, RSCE Director, Mr. Paulin Djomo handed over 20 Lenovo ThinkPad laptops and a LaserJet Enterprise all-in-one printer to Busede Seed Secondary School in Jinja District.

Busede Seed S.S. is located in the middle of the sugar plantations in Kakira. The school's computer room was furnished with obsolete computers so the donation came in at a convenient time.

"As you can see, we are in desperate need of computers and the facilities to help our learners embrace the new Uganda curriculum that emphasizes the use of digital tools and hands-on approaches to educate the current crop of students," said Mr. Ismail Luwangula, Headteacher.

Recognizing the challenges faced by the school, including limited internet and unreliable electricity, Mr. Djomo emphasized that basic ICT skills such as typing, printing, creating presentations, and learning coding can still be taught offline and will significantly boost students' digital literacy.

Earlier that same day, RSCE had extended the same support to Jinja College, where the donation was received with enthusiasm, especially since the school had already embraced ICT integration under its 2024 theme: "Embracing ICT innovations in 21st-century education." The school's head teacher, Mr. Michael Dhikusooka, highlighted the transformative impact of the new equipment on student learning, modern teaching methods, and digital access to educational resources.

Joining Forces for Greater Impact

RSCE's efforts are part of a broader collaboration with UNICEF and Airtel Uganda. As part of the Airtel Africa–UNICEF Digital Learning Partnership launched in 2019, the initiative seeks to eliminate barriers to quality education through free internet connectivity, digital content, and educational assessments.

Under this partnership, RSCE donated 20 laptops to Kasengejje Secondary School, the only government-aided school in Central Wakiso District. This donation coincided with the UNESCO International Day of Digital Learning, celebrated under the theme "Digital learning realities in low-resourced contexts."



Mr. Paulin Djomo and Mr. Michael Dhikusooka exchange certificates of handover for the 20 laptops and 1 printer received by Jinja College ©RSCE

“In a statement underscoring the broader purpose of these contributions, Thomas Meyerer, UNICEF Uganda’s Deputy Representative, explained, “this initiative is part of UNICEF’s ‘Reimagine Education’ campaign, which supports global digital transformation by focusing on the 3 Cs: Content, Capacity, and Connectivity for every child.”

To ensure continued learning in low-connectivity areas, RSCE has partnered with UNICEF to pre-install the Kolibri learning platform on donated laptops. This offline-first tool provides access to high-quality educational content and is tailored for low-resource communities.

Aligning with National Priorities

Uganda’s evolving education curriculum increasingly prioritizes ICT integration, and the Ministry of ICT has placed digital inclusion at the forefront of its national strategy. RSCE’s contributions not only align with this national vision but actively support it by providing the tools necessary to equip young Ugandans with the skills to thrive in the digital age.



Jinja College Headteacher Michael Dhikusooka showing one of the 20 laptops donated by RSCE to the students at the handover ceremony held in their 70 seater Computer Lab ©RSCE

As Mr. Djomo noted during his visit to Jinja College, “Digital literacy is no longer optional. It’s a gateway to education, employment, and responsible citizenship in the 21st century.”

RSCE has now donated 200 laptops to schools across Uganda, showcasing their unwavering commitment to inclusion, equal opportunities, and digital empowerment. 🌍

SHARPENING VOCATIONAL SKILLS FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

By Jessica Murphy, United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO)



Vocational skills being demonstrated at the exhibition at national commemoration of International Education Day in Kampala on 29 April 2025 ©UN Uganda

On April 29, 2025, Uganda commemorated the International Day of Education at Kololo Independence Grounds under the local theme, *“Promoting an employer-led TVET system that is functional, effective, and efficient to meet the needs and priorities of the labour market.”*

The event celebrated innovation, culture, and youth potential. But more importantly, it served as a critical reminder: with just five years to 2030, time is running out to achieve **Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4)**—ensuring inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all.

Speaking at the event, UN Resident Coordinator Mr. Leonard Zulu highlighted the dual role of technology: “AI offers major opportunities for education, but it must complement—not replace—the human and social dimensions of learning.” He reaffirmed the UN’s commitment to advancing skills development through teacher training, infrastructure support, and expanding Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).



United Nations Resident Coordinator in Uganda, Mr. Leonard Zulu delivering remarks at the national commemoration of International Education Day in Kampala on 29 April 2025 ©UN Uganda

Education in Uganda: Progress and Gaps

Uganda has made strides in expanding access and promoting TVET through efforts like the Uganda Skills Development Project and special scholarships for women and learners with disabilities. Initiatives in refugee-hosting areas, such as vocational centres in Kyaka II, are empowering youth with practical skills.



Presindet Yoweri Museveni (centre) and dignitaries including the UN Resident Coordinator in Uganda, Mr. Leonard Zulu (seated fifth from left) at national commemoration of International Education Day in Kampala on 29 April 2025 ©UN Uganda

Yet challenges persist:

- **Underfunding:** Education received only 10% of Uganda's 2023/24 budget—half the AU benchmark.
- **High dropout rates:** Only 35.3% of students complete primary school; just 17.3% finish upper secondary.
- **Equity gaps:** Girls, rural learners, and children with disabilities remain at risk of exclusion.
- **TVET stigma and underutilization:** Vocational pathways are still undervalued and under-resourced.
- **Digital decline:** ICT skills proficiency is dropping; even as digital transformation accelerates.

“

President Yoweri Museveni emphasized the importance of universal education, encouraging the integration of AI as a tool for problem-solving and economic growth: “People should not fear AI—using it well will help solve our problems. Affluence for all is better for the world.”

The Path Forward

To meet SDG 4 by 2030, Uganda must move from celebration to systemic reform:

- **Increase education financing** to the 20% target and invest in infrastructure, teacher training, and materials.
- **Strengthen and destigmatize TVET** as a pathway to decent jobs.
- **Improve retention** through feeding programs, gender-sensitive policies, and community outreach.
- **Accelerate digital literacy** for both learners and teachers.
- **Promote lifelong learning** for adults through flexible, inclusive education models.

Call to Action

To achieve SDG 4 by 2030, Uganda must deepen its commitment to leaving no one behind. This means prioritizing inclusive quality education, closing funding and equity gaps, and creating a system where all learners, regardless of background, can thrive. 🌍

POLICE AND JOURNALISTS COMMIT TO COLLABORATING IN UPHOLDING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS AND PUBLIC ORDER

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



Senior Police officers sharing views during the training on Freedom of Expression, Safety of journalists, and Public Order ©UNESCO Uganda

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in partnership with the Africa Freedom of Information Centre (AFIC) in coordination with the United Nations in Uganda, successfully convened a training and dialogue workshop between police officers and journalists in Uganda.

The workshop focused on Freedom of Expression, Safety of journalists, and Public Order, aiming to foster a constructive dialogue, enhance mutual understanding, and establish a framework for sustained collaboration.

This initiative is strategically aligned with Uganda's 2026 elections, recognizing the critical role of a free and independent media in ensuring transparent, peaceful, and credible electoral processes. It also supports the broader goal of strengthening informed public discourse and democratic participation.

The two-day workshop brought together officers from the Uganda Police Force, journalists, and civil society organizations. Practical demonstrations and scenario-based discussions were conducted to equip the participants with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate complex situations around their work. Interactive discussions and shared experiences highlighted the need for trust and cooperation between law enforcement and media.

Key Highlights

The dialogue covered various topics, including enhancing professional relations between law enforcement and media, fostering freedom of expression to strengthen the rule of law and democracy, and international and regional standards on freedom of expression, freedom of press, and safety of journalists, among others.

The Senior Commissioner of Police and Director in charge of Human Rights and Legal Affairs, Mr. Charles Kataratambi, expressed his gratitude for the training, noting that it marked a crucial starting point for fostering a harmonious relationship between law enforcement and media. "Journalists and police officers are strategic allies who need each other to effectively serve the public," he said. "However, the rise of citizen journalism has sometimes blurred the lines of professionalism in our sector, leading to polarization. This training is a vital step towards rebuilding trust and promoting collaboration between our institutions."

UN Resident Coordinator Leonard Zulu quoted the UN Secretary-General António Guterres on World Press Freedom Day 2025: "Free and independent journalism is an essential public good. It's the backbone of accountability, justice, equality, and human rights. Journalists everywhere must be able to report freely and without fear or favor. When journalists are unable to work, we all lose."

UNESCO Regional Director for Eastern Africa and Representative, Ms. Louise Haxthausen, reinforced the importance of the initiative: "The safety of journalists and freedom of expression are fundamental to a functioning democracy. This training underscores UNESCO commitment to building bridges between law enforcement and the media, ensuring a safer and more informed society."



UN Resident Coordinator Leonard Zulu (seated centre) after the training on Freedom of Expression, Safety of journalists, and Public Order ©UNESCO Uganda

Participant Feedback

The workshop provided valuable reflections from participants, many of whom emphasized its timeliness, relevance, and transformative potential:

“It was nice interacting and staying in the same accommodation with journalists. I realized we share a lot in common in relation to our work.” – Police Officer



The belief that media and police cannot work together has in the past hindered the relationship. But having both groups in the room has fostered understanding and appreciation of each other’s roles. Hopefully, the animosity ends here.” – Journalist

“The sessions were practical and highly relevant, especially as we head into the elections that often raise tensions.” – Civil Society Organization

Recommendations

The workshop concluded with key recommendations to guide future collaboration:

- Strengthen communication and mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities of all parties.
- Establish transparency and accountability mechanisms to address impunity and crimes against journalists.
- Create independent oversight bodies to handle grievances from both parties.



Journalists exchanging views with senior police officers during the training on Freedom of Expression, Safety of journalists, and Public Order ©UNESCO Uganda

- Promote continuous professional development programs for journalists and police officers to deepen understanding of each other’s mandates.
- Ensure prosecution of perpetrators to prevent the recurrence of injustices.
- Institutionalize regular dialogue and stakeholder engagement to foster collaboration.

It is hoped that this engagement will foster a more collaborative and mutually respectful relationship between the police and journalists, ultimately contributing to a safer and more informed society. 🌍

IOM SUPPORTS UGANDA GOVERNMENT TO SET UP MIGRANT WORKERS SUPPORT CENTRE

By Joyce Nakato, UN Migration/International Organization for Migration (IOM)



Uganda State Minister for Labour, Employment and Industrial Relations, Hon Esther Davinia Anyakun (Right), receives the deed of donation from IOM Uganda Chief of Mission Sanusi Tejan Savage
©IOM Uganda

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Uganda has supported the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development in establishing a centre to address the information and educational needs of migrant workers.

Located at the Ministry's head office in Kampala, the Migrant Workers Support Centre (MWSC) was formally opened on 28 March 2025, by the Minister of State for Labour, Employment, and Industrial Relations, Hon. Esther Davinia Anyakun.

The MWSC will serve as a one-stop information hub for labour migration, specifically targeting aspiring migrant workers. It will offer pre-employment and pre-departure orientation (PDO), including training on cultural awareness, migrant worker rights, access to legal assistance, and guidance on necessary documentation.

A Return and Reintegration referral mechanism will also be available at the centre for workers returning to Uganda in vulnerable conditions, such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. The centre has been established under IOM's Better Regional Migration Management (BRMM) project, funded by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO). This initiative is in line with the IOM Uganda and global Strategic Priority III, of Facilitating Pathways for Regular Migration.

In her remarks at the handover ceremony, State Minister Anyakun said the centre would support migrants and their families at every stage.

"We acknowledge the challenges many migrant workers face, and we stand here united in our belief that every migrant deserves to have access to the tools, resources, and support that will enable them to thrive. The Migrant Workers Resource Centre is designed to provide exactly that."

She placed the MWSC into a larger context, saying: "As we look forward, let us remember that building a truly inclusive society is not just about policies and programmes, but about fostering a culture of kindness, understanding and solidarity."

Speaking ahead of the handover, IOM Uganda Chief of Mission Sanusi Tejan Savage explained IOM's contribution: "We provided the necessary equipment for the centre, developed the Centre's Standard Operating Procedures, provided training for the staff, and produced and printed informational materials — both audio-visual and

printed — to be distributed to migrant workers."

In Uganda, labour migration has been driven by the country's growing workforce and limited domestic employment opportunities. As a result, many young men and women have sought to take advantage of the global demand for labour.

According to the 2024 Population and Housing Census report, at least 120,000 Ugandans have left the country to seek employment abroad, particularly in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. In addition to improving the living conditions of many Ugandans and their families, labour migration contributes to Uganda's development, with the Bank of Uganda recording remittances totaling USD 1.42 billion in 2023.

Despite these benefits, migrant workers face numerous challenges both before departure and upon arrival in destination countries. Pre-departure challenges include the operation of unregistered recruitment agencies, trafficking of workers, lack of pre-departure orientation, and migration to countries without bilateral agreements with Uganda.

Migrant workers also face physical and sexual violence, abusive employment practices, and the withholding of salaries in destination countries. Additionally, returnee migrants often struggle with reintegration into their communities upon returning home.

Hence the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development has taken several steps to manage labour migration and protect migrant workers. These include the establishment of an External Employment Unit and the development of laws and policies on labour migration and diaspora engagement. IOM has now complemented these efforts by supporting the Ministry to establish the MWSC to empower aspiring migrant workers to make informed decisions.

The Centre will also collaborate with migration stakeholders, such as the Platform for Labour Action and licensed private recruitment agencies, to provide referral pathways for individuals seeking legal redress and other support services.

Additionally, skilling and re-skilling programmes will be offered to returnee migrants to enhance their employability in the local job market. The Centre will also prioritize their well-being by providing pro-bono medical services. 🌍



RAISING ROOFS AND BREAKING BARRIERS: WOMEN REDEFINING CONSTRUCTION

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



Judith on top of the building, doing the timber layout ©UN Women/Allen Ankunda



Judith and Jennifer ©UN Women/Allen Ankunda

The sun blazes fiercely at 11 AM as Judith Kyomugisha, just 18 years old, stands atop a building under construction in Muhokya Town Council, Kasese District.

Sweat glistens on her forehead as she carefully arranges the woodwork, preparing to start the roofing of a house she has helped build from the ground up. In Muhokya, women working on construction sites is unheard of. But Judith and her 20-year-old friend, Jennifer Nakayemba, have defied societal expectations, proving that women can excel in trades traditionally dominated by men.

Judith's story is one of resilience, determination, and self-reliance. She dropped out of school in primary four due to financial constraints, and for years her future seemed uncertain. But in 2023, Judith's life took a dramatic turn when she heard about an initiative aimed at skilling young women and girls to reduce their vulnerability to violent extremism. With funding from the Government of Norway, UN Women supported Refugee Law Project to implement initiatives that offer second chance education opportunities and skills development, offering young women a way to support themselves and contribute to their communities.

For Judith, this was a lifeline. "From childhood, I loved construction work and admired those who did it. When this opportunity came, I was eager to take it up," she recalls. The prospect of climbing to the top of buildings and working alongside men was daunting at first, but the support from her trainer and her own determination made it possible. "At first, I was scared and uncertain if I would manage, especially climbing on top of the building, but my trainer was good, which made it easy to learn the skills," Judith says.

Jennifer, too, was eager to learn and defy the norms that placed limitations on women's roles. "Men sometimes despise us, saying they cannot live in a house built by women. But when you know what you want, you set your mind on that," Jennifer explains. Despite the challenges they face—both on the job and in their community—the two young women are carving out a space for themselves in the construction industry.

The training programme they completed was not only about learning skills but also about empowering them to make a living. Daily, Judith earns 15,000 UGX, which has allowed her to support her mother and provide for herself. "I can't be easily lured by boys now," she says, her voice ringing with newfound confidence. "I can provide for myself."

Their instructor, Hamidu Masereka, has been instrumental in their journey. He recognizes the talent and dedication of Judith and Jennifer, noting that they are just as capable—if not more so—than the boys he also trains. "I have boys working on my construction sites, but I've noted that the girls are equally good at their job. They are fast, they listen to instructions, and this gives me confidence to keep them on my team," he affirms.

Their success is a reminder that when young women are given the tools and the opportunity to thrive, they can break down the barriers that limit them. Jennifer urges other girls to embrace opportunities for skill-building, regardless of societal expectations. "Don't despise any opportunity that aims at skilling. Don't focus on the comments from others because they can distract you from your goal," she advises. 🌈

FROM RECKLESSNESS TO RESPONSIBILITY: One young man's journey to championing gender equality and community transformation

Emmanet Nabwire, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)



Robert Lukaliyo says equality has brought peace to his home ©UNFPA Uganda

In the streets of Twabakobelanga Village, Butansi Sub-county, in Kamuli District, the name Robert Lukaliyo once sparked fear. As the self-proclaimed chairman of a 'ghetto gang', Robert and his group were notorious for their reckless and anti-social behaviour.

"We lived recklessly and I personally had no respect for women or their rights. I didn't even know anything about sexual and reproductive health. Life was chaotic," Robert recalls.

At just 15 years of age, Robert now 23, took his first wife, who was only 13. Following in the footsteps of his father, who had 18 children, Robert believed that having many wives and a large family was a sign of manhood.

"I thought controlling women, keeping them at home and doing as I pleased was normal because that is what I used to see happening in my community. I never shared chores at home because I thought it was a woman's job to give birth and to do the chores," he says.

However, Robert's life took a dramatic turn when he became part of a youth group under the Empowering Young Girls and Women to Decide Over Their Own Bodies (EYE) Universal SRHR project funded by The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway.

Now in its third year, the project is being implemented by UNFPA, together with Marie Stopes Uganda and CARE International, in two high SRHR-burdened districts of Kamuli and Mayuge in eastern Uganda under the tagline My Body, My Life, My World. Its overall goal is to increase the utilization of integrated SRHR services by adolescents and youth aged 10-24 in Uganda.

Initially, while doubtful, Robert said he joined a Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) savings group within the initiative. But what started as mere curiosity soon blossomed into a life-changing journey of self-discovery and total transformation.

"At first, I really didn't understand what the group was about," he says. "But as I attended more sessions, my eyes opened to a world I had never experienced. They taught us about sexual and reproductive health, gender equality and the importance of respecting women and girls. It was the first time I realized how harmful my past actions and beliefs had been."



Robert (in white shirt) attends one of the VSLA sessions where they learn how to make reusable sanitary pads ©UNFPA Uganda

The Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) has become a powerful foundation for change through empowering adolescents and young people to claim their sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), challenge harmful gender and social norms, and prevent gender-based violence (GBV), including teenage pregnancies.

By promoting male engagement, the initiative has helped cultivate self-reliant individuals who are driving positive transformation within their families and communities.

For Robert, the VSLA was more than just a savings group; it became a gateway to empowerment. Through the sessions, he not only learned how to save his finances, but also began questioning the harmful beliefs and practices that had defined his life.

“One of the most eye-opening experiences was learning to design reusable menstrual pads,” Robert shares.

“When they asked me to teach girls how to make pads, I thought it was funny. Before, I never cared about menstruation; I thought it was purely a woman’s responsibility. But then I realized how much we had ignored the struggles of women in our community.”

Robert didn’t stop at personal growth; he became a change agent for his peers who were together in the hetto group. He used his influence to encourage other young men to join the group and embrace the message of equality and respect.

“I told my friends that if we want better lives, we need to treat women with respect and not contrary to what we had been doing. I even started talking to my fellow farmers about family planning and advised them to have children they could care for well.”

Robert is involved in sugarcane farming as well as being a vocal advocate for gender equality. At home, he and his wife now share household chores, something he once believed was impossible.

“Equality has brought peace to my home. My wife can now go to the hospital for family planning without fear and I encourage other men to support their wives too,” he says with pride.

Despite his remarkable transformation, Robert acknowledges the lingering challenges in his community.

“

Many men still believe women should do all the work, even after giving birth. But I tell them that when boys and men are meaningfully engaged, positive change can happen in our community.”

Robert dreams of expanding his farming business and venturing into brickmaking to support his family further.

“I have come a long way from the life I used to lead. My dream is to create a better future for my children and my community. If I can change, anyone can.”

Today, Robert is a reformed man, actively challenging harmful gender norms and empowering young people with knowledge to create change in their lives and communities. 🌍

BREAKING BARRIERS: Young mothers rewrite their futures through education

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



My mother left me when I was two. I grew up with my grandmother, father, and aunt."

Peace Aleru listens attentively during a lesson at Adjumani Girls Primary School on March 18, 2025. After becoming pregnant in 2021, she faced the possibility of dropping out permanently, but with the support of the Life Skills Education programme, she was able to return to school and continue her education. Now, she is determined to build a better future for herself and her child. ©UNICEF Uganda

In Adjumani District, girls once counted out—due to early pregnancies, poverty, or the burden of caring for siblings—are returning to school, determined to change their futures.

With the support of life skills clubs and peer-led community sensitization initiatives backed by UNICEF with funding from the David Beckham 7 Fund through the UK National Committee for UNICEF, these young mothers are not only reclaiming their education but also their dignity and dreams.

Eighteen-year-old Peace Aleru doesn't look her age. Petite and soft-spoken, her voice barely rises above a whisper. Yet behind

her shy demeanour lies a story of unimaginable resilience. "My mother left me when I was two. I grew up with my grandmother, father, and aunt," she says. After her father fell gravely ill, Peace moved in with her aunt in Adjumani.

Life without parents was difficult. "Sometimes, they wouldn't give me food or basic things like pads," she recalls. She joined school in 2019, but the COVID-19 lockdown disrupted everything. At 14, she became pregnant.

"When my aunt found out, she told the police. My father was so angry, he wanted to kill me," she says, pausing. "I begged him not to. I wanted to go back to school."

Her school stepped in. "The headteacher visited me, counselled my parents, and told me I could return to school after giving birth," she says. Peace delivered her baby in 2022 but had to stay home in 2023 because she lacked childcare. "I rejoined school in 2024, in Primary Six. I knew I had to try again—my family had no income, and the future looked bleak."

Despite financial struggles—her father could only afford half of her Ushs.85,000 (US\$23) term fees—Peace has found strength in her school's Life Skills Club. "My friends visited me when I was nursing. They brought me soap and encouraged me to stay strong," she says.

Through the club, she has learned about menstrual hygiene, self-care, and healthy relationships. "I tell other girls not to have boyfriends. It's not worth it," she says firmly. "I've



Learners at Adjumani Girls Primary School in Adjumani District take a photo in their class on March 18, 2025. In a classroom filled with determination and hope, these students are gaining not just academic knowledge but also essential life skills that prepare them for the future. Through interactive learning and peer-to-peer support, the school fosters an environment where every girl has the opportunity to thrive. ©UNICEF Uganda

been through it. I'm not thinking about boys anymore. I want to be a nurse."

Still, balancing motherhood and education is hard. "When my grandmother isn't home, I skip school to care for my baby. If she's sick, I take her to hospital. Missing class affects my performance," she admits. "Sometimes there's no food, and I have to go to the village to find some."

Her school head teacher Rebecca Konyio Gobbi says the support offered to teenage mothers goes beyond encouragement. "We follow up with them, even after they've delivered. Life skills are integrated into the schoolwork plan and budget. We need that to track progress and keep girls from falling back," she says.

Seventeen-year-old Dorothy Iracaah, from Palemo Village, shares a similar story. She is the eldest in her family and now heads her household while her parents are away in Arua, seeking treatment for her younger sister's mental health condition. She has two children, one aged three, the other just over one.

"I got my first baby in 2021 when I was in Primary Four. My boyfriend left me when I got pregnant," she says. "My mother told me not to run. She said we'd face it together."

Now back in school, Dorothy rises at 4 a.m. each day to cook and feed her child before walking three kilometres to school. "I often arrive late—lessons start at 7:30 and I get there at 8—but I'm trying."

She finds comfort in the life skills club. "We talk about menstruation, fears, and things we don't understand. We share, we learn, and I'm no longer afraid," she says with a shy smile.

For Adea Liz Kajoiying, 21, the road back to education was long. "My father died the year I was born. My mother has always been sick," she says. She attended school until Senior Two but dropped

out because her family couldn't afford the fees.

Pressed by circumstance, she married and had a son. "I baked pancakes to survive. I sold vegetables at the refugee settlement," she says. Then came a turning point—a community meeting led by Adolescent Volunteer Action Team (AVAT), a UNICEF-supported adolescent empowerment programme, funded by the David Beckham 7 Fund through the UK National Committee for UNICEF. "They told us: leave the past behind. You can still make something of your life."

That message changed everything. Liz enrolled in an Adult Learning Programme and later joined an Accelerated Education Programme (AEP). She completed Senior Four, despite her baby often being sick and limited time to study.

Her favorite subject is agriculture. "I scored a credit five. I want to study agriculture and support my child. I've seen others thrive in it," she says.

“

What keeps her going is simple but powerful. "I am not lazy. I believe I can do anything," she says. "And I want to be an example to other girls—to show them they can return to school and build a better future."

These young women are not just statistics. They are daughters, mothers, students—and leaders. Their journeys reflect the transformative power of education and the critical role of community-driven support. 🌈

TRAFFICKED, HOMELESS, AND NOW THRIVING: Regina's Remarkable Transformation

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



Group photo of young people who completed vocational training, with UNODC in Uganda's support, at their graduation at UYDEL's Masooli Rehabilitation Centre
© UYDEL

At just 19 years old, Regina Adoo has lived through hardships many would find unimaginable. But today, she stands tall as a beacon of resilience, hope, and transformation.

Born in Soroti District, Regina lost her father when she was only two. Her mother, left to raise four children alone, worked tirelessly. Regina was forced to drop out of school in Senior Two because her mother simply could not afford the fees.

In search of better opportunities, a relative arranged for Regina to travel to Kampala City. Instead of finding decent work, she was trafficked—trapped in a dingy makeshift restaurant, overworked, underpaid, and exposed to constant sexual harassment. She earned a meagre 2,000 UGX a day, faced sexual harassment from male customers, and was pressured into drug and alcohol use. When she tried to speak up, her pleas were dismissed, and she was told to “get used to it.” Eventually, she ran away.

Homeless and vulnerable, Regina endured the harsh realities of street life in the city. Her turning point came when a local female leader noticed her struggle and referred Regina to the Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL), an NGO supporting at-risk youth.

Thanks to the “Strengthening Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Uganda” Programme, implemented by UNODC in Uganda with funding from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Regina was enrolled at UYDEL's Masooli Rehabilitation Center. There, she received trauma-informed counselling, life skills training, and vocational training in hairdressing.

“I am now able to support myself and my family, thanks to the skills I acquired at UYDEL,” Regina shares with a smile. Today, Regina works in a salon in Kamwokya, earning an income to support her daily needs. Not only is she financially independent, but she also sends money home to support her mother look after her siblings.

Regina's story is a powerful reminder that with the right support, young people can rise above even the darkest circumstances.

Through the “Strengthening Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Uganda” Programme, UNODC in Uganda is supporting UYDEL to implement youth crime preven-



Regina at her graduation after attaining skills in hairdressing. ©UYDEL

tion initiatives including engaging youth in entrepreneurship, arts and sport-based programmes in the context of comprehensive responses for preventing crime and violent extremism. 🌍



FAO BUILDING ANTICIPATORY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR PASTORALISTS IN RWENZORI SUB-REGION

By Billy Rwothungeyo, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)



FAO Uganda Engineer Costa Odwar (second from left) hands over technical details of dam construction to Bundibugyo Local Government leaders ©FAO Uganda

The elements are not kind to the Rwenzori sub-region. One moment, the rains are unrelenting, rivers, including Semiliki, are bursting their banks.

Homes, schools and businesses are partly submerged under flood waters. The next moment, the waters have subsided, the sun is unleashing its relentless rays, evaporating seasonal streams, valley dams, leaving many on edge.

Droughts often spell doom for pastoralists, as pastures become scarce and wells dry up, negatively impacting the prospects of their livestock.

To cushion farmers against the impacts of such climatic shocks, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is building and revamping vital water infrastructure for pastoralists in Bundibugyo, Ntoroko and Kasese districts.

In Burondo sub-county in Bundibugyo district, FAO is building a new dam with a capacity of 10,000 cubic metres. The solar powered facility will have 20,000 litre capacity tanks and four water troughs.

During droughts, drying wells force many pastoralists to drive their livestock to the perilous River Semiliki for water. In the river, the cattle run the risk of drowning and are also susceptible to crocodile attacks.

‘When the wells dry up during drought, we are forced to go to the river. I am always pensive because of the risks with the river,’ says Wilson Rugambwa, a pastoralist in Ryakasonyi village in Burondo Sub-county.

The dam will not only provide water for livestock during long dry spells but also relieve pressure on the river.

The trampling by cattle has contributed to the damage of parts of the river banks, especially at watering points.



An excavator digging up the ground on the dam construction site in Burondo Sub-county, Bundibugyo District ©FAO Uganda

In neighbouring Ntoroko District, FAO is refurbishing a dis-used dam in Kanara Sub-county. Originally smaller, the new dam will be bigger and have a capacity of 10,000 cubic metres of water. The solar powered facility will have attendant 20,000 litre capacity tanks and four water troughs – including a smaller one for goats and calves.

Even though Ntoroko is next to Lake Albert and River Semiliki, the district experiences some of the most ruthless dry spells in the country.

Ntoroko is mainly populated by the Batuku, a pastoralist community. One such pastoralist is Charles Isingoma of Kyama-haika Village in Kanara Sub-county. He is eagerly awaiting the dam completion.

‘Since December, the wells have been drying up. In our sub-county, up to 100 cattle have died in recent weeks due to lack of water. We expect March to become even worse,’ says Isingoma.

In Kitwamba Sub-county, Kasese District, FAO is constructing a motorized solar-powered borehole. The facility will have 20,000 litre capacity tanks and water troughs. The new facility will help pastoralists access water for livestock during dry spells.

Kitwamba Sub-county is mainly occupied by the Basongora people, who have a special relationship with cattle. When a boy is born among the community, he is given a cow and a stick during a naming ceremony. Girls too get a cow, but without a stick. 🌈



INTEGRATING STRATEGIC FORESIGHT INTO THE UN IN UGANDA COOPERATION FRAMEWORK

By Marian Musingo and Bright Onapito, United Nations Global Pulse (UNGP)



Bright Onapito of United Nations Global Pulse delivering the presentation on Foresight during the workshop formulating the results framework for the Uganda UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for 2026–2030 ©UNGP Uganda



Marian Musingo of United Nations Global Pulse explaining a point on Foresight during the workshop formulating the results framework for the Uganda UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for 2026–2030 ©UNGP Uganda

UN entities and partners convened early March in Kampala to assess progress and shape the future of their work in Uganda.

UN Global Pulse Uganda—with support from the Global Pulse Finland's Futures and Foresight Team, contributed to this process by integrating strategic foresight, to deliver a transformative and resilient Cooperation Framework for 2026–2030.

Through plenary and break-out group sessions, the workshop provided a dynamic platform for fostering collaboration and innovative thinking among participants.

Integrating strategic foresight into the process began with producing a comprehensive Common Country Analysis,

taking into account trends and potential scenarios that could impact the UN's interventions in Uganda.

Continuing into the workshop, Global Pulse presented a preferred scenario of a transformed Uganda in 2040—a video that vividly illustrated a transformed Uganda, capturing the imagination of attendees and setting the stage for deeper discussions.

After, participants enriched the conversation by sharing their feedback and ensuring diverse perspectives were heard. For the preferred scenario video, participants reckoned:

"It provided a vision of the kind of regional developments we want to see in Uganda."

"Clarifies what Uganda should do to attain transformation and balanced growth"

"The good governance that gives the citizens power to influence their economic freedom"

To further stimulate creative thinking, we introduced a series of "What If" scenarios designed to test the resilience of the Cooperation Framework's intended outcomes. This exercise was conducted in groups and encouraged participants to explore potential challenges, blind spots, and opportunities, fostering a proactive approach.

The Foresight session challenged participants to plan and gaze out into the future, seeking signs, trends, and developments that could influence the outcomes of the UN Cooperation Framework.

Integrating strategic foresight into the UNSDCF is a vital step toward ensuring resilient outcomes for Uganda. This ongoing process is laying a strong foundation for future initiatives.

As we look ahead, we are excited about the potential for continually utilizing future thinking for sustainable development in Uganda. Together, we are not just envisioning a better future; we are actively working to create it, one strategic insight at a time. 🌍



FROM REFUGEE TO ENTREPRENEUR: A Journey of Agricultural Innovation and Self-Reliance

By Brenda Luyiga, World Food Programme (WFP)



Faustin at his newly established shop ©WFP Uganda

At just 14, Faustin Irankunda now 23, fled ethnic conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo to Uganda in 2016. “My grandfather and most of us lived in fear and agony,” he recalls. Upon arrival, like many refugees in Uganda’s population of 1.8 million displaced people, Faustin depended on the World Food Programme’s (WFP) general food assistance.

In 2021, determined to break free from aid dependency, Faustin secured a loan from his mother. Equipped with financial literacy training from WFP’s partner World Vision, he established the Creative Youth Foundation with peers. What began with a single pig evolved into a thriving agricultural enterprise comprising 21 members, including four Ugandan nationals, fostering integration between refugee and host communities.

The Refugee-Led Grant initiative proved transformative in scaling their operations. This programme, which provides 75% of the required capital while groups contribute 25%, helped foster investment and ownership. With an UGX



Faustin demonstrates how to harvest Azolla ©WFP Uganda

11 million (US\$ 3,000) grant, the Foundation expanded significantly, introducing multiple pig breeds selected for local adaptability and productivity.

Their innovative “pay it forward” model demonstrates a commitment to community development. “We pledged to donate free two-month-old piglets to other refugee-led groups,” Faustin explains. “Recipients then return an equal number after eight months.” This approach has enabled groups like Tuamuke and Maisha to establish their piggery projects. The Kyegegwa Local Government enhances this impact by providing training for veterinary care and farm management.

The business has proven highly profitable. Each pig produces 15-17 piglets, sold at UGX 100,000 (US\$27) each. Success has enabled expansion to three farmhouses,



Faustin at the pig sty. ©WFP Uganda

with profits systematically reinvested while repaying initial loans. The group diversified by producing and selling Azora feeds, reducing their costs while generating additional income of up to UGX 2.5 million monthly.

Digital literacy has been crucial for market expansion. “Leveraging digital financial literacy training, we’ve reached customers in districts such as Hoima, Kasese, and Bwerya through social media,” Faustin explains. This technology adoption has broadened their market reach significantly.

The impact extends beyond business. “Today, I am a different person,” Faustin states. “All our members have invested in other ventures. We employ four members and a caretaker.” The enterprise’s success has made education accessible—Faustin will soon begin studying agricultural engineering, while other members pursue finance, accounting, and agronomy.

Despite challenges like theft and rising costs, the group continues evolving. Their governance structure includes rotating leadership, quarterly reviews, and reinvestment of 50% of sales, ensuring sustainability and equitable benefits.

Faustin’s success exemplifies WFP Uganda’s broader impact on refugee resilience. In 2024, WFP’s Self-Reliance Model enrolled 10,532 households across five settlements. The programme enabled 50% of participants to engage in farming on 3,718 acres; 41% developed off-farm enterprises; and 9% received vocational training with US\$ 550 startup grants. Additionally, WFP supported 1,444 teenage parents (96% female) through vocational training institutes.

Digital and financial literacy proved critical to success, with 55% of participants completing digital literacy programmes and 45% of village savings groups becoming digitised—skills that Faustin’s Creative Youth Foundation masterfully leveraged through its social media marketing strategy. The success of such youth-led refugee enterprises demonstrates the effectiveness of WFP’s integrated approach to fostering self-reliance and economic independence among refugee populations.

“All these skills came from you,” Faustin acknowledges. “Without your support, nobody would know us. Thank you for trusting us and proving that with the right support, refugees can build thriving enterprises, contribute to our communities, and shape our destinies.” 🌍

3 million Farmers to be reached for Agricultural Insurance by 2027

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Held on the 28th of March 2025, the 2-day workshop gathered stakeholders from Government Ministries, UNDP, Agro Consortium, Insurance Sector Stakeholders, Financial sector stakeholders, Representation from the farmers, Development Partners, and players from the digital market with a focus on key objectives below;

To strengthen Uganda’s agricultural insurance framework by tripling the subsidy allocation from UGX 5 billion to UGX 15 billion, creating a stronger financial foundation for farmer support. To develop strategies to expand coverage from 1 million to 3 million farmers, significantly widening the protective reach across agricultural communities. To build technical capacity in data management and product innovation to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of insurance offerings. Finally, to create a joint implementation roadmap for the Uganda Agriculture Insurance Scheme (UAIS), ensuring coordinated efforts among government agencies, insurance providers, and farmer organizations.

Next Steps

1. Subsidy Strategy: Finalize the proposal to increase funding and explore alternative financing mechanisms to support the scheme.
2. Policy Reform: Accelerate the adoption of a comprehensive agricultural insurance policy to provide a robust regulatory framework and support the Finalization and enforcement of the National Agriculture Finance and Insurance Policy.
3. Data and Innovation: Invest in digital infrastructure for real-time claims processing and data-driven product design to improve efficiency that is development of a unified data platform for agriculture insurance development.
4. Awareness Campaigns: Scale sensitization programs targeting women, youth, and large-scale individual farmers to increase uptake.
5. Institutional Coordination: Develop a cross-ministerial task force to align mandates and implement the Agricultural Insurance Agenda effectively and onboard Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries to expand on the distribution of Agriculture Insurance.
6. Monitoring and Evaluation: Establish key performance indicators (KPIs), monitoring and evaluation tools and regular review mechanisms to monitor progress of the scheme and make necessary adjustments. 🌍



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For more information, please contact:

MICHAEL WANGUSA | michael.wangusa@un.org

MONICAH ATURINDA | monicah.aturinda@undp.org

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